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The Community Lifestyle/Business Profile Journal of CenLA

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in this
ISSUE


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Fields, Forests, and Food FUEL CENLA'S ECONOMY

By Kurt M. Guidry

Agriculture touches nearly every aspect of daily life in Central Louisiana. From the food on our tables and the timber used to build homes and businesses to the crawfish that have become a staple of Louisiana cuisine, the region's farmers, ranchers, foresters, and aquaculture producers help sustain both local communities and the state's economy. Despite significant economic challenges over the past several decades, agriculture remains one of Central Louisiana's most important industries.

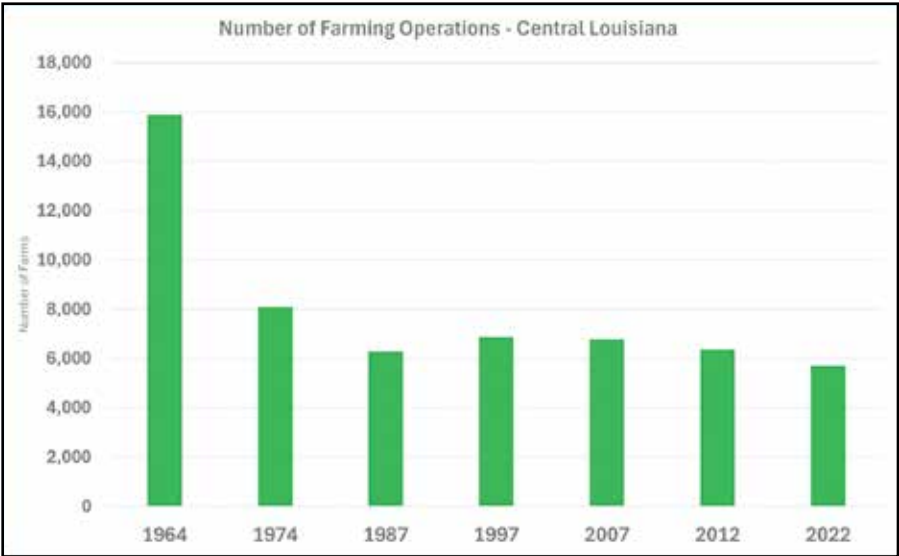
Agriculture has long been woven into the history, culture, and economy of Louisiana. Over the past several decades, however, farming and ranching have become increasingly challenging businesses. According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, Central Louisiana, defined as the ten parishes that make up the LSU AgCenter's Central Region (Allen, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Evangeline, Grant, LaSalle, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, St. Landry, and Vernon), had nearly 16,000 farming operations in 1964. By 1974, that number had fallen to just over 8,000 farms, and today fewer than 6,000 farming operations remain in the region. Rising production costs, competition for land, and periods of stagnant commodity prices have all placed significant financial pressure on agricultural producers, contributing to this long-term decline.

The economics of farming help explain this trend. Over the past 50 years, the cost of producing crops and livestock has increased dramatically. USDA data show that production costs for major commodities such as corn, soybeans, rice, cotton, and cattle have risen by 300% to 450% since 1975. During the same period, selling prices for many agricultural commodities have increased much more slowly and often have failed to keep pace with inflation. While cattle producers have benefited from exceptionally strong calf prices in recent years, even that sector experienced decades during which production costs increased much faster than market prices.

Despite these challenges, Louisiana farmers and ranchers have continued to adapt and remain productive. Advances in technology, improved crop varieties, enhanced livestock genetics, precision agriculture, and better management practices have enabled producers to generate more output from the same amount of land and resources. Producers have also expanded the size of their operations to spread fixed costs over more acres or livestock units and capture greater efficiencies. These improvements in productivity have allowed agriculture to remain a major economic force throughout the region.

While the number of farms has declined, the value of agricultural production has

generally trended upward. The LSU AgCenter estimates that the farm gate value of Louisiana's agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and wildlife enterprises exceeded \$7.3 billion in 2025. Farm gate value represents the value of commodities at the point where they leave the farm, ranch, forest, or fishing operation and enter the marketplace. It is often used as a measure of the direct value generated by agricultural production.





Central Louisiana plays an important role in that total. The ten parishes that comprise the region generated more than \$1.26 billion in farm gate value during 2025, accounting for approximately 17% of Louisiana’s total agricultural production value. From 2021 through 2025, the region averaged more than \$1.3 billion annually in farm gate value. Individual parish totals ranged from approximately \$38 million to nearly \$215 million per year, demonstrating the importance of agriculture to local economies throughout the region.

Plant enterprises represent the largest agricultural sector in both Louisiana and Central Louisiana. In 2025, Louisiana’s plant enterprises generated approximately \$4.27 billion in farm gate value, while Central Louisiana contributed nearly \$935 million, representing almost 22% of the statewide total. Forestry and sugarcane are the region’s two largest plant enterprises, generating approximately \$224 million and \$277 million, respectively. Together, these two commodities account for more than half of the region’s total plant enterprise value.



Central Louisiana is also an important contributor to several other agricultural industries across the state. The region accounts for nearly 23% of Louisiana’s rice farm gate value and more than 22% of its soybean farm gate value. Central Louisiana producers generate more than 40% of the state’s nursery crop value and nearly two-thirds of Louisiana’s pecan value. These figures highlight the diversity of the region’s agricultural sector and its importance to the state’s overall agricultural economy.

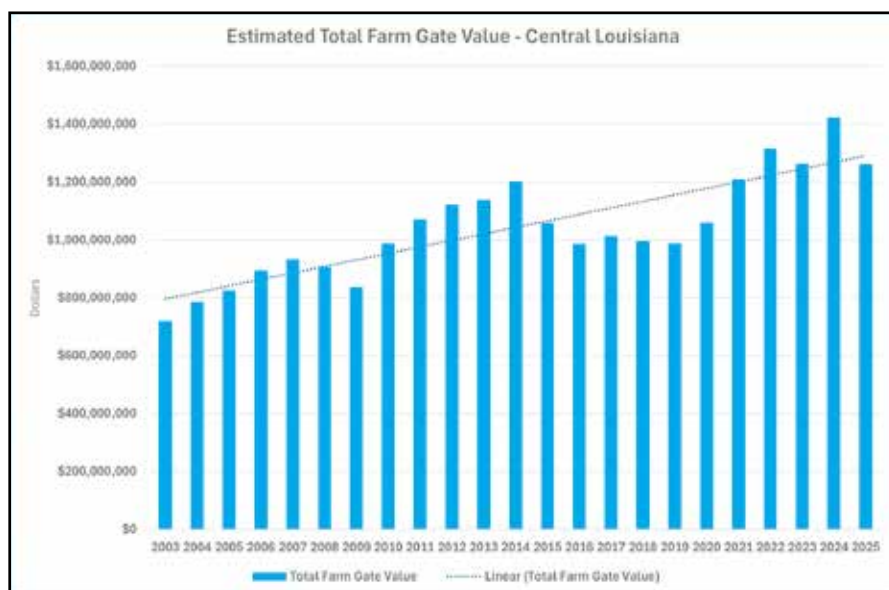


Animal enterprises are another major contributor to the regional economy. Louisiana’s animal agriculture sector generated more than \$2.1 billion in farm gate value during 2025, with Central Louisiana contributing nearly \$205 million. Beef cattle dominate the region’s animal agriculture sector, accounting for more than \$150 million in farm gate value and nearly 19% of Louisiana’s total cattle and calf value. Horses represent the second-largest animal enterprise, generating approximately \$34 million in farm gate value. Together, these industries contribute substantially to the economic vitality of rural communities throughout the region.



Fisheries and wildlife enterprises represent the third major category of Louisiana’s food and fiber sector. Statewide, this category generated more than \$912 million in farm gate value during 2025. In Central Louisiana, fisheries and wildlife enterprises accounted for nearly \$122 million. The largest contributor within this category is aquaculture, primarily farm-raised crawfish production. Central Louisiana generated more than \$103 million in aquaculture farm gate value, representing nearly 30% of the state’s total. This highlights both the economic significance of crawfish production and its importance to the region’s cultural identity.

Although farm gate value provides an excellent measure of agricultural production, it does not tell the entire economic story. Farmers, ranchers, foresters, and aquaculture producers purchase seed, fertilizer, feed, fuel, equipment, insurance, veterinary services, and numerous other inputs from local businesses. In addition, workers employed by farms and supporting industries spend their earnings on housing, food,



healthcare, and other goods and services. This spending creates additional economic activity throughout local and regional economies.

Economists refer to these additional economic benefits as “multiplier effects.” Studies frequently show that every dollar generated through agricultural production creates additional economic activity as that money moves through local economies. As such, the economic benefits of agriculture extend far beyond the farm gate. Depending on the commodity and geographic area, agricultural output multipliers in Louisiana often range from 1.5 to 2.5. Using a conservative multiplier of 1.5 suggests that Central Louisiana’s \$1.26 billion in farm gate value generated nearly \$1.9 billion in total economic activity during 2025. Over the past five years, the region’s agricultural sector has supported an estimated average economic impact approaching \$2 billion annually.



