

# Travel Talk

News from Louisiana's Other Side - Shreveport-Bossier Convention & Tourist Bureau



Mar.-  
Apr.  
2009

## Bassmaster, Mardi Gras Huge Successes

The Feb. 20-22 weekend was monumental and record shattering for Shreveport-Bossier - in more ways than one. Not only did the 2009 Bassmaster Classic draw its largest crowd yet, the second successful week of Mardi Gras celebrations also exceeded expectations.

The Classic lured more than 137,000 fans to Shreveport-Bossier for the three-day event, breaking attendance records last set in New Orleans by more than 55,000.

"By all metrics, including the compelling content that was delivered to fans worldwide, the Bassmaster Classic was an absolute success," said Tom Ricks, vice president and general manager of BASS.

Among other shattered records, on Bassmaster.com, BASSInsider.com and ESPN.com, fans generated more than 12.3 million page views.

On-site media also included ESPN Radio's *Mike & Mike in the Morning*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *Miami Herald* and *Austin American-Statesman*, among many others.

"(I) just wanted to congratulate you folks on a great Bassmaster Clas-



Credit: ESPNOUTDOORSMEDIA.COM

Both the 2009 Bassmaster Classic and Mardi Gras Bash events broke all-time attendance records.

sic," said writer Andy Crawford, who covered the event for *Bassmaster* and *BASS Times* magazines. "All the BASS folks could talk about was how great the event turned out. I was stunned by the attendance."

The crowd at the annual Mardi Gras Bash, hosted by the tourist bureau, also saw outstanding attendance numbers.

More than 400 attendees filled the tent party along the riverfront in downtown Shreveport. The crowd included six bus groups, two convention groups and guests from ESPN. The excitement of the second weekend bash mirrored the success

of the first weekend, which saw more than 300 guests from three bus tours, two convention groups and a media tour group. About 45 volunteers assisted with the event.

"Both weekends were successful as we broke all-time attendance records," said Tourism Sales Manager Erica Howard. "However, the event wouldn't have been possible without the support of our industry partners and volunteers. Tour operators are already booking group tours for 2010."

## 2009 Bureau Board Seated

The Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau welcomed new board members at the start of the year, and named Marty Young, of the Pioneer Heritage Center, as chairman.

New to the 2009 board are:

- Ray Ferland, of Holiday Inn Bossier, appointed by the Shreveport-Bossier Hotel Lodging Association;
- Jerry Kolniak, of Notini's Restaurant, appointed by the Louisiana Restaurant Association;
- Sarah Parsons, of Eldorado Resort Casino, appointed by the Shreveport-Bossier Hotel Lodging Association;
- Keisha Shields, of Hampton Inn - Bossier, appointed by the Shreveport-Bossier Hotel Lodging Association.

