



Submitted photo

Members of Lakeside Baptist Church in Pineville prayed with others and shared the Gospel with individuals who received 400 crosses near a heavily traveled section of Hwy 28 in the city. By the end of the day, 14 new converts had placed their trust in Christ.

STEPPING OUTSIDE CHURCH WALLS

Handing out crosses leads to 14 professions of faith

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

PINEVILLE, La. (LBM) – A parking lot along a heavily traveled highway in Pineville was transformed into a harvest field that produced 14 new converts for Christ during a pre-Easter outreach, March 13.

In all, 25 members from Lakeside Baptist Church in Pineville either directed motorists to the parking lot, prayed/shared the Gospel with others on-site, or distributed 400 crosses (half were 2-foot tall, the other half 5-foot tall).

Lloyd Bye said this was the largest evangelistic effort in the 20 years he has served as pastor of the congregation, which averages 50 for Sunday morning

worship services. One person who received a cross has visited the church and Bye is praying additional people will do the same.

The event was born out of the “Increase Challenge,” a five-step action plan in effect through May 31 that was issued to pastors of the CENLA Baptist Association. Lakeside and other area churches were encouraged to find a way to focus on actions that can move people to understand the Gospel clearly and then respond in faith.

Bye said the event was a way for some of his members to share their faith for the first time. They had been trained recently, taking part in four evange-

See CROSSES, page 2



Submitted photo

Larry Filask, a deacon at Lakeside Baptist Church in Pineville, enjoyed distributing crosses to others in his community.

McMillan retires as LBDR Director

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – For the last 15 years, Gibbie McMillan has been the face of Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief, serving on the frontlines of LBDR-led responses that helped rebuild homes, and, also, offered the hope found in Christ to thousands impacted by floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes.

McMillan is set to retire, April 30, as men’s ministry and disaster relief strategist for Louisiana Baptists. But he will continue to pursue his passion for disaster relief as the leader of a newly formed chainsaw team affiliated with Two Rivers Baptist Association.

“Working for Louisiana Baptists has been one of the most rewarding opportunities I have ever had,” McMillan told the *Baptist Message*. “Being the hands and feet of Jesus enabled me to meet needs because of the generous giving of the churches of Louisiana. Our Georgia Barnett State Missions offering each year provided the funds needed for a quick response in times of disaster. Not every church in Louisiana is involved in disaster relief -- but they can be when they support the Georgia Barnett State Missions offering.”

Stan Statham will succeed McMillan, May 1. He currently serves as associational missions strategist for Baptist Associations of Southeast Louisiana, which includes Two Rivers and two other Baptist associations.



Gibbie McMillan

See MCMILLAN, page 4

Bill would ban ‘critical race theory’ from Louisiana schools

By Will Hall
Message executive editor

BATON ROUGE, La. (LBM) – Rep. Ray Garofalo has introduced H.B. 564 which would prohibit the teaching of divisive con-

cepts relative to race and sex at publicly funded K-12 schools and postsecondary education institutions.

His legislation addresses a growing push to teach radical ideologies such as the “1619 Project” as well

as “critical race theory” and “intersectionality,” even on Christian school campuses:

-- The 1619 Project was launched by the *New*

See BAN, page 6



Submitted photo

Randy Pilcher, a member of Cross Ministry in Dibold, Texas; Lloyd Bye, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church in Pineville, and Leo Lytle, an evangelist and professional wood maker in Pine Valley, Texas, were part of a distribution of 400 crosses in Pineville in mid April.

Crosses from page one

listic training sessions on Wednesday evenings prior to the cross distribution.

"People are scared sometime to let others know about Jesus," Bye said. "My people jumped deep into the water."

Among the people who came to Christ was a man who received three crosses but did not know what they represented.

"I asked him what God requires of him to get into Heaven and he did not have an answer," Bye said. "I led him to Christ right there. He was like so many who love getting a cross around Easter time but don't know its message."

The crosses were made by Vic Bass, founder of the Cross Ministry in Dibold, Texas. Since 2015, Bass has produced 250,000 crosses that have been distributed in all 50 states and four countries.

He said the crosses seem to resonate with others and provide an avenue to share the Gospel.

"It's had a big impact all these years because it's not white or black, Baptist or Pentecostal," he said. "It's the simple message of Jesus Christ and that's what people are thirsty for today. He's the life changing message that can bring this world hope."

Leo Lytle, a professional wood maker in Pine Valley, Texas, and a former pastor of Lakeside Baptist and several other Louisiana Baptist churches, traveled with Bass to share the Gospel during the distribution of the crosses.

"What impressed me was when we arrived on that Saturday was how his people were trained and ready," he said. "When the cars started pulling in, they started talking to them."

"I like this way of evangelism because the church in America is going to have to get outside the walls," he continued. "If we are going to reach a lost and hurting world, we have to reach them where they are."

Church member Michelle Bordelon said that the Wednesday night evangelism training sessions helped her feel more at ease when she approached people to start a conversation about Jesus. She said most people she met were familiar with the cross and were open to hearing about the message behind it.

"God's timing is perfect, and it is amazing to see how He orchestrated all of this to fit together perfectly," she said. "Our church has been praying for the souls that we would come in contact with, and it was amazing to be there and see how well everyone and everything worked together to bring others to Christ."

Bye said the congregation plans to host another cross distribution, in late May, on a roadway near the church. He is excited, anticipating how the Lord will use this tool to reach others for Christ and continue his congregation's evangelistic zeal.

"It's a way of us getting outside the walls of the church," Bye said. "These crosses are like a bait when you go fishing. That cross is a bait that speaks all by itself."

