

Optimist Club Westbank- Gretna Winter 2021 News

OCTOBER

Optimist Community Week (October 10-16) recognized our Westbank Optimist Club for participating in a huge community effort along with other Community Service Clubs such as Rotary Club, Knights of Columbus, Kiwanis Clubs and others to help the community of Lafitte. Most residents of Lafitte experienced Hurricane Ida's destruction to their homes, businesses, and livelihoods but having these local Service Clubs rally together and assist the community by cooking and providing hot meals to feed community members, first responders, and contractors living and working in the town to help restore the community.



Our Westbank Optimist Club sponsored a cooking team consisting of 4 members to join in Gretna's **Chili Cook-Off on the River held on October 30** on the Mississippi River Batture. This event was a planned family affair which offered all the chili you can eat along with swamp pop music, a Chili Poker Run, a Kid's Korner with face painting, games, and prizes. Contest judges for the cook-off used a blind method, tasting in rounds to decide the winners. This event benefits the St Joseph Restoration Fund to restore St Joseph Church listed on the National Register of Churches. Our Westbank Optimists received Honorable Mention for their venison chili. We are very proud of our team for this phenomenal accomplishment at our **first** Chili Cook-Off competition.



NOVEMBER

The **Gretna Economic Development Association's 2nd Annual Pink Dress Golf Classic** was held on **November 6th** benefiting West Jefferson Hospital's Women's Imaging Center. Our club sponsored a foursome of members for a fun golf outing. All golfers were encouraged to wear pink, a pink dress, tutu or kilt and play a 4-person scramble from ladies Pink Tees. Everyone had a great time while supporting this community service event.



Our Optimist Club sponsored a table for members to attend the **Westbank Ducks Unlimited Banquet on November 10th**. This event is held annually at the Four Columns Event Hall featured Live & Silent Auctions, Raffles and a delicious meal in fellowship. Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands & associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. This is important to us because the Louisiana coast has been adversely affected by several recent hurricanes.

DECEMBER

Our Optimist Club of the Westbank celebrated our **Annual Christmas Party & Installation Banquet on December 1st** at the Four Columns Event Hall. Our Club President Tom Verret was Master of Ceremonies. Immediate Past Governor Les Lowery installed Club Officers and Board Members. Invocation by Father Gary Copping of St Joseph Catholic Church and Presentation of Colors by West Jefferson High School Air Force Junior ROTC Color Guard. Entertainment during dinner was provided by three local school bands, who are recipients of funds provided by the Westbank Optimist Club for new instruments. Musical entertainment for the Pledge of Allegiance and National Anthem was provided by Sophia Parigi of the Louisiana Kids organization. Our club honors Police Officers from 4 different Westbank parishes with the "Deputy David Michel, Jr. Respect for Law Award". Officers are selected by their parish's Police Chief and honored at this event with family and Optimist friends. We also present an award to honor Veterans via the Army Lt. General Larry Dodgen Memorial Award. We also recognize Organizations that we support throughout the year such as: Louisiana Kids, Inc.; Believer's Life Christmas Toy Drive, Ronald McDonald House Charities of South LA, Jefferson Parish School Bands. And finally, our Installation of Club Officers and Directors was held at this event along with the presentation of New Club Member Pins, and Special Club Awards. We closed out the evening with a Benediction by Father Gary, our recital of the Optimist Creed, and the singing of God Bless America.



The **ChristmasToy Giveaway on December 6th** was held thanks to the generous donation from our Westbank Optimist Club at Believer's Life Family Church in Gretna. A committee managed the selection and purchase of toys for children of all ages. Due to COVID Protocols, the toy giveaway was handled entirely as a drive-thru event. Santa was there to take pictures and handed-out the gifts and candy. Games were also given out including Game Night Cards encouraging family's to have game night once per week.



Gretna's Believe in Miracle Christmas in December was an event new to our club. The Mayor of Gretna asked our club to help sponsor this event along with Rotary Club and Gretna Economic Development Association to make a bigger impact in the community. Club members assisted in visiting needy children and families in the community to hand out giveaways. Donations provided bicycles and age appropriate gifts the children as well as food baskets for the families.





Other events our club members participated in and donated to were the Westbank Quarterback Club's High School Awards Banquet featuring guest speaker former LA State Senate President John Alario, Jr. and the Theta Golden Agers Holiday Celebration honoring 3 of our club members.

