

i m a g i n e

A publication for all Iberville residents by your government leaders

Iberville

SEPTEMBER, 2010



Ready to turn the shovel at the ground-breaking are, from left, Parish Council Member Howard Oubre, State Representatives Karen St. Germain and Elton Aubert, Chamber Director Hank Grace, Gov. Bobby Jindal, SNF President Peter Nichols, Council Member Warren "T-Notchie" Taylor, Parish President J. Mitchell Ourso, Jr., Gary Ryals of SNF, former Gov. Mike Foster, SNF Site Manager Brian Soucy and Parish Council Chair Matt Jewell.

SNF Flopam jobs, economic impact touted in ground-breaking

SNF Flopam, the latest big economic development win for Iberville Parish, broke ground in a ceremony including Gov. Bobby Jindal and former Gov. Mike Foster, on August

23. The 800-acre site is located next to Shintech on River Road between Plaquemine and White Castle.

The company is expected to employ 500 people with estimated

\$57,000 salaries plus benefits, and 100 contractors once it is fully operational by 2015. It will hire 250 contractors for the construction.

"I intend to hold SNF accountable to hiring the people of Iberville first," said Parish President J. Mitchell Ourso, Jr. "I want a job fair held in the near future by SNF, the Chamber and the parish to give residents the first opportunity to fill jobs."

An LSU economic analysis of the facility concludes that it will provide an additional 900 indirect jobs, and will provide a \$3.7 billion impact for the state between 2010 and 2025, including \$30 million in local taxes. During the ceremony, Gov. Jindal said the project was listed as one of the top 15 corporate investments in the country by

Trade & Industry magazine.

Peter Nichols, president of SNF Flopam Holding Company, noted that the Plaquemine project is its "largest greenfield investment in the history of the company." Nichols said the company decided to locate in Iberville because of the proximity of raw materials, support by local and state government, infrastructure, the quality of the labor pool, and state's commitment to workforce training.

Critical factors in getting the facility was adjacent Shintech's agreement to allow SNF to run a rail line across its property, and the residents of the Ella Road community agreeing to be bought out by SNF.

Ourso, Jr. said the residents of the Ella Road community were skeptical

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"I intend to hold SNF accountable to hiring the people of Iberville first."

Parish President J. Mitchell Ourso, Jr.

Honor Your Veteran or Active Military on The IBERVILLE WALL OF VETERANS!

WHAT IS IT?
A wall display of photographs of veterans and active military with ties to Iberville Parish. It will be on display at the Iberville Salute to Veterans event on Veterans Day, November 11, at the Iberville Veterans Memorial.

HOW IT WORKS
Bring your favorite photograph of your veteran or military person, preferably in military attire, to one of three locations for scanning. Photographs will be scanned while you wait. **If framed, the photo must be taken out of the frame prior to being brought for scanning. Photos can be no larger than 8 X 10 size for scanning.**

Veterans or active military are not required to be residents of Iberville to be placed on the Wall display as long as they have some tie to Iberville, for example they have family or friends who love or work here, were born here or lived here, married a local resident, etc...

Bring your veteran's photo in for scanning between September 20 and October 2!

WHERE TO BRING PHOTO

Iberville Parish Library in Plaquemine:
Monday – Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is located at 24605 J. Gerald Berret Blvd. in Plaquemine.

Iberville Parish Library in east Iberville:
Monday – Wednesday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday 8 a.m. to noon. It is located at 5715 Monticello Street in St. Gabriel.

Iberville Visitors Center in north Iberville:
Monday – Sunday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. It is located on La. Hwy. 77 next to the interstate in Grosse Tete.

Questions? Call 687-2642

This is a project of Iberville Parish President J. Mitchell Ourso, Jr. and the Iberville Parish Council.

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Maringouin

New 'green' company to bring 120 jobs, \$25 million facility to Maringouin

Construction on a new \$25 million facility in Maringouin that will provide 100 to 120 jobs is projected to begin later this year, announced Mayor John Overton.

Pioneer Water Systems and Consolidated Recyclers, Inc. have formed a joint partnership to bring innovative "green" technology to the United States that uses something we have a lot of in south Louisiana – humidity - to make water. The new technology is presently being used in the Middle Eastern country of Qatar.

