

Tiki Tubing provides fun summertime adventure

By Sherry Wilks

Tiki Tubing is a first-class tubing adventure that allows you to enjoy the natural surroundings of the Amite River near Denham Springs at your own leisurely pace. The main attraction for most customers is the family-friendly atmosphere created by John Fore and his staff.

Fore had been in the tubing business for a brief stint 23 years ago and decided to emerge from retirement several years ago after some persuading by his kids. But first Fore travelled from Maine to Texas and observed 50 different canoeing and tubing operations.

"I wanted to learn how the tubing business had improved and changed. I saw that the environment had changed from mainly college kids to families and groups. I told my kids if we are going to do this, we have to use very nice tubes and make it family oriented." He has achieved his goal of doing just that.

The four hour float trip - roughly 6 miles - starts with a short bus ride up the river to the beach entry point where tubers select a tube, jump in the river and float back to the Tiki Tubing beach where their car is waiting. The trip can take much longer if tubers stop at one of the 18 sandbars on the river. Customers frequently stop to picnic, play football or just to take in the beauty that surrounds them.

Customers will not find black truck inner tubes at Tiki Tubing; they *will* find state-of-the-art PVC vinyl tubes with handles - and even some with bottoms. The tubes range from the basic one person tube (\$19) to ones as large as a queen size bed that can hold two or more people comfortably (\$59). Tiki Tubing also has a custom tube created specifically for them called the "Tiki Tiger - a large one-person purple and gold tube



Hundreds of tubing enthusiasts enjoy the six-mile flat trips on the Amite River each week. Come fall, Tiki Tubing customers will also be able to enjoy a new zip line now being constructed.

with tiger stripes and eyes (\$39). If customers are in the mood for recreational exercise, kayak rentals are also available (\$28).

Tiki Tubing rents cooler floats to keep coolers from tipping over. They also sell ice, sunglasses, waterproof bags for valuables, lotion, shirts, water-proof cameras, and more. Jambalaya, hot dogs, and hamburgers are cooked on-site every afternoon.

Tiki Tubing allows customers to bring their own ice chests with their choice of non-alcoholic or alcoholic beverages, but glass bottles aren't allowed due to safety

issues. Fore warns, "If you try to bring glass anyway, it will be confiscated, zero tolerance and you will not get it back."

Styrofoam containers are also banned because they tend to break up during river use and pollute the river. If anyone shows up with Styrofoam coolers, they can rent regular ice chests and get their Styrofoam cooler back when they return from tubing.

Fore has a vested interest in keeping Amite River litter-free; he owns the property where Tiki Tubing is

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located, plus, a dirty river would hurt his business.

"We want you to bag all your trash in the mesh trash bags that are sent along with you, so that the river stays beautiful," he said. "You can bag your or someone else's trash, and for every full trash bag you return to us, you receive a coupon for \$5 off your next trip. Plus, we pick up trash along our section of the river three times a week. I travel the Amite River from St. Helena to Maurepas on a regular basis, and the cleanest stretch of river is where our customers tube."

Tiki Tubing is located at 33203 Hwy 1019, and is open seven days a week. Customers can start tubing at 8 a.m. and the last chance to put in is at 3 p.m. Naturally, business is heaviest on the weekend, so tubers Monday through Thursday have the river almost to themselves.

Labor Day weekend will be the last chance to experience Tiki Tubing before it closes for the season; they open again in April as soon as the weather has warmed up enough to allow the fun to resume.

Fore announced that coming to Tiki Tubing in October will be the first zip line in the Gulf South region. Once the zip line is up, the facility will be open for fun year round.

Visit www.tikitubing.com for more information on the zip line and updates of opening day. The website also has a map showing Tiki Tubing's location and lots of photos of tubers having fun on the river. They accept cash and all major credit cards, but no personal checks. Call 225-223-1156 or email contact@tikitubing.com.

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allowed to play by his teacher was classical. Then, one day, Jeff took Clay to see the Ray Charles biopic, and Clay was inspired.

"The music really touched me," said Clay. "It's a style of music you can really get into."

"On the way home, all he could talk about was playing music like Ray Charles," said Jeff. "When we got home, I showed him a rock-and-roll-style piano riff and told him to practice playing it. I left for awhile, and when I came back in I heard this rocking music that I thought was the radio, but it turned out to be Clay. I started practicing with him, and he consumed my entire piano knowledge pretty quickly. We started talking about playing professionally, and we recruited Paul to come back and play drums for us. We decided to resurrect the Quarter Moon name, and it wasn't long before we had our first gig."