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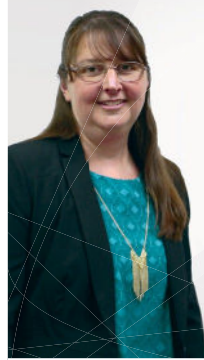


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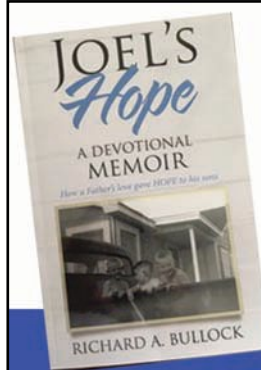
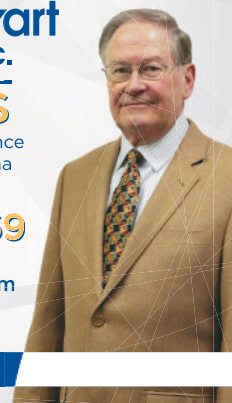


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Number 5

Pawpaw baptizes great-granddaughter at Leesville's Canaan

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

LEESVILLE, La. (LBM) – Vernon Baptist Association Director of Missions Morris Goins normally is not at a loss for words, but a request from his great-granddaughter Kaylee Pew, 8, left him speechless.

“PawPaw, would you baptize me,” Pew asked him shortly after she admitted she was a sinner and needed Christ in early March.

Four weeks later, Goins was at Canaan Baptist Church in Leesville to fulfill the request during a special time that was shared by family, friends, and a supportive church family.

“It’s the closest thing to being in the holy presence of the Lord,” Goins told the *Baptist Message*, regarding baptizing new believers.

He added that baptiz-

ing Kaylee, March 28, was “more than I can explain – it’s one of the highest honors and privileges a great grandfather can have in his life.”

Pastor Jason Nolde said the baptism reiterates the important role discipleship plays in a believer’s spiritual development.

“What I saw that Sunday was a multi-generational approach by a great-grandfather, parents, and Sunday school teachers,” Nolde said. “It was obvious how much time they invested in this young girl, and it ended with her making a genuine decision to follow Christ.”

SPIRITUAL, NUMERICAL GROWTH

Pew’s baptism was the ninth since October at Canaan Baptist, which has seen a resurgence in baptisms, evangelism, and discipleship since in-

person services resumed in early May 2020. Until then, public gathering restrictions from COVID-19 mandates had forced them to conduct services exclusively on YouTube and Facebook since March 2020.

Sunday morning worship attendance has increased from 120 before the pandemic to 150 a year later, and several Sunday morning Bible study classes have outgrown their classrooms.

Message trustees to meet May 18

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Trustees of the Baptist Message will gather for the regular spring meeting on May 18 in the Louisiana Baptist Building, Alexandria.


Committees will meet in the morning, and the general session will begin at 1 p.m.

Nolde said the congregation is considering whether to add onto existing buildings to accommodate the growth, noting that the young adult class has increased from six members in late 2019 to more than 30 at the end of March. He also said a men’s ministry Bible study that began March 25 drew 21 for the first meeting and a

women’s ministry group that started March 18 attracted 26 for the initial class.


He further shared that members presented Christ to community members whom they sheltered and served three meals a day in September 2020 after

See PAWPAW, page 8



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McMillan

from page one

USEFUL TO CHRIST

McMillan, a native of Kentwood, became a Christian when he was 20 years old. The death of a cousin prompted him to examine his own spiritual condition; subsequently, Steve Brown, who at the time was pastor of New Zion Baptist Church in Kentwood, shared the Gospel with him.

After his conversion, McMillan was discipled by Brown, who equipped him with the tools necessary to

share his testimony with a Gospel message during a service six weeks later. McMillan, who before the start of the service asked God to confirm a call to ministry, issued an invitation at the end of his sermon and saw 14 people come forward to accept Christ.

Over the next 28 years, McMillan continued to see God move through pastorates in Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Texas, and for nearly three years as a prison chaplain with the

Louisiana Department of Corrections. He also led the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's hurricane recovery ministry to churches and pastors after Hurricane Rita devastated portions of southeast Texas in 2005. As a member of the convention's minister-church relations office, he coordinated recovery efforts and distribution of disaster relief funds in New Orleans and the surrounding area for the SBTC.

McMillan also has served Southern Baptists as a member of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, a trustee of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and a trustee of the International Mission Board.

FAITHFUL SERVANT

McMillan has coordinated 48 responses in the state since he assumed his role with the Louisiana Baptist missions and ministry team on March 16, 2006. Those responses have included twin flooding disasters in 2016 that left north Louisiana under more than 3 feet of rain (March) and 31 inches of rain over a two-day period in south Louisiana (August); Hurricanes Delta and Laura (2020); and multiple tornadoes throughout the years.

Outside the state, McMillan has been involved with multiple efforts, such as rebuilding St. Matthews Baptist Church in the Bahamas

that was flattened by Hurricane Dorian in 2019.

McMillan, in 2018, reorganized LBDR into seven zones to allow for a more organized disaster response.

McMillan also supervised the state's Royal Ambassadors program, a Southern Baptist mission education organization for boys in grades 1-6. Young boys are taught to deepen their love for missions through RA programs at their respective churches as well as group events such as the RA Congress, Survivor Man and Camp-O-Ree. In the year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Louisiana Baptists formed 21 new RA chapters, placing it among the fastest growing state RA programs in the SBC.

Among the most memorable moments over the last 15 years was the opportunity to baptize Len Miller, a truck driver who delivered tank loads of clean water to the staging site at Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles. Instead of returning home immediately to Wauchula, Florida, Miller felt compelled to remain at the church and assist with relief efforts for the next four weeks.

Throughout the course of his time there, Miller developed a relationship with disaster relief volunteers, and having accepted Christ 10 years prior, was convicted of his need to be obedient in publicly sharing his faith through believer's baptism. On Sept. 25 in a cattle trough

that relief volunteers used to wash equipment, Len Miller was baptized, given a study Bible, and instructed on how to grow in Christ.

Miller was among 1,428 people with whom disaster relief chaplains shared the Gospel from late August until September 27 in areas of Louisiana impacted by Laura. Of those who heard the Good News, 300 turned to Christ. Disaster relief volunteers also distributed 1,955 Bibles.

"That baptism seems to bring it to a high point of why we do disaster relief and how we make a difference in people's life with sharing the Gospel," McMillan said. "I have seen people respond as a volunteer and during a times of debrief people would realize God was dealing with them in their own heart."

GRATEFUL SERVANT

McMillan is grateful for the many volunteers who showed up year after year to serve in areas devastated by disasters; and, also, is appreciative of Louisiana Baptists who have given faithfully to the Georgia Barnette State Missions Offering that supports disaster relief efforts.