The food and fiber sector remains one of Central Louisiana’s most important industries. Forestry, sugarcane, beef cattle, rice, soybeans, crawfish, nursery crops, pecans, and numerous other commodities provide jobs, generate business activity, and support communities throughout the region. While modern agriculture faces significant economic challenges, Louisiana producers continue to improve efficiency, adopt new technologies, and supply consumers with a reliable and affordable source of food and fiber.

Many consumers rarely think about agriculture’s contribution to their daily lives. Yet the United States enjoys one of the most affordable food supplies in the world, with recent studies showing Americans spending less than 8 percent of their household budgets on food. That affordability is made possible by the productivity and resilience of farmers, ranchers, foresters, and fisheries producers right here at home.

While the number of farms may be smaller than it was generations ago, the impact of agriculture on Central Louisiana remains enormous. The region’s producers

continue to adapt, innovate, and provide food, fiber, and economic opportunity that help sustain communities across the area. Agriculture is not simply part of Cenla’s history; it remains an essential part of our future!

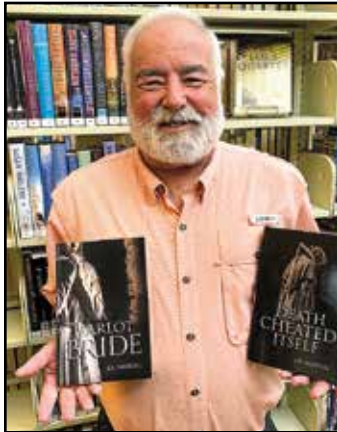


Kurt Guidry is an Agricultural Economist with the LSU AgCenter. He serves as the Assistant Resident Coordinator at the H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station and as the Associate Director of the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station.



Author James Randall Manuel

By Michael Wynne



In interviewing authors for all of these years, every author is, of course, very different. Each is on their own unique trail to write the good word and the good book. Often, I come across authors who appear to be confused in what they are writing or even why they are writing, and worry whether their work will be accepted by the public. So, it is refreshing to come across those rare authors who know exactly what they want to write about, regardless of the possible reception of their works. Authors should always write about what they know and feel strongly about. They should write to a specific crowd, regardless if it is three million or just three people who would be interested in their

work. I commend James Manuel for being one of those singular writers, knowing exactly what they want to write about.

James is simply a fascinating man to listen to. The son of a mechanic and a self-described housewife, he was born in Mamou, yet raised in nearby Ville Platte. "My father read constantly when I was little," James says proudly. "That inspired my brother and me to try to read every non-fiction book in the city library. My brother says that we succeeded!"

After high school, James attended USL (now ULL) in the field of accounting. "Reading allowed me to do anything that I wanted to do without study. It gave me a

substantial different viewpoint on life. It helped me pass the C.P.A. exam."

From there, James rose through the corporate ladder in accounting, yet he turned down some promotions that would have taken him from Louisiana, rather wanting to remain close to his beloved family—his wife, two children, and five grandchildren. He retired after a total of 32 years. "I preferred the snakes in my crawfish lake than the snakes at work."

When asked why he got into writing, James became momentarily speechless. "It's kind of a shock to me that I started writing," James finally answered. "I love history and listened to all that books have told me." James started writing history, but not just any history, but one set in the Middle East in ancient times. He wanted to offer thoughtful information to help readers. About his books, he says, "Enjoy the ride, and if you pick up a tidbit of information that benefits you along the way, [I would] be extremely pleased."

And his books do please. They contain topics that can have a multi-layered impact on a lot of different people, really too difficult to explain in this short article. Two books are out so far: "A Harlot Bride" and "Death Cheated Itself." His third book, "Three Without A Heart," will be out later this year. These first three books follow a similar theme and should probably be read in order. His planned fourth book will be completely different. Set at the end of World War III, the book will explore a man losing his spouse and then other women wanting to move in on his life.

James is quite a talented writer and has a bright future ahead of him. His books (under "J. R. Manuel") are available on Amazon or from your favorite local bookseller.

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Captain William Waters, Chickapoo Park, and the 1st Boy Scout Camp

By Michael Wynne



I was once told by a prominent local person that “we” do not have an interesting history here in Cenla. I immediately corrected this misinformed individual and told them that, just because some people don’t bother to make the any effort to seek out and learn of our magnificent history here in Cenla, doesn’t mean that we don’t have a remarkable history. With unlimited space, I could give you at least 100 great and varied stories every year.

My good friend, Bucket Trotter of Alexandria, suggested this month’s topic as many of the public have over the past decade. Let’s start this unusual tale with William Waters, Sr. (1789-1860). A native of Maryland and raised in Kentucky, William arrived in Louisiana on a flatboat that he owned at age 17. By 1815, “Captain” William was regularly plying the Red River with his own steamboat, finally settling in Rapides Parish by 1825. He bought at least 15,300 acres, much of the land located from the current Tioga area going all the way to the Red River, not including what is now downtown Pineville. There, William built the “Rural Retreat,” his most impressive home that was a Cenla showplace until at least the 1920s. The site of his home on a hill was just north of Tioga, only a short distance from the western side of what is now the Pineville Expressway, located on what is now the Kiwanis Camp land. There, he raised



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LOGAN CARTER

Say hello to Logan Carter, Credit Analyst Trainee at BOM Bank's Operations location!

Originally from Converse, Louisiana, Logan is a graduate of Converse High School. When he's not at work, you'll likely find him on the golf course. In fact, his passion for the game led him to help establish the NSU Golf Club!

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Indian corn, cotton, sweet potatoes, timber (much for New Orleans buildings), and sugar cane for molasses. William also owned the infamous “Lioness” steamboat which blew up in 1833, killing 16 people, including local U.S. Senator Josiah Johnston.

William married three times and had at least 12 children. Although Captain Waters elegant tombstone still survives at the Kiwanis Camp site, his body and nine other Waters’ family members were reburied in Old Rapides Cemetery in 1905. The Waters’ land was sold off by the family by the 1920s. William is perhaps best known as having named the city of Pineville so that he could have a designated landing location for his steamboat advertisements promoting his business here on the Red River.

In the May 1928 Town Talk, it was announced that “Chick-A-Poo Park” was opening in the former, short-lived Tucker Park. This is where the Kiwanis Camp is now located. Created by J. Rufus Tullos on lands formally owned by Captain Waters, the park was described as having “an excellent swimming pool in connection with the resort, in which swimming for the day will be free. Dinners, lunches, and cold drinks will be served at all times.” This park was situated on what was then called Chickapoo Park Lake, located across the lake from Camp E. J. Barrett, which was the first Attakapas Council Boy Scout Camp. The park also had “lifeguards, water, lights and sewerage.”

The Boy Scout Camp was almost created simultaneously



by the donation of 60-acres of land, formerly owned by Captain Waters, by Major T. Winnie Barrett in honor of his late father. This was the first formal Boy Scout Camp in all of Louisiana. It was sold in 1955 to the Kiwanis Club, and Camp Attakapas was moved to a site near Jena.

In December of 1946, the Alexandria Kiwanis Club purchased most of the old Chickapoo Park lands to create a place for the “underprivileged” youth of Cenla to camp and fish. The Kiwanis Club built a dormitory, a recreation center, a dining room and kitchen bath house.

The old Waters’ land, later Camps’ Chickapoo and the first Boy Scout camp, are still carefully maintained by the Kiwanis Club for the past 70 years for the benefit of children and families alike.

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Why You Should Always Be Represented by a Realtor

By Rusty Wilder



RUSTY WILDER

As you embark on the process of buying or selling a home, you may consider whether a real estate agent is necessary. It can be easy to convince yourself that you understand enough about the process and certainly about your home to handle the transaction on your own. Especially with all the new technology, social media platforms, and websites dedicated to real estate, it is understandable why everyone seemingly becomes a real estate expert when house hunting. Keep in mind, however, that real estate agents are just that, experts in this field, and you should use the knowledge and resources that we provide. Your home purchase is likely the largest single investment you will make, so you want it to be founded on accurate information and wise advice.

Even the latest technology and real estate websites cannot make up for the education and experience that a real estate agent brings to the process. We have done this before. While some transactions are straightforward and hassle-free, many have twists and turns that only someone who “has seen it all” can navigate. Whether you are a buyer or a seller, a real estate agent can help you to screen those who are just curious or trying to sell you on something, and keep you focused on the end goal of a successful closing transaction.

While you may feel like you really know the community or neighborhood in which you live or are seeking to live, there is a lot that goes into home values of which you may not be aware. A real estate agent can compile comparable sales in the area to ensure that you pay or receive a price for your home that will allow your investment to grow. While most certainly ensuring that you don’t pay too much for your home, the National Association of Realtors says that, on average, homes that are sold with a listing agent get nearly 22% more for the home than those sold by the owner.

