

# METRO

SECTION  
**B**Wednesday,  
March 19, 2014

A/B



Saints wide receiver Joe Morgan, 25, was arrested in May and booked with DWI.

## Morgan's DWI charge dropped

*He agrees to join  
diversion program*

By Paul Purpura  
Staff writer

Jefferson Parish prosecutors on Tuesday dismissed a drunk-driving charge against New Orleans Saints wide receiver Joe Morgan, who has accepted entry into the district attorney's office diversion program. The prosecutors could resurrect the charges in the future if Morgan does not complete the program.

Morgan, a free agent who turns 26 on Sunday, was arrested May 25. State Police troopers found him sleeping in the driver's seat of his sport-utility vehicle, parked on the Earhart Expressway shoulder near Causeway Boulevard.

His trial on charges of DWI and driving without a license was scheduled to begin Tuesday before 1st Parish Court Judge Rebecca Olivier in Metairie. But his attorneys, Anita McCrossen and Donald "Chick" Foret, and prosecutors jointly asked the judge to delay the trial while

See **MORGAN, B-2**

## Interviews for OPSB leader to begin

*They'll take place  
behind closed doors*

By Danielle Dreilinger  
Staff writer

The first interviews with candidates for Orleans Parish public schools superintendent were announced Tuesday, and they will take place behind closed doors. That means the public will get only a glimpse of the process.

The two local candidates, lawyer and businessman D'Juan Hernandez and Kyle Wedberg, president and chief executive of the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, will be interviewed today starting at 4:30 p.m.

The two other finalists are to be interviewed Thursday at a time still to be determined: Thomas Darden, is a charter school administrator in Philadelphia, and Edmond Heatley, the education commissioner of Bermuda. Interim Superintendent Stan Smith said both out-of-town candidates will be interviewed today.

According to the agenda posted on the school system's website, the School Board will start

See **SCHOOL, B-2**

## Marigny bar has neighbors on edge

SHOOTINGS, UNRULY CUSTOMERS SCARE RESIDENTS

By Naomi Martin  
Staff writer

A 24-hour neighborhood bar in Faubourg Marigny has shifted from a community benefit to a danger, several residents of the New Orleans neighborhood said Monday. A shooting left a man dead outside Iggy's on Saturday night, the second

murder in six months near the bar at North Rampart and Touro streets.

The owner of Iggy's denied the bar had anything to do with the crime on the streets outside. But neighbors said the violence has added urgency to a growing list of their complaints about the establishment, where they say a laissez-faire attitude has attracted a thriving criminal

element.

Crowds of 30 now gather on the sidewalk outside. Motorists stop to engage in quick conversations with loiterers, a sign of what neighbors suspect are drug deals. Some bar customers urinate on the sidewalk or smoke marijuana on nearby doorsteps. Fights often spill out onto the street.

"I've heard gunshots, and it scares the crap out of me," neighbor Chodie Gabor said. "If someone's out there and they do a drive-by, it's indiscriminate. It is disturbing."

On Saturday, witnesses reported eight gunshots around 11:45 p.m. Atiba Pilart, 40, was killed.

On Sept. 7, gunfire at the same corner erupted around 2:30 a.m., leaving Gerald Williams, 21, dead and two others wounded.

Many residents said they think working surveillance cameras, better lighting and the presence of a police officer or a security guard — or at least a bouncer — at the front door would dissuade people from selling drugs or shooting each other there. "It's just poor management," neighbor Lauren Fred said. "It's a lack of care or consideration for the neighbors."

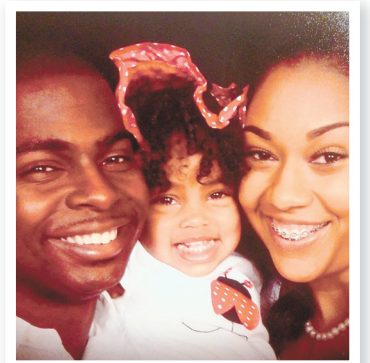
Reached by phone, the bar's

See **IGGY'S, B-2**



Shavone Cheneau displays a portrait that NOPD Detective Charlie Hoffacker drew of her slain husband, Shawn Cheneau, for the family to auction off to increase the Crimestoppers reward in the case.

NAOMI MARTIN / STAFF



ABOVE: Shavone Cheneau says Shawn Cheneau was a loving father to their daughter, Anylah.  
LEFT: Leroy Price is wanted on a charge of second-degree murder in Shawn Cheneau's shooting.