"Because we generally have more disasters in our state than others, we have had a greater support of the churches and church leaders from across the state," he said. "This is not a one person deal here. It is the Louisiana Baptist family that makes a difference."

"The Georgia Barnette Offering is the backbone of disaster relief because if it were not for that offering and the individuals that give, we would not be able to respond and do the work and have the training sessions that we do," he said. "If you want to see a clear picture of what the Cooperative Program is, look at disaster relief. It affects every aspect of church life. We reach people with Gospel when they are hurting, we feed them when they are hungry, and we offer showers when they don't have water or power."

"Jesus Himself said when you do it to least of these my brethren you did it to me," he added. "We become hands and feet of Jesus as we respond. We let them know Jesus is the reasons we do this. It's not for our glory but for His."



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Summer camp is back!

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) -- After a year that saw most activities come to a halt by COVID-19, and facilities battered by hurricanes, tornadoes and major storms, the state's Baptist camps are gearing up for a busy summer.

"COVID-19 had huge effects on us and many other camps in 2020," Josh Bumgardner, director of Tall Timbers Baptist Conference Center, told the *Baptist Message*. "This is the first time in our history that we did not host or program overnight summer camps for our churches. Summer is the focal point for our year and not having camps -- understandable, with the ongoing pandemic -- was a huge loss to our staff and to our churches. Most

of our other retreats and guest groups cancelled throughout the year, too."

But so far (mid-April) in 2021 the camp has filled 1,925 spots, with space for an additional 1,325 guests.

Bumgardner said his staff has worked hard over the past year to work on upgrades to the new Dogwood Cabin, renovations to hotel rooms at Lee Lodge, as well as repairs to the activity building and Indian Creek Lodge that sustained damage from Hurricane Delta.

He asked for continued prayers for his staff and guests, and, also for other Christian camps across the state as they continue to navigate uncharted waters.

"I think all of us personally have gone through the range of emotions since the pandemic began last March," Bumgardner

said. "The majority of our ministry is to serve the people who come on the grounds of Tall Timbers. When nobody was able to attend or be here in person, I think we all grieved that loss in 2020. We trust that God has been working in the lives of our churches and guests when they were not able to be here in person, and we are ready to continue participating in the camp ministry as things continue to open up again."

CLARA SPRINGS BAPTIST ENCAMPMENT

After nearly eight months without hosting a camp, Clara Springs Baptist Encampment in Pelican finally held three retreats in November.

But the staff was creative in finding other ways to minister during the



Brian Blackwell photo

Activities like bow and arrow shooting will return this summer when Louisiana Baptist camps will again host guests. The COVID-19 closed most camp events in 2020.

interim.

The camp held a Farm and Family Trade Day that drew more than 50 vendors and 600 participants, Fourth Friday Fish Fry meals, a winter kids retreat, a couples retreat and a Fourth of July celebration that included a

boxed hamburger meal and a firework show. Camp Director Bubba Mills and his wife Mandi even ventured 40 miles southeastward to Natchitoches to distribute Bibles and remind

See **CAMPS**, page 6

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Camps from page 5

more than 500 children who came to a Santa Claus House in December that Jesus is the reason for the Christmas season.

Mills said that he hopes Clara Springs Baptist Encampment, which has plenty of space remaining for camps and retreats, can be an encouragement to churches who have supported them throughout the pandemic.

"Financially, it has proven to us again how our God is always faithful," Mills said. "As bills came in, God stepped in and provided through fellow believers in Christ. We did not allow COVID-19 to stop our ministry, but we did have to be creative."

DRY CREEK BAPTIST CAMP

Dry Creek Baptist Camp experienced the same virtual shutdown the pandemic thrust on all the other camps, but also suffered damage from Hurricane Laura and Delta, as well as a fire in February. But the staff is encouraged by the response for this summer. Registration numbers had topped 710 in April, and hopes are high for filling the 890 remaining openings.

"Thank you for the support and keep it coming," Aaron Watkins told the Baptist Message. "Ministry changed for a while when the restrictions set in from

the pandemic, but the outpouring of encouragement kept us going. The people who have loved the camp for years understood not having groups here meant we had no money coming in; and we saw the faithfulness of God through his body of believers who supported us through some very slim times. We can't say 'Thank you' enough for those who have loved on us, and supported us, and prayed for us."

He was equally grateful for the volunteer work completed by construction teams who renovated dorms that will lodge overnight guests.

ACADIAN BAPTIST CENTER

James Newsom, director of Acadian Baptist Center

in Eunice, reported that more than 2,300 guests had registered for camps, leaving only 100 open spots for this summer.

Newsom said the camp – which since January has hosted a men's retreat and its first-ever disc golf tournament – is excited about the busy summer ahead. Not only will they host several camps, but on July 10 will dedicate a \$3 million, 18,000-sq.-ft. facility that was finished May 13, 2020.

"Pray for people to feel comfortable sending their kids to camp and for those attending this summer," he said. "Camp is such a great evangelistic opportunity and a chance to really grow spiritually."

"I would encourage churches to use their local camps," he continued. "Your support will help us continue our ministry for years to come."

CAMP LIVING WATERS

When Gov. John Bel Edwards announced restrictions in late March 2020, a Campers on Mission group had to stop a work on a

dormitory at Camp Living Waters in Loranger. Nearly a year later, they are working feverishly to complete the project that included putting in a new air conditioning unit, water heater, beds, and giving the facility a fresh coat of paint.

Scott Mercer said the renovations should be finished in time for the first group of summer guests. The camp already has registered 350 guests but still has 300 openings to fill.

"The phones have begun to ring again after months of nothing," Mercer said. "We offer great programming that is affordable; and we can cater to small and large churches."

"The shutdown put us into hibernation, and we questioned whether we would open," he said. "Now we are starting completely over. I am ecstatic people are back on campus because it was the worst thing not to be able to minister to people. But we are gearing up to share the Gospel again which is ultimately what we are all about."

See CAMPS, page 9

Ban from page one

York Times as an effort to redefine the birth of the United States from a fight for liberty in 1776 to an expansion of slavery in

1619 (when a British ship brought 20 Africans captive to Jamestown).