Many people have strong emotional connections to their home, which can often play into the buying and selling process. A real estate agent can take the emotion out of pricing your home if you are putting it on the market, and base decisions on market supply and demand, the overall market conditions, and other data about the community and current economic climate. Moreover, an agent can help with negotiations as the potential sale proceeds, again removing the emotion and always putting your best interests first.



A real estate transaction has many different parts, requiring the work of various professionals to get to a successful closing. Oftentimes, a real estate agent has built connections with trusted partners that they can recommend to their clients. Because some of the services involved in real estate transactions are negotiable during the buying process, it is valuable to have a real estate agent who has aligned



themselves with trusted partners to mitigate or eliminate some of the negotiations surrounding this piece of the agreement.

If you have ever bought or sold a home, you know that the amount of paperwork and the detail involved can be overwhelming. A real estate agent knows what is necessary, who to work with to get it done, and will ensure an error-free transaction. Since one mistake or omission could derail your closing, a real estate agent provides peace of mind.

We are committed to a continuing relationship. Consider that referrals are a huge part of a real estate agent’s future business. It makes sense, then, that it is in their best interest to remain ready to help and be a trusted resource to you, even after the closing is over. Whether it be tax issues, home warranty questions, or inquiries about the community, your real estate agent remains your best source of information.

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More Than Simply a Great Propane Supplier

By Sarah Drell



For Brenda Thibodeaux, owner of Powered by Propane, serving customers means being willing to go the extra mile, whether that means finding a hard-to-locate piece of cookware or designing a propane setup specifically for a customer's needs.

Propane is a major part of what Brenda offers, but her service goes far beyond simply filling a tank. Personalized propane lines can be built to fit individual homes, businesses, nurseries, and restaurants, with customizable solutions designed around each customer's needs. In fact, some local nurseries and restaurants have Brenda's personal cell phone

number so they can reach her directly when they need propane or have a cooking-related need.

That commitment to availability is at the heart of her approach to business. "If we don't have it, we will go out of our way to find it," Brenda said. Every customer has different needs, and Brenda believes there should be an option for everyone. "We offer something in for everyone's budget," she said. "A lot of times, when people will come in at Christmastime, they will say, 'I'm looking for a gift for my wife,' and we will ask in general, 'What does she like to cook? What is your price range?' Because we want to fit everyone."



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Louisiana's Forgotten Wild Plum

By Michael Polozola II, PhD



Many of us are familiar with peaches, plums, and other fruit trees commonly found in home orchards, but few realize that Louisiana has its own native plum growing along roadsides, fence rows, and woodland edges. Known as the Chickasaw plum (*Prunus angustifolia*), this small tree or large shrub has been part of Southern landscapes for centuries and deserves greater recognition among gardeners, wildlife enthusiasts, and homeowners.

In early spring, Chickasaw plum is often one of the first native fruit trees to bloom. Before its leaves emerge, branches become covered with fragrant white flowers that attract pollinators and provide a welcome sign that winter is ending. Throughout Louisiana, these blooms can often be spotted along rural roadsides, although many people pass by without knowing the tree's identity.

Long before modern orchards and grocery stores, Native Americans harvested Chickasaw plums for food. The fruit was eaten fresh, dried for later use, and eventually made into jellies, preserves, and other products. The tree takes its common



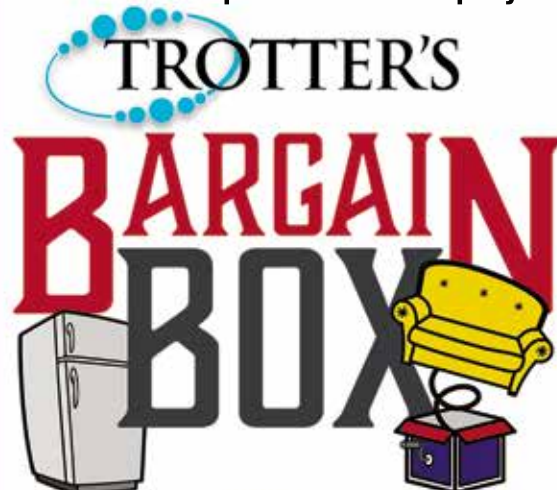
The fruit itself is typically small, ranging from yellow to red as it ripens. Wild plants can vary considerably in fruit quality, with some producing tart fruit and others

name from the Chickasaw people, who cultivated and utilized it long before European settlement. Although the species remains common in many parts of the South, it is rarely found in today's home landscapes.



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offering surprisingly good flavor. While fresh eating is certainly possible, the fruit is especially well suited for jams, jellies, syrups, and preserves.

Wildlife also benefits from Chickasaw plum. Numerous species of birds and mammals consume the fruit, while the dense thickets

formed by the plant provide nesting sites, shelter, and escape cover. During spring, the flowers attract pollinators and other beneficial insects, making Chickasaw plum an excellent choice for those interested in supporting local ecosystems.

One reason Chickasaw plum deserves more attention is its adaptability. As a native species, it is naturally suited to the heat, humidity, and challenging growing conditions of Louisiana. It tolerates drought better than many commonly planted fruit trees and often requires relatively little maintenance, once established. For homeowners interested in low-input gardening, native plants such as Chickasaw plum can offer

significant advantages.

In recent years, interest in Chickasaw plum has led to the selection and development of improved varieties. One particularly interesting introduction is “Purple Pride”, developed at Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas. Unlike typical Chickasaw plums, “Purple Pride” features deep burgundy foliage that persists through much of the growing season. The combination of colorful leaves, spring flowers, and edible fruit makes it a unique addition to the landscape and highlights the ornamental potential of this native species.

The development of selections like “Purple Pride” reflects a growing appreciation for native fruit plants. Rather than viewing them solely as wild species, gardeners and researchers are beginning to recognize their value as edible landscaping plants that provide beauty, wildlife habitat, pollinator resources, and fruit production. In many ways, Chickasaw plum embodies the concept of a multi-purpose landscape plant.

As interest in native plants continues to grow, Chickasaw plum may be poised for a comeback. Its spring flowers, edible fruit, wildlife benefits, and adaptation to Louisiana conditions make it a worthy addition to many home landscapes. Sometimes, the best plants for our gardens are not the newest introductions from distant places, but the forgotten native species that have been growing around us all along.



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Growing Edamame in Central Louisiana

By Molly Lyles



MOLLY LYLES

This summer, I grew edamame for the first time. After seeing how well it performed, it will probably become a regular crop in my summer garden.

Edamame and soybeans are actually the same species of plant. Soybeans are a common crop throughout Central Louisiana, and you can see fields of them growing along roadsides and across the agricultural landscape. The difference is in the harvest stage. Edamame is harvested when the pods are still green and the seeds are fully developed, but still tender. The seeds can be eaten fresh and are often served as a popular appetizer in East Asian restaurants. Soybeans, on the other hand, are left on the plant until the seeds dry and harden. At that stage, they are primarily used for livestock feed, oil production, and many other products.

If you are looking for a crop that performs well during our Louisiana summers and requires relatively little maintenance, I would recommend trying edamame. I planted several successions throughout the summer—beginning in mid-June and continuing through July—and, overall, the crop performed very well.

A common question I was asked was whether gardeners could simply grow field soybean varieties and harvest them as edamame. While they are the same species,

soybean varieties are often bred for traits such as high oil content, whereas edamame varieties are selected for sweetness, large seed size, and other qualities desirable for fresh consumption.

One of the most interesting things I learned is that edamame is a short-day plant, meaning it begins flowering and producing pods as the



days become shorter, after the summer solstice. Because of this, plantings made at different times will mature at nearly the same

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time as days become shorter and nights longer. Next year, I plan to track the number of days from planting to harvest for each planting date to help me better understand how planting dates affect maturity and allow me to develop a more consistent harvest schedule.

Harvesting was surprisingly easy. When the crop reached maturity, nearly all of the pods were ready at once. Rather than picking individual pods in the field, I simply cut the plants at the base and brought the entire stalk indoors. I could then remove the pods in the shade and out of the heat, making the process much more comfortable. I could even envision growers selling whole plants with the pods attached at farmers markets while educating customers on how to process them at home.

Like any crop, edamame has its share of pests and diseases. Because edamame and soybeans are the same species, the same diseases and insect pests will affect both crops. Fortunately, there is an abundance of information available on soybean production that can help growers identify and manage potential problems. It is important to remember, however, that pesticide recommendations for soybeans may not always be appropriate for edamame, especially since edamame is harvested and consumed as a fresh vegetable.

There were two primary issues during my first year of growing edamame—Cercospora leaf blight and stink bugs. Cercospora leaf blight is a common, late-season disease of soybeans. It caused leaves to develop a bronze coloration and left dark blotches on some pods. The fungus can survive from one season to the next in infected seed and crop residue. Rotating crops, removing plant debris, and being selective about the seed I save are some of the primary practices I plan to use to reduce disease pressure next year.

