

# Riverside

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March 2002

# Remembering the 1927 Flood

Suzanne Hawes receives conservation award

# **Carrollton Gage**



Col. Thomas F. Julich

#### 2002 DISTRICT DOUBLOON

The theme for our district doubloon this year is "Emergency Operations and Disaster Response: Helping Communities Prepare, Respond and Rebuild." Many of you have participated over the years in preparations and actual operations to protect the citizens of south Louisiana and their property against the devastating losses from floods and hurricanes. We will have opportunities in the future to do the same. That's all part of living here in south Louisiana.

Many of you have also helped out in other parts of our country hit by disasters. This past fall we sent some of our people to West Virginia to help out after their flooding event. And we sent five of our folks to New York in the aftermath of Sep 11. I thought it about time

that we honor all of you for the work that you do in this most important area. It is a key mission area that we want to be the best at.

#### LOUISIANA COASTAL AREA EFFORTS

In December's *Riverside* I wrote about the increased pace and visibility of this study since the Governor's Coastal Summit in August. I must tell you that the pace and visibility are still accelerating! The activities of the last few weeks attest to that. In that time we have had a significant document produced, a meeting with Senator Breaux, a gathering of key players on our coastal issues, a briefing to a state committee and testimony to a national commission

On Feb. 28, the governor's Committee on the Future of Coastal Louisiana published their seven recommendations for implementing an expanded coastal restoration program. This committee was formed after the coastal summit, and was asked to prepare a report of needed actions within six months. The committee met numerous times as part of the process. We had plenty of input to the committee through the briefings we provided and attendance and discussions at the meetings. We support the seven recommendations.

Also on Feb. 28, John Saia and I had an opportunity to spend nearly an hour with Senator Breaux in Washington D.C. The only subject discussed was coastal restoration. The senator has had a long history of involvement with coastal issues through the Breaux Act and other actions he has taken. We will continue to keep him and his staff involved as we proceed, and ask his help when appropriate.

On March 8, there was a meeting of key players involved with coastal issues on board the Motor Vessel Mississippi. This was an opportunity to make the members of the Mississippi River Commission and representatives of headquarters and MVD aware of our efforts and need for their support and cooperation as we move

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# Riverside

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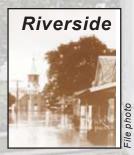
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Historic photos of Plaucheville, La., are vivid reminders of the disasterous, great flood of 1927. Morgan City grateful for

By Amanda McClain

Torgan City passed a resolution on Jan. 22 to say "Thank You" Lto the Corps for its assistance in making the Atchafalaya Basin Program a reality.

The resolution came as a surprise to those involved in the project, including Frank Duarte, project manager on the Lake Palourde project. Duarte said, "Normally we just hear when things go bad, so this was really a pleasant surprise."

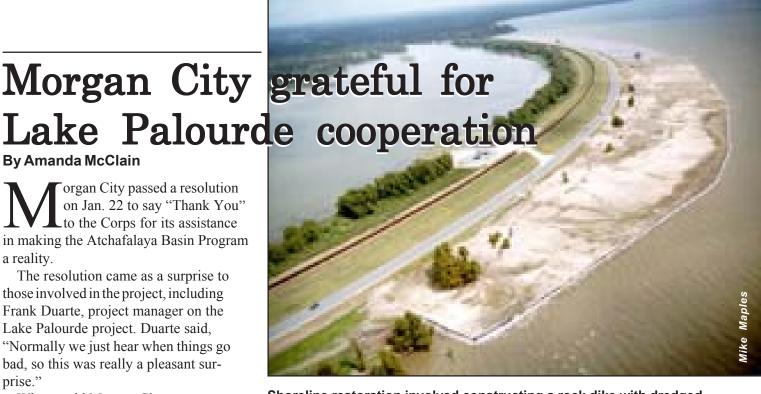
Why would Morgan City pass a resolution of this kind? Duarte believes it has to do with how close the Corps has been working with the city.

Morgan City and St. Mary Parish have a master plan for things it would like to see done in the Atchafalaya Basin. This involves developing a recreational area and visitor center.

The Corps has attended town meetings to keep the city informed about plans for the area.

Morgan City coordinated its master plan with the Corps, and the two agencies worked together every step of the way.

A good example of the efforts the Corps made to help



Shoreline restoration involved constructing a rock dike with dredged materials from another project in nearby Berwick Bay.