-- "Critical race theory" and "intersectionality" are both rooted in Marxist thought ("dethrone God") and argue that white supremacy is persistent in our country. The first condemns all human systems (law, education, finance) as oppressing people of color, and the second claims all human relationships (intersections of lives) discriminate against people of color, especially LGBT women. Both are used to declare all whites as racists whether they are aware of it (intentional in their actions) or not.

In the abstract of the proposed law Garofalo explained the two intentions of the measure are to ensure that (1) each school "fosters a learning environment and workplace that is respectful of all students and employees," and (2) no training (for students or employees) "teaches, advocates, acts upon, or promotes divisive concepts, ... relative to race and sex."



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Royal Ambassadors 'cowboy up' for Christ

By **Brian Blackwell**
Message staff writer

WOODWORTH, La. (LBM) – Eighty young men from nine churches were joined by 43 adult leaders for the Royal Ambassador Congress, April 9-10, at Tall Timbers Baptist Conference Center in Woodworth. The theme for the weekend was "Cowboy Church," using a creative take on Psalm 20:7.

The weekend featured Paul Daily, founder of Wild Horse Ministries in Trout, and his daughter Lenora, who used the taming of an unbroken wild horse to help present the Gospel.

Throughout the two-day camp, the youngsters grew deeper in their faith while learning how to rope cattle and ride a mechanical bull, organizers said. By the closing session, nine of the boys had made salvation decisions.

Mike Collie, an RA consultant for Louisiana Baptists, said the decisions resulted from seeds being intention-

ally planted, cultivated, and harvested throughout the weekend.

"It was so exciting to be able to host an event after a year of COVID," he said. "Using horses from Paul Daily's Wild Horse Ministry, the boys and their dads got to see what it meant to submit to God's will. The boys also learned how cowboy churches are helping to further the Gospel in their communities."

"The true highlights of the weekend, though, were the decisions made by those boys to follow Christ," Collie continued.

During the Friday evening session, members of the Cross Branded Cowboy Church, Pineville, supervised the boys in hands-on activities that included archery, horse and sheep rides, goat tying, roping, bull whipping, a wild west shooting gallery and mechanical bull riding.

Missionaries taught breakout sessions the next day, and participants compet-

ed in the annual Pinewood Derby and Soap Box races.

Another highlight of the weekend was the awards presentation, which honored young men for their character and service:

-- Lincoln Wilkerson, Trinity Baptist Church, Natchitoches, and Lucas Watts, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Ruston, were honored as Crusaders of the Year;

-- Jonathan Kimball, First Baptist Church in Lafayette, garnered the Lad of the Year award; and

-- Ben Burgess, First Baptist Church, Lafayette, was honored as Leader of the Year.

During the Pinewood Derby competition, participants competed in a series of heats to determine a winner for each grade level.

The winners advanced to the finals to determine the top three overall champions. RAs and leaders also took part in a Soap Box Derby race.



Brian Blackwell photo

Bryson Worley, a fifth grader from First Baptist Church in Columbia, practices his roping skills during the recent Royal Ambassador Congress.

PINEWOOD DERBY: 1. Nolan Hogan, Temple Baptist Church, Ruston; 2. Henry Campbell, First Baptist Church, Lafayette; 3. Judah Pritchard, First Baptist Church, Lafayette.

SOAP BOX DERBY: RAs -- 1. Britton Burgess, First Baptist Church, Lafayette; 2. Quitman Baptist Church (team award). **Leaders** -- 1. Gabe Ho-

gan, Temple Baptist Church, Ruston; 2. Jeremy Coleman, Temple Baptist Church, Ruston; 3. Chad Newsom, Temple Baptist Church, Ruston.

MOST UNUSUAL DESIGN (Soap Box Derby): 1. Quitman Baptist Church; 2. First Baptist Church, Columbia; 3. First Baptist Church, Lafayette.

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By Staff

Louisiana College news

PINEVILLE, La. (LCNews) -- Louisiana College is the first institution in Central Louisiana to offer a loan repayment assistance program (LRAP) to all incoming freshmen starting in the fall of 2021.

The LRAP can help graduates repay their federal student, parent PLUS and

private alternative loans if their income after graduation is below \$43,000.

Louisiana College has partnered with Ardeo Education Solutions to offer the LRAP at no cost to students or families. The assistance will continue until the graduate's income exceeds \$43,000 or until their loans are completely paid off.

"We understand, especially during this difficult time

the huge financial challenges facing families," said President Rick Brewer. "LC has always pursued strategies to ensure education is accessible and affordable, and this initiative underscores our commitment to students and families seeking an excellent Christian education."

For more information about the program or to sign-up, visit myLRAP.org.

PawPaw from page 3

Hurricane Laura. Likewise, they served food and water to area families impacted by the other major storms that struck in 2020.

Even the children and youth have participated in missions through delivery of meals to homebound individuals and mailing hand-

written cards to area nursing home residents, he said.

"I have seen our church grow closer together and be a light to this community," Nolde said. "We have grown spiritually and numerically during this last year and worked together more."

Seeing an increase in attendance is always a good thing," he said, "but witnessing your members develop a deeper love for Christ and their community is always exciting."



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Vernon Baptist Association Director of Missions Morris Goins baptizes his great-granddaughter, Kaylee Pew at Canaan Baptist in Leesville March 28.



FEARLESS
Teen Camp 2021

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
Psalm 27:1

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
JAKE WHISNANT

WORSHIP BY:
ETHAN MCNELLY & NEW DAY

June 7th-11th // Grades 6 - 12

Camps from page 6

BETHANY CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER

Bethany Camp and Conference Center, which hosted 360 people combined from two summer camps in 2020 and four Disciple Now weekends and other retreats this year, is expecting to welcome many more guests to the campground this summer.

Trey Miller, interim camp director, said his team greatly appreciates the volunteers who renovated the facilities and are so grateful to churches who gave financial and emotional support during a difficult season. He also was overjoyed that returns on investments with the Louisiana Baptist Foundation helped cover some of the construction costs.

"I've been here 10 years and this last year was terrible," Miller said. "The kids bring all the energy, and in 2020 there was no energy. I am so excited the kids are coming back."

"Despite what was a hard year, we were encouraged by such a strong community base," he continued. "So many of the churches were struggling in the months after the shutdowns, but they still kept us afloat."

