

# Bass: "FEMA has been a failure to us"

**Mayor laments after up-front funding request for harbor repairs due to Hurricane Zeta shot down**

By Toni Miles

More than four years after Hurricane Zeta made landfall as a Category 2 hurricane, battering the Mississippi Gulf Coast and beyond, not a single boat is docked at the Long Beach Harbor, nor is the popular Jim Simpson Pier available for public use, as evidenced by splintered boards jutting out along the shoreline and broken concrete at the foot of the Jim Simpson Pier in the harbor.

Heavy equipment can be seen along the horizon of the Mississippi Sound on the east side of the harbor, as the City uses what funds it has been able to secure for harbor repairs since the October 28, 2020, landfall of the hurricane.

Some work has been done, but overall it's been a waiting game – a long one – as City leaders have engaged in a years-long battle to try to secure an additional \$9.5 million in FEMA funds for much-needed harbor repairs more than four years after the damage was done. That decision was made at a recent arbitration hearing headed by a three-judge panel, and City leaders, namely Long Beach Mayor George Bass, is not happy about it.

"I will say this. I believe FEMA has been a failure, not only to our city, but also Harrison County and the Mississippi Gulf Coast," Bass told the crowd that gathered at Long Beach City Hall on Friday, December 6, at a press conference called on the matter.

This and other remarks from the Mayor came after the three-judge arbitration panel rendered a decision denying the City's request for up-front FEMA funding for the harbor and infrastructure repairs.

All was not lost, as the decision was also made that FEMA would reimburse ninety-percent of the money spent for the repairs. However, this leaves City leaders scrambling to secure more funding from other sources to get the overall needed repairs completed at the harbor - before requesting reimbursement.



Toni Miles

Heavy equipment can be seen at the east side of the Long Beach Harbor. Repairs at the harbor got underway in March.

"The outcome is not what we wanted," Mayor Bass says.

"The scope of the work was what we were arbitrating with the panel. FEMA decided they would stick with what they had come up with, and the three-judge panel [arbitrators] unfortunately agreed with them [FEMA]. The monetary amounts that they had given us approximately three years ago based on on-site inspections was decreased by those FEMA officials, who have never been here, who have never seen or witnessed our harbor except from Google Earth view; and we feel that was an injustice to us to not come and put their eyes on the project."

cont. on page 5

# Long Beach could be home to a casino within five years

By Toni Miles

Within the next five years, the City of Long Beach could join the ranks of cities across the Coast that host a casino. The Long Beach Board of Aldermen helped clear the way in a vote at a special meeting called November 21, which allows for a casino development to get underway, with construction possibly beginning in the next three years and doors opening in the next five.

At the November 21 meeting, the Board unanimously voted for and approved an amendment and restatement of a lease of City property in the Long Beach Harbor with Long Beach Harbor Resorts, LLC. The leased land would be part of an overall planned casino project. Meanwhile, Southern Sand is in negotiations to purchase the property just north of the harbor and Highway 90, on the west side of McDonald's, where the



Toni Miles

This site, just north of Highway 90 and the Long Beach Harbor, could be the location of a casino, the first in Long Beach, within the next five years. Southern Sand is in negotiations to purchase this property just north of the harbor and Highway 90, on the west side of McDonald's, where the old K-Mart used to sit.

old K-Mart used to sit.

Long Beach Mayor George Bass says this opens the door for not only a casino, but a big revenue-maker for the City. Under the recently amended rental agreement between the City and Long Beach Harbor Resorts, LLC, the casino will pay \$500,000 annually to the City of Long Beach for the first five years it is open and operating. After the first five years, the City would receive one-percent of the casino's gross gaming revenue, up to \$100 million.

The rental agreement is for an initial term of forty years, with an option to extend for two additional terms of twenty-five years each, along with other stipulations, including the amount of monthly rent to be paid and other revenue to be collected by the City through non-gaming operations, which is expected to land millions of dollars in City coffers.

