

Guest Column to The News-Star
For the Sunday, April 25, 2010 Edition
From Mayor James E. "Jamie" Mayo

It's a Community Affair

Recently, Donald Northcross, the founder and CEO of the O.K. Program was visiting in town. Northcross is a longtime college friend and former basketball teammate. When we have the opportunity to talk, he usually tells me about the goals and achievements of the young men in his program, and I usually tell him about the many positive things our team is doing here in Monroe. While here, I took the liberty to take him on a tour of Monroe to show him some of the projects our team is working on. In addition to the business successes & infrastructure improvements, I wanted him to see the recreational facilities in our community.

Some of the places we visited were Chennault Park & Golf Course, Forsythe Park, Charles Johnson Park, Robinson Place Park, and several neighborhood parks. The most impressive constant was the number of families and individuals enjoying the beautiful spring Sunday afternoon. People were out walking their dogs, playing volleyball, golf, frisbee, basketball and baseball. Northcross was amazed at the number of citizens enjoying the benefits of our recreational resources.

One of our new projects is a beautiful baseball field near completion behind Marbles Recreation Center on Renwick Street. We invested nearly \$200,000 in community development block grant funds, along with another \$75,000 from the Monroe City School system to create a field that will be utilized as the Carroll high school home baseball field. In addition, it will be used for tournaments, and youth league games. We are sure the Bulldogs are anxious to break in the new field during the 2011 season.

The weather is beautiful this spring, and I want to encourage all of our citizens to enjoy the beauty of nature at our wonderful recreational facilities. This is a prime opportunity to spend quality time with your family & friends as you create memories that will last a lifetime. As you visit our parks, recreation centers, and zoo, please do not hesitate to take note and mention to our staff any ideas or areas of improvement you feel we should consider.

These beautiful amenities belong to you, the public and we want to provide you with the best quality of life experiences that we can.

One of the ways we will be able to provide that service is to utilize the many federal grants we receive as an entitlement city. By being a city with a population of 50,000 or more, Monroe receives numerous federal grants. We want to do all that we can to keep our population numbers above 50,000. One of the ways that you can help us do so is by completing and mailing back your 2010 Census form.

Midway last week the City of Monroe participation level was at 67%. That is exactly one percent above our total participation level from the 2000 Census. Our goal is to have all of our residents counted and for our population numbers to be as accurate as possible. Not just for the sake of numbers, but in order to sustain and enhance services throughout our city. Our census numbers directly affect millions of dollars that go to our local schools, hospitals, senior centers, non-profit agencies and more. So many people rely on these services which we can not afford to have reduced.

Please help us sustain and improve these services by doing your part. Encourage your friends, family, church members, and neighbors to complete the Census form and mail it back. The 2010 Census will help determine how \$400 billion dollars will be spent annually for the next ten years. Monroe, northeast Louisiana and our entire state deserves a fair share of those funds. We can't move forward until you mail it back. It's a community affair. In the meantime, stay Monroe Proud!