The camp has signed up 275 campers but has room to host 325 more.

JUDSON RETREAT CENTER

Judson Retreat Center in St. Francisville took camp on the road in 2020, engaging 430 youngsters at 15 locations in June and July. Staffers provided a three-hour camp experience that included Bible study, mission lessons, water/recreational games,

a portable "ga-ga" pit, and horseback rides using three of Judson's camp animals.

"We knew that we couldn't host groups overnight," Justin Busby said. "We also knew God brought us here to do ministry, so we couldn't just sit around and do nothing. Most of the kids at the day camps were attending the first event since the shut down and were so excited to be able to be out and do something. Even in the middle of the pandemic, we reminded them God is in control, and if He is in control, it's all good."

Busby, who is the camp director, said the ministry team is excited about the more than 200 guests who have registered to attend camp this summer, and added that 230 spots still are available.

SEEKER SPRINGS BAPTIST CAMP

After hosting 75 people at two daytime camps and another 20 families for afternoons of fishing and swimming during the summer of 2020, Seeker Springs Baptist Camp in Eros is gearing up to welcome a full slate of camps this year, although just 140 of the 400-500 available slots have been filled so far.

"We feel like God has done some great things in the midst of a pandemic, hurricanes and a tornado, and I think He is preparing us for what He wants us to do in the future," Terry Slawson, camp director, said. "This summer we are training and discipling our summer staff so they can be mission ready for the groups that come in for summer camp."

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CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH of Gardner is seeking a **part-time music director**. Willingness and ability to lead a wide range of styles including Christian classics (hymns) with an appropriate blend of contemporary music. Inquires please reply to: sbaillio@bellsouth.net.

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KILLIAN FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH in Killian, LA is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Please mail résumés to Killian FBC, P O Box 123, Springfield, LA 70462 or email to nicolebbarnum@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church in Choudrant, LA is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send résumés to Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 217, Choudrant, LA 71227 or fbcchoudrant@gmail.com.

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or mail to above address:
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Eola Baptist Church in Bunkie, LA is seeking a bi-vocational pastor. A parsonage is available.
Send résumés to: EBC, P.O. Box 417, Bunkie, LA 71322 or e-mail résumés to mouliere_ms@yahoo.com

BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR
Pelican Baptist Church in Pelican, LA, is seeking a bi-vocational pastor. Please send résumés to Pelican Baptist Church, P.O. Box 108, Pelican, LA 71063 or email to henrytouchton@gmail.com. Parsonage is available.

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YOUTH MINISTER
First Baptist Church in Coushatta, LA, is seeking a full-time youth minister. Email résumés to jnathandavis@yahoo.com or mail to First Baptist Church, P O 465, Coushatta, LA 71019. For more information call 318.932.4023. www.fbccoushatta.com

SEEKING A PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER
First Baptist Church in Mansfield, LA is seeking a part-time worship leader. Applicants must be able to lead various worship styles and coordinate Wednesday p.m. choir practice and Sunday morning worship service with the choir, band and media team. Please mail résumés to: First Baptist Church, Attn: Jill Heard, P. O. Box 983, Mansfield, LA 71052 or email to: jill.heard@firstmansfield.org.

SEEKING A DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS
The Baptist Association of Southeast Louisiana (BASELA) is looking for a Director of Missions to serve as a catalyst for strategic planning, guiding the individual associations within BASELA to develop their own identity, purpose, and strategy for doing associational mission work. Visit basela.org for more information about BASELA. Please send resumes and inquiries to résumés@basela.org

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SEEKING A FULL-TIME OR BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR
Trinity Baptist Church in Oakdale, LA is seeking a bi-vocational or full-time pastor. Please send résumés to: Pastor Search Committee, P O Box 748, Oakdale, LA 71463.



EDITOR'S NOTE: Do you have a Revival, Homecoming, a new pastor, a community outreach or a concert? The Baptist Message would love to share your church news with the rest of the state. It is very easy to do, just send in your information (who, what, where and when) to philip@baptistmessage.com or call 318.449.4345. To get your event in the paper, please submit your information three weeks prior to the event.

ON THE MOVE

■ **Peter E. "Pete" Keough** is the new pastor at Simpson Baptist Church, Simpson.
 ■ **John McCathery** is the new pastor from interim at Ferry Lake Baptist Church, Oil City.
 ■ **Roy Strother** is the new pastor at New Bethel Baptist Church, Arcadia.
 ■ **Gibbie McMillan** from interim to pastor at Taylor Creek Baptist Church, Kentwood.
 ■ **Bobby Daniel** resigns as pastor at First Baptist Church, Vinton.
 ■ **Jay Avance** resigns as pastor of First Baptist Church, Baker and is the new pastor at East Fork Baptist Church, Kentwood.
 ■ **Shelly Clutter** is the new youth minister at Simpson Baptist Church, Simpson.
 ■ **Dana Anika** is the new preschool director at Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville. She will replace **Pam Keith** who has retired from the position.
 ■ **Mike Matthews** is the new music director and **Sacha Matthews** is the new pianist at Rocky Springs Baptist Church, Homer.

HOMECOMING

■ Longview Baptist Church, Deville: **97th Homecoming**, May 2, 10:30 a.m. followed by dinner on the grounds. Speaker: **Leonard Free**. Pastor: Robby Poole
 ■ Beech Springs Baptist Church, Minden: **150th Anniversary**, September 2021. The church is in the process of looking for prior/current members for whom they have lost contact in preparation for its anniversary celebration. Please send name(s), address, phone and email to beechspring-sbs2@suddenlink.net. Pastor: Randy Brown.

REVIVAL

■ Gloster Baptist Church, Gloster: **Hope Revived**, April 26-29, 6:30 p.m. nightly; **Defining Hope, Monday, Speaker: Cliff Estes**. Worship: **Keith and Fontaine Simmons; Living Hope**, Tuesday, Speaker: **Luke Hockenjos**. Worship: **Scotty Blackwell**; Building Hope, Wednesday, Speaker: **Ronny Cates**, Worship: **The MITC Worship team and Keila Cates and Alex Flores; Restoring Hope**, Thursday, Speaker: **Richard Taylor**. Worship: **Caleb and Jenni Ro-**

bison and collective worship teams from previous nights. Pastor: Ron McLellan.