The company proposes to build two structures on a 15-acre tract of land next to the Maringouin Council on Aging Center on Wheelock Road. The property, presently a town park, will be converted to an industrial park and is expected to be donated to the company.

The buildings will house two separate operations: an atmospheric water generation and biodegradable water bottling facility; and a plastic polymer extrusion recycling plant, which will convert recycled plastic into pellets that are sold to companies to make plastic piping and other plastics.

"This facility will provide many benefits to Maringouin, Iberville and the state," said Mayor John Overton. "It will put Maringouin on the map because



of the innovative environmentally-friendly technology; and it will provide 120 jobs and a big economic boost to our area." In addition, Overton said the company will assist Maringouin with infrastructure needs including upgrades to its sewer system.

A water well planned for the facility off La. Hwy. 77 would also be available to serve the town. The water well will be constructed as an emergency backup water supply for the company's operations. "We provide water in Pointe Coupee all the way to Livonia, so having this water well will help us with water supply," Overton said.

"I put my heart and soul into getting this business to locate in Maringouin," Overton noted. He said he

has been working for five years with the company on the project.

John Stablier of Pioneer Water and Consolidated Recyclers, said Overton, Parish President J. Mitchell Ourso, Jr., State Rep. Karen St. Germain and state Department of Economic Development officials have been "extremely helpful" with the project. Stablier said that Overton "has been persistent and determined in his efforts to locate the company in Maringouin."

Frank Hornsby, a representative of the companies, noted that the state has great incentives for new businesses, and LED's Fast Start program will provide employee training assistance. He noted that the company is Louisiana-based.

"We will produce super water with tremendous health benefits," Hornsby said. "And, our operation will have no negative environmental impact or waste. It is truly a green operation."

Upcoming Events and Activities

- October 9 - International Acadian Festival Water Ceremony, 6:30 p.m., Bayou Plaquemine Waterfront Park - www.acadianfestival.org
- October 15-17 - International Acadian Festival at Mike Zito Multipurpose Center
- October 24 - "Swingin on the Levee" at Nottoway Plantation, 4:30 p.m., music by BR Symphony ensemble, dancing with big band orchestra and more, Call 545-2730 or go to www.nottoway.com
- October 25-November 7 - Fall decorating by We Are The Difference for \$30 donation, Call 931-8912 or 687-2029
- October 31 - Fall Fest and Gumbo Cook-Off at Mike Zito Multipurpose Center, 1-4 p.m., music, hayrides, petting zoo, sack races, tug-of-war, apple bobbing, etc. www.wearethe difference.com
- November 11 - Iberville Salute to Veterans event at Iberville Veterans Memorial in Plaquemine (see front page), begins at 2 p.m., ceremony at 3:30 p.m.
- November 11 - Kiwanis Prayer Breakfast
- December - Nottoway Plantation will present month-long wonderland of Christmas lights, music, decorations and events. Call 545-2730 or go to www.nottoway.com

Community theater group being organized, with the first play set for December. For more information or to get involved go to www.wearethedifference.org.

Give us your feedback

This publication is funded by local government agencies, and is coordinated through the Iberville Chamber of Commerce. It is written and designed by Peacock Communications. Comments or suggestions can be made by calling Peacock Communications, L.L.C. at 225-929-9661 or emailing Ellie Hebert at: ellie@peacockcommunications.com



Gov. Bobby Jindal addresses a large crowd attending the ribbon-cutting of SNF.

SNF breaks ground

(continued from page 1)

at first, but "gave up their history for the progress of Iberville and its people." He and Chamber President Hank Grace, along with Site Manager Brian Soucy of Global Environmental Solutions, met with the residents to answer their questions about the facility and buy-out, and also tried to help them as they went through the purchase process.

Vera Brooks, a member of the Ella community, said the residents of the community met and decided the project was a way to help everyone. "This project will bring progress and jobs for our children in Iberville, and it also provided a way for people to move to better housing," she said. "There was no sewer system on Ella Road. Everyone has moved to differ-

ent places, but all the Ella Road residents have stayed in Iberville."