Morgan City is the Lake Palourde project. Erosion problems on Highway 70 made it necessary to construct a rock dike 400 feet from the shore. The Corps has been dredging in Berwick Bay and using the dredged materials to build up land behind the dike.

The Corps expedited the project and Morgan City will soon be able to use the newly created land for recre-

Mark Wingate, senior project manager, worked extensively with the city to help them with their recreational goals for the area.

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forward.

On March 14, I joined King Milling, chairman of the governor's Committee on the Future of Coastal Louisiana, and Randy Hanchey, assistant secretary of DNR, in a briefing to the combined Louisiana Senate and House Natural Resource committees. We must have the support of the state House and Senate to implement our coastal restoration program. This is an effort to educate them on the problem and ongoing actions to address it.

On March 15, I had the opportunity to provide testimony to the Pew Oceans Commission who visited New Orleans as part of the first independent review of the

policies to restore and protect the oceans in over 30 years. Also giving testimony was King Milling and Dr. Len Bahr of the Governor's office. Ideally, an outcome of the commission review will be clear support of our coastal restoration efforts.

I will continue to update you periodically on this extremely important work. I want all of you to be aware of these activities because of the huge impacts they will have along our coast. As residents here in south Louisiana, this should be important to you. This also represents a tremendous challenge for our district in the future to implement the large-scale projects that we need to help save our coastal wetlands.

**Correction:** A photo in last month's issue on page seven was incorrectly identified as the Davis Pond Freshwater Diversion Project. The photo was actually of the Whitney-Barataria Pumping Station.



For her strong leadership in environmental programs, Suzanne Hawes was presented with this statuette of a bald eagle from the Louisiana Wildlife Federation.

# Hawes receives Louisiana Wildlife Federation award.

Suzanne Hawes (PM) was honored on March 2 with the Louisiana Wildlife Federation's Governor's Award. The award is presented annually, from nominations submitted by the public, to the person or organization deemed to have made the most outstanding contribution toward the protection and wise use of the state's natural resources during the previous year.

Hawes received the award at the 38th Conservation Achievement Recognition Banquet held in Marksville.

Hawes was cited for leadership in coordinating the state and federal effort to understand and remedy the massive marsh dieback along the Louisiana coast, but even more for her commitment to the environment that has helped bring a conservation ethic to the Corps. Over her 30-year career, she has become the environmental conscience of the district.

Hawes has been the bridge between the conservation community and the Corps, and just as important, the bridge between each district commander - a critical role in keeping the momentum on long-term efforts like coastal restoration and the conservation and recreation program for the Atchafalaya Basin.

# **Beth Cottone named chief of Project Management Branch - East**

By Terri Jackson

In a division seeing many personnel shifts, Beth Cottone recently became the new chief of Project Management Branch - East.

A native of Ville Platte, Cottone received a bachelor's degree in art and science from Louisiana Tech. Cottone later obtained a master's degree in engineering from Tulane University.

Asked what interested her most about her new position, Cottone answered, "I thoroughly enjoy the challenge and sense of accomplishment."

Cottone has faced many challenges in the 19 years she has worked for the Corps. She began here as a design engineer in the Design Branch, Levee Section. She then moved to Project Management Branch where she worked as a project manager. In 1997 Cottone had her hands full as senior project manager when she was promoted to chief of east branch.

As chief of Project Management Branch - East, Cottone now supervises and gives support to project managers, providing executive leadership and guidance to successfully execute district programs.

"The employees in my branch are extremely capable and successful at getting the job done well," said Cottone. "Most of my efforts will be focused on implementing changes within our business processes."

Cottone remembers playing sports as a child as being her first encounter with team activities. "Since then, I have been a team player and a firm believer that each team member needs to do their individual part to make the collective team successful."



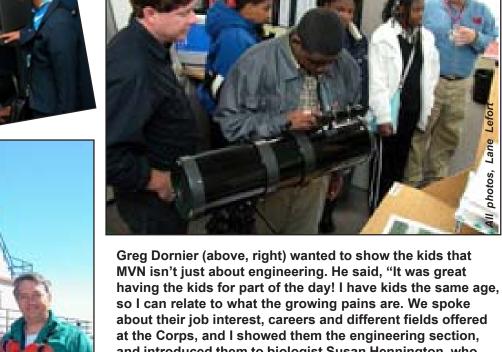
said Cottone.

Cottone is married with two children. Her favorite pastime is working with computer graphics.