■ Esler Baptist Church, Pineville: **Revival**, April 28-May 2, 6:30 p.m. Evangelist: **Brian Crain**. Worship: **Mike and Debbie Cinereski**. Pastor: Joshua Timothy.
 ■ First Baptist Church, Haughton: **Awaken 2021 Crusade**, May 1-5. May 1 - **Children's Event - FamBlitz Live at the Worship Center**, 6 p.m.; May 2 - Evangelist: **Bill Britt**. Worship: **Jason Lovins Band**, 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; May 3 - **Men's event featuring professional fisherman Clay Dyer**, 6 p.m., Cost: \$10; May 4 - **Women's event featuring Chewbacca Mom Candace Payne**, 6 p.m.; May 5, **Ninja Warrior at Haughton High School Football Stadium with free food and big giveaways**, 5 p.m.; May 5 - Evangelist: **Bill Britt** Worship: **Jason Lovins Band**, 6 p.m. Pastor: Gevan Spinney.
 ■ New Hope Baptist Church DeQuincy: **Revival**, May 2-5; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. nightly. Evangelist: **Sam Moore**. Worship: **We-R-Called**. Pastor: Roland Hebert.
 ■ Bethel Baptist Church, Grand Bois: **Revival**, May 2-5. Evangelist: **Mackey Willis Family**. Pastor: Jimmy Autin.
 ■ First Baptist Church, Gilbert: **Revival**, May 9-12, Evangelist: **Bill Britt**. Pastor: Bubba Ezell.
 ■ Topsy Baptist Church, Lake Charles, **Revival**, May 9-12. Evangelist: **Mackey Willis**. Worship: **Mackey Willis Family**. Pastor: Lloyd Carroll.
 ■ Fellowship Baptist Church, Central: **Revival**, May 16-19. Evangelist: **Mackey Willis**. Pastor: Huey Moak.
 Bethel Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Revival**, May 19-23, 6 p.m. nightly. Speaker: **Grant Bamburg**, pastor Victory Baptist Church, Monroe. Worship: **Mason Granade and Bethel Baptist Praise Band**. Pastor: Dennis Hensley.
 ■ Old Anacoco Baptist Church, Leesville: **Revival**, May 23-26, Sunday, 8 a.m. Monday-Wednesday, 5 p.m. Speaker: **Herman Cramer**. Pastor: Kenneth Hodges.

LAGNIAPPE

■ A **Wurtzler piano** that is in pristine condition is being given away to either a church or individual in need by retired Pastor Bob Galloway. If interested, call 318.473.8803. The piano must be picked up from Galloway's home, which is located 150 Christine Drive, Boyce, La.
 ■ **Larry Baldrige** is available for **pulpit supply**. If interested, call 337.250.3954 or email him at larry.bal01@gmail.com.
 ■ First Baptist Church in Coushatta, LA is seeking a **youth minister**. For more information, please call 318.932.4023 or visit the website at www.fbccoushatta.com.
 ■ Toledo Bend Baptist Resort Ministry, Zwolle: **14th annual Toledo Bend children's fishing derby**, May 1, 9 a.m.-noon at San Miguel Park pavilion for children age 3 to

15 years of age. Participants much bring a fishing pole or rod and reel and bait. Preschoolers must have a parent or guardian present at all times. School-age children groups must have at least one adult for each five children. There will be a complimentary lunch on the grounds. For more information, call Mary Gore at 318.645.6601.

■ Rocky Branch Baptist Church, Farmerville: **Ben Waites in concert**, May 2, 10:30 a.m. Cost: Free. Pastor: Terry Mims.
 ■ Fellowship Baptist Church, Converse: **Jimmy Price in concert**, May 2, 6 p.m. Soft drinks, coffee and desert will be served after the concert. Pastor: Ron Boyer.
 ■ Bethel Baptist Church, Bastrop: **Ben Waites in concert**, May 2, 6 p.m. Pastor: Tim Post.
 ■ First Baptist Church, New Orleans: **FBNO at the Park**, May 2, 5-7 p.m. There will be plenty of food, friends and

fund. Pastor: Chad Gilbert.

■ Cherry Ridge Baptist Church, Bastrop: **Ben Waites in concert**, May 3, 11 a.m. Pastor: Dennis Hackler.
 ■ Woodland Hills Baptist Church, Shreveport: **The Southern Plainsmen Quartet in concert**, May 9, 11 a.m.
 ■ Indian Mound Baptist Church, Greenwell Springs: **Greg Sullivan in concert**, May 16, 10:45 a.m. Special Guest: **Rickey Atkinson**. Pastor: Jim Efferson.
 ■ Trinity Baptist Church, Pumpkin Center: **Greg Sullivan in concert**, May 16, 5 p.m. Special Guest: **Ricky Atkinson**. Pastor: Avery Dixon.
 ■ Victory Baptist Church, Hammond: **Greg Sullivan in concert**, May 23, 10:45 a.m. Pastor: Johnathan Watts.
 ■ Cypress Baptist Church, West Monroe: **The Southern**

Plainsmen Quartet in concert, May 23, 11 a.m. Cost: Free admission. Pastor: Jeff May.

■ Bethel Baptist Church, West Monroe: **The Southern Plainsmen Quartet in concert**, May 23, 6 p.m. Cost: Admission is free, but a service offering will be taken to assist in the group's mission. All are welcome. For more information, call 318.325.5891. Pastor: Dennis Hensley.
 ■ North Monroe Baptist Church, Monroe: **Ben Waites in concert**, May 30, 9 a.m. Pastor: Bill Dye.
 ■ French Corner Baptist Church, Ponchatoula: **Greg Sullivan in concert**, May 30, 11 a.m. Pastor: Eric Hattaway.
 ■ Cross Branded Cowboy Church, Pineville: **The Southern Plainsmen Quartet in concert**, May 31, 7 p.m. Pastor: Steve Speer.

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Scripture Crypto

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GJX NPK HFABLK H GJX FPBKQ TABKHNH PKGAX BN, GJX

HYSWPN PYI NPKR UBWPN XKHNAYR PBU; QYA NPKR

QKGAKX PBU, LKFGSHK GOO NPK TKYTOK IGH

GHNYJBHPKX GN PBH XYFNABJK.