Ourso said complex negotiations were necessary with Shintech to get the company to allow the rail line through its property. Former Gov. Foster was involved in recruiting Shintech to Iberville, and assisted Gov. Jindal in the negotiations on the rail line. He thanked the governor, the La. Department of Economic Development, and Chamber Director Hank Grace for their hard work and persistence in making the facility a reality.

Flopam will manufacture polyacrylamide, a water-soluble polymer, to help remove impurities from water and wastewater. It is also used in the oil and natural gas industries and in oil recovery.

Upgrades coming for boat launches

Approximately \$1 million will be spent on upgrading boat launches in Iberville Parish in the coming months, with \$920,000 provided by grant funds. The upgrades will make Iberville one of the premier parishes in the state to provide public access to its waterways, according to Parish President J. Mitchell Ourso, Jr.

The **Bayou Sorrel boat launch** – one of the busiest launches in Iberville Parish – will get \$670,000 in upgrades, including adding more boat lanes, parking, restrooms and security. The state's Atchafalaya program is funding the project. Engineering and design for this project is underway and construction

is expected to begin soon after.

Another \$250,000 will be spent by the Port of Greater Baton Rouge on major improvements to the boat **launch into the Mississippi River** at Court Street in Plaquemine. The Port received the grant for improvements in launches into the Mississippi River from the U.S. Office of Homeland Security. The work will include adding riprap and a concrete launch. Parish President J. Mitchell Ourso Jr. said the project will provide much easier access to the river by law enforcement and emergency response personnel, but it will also be open to the public.

The parish is also adding two



new boat launches, and is making improvements to the **launches at Milly Landing on Bayou Plaquemine and White Castle Canal. One new launch will be on Hwy. 69 into Muddy Bayou** that provides access to Bayou Corne. The launch is presently a privately-owned launch, and the parish is drafting an agreement with the landowner to provide for public use. When that is complete, upgrades will be made to the launch.

The parish is also in the process of obtaining a permit from the U.S. Corps of Engineers to have a **public launch on Grand River at the old Rajun' Cajun convenience store**

in Bayou Pigeon. Once it obtains the necessary permit, upgrades will be made to that launch.

Finally, about \$20,000 is being spent to add floating docks, lighting and to upgrade the parking area at the **Milly Landing and the White Castle Canal launch.**

“We presently have 13 boat launches in Iberville, and the two new launches will bring the total to 15,” said Parish President J. Mitchell Ourso, Jr. “We have a great appreciation for our beautiful waterways and want to provide access both to our residents and also to those who want to visit here.”



\$831,250 Tri-Parish project to address water quality problems

Iberville, West Baton Rouge and Pointe Coupee parishes have combined forces to address water quality problems in our waterways with \$831,250 cost-shared funding allocated for the three-year project.

The Tri-Parish Partnership received a \$466,520 federal grant through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) for the project, and each of the parishes will provide a combined \$364,730 in “in-kind” matching contributions.

The waterways included are located between the Mississippi River and the Atchafalaya Basin, called the Upper Terrebonne Basin. John Clark, Iberville's

Environmental Manager, said the waterways are all connected between the parishes, so a joint project was the most effective way to address water quality improvements.

“We share a lot of the same problems and goals – all three parishes want to improve fisheries, water quality, navigation and flooding problems in various waterways so we are addressing the issues together,” Clark said.

“Iberville actually will probably not be writing a check for its share, because Parish President Mitchell Ourso has been committed to improving the water quality, and we already have ongoing projects that will qualify for our in-kind share,” he said.

“Iberville has 400 to 600 miles of waterways, and they have shaped our unique culture and way of life,” Clark noted. “The EPA and LDEQ have listed waterways in this project area as being impaired, so it is important that we take care of our waterways.”

The Tri-Parish Partnership is contracting with GEC environmental engineering company of Baton Rouge to lead the project. Waterways included are Bayou Maringouin, Bayou Grosse Tete, Lower Grand River and Bayou Choctaw, along with other waterways that may be added to the project.

The project includes coordination and outreach with stakeholders, refining source water quality data,

watershed modeling and plans for water quality sampling and monitoring, identifying problem areas, and dissemination of project information.