Although the Mississippi Gaming Commission gave site approval for the property back in 2019, there have been many obstacles and delays in plans to build a casino in Long Beach, including a dispute between the Mississippi Secretary of State and Jim Parrish, owner of Parrish's Restaurant, which sits on the south side of Highway 90 and the site of the proposed casino development site in the harbor, all over a tidelands dispute. However, the Mississippi Supreme Court eventually sided with the developer in 2022.



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## Free, interactive app to help promote healthier habits, improve parks

By Toni Miles

Collecting data, while also sharing important information for park and green space users in Long Beach, is about to be at the tips of people's fingers, all through a new, free interactive app that City leaders have decided to help fund and use.

"We have developed an innovative app that you can download for free on iPhones or Android phones, and what it does is it maps out all our parks and green spaces," Executive Director of the Let's Go, Gulf Coast app Dr. Kelsey Keel told City leaders at the December 3 Board of Aldermen meeting. "We've collected data on the parks that are managed by Long Beach. We've geofenced them. We've cataloged all the resources there, and downloaded them on our app."

Ten years in the making, including three years working closely with some City department heads, Dr. Keel discussed in detail the benefits the City of Long Beach would reap by using the non-profit's app, which would be the first of its kind in the United States. Dr. Keel says one Coast city and county have already pledged funds to be part of this inaugural program.

At the December 3 Board meeting, aldermen voted to join in, too, approving a contribution of \$3,000 to fund the first year of the app. This money will be used to launch the app, which will help not only collect important data and input from park and green space users that can result in additional grant money for local parks down the line, but can also be used by those who visit local parks for hazard and wildlife reports, such as getting the



Toni Miles

Soon, City park and green space area visitors will be able to get and share information through a free, new, interactive app called Let's Go, Gulf Coast, which will also be used to quickly report injured wildlife and hazards, such as storm damage at these areas, while also collecting useful data for City leaders, including surveys and ratings.

word out quickly about any downed limbs or storm damage in these areas. The innovative app is also funded by the the local non-profit Gulf Coast Community Foundation, whose mission is to combat childhood and adult obesity on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

So far, more than two-hundred parks and green spaces managed by cities and counties along the Coast have been cataloged, and the app is tailor-made for each city and county, including Long Beach, providing direct links to the City of Long Beach's social media pages and website. It will be used to push out important community notifications and provide information about local events, parks and festivals.

Dr. Keel says the free app is also user-friendly.

"Users can download the app," Dr. Keel said. "The goal is to increase physical activity by improving access to our parks

and green spaces and making them more social spaces. There are also features on the app that will help users engage with our parks and green spaces. There's going to be some augmented reality games to help keep kids at parks and engage with them, like scavenger hunts and things like that, park passports."

App users will also be able to upload pictures, fill out surveys and answer specific questions set forth by local leaders wanting to collect information and data about parks, green spaces and other local areas to help gauge community needs and assessments.

"There's no initiative or app that's been built like this in the U.S., so we've gotten some other grants for this project to kind of get it up [and going], and we're very excited to launch it on the Mississippi Gulf Coast with the hopes of seeing successful results here, and slowly spreading it throughout the state," Dr. Keel said.



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# CALB to roll out the red carpet for Mardi Gras Royal Court and parade

By Toni Miles

The Carnival Association of Long Beach (CALB) is preparing to roll out the red carpet and announce this year's CALB Royal Court, unveiling King Scott LXIV and Queen Rosalie 2025, who will both be officially stepping into the roles held by last year (2024's) CALB King Scott LXIV Junior Husband and Queen Rosalie Lisa Frazer. The new king and queen will be the focus of the 2025 CALB Royal Ball, scheduled to take place on February 21, 2025.

The next day, on Saturday, February 22, the streets of downtown Long Beach will come alive as the 2025 CALB's annual Mardi Gras Parade rolls out. Parade applications for 2025 have already opened for those who wish to participate and register a float for the parade.