# Kids experience MVN workday

A group of eighth graders from New Orleans Charter School shadowed MVN employees in five different departments on Feb. 27. Mike Maples, Reprographics, Bill Emmett, Operations, Tim Black, Contracting, Greg Dornier, Operations, and Ronald King, Engineering, all volunteered their time to show the kids what the workday of a district employee involves. Maples said that the kids this year seemed "exceptionally gifted."





so I can relate to what the growing pains are. We spoke about their job interest, careers and different fields offered at the Corps, and I showed them the engineering section, and introduced them to biologist Susan Hennington, who told them what biologists do. We had several exhibits planned for them including a favorite hobby of David Mayeaux (above, left) in Astronomy: David showed them a telescope and taught them about searching for the stars. Also, Michelle Newman showed them the in's and out's about dredging with cutterhead and hopper dredges. We all enjoyed it and will be looking forward to next year!"

# Article by Pam Clark, MVD Interviews by Eric Lincoln

his year marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the devastating flood of 1927 that caused death and widespread destruction throughout the lower Mississippi Valley, from Arkansas to Louisiana, from Cairo, Ill., to the Gulf of Mexico.

The nation's most destructive flood began with the heavy rains that pounded the central basin of the Mississippi in the summer of 1926. By September, swollen tributaries were pouring through Kansas and Iowa.

From December 1926 to April 1927, heavy rains continued throughout the central areas of the basin. There were three flood waves on the lower Mississippi in January, February and April, increasing in magnitude each time.

In February, the White and Little Red rivers broke through the levees in Arkansas, flooding more than 100,000 acres with 10 to 15 feet of water. Five thousand people were left homeless.

The April rains were very intense and river stages rose rapidly on the Mississippi.

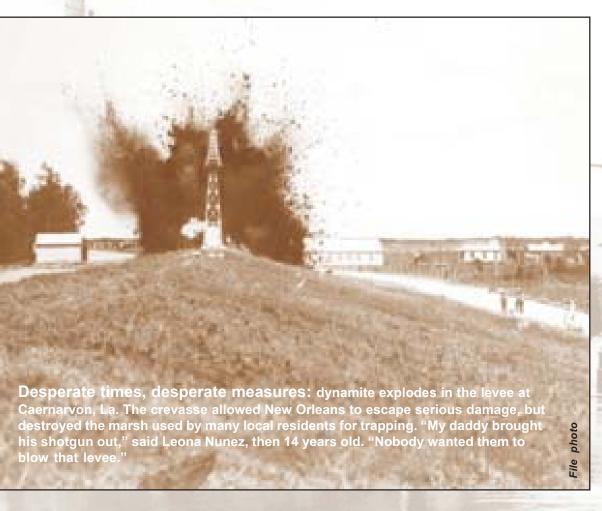
By April 9, more than one million acres of land were covered by floodwaters, and the rain continued to fall. On April 19, a levee near New Madrid, Mo., burst open, flooding an additional one million acres. Portions of seven states (Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi) were under water.

It is not known exactly how many died in the great disaster. Historians once estimated the death toll at 250 victims, but deaths due to disease and exposure after the immediate flood are hard to tally; some

estimates exceed 1,000 deaths

At Mounds Landing near Greenville, Miss., for example, a flood surge blew out a levee where thousands of terrified workers were building a bunker of sandbags. Swirling westward, the flood ravaged 2.7 million acres of farmland before rejoining the mainstem of the Mississippi at Vicksburg, Miss.

The levee break at Mounds Landing was the greatest single crevasse ever to occur on the Mississippi River. It flooded an area 50 miles wide and 100 miles long with up to 20 feet of water. It put water over the tops



# The 75th Anniversary of

of houses 75 miles away.

There were also numerous breaks in the levees on the west

bank of the river, inundating lands as far west as Monroe, La.

As the wall of water moved south into Louisiana, state and city officials prepared for the worst. Governor James Thomson, with the concurrence of Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover and the Corps' Chief Engineer Edgar Jadwin, authorized a plan to turn the flood into the St. Bernard and Plaquemine Parish marshlands, a desperate attempt to save New Orleans.

On April 29,

1927, at Caernarvon, 13 miles below Canal Street, 39 tons of dynamite was used to crevasse the levee (left), sending 250,000 cubic feet of water per second through a tall-grass marshland.

New Orleans escaped serious damage, but the diversion annihilated much of the marsh traditionally trapped by the Canary Islanders whose 18th century foreparents had colonized Louisiana for Spain.

On May 17 the flood continued south and west toward the City of

were floating away."

