

1012 Corridor Weekly

This Week's Headlines / Wed, Sept. 23, 2009

Lake Charles is the nation's strongest construction market



Lake Charles is the nation's strongest construction market right now. According to *BusinessWeek* magazine, the city saw the highest increase in building permits issued during the first six months of this year of any community in the country. Permits were up nearly 123% from the first half of 2008. The magazine notes the Lake Charles economy still is rebuilding from Hurricane Rita in 2005 and Hurricane Ike last year. Also bolstering construction were the new nuclear power fabrication facility now under construction, and an 870% jump in building permits for apartments compared to the same period a year ago. The data comes from Hanley Wood Market Intelligence. To read the story, click [here](#).

Tulane tops graduate schools for entrepreneurs

The A.B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University is one of the top five graduate schools in the nation for entrepreneurship, according to a new ranking by *Entrepreneur* magazine and *The Princeton Review*. Tulane is ranked No. 4 on the list, which appears in the October issue of *Entrepreneur*. *Entrepreneur* and *The Princeton Review* surveyed more than 2,300 schools to determine this year's ranking. Programs were judged by academics and requirements, students and faculty and outside-the-classroom experiences. The school has built a strong reputation in recent years for its emphasis on social entrepreneurship, which uses entrepreneurial principles to address social problems. Tulane promotes conscious capitalism, which calls for organizations to consider what is best for all stakeholders — employees, shareholders, the community and the environment — rather than solely focusing on shareholder returns. The school's 2010 Tulane Business Plan competition will be the first in the country to incorporate principles of conscious capitalism into its requirements. Says John Elstrott, executive director of Tulane's Levy-Rosenblum Institute for Entrepreneurship: "This ranking reflects the commitment of our students, faculty and staff to engage in the reinvention and rebuilding of New Orleans through entrepreneurship." To see the story, click [here](#).

Corridor tech and community colleges post record gains



Joe May

Fall enrollment numbers at the technical and community colleges along the 10/12 corridor are breaking records,

even as many four-year universities are reporting sluggish figures of their own. Across the entire Louisiana Community and Technical College System, enrollment is up by 17.6%, from 59,480 students last fall to 69,967 students right now. This part of the state, however, is surpassing that average. At the River Parishes Community College in Sorrento, new students have created a 35.3% enrollment surge. The Louisiana Technical College, which has campuses in Baton Rouge, Hammond, Lafayette and on the Northshore, experienced the second largest growth in enrollment with an impressive 24% increase. Additionally, colleges impacted by hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 continue to rebound. Delgado Community College in New Orleans saw a 15% spike this fall and Sowela Technical Community College in Lake Charles is hosting more than 300 new students as compared to last year. South Louisiana Community College in Lafayette is on the same track with its own 15% boost. Stephen C. Smith, who serves as chairman of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System's board of supervisors, says the economy is one factor driving enrollment. "This is something we are seeing throughout the state," Smith says. "In an economic downturn like this, people go back to school. They see their co-workers and friends losing their jobs and they want better security and something more. I think these numbers will also become more common in coming years." The same economic factors are recognized by LCTCS President Dr. Joe D. May, who believes the higher enrollments will eventually play a key role in helping the state recover since education can be directly linked to economic development. "As we continue to see the enrollment rise at our local colleges, we know we are equipping Louisiana citizens to help meet the ever-growing workforce needs of this state, and we are providing the much needed solutions to help meet the demands of local employers and business and industry," May says. "As Louisiana continues to be faced with numerous economic, budget and workforce challenges, we recognize that the services provided by our state's community and technical colleges are critical to solving those issues." — **Jeremy Alford**

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New program puts people on government assistance to work

A pilot program designed to provide jobs and training to people on food stamps and other government assistance is launching in Lafayette. The Connections to Work seeks to place job-ready Department of Social Services clients into high-demand jobs through the Louisiana Workforce Commission. The program will be implemented in the Lafayette Metropolitan Area over the next 90 days, with plans to later expand it regionally and statewide. The pilot program will target able-bodied Louisiana residents receiving food stamps, temporary cash assistance for needy families, vocational rehabilitation services and those who are aging out of the foster care system. In the Lafayette area, the pilot program expects to serve about 300 DSS clients. The goal is to place 70% of them in jobs by the end of the 90-day pilot program.