## A VICTIM REMEMBERED



Detective uses art to aid  
Gentilly family's case

By Naomi Martin  
Staff writer

New Orleans homicide Detective Charlie Hoffacker has knocked on dozens of parents' doors. Some stay quiet, others break down in tears. Sometimes they take their anger out on him.

The family on Simmons Place in Gentilly, though, was unlike any he had ever met.

When the detective went to tell them he would be investigating what happened to their loved one, Shawn Cheneau, who was gunned

down in a Burger King parking lot in November, the family hugged him and offered him dinner.

Four months later, the detective has developed a suspect in the killing, and he also has forged deep bond with the relatives of the 28-year-old nicknamed Buck, who Hoffacker quickly learned was very loved.

With an arrest warrant in hand in the shooting — but no suspect in custody — the detective is using his hobby as an artist to raise money and awareness that he hopes will finally help him close the case.

"I've never experienced the love and faith this family has in me as

a detective," Hoffacker said. "It's very comforting to know people have faith in me."

**A special case**

It was the day after Cheneau's death when Hoffacker knocked on the family's Gentilly door.

Cheneau's wife, mother, father, sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins listened intently as Hoffacker told them what little he had learned so far: a gold Toyota Solara was seen speeding away from the Burger King parking lot where Cheneau was killed.

No suspects. No motive.

All of his cases matter, Hoffacker says, but this one stuck with him. He started talking to the victim's mother, sisters or wife almost daily. Cheneau's sister, Sheena, invited him to Thanksgiving

dinner.

By January, he had an arrest warrant for a man named Leroy Price. Price, 28, has a rap sheet that includes multiple convictions for attempted heroin and attempted gun possession. He was arrested in October 2011 on a count of murder, but charges were never filed.

Weeks went by, though, and Price managed to elude police.

So Hoffacker turned to charcoal.

Hoffacker, 32, took up art in 2011 to relieve stress from seeing violence and pain every day on the city's streets. The hobby soon morphed into a second profession. His gallery shows have been well-received. His paintings now sell

See **CHENEAU, B-2**

## St. Bernard Council orders civic center audit

*Vote on increasing  
water rate is delayed*

By Benjamin Alexander-Bloch  
Staff writer

The St. Bernard Parish Council voted Tuesday to authorize an investigation into St. Bernard Parish's civic center and "any other nonprofit organizations directly associated with St. Bernard Parish government."

The council also tabled a vote on a possible water and sewer rate increase, with Councilman Ray Lauga asking for that postponement pending an independent audit of the sewer and water department.

In terms of the potential water and sewer rate increase, Parish President Dave Peralta said that he might hire a firm to conduct an audit by as early as the end of this week.

Councilman Guy McInnis had pushed at the March 5 council meeting — when the rate increase was introduced — for a third-party audit of the water and sewer system. The proposed increase would raise water and sewer rates by 34 percent to help improve infrastructure in a water system that has been scrutinized since a brain-eating amoeba was found in the system last fall.

For residents who use 10,000 gallons a month, that increase would cause a jump from \$34.27 to \$46.70.

The civic center investigation into "the business policies and

procedures" of it and other such nonprofits came about a week after the civic center's director Stephanie Bachemin was first suspended and then fired.

The civic center is managed by a nonprofit corporation, St. Bernard Cultural Center Inc., created in 1991 and currently overseen by three board members, all parish employees: John Rahaim, who heads the parish Office of Emergency Preparedness; Ross Gonzales, who is the parish's finance director, and Melissa O'Neil, who is an assistant manager in the parish's recovery office.

The only other nonprofit organization directly associated

with parish government is the St. Bernard Recreational Complex Inc., which in part manages the Val Reiss complex.

Councilman Richie Lewis, who introduced the resolution Tuesday, said he and Councilman Guy McInnis had spoken with state auditor's office officials earlier Tuesday, and that while "they said that it is probable that they will come out and do an investigation," that "they haven't actually made a decision to come yet."

The legislative auditor's office Tuesday did not respond to requests for comments on the matter.

"We had some poor management of the civic center, if you will, some ill management," Lewis said at the Tuesday afternoon council meeting. "We can't afford to have money come up missing in the budget ..."

Lewis said he proposed the resolution because he "wanted the council to have the authorization to do our own investigation if the legislative audit doesn't come."

He said he expects that a legislative audit likely will be conducted, but that it could be a month or so before that gets up and running.