Another challenge was stink bugs. I did not experience significant stink bug pressure early in the season, but populations increased in late August. Stink bugs feed directly on developing seeds, which can reduce seed quality and affect germination. After speaking with soybean specialists about these issues, it appears that both Cercospora leaf blight and stink bugs are common challenges that growers should expect to

monitor and manage when producing edamame.

To save seed, I simply selected plants that performed well in the garden and allowed the pods to dry completely on the stalk before harvesting them. The seed can then be stored and replanted the following season.

Overall, edamame proved to be a productive and easy crop for a Louisiana summer garden. It tolerated the heat well, required minimal maintenance, and provided an opportunity to learn more about a crop that is grown extensively throughout our region. Based on my experience this year, it is a crop I look forward to growing again.

Molly Lyles is the LSU AgCenter Horticulture Agent serving Avoyelles, Grant, Rapides, and St. Landry Parishes.

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Central Louisiana Orchid Society Fall Orchid Show and Sale

Orchid lovers, gardeners, and anyone who appreciates beautiful flowers are invited to attend the Central Louisiana Orchid Society's Fall Orchid Show and Sale on Friday, October 9th and Saturday, October 10th at the Kees Park Community Center in Pineville.

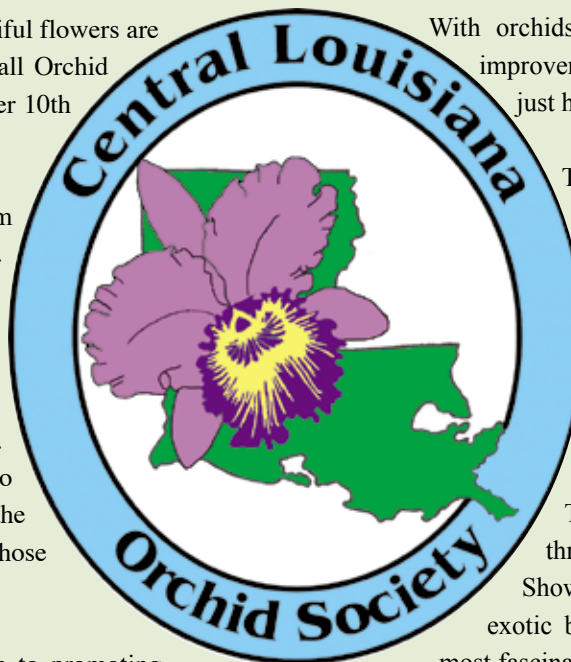
The free event will be open to the public on Friday from 2:00pm to 5:00pm and Saturday from 8:00am to 4:00pm. Visitors will have the opportunity to explore stunning orchid displays, learn about orchid growing and judging, and shop from vendors offering orchids and orchid-growing supplies. The show showcases a wide variety of orchids in bloom, ranging from familiar favorites to rare and unusual species. Society members will be available throughout the event to answer questions and share tips on orchid care, making the show an ideal destination for both experienced growers and those considering their first orchid.



In addition to promoting orchid appreciation, the Central Louisiana Orchid Society has played an important role in conserving one of the state's rarest native orchids—the Kentucky lady's slipper (*Cypripedium kentuckiense*). The conservation effort began with the curiosity of a Shreveport high school student, Kevin Allen, and has grown into a collaborative project involving the Kisatchie National Forest, the Southwest Regional Orchid Growers Association, the U.S. Forest Service Southern Research Station, and the Central Louisiana Orchid Society.

Allen continues to be actively involved in the project. The Kentucky lady's slipper is the largest-flowered lady's slipper orchid known and is considered one of Louisiana's most spectacular native orchids. Through grant funding, the society purchased laboratory-grown plantlets produced from collected seed pods. Researchers are now studying the best methods for establishing new populations by comparing seedling age, fungal inoculation, planting depth, and planting season. Information gathered from the ongoing planting trials will help guide future restoration efforts for this remarkable native species.

Although orchids are often thought to be difficult to grow, society members say they are surprisingly easy to care for once their basic needs are understood. Members successfully grow orchids on windowsills, under indoor lights, and in greenhouses.



With orchids now widely available at grocery stores and home improvement centers, many first-time growers are discovering just how rewarding these exotic plants can be.

Those interested in learning more are encouraged to attend the Central Louisiana Orchid Society's monthly meetings, held on the third Sunday of each month at 2:30pm in the St. James Episcopal Church Youth Activities Building, located at 1546 Albert Street in Alexandria. Meetings feature educational programs, opportunities to meet experienced growers, and door prizes and raffle plants.

The Central Louisiana Orchid Society invites residents throughout Central Louisiana to attend this year's Orchid Show and Sale and experience an impressive display of colorful, exotic blooms while learning more about one of the world's most fascinating plant families. For more information on the Central Louisiana Orchid Society, see their website centrallouisianaorchidsociety.org.

Central Louisiana Orchid Society

Orchid Show & Sale

Friday, October 9, 2026
2:00 – 5:00 PM

Saturday, October 10, 2026
8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

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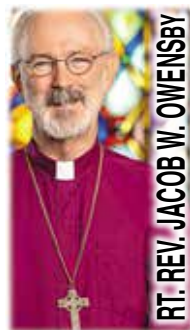
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How God Works with Imperfect Material

By Rt. Rev. Jacob W. Owensby, PhD, DD



RT. REV. JACOB W. OWENSBY

The church is a mess. Sometimes, it looks nothing like Jesus. I know people who have been hurt by the church. You may be one of them. I don't blame you if you wouldn't dream of darkening the door of any congregation. But here's something I invite you to consider: God works with the material that God is given. You know, people. Maybe you get it right all the time. I have to tell you,

I don't.

We're supposed to be the grace people, we Christians. And even when I happen to get that love thing right, it's really not because I'm so perfectly pure of heart. Actually, Nadia Bolz-Weber is speaking for me when she says, "I realize God may have gotten something beautiful done through me despite the fact that I am [a jerk], and when I am confronted by the mercy of the gospel so much that I cannot hate my enemies, and when I am unable to judge the sin of someone else (which, let's be honest, I love to do) because my own

crap is too much in the way," ("Accidental Saints," page 9).

Here's what church is: imperfect people drawn together by God so that we can learn from each other that we are loved in our imperfection. To draw on Nadia again, it's "like being thirsty and having someone you don't even like give you water," (page 48). That's just the sort of thing that makes us humble, repentant, and eventually, more capable of loving.

Look, there's nothing really new about this. Church has always been a mess—because we human beings have always been a mess. You can see this in Paul's Letter to the Romans. Let me give you a little context and then I'll explain. Paul wrote Romans in around 57 AD. The Emperor Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome in 49 AD. Decades later, the historian Suetonius reported that Chrestus had created civil disturbances. Scholars interpret this as a reference to conflicts in the Roman synagogues between those who followed the Way of Jesus and those who didn't.



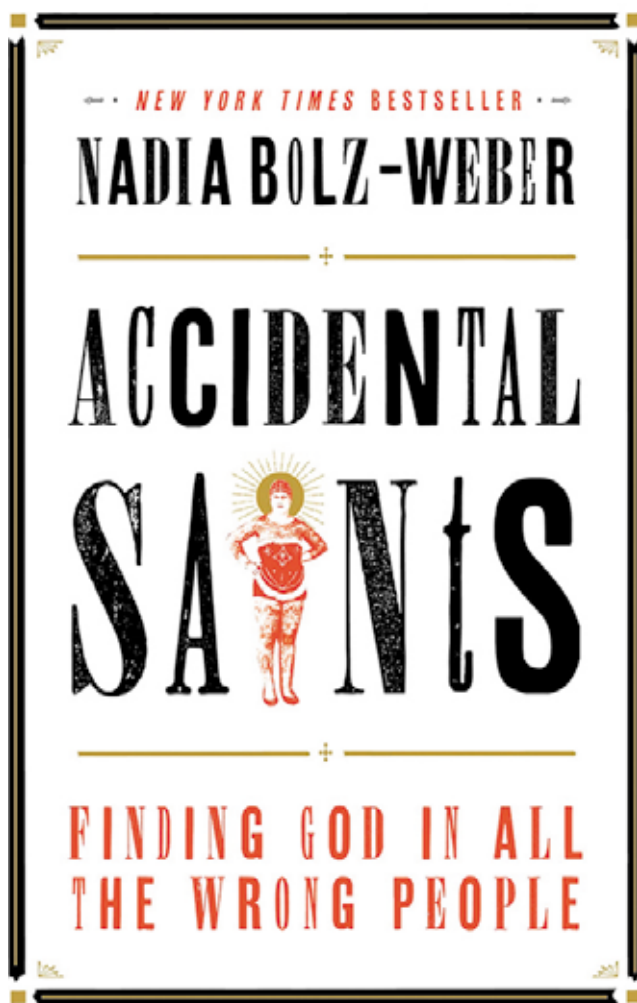
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After Claudius died, his nephew, Nero, ascended the throne in 54 AD. Claudius' edict expired, so Jews began returning to Rome. What the Jewish Christians found when they got there was that Gentiles had formed and were leading congregations shaped by their own customs, theological understandings, and spiritual practices. Conflict followed. So, you see, Paul was writing to a messy, conflicted church. Since he had not founded the church in Rome, Paul spent time laying a theological foundation and explaining how God remained faithful to his covenant with the Jews.