## Dates to Remember:

### Strategic Sales Meeting

**3-31**, 11 a.m., SBCTB Board Room.

**4-28**, 11 a.m., SBCTB Board Room.

### Shreveport-Bossier Hotel & Lodging Association

**TBA**, Information: Scott Douglas, 752-1112.

### Attractions Association

**3-11**, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Grant Workshop Lunch, The Robinson Film Center.

### Louisiana Restaurant Assn.

**TBA**, Information: Gretchen Boothe, 425-4548.

### Hospitality Breakfast

**4-1**, 8 a.m., Sonic at Bass Pro Shops.

# Calendar of Events

## MARCH/APRIL

- 3/6** Bossier-Shreveport Mudbugs vs. Wichita Thunder. CenturyTel Center.
- 3/7** Bossier-Shreveport Mudbugs vs. Mississippi RiverKings. CenturyTel Center.
- 3/7** Adult Wire Wrapping Workshop. Barnwell Garden & Art Center.
- 3/7-8** New Twin Eagles Rebirth Traditional Powwow. State Fairgrounds Exhibit Building.
- 3/9** Pulp Fiction/Samuel L. Jackson Day. Robinson Film Center.
- 3/9** The Forum presents "Free Will and Neuroscience." Centenary College.
- 3/10** New Kids On The Block. CenturyTel Center.
- 3/10-17** Wine Tasting 101. LSUS.
- 3/13-22** Julius Caesar. East Bank Theatre.
- 3/15** Bossier-Shreveport Mudbugs vs. Rio Grande Valley Killer Bees. CenturyTel Center.
- 3/17** St. Patrick's Day: Goin' Green. Sci-Port: Louisiana's Science Center.
- 3/19-22** Sweethearts. Louisiana State University in Shreveport Theatre.
- 3/20** Bossier-Shreveport Mudbugs vs. Mississippi RiverKings. CenturyTel Center.
- 3/20** Star Party! See the Vanishing Rings of Saturn. Sci-Port: Louisiana's Science Center.
- 3/21** Bossier-Shreveport Mudbugs vs. Corpus Christi Ice Rays. CenturyTel Center.
- 3/27** For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf. Louisiana State Exhibit Museum.
- 3/26-4/5** Blackbird. Louisiana State University in Shreveport Theatre.
- 4/3** Movies & Moonbeams presents Fried Green Tomatoes. RiverView Park.
- 4/4** CORK: A Red River Revel Wine Event. Festival Plaza.
- 4/11** EarthKind Rose Symposium and Rose Sale. Gardens of the American Rose Center.
- 4/13** Nickelback with Seether and Saving Abel. CenturyTel Center.
- 4/16** Birds of Louisiana with Mac Hardy. Louisiana State Exhibit Museum.
- 4/17-26** Holiday in Dixie Festival. Festival Plaza.
- 4/17** Snow White. Shreveport Symphony. Riverview Hall.
- 4/25-26** "Shop Til You Drop" Arts, Craft and Gift Show. Bossier Civic Center.
- 4/30** The Drowsy Chaperone. Strand Theatre.



Be sure to submit your  
Shreveport-Bossier events regularly at  
[www.ShreveportBossierFunGuide.com](http://www.ShreveportBossierFunGuide.com)

# Your Bureau at Work For You



Kathy Melancon  
Product Development/  
Research Manager

Vice President of  
Tourism Marketing  
**Kelly Wells** and Product  
Development/Research  
Manager **Kathy  
Melancon** traveled  
with local musicians to  
Memphis, Tenn., Feb.  
17-22, to meet with  
Folk Alliance Festival

representatives.

Traveling with Kathy were such headlin-



Pat Gill  
Internet/Systems  
Manger

ers as band Dirtfoot,  
Victoria Williams and  
city ambassador James  
Burton.

Internet/Systems  
Manager **Pat Gill** and  
Public Relations/Social  
Media Manager **Tarah  
Holland** will attend  
the Social Media for

Communicators Conference, March 10-13,  
in Las Vegas, Nev.

## Guests Give Hotels Internet Reviews

What are your guests saying after they leave your lodging property? You may think you hear every complaint, but you probably don't. That doesn't mean that guests who were dissatisfied are not registering their complaints – they're just using the Internet to broadcast it to the rest of the world instead of coming straight to you.

Forrester Research reports that of the American travelers who research their trips online, about a third read reviews written by fellow travelers. Among travelers who book hotels online, those reviews have prompted a third to change their travel plans. So you can see why it's important for you to know what's being said about your business.

The good news is that you often have access to their online comments, and this gives you a chance to respond and make amends. The worst thing you can do is to ignore the bad reviews of your business. Imagine that a guest had the kind of experience that inspired him to leave this review:

"Hated this hotel" - I agree with the bad reviews on this site. The hotel staff was incompetent. Room charges were incorrect. Had to move to two



The worst thing that hoteliers can do is ignore bad reviews of their lodging properties. Most online travel review sites allow you to respond.

different rooms due to the rooms falling apart.

Most online travel review sites allow you to respond to the review. If the complaint is legitimate, admit it and tell the reviewer how you would like to make it up to them.

Even if you've investigated the complaint and found that the re-

view is an extreme exaggeration, explain that most of your guests find your services satisfactory, and express your regrets that they had a negative experience. In any case, invite them back and ask them to give you another chance.

Remember – you're not speaking only to the reviewer. Everyone who reads the review is also watching to see how you manage unhappy customers. Chances are, if they believe that you're committed to your customers' satisfaction, they'll give you a chance.