Peralta said the civic center's board will begin "holding more regular meetings than there has been in the past, and there will be more regular attendance

See **ST. BERNARD, B-2**

## METRO

## Board will report on interviews

**SCHOOL**, from B-1

today's interview meeting in open session. It will immediately recess to executive session to talk with each candidate about "his character, professional competence and/or physical or mental health as a candidate for the superintendency."

Afterwards there will be a report on the closed session, but likely a brief one. The School Board is not scheduled to take any votes.

The Louisiana Constitution gives the public "the right to observe the deliberations of public bodies." The state attorney general has said that school boards may discuss job applicants' character, competence and health privately, though boards must make all recommendations about candidates in public.

The school system has been without a permanent superintendent since July 2012. Smith has held the job on an interim basis since then.

The interviews will take place at the school system's offices at 352 Gen. de Gaulle Drive in Algiers.

## Player must complete program

**MORGAN**, from B-1

they explore Morgan's entry into the diversion program.

Olivier would not agree. So prosecutors dismissed the charges, effectively avoiding a trial. Morgan's was one of a handful of cases that were handled similarly on Olivier's docket.

"The diversion has to be completed," Olivier told Morgan's attorneys. "Otherwise, the DA's office is going to refile the bill of information," or re-institute the prosecution.

Morgan would not speak with reporters after leaving the courtroom.

Diversion is an alternate to criminal prosecution for low-risk, first-time offenders. If he completes the program, Morgan could see his DWI charge reduced to reckless driving, McCrossen said.

"It's a very rigorous program," Foret said. "It's not an easy program to complete."

The attorneys said they've accepted the diversion offer, but Morgan still must attend an orientation program to determine whether he can complete the program's requirements, Foret said. The program can last as long as one year, and in addition to paying fees, participants must regularly report for therapy sessions and submit to random drug screens. Morgan's driver's license could be suspended for the duration of the program.

However, Morgan's football career, which includes Saints games away from New Orleans, could hinder his ability to participate in the program, the attorneys said. Morgan reportedly has met with the Kansas City Chiefs, and Foret said playing for another team also could hurt Morgan's ability to participate in the diversion program.

Morgan was arrested after a state trooper had him step out of his vehicle and found him unsteady and smelling of alcohol, according to the arrest report. His blood-alcohol content measured 0.218 percent, more than twice the 0.08 percent maximum to drive, police said.

He pleaded not guilty in September, a month after prosecutors filed the charges. Upon conviction, the misdemeanor first-offense DWI charge carries a punishment of 10 days to six months in jail and a fine of \$750 to \$1,000.

Morgan missed the 2013 season because he injured a knee during the Black and Gold Scrimmage. He's a free agent now, but the Saints reportedly hope to re-sign him. In 2012, Morgan had 10 receptions for 379 yards and three touchdowns.

# School chief candidate is making waves

*He confirms interest in N.O. position*

**By Danielle Dreilinger**  
Staff writer

Bermuda Education Commissioner Edmond Heatley confirmed his interest in the Orleans Parish public schools superintendent job Tuesday but said he was still committed to the island country's children.

"I can confirm that I am a finalist in a superintendent search in Orleans Parish," he

said in a carefully worded statement designed to quell criticism just seven months after taking the Bermuda job.

The Orleans Parish public school system, the smaller of two systems in the city, has been without a permanent leader since July 2012. Though its members have been known for squabbling and meddling, the job is still seen by some as a chance to unify the city's schools, most of which were taken over by the state and chartered after Hurricane Katrina.

Heatley is one of four finalists for the job, along with Thomas Darden of Philadelphia and D'Juan Hernandez and Kyle

Wedberg of New Orleans.

Heatley apologized Tuesday for the drama that his candidacy had kicked up at home.

"It is unfortunate the way this situation has played out in the media and cast a negative light on both my position and the good progress we are making in public education," he said.

He expected his interest would remain private at this



**Edmond Heatley**  
Recently started job in Bermuda

stage, he said. According to Louisiana law, however, the names of applicants for a government position are public record.

"I appreciate that there may be some who will question my commitment" to Bermuda, Heatley said. "These would be people who do not see me work every day and who do not understand what it takes to move an education system in a progressive direction."

Heatley said consultants Hazard, Young & Attea recruited him for the New Orleans job during a time of upheaval at the Bermuda ministry, including two new leaders and

a department merger. But he has since "built a very positive working relationship" with the new personnel, he said. He said he has not applied for any other jobs.

"I remain committed to the students of Bermuda, and I remain committed to improving the Bermuda education system," he said.