Only then did he turn to the practices that define the Christian life. And he quoted Proverbs 25:21-22 to crystallize his main point: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads," (Romans 12:20). Paul is not suggesting some backhanded way to get back at someone who has injured you. Instead, commentators trace the passage in Proverbs back to ancient Near Eastern customs. For instance, in Egypt, a person publicly displayed their feelings of remorse by carrying a clay pan containing hot coals on top of their head. Likewise, Paul is suggesting that unearned acts of kindness and generosity in response to someone's cruelty may invite them to self-reflection, contrition, and amendment of life.

Our aspiration as a Christian community, as church, is to embody the virtues that Paul outlines. "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection," (Romans 12:9). We cannot achieve this on our own. God helps us each stumbling, hesitant step of the way.

God's help generally comes in our honest, vulnerable interactions with one another. You may read Paul telling you to bless those who persecute you—and he is saying that. But he's telling us that we'll probably learn to do that—gradually and grudgingly—only after we've received a blessing from the very one we've judged, neglected, or harmed. We are able to overcome evil when, through some other person's good toward us, our own evil has been overcome.

Bishop Jake is the 4th Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Western Louisiana, the 26th chancellor of the University of the South, husband, father, noted speaker, teacher, and author. His latest book is entitled, "Looking for God in Messy Places" and is available through Amazon or your favorite bookseller. Find Bishop Jake online at jakeowensby.com.



Happy 15-Year Anniversary, Mary Hooper!

Mary has been a valued member of our Operations Department in Natchitoches for the past 15 years, and we're so thankful for her dedication, hard work, and commitment to serving both our team and our customers.

Thank you, Mary, for everything you do to help keep BOM Bank running smoothly behind the scenes. Your loyalty and positive attitude make a difference every day!

Please join us in congratulating Mary on 15 amazing years. Here's to many more!

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The 9th annual Gleaux for the Girls is set for 6:00pm on Saturday, October 10th at Walker Toyota, located at 5735 Coliseum Boulevard in Alexandria.



This one-mile glow-in-the-dark fun run in the Lakes District is dedicated to raising breast cancer awareness and education in Central Louisiana. Participants will help generate funds that will stay within our community, directly benefiting the CHRISTUS St. Frances Cabrini Cancer Center and Breast Health Center through the CHRISTUS St. Frances Cabrini Foundation.

Participants can also purchase raffle tickets for \$20.00 each for a chance to win a pink Toyota, courtesy of Walker Toyota, or a brand-new pink 4 Seater golf cart presented by Cenla MotoSport.

Register for the race and buy raffle tickets at christuscabrinifoundation.org/gleaux. Registration fees are \$30.00 for adults and \$15.00 for survivors or children 17 and under. All registrations include an event t-shirt, race bib, and Gleaux swag bag!



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For more information, visit www.christuscabrinifoundation.org/gleaux

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FOTAZ is Serving Up Wild Fun

Get ready to hit the courts for a great cause! Serve, smash, and support Alexandria Zoo at this fun-filled, competitive event for pickleball players of all skill levels on Saturday, September 19th at the Alexandria Tennis Complex, located at 98 Sylvester Drive in Alexandria. Check-in begins at 7:30am and the tournament kicks off at 8:00am.

The tournament is open to intermediate and advanced players of all levels, ages 15 and up, who will compete across five divisions—Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles, Mixed Doubles, Men's Singles, and Women's Singles. Individuals can compete in more than one division and players must provide their own paddle. Matches consist of one game of first to 15 points, winning by at least two. All teams are guaranteed a two-game minimum. All matches will last a maximum time of 35 minutes. A 5-minute warmup, if needed, will take place prior to the match's 35-minute time

frame. Water breaks may be given at any time, needed, by either team. Standard rules apply and are available at thealexandriazoo.com/Pickleball.html.

Registration is \$30.00 for individuals, \$60.00 per team, and includes tournament t-shirts, provided on a first come, first served basis for registered participants; if we run out of your selected size, we will provide the next available size. Registration is online only at thealexandriazoo.com/Pickleball.html and closes on Friday, September 11th.





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On tournament day, please use Lee Street to enter parking lot. The Masonic Drive entrance to the Complex will be closed to vehicle traffic. Fuel your pickleball passion with a delicious lineup of local food trucks ready to satisfy your cravings. From savory bites to refreshing treats, grab a quick and tasty meal between matches to keep your energy high and your game strong!

Got time between pickleball games? Don't just sit around! Stroll over to the City of Alexandria's Youth & Teen Center to relax, cool off, and have some fun. The Center features a pool table, ping pong, air hockey, and foosball ready for you to enjoy.

For full tournament rules, instructions, and information or to register your team, visit thealexandriazoo.com/Pickleball.html.





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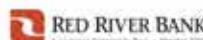
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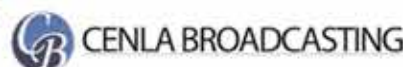
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Town Talk.



The Silent Struggle

By Christy Pennison, LPC-S



I recently came across a post online about depression that stopped me for a moment. The person sharing it said that, from the outside, most people would probably never know they were struggling. They appear happy, take care of their kids, go to work, and move through life like everything is fine. Then, they shared something that I think captures the reality for so many people: “People have no idea what’s going on inside the heads of people suffering. We look no different than anyone else...”

I have someone close to me, and a conversation with them the night before I wrote this reinforced something I already know: even the people we feel like we know better than anyone else can be silently struggling. Struggling with the thoughts in their head. The voice within telling them they should be better, feel better, or be farther along than they are at this moment. Thoughts and feelings that can become so overwhelming that they leave someone wondering, “Maybe it would be better if I wasn’t here anymore, so I wouldn’t have to keep feeling this way.”

I heard from this loved one that, if they continued to struggle with the thoughts inside their mind and the feelings they were experiencing, they couldn’t imagine carrying that silent struggle forever. So, we had an honest conversation about how they were thinking and feeling, ways to talk through it when the thoughts and feelings become overwhelming, and what next steps we needed to take together to support their mental health.

The truth is, we all—and I mean all—know someone who is in the silent struggle. What individuals who are struggling silently need is someone who can help them break the silence, give them a space to talk about what they are experiencing, and help them find support.

September is Suicide Prevention Month. I wish it weren’t true, but if you are reading this, there is a good chance you know someone who has died by suicide or someone whose life has been deeply affected by suicide. The weight of suicide is like a shackle that weighs on so many. There is the immense weight carried by the person who feels like the world—whether in a single moment or through a daily struggle—has become too much to bear. And then, there is the weight left behind for the people who loved them so dearly.

I’m here to tell you, I don’t have all the answers. But I am learning through my own life and through my life’s work of helping others that the antidote to the silent struggle isn’t more silence. It’s having a space to be heard. It’s having someone willing to sit with you in what feels unbearable. And, it’s being reminded that how you feel right now may not always be how you feel. That is hope.

So, how do we break through the silence? We talk about it—in safe spaces. And since I just had this conversation last night, let me share a few things you can ask:

- “Have you been thinking about suicide?”
- “You seem a little off lately. How are you doing—really?”
- “Do you feel safe right now?”
- “Are the thoughts getting hard for you to manage on your own?”

And then, be prepared to listen. It will be hard to hear, especially when it is someone you love deeply. Because no matter what skills, education, or training you have, there is a helplessness that comes with knowing you cannot simply remove someone else’s pain. But you can listen.

You can acknowledge how hard it must be to carry those thoughts and feelings. You can remind them that they are loved and cared for. You can help them identify reasons to keep going and find the next step forward, rather than expecting them to



figure it all out alone. That might mean contacting their counselor, helping them find a mental health professional, reaching out to a trusted family member, or calling or texting 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. If someone tells you they have a plan to harm themselves or that they cannot keep themselves safe, take it seriously, stay with them, and seek immediate help.

Sometimes, breaking the silence begins with one person being brave enough to ask the question—and another person finally feeling safe enough to tell the truth. And, if you are reading this and you are the one struggling silently, please know that you do not have to carry everything happening inside your head alone.

Tell someone. Even if you don’t know exactly what to say. Even if all you can say is, “I’m not okay.” There are people who want to sit with you in the struggle, help you carry what feels too heavy right now, and remind you of something that can be very difficult to believe when you are in the middle of the pain: What you are feeling right now does not mean you will always feel this way.

There is help. There is hope. The first step is breaking the silence.