Clark said the goal of the project is to identify non-point water pollution hotspots, developing a plan for initiating projects to implement water quality improvements, and building stakeholder support for the improvement projects.”

“We are blessed in Iberville to have so much ‘green space’ and waterways. We see it as an economic engine for tourism, or ‘green industry,’ but we must take care of these waterways. This is a step in the right direction,” Clark said.

St. Gabriel

St. Gabriel prepares for emergency services

The City of St. Gabriel has completed the installation of the second of two emergency generators designed to provide emergency services to the citizens of east Iberville.

CSRS Engineers contracted with the city to design a generator capable of supplying kilowatt power adequate enough to allow the 38,000 sq. ft. St. Gabriel Community Center to operate at full capacity. This means that in the event of an emergency, the St. Gabriel Community Center would be a major site in providing for the needs of St. Gabriel area residents.

The approximately \$150,000 generator cost and accompanying equipment was a part of the loan that the City of St. Gabriel obtained from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 2003.

The city also has an emergency generator at City Hall. This generator is capable of powering the entire facility, which includes



Mayor George Grace is shown with the new generator at the St. Gabriel Community Center.

the kitchen and auditorium area, the council meeting room and administrative offices. The Police Department is also powered by an emergency generator, which would allow that department to be functional during an emergency.

The city is in the process of working with the Iberville Parish Council and Parish President J. Mitchell Ourso, Jr. in completing the requirements necessary to obtain additional generators from the fund established by the Hurricane Gustav

grant. These generators will be used to provide power for the three sewer plants and some of the 26 pumping stations located throughout St. Gabriel.

Mayor George L. Grace gives credit to the support of the present City Council members as well as some former council members, namely Warren Berthelot, who participated in the design and installation of the City Hall system. Police Chief Kevin Ambeau is responsible for the emergency system installation at the police station on La. Highway 30.

These improvements have been made in an effort to make sure that all possible preparations are in place prior to emergency situations in which the lives of the citizens are at stake. The present City Council has also authorized the mayor, the police chief and the fire chief to create a comprehensive Hazard Emergency Operations Plan in conjunction with Diversified Emergency Management Associates, LLC of Mobile, Alabama.

Rosedale

\$528,000 grant to provide housing repairs

The Village of Rosedale has received a \$528,000 grant to repair, and in some cases, rebuild houses in the low income areas of Depot, Augusta, Wiley Hawkins and Canal roads.

A total of 22 homes will be improved with the Louisiana Community Development Block Grant (LCDBG) program, which receives funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The grant includes spot rehabilitation of five homes, substantial rehabilitation of four homes, and reconstruction of five homes at a cost of \$65,000 each.

Rosedale will take applications from eligible homeowners in the Depot Park area. To qualify, the owners are required to have lived in the home for six months prior to grant application, must be homeowners or have usufruct,

and must meet low and middle income criteria set by HUD. Renters do not qualify. Rehab of mobile homes is not permitted by program guidelines, but mobile homes in substandard condition would qualify to be replaced with single family homes.

Rosedale Mayor Lawrence "Football" Badeaux said the grant will go a long way in repairing deteriorating homes in that area. "We want to do everything we can to raise the standard of living for our residents and improve our community."

Badeaux said International Consulting Group (ICG) of Baton Rouge wrote the grant and is administering the program. Badeaux said Gov. Bobby Jindal, State Senator Rob Marionneau and State Representative Karen St. Germain notified him that Rosedale had received the grant.



Shown is a dilapidated trailer that will be removed as part of Rosedale's \$528,000 housing rehabilitation project.



Accomplishments of Iberville Parish School System

A Progress Report to the Community

P. Edward Cancienne, Jr., Superintendent

As a result of the focus on academic enhancements from 2006 through 2010, **student enrollment has increased by over 400 students** in the district; and in 2009, Iberville Parish had **one of the highest academic growth scores in the state**, increasing its score by 4.5 percent! The district goal is to be in the top 15 school districts by 2014.