More gators, less profit



Alligators may be living longer, thanks to the economy. The LSU AgCenter reports that this year has been a trying one for alligator hunters and farmers. The price for alligator skins has plummeted from roughly \$45 a foot for a seven-foot alligator several years ago to about \$10 per foot this year. Luxury alligator products are not selling, which has led to an oversupply of skins. Workers at the Vermilion Gator Farm in Henry, just south of Lafayette, are curing the skins of some of the 80,000 alligators the farm raises. But next year, the skinning and curing sheds will sit mostly empty. The Sagra family — which has operated the farm for more than 25 years — didn't collect any alligator eggs this summer and won't raise a crop of alligators in 2010. "With the market like it is, we're still not finished being paid for our alligators from last year, and we're killing this crop and shipping it overseas right now," says Raphael Sagra. "It doesn't make any sense to pick eggs and raise another crop." Their tannery in Singapore,

which once sold 10,000 skins a month, didn't sell any this winter. Sagera doesn't know when he'll be paid for the ones he's shipping there now. The wild alligator season runs through the end of October. Louisiana allows up to 35,000 alligators to be harvested annually, but LSU AgCenter Aquaculture Agent Mark Shirley expects few hunters will bother, which could result in nuisance problems. Says Shirley: "The more alligators you have, eventually they're going to get in people's backyards and show up in places where alligators shouldn't."

Welcome to the Elephant Room

The family responsible for the popular Marcello's Italian restaurants in Lafayette in the early eighties and who now run successful wine cafes in Lafayette and Baton Rouge will launch a new steakhouse in Lafayette early next year. The retro Elephant Room, a Todaro family brainchild, draws inspiration from safari and old-time burlesque themes, says Gene Todaro, Jr. Renovation of a former Fazoli's restaurant at Kaliste Saloom and Pinhook kicked off earlier this month and will likely be complete by January. The venture follows two other restaurants opened by the Todaros in the last two years, Marcello's Wine Market Café in Lafayette and Enoteca Marcello in Baton Rouge, which feature Italian cuisine and fine wines at just over retail prices, considerably less than the standard 300% markup restaurants generally follow. The Elephant Room will repeat the unconventional wine-pricing policy, and will serve high-end cuts of Argentine grass fed, American corn fed and Japanese Wagyu beef. More than half of the wine cafés' patrons are women, says Todaro, which he expects to also be true at the Elephant Room. Thus, the spot will offer smaller portions and filet "flights," a sampler of different beef varieties. A raw bar departs from oysters and includes tartare and ceviche. "We're going for something other than stodgy steakhouse," Todaro says. —

Maggie Heyn Richardson

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Lafayette gets the upscale Chinese bistro Shanghai Moon



This fall, the upscale Chinese bistro, Shanghai Moon, is set to open in Lafayette. The restaurant will be located at 5621 Johnston St., next to Best Buy. "We wanted to take an older abandoned building in Lafayette and give it a face lift," General Manager Rick Stutes says. Shanghai Moon's menu has been compared to other bistros such as P.F. Chang's and China Grill. The restaurant will feature chefs from around the world with years of experience in preparing upscale Chinese cuisine. "I wanted to start a Chinese restaurant like Shanghai for a long time, and this restaurant just fell into place," says Shanghai Moon owner Brandon Lee. "I felt like what Lafayette needed was an upscale and fresh Chinese restaurant."

Corridor baker competes in the 'Ultimate Cake Off'

Can Martha Hebert bake the ultimate cake? We won't know until she appears next week on TLC's *Ultimate Cake Off*. The owner of Sweet Southern Ladies in St. Martinville and her team face off against two other contestants in a challenge to create an edible masterpiece in hopes of winning \$10,000 and having their cake featured at a marquee event. With only nine hours, the competitors must make cakes that are at least five feet tall and creative enough to win the taste of the client and clinch the ultimate prize. To add to the pressure, the contestants also face two mini-challenges — a skills test and a tast test — that could give one team the ultimate advantage: being able to force another team to lose 30 minutes from their preparation time. Hebert co-owns the baker with her sister and best friend Becky. The show airs Monday night.