Application drop off locations for this year are: Exclusive Cleaners, located at 100 West Railroad Street; Allstate: Chris Boudreaux's office at 7100 Menge Avenue in Pass Christian; and at Riemann Family Funeral Home on 9113 Kiln DeLisle Road in Pass Christian. The cost to register is \$125. Applications must be received on or before January 31, 2025.

The parade will roll out on February 22 at 6 p.m. Roads along the parade route will shut down at 5:30 p.m. Floats will gather at the Long Beach High School Stadium at the staging area before the pa-

rade begins, then the procession will head south on Cleveland Avenue, turn west down Railroad Street, turn south on Jeff Davis Avenue, turn east at the intersection of Jeff Davis and Highway 90 to run along the Long Beach Harbor, then turn north back up Cleveland Avenue, with a final turn west on 1st Steet, ending at the Harper McCaughan Town Green in downtown Long Beach.



The parade is free to attend, and revelers will be sure to walk away with a lot of Mardi Gras throws; so those who plan to attend are advised to bring a bag to collect their parade throws. Parade-goers are also encouraged to stake out a spot on the parade route early for the best view.

CALB, headed by Team Stirrat Brown for the 2024-2025 season, has been holding numerous events and fundraisers over the past year as Carnival season approaches.

Long Beach did not have its first official Mardi Gras celebration until 1961, although the spirit of the season was always present in the area. The preceding year, a small group of mothers of children attending St. Thomas Elementary School recognized a need for a source of continuing funds to finance the betterment of the quality of education for their children; so they undertook the task of sponsoring an annual Carnival Ball to coincide with the Mardi Gras season.

By 1964, the small club of ladies had generated so much interest that it had be-

come a community affair, and the name was changed from the St. Thomas Mother's Club to Carnival Association of Long Beach. By 1979, the organization had spread coast-wide and became incorporated by obtaining chartered status as a legitimate tax-exempt charitable organization.

Now, men and women of all faiths and professions join together for the common benefit of worth-while charities in the coast area, as well as St. Vincent de Paul School (formerly St. Thomas School). Through their efforts, more than one million dollars has been donated to countless charities, such as The Special Olympics, d'Epee Deaf Center, South MS Region-



Toni Miles

Thousands are expected to line the streets of downtown Long Beach for the next CALB Mardi Gras Parade, scheduled for Saturday, February 22, at 6 p.m.



al Center, North MS Regional Burn Center, Harrison County Heart Association, Senior Citizens, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, St. Jude's Hospital, and many others.

The first CALB parade rolled through the streets of Long Beach in 1971, with the participants tossing doubloons made of wood, which are now considered among the most sought-after of collectibles, as have the .999 silver doubloons minted each year in a limited quantity.

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## Library announces events, holiday closures for January

By Guest Columnist Renee Rayburn, LBPL Youth and Technology Services

We want to thank everyone who participated in the library's "It's a Wrap" event that was held during the third week in December. Whether it was by donating their time, gift wrapping supplies or gift-wrapping skills, it made for a festive event for all involved.

The Friends of the Long Beach Public Library will hold their next meeting on Monday, January 6, at 1 p.m.

The Long Beach Board of Trustees will hold their next meeting on Tuesday, January 14, at 4 p.m. This meeting is open to the public to attend.

There will not be a Family Movie Day scheduled for January.

Preschool story time will continue to be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:30 a.m.

The library will be closed for two holidays in January. The first is New Years Day, on Wednesday, January 1. The library will reopen on Thursday, January 2, at 9 a.m. The second holiday when the library will be closed is for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. For that holiday, the library will be closed on Saturday, January 18, and Monday, January 20. We will reopen on Tuesday, January 21, at 9 a.m.

As a reminder to everyone, Long Beach Public Library's hours are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. We are open on Saturdays from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. On Saturdays, we hold our book sale in the main meeting room.