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Fall into Late Summer Fun in Avoyelles

By Wilbert Carmouche



September 22nd officially welcomes autumn this year, but Mother Nature clearly hasn't gotten the memo yet. With temperatures still warm and humid, the flannel can stay tucked away a little longer. There's still plenty of summer sunshine to enjoy as we get ready for all the festivals, flavors, fairs, and good times cookin' up this September in Avoyelles Parish—Centre de la Louisiane!

Calling all artists, Plein Air Marksville (PAM) and Gallery on the Square, home of Avoyelles Arts Council, invites you to Plein Air on Saturday, September 12th. Check-in time is 9:00am at The Gallery; paintings are returned for judging at 3:00pm, and reception, awards, and art sale are scheduled from 5:00pm to 7:00pm. The fee is \$35.00 per artist, pre-registered on Eventbrite or \$40.00 on event day. Email MargeShanksArt@gmail.com or call (225) 287-6623 for more information.



St. Martin of Tours, located at 1981 Highway 114 in Belledeau begins the fair season on September 12th and 13th. On Saturday, the fair begins at 5:00pm with gumbo for \$6.00, bingo, and children's games, Traeger Grill Raffle, and refreshments. Sunday's Chicken or Pork Dinners for \$13.00 will be served from 10:30am to 12:30pm. Bingo will end at 3:00pm. For additional information, call (318) 359-9594.

Ready for a "Food Sampling Soiree"? Motor over to Moncla for "Mange' de Moncla" (Food of Moncla) on Saturday, September 12th. Tickets are available for \$15.00 for the food tasting event. Select samples from 16 food stations and return for more from your favorite "chef" beginning at 5:00pm. All benefits are for St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Moncla. Contact (318) 305-8267 or (318) 305-0337 for tickets and additional information!

Save Cenla will host the 10th annual "Into the Light" Walk/Run at the Avoyelles Parish Courthouse Square on Saturday, September 19th. Participants can carry a pair of combat boots in honor of one of the 16 veterans who lose their life to suicide every day by checking out a pair of boots (located on the courthouse steps). The day will include bead boards, vendor booths, pre-ordered event shirts, memorial list, food tickets, team donations, silent auction, and more! Visit savecenla.com to register today!

We continue our event schedule on a true Cajun note with the Authentic Cajun Music Concert, featuring Sheryl Cormier and Cajun Sounds on Sunday, September 13th from 2:00pm to 4:00pm at the Friends of Evergreen Methodist Social Center.

Known as the Queen of Cajun Music, Sheryl has kept traditional Cajun music alive for generations. For concert information, call (318) 447-1580 or (318) 201-7824.

Arts Council of Avoyelles invites its members (\$25.00) and non-members (\$35.00) to "Cork & Canvas" on Thursday, September 17th at 5:30pm. Join artist Amber LaPrairie for a fun-filled 2-hour painting class where you can explore your artistic side and learn valuable painting techniques. Whether you are a beginner or an experienced artist, this class is suitable for all skill levels. And remember to BYOB—Bring Your Own Beverage! Register at avoyellesarts@gmail.com or call Myleka at (318) 264-1826.



Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Fifth Ward invites you to celebrate with them on September 19th and 20th at their Annual Church Fair! Festivities begin with a Jambalaya Cook-Off; register by calling (318) 359-8749. The fair kicks off after 4:00pm mass on Saturday. Events will include raffle, football game watch, children's games, jump house, DJ, bingo, hamburgers, nachos, cakes, and beverages center. Pork or Chicken dinners are available for \$13.00 (with advanced tickets) on

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FB: Unity Park Cottonport Louisiana

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www.paragoncasinoresort.com

Our Lady of Sorrows Church Fair

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318.359.9342

Plein Air-Avoyelles

Avoyelles Arts Gallery

September 12, 2026

318.264.1826

St. Martin of Tours Church Fair

Belledeau, LA

September 12-13, 2026

318.240.0007

Mange de Moncla

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Moncla

September 12, 2026 @ 5:00-7:00pm

318.305.8267 or 318.305.0337

Cajun Music Concert

(featuring Sheryl Cormier)

Friends of Evergreen

Methodists Social Center

September 13, 2026 @ 2:00pm - 4:00pm

318.447.1580 or 318.201.7824

Our Lady of Lourdes Church Fair

Fifth Ward, LA

September 19-20, 2026

318.240.0641

St. Peter's/St. Michael's Church Fair

Bordelonville LA

September 19-20, 2026

318.500.0417

Boots & Blues III

Paragon Casino Resort

September 19, 2026 @ 7:30pm

www.paragoncasinoresort.com

St. Francis De Sales Church Fair

Echo, LA

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318.709.0443

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318.876.3485

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Paragon Casino Hotel

September 26, 2026 @ 4:00pm

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www.paragoncasinoresort.com

Ladies Night Out-Pink October

Paragon Casino Resort

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318.359.6901

Craig Shoemaker

Paragon Casino Resort

October 10, 2026 @ 8:00pm

www.paragoncasinoresort.com

St. Joseph's School Fair

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Sunday from 10:00am to 12:30pm. Bingo, homemade cakes, and a beverage center will be available. Call (318) 253-9936 or (318) 240-0641 for more information.

All roads will lead to Bordelonville September 19th and 20th for the St.Peters/ St. Michael’s Church Fair. Location will be at the Bordelonville Volunteer Fire Department Training Center, located at 4475 Highway 451. Saturday will include games, food sales beginning after 4:00pm Mass in the Gym. The music starts at 7:00pm and continues to 11:00pm. Sunday brings the sought after Cochon de Lait dinner served from 10:30am to 1:00pm along with cakes and drinks.



September 19th, starting at 7:30pm. Tickets starting at \$30.00 are available at www.paragoncasinoresort.com.

As America celebrates 250 years, we invite you to take a closer look at the part Avoyelles has played in that remarkable journey. Join us on Friday, September 25th at 1:00pm for “Louisiana’s Legacy: Avoyelles and America’s 250-Year Journey,” a special symposium at the Avoyelles Commission of Tourism Office, located at 8592 Highway 1 in Mansura. Come spend the afternoon with us as we share history, heritage, music, and a few stories along the way—because right here in the Centre de la Louisiane, we have 250 years of America to celebrate, remember, and pass along to the next generation.

Let’s go to Echo, Echo, Echo for their Annual St. Frances de Sales Church Fair on September 26th and 27th. Saturday events begin at 5:00pm with game booths, Homemade Cakes, Hot Cracklings, Chuck Wagon, and Street Dance with music by Phillip Meche “The Cajun Outlaw”. All you can eat dine-in Gumbo for \$10.00 will be served at 5:00pm. Bingo will start at 5:30pm. For more information, call (318) 613-1376 or (318) 709-0443. On Sunday, the events begin at 10:30am for dinner pickup and homemade cakes, bingo, and raffle.

The banks of Bayou Rouge and the Town of Cottonport is the place to be on September 26th, beginning at 7:00am for the annual Community-

Boots & Blues III starring J. Paul and The Zydeco Nubreedz, Big Pokey Bear, and David Sylvester, presented by DJ Troy will be at Paragon Casino Resort on

wide Garage Sale, “Sale”ing on the Bayou. The community event is sponsored by Cottonport Women’s Commission. Sale locations are throughout Cottonport, along the bayou, at home locations and Downtown Cottonport Square. For more information, call (318) 876-3485.

For all your Avoyelles Parish travel needs, contact Mary, Murial, or Wilbert at (318) 964-2025, (800) 833-4195, visit us at 8592 Highway 1, Suite 3, Mansura, LA 71350 or online at www.travelavoyelles.com and Facebook @ravelAvoyelles or @AllonsAvoyelles.



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Vendor App

Your Comfort Is the Win this Season!

By Cornel D. Leblanc, D.C.



Football season is here and, for some people, football games can be uncomfortable and maybe a dread to attend. Fans must sit on hard bleachers, traveling back and forth from the parking lots, and standing in long lines at the concession that can cause neck pain, low back pain, and even sciatic pain, which can be aggravating, making it difficult to enjoy the gameday experience. That is why chiropractic care can be so beneficial to people that suffer with neck pain, low back pain, and even sciatic pain. That is where we come in at, here at Alexandria Spine & Rehab Center. We provide excellent chiropractic care and specialize in non-surgical spinal decompression therapy.

You will know quickly—no matter how well your team is doing—if you have problems like sciatica, disc herniation, spinal stenosis, or even degenerative disc disease, those games are not fun. Sitting up throughout the game can be demanding on some people causing dis-ease. The chiropractic adjustment can help align the spine and decrease pain and inflammation, therefore, restoring the quality of life.

For people with more advanced or persistent symptoms, here at Alexandria Spine & Rehab Center, we offer a Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression table that is state-of-the-art and is specific to the disc area that is involved. It softly stretches the spine, alleviating pressure off the nerve and spinal disc. It uses negative pressure as a pumping mechanism and draws the disc back inside. So, if you've had a not-



quite-the-best football season experience before due to neck or low back pain, our Accu-Spinal Non-Surgical Decompression table can give you tremendous relief with long-term satisfying results.

