W. Feliciana urged to tout museum opening at Angola

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ANGOLA — Louisiana State Penitentiary's new museum adds a unique component to West Feliciana Parish's valuable tourism industry, the state's top tourism official said as the museum formally opened to the public Friday.

Culture, Tourism and Recreation Secretary Phillip J. Jones suggested the established tour guides, bed and breakfast owners and others in the West Feliciana Parish tourism industry make visitors aware of the museum, which he called a "real positive development."

Situated at the gates of Angola on the west end of La. 66, the museum features historical artifacts, the state's now-retired electric chair, photos of original buildings, confiscated inmate weapons and inmate records from the 1800s, when the penitentiary was in Baton Rouge.

The prison's remote location should not be a detriment in attracting visitors, Jones said.

"Just the drive up here is appealing," he said.

The museum will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. today and Sunday during the annual Angola Arts and Crafts Festival.

Admission to both the museum and festival is free.

Regular hours after the weekend will be from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays.

"I think they did a great job," said Tim Lupin of the Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans, which assisted Curator Nadine Tanner in arranging the exhibits.

"I've seen a lot of museums, but a museum like this is good because it's done with the help of a lot of the people around here," Lupin said, referring to donations of artifacts by current and former Angola employees.

"It'll be appealing to visitors, and it's really a treasure for the people around here to see their history on display," Lupin said.

"It's a living tribute to Angola's past. It captures the spirit and essence of the staff and inmates who made it what it is today," Corrections Secretary Richard Stalder said in listing some of the corrections experts who visit Angola because they "hear of the worth and value of Angola."

Angola Warden Burl Cain credited Tanner for organizing and developing the museum "almost single-handedly."

"We wouldn't have this celebration today without you," Cain told Tanner.