For more information about any of our events or offerings, please give us a call at 228-863-0711. The library is located at 209 Jeff Davis Avenue.

We would like to thank you all for your continued support. As always, thank you for your patronage, and stay safe!

cont. from front page

## Bass: "FEMA has been a failure to us" Mayor laments after up-front funding request for harbor repairs due to Hurricane Zeta shot down



Toni Miles

Barricades are still in place, and the once-popular Jim Simpson Fishing Pier in Long Beach is still inaccessible more than four years after Hurricane Zeta, a Category 2 storm, battered the Mississippi Gulf Coast.



Toni Miles

Broken concrete remains untouched more than four years after Hurricane Zeta caused extensive damage to the Long Beach Harbor.



Toni Miles

The splintered remains of what once was the popular Jim Simpson Fishing Pier jut out of the waters of the Mississippi Sound.

Bass said FEMA required the City to essentially jump through hoops, especially regarding new FEMA policies and requirements to assess damage after the hurricane, without providing much guidance.

Regardless, Bass says, the City did its best under the circumstances to meet the requirements, including using ground-penetrating radar on roads broken and battered by the 2020 storm and pit tests on most of the pilings in the harbor, which determined that about ninety-percent of the pilings in the harbor had been damaged.

"FEMA wanted us to show them a pre-event pit test," Bass said. "This was the first time we had ever done this pit test, and it was, of course, after Zeta; and, now that we had presented it to them, they wanted to see a pre-test. There's nothing in the guidance that gives you anything from FEMA that tells you what you need to do, what methodology you need to do on your pilings, on your roadways..."

"We will be able to support and supply to FEMA the actual cost of the repairs that we do in the harbor, and FEMA will refund ninety-percent. We'll get another five-percent from the State, and the City will be responsible for the remaining five-percent," Bass said.

"We're not pleased with what we got, but we are happy we did get some concessions from FEMA (such as building the pilings back to be more long-lasting and durable) to be able to move forward. We've got the southern wall, the southeastern wall and the eastern wall under construction, as we speak. Concrete was poured to start the eastern (and southern) wall toward the finished product."

"We are going to bid for the inner bulkhead wall," Bass said. "The engineers had estimated three-and-a-half years ago we were looking at \$2 million dollars for that. Now, we're looking at \$5 million to do an interior wall."

"We do have funding sources not from FEMA. We will move forward with that interior bulkhead wall, which will allow us to move forward with possibly starting with one of the piers. I don't have a timeline for that. It will take time, but we're hoping to build a resilient harbor when we're through with this project. It may take ... three or four years. We're in hopes of being able to get a pier in and to be able to start bringing some boats in and get them back into the harbor, but also to be able to maintain our construction on the other piers as we move forward, without disturbing those boats that will be able to be brought back."

While Mayor Bass publicly praised state and local leaders, including members of the Long Beach Board of Aldermen, he expressed extreme disappointment in FEMA.

"I can't speak for the other states, but FEMA has been a failure to us," Bass told the crowd.

"There are any number of piers along the Coast that are in the [same] situation due to a failure from FEMA to put somebody on the ground who can make a proper decision and to decide not just the scope of the work but also the damages, that the damages were caused by this storm."

Bass, who recently announced that he will not be seeking a third term as mayor in the upcoming election, says there are lessons learned after the fact, and shared a suggestion for the next City administration.

"Yearly, do annual pit test on all of the structures in the harbor, the pilings, and also do a ground penetrating radar on all the drives yearly, so that we can have information that shows our outer and inner walls; so that, if they move, we'll be able to show that they have moved, and the damage has been caused by a future storm."

Construction (for repairs) at the harbor began in March of 2024.

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# Law enforcement, volunteers serve the public holiday meals



Special to Long Beach Breeze

Hundreds of volunteers, including local law enforcement, dedicate their time to help pack and deliver free, hot holiday meals for Thanksgiving and Christmas every year, thanks to the Gulf Coast Public Safety's annual Feed the Needy program.