Disney film on the hunt for extras

If you've always thought you belong in a Disney movie, now is your chance. BAM Casting is on the hunt for more

than 4,000 extras for the Disney feature film *Secretariat*, which will be filming in Lafayette beginning Oct. 12. The flick stars Diane Lane and John Malkovich. BAM is seeking extras of all ages and ethnicities. The firm is also looking for experienced horse handlers and trainers, 1970s-era cars, horse trailers and RVs and photo doubles for Diane Lane, John Malkovich, Dylan Walsh, Nelsan Ellis and others, particularly hippie/Woodstock types, military/police types and reporter/media types. The casting call is set for 12-8 p.m. Sunday at the Cajundome, 444 Cajundome Blvd. in Lafayette. Show up with a 4x6 photograph of yourself.

Poll: Saints are sure to be a winning team



This is the year the Saints are going to do it, *10/12* poll respondents say. Some 23% predict the team will be Super Bowl champions. Another 15% are convinced the New Orleans franchise will take home the NFC championship, but lose the ultimate game. Some 45% predict the Saints will make the playoffs. Of the remaining respondents, 9% foresee a winning record, 4% foresee a losing record and 2% don't know what to predict. **This week's question:** What are your shopping plans for this holiday season?

Places to be on the corridor

Oct. 7: Dr. Loren Scott will bring an in-depth review of his "Louisiana Outlook: 2010 & 2011" report, detailing Louisiana's changing economy and an overview of what is to come at 5 p.m. at the Lake Charles Country Club, 3350 Country Club Drive. The event is hosted by the Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance. A wine and cheese reception will follow. To RSVP, call Lynette Clark at 337-433-3632 or click [here](#).

Oct. 8: The Louisiana CEO Forum, featuring five top CEOs from the *10/12* corridor, will debut at the Baton Rouge River Center during the BizTech Expo. Participating in the forum will be CEOs **Marty Mayer, Stirling Properties** [Covington]; Nanette Noland, The Powell Group [Baton Rouge]; Dennis Stine, Stine Lumber [Lake Charles]; David Voelker, Frantzen, Voelker & Conway Investments [New Orleans]; and Richard Zuschlag, Acadian Ambulance [Lafayette]. The forum, presented by *10/12* magazine, will be moderated with previously submitted questions, as well as allow a free flow of ideas and questions from the audience. Doors will open at 8:15 a.m. The Louisiana CEO Forum is being held in conjunction with the 2009 BizTech Expo, which runs from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Oct. 7 and Oct. 8. The 27th Annual BizTech Expo also hosts the Top 100 Luncheon, in which Dr. Loren Scott unveils his economic forecast for 2010-2011. To purchase tickets to the Louisiana CEO Forum and other Expo-related events, click [here](#).

Oct. 22: "Hot Topics for Employers: Employment Practices & Labor Law Updates" is the topic of a half-day seminar from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Lafayette, 2032 Evangeline Thruway. Speaker is Rob Roux, attorney for the Louisiana Workforce Commission for more than 20 years. He'll address information on security and privacy, background investigations, drug testing, whistle blowing, non-compete agreements, leaves of absence and more. Cost is \$45, which includes a continental breakfast and lunch. The event is sponsored by the Lafayette Regional Business Advisory Committee and the Lafayette Economic Development Authority. For more information or to register, call Ryan LaGrange at 337-593-1405, or click [here](#).

Viewpoint: The uphill battle for ethics reform



Bobby
Jindal

When Gov. Bobby Jindal convened his first special legislative session in early 2008 to ram through a series of "ethics reform" bills, *Gambit Weekly* columnist Clancy Dubos writes, not all reformers were happy with the results. The Public Affairs Research Council and the Council for A Better Louisiana, two high-profile reform groups, were particularly concerned about Jindal-sponsored changes at the state Ethics Board. Jindal's "reform" package included a bill that took away the "adjudicatory" authority of the ethics board, i.e., the board's power to sit as fact-finder and judge in addition to its traditional role as investigator, prosecutor and executioner. The bill transferred the board's judicial authority to state administrative law judges, who previously toiled in anonymity hearing regulatory appeals. The bill passed handily despite PAR's and CABL's opposition. Now, after a year under the new system, PAR and CABL appear poised to lead the charge to undo, or at least revise, those changes. They face an uphill battle. To read the full column, click [here](#).

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