The Orleans Parish School Board is scheduled to interview the four finalists Wednesday and Thursday, after holding its regular meeting Tuesday night. Members have expressed a strong interest in seeing additional candidates.

## Owner says bar has nothing to with violence

**IGGY'S**, from B-1

owner disagreed with the concerns voiced by his neighbors. "It wasn't violence," Dave Stewart said of the recent shooting. "It was somebody who was after somebody else."

"It didn't happen in my bar. It happened on the street. I have nothing to do with it, so leave me alone," he said, before hanging up.

Ken Caron, a neighbor and a board member of the Faubourg

Marigny Improvement Association, said many residents contacted him about the bar's issues. He said one option they will consider is complaining to the City Council, the city attorney's office and the state Office of Alcohol and Tobacco Control.

"If you're going to be in the neighborhood, you should take ownership in the neighborhood," Caron said. "They're turning a blind eye. Honestly, I think it's a disgrace that two people have now lost their lives because of it."

Many neighbors said they just wanted to be able to hang out at their local watering hole again without having to worry about bullets flying. "I think we'd all like to see the bar turned around, but it's going to take some major changes," said Dan Leasure, who has lived in the area since Hurricane Katrina.

Not all the neighbors are worried. One man who was walking his dog by Iggy's on Monday evening said he had not heard about the recent shooting,



but it did not disturb him. "Murder happens anywhere," said the man, who would not give his name.

On the other side of the street, a woman bent down to pick up some used cups and threw them away.

## Levee agency seeks director

**By Andrea Shaw**  
Staff writer

The West Bank levee authority is looking for a new executive director to manage the 100-mile hurricane protection system. Giuseppe Miserendino, a 23-year employee of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-West Bank and its predecessor, has resigned effective Aug. 14.

Miserendino requested leave and tendered his resignation, board President Susan Maclay said. "We want to try to get somebody in there before hurricane season," she said.

## Parish to monitor nonprofits' finances, hire a director

**ST. BERNARD**, from B-1

as well." The board now meets quarterly, but Peralta said it will begin meeting monthly.

He also said he has discussed the center's financial troubles with the St. Bernard Sheriff

Jimmy Pohlmann and that Pohlmann is prepared to investigate the matter if the audit reveals any possible wrongdoing.

"But I do want to make it clear, we don't know what the situation is there," Peralta said. "We don't know if we have any funds missing there" or if it is

just poor bookkeeping.

Following the council meeting, Pohlmann confirmed that he would "prefer to first have that audit and, if it then seems anything criminal was going on, then we will handle it."

While waiting on that possible audit, Peralta and parish finance

director Ross Gonzales said that they have begun to institute new financial checks and balances, including putting in place the financial software QuickBooks to help monitor the nonprofits' finances "with less delays."

Lewis said Tuesday that he also would like to see additional

firewalls instituted, such as security cameras installed to monitor employees' financial dealings.

Gonzales said he expects that a new civic center director will be hired within the next 10 days.

## Detective, family working together to solve case

**CHENEAU**, from B-1

for thousands of dollars. During Mardi Gras, when parade assignments put detectives like him on the street, Hoffacker, unsettled by the lack of resolution in Cheneau's case, completed a portrait of the man he had never met.

Hoffacker presented Shavone Cheneau with the drawing on a recent morning. In her mother's Gentilly living room, the 26-year-old widow uncurled the artwork and gasped.

"Looks just like him. Wow." "It's not perfect," Hoffacker said.

"It really is," Cheneau said. "Thank you."

### Seeking witnesses

In a city with one of the nation's highest murder rates, authorities say reluctant witnesses are a constant problem. Witnesses to shootings often fear retaliation and stay quiet. Crimestoppers, an organization that distributes cash rewards to tipsters who don't have to give their name or testify, has been a growing resource for the New Orleans Police Department in recent years.

The organization offers a \$2,500 reward for information leading to an arrest and an indictment in all murder cases. Sometimes private donors, family members or other agencies chip in more money. Hoffacker's portrait of Buck would become a way to raise money to add to the cash reward in hopes of getting that crucial information to lead police to Price's arrest.

Police Superintendent Ronal Serpas said in a recent interview that the number of Crimestoppers tips called in to the NOPD has grown by more than 10 percent each year since 2011. Those pieces of information, he said, are often crucial to building a case, such as the location of a murder weapon or the identity of a suspect.

A fundraiser on Feb. 28, which would have been Cheneau's 29th birthday, raised \$400. The family

plans to auction off Hoffacker's portrait, then add all that money to the \$2,500 currently being offered by Crimestoppers.