By Toni Miles

Thousands of South Mississippians who may not have otherwise enjoyed a (hot) holiday meal, were treated to one this Thanksgiving, thanks to the annual Gulf Coast Public Safety's Feed the Needy program.

The program was launched thirty-five years ago by the Harrison County Sheriff's Department and started with serving about one-hundred meals for the holidays. That number has grown to somewhere between 1,200 and 1,800 total meals prepared and delivered each year for both the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Now, law enforcement volunteers from the Harrison County Sheriff's Department, Gulfport, D'Iberville, Biloxi and Long Beach police departments, along with hundreds of community volunteers, pitch in.

Long Beach Police Chief Billy Seal and Harrison County Sheriff Matt Haley were among the dozens of local law enforcement officers who rolled up their sleeves to help prepare and deliver thousands of meals to residents throughout the Mississippi Gulf Coast on November 28, Thanksgiving morning.



Toni Miles

Long Beach Police Chief Billy Seal (middle) was among the dozens of law enforcement officers who volunteered.

organizers say it doesn't look like the generous holiday community service will lose momentum in the years and holidays to come.



Special to Long Beach Breeze

Harrison County Sheriff Matt Haley (right), along with many others, volunteered to prepare and distribute hot holiday meals to those in need in South Mississippi on Thanksgiving Day.

The hot meals, consisting of turkey, dressing, peas, a roll and pumpkin pie, were then delivered to people across South Mississippi, from Long Beach to D'Iberville. Each holiday meal starts at the Harrison County Work Center, where the feast is cooked, then is delivered to the Lyman Community Center. There, hundreds of hands are on deck to pack up the meals, which are then delivered to the doorstep of those in need who sign up. Each household can get up to four free, hot meals for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

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## New chapter for Long Beach Library's south side



Toni Miles

A new entryway that is ADA-compliant is now open on the south side of the Long Beach Public Library.

By Toni Miles

The Long Beach Library has turned the page on a recent renovation project on the south side of the library.

Work to install a new entrance porch, railing and an ADA-compliant access ramp on the south side of the library began in late October. Crews with H2O demolished the former porch that sat on the south side of the library, making way for workers with Delta Concrete to install a new and improved entry porch and handicap-accessible ramp with new railings.

The project was completed in early December, and library leaders say they are excited about the new entry way, porch, railing and ramp, as well as the overall improved access to the facility that will benefit the community for years to come.

There is also a new book drop available for use to the east of the new entryway and porch.



Toni Miles

A book drop is available near the newly-renovated library south entrance.

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## Writing workshop series begins January 8

The Pass Post

Wednesday, January 8, will mark the beginning of a free writing workshop series at the Pass Christian Library.

Facilitated by author Deborah Tainsh, the "Flash Writing Your Memoir" class will begin at 2 p.m. that Wednesday and continue weekly. The purpose of the workshop is to inspire and assist those attending the class to write stories for family posterity through flash, micro and creative nonfiction writing to tell true life or fictional stories. Ideally, participants will attend as many sessions as possible, but perfect attendance is not required.

Tainsh is the author of *Love's Return*, a novel; *Heart of a Hawk: One Family's Sacrifice and Journey Toward Healing*, a memoir; and essays published in *Folded Flag: Families of War Share Stories of Coping, Courage and Faith* and in *Chicken Soup for the Soul* publications. She has facilitated numerous creative and memoir writing workshops for libraries and Barnes and Noble stores in Georgia and Florida.

Anyone who is interested in writing is welcome to attend. Participants are asked to bring their laptop or pen and paper, as well as (at their discretion) any writings they are currently working on.

The library is located at 111 Hiern Avenue. For more information or to reserve a spot, call the Pass Christian Library at 228-452-4596.