By August 1927, when the flood finally subsided, the disaster had

On higher ground: dogs and pigs take refuge together on an embankment during the flood. Pauline Gonzalez, who was 12 years old in 1927, remembers scenes like this. "The cows got up on the levee early on," she said. "They had more sense than we did."



Melville and the fast-running Atchafalaya River. "The water leaped the crevasse with fury," reported a contributor to the Memphis Commercial Appeal.

"Breakers were shooting through and leaping over each other way up into the streets of the town. [The flood] swept everything before it. Washtubs, work benches, household furniture, chickens and domestic animals displaced about 700,000 people. Twenty-six thousand square miles were inundated to depths up to 30 feet, levees were crevassed, and cities, towns and farms lay waste. Crops were destroyed and industries and transportation paralyzed.

At a time when the federal budget barely exceeded \$3 billion, the flood, directly and indirectly, caused

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# The Great Flood of 1927

### FLOOD, from page 7

an estimated \$1 billion in property damage.

It was a disaster of tremendous proportion, awakening the national conscience to the need for a comprehensive program to control the giant river. From destruction and ruin came the 1928 Flood Control Act, which authorized the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project, the



Nunez's friend, Pauline Gonzalez, who was 12 years old in 1927, recalled being able to gather crawfish that had been pushed out of the marsh and onto the streets. "We'd just pick 'em up and take them home, and there was lunch," she said. "They were all over the road."

"That's how we learned to eat them," said neighbor Emily Vega.

Gonzales said that her father saved the family car by putting it up on the levee. The animals in the area were already there, though. "The cows got up on the levee early on ... they had more sense than we did," she said.

Nunez and Gonzalez admitted that overall they didn't have very good memories of the flood. "It was terrible," Nunez said, "seeing all that water gushing like that." nation's first comprehensive flood control system.

Until 1927, a "levees only" approach to flood protection was used up and down the valley, and most levees were built by local levee boards with the Mississippi River Commission's help.

However, the 1927 flood illustrated that the "levees only" approach was inadequate to control and safely handle the river's flood flows. It was time to take a new approach. More than 300 competing flood control plans were proposed, and Chief Engineer General Edgar Jadwin's proposal won the competition. His



Leona Nunez, grandmother of Christie
Nunez, Engineering, was 14 years old when the
flood hit. She remembers how most of the
residents, including her father, in the
Caernarvon area, didn't want the levee to be
blasted with dynamite because of the destruction the break in the levee would cause to

their land. "My daddy brought his shotgun out," she said. "Most everyone didn't want them to do it ... [the Corps] had some misjudgment there."

The flood destroyed the fur trade as well, since most of the muskrat and minks hunters depended on for their income were killed. "They were all washed out," said Nunez. "My

father trapped for a living ... the flood really hurt us."

Nunez displayed her newspaper clippings from 1927 (left) that showed the path of the flood and Corps plans for levee protection.

plan differed from the "levees only" approach in three major respects: (1)

the incorporation of floodways to divert peak flows and hold down stages in the main channel; (2) backwater areas to divert peak flows from the river and store a portion of the flood waters near the peak of the flood resulting in reduced downstream stages; and (3) designing all works on the basis of a project flood — a great hypothetical flood derived from examining historic rainfall and runoff patterns.

This comprehensive system of works was formalized in the 1928 Flood Control Act, which authorized the Jadwin Plan — or what came to be known as the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project.

The Mississippi River and Tributaries Project has four major elements: (1) levees, (2) floodways and control structures, (3) channel improvements and stabilization measures, and (4) tributary basin improvements. These elements work together to provide flood protection and navigation, and foster environmental protection and restoration.

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# Study shows "leaky" Morganza to the Gulf levee will replenish wetlands

"This project satisfies the

Coast 2050," said Dayan.

coastal restoration needs of

By Terri Jackson

The Morganza to the Gulf of Mexico Feasibility Study is nearly completed as the district finalizes the study's report, released in October 2001, and responds to government agency and public comments.

The Corps conducted the Morganza to the Gulf Feasibility Study to determine the federal interest in providing hurricane protection for about 1,700 square miles of southeast Louisiana. "This project will not only reduce flood damage, but also prevent saltwater intrusion, reduce coastal wetland loss and minimize adverse impacts on navigation and industry," said Rodney Greenup, project manager.

"The project is big, but the reasons are small," said Nathan Dayan, environmental manager.

"The final project will provide hurricane protection to the study

area," he added. Currently, the levees in the area provide protection against flooding, but do not provide adequate hurricane protection.