Curriculum and Instructional Progress

- **New computerized telephone system** now notifies parents and community members of important information concerning students, schools or events
- Identified **specific skills to be taught at each grade level** in reading and math, preparing students for April's State Assessment
- Secured a method of **effectively assessing student progress** toward passing LEAP, iLEAP, GEE, and End of Course exams
- Provided guided training for principals and teachers to use benchmark testing data to plan for teaching and reteaching standards that are tested in April
- Continued with **Reading First** program in grades K-3
- Extended the Reading First concept to grades 4-6 in reading and math providing timely student remediation
- Purchased the Voyager Reading program for grades 6-10 who are reading below level for extra instruction by teachers trained in this specialty
- Purchased Apex Learning, a **technology-based remediation and credit accrual program** for English, math, science and social studies; and providing ongoing teacher training on its optimal use
- **Initiated the Iberville Apple Initiative to diversify creative teaching and learning for students.** Each teacher received a laptop computer and training in teaching methods
- Instituted a **Career Diploma track** to give students focused instruction in

- workforce interest areas, resulting in a standard high school diploma
- **Improved** the overall program at the **Optional Center** for suspended or expelled students, focusing on Positive Behavior Support resulting in lowering suspensions, lowering expulsions, and increased learning
- **Established the Math and Science Academies** on the West and East banks offering students nontraditional, high-level approach to learning
- **Provided students at the Academies with laptop computers** (grades 7-11) to enhance learning experiences. All school sites and students, 5th-12th, will have technology as infrastructure is added in the schools by 2011.

Teaching Staff Progress

- **Increased teachers' salaries** to become competitive with surrounding parishes
- Achieved an **excess of 90% of all teachers being certified and highly qualified**, with an increase of that percentage in each coming year
- Continue to **provide teacher support and staff development** in areas of teaching techniques, focused instruction and data analysis

Fiscal Progress

- **Prioritized district building and maintenance jobs**
- Annually **balanced the budget**
- **Addressed huge federal and state funding restraints to the district of over \$3 million** by implementing the Reduction in Force Policy in order to responsibly keep Iberville Parish in sound financial standing



Spelling Bee builds literacy skills



"Our students must have computers to compete"



Popular career track—Restaurant Management (ProStart)



Job fair for high school students

www.ipSB.net
687-4341

White Castle

Street improvement project is second phase of town upgrades

Several projects are underway in the Town of White Castle in hopes of improving the scenery and future of the community.

According to Mayor Maurice Brown, 11 streets of the town are being resurfaced and/or widened at a cost of \$600,000. The road improvement program is the second phase of the town's \$3 million bond issue, following the water improvement project that took place earlier this year.

The project includes widening Francis Street from the high school to the railroad track and resurfacing from the railroad track to Tanoos Street, resurfacing Adams Drive, and resurfacing and possibly widening Graham Street. Others to be improved include Gleason Street, Joseph Street, Marque Street, Maggio Street, Shady Lane, Cambre Street and Aucoin Street. Due to extreme heat last year, damage occurred on Church Street, which caused it to be the first repaired before others.

It is not known when the project will be finished due to work having to be done in the school area. Brown said that work will be done on days that school is not in session so that the academic time will not be disrupted by noise and school traffic will not be affected.

Also in progress is a fitness park on Bowie Street, which is expected to be finished in late October. Other upcoming projects include a walking trail, along with renovations to the community center on Graham St., purchasing a new fire truck, pressure washing and recoating the water tower by Gents Construction, and construction of a power motor on Auxiliary Water Well #2.

The town is also purchasing generators for the police and fire departments as well as the community center, which will be paid for with the Iberville parish and LRA Gustav/Ike funds. In addition, the town will be replacing major equipment in the sewage plant, resurfacing the downtown streets, and adding street lights.



Shown is the corner of Church Street and Bowie Street (next to Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church) after completion of resurfacing. The street was the first to be completed during the Road Improvement Program as it was damaged due to extreme heat last year.

THE SPIRIT OF THE HUMAN ELEMENT



All work and no play can make for a dull life. The Dow Chemical Company culture of innovative work-life practices includes flex time, along with continuous learning and a relentless commitment to safety and employee health. It's a culture that understands the spirit of the human element. **It's a culture that rocks.**



Plaquemine

\$12 million road improvement project underway

The City of Plaquemine's \$12 million road improvement project has been underway for about two months, but is now moving into high gear, according to Mayor Mark "Tony" Gulotta.