Investigators are still baffled by the motive behind the slaying. Hoffacker said it appeared Price may have known Cheneau, and may have been jealous of him.

At the time of his murder, Cheneau was awaiting trial on a charge of possession with intent to distribute marijuana related to a September 2012 arrest. That was not his first. He was booked in October 2009 with possessing a weapon and marijuana. No charges were filed in that earlier incident.

### A helping hand

Hoffacker has been in homicide for two years. He is one of 28 detectives who investigate the city's killings, and he juggles about 10 cases at a time. Detectives solved 88 murders in 2013, a year that saw 155 murders.

Cheneau's case was not one of them. Not for lack of cooperation by those who loved him.

Shavone Cheneau was "instrumental" for the investigation, Hoffacker said. She snooped on social media and talked to her husband's friends, culling information for the detective that helped him secure the arrest warrant for Price.

"When the family wants an answer as bad as Shavone does, it's a solve," Hoffacker said.

In her mother's living room, Shavone Cheneau wiped away tears. "They took a real big part of me when they took Shawn away," she said. "I can't just sit back and say, 'Oh well, maybe it's gonna get done.' I feel I have to do something."

The Cheneaus said they appreciate Hoffacker's dedication. One of the victim's sisters said she was distraught when Hoffacker first came to their house, but she felt a sense of relief in seeing that the detective was not going to be lazy or allow the murder to go cold.

"He went above and beyond," said Sheena Cheneau. "He's very compassionate. He makes you feel like it's only one he's working



CHARLIE HOFFACKER

Detective Charlie Hoffacker, 32, works on a charcoal portrait of murder victim Shawn Cheneau, who was slain Nov. 15.

and I know that's not the case."

### Honoring a victim

Hoffacker grew up in New Mexico and moved to New Orleans as a teenager. At 22, he was working as a carpenter when he pulled over to help a stranger who had been in a car accident. The stranger suggested he would make a good police officer. Hoffacker had had his own share of negative police interactions, but he realized he could create positive ones for others. He joined the force in 2004.

Around that time, Shavone Sutton and Shawn Cheneau fell in love. They met while they were both working at Pizza Hut. She was in high school, and he had just graduated from Frederick Douglass High School.

They married on July 22, 2012, and went into business together. The couple bought seven school buses and rented them

out through their company, SSA Global LLC. They had a daughter, Anylah. Shawn Cheneau called her his princess.

It was raining on the afternoon of Nov. 15, as Shavone Cheneau sewed a pair of pants to wear to that night's Rihanna concert. She was thinking about her biology classes at Nunez Community College, and her goal of becoming either a dental hygienist or a nurse.

She got a call around 3:30 p.m. from someone saying her husband had been shot. She rushed out to the Burger King parking lot at 4454 Chef Mentour Highway.

She screamed as she approached the yellow crime scene tape where she saw her husband's navy Chevy Silverado, the driver's door still open. His lifeless body lay inside. Pink baby shoes, their daughter's, hung from the truck's rearview mirror.

"I want to see him. I want to see him!" Shavone Cheneau cried, rushing the crime tape. Relatives and police scrambled to console her and keep her from entering the scene, where investigators were collecting evidence.

Hoffacker went to the edge of the tape looking for relatives. Cheneau's uncle, Roy Cheneau, stepped forward. Hoffacker slung an arm around the man's shoulder, and in the most reassuring voice he could muster, he promised him. "I'm gonna do my best to solve this."

As Hoffacker reviewed Cheneau's phone and financial records during his investigation, he was struck by all of the signs of a good guy. Cheneau's text messages to his family were full of "I love yous." His photos were all of his wife and his daughter. All his money went to his mortgage and family.

"I wish I would've had the luck to meet him when he was alive," Hoffacker said.

At home and in his art studio, Hoffacker's mind turned to the Cheneaus. Shavone Cheneau would call him crying. She was trying to hold it together for their daughter, but it was hard. Hoffacker offered to try to help explain what happened when the daughter gets older.

Even now, four months after the slaying, Shavone still can't bring herself to move anything Shawn touched. His half-empty bottle of blue Gatorade and his worn laundry are all exactly as he left them in their bedroom.

Raising the Crimestoppers reward — and hopefully getting the shooter in jail — is a way for her to honor her husband's memory, she says.

"It would bring me some kind of justice knowing that someone is paying for what they've done to Shawn," she said. "It won't bring him back, but that's the best that can happen in this horrible situation: someone getting caught."

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Police ask anyone with information in the case, including the location of Price