UGAE KOKCKJ:KBWPNKKJ

Clues:
X = D; G = A

Answer to March 25 Scripture Crypto:
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Louisiana Baptist Children's Home & Family Ministries

Lawmakers address election integrity, gambling, fairness in women's sports

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

BATON ROUGE, La. (LBM) – Although 2021 is a budget year for the legislature, which by policy limits lawmakers to submitting only five bills each on other matters, civic and social issues are poised to dominate the agenda during the regular session which convened April 12.

FAIRNESS IN SPORTS

Sen. Beth Mizell, a member of First Baptist Church, Franklinton, submitted S.B. 156 "Fairness in Women's Sports Act" as an attempt to level the playing field for women athletes, according to statements she made to the *Baptist Message*.

The bill is in response to the H.R. 5 "Equality Act," passed by the U.S. House and awaiting a vote



Submitted photo

The Louisiana House and Senate are expected to take up a full range of bills this budget year that include a number submitted by Louisiana Baptist lawmakers. Among the issues that will be considered are election integrity, gambling and fairness in women's sports.

in the Senate, that would allow biological males to compete as female ath-

letes. Regardless of the outcome of that legislation, an executive man-

date promoting transgender rights that was issued by President Joe Biden

calls for a review of federal policies that likely will produce the same result.

In opposing such changes in Louisiana, Mizell drew heavily from Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 in drafting her protections for women athletes. This legal precedent ensures that women receive equal opportunities with men to participate in sports and receive athletic scholarships.

Likewise, she relied on science to point out the biological advantages that male physiology offers in sports because of strength, speed, and endurance differences from having greater muscle mass and bone density, as well as larger hearts and lungs.

Using detailed language, her legislation prevents biological males from competing as girls.

See **LAWMAKERS**, page 13

258 people indicated a decision for Christ in the first quarter of 2021 through our partnership with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

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Lawmakers from page 12

CHILD PROTECTION

Rep. Gabe Firment, a member of the First Baptist Church, Pollock, also is relying on science as well as a patient's right to "informed consent" to champion H.B. 575 "Vulnerable Child Protection Act."

The proposed law prevents any procedure or treatment, as well as counseling, for any child simply "for the purpose of altering the appearance or affirm a minor's gender or sex because perception is inconsistent with the minor's sex."

His legislation is presented amid a growing movement in the United States to subject children to permanent physical changes in response to mental conflicts about their biological sex.

Importantly, chemical treatments cause body changes that are as irreversible as surgery:

-- Puberty blockers stop hormone-induced biological changes in the vocal chords, breast tissue, and facial structure.

-- Meanwhile, taking

cross hormones (to transition to the opposite sex) reduces fertility (a factor later in life if a person wants to have a biological child), and there are unknowns about the long-lasting effects on bone density and brain development. Also, there are higher risks for heart disease, diabetes, and blood clots (for those who start estrogen), and the long-term cancer risk for these children is unknown.

Firment told the *Baptist Message* that children are mentally and emotionally unable to make decisions with such lifelong consequences, and thus cannot give "consent" to either chemical or surgical transition.

Key research supports his concerns.

A landmark study collected data from 9.7 million Swedes, identifying 2,679 individuals who had been diagnosed with gender dysphoria and 1,000 persons who had gone under the knife to alter their sex organs or related body parts. The American Journal of Psychiatry reported that in the final analysis there were



Rep. Gabe Firment

no mental health benefits to these patients (e.g. changing physical appearance did not resolve the person's gender dysphoria and related anxiety and mood disorders).

ELECTION INTEGRITY

The 2020 presidential election raised awareness about the potential vulnerability of the election process. Moreover, the Democrat-led U.S. House passed H.R. 1 "For the People Act" which would essentially federalize state election systems. The U.S. Constitution Article 1, Section 4 grants the power to regulate congressional elections to the states, but also allows Congress to alter

these regulations.

Harvard University conducted an analysis of election integrity across the country and Louisiana is the highest ranked state in the South and 12th in the nation, according to information from Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin. Still, several key bills have been submitted, seeking to improve the election process.

Some of these proposed laws address controversial issues that arose during the federal election: poll watchers (H.B. 599), voting machines (H.B. 653, S.B. 221) absentee

and early voting (H.B. 286, H.B. 388), and ballot drop boxes (S.B. 224).

However, one that should garner bipartisan support is H.B. 167 by Rep. Mike Johnson, a member of First Baptist Church, Pineville.

His legislation seeks to add integrity to the election process by strengthening the guidelines for removing deceased individuals from voter registration rolls. Specifically, the bill would require timely



Rep. Mike Johnson

See **LAWMAKERS**, page 15

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ANALYSIS: THE TRUTH ABOUT GAMBLING

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Late last year, *The Advocate* reported John Alario, the immediate past president of the state Senate, as saying that it “would take a crowbar” to get rid of gambling in the state now.

Unfortunately, he is right.

Too many budgets in the state have been tied to gambling taxes as a key source of revenue – revenues that have been flagging for at least a decade (aside from the nearly billion-dollar pandemic losses in 2020), causing regular budget crises for the state, local governments, schools, and law enforcement.

Furthermore, there is a whitewashing about gam-

bling when budget notes are developed in the legislature. Potential tax revenue payouts are touted in testimony to legislators, but there is a near blackout of information about the actual costs to taxpayers on the expense side of the ledger.

Importantly, public discussions and policy decisions about gambling in this state ignore the crippling human costs of gambling as well.

CASINOS

In general, casinos are not created for casual entertainment. Instead, they are designed to exploit the weakest among us.

Most are windowless facilities that offer no clocks --

to avoid triggering a patron's sense of time. It is part of the overall design of casinos

to be all-absorbing experiences so that customers do not leave until after having

exhausted all their money.

See GAMBLING, page 15



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Gambling from page 14

This carefully crafted atmosphere does not negatively impact the casual gambler -- the person who comes for dinner and a show as well as some "entertainment" at the slot machines or card tables. Research from Canada shows that **75 percent of casino patrons** in one study were recreational players, but that these guests **were tapped for only 4 percent of casino gambling revenues**.