Special to The Pass Post  
 Author Deborah Tainsh

## Spelling Bee winners advance to county contest



Special to The Pass Post

DeLisle Elementary School recently held a spelling bee competition for students in the third through fifth grades. Each homeroom class held their own classroom spelling bee, and the top two winners of the class spelling bees participated in the school bee. The event brought together young spellers to showcase their vocabulary skills, determination and love for words. It is the 100th anniversary of the Scripps Spelling Bee this year. Pictured (l to r) are third place winner Lauryn Martin, Spelling Bee Champion Vincent Fontenot and second place winner Bryson Johnson, all of whom will advance to the county spelling bee on January 16 at North Woolmarket Elementary School.

## Crafts and Crime set for 2nd Tuesdays

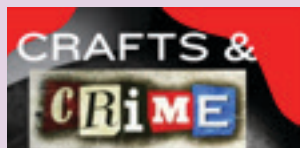
The Pass Post

True crime podcast lovers who are also interested in crafts are invited to attend the Pass Christian Public Library's Crafts and Crime events on the second Tuesday of each month. This month's meeting will be on Tuesday, January 14, at 11:30 a.m.

Held in the media room at the library, the morning will include the opportunity for older kids and adults who are fascinated by the morbid to bring their own crafts to do (or just come to color) while listening to and discussing some "killer" podcasts.

No reservation is needed, and no experience is required. Light food and drink are allowed.

For more information, call the library at 228-452-4596. The library is located at 111 Hiern Avenue.



## King cake tasting set for January 23

Special to The Pass Post

King cake will be the focus of a community treat-tasting event set for Thursday, January 23.

Organized and sponsored by Pass Christian Main Street, the City of Pass Christian, the King Cake in the Pass Committee, O'Dwyer Realty and the Pass Christian Public Library, the Randolph Center will be open from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for Pass Christian residents to taste a People's Choice King Cake and king cake-inspired treats.

The event is free, but the Committee asks those attending to consider bringing a nonperishable food item(s) for the Christian Concern Community Food Pantry or a monetary donation for Gone Fishing Ministries.

Those interested in being a participant (providing king cake or king cake-inspired treats) or donating a door prize are asked to contact Rebecca O'Dwyer at 985-507-0702.

The Randolph Center is located at 315 Clark Avenue.

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# Thanks a Brunch event honors retired educators



*Special to Long Beach Breeze*  
Pictured (l to r) with LBSD Superintendent Dr. Talia Lock (center) are retired superintendents Carolyn Hamilton, Dr. Marlin Ladner, Dr. Bobby Jones and Mr. Pat Donald.



*Special to Long Beach Breeze*  
Pictured (l to r) are Long Beach School District retirees Jean Hauer, Fudgie Parker, Deb Fournier and Peggy Hertz.



*Special to Long Beach Breeze*  
Long Beach High School retired math teachers Nancy Ruff and Grace Gingles are pictured visiting at the retiree brunch.



*Special to Long Beach Breeze*  
Retirees (pictured l to r) gathered for a photo: Nathan Paola, Marlin Ladner, Terry D'Angelo, Deb Allen, Becky Mullins, Kim Previto, Pat Donald, Bobby Jones and Jim Hamilton.

*Special to Long Beach Breeze*

The Long Beach Excellence in Education Foundation, in partnership with the Long Beach School District (LBSD) and P.E.O. Chapter B, recently held their inaugural "Thanks a Brunch" event for Long Beach School District retirees. LBSD Superintendent Dr. Talia Lock welcomed the retirees and announced several updates regarding the LBSD. Representative Richard Bennett and Long Beach School Board President Timothy Pierce also addressed the retirees.

Guests enjoyed brunch while visiting with old friends and learning more about the sponsoring organizations. Both the Long Beach Excellence in Education Foundation and P.E.O.-Chapter B are very active in the community and in the Long Beach School District. Through donations and fundraising, the Long Beach Excellence in Education Foundation (LBEEF) annually funds multiple staff grants, student scholarships and recognition programs. P.E.O.-Chapter B promotes education for women by submitting local candidates for consideration for various scholarships, grants and loans offered by the state and international organization.