The goal is to formulate flood protection to maximize the number of residential and commercial structures protected, while minimizing the adverse impacts to the environment, local interests and navigation.

"Our Engineering Division exemplified teamwork by tapping the engineering services of every district in the Mississippi Valley to complete the design and cost estimates shown in the report," said Greenup.

The project will soon progress to the pre-construction, engineering and design phase. In this phase, engineers are heavily involved. "They will formulate a plan of action and assess the impacts of construction," said Dayan.

To evaluate environmental concerns, the Corps has created an interagency Habitat Evaluation Team to estab-

#### FLOOD, from page 8

The MR&T project is 87 percent complete and provides significant flood protection, navigation and environmental benefits. Since 1928, a total of \$11 billion has been invested in planning, construction, operation, and maintenance of the MR&T project.

For that investment of \$11 billion, the MR&T project has prevented \$258 billion in flood damages to date — a 24 to 1 return on damages reduced per dollar spent.

The Mississippi Valley Division includes portions of 12 states and encompasses

lish a mitigation plan. This team consists of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Louisiana departments of Wildlife and Fisheries and Natural Resources.

"The Habitat Evaluation Team carried out a wetland value assessment (WVA) to determine what type and quality of wetland we would impact," said Dayan.

Most levee systems are thought to be bad for wetlands, but the WVA analysis showed the project's overall impacts would have a positive effect on the coastal wet-

lands in the area. "This project not only satisfies the hurricane protection need but also satisfies the coastal restoration needs of Coast 2050," said Dayan.

Coast 2050 is a joint planning initiative among the Louisiana Wetland

Conservation and Restoration Authority, Breaux Act Task Force and Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Coastal Zone Management Authority. This partnership is geared to develop a strategic plan to protect and sustain the state's coastal resources for future generations.

The Morganza to the Gulf final project will consist of 72 miles of earthen levee, 12 flood control structures and the Houma Navigational Canal Lock. "We will begin construction of the lock in 2004," said Greenup.

Assuming there is Congressional authorization, environmental compliance and funding, construction of the multi-lift levee is expected to take eight years. The Corps designed the levee as a multi-lift structure because of the softness of the region's soil. Dirt that is piled onto the surface eventually consolidates, squeezing all water out of the soil, causing it to compact.

The Morganza to the Gulf of Mexico project is highly unique. "It is a hurricane protection levee that was designed as a leaky system," said Greenup.

The term "leaky" refers to the navigational and environmental structures that will be built inside the structure to allow tidal exchange between wetlands inside and outside of the levee system.

"Also, because of the Houma Navigational Lock, the Corps will be able to manage the fresh water from the Atchafalaya River and prevent saltwater intrusion," Greenup added.

The Corps' ultimate goal is completion of the \$680 million project that is estimated to take 16 years to complete.

# **NOD** at Work

# **Operations**

# MVN WILL RELOCATE CEMETERY COVERED BY LEVEE IN 1933—

The district will relocate an estimated 800-850 graves of the former Braziel Baptist Church cemetery, near White Castle, that were covered by a levee built in 1933. The levee was part of large-scale improvement of flood control on the Lower Mississippi in response to the Great Flood of 1927. Cost is estimated at \$4.2 million for the design, cemetery relocation and associated levee work. The Corps discovered human remains in September 1999 in an archaeological test trench dug in preparation for slope-paving. We recommended that the cemetery be relocated, and Mississippi Valley Division approved the plan and design work can now begin.

## **Public Affairs**

### GEOLOGIC-LITERARY ORPHANS GET HOMES—

Public Affairs found homes for about 1,000 surplus sets of an authoritative Corps publication on geology of the Lower Mississippi Valley. Office-space needs squeezed the books out of Engineering Division's Files Room. The famed Roger T. Saucier of



Chalmette High School math and physics students listen to Jack Fredine (PM) explain freshwater diversion during a National Engineers Week presentation in the DARM on Feb. 20. Other speakers included David Elmore (ED), Greg Gagliano (IM) and Ralph Sheid (ED).

Waterways Experiment Station prepared the work, "Geomorphology and Quaternary Geologic History of the Lower Mississippi Valley," in December 1994. Volume I is the illustrated text, and Volume II a large book of color maps. Most of the sets went to numerous places in MVN, including Geotechnical Branch, Project Management, Coastal Restoration Collocation Team, Operations

Division and the Lafayette Area Office. The next largest supply went to an appreciative WES, which sent a vehicle from Vicksburg. Elements of UNO, SLU, ULL, Tulane and LSU got copies, as did the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Jefferson Parish Public Library, Historic New Orleans Collection and The Times-Picayune. Other agencies included Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Louisiana Geological Survey, U.S. Geological Survey and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. One of the most pleased recipients was the LSU Geography Department, which maintains the late Dr. Saucier's papers and also sent a

There are a few sets of the maps remaining.