However, as for **problem and pathological gamblers** (who make up only **4 percent of U.S. adults**), it is a different story. Slot machines alone provide 65-80 percent of casino gambling revenues, and **addicted gamblers account for 40-60 percent of these gains**.

It is a pernicious industry.

Now, casinos also are marketing themselves to the elderly. Already, half of patrons are 50 years old or more; and, increasingly, casinos are advertising to attract those 70 years old and above to exploit their boredom and fixed incomes.

LOST OPPORTUNITY

Conservatively, Loui-

sianans lose \$3.4 billion of personal wealth each year due to all sources of gambling, according to the annual report by the Louisiana Gaming Control Board. These are fortunes that are not passed on to families to lift the next generation;

Lawmakers from page 13

changes, setting a three-day limit for names to be deleted upon a voter registrar receiving a certified copy of a death certificate or upon the Department of State being alerted by the Louisiana Department of Health's monthly report on parish deaths (when supported by three pieces of corroborating identifying information).

Additionally, Johnson's bill would require registrars as well as the Department of State to search obituaries for possible registered voters whose names need to be removed from the rolls.

GAMBLING

A gambling initiative is on the agenda, again, this time to allow a Shreveport riverboat casino to relocate to St. Tammany Parish.

or that are not invested in businesses that would benefit the state for years to come.

Moreover, there is more red ink for Louisiana taxpayers that is totally ignored in state and local budget discussions.

Indeed, the reality is that the gambling industry costs taxpayers almost double the tax revenues that are gener-

ated. The \$700 million dollars or so in gambling taxes recorded on the revenue side of the ledger are offset by at least **\$1.25 billion in red ink** that is not accounted for on the other side of the book. Research from Baylor University indicates that Louisiana's **96,000 pathological gamblers** cost our state about \$800 million per year. On top

of that a North Carolina study suggests that **another 179,000 problem Louisiana gamblers** add a minimum of \$450 million in costs to taxpayers, too.

This enormous deficit does not include direct payments to families from the government (TANF, SNAP, WIC,

See GAMBLING, page 16

S.B. 213 calls for a referendum in St. Tammany Parish, Oct. 9, to allow Peninsula Pacific Entertainment, a Los Angeles, California, company, to build a casino complex on Lake Pontchartrain within the Lakeshore Marina. The same company fail in its 2018 bid to move to Tangipahoa Parish. A noteworthy development since then is that riverboat casinos no longer are required to be operable paddlewheels and are permitted to expand onto land within 1,200 feet of their licensed berths.

Slidell residents, led by

the faith community, already have launched a campaign against the relocation, citing irreparable damage to "the good life" they now enjoy in their community.

Importantly, research supports their claims:

-- A National Association of Realtors study found that a casino hurts property values in the local market, dropping home prices as much as 10 percent.

-- Data from the Louisiana Gaming Control Board appears to show that casinos cause a long-term flow of money out of the commu-

nity.

-- Finally, casinos imperil public health according to multiple studies that conclude casinos cause gambling addiction to triple after opening.

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Gambling from page 15

etc. -- often referred to as "welfare") that result from indebtedness, bankruptcy, and family fragmentation due to gambling among these combined 275,000 gambling addicts. Likewise, these expenses do not include the costs pushed down to churches and other ministries, who in large part pick up the pieces of broken lives and fractured families by providing counseling, groceries, lodging, utilities, and clothing, etc.

HOPELESS HERITAGE

There also is a generational curse that is taking place within our Louisiana homes.

Gambling has been legal in Louisiana for only 30 years (lottery, video poker, 1991, and casinos, 1993). Now, a study commissioned by the state legislature, "The Impact of Gambling in Louisiana," completed by the Cecil P. Picard Center for Child Development & Lifelong Learning of the University of Louisiana at

Lafayette, tells us that **40.6 % of 6th graders, 44.1 % of 8th graders, 40.8 % of sophomores and 34.4 % of seniors gamble each year** (sports bets, cards, bingo for cash, dice, games of chance).

Overall, Louisiana has the fourth highest incidence of problem gambling in the country, while ranking only 25th in population. But given the growing gambling behavior among our children that troubling news is only going to worsen.

CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

Two final points:
-- Casinos do not make

good neighbors. According to the National Association of Realtors, **the impact of casinos on neighboring property values is "unambiguously negative."**

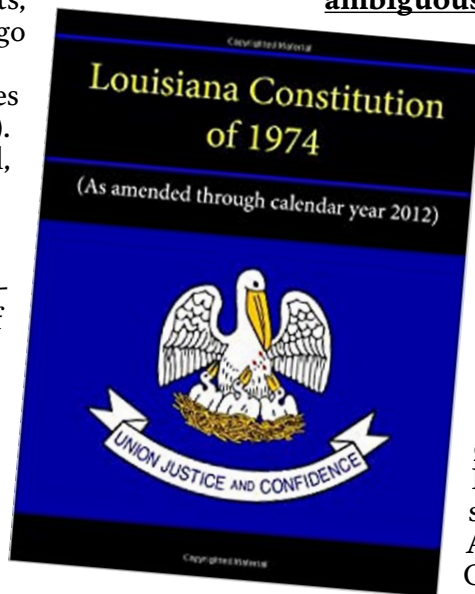
Like- wise, the Institute of American Values found that **very few businesses "pop up" around casinos.**

For instance, in Atlantic City the casino area desperate trouble sustaining even a single grocery store."

-- Gambling is not an economic engine. In Louisiana, prior to the pandemic, **12 of 15 riverboat casinos lost money**, according to the LGCB. Only the three Lake

Charles casinos have been profitable -- and that is because they draw patrons from Houston. But the Shreveport casinos used to draw customers from East Texas until new tribal casinos were opened in Oklahoma, and these now capture this market. Likewise, **Harrah's in New Orleans** once produced more than **\$90 million in taxes per year**, but that amount **dropped to \$63 million in 2019**, in part because of newer and bigger casinos opening in Mississippi.

The Louisiana Constitution states specifically, "Gambling shall be defined and suppressed by the legislature." In keeping with our state's dark history with gambling, lawmakers have chosen instead to reclassify gambling as "gaming" and to pursue expansion of it -- to the detriment of economic growth in Louisiana and in total disregard to the havoc wrought upon the most vulnerable among us.



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