So, if this football season, you or a loved one is suffering with, neck, lower back, or sciatic pain, make an appointment at Alexandria Spine & Rehab Center today by calling (318) 561-6250 and let's make this the best football season ever!

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Diabetes and Its Effect on Eye Health

By Dr. Phillip L. Carney, Jr., O.D., F.A.A.O.



Diabetes is a disease where the body is not able to break down sugar properly. This causes blood sugar levels to remain elevated. Over time, excess amounts of sugar in the blood cause a decrease in the amount of oxygen that the blood vessels can deliver to the tissues of the body. This lack of adequate oxygen is mostly seen in the small blood vessels of the body. This is the reason that diabetes tends to affect the eyes, feet, and fingers, where many small blood vessels provide oxygen to maintain normal health. The delicate blood vessels that supply the retina of the eye are the most susceptible to damage and can be damaged, resulting in long-term vision loss. Excess blood sugar level can cause

the lens inside the eye to become swollen, resulting in blurred vision and fluctuating vision.

It is recommended that persons with diabetes have a dilated comprehensive eye exam at least once a year, and more often if any damage to the eye is detected. Those with a history of diabetes or high risk factors (obesity, poor diet, etc.) may show early signs of diabetes during an eye exam, even if vision is normal.

Dr. Carney is available for all your eye care needs by appointment at Wallace Eye Associates by calling (318) 448-0221.



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Give Your Baby Space!

How and where our babies sleep make a big difference in their health. In fact, practicing safe sleep is one of the best ways to help prevent Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), and sleep-related deaths. Reduce all babies' risk for Sudden Unexpected Infant Death by learning a few steps to safe sleep. Through our love, our strength, and our working together, we can make sure that every baby in Louisiana takes their first steps to a bright future! The Safe Sleep Crib Card was developed as part of a community awareness effort to provide parents and caregivers with simple, easy-to-remember safe sleep guidance using the ABCs of Safe Sleep: A for Alone; B for On Their Back; and C for In Their Crib.

Babies should always sleep on their backs, not their tummies or sides every time they sleep--naptime and bedtime--in their own sleep space, not together with an adult, another child, or pet. Babies can lay or cuddle with you to breastfeed and bond, but when it's time to fall asleep, or if you get drowsy, return them to their own sleep space.

They should sleep in an empty, safety-approved crib with a firm mattress and a tightly fitted sheet,

or a Pack 'n Play with a firm base, and always where their caregiver can see and hear them. Share a room with your baby if you can. Never place a baby to sleep on a couch, sofa, or recliner. Don't put pillows, stuffed animals, bumpers, or blankets in with them. Car seats, swings, and other furniture were not made for routine, extended sleep for a baby. Don't let the baby sleep in these devices for too long, and make sure you're keeping a close watch while they do.

Try to keep the room at a comfortable temperature to prevent overheating. Keep the room temperature at what would be comfortable for a lightly dressed adult. If the room is cold, dress the baby in a wearable blanket (infant sleep sack) or extra layer of clothing. When swaddling (wrapping a light blanket snugly around a baby), make sure the blanket is not too tight--you should be able to fit your hand between your baby and the light blanket, and make sure to place your baby into their crib, bassinet, or Pack N' Play, on their back.

For more information on safe sleeping practices or to download a copy of the Safe Sleep Crib Card, visit giveyourbabyspace.org.



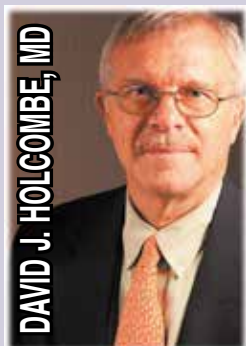
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Glucagon-Like Peptides (GLP-1s)—Both Promise and Problems

By David J. Holcombe, MD, MSA, FACP



The obesity epidemic in the U.S. worsened every decade after the end of World War II. Public Health sounded the alarm years ago as the epidemic, which started in the South, extended gradually over the entire U.S. Maps showed the progression, decade after decade, like a red cancer, extending everywhere (with the exception of a couple of healthier states). Obesity brought in its dreadful wake a constellation of other medical problems including diabetes, hypertension, increased cancer rates, fatty liver, mobility and other issues, all of which slowed previous improvements in life expectancy. Louisiana, often on the top of a number of bad health lists, found itself with a third of the population overweight and another third obese.

Enter the GLP-1s. These miracle drugs curb the appetite and provoke astonishing decreases in weight, sometimes up to fifty pounds or more. People who formerly had to undergo gastric bypass surgery or endless cycles of failed diet and exercise programs, suddenly found themselves losing substantial amounts of weight with a simple weekly shot.



Not only did the pounds melt away, but there were improvements in diabetic control (often getting off all diabetic medications), reduced hypertension and heart disease rates, decreases in some cancers, possible improvements in dementia and even addiction. Some of these injectable agents became available orally and they can



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GLP-1s do have side effects. They can cause abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, bloating, constipation, and excessive flatulence, which require 4% of users to stop. They cause weight loss of both fat and muscle, which requires increased dietary protein supplementation and exercise. They also cause a curious hair loss (telogen effluvium) in about 4% of users, attributed to the physical “stress” of losing substantial weight.

None of this has decreased their popularity and now 11% of all Americans are on a GLP-1, over a half a million people. Because of their cost, the impact on health insurers has been dramatic. Billions of dollars must be spent to cover these medications which, while they have absolute positive benefits, cost an arm and a leg (someone always pays). This might be acceptable, except that healthcare in the U.S. already costs \$4 trillion a year (over \$12,000 per every man, woman and child). Healthcare expenditures, now aggravated by the miracle of the GLP-1s, top 18% of the gross domestic product, much higher than other countries with universal healthcare and an unsustainable financial burden on the U.S.

all could be obtained online. It seems that a solution to America’s obesity epidemic had finally arrived. As the agents became more widely available and somewhat less costly (or subsidized by some insurers), more and more overweight Americans could get GLP-1s and join the ranks of those approaching a normal body mass index.

As our professor in pharmacology in Belgium told us, “If a medication has no side effects, it’s not really effective.” Side effects are a necessary evil of all truly active medications. Every medication, however, undergoes rigorous testing and must be proven “safe and effective” prior to FDA approval. Side effects must be documented and, in the end, the positive effects must outweigh any negative ones. This does not hold true for the plethora of non-prescription dietary supplements and other “snake oil”.

At the height of the Roman Empire, wealth and food poured into Rome and overindulging upper-class Romans were confronted with increasing obesity. The Roman version of beauty, like our own, included svelte women and muscular men. Since they did not possess our pharmacological advances, they resorted to the vomitorium. This special room allowed gluttonous guests at banquets to tickle their throats with goose feather to provoke vomiting so they could continue to overindulge in their feasts. While GLP-1s do not represent a modern “vomitorium,” they do remind us that overindulgence itself can force people (and societies) to extremes which might be unhealthy.

P. Steven Arnold Jr., DMD, MD
Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon



Fred W. Smith, DMD, MD, JD
Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon



Matthew Kennedy, DDS, MD
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Making the Move to Corner Drug and Wellness is Easier Than You Think

By Sarah Drell

For some patients, switching pharmacies may seem like a hassle, but according to pharmacist and Corner Drug and Wellness owner Austin Peavy, transferring prescriptions to the locally owned pharmacy can be much easier than many people realize.



Located on Jackson Street in Alexandria, Corner Drug and Wellness offers patients personalized service, prescription transfers, and delivery options designed to make managing medications more convenient. Peavy said one of the biggest misconceptions he hears is that patients must use a specific pharmacy because of a letter they received from their insurance company. "A lot of people will receive a letter in the mail saying that they have to use a certain pharmacy, but that is definitely not the case," Peavy said. "We are in network with most insurance plans."

Corner Drug and Wellness is in network and preferred with many insurance plans, including Medicaid, Medicare Part D plans, state employee insurance and retired state worker plans, as well as Humana and numerous others. Peavy said patients who are unsure whether their insurance is accepted should simply ask the pharmacy. The staff can help determine coverage and make the transition as easy as possible.

For patients who have prescriptions at another pharmacy, transferring them can often be handled with a simple phone call to Corner Drug and Wellness. The pharmacy staff can take care of the transfer process, allowing patients to spend less time navigating their medications, and more time getting the care they need.

The pharmacy also offers a range of services designed to make medication management easier, including medication synchronization, immunizations, drive-thru prescription pickup, adherence packaging, non-sterile compounding, and safe drug disposal. Patients can also take advantage of affordable cash pricing, giving those who may not have insurance another option for accessing their medications.

