Ruston Daily Leader 125th ANNIVERSARY 1894

YOUR FORECAST

Mostly sunny and mild

High Sunday near 64.
Low Sunday near 42.
Chance of rain beginning on Tuesday.

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Ruston Daily Leader

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'Ruston Strong'

Leader photo by NANCY BERGERON

Artist Ashley Greer works on downtown Ruston's newest mural. The mural is located on the side of the JACO Federal Credit Union building that faces Vienna Street and commemorates the outpouring of community support following the April 25 tornado.

New downtown mural symbolizes city's coming together after April 25 tornado

By Nancy Bergeron
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Professional artist Ashley Greer is creating a new mural in downtown Ruston aimed at sending your spirits soaring.

The roughly 12-foot-tall by 24-foot-long mural on the east wall of the JACO Federal Credit Union building that faces Vienna Street will feature a stylized rainbow, the "Ruston Strong" slogan adopted after the April 25 tornado, and balloons.

Greer said the mural is dedicated to the memory of victims Kendra Butler, 35, and her 14-year-old son Remington. They died when a tree crashed into their Evans Street home.

The mural, commissioned by the city, is also meant as a reminder of how Ruston united following the storm, Greer said.

"Day 4 after the tornado, I had the thought 'wouldn't it be good if we had a Ruston Strong mural,'" Greer said. "It would be a constant reminder of how our community came together in the face of a tragedy that affected so many. We wanted to always remember that in art form."

Before the tornado ripped through, the city had already been planning to add another downtown mural, Tori Davis, Ruston's Main Street director and community coordinator, said.

The immediate outpouring of community support after the storm spawned the idea for the next mural, she said.

Davis and Greer met by chance at a Main Street meeting several months after the storm.

"All the pieces just sort of fell into place," Davis said.

The JACO wall was already on a list of possible mural locations pegged by a Louisiana Tech University student study.

Greer began working on the mural Nov. 15. She said the peach color the meat the end of the words "Ruston Strong" "is a symbol of the rainbow after the storm, the moment when all the people, all the city came together and uplifted each other."

Friday's rain kept Greer from finishing the mural by week's end. Three balloons that passerby can appear to be holding are what remain to be painted. That's for people who want to take pictures in front of the mural, Greer said.

"Each person who's holding a balloon is being uplifted," she said.

Davis said the city's downtown mural initiative — there are already municipally commissioned murals on downtown buildings — help give Ruston a sense of place.

The artworks are also a visible sign of the city's commitment to the arts, she said.

Leader photo by T. SCOTT BOKRIGHT

Bearcats reach quarterfinals

Ruston High School head coach Jerrod Baugh addresses his Bearcats after they defeated East Ascension 21-13 Friday night to advance to the quarterfinals of the Class 5A football playoffs. For more on Ruston's win, see page 9.

Parish schools not hit by flu bug

By Caleb Daniel
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Milstead

It seems a recent outbreak of the flu some 30 miles east of Ruston did not affect Lincoln Parish students in their last week of school before Thanksgiving break.

While more than 900 students and many staff members at West Monroe High School were out with flu-like symptoms last week according to a KNOE-TV report, Lincoln Parish Schools Superintendent Mike Milstead said things have held steady locally.

"The Lincoln Parish School system is experiencing normal absenteeism for the week of Nov. 11-22," Milstead said Friday. "Attendance rates remain at about 95%. We have seen some higher than normal absenteeism at the (Lincoln Parish Early Childhood Center) related mainly to strep throat, as well as a few cases at Cypress Springs."

According to the Centers for Disease Control, Louisiana showed the highest levels of influenza-like illness in the country in the week ending Nov. 9, the last week for which data is available.

With flu activity increasing in the region, Milstead said having students out of school for the holiday this week was a lucky break.

"We are fortunate that the Thanksgiving holiday is occurring at this time," he said. "With that, we remain optimistic we can get past this initial outbreak presently occurring at other school systems in north Louisiana."

Lincoln Parish students will return to class on Dec. 2.

Grambling Friends of Football announce Luminary Award recipients

Leader News Service

GRAMBLING — The Grambling Friends of Football have announced their 2019 Luminary Award recipients.

Dozens of nominees were considered, but only four people will receive the award which is reserved for individuals who are considered prominent in their field and have been an inspiration and pillar of support for Grambling State University and the community.

This year's recipients are Ora Evans of Bastrop, (retired educator and community leader); Elvin Franklin of Houston, (philanthropist and retired State Farm associate); Ellen D. Smiley of Homer, (community leader and former provost and vice president for academic affairs at GSU); and Robert Woods of Houston (former GSU and NFL player and current CEO of the Center for Success and Independence). A scholarship will be endowed in each recipient's name that will be awarded at a later date to deserving high school or university students.

Evans

Franklin

Smiley

Woods

The Luminary Award will be presented at 7p.m. Friday at The Black and Gold Ball, which will be held during Bayou Classic weekend in New Orleans at the Westin Hotels and Resorts – Canal Place.

For ticket or sponsorship information, contact Shelia Carr at 713-419-2468.

Grambling Friends of Football, Inc. is a non-profit organization that was originally founded by Super Bowl MVP Doug Williams and 35 other Grambling State University alumni to further the GSU football program.

Although the organization has maintained its original name, over the years the group has expanded its resources to provide financial and moral support for both athletic and academic programs.

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