Clay stated, "After that first gig, I knew I wanted to be a performer."

The group played a variety of local venues including restaurants, fairs and casinos, and Clay was exposed to blues festivals and other music events. One night they went to Spitale's, a restaurant in Amite, where a pianist played for the customers.

"When the piano player took a break, Clay asked if he could play," Jeff said. "They thought this 10-year-old kid was going to play

"Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" or something."

Clay said. "I sat down at the high-back piano and all anyone could see was the top of my head. I started playing boogie woogie music, and everyone starting walking up to look around the piano to see who was playing. They let me keep playing, and I ended up with about \$200 in tips that night."

They made many return trips to Spitale's for Clay to play and sing, and his popularity there led to them playing at the Washington Parish Fair and his sharing a stage with Dorothy Moore, the grammy-winning blues artist. He has made a name for himself on the blues circuit and is often invited up on stage to jam with blues greats such as Eddie Shaw, George Winston, James Johnson, Jr., Kenny Fife and many others.

Clay counts among his influences legends such as Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis, Stevie Wonder, Patsy Cline, Reba McEntire, Aretha Franklin and, of course, Ray Charles. And while blues and boogie woogie music are his favorites, he also loves to play big band/swing music. Most of all, he loves playing with their family band which serves up a variety of pop, blues, boogie woogie and country music.

"When we play and sing together, we're so tight, we know exactly what the others are going to do," said Clay, "and we don't often make mistakes."

Clay has performed hundreds of shows over the last five years and never tires of performing or practicing, and he loves it when he hears one of his songs on the radio. DJ Roland Doucet often plays the band's songs on his Saturday Morning Rocking Cajun Show on 100.7 FM, and he recently had Clay on as a live guest.

So what's next for the Walker High School sophomore? The band plans to go right back into the studio to do an all-original CD, with all songs written by Clay. Beyond that and beyond high school, Clay's not sure where his music will lead him, but he knows he wants to pursue a music career.

Sherry and Jeff support his ambition, even if that means he may eventually go solo. They both love music themselves – they met at a music festival – and understand what music means to him. Right now, they're savoring the moment.

"There's a lot of work to this business," Jeff said. "It's not just showing up and singing. But when I'm performing with my wife and son, it's pretty special."

Sherry added, "We love to do this because it puts smiles on peoples' faces. It's wonderful to have the greatest friends and family support you and to be able to play music for the best people ever ... it's awesome!"

Keep up with the band at claynewsom.com or email sherryfn@aol.com.

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For more than seventeen and half years, you trusted me to bring you the latest news on WAFB. Now, I consider it the greatest honor that you trust me to help provide an even better education for our children.

I consider it such an honor to soon represent District 2 on the Livingston Parish School Board. I am a 1988 graduate of Live Oak High School, '92 graduate of Southeastern Louisiana University. I am a life-long resident of Watson, married for seventeen years to my husband, Scott. We are both very proud of our twelve year-old daughter, Mallory. I feel that my passion and commitment to excellence will help further the pride, progress, and growth in such an outstanding academic community. I am taking on the challenge of representing District 2 for my own child, and for all of yours.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Mr. David Tate, for his many years of service and dedication to all of the Live Oak Schools. Mr. Tate helped us achieve the goal of having a new high school. His vision is about to become a reality.

While the economic future may hold grim thoughts of budget cuts and shortfalls throughout our Parish, we must all come together, making sure we do not let our young people down. As test scores continue to rise in Livingston Parish, we must also rise to meet the challenges we will face. Our number one most valuable resource is our children. I will do everything in my power to bring the energy, integrity, and respect to our school system. My Faith and my family have inspired and empowered me to take on this endeavor. However, I know that I cannot make the needed progress and improvements on my own. I feel so Blessed to have tremendous community support, wisdom and guidance as we continue to fight for excellence in education. The children of Livingston Parish need a united School Board now, more than ever. Together, we will show the entire State of Louisiana and even the nation, that Livingston Parish Schools are number one.

On behalf of my family and friends, thank you all...from the bottom of my heart...for believing in me and my ability to serve you, and to help make a difference for our children.

Sincerely,

Kellee Hennessy Dickerson

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