"This is the first comprehensive road improvement program the city has done in many years," Gulotta said. "Just about every street in the city will be resurfaced." The project is being completed in two phases. Phase I includes natural gas and water line relocation and sewer repairs, removing and replacing approximately 60,000 linear feet of cement curbing and cement road repair, asphalt patching and road resurfacing.

"Originally we were only going to change out about 20,000 linear feet of curbing, but we got a good price on the cost per linear foot with their low bid, so we have been able to bump up the curb work to 60,000 linear feet," the Mayor said.

The asphalt contract in Phase I was awarded to F. G. Sullivan Jr. Contractor, and that low bid also came in lower than expected. The asphalt work began in August and will take about 120 days to complete. "We were able to get substantially lower prices because we have pieced the project out," Gulotta said. "Doing that will complicate the construction,

but it also allows us to really make taxpayer dollars work for the city and get a lot more done."

Phase II includes sewer repairs, and more asphalt and concrete road resurfacing. City officials approved the sewer portion of the contract at their July 27 meeting, and the sewer work began by September. The asphalt portion of Phase II will be bid out in October.



Shown are scenes from work to replace curbing on streets. A total of 20,000 linear feet of curbing will be replaced as part of the city's road improvement project.



Grosse Tete



The line and tap-in markers at homes along the route of a new 6-inch water line.

Water service improvements completed

The Village of Grosse Tete completed a \$75,000 project to provide better water service to local customers in mid-September. The project included changing out 2,200 feet of 1.5 inch water lines to 6 inch water lines for a section of Grosse Tete around Willow Street.

"The new lines will provide better water pressure and supply, and will also make the water service more reliable," said Mayor Mike

Chauffe. "We were having constant breaks in the water line because it was so old. Some of the old lines were even exposed in ditches, so it was time for the improvements."

He said the project was funded with \$25,000 Louisiana grant assistance, \$25,000 from a water enrichment grant, and \$25,000 in village funds.

Sewer improvements coming in October

Approximately \$1.5 million in sewer improvements in Grosse Tete is expected to begin in October. The village received a \$1.4 million capital outlay grant for two sewer projects - \$750,000 on the collection system, which will take about 75 homes off individual septic tanks and put them on the village sewer system; and \$850,000 for a new treatment plant. The village will chip in another \$100,000 for the project. Watch for more about this project in the December issue of *Imagine Iberville*.

Hazardous ditch closed in

A deep ditch on Sidney Road that posed a driving hazard has been filled in by the Village of Grosse Tete. The ditch was located near the new bridge in Grosse Tete. A concrete catch basin built to accommodate drainage from the adjacent field and road is about 8 feet tall, Chauffe said. "The ditch was both a safety hazard and also had a lot of erosion problems."

The project required the village to bore under Sidney Road and re-route water lines. The project cost about \$10,000.



Mayor Mike Chauffe, Maintenance Supervisor Phillip Favoroth and Jim Garrett of Pointe Coupee Contractors look over work dirt work after a hazardous ditch was closed.



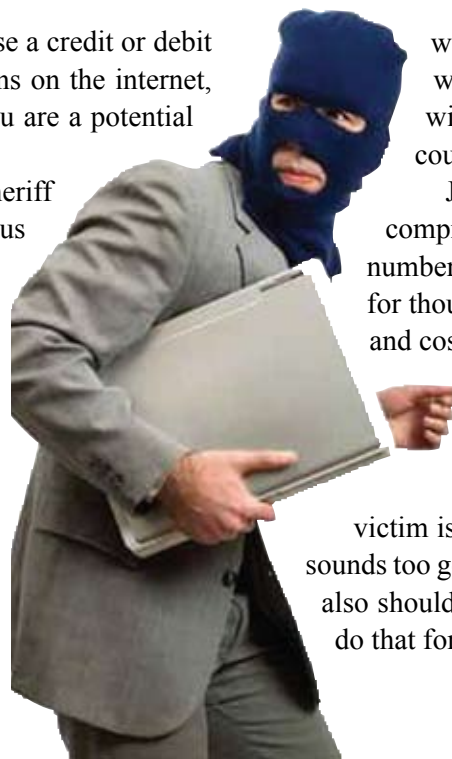
Will your identity be stolen?

