



## KREWE OF BOGUE FALAYA

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### **‘Krewe of Bogue Falaya’: Carnival in Covington group adopts new name**

*Mardi Gras Day parade group honors the town’s indigenous past*

When you come to Covington for Mardi Gras 2024, you may think there’s a new krewe in town. But you’d be wrong. The parade billed as Carnival in Covington—just one parade among three on Fat Tuesday—has a new name that sets it apart as a unique group with fresh goals for the future: The Krewe of Bogue Falaya.

To understand the name change, it is helpful to look back to 2017, when then-Mayor Mike Cooper asked Covington City Councilman At-Large Larry Rolling to organize a small group of community volunteers to help re-invigorate Mardi Gras Day celebrations in Covington. The group, dubbed “Carnival in Covington”, would feature large, traditional floats and local bands and groups, and membership would not be a requirement to participate.

Initially coordinating with the other groups parading on Fat Tuesday—the Covington Lions Club and Mystic Krewe of Covington—the group quickly took on its own character; however, due to its generalized name, many assumed that the existing krewes had simply expanded. The day’s celebrations grew steadily, and in 2023, drew what is believed to be the largest crowd in the town’s history. Using this as a measure, it was agreed that their original goal was achieved and it was time to establish a new mission—and to resolve confusion, a new name.

Since the beginning, key goals for the organization have been to honor the town’s historic past and promote it for a vibrant future. Their new mission affirms this, as the Krewe of Bogue Falaya will provide a family-friendly, safe Mardi Gras experience that honors the history and traditions of Covington and promotes the businesses, charities and organizations that support the people of the Northshore. Naming the krewe after the river aligns well with this goal, as the unique name is closely associated with Covington, immediately recognizable to locals, and stirs the curiosity of visitors.

The scenic Bogue Falaya (pronounced BO-guh fa-LY-uh), once a primary fishing and trade waterway for indigenous peoples and European newcomers, and today a primary source of recreation and enjoyment for residents and visitors of The Northshore, is a slow-flowing river that connects the heart of the town to the Abita and Tchefuncte rivers, out to Lake Pontchartrain. The term is derived from the Choctaw words *bogu*, “river,” and *falaya*, “long”, and it is an embodiment of both reflection and movement—the past and the future.

The Krewe of Bogue Falaya, along with the Covington Lions and Mystic Krewe of Covington, will roll on Tuesday, February 13, 2024, with parades beginning at 10:00 a.m. and rolling one after the other. Boasting 600 members, the Krewe of Bogue Falaya is highlighted by 20 traditional floats and the “Louisiana Feed Your Soul” float, along with marching bands and groups, horse groups, the Saints Superfans and more. With this year’s floats by Mardi Gras Decorators created on the theme “things you learn in school”, the krewe chose for its first theme, “School Daze in a Mardi Gras Haze”.

Fittingly, the Grand Marshal to be honored in the krewe's first year under the new moniker is local educator, musician, and internationally recognized authority on Southeastern Native American and Colonial cultural history, Grayhawk Perkins.

### **Honoring a Tradition-Bearer**

Perkins is a lifelong storyteller and one of the last speakers of Mobilian, an ancient trade language once used by the indigenous peoples of the Gulf South. He has worked for more than 25 years as a cultural coordinator for the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival where he helped spearhead the creation of the Native American Village. He has served as an Interpretive Ranger for the Louisiana Office of State Parks, designer and director of Kenner's Canne Brulee Native American Village, and Cultural Naturalist for the Audubon Louisiana Nature & Science Center. Drawing from his tribal folklore, Perkins has performed as a storyteller at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian and regularly headlines the University of Alabama's annual Native American Festival at the Moundville Archaeological Park.

Perkins has been active in the New Orleans music scene for decades, performing at marquee events such as Jazz Fest, the Voodoo Music + Arts Experience, and Bayou Boogaloo. In addition to leading his namesake ensemble, The Grayhawk Band, he has frequently played percussion alongside such notable acts as Dr. John and Coco Robicheaux.

### **Reviving a Tradition**

First celebrated in Covington on February 25, 1879, Mardi Gras revelry began the day before, on Lundi Gras, when the king (Rex) of New Orleans' Krewe of Rex arrived in the town the Columbia Street Landing to lead a procession of figures dressed in medieval garb into the heart of town. In 1909, Rex arrived aboard the steamer Josie, where he was greeted by a cheering crowd, escorted to the courthouse and presented with a key to the city. These traditions are revived in 2024 with a special event in Bogue Falaya Park on Monday, Feb. 12, at 4:00 p.m. Grand Marshal Perkins will arrive by boat and lead a second line to the steps of the historic Southern Hotel, where the Mayor of Covington and dignitaries will present a champagne toast and proclamation naming Perkins the 2024 Grand Marshal.

The parade will start in front of St. Tammany Parish Justice Center on Columbia Street and follows a route along Columbia Street to Boston St./Hwy 21 to Jefferson Ave., to 15th St., to Tyler St., to W. 23rd, and then back to the Justice Center. Immediately following the parade is a free, all-ages after-party at Covington Trailhead, noon to 4:00 p.m. The party features live music along with food trucks, drinks, dancing and activities in the Kids' Zone, sponsored by Gulf Coast Bank.

Parade-goers can also participate in costume contests with cash prizes. The kids' costume contest, sponsored by Acquistapace's Covington Supermarket and West St. Tammany YMCA, takes place at 10:00 a.m. at the corner of 15th and Jefferson Ave. Costumed revelers aged 18 and up can strut their stuff at the after-party in the adults' costume contest, sponsored by the Covington Business Association.

All events are free to the public and all are invited to join in the fun.

The Krewe of Bogue Falaya parade is sponsored by American Bank, Gulf Coast Bank, Cleco, St. Tammany Parish President Mike Cooper, State Senator Patrick McMath (Dist. 11) and Representative Mark Wright (Dist. 77), St. Tammany Parish Hospital System/Ochsner, and Coastal Waste. Float sponsors include Southern Hotel, Abita Roasting Company, Abita Brew Pub, T-Mobile, Paradise on Columbia Med Spa, Pinecrest/E.J. Fielding Funeral Home, Winn-Dixie, 30 by Ninety Theatre, Armbruster Artworks, CARE Physical Therapy, Covington Junior League, realtor Michelle Grubbs, Dicristina's, Covington Elementary, and Attorney Josh Allison.

For more information and to set up an interview, contact City of Covington Councilman At-Large Larry Rolling, (985) 502-8586, or Amy Tucker, (504)994-5932. Visit [www.CarnivalinCovington.com](http://www.CarnivalinCovington.com) and the group's Facebook page, [www.Facebook.com/CovingtonMardiGras](http://www.Facebook.com/CovingtonMardiGras), for updates about the event and sponsors.

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