



CITY OF KENNER

PRESS RELEASE

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NATIONAL 5TH GRADE AAU CHAMPIONSHIP TO RETURN TO KENNER IN 2016

Kenner, LA. – The Kenner City Council approved a contract Thursday night for the city to host the 2016 AAU Girls 5th grade division national basketball championship tournament.

The event will bring in 60 to 75 teams of 10 to 12 players from throughout the country, Recreation Director Ken Marroccoli said. Kenner was chosen to host the 2016 event after submitting a bid in September, 2012 through the combined efforts of Marroccoli and the Recreation Department, Pontchartrain Center officials and the Jefferson Convention & Visitors Bureau.

“This is a significant event for the city,” Marroccoli said. “When you add in parents, grandparents and others traveling with team members, you’re talking in the neighborhood of 1,500 to 2,000 people coming to Kenner. That’s people who will be eating in our restaurants and spending nights in our hotels.”

The 5th grade AAU championship returns to Kenner after a three-year hiatus and will be held either the week before or the week after July 4th. The city’s former convention group, the Kenner Convention & Visitors Bureau, had regularly put in bids for the national championship in past years.

However, after a series of spending irregularities was uncovered in 2011, Kenner Mayor Michael Yenni terminated the contract with the KCVB in August of 2011 and signed an agreement with the Jefferson Convention and Visitors Bureau.

“I am very proud to say tonight that we will be bringing this very prestigious tournament back to Kenner,” Chief Administrative Officer Mike Quigley said at Thursday’s meeting. “This is very good news for us.”

It didn’t take long for Kenner’s association with the JCVB to pay off as the organization helped to win the 2016 event with a bid that was turned in to AAU officials in September of 2012. The AAU awards tournaments in three-year blocks and Kenner was awarded the 2016 championship.

“I know there were some people who wondered if Kenner would ever win back the AAU tournament after cutting ties with the Kenner Convention and Visitors Bureau,” Kenner Mayor Michael Yenni said. “But the JCVB has worked hard to bring events to the city, and the AAU tournament for 2016 is just one of their successes, with the help of our Recreation Department and the Pontchartrain Center.”

Violet Peters, president and CEO of the JCVB, said the group focuses on a wide range of potential events to bring to Kenner. “The JCVB works very hard to continue to grow sports events as well as other potential markets including association and religious meetings,” she said.

Marroccoli said there are big plans to wow AAU players and their families with an elaborate Opening Ceremony at the Pontchartrain Center that is scheduled to include a Mardi Gras parade that will provide individual players the chance to experience a mini Carnival atmosphere inside the Pontchartrain Center

The championship games and the athlete party after the tournament will be held at the Pontchartrain Center. Teams will be assigned to one of Kenner’s nine gyms so there will be plenty of opportunity for practices before and during the tournament, said Linda Maher of the Jefferson Convention & Visitors bureau.

Maher and Peters said officials are awaiting news on the time frame to put in bids for the AAU championships to be held 2017, 2018 and 2019.

“Just as soon as that opportunity arises, we will jump on that,” she said. “With us partnering together with the Recreation Department and the Pontchartrain Center, and the experience of successfully earning this event, we are very hopeful to bring more AAU championships to Kenner.”

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