Rick Tillman participates in an interactive panel discussion with students from Mississippi schools in a VTC broadcast on Feb. 19. The discussion centered on engineers that responded to the WTC disaster in New York.

# Around the District



The fourth annual Castle Kids parade rolled on Feb. 8. This year's King and Queen were Brian Arceneaux-Sackett, son of Claudette Arceneaux and Robert Sackett, community parents, and Syndney Krasnoff, daughter of Eric Krasnoff and Kelley Porter. Eric Krasnoff is employed by the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves.



## Congratulations

to Philip Schinetsky, 13, son of **Steven A. Schinetsky** (OD-H), who placed Second All-Around at the Tabasco Invitational Gymnastics Meet, Feb. 10, in New Iberia. Philip placed First on pommel horse, and Second on

floor, vault, rings, parallel bars, and high bar. Philip and his Class 4 team also took 1st place in the Team competition for the East Jefferson YMCA.

### Condolences

to **Rick Bush** (PM), whose father passed away on Feb. 13.

to **Micheal Breaux** (ED), whose grandfather, Phillip Minor Kenner, died Feb 27. Phillip Kenner was the last member with the Kenner surname for which the city of Kenner is named after.

to **Gayle Boone** (LMO), whose mother, Gertrude Giebel, passed away on Feb. 18.

to **Troy Davis** (OD), whose father, Roy Davis, passed away on Feb. 20.

to **Douglas Dillon** (ED), whose father, Lawrence Dillon, passed away on Feb. 20.

#### Welcome

to new employee **Michael Zack**, coming to MVN on Feb. 25. Michael is a retired Coast Guard Officer, and was also an attorney for a private law firm that specialized in marine litigation.

to **G. Rogers Sloan** ("Bitsy"), joining the district on March 11. Bitsy previously served as attorney in the Office of Counsel for Vicksburg District.



Last month we solicited your comments on "Comfort Levels." Many of the respondents agreed that comfort levels at work were determined by teamwork and communication between coworkers.

## The Corps family

My comfort level at work would have to be my coworkers, my friends. They keep me sane! As busy as we have all gotten in the past few years both on the job and with our families, it is nice to know that you DO have a good job and support to do that job well. It seems to me that since we have entered the age of cell phones, beepers, and eating in our cars, we basically spend less time "relaxing." It is nice to know when you are at work that you do not have to handle the stress alone. I know I can always count on my family's support for any problems that arise at home but it is nice to know that I also have support from my "Corps family" too. To me this is very "comforting!"

**Toni Baldini** Project Management

## A group that clicks

My comfort level is working in an office environment with a group of people that really clicks. By that, I mean everyone does what he or she is professionally trained to do, and to a degree where if something goes wrong, or if a problem occurs, automatically they resolve it and get the office back on track. Also, from diligent teamwork, commu-

nication and mapping out the situation, problems are solved.

Then everything goes back to the calmness of the office, to where you can count on your co-worker, knowing you have someone that can cover your back. That is a very acceptable level of comfort to me.

Patricia Broussard Logistics Management

Patricia is our Talk Back winner for February.

#### Great friends

To be comfortable at work, I also learned that I had to first take care of my mental and physical needs or I am of no benefit to anyone. We all have weaknesses. I became more comfortable at work when I realized that I am more powerful when I rise above my weaknesses rather than succumb to them. In that respect, friends help tremendously and I am fortunate to say that I have some great friends here. All of these things have helped me to become more comfortable at work but more importantly, it has helped me to become more comfortable with me - the journey has to be worth it. And that is what it's all about, isn't it?

**Sylvia J. Robinson** Resource Management

TO HAVE YOUR IDEAS PRINTED IN THE NEXT ISSUE

AND

WIN A RESERVED PARKING SPOT FOR AN ENTIRE MONTH

# RESPOND BY APRIL 12

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT THIS MONTH'S TALK BACK TOPIC:

## FLOOD MEMORIES

>WHAT STORIES CAN YOU TELL ABOUT FLOODS THAT HAVE STRUCK LOUISIANA?

THE EDITOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PICK WHICH RESPONSES TO PUBLISH AND AWARD.

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