The Long Beach Excellence in Education Foundation hopes to make the brunch an annual event. For additional information about LBEEF, email [LBExcellenceInEducation@gmail.com](mailto:LBExcellenceInEducation@gmail.com) or follow them on Facebook. For more information about P.E.O., visit [www.PEOInternational.org](http://www.PEOInternational.org) and [www.PEOMississippi.org](http://www.PEOMississippi.org).

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# South Coast Sea Turtles choose CED for home court

Special to Long Beach Breeze

The South Coast Sea Turtles, Coastal Mississippi's semi-professional, ABA basketball team, will be using Coast Episcopal School's (CES) Long Beach gymnasium for its 2024-25 season, according to a joint announcement by the team's CEO and Creator Jerry Thompson and CES Head of School Jake Winter.



"After looking all along the Coast, from Moss Point to Ocean Springs and Biloxi to Long Beach, we were excited to find the Coast Episcopal School's gymnasium for our home court," said Thompson. "The gym's facilities and location are a good fit for our team's needs."

"Partnering with this new team is a nice opportunity for Coast Episcopal School," said Winter. "Our students have been participating in the Catholic Youth Organization's basketball program for several years, and hosting semi-professional games on our campus builds on the enthusiasm our families have for the sport."

Nine games will be played in the

CES gymnasium located on the Long Beach independent school's twenty-five-acre campus. The first game was in late November against the Montgomery, Alabama, River Region Generals. Remaining home games include January 5 against the Mississippi Silverbacks (Veterans and Military night), January 11 against the Gulfport Kings (Teacher Appreciation night), January 12 against the North Alabama War Dogs (First Responders/Healthcare night), January 26 against the Shreveport-Bossier Knights (Family Night), February 2 against the New Orleans Rush (College night) and February 9 against the Gulf Coast Gladiators (Carnival night).

The South Coast Sea Turtles is composed of twelve players, ages eighteen to forty.

Concessions will be sold at games, and admission will be free to all Coast Episcopal School students (when accompanied by an adult) and faculty. The 2024-25 schedule can be viewed, and tickets can be purchased at SeaTurtlesBasketball.com.



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# LBSD employees receive grants for projects

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Tyler Brandon

The Long Beach Excellence in Education Foundation recently announced the award of four educational grants to Long Beach School District staff. The Foundation awarded the grants, each valued up to \$500, for special projects for which applicants requested funding assistance.

This year's grant recipients are Tyler Brandon, T.L. Reeves Elementary, for his "Allowing Student Voices to be Heard" project; Nicole Taylor, W.J. Quarles Elementary, for her "Math Stackers-Math in Action: Hands-On Learning for K-3 Students" project; Melanie Jones, Long Beach Middle School, for her "Expanding Student Voices through Podcasting and Digital Media" project; and Kenny Triplett, Long Beach School District, for his "Bearcat Broadcast Network (HMETV, LBMTV, LBTV)" project.

The group received several applications and hopes to continue to expand the grant program in the future.

The Long Beach Excellence in Education Foundation sets as its goal to administer funds for the charitable purpose of supporting the Long Beach School District (LBSD), its teachers and its students by funding scholarships, grant recognition programs and other such supplemental activities within the LBSD. Since its inception, the group has funded thirteen teacher grants, and, by the close of this school year, will have awarded fifteen \$1,000 scholarships to Long Beach High School seniors. These and other programs are possible through the group's fundraising activities and through tax-deductible donations.

For more information about the Long Beach Excellence in Education Foundation, contact LB-ExcellenceInEducation@gmail.com or visit their Facebook page. Tax-deductible donations to support the Long Beach Excellence in Education Foundation may be made at <https://bit.ly/LB-EEF>.



