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Harahan Christmas and New Years Message

As Christmas Day approaches and the dawn of a New Year rapidly approaches on the horizon, it is a good time to reflect upon the good we have witnessed, cherish those that we love and remind ourselves that it is in human nature to always find fresh cause for optimism – that hope does spring eternal.

Our community has been able to overcome and accomplish so much despite a challenge we cannot see or touch; mandates we did not plan for; masks that we have never worn; social distancing that we have never practiced. Quarantines. Isolation. Fear. Anxiety and plenty of tears too. We have lost those that were loved and welcomed new ones to hold and nurture. We've looked for a shoulder to lean on and many times have offered ours in return. And let's not forget our annual threat of Tropical Storms and Hurricanes – six this year to come our way. We've run the gamut and yet, here we are, standing at the end of 2020 and staring at the start of 2021.

I don't think I have ever been prouder to call Harahan "home" than I am at this moment.

Our businesses have scratched and clawed their way through this pandemic like maybe no other community in our region, state and will put up their will and determination against any other town in our country. We've added businesses – including The Blake, a \$30+ million investment in our community. We had one restaurant expanding into a larger space – and beginning to cater for the Saints and Pelicans; we gained three new restaurants and bar and had another one featured on the *Food Network*. Amazon Studios chose Harahan as their base to film the award-winning series *Leverage*, because they "love this place" – their words, not mine. Harahan truly has become a beacon of light during these dark times and our positive message has resonated throughout the region and state. Going forward that will only help Harahan grow, prosper and get stronger.

During the last year, we have built a great support network and resources team. The *Louisiana Economic Development Commission*, and *GNO, Inc.* are helping us craft a long-term plan for strategic growth; the *World War II Museum* and *Lakefront Management Authority* are offering guidance with our plans to revitalize Zeringue Park; *The Nature Conservancy* and *Pontchartrain Conservancy* are guiding us in developing a plan for the river batture; the *Delta Regional Authority* and *Regional Planning Commission* has helped us with our Federal Grant applications; the *Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative* has helped us develop a stronger relationship with similar communities along our country's greatest natural asset; and most recently *NOLA Gold* reached out to us about providing clinics for our kids, holding a fundraiser for our recreation department, having some of their training camp for their upcoming *Major League Rugby* season at our

playground and more importantly, looking for property to invest in to house their players that live here year-round.

Our team in Baton Rouge has been nothing less than fantastic – *Senator Kirk Talbot* and *Representative John Illg*, have both conveyed our positive message to their colleagues in the Senate and House and it has helped tremendously in our efforts to improve our stature among the many small towns that make Louisiana a great place to live. We have a very strong team in Washington, D.C. as well, in particular *Senator Kennedy* and *Representative Scalise* – all working to help us make Harahan the best it can possibly be. Locally, our relationship with the Parish Council has probably never been better. *Parish Reps. Deano Bonano, Scott Walker, Dominick Impastato, Parish Council Chairman Ricky Templet* and *Parish President Cynthia Lee-Sheng* have all paid their compliments to our community’s resiliency during these past twelve months – especially during COVID and our recovery efforts after Hurricane Zeta. *Parish Representative Jennifer Van Vrancken* and *Michelle Gonzales, Director of the Parish Ecosystem and Coastal Management Department* are working with us on our river batture ideas. Harahan has been praised about being ranked #1 in the state for participating in the census. And even the *City of Kinder, LA* dedicated a day honoring Harahan after our Disaster Response Team’s hard work to help that small community stand back up after Hurricane Laura.

Our town has a lot of great things happening in the coming months and years ahead. A lot of things that have never been tried and a lot of things that have never been accomplished. It won’t be easy, but achieving great things never is.

Finally, none of this would have happened without you. The men and women and families that call Harahan “home”. Without your strong will and resolve, we would not have made it through this mess. People want to be a part of something great and you are making it happen.

It’s always good to remind ourselves of that; that when needed, there are plenty of shoulders to lean on and lending hands reaching out to help; that this too shall pass; that ***Small Towns CAN Do Big Things*** and that in Harahan, hope still does spring eternal.

Have a Very Merry Christmas and a Safe and Happy New Year!!!

Tim Baudier - Mayor