**About a third of American travelers, who research their trips online, read reviews written by fellow travelers.**

- Forrester Research



# Convention Calendar - March/April

Date	Event	Hotel
3/06- 3/07	Red Line Cheer - Open National Championship	Hilton Hotel
3/17- 3/19	Louisiana Association of School Business Officials - Spring Conference	DiamondJacks Casino and Resort
3/18- 3/21	Harley Owners Group State Rally - HOG Rally	Best Western Chateau Suite Hotel DiamondJacks
3/25- 3/28	Air Force Sergeants Association - Air Force Sergeants Annual Meeting	Holiday Inn Shreveport West
3/25- 3/27	Women of Faith - Event	Hilton Hotel & Shreveport Convention Center
3/31- 4/02	Louisiana Assembly on School Based Health Care	Hilton Hotel
4/02- 4/03	American Business Women's Association - Spring Conference	Sam's Town Hotel & Casino Shreveport
4/03- 4/05	Louisiana Retailers Association	Horseshoe Casino & Hotel
4/03	Regional Career Fair	Hilton Hotel
4/08- 4/11	Omega Psi Phi District 9 Conference	Hilton Hotel
4/13- 4/14	Mustangs Across America - 45 Year Anniversary	Rodeway Inn & Suites
4/16- 4/18	Louisiana Parent Teacher Association	Hilton Hotel
4/16- 4/17	Louisiana Urological Society	Sam's Town Hotel & Casino Shreveport
4/16- 4/18	Shreveport Kennel Club Dog Show	Hilton Hotel
4/16- 4/18	USA Weightlifting National Collegiate Championship	Clarion Hotel Shreveport
4/21- 4/24	Louisiana Society of Professional Surveyors	Clarion Hotel Shreveport

## Retire Bossier Hosts Forum; Louisiana North Recognized

The tourist bureau and the City of Bossier will host a **Retire Bossier Informational Community Forum** at 4 p.m., March 11, in the Barksdale Room at the Bossier Civic Center.

The forum, which is free and open to the public, will provide information about Bossier City's designation as one of 11 certified retirement communities in Louisiana. ■

**The Louisiana North Coalition** received the Tourism Campaign of the Year Award at the Louisiana Travel Promotion Association's annual industry summit, Jan. 20-22, in Marksville.

"The unified voice of north and central Louisiana makes it much more exciting to all aspects of the travel industry," Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu said



The Louisiana North Coalition was named Tourism Campaign of the Year Award at the annual LTPA Summit, Jan. 20-22, in Marksville.

recently of the organization.

Louisiana North is a marketing coalition that's made up of the state's 29 uppermost parishes, including more than 80 cities. The organization's mission is to promote the unique cultural and historical heritage of the entire region while promoting economic development as it relates to tourism.

"North Louisiana has a rich base of assets and resources to make the entire region a great destination," said Louisiana North President Kelly Wells. "The area's wealth is also seen through its impact on the state's economy."

With more than 17,500 hotel rooms, North Louisiana generates a combined \$1 billion economic impact for the state, Wells said.

For more information, visit [www.ExploreLouisianaNorth.org](http://www.ExploreLouisianaNorth.org). ■

# Industry Briefs

## Need Money In These Tough Economic Times

The Grant Workshop, hosted by the Shreveport-Bossier Attractions Association, will be held from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., March 11, at The Robinson Film Center. Sharon Calcotte, with the Louisiana Office of Tourism, will share information with attractions on how to write and secure grants. Other featured speakers will be Jim Montgomery with Beaird Foundation, Liz LaBorde with Shreveport-Bossier Community Foundation and Pam Atchison with the Shreveport Regional Arts Council. The cost is \$10 and includes lunch. Please RSVP to Kathy Melancon at 429-0654.

## New Homewood Suites Welcomes General Manager

Tom Lubbe is the general manager at the recently opened Homewood Suites by Hilton Hotel at 5485 Financial Plaza in Shreveport. As a hospitality industry professional for 25 years, Lubbe has worked in various positions in hotels from Alaska to Florida.

## Hilton Shreveport Has New Catering Sales Manager

Brandi Burns is the new catering sales manager for Hilton Shreveport. Burns was previously the hotel's sales coordinator.



Convention & Tourist Bureau  
629 Spring Street  
Shreveport, LA 71101

# Board of Directors

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\*Appointing  
Organization