

Guest Column to Monroe Dispatch
For the Thursday, December 22, 2016 Edition
From Mayor Jamie Mayo

The Joy of the Season

On behalf of my family, our City Council and employees let me wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I pray that God blesses you and your loved ones with traveling grace, fun, food and fellowship during the Holiday season. I want to encourage you to do what it takes to spend some quality time with your family. Life is too precious to miss out on opportunities to create memories that will last a lifetime.

For just a moment, I want to salute our city employees and supportive community benefactors for the wonderful acts of charity they have performed throughout this year. In my *60 for 60* projects, #12 is "*City Employee Community Benevolence Projects.*" To make it plain, I have asked our Monroe city employees to get more actively involved in community outreach projects. I am proud to say they have more than answered the call. Our outstanding employees donated hundreds of school supplies, collected over 3000 pounds of canned food, helped donate 200 Thanksgiving turkeys, committed thousands of dollars to the United Way, and donated more than 300 Christmas toys, books and bikes this year.

I know that so many kids (young and old) are excited about Christmas because of the gifts they receive. I mean...who doesn't like receiving gifts? But, let us all remember (and remind others) that Jesus is the reason for the season. He and his life-saving sacrifice on Calvary's cross is the true joy of the season...the greatest gift that God has ever given us. Let us never lose sight of that.

As we prepare to enter 2017, the City of Monroe will be working diligently on various flood recovery, prevention and resiliency projects. Our city, parish and region still has a long way to go to fully restore and strengthen our infrastructure, housing, drainage and other important aspects. We will continue working with our local, state, and federal leaders to secure and maximize federal dollars and other funding available to further our efforts.

The entire community is invited to attend the City of Monroe's 38th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday salute. Our theme is "Unity in the Community." Please come and enjoy a great inspirational message. Help us salute this year's award winners, and enjoy our traditional lunch. The event will take place 11:30am until 1 pm Thursday, January 12th at the W.L. "Jack" Howard Theater.

Within the next couple of weeks, we will officially begin our participation in a Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals effort called *Own Your Own Health*. The City of Monroe is creating a team that will be competing against the City of Alexandria, LA. Our goal is to get as many people as possible to become more physically active. The more active you are, the more it helps our team in the competition. We want individuals, schools, churches, organizations and etc. to all join the City of Monroe team. To learn more about the effort, visit www.oyohla.com and look out for future updates through our local media.

By working together, we are making a difference. Monroe is one city, with one future!