For older adults, busy families, and patients who have difficulty getting to the pharmacy, delivery provides another convenient option. Keeping prescriptions with a locally owned pharmacy also means patients have access to a familiar staff that can get to know them and their medication needs. Peavy hopes more Rapides Parish residents will realize they have choices when it comes to where they fill their prescriptions.

Whether a patient wants to transfer medications for convenience, take advantage of delivery, simplify their medication schedule or simply receive more personalized service, Corner Drug and Wellness is making it easier to choose local.

Call Corner Drug and Wellness today at (318) 769-0148 to get started!

Transfer Your Prescriptions Today for Better Care!

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Bring medications for a one-on-one consultation for clear guidance—even if prescriptions are filled at another pharmacy.

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Pharmacy Hours

Monday-Friday (9am-6pm)

(Closed for lunch 1-1:30pm)

Saturday (9am-1pm)

4116 Jackson St, Alexandria, LA 71303
cornerdrugwellness.com

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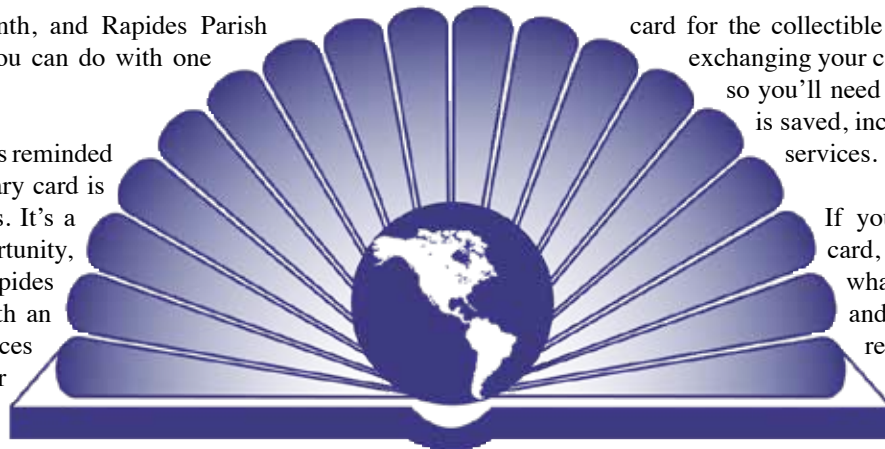
EDUCATION FOCUS

I Can at Rapides Parish Library

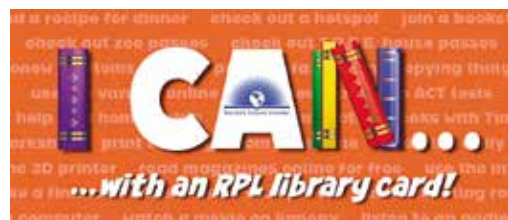
September is Library Card Sign Up Month, and Rapides Parish Library (RPL) is celebrating everything you can do with one small but mighty library card!

Since 1987, Library Card Sign Up Month has reminded communities across the country that a library card is about much more than checking out books. It's a passport to learning, entertainment, opportunity, discovery and connection. Here in Rapides Parish, your library card is free, along with an incredible collection of resources, services and experiences available to you and your family.

RPL is celebrating with the theme "I Can..." because there is so much you can do with your library card. With my RPL

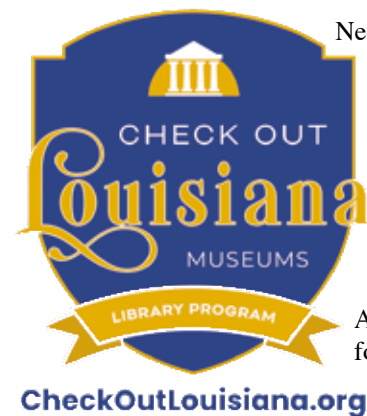


RAPIDES PARISH LIBRARY



card, I can download e-books and audiobooks, read digital magazines, get homework help and tutoring, explore reliable research resources, use technology, attend programs and classes, and discover something new, all without adding another bill to the family budget.

I can even explore beyond the library. Through programs like Check Out Louisiana Museums and Check Out LA State Parks, your library card can open the door to museums, attractions, outdoor adventures and experiences across Louisiana.



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And, of course, I can visit my local RPL branch for so much more. From art, science and STEM to technology, literacy, lifelong learning and programs for

children, teens, adults and families, your library is a place to learn, create, connect and simply enjoy being part of your community.

This September, we're adding a little extra fun to all those possibilities! Beginning September 1st, RPL offers our special edition collectible library card, featuring the Red River at dusk in beautiful shades of RPL blue. New cardholders can choose the collectible card and will also receive a special RPL tote bag, bookmarks, and stickers while supplies last.



card for the collectible edition during September. Just remember: exchanging your card will give you a new library card number, so you'll need to update it anywhere your current number is saved, including the RPL app and other digital library services.

If you've never had a Rapides Parish Library card, September is the perfect time to discover what you've been missing. Signing up is free, and that one card connects you to books, digital resources, educational tools, technology, programs, experiences and opportunities throughout Rapides Parish and beyond. Your library is here to help you learn something new, find what you need, connect with your community, and discover what comes next, not just during

Library Card Sign Up Month, but all year long.

So, this September, stop by your local Rapides Parish Library and discover just how much "I can..." really means. I can learn. I can explore. I can connect. I can create. I can discover. And I can do it all with the most valuable card in my wallet—my free Rapides Parish Library card!

CUB VISION QUEST

Roaring into Vision Awareness!

Come explore, learn, and play in a fun, hands-on evening all about vision! Try interactive games and discover how others experience the world without sight.

Thursday, September 10th, 2026

5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Westside Regional Library

5416 Provine Place, Alexandria, LA 71303

Event Highlights:

FREE Vision Screenings
Non-invasive screenings using PlusOptix instruments.

Cubs Vision Quest
Children will complete 6 missions to earn a prize.

Ted Talk
Hear Ted's inspiring story of navigating life without sight.

Recycling for Sight
Donate your old eyeglasses and eyeglass cases.

RSVP to attend with Rachel Hazelton
by Monday, September 7th, 2026
318-229-5405 or rae_hazelton@live.com



I CAN...

It's National Library Card Sign-Up Month!

Tons of **FREE RESOURCES** available with a RPL library card! Don't have one? Get yours today to start exploring **ALL THE POSSIBILITIES** of what **YOU CAN DO!**



Sign Up for an RPL Library Card!



Get a FREE Tote Bag!



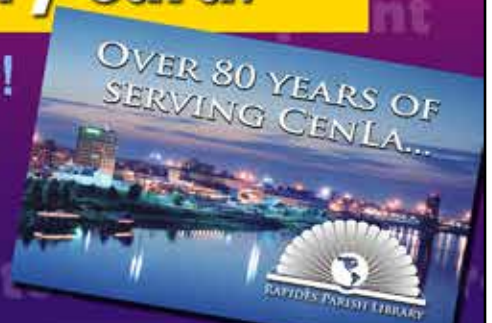
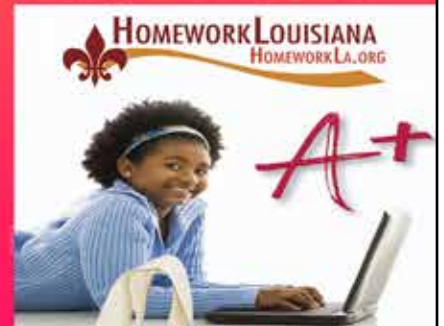
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LSUA Earns First-of-Its-Kind Accreditation for Accelerated Bachelor's Degrees in Bioinformatics and Information Technology

LSU of Alexandria has received accreditation approval for its new 90-credit-hour accelerated bachelor's (AccB) degrees in Bioinformatics and Information Technology, clearing the way for LSUA to launch two first-of-their-kind programs designed to reduce the time and cost required to earn a bachelor's degree while preparing graduates for rapidly growing technology careers.

The approval from The Commission on Colleges and Universities marks a significant milestone for LSUA and a new model for public higher education. LSUA is the first public institution in the Commission's membership to receive approval for a program under its new accelerated bachelor's degree framework, which allows institutions to demonstrate that rigorous undergraduate learning outcomes



can be achieved through thoughtfully designed programs requiring fewer than the traditional 120 credit hours.

"Louisiana State University of Alexandria is the first public institution in our membership to receive approval for a program under our new framework," said Stephen L. Pruitt, Ph.D., President of The Commission on Colleges and Universities. "Being first is not a small thing. It means making the case without a template to follow. We ask institutions to justify program length against the outcomes they promise students, and LSUA did that with evidence. Congratulations to Chancellor Beard and to the faculty who built a bioinformatics pathway that is shorter without being thinner."



The accreditation represents the culmination of an ambitious academic development



Welcome
JOE SOLOMON

Say hello to Joe Solomon, Courier, and member of Maintenance at BOM Bank!

Joe is a longtime resident of Natchitoches and a third-generation cattle rancher. In addition to ranching, he dedicated 29 years to fire and