Don't think identity theft can happen to you? If you use a credit or debit card, receive e-mail, have a cell phone, make transactions on the internet, or receive mail – which is just about everyone - then you are a potential identity theft victim.

Identity theft has certainly hit Iberville Parish, said Sheriff Brent Allain. The Sheriff's Department fields numerous cases every year, and the cases are steadily increasing. Just this year, the department has handled cases of a Nigerian scam in which a local resident lost several thousand dollars, a stolen debit card number on which tens of thousands of dollars was charged, counterfeit checks cashed by local businesses, and more.

"Criminals worldwide are now committing crimes in the comfort of their homes from their computers," said Detective Blair Favaron, who with Detective Hose Anderson, handles the department's identify theft investigations.

In the Nigerian scam, a local resident was advised by e-mail that he had won a huge monetary prize. He



was told that when he received his \$80,000 check, he was to wire money to a location to cover fees of the prize award. He wired the money and later learned that the \$80,000 check was counterfeit.

Just last year, Favaron said a rash of debit cards were compromised at a processing center. Hackers got the card numbers, sold them to criminals and accounts were being debited for thousands of dollars. The operation led to an international ring and cost Iberville banks some \$150,000.

In another case in September, \$13,000 was charged to a local resident's debit card in Texas. That investigation is on-going. Your identity can be stolen in numerous ways but Sheriff Allain said the best way to avoid becoming a victim is to take precautions to protect your identity. "If something sounds too good to be true, then it's not true," said Favaron. "Individuals also should check their accounts and credit reports regularly, and can do that for free by going to www.annualcreditreport.com.

Tips to prevent identity theft



Your Computer

- **Do not keep computers online when not in use.** Either shut them off or physically disconnect them from Internet connection.
- **Use anti-virus software and a firewall,** and keep them up to date.
- **Be cautious about opening any attachment or downloading any files from emails** you receive, regardless of who sent them. These files can contain viruses or other software that can weaken your computer's security.
- If you get an email or pop-up message that **asks for personal or financial information, do not reply.** And don't click on the link in the message, either.

Your Credit Cards

- Do not hand over your ATM/Debit Cards or Credit Cards to anyone.
- Cancel all unused credit card accounts.
- Avoid paying by credit card if you think the business does not use adequate safeguards to protect your personal information.

Your Credit Report

- **Check your credit reports from the three major credit bureaus,** Equifax, Experian and TransUnion, at least twice a year and correct any inaccuracies. To order your free annual report from one or all the national consumer reporting companies, visit www.annualcreditreport.com,

call toll-free 877-322-8228, or complete the Annual Credit Report Request Form and mail it to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281. You can print the form from ftc.gov/credit.

Your Financial Accounts

- When you open **new accounts, place passwords on them.**
- **Add passwords to your credit card, bank and telephone accounts** that are not the typical passwords. If you open a new account that requests your mother's maiden name, use a password instead.
- **Secure personal information** in your home.

Phone Calls/Offers

- **Be cautious when responding to promotions.** Identity thieves may create phony promotional offers to get you to give them your personal information.
- **Be wary of anyone calling you to "confirm" personal or financial information.** Often, these are criminals trying to obtain those facts under the guise of "confirmation".
- **Stop receiving unsolicited calls.** You may do so by contacting the National Do Not Call Registry either by phone at 1-888-382-1222 or online at <https://www.donotcall.gov/>. The registration is free of charge and is effective for five years.

- **Never give out personal information on the phone, through the mail, or on the Internet unless you've initiated the contact** or you are sure you know who you're dealing with.
- **Before you share any personal information, confirm that you are dealing with a legitimate organization.** Call the company back using a phone number from a statement or from the telephone book (not a phone number the person who is calling gives you).

Your Social Security Number

- **Give your Social Security number only when absolutely necessary** and ask to use other types of identifiers. Do not carry it in your wallet.
- **Remove your Social Security number from any identification you carry:** such as checks, a driver license or your health insurance card.
- If you ask, only the last four digits of your Social Security number will appear on your credit reports.