Melanie Jones



Kenny Triplett

# Fossils to be subject of next Science Café on the Coast

Special to Long Beach Breeze

On Monday, January 6, Science Café on the Coast will host a presentation on fossils, featuring Meaghan Huseman, a conservation educator with the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science.

Science Café on the Coast is a collaboration between the Long Beach Public Library, the Harrison County Library System, the Hancock County Library System, Infinity Science Center, The University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Libraries and Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.

The January presentation will be held at 6 p.m. at the Margaret Sherry Public Library, located at 2141 Popp's Ferry Road in Biloxi. The event is designed to offer those with minimal background in science the chance to meet and discuss scientific issues in a relaxed social setting. The program will include a dive into the history of Mississippi's fossils. Attendees will discover what fossils are, how they form and what they reveal about life on



Special to Long Beach Breeze



Earth millions of years ago, as well as learn about the creatures that once roamed Mississippi and explore the geological timeline that shaped the planet. The event is suitable for history and fossil enthusiasts of all ages.

Admission is free and open to the public, and light refreshments will be available. For more information, call Librarian Tara Calliavet Morgan at 228-388-1633.

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## Quarles Elementary named Mississippi's only ESEA Distinguished School

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Long Beach School District's W. J. Quarles Elementary School has been named Mississippi's National ESEA Distinguished School. The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) recognized Quarles Elementary School for its exceptional student performance and academic growth for two or more consecutive years.

Quarles Elementary is the only school in Mississippi to receive this distinction for 2024.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed as a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" and has been the most far-reaching federal legislation affecting education ever passed by Congress. According to officials, the esteemed award, initiated by the National Association of ESEA State Program Administrators' (NAESPA) ESEA Distinguished Schools Program, highlights the exceptional academic accomplishments of the school's students. It also acknowledges the school's unwavering dedication to making substantial progress for their students.



"I am so incredibly proud of the teachers, students, staff and leadership at W. J. Quarles Elementary School for being named Mississippi's National ESEA Distinguished School," said Long Beach Public School District Superintendent Dr. Talia Lock. "This prestigious recognition is a testament to their continued hard work, dedication and heart for students."

"Their remarkable achievements and growth in reading and math reflect their commitment to being a System of Excellence by continuing to work hard and grow and reach new heights," continued Lock. "This honor is very well deserved, and I am thrilled they are being recognized for their efforts. The team at W. J. Quarles Elementary is building a brighter future for our community."

Quarles Elementary Principal Sarah Sanzin says she takes pride in her students and staff, who have earned this national recognition for their achievements.

"It is an honor to be selected as a National ESEA Distinguished School," said Sanzin.

"It brings my heart joy that our staff and students are being recognized for their efforts and success! They greatly deserve all the praise."

## Eleuterius named BSN Student-Athlete of the Month

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The Long Beach School District (LBSD) has named Long Beach High School senior soccer player Morgan Eleuterius as the Bearcat Sports Network (BSN) Student Athlete of the Month for December. In their announcement about the award, Eleuterius has been described as "the cornerstone of the midfield unit, playing a vital role in maintaining the structure of the team and facilitating seamless transitions between defense and attack. Her exceptional ability to read the game and organize play has significantly contributed to the team's success this season."

Eleuterius was elected by her teammates to serve as captain for both the 2023 and 2024 seasons. The district says that her leadership qualities were "evident during practices and games, extending into the hallways of Long Beach High School, where she consistently ranks among the top of her class."

"Eleuterius' commitment to uplifting her teammates creates an environment of growth and encouragement that strengthens the team dynamic. Her positive influence resonates not only within the team but also throughout the school, exemplifying the spirit of teamwork and perseverance that Long Beach High School cherishes."

In addition to her contributions on the field, Eleuterius is an active member of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, and she recently announced her decision to continue her soccer journey at Pearl River Community College (PRCC) after graduating from Long Beach High School.

"Her dedication, leadership, and unwavering support for her peers exemplify why she is a deserving recipient of this honor."



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