

GUEST COLUMN

For the Sunday, May 30, 2010 Edition

From: Mayor James E. "Jamie" Mayo

Marketing Monroe on the National Scene

The Monroe City Council and I believe it is our job to market our city a top place for business, sports, and entertainment. So far, our city has received unprecedented exposure and success in 2010.

We remain hopeful the V-Vehicle Company will receive approval for the U.S. Department of Energy Loan. Leaders across the state recognize the VVC as a transformational project which would have a positive ripple effect on the economy of north Louisiana for generations. In this present economy, the 1400 direct jobs and the anticipated 1800 indirect jobs from this project would be a major accomplishment anywhere in the country. After a national site-search, Monroe was chosen as the ideal location for the manufacturing of this 21st century car. It will definitely make a national statement to have that car made right here in Monroe.

The continued expansion of CenturyLink gives our city a larger footprint on the national business map. CenturyLink's acquisition of Embarq and Qwest has cemented their position as the nation's third largest telecommunications company. Our entire community already recognizes CenturyLink as a major employer and corporate citizen. As a Fortune 500 company, CenturyLink brings prestige to our region and state. We eagerly welcome the families who are transferring to the corporate headquarters in Monroe from Colorado, and other states, to begin what we hope will be the next memorable and successful phase of your professional career.

Perhaps, for the first time in the history of DeltaFest and the Louisiana Folklife Festival, we actually made a profit. The final books are not closed, but we have no doubt DeltaFest 2010 will be the best in our history. The festival was headlined by grammy award winning singer Monica, critically acclaimed actor & comedian Mike Epps, and grammy nominated singer Tracey Lawrence. The final concert featuring Mike Epps and Monica on Saturday night drew a standing room only crowd of over 6,000 fans.

The Gaither Homecoming Gospel music concert drew well over 4,000 fans. WWE wrestling drew over 3,000 fans. These are just samples of recent successful events hosted in Monroe. There should be no doubt that the people of Monroe and all of northeast Louisiana will turn out for quality top level entertainment.

The nationally televised Bellator Mixed Martial Arts Tournament gave Monroe exposure to nearly 300 million viewers. A feature segment on Monroe highlighted the University of Louisiana at Monroe, downtown and the beautiful Ouachita River. Monroe joined the list of Boston, Chicago, and Kansas City as Bellator tournament host sites. I was able to promote Monroe as a destination place for entertainment to viewers on FOX Sports, NBC and Telemundo. We continue to receive compliments from fans, promoters and producers about the great crowd, hospitality and fights held in Monroe.

The *Run for the Wall* attracts hundreds of motorcyclist and veterans from across the country. Monroe is a favorite stop in route to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. The soon to be opened Monroe Monarchs field located behind Marbles Community Center will give us another story to share with the nation about our rich sports heritage. The field is named after our former Negro League baseball team. It will serve as a home field for Carroll High School. Thousands of people will be in Monroe, West Monroe and Ouachita Parish this summer participating in the Peak Performance Track Meet, National Archery and Horseshoe competitions. These events are projected to have a multi-million dollar economic impact on our region.

By promoting such successful efforts and events, we can build a strong reputation in many circles. As we show the remainder of the country our many positive assets, others will want to know “What’s going on in Monroe?” We only ask that, as a community, you support these major events and efforts. Together, we are stronger. Monroe is one city, with one future!