



TIMES-PICAYUNE COLUMN – May 25, 2008

Contact: Emily Miller

Phone: 985.892.3216 ext. 23

E-mail: emily@sttammanycommerce.org

Many will agree that continued recovery and rebuilding in Southeast Louisiana is the greatest challenge of our generation and history will remember us on how well we performed. Very few economic regions have experienced the transformation we have seen in the last three years. Our chamber is fully aware that discussions, solutions and action are needed and we have embraced our leadership position. In this latter half of May, our chamber events have focused on informing people on the north shore's new identity and our local leaders that will guide us as we move forward as a recognized region.

This past week, together with the East St. Tammany and Hammond chambers of commerce, we hosted a regional meeting for Blueprint Louisiana (www.blueprintlouisiana.org), a citizen-driven effort to identify and implement essential changes to fundamentally improve Louisiana. Its progress and accomplishments during the 2008 legislative session were highlighted at this encouraging and optimistic event.

On the very same afternoon, our chamber of commerce together with chambers from Bogalusa, Denham Springs, East St. Tammany, Hammond, Lacombe, Madisonville, Ponchatoula, and the Southeastern Louisiana University Alumni Association gathered at the Capitol to bring the north shore's message to legislators from across the state during the "North Shore Focus" event. Senators, representatives, statewide officials and chamber leaders attended discussions on how to further facilitate regional collaboration and focus on needs of the north shore region.

The north shore's identity has significantly changed as both the I-12 Alliance and the 10-12 corridor coalition recognize our resources and the value we play as a partner in these economic initiatives. While coalitions have been built, continuous efforts and communications will inform, enhance and solidify them. With this in mind, the chamber excitedly plans to host Mayor-President Kip Holden of Baton Rouge at this Wednesday's monthly luncheon, where he will be the featured speaker on such topics.

As a chamber, we encourage and see potential in our new leaders as we continue our quest for a better Louisiana and north shore region, but time must be allowed for seeds planted daily by leaders of our business community and our government to bear fruit. We all have a vested interest in what happens in surrounding cities, parishes and our state and as a chamber we hope to continue to promote opportunities to strengthen our bonds with other regions and help create a part of history well done.

###

David Guzan is the St. Tammany West Chamber of Commerce's 2008 Chairman of the Board and CEO of Fairway Medical Center. He can be contacted at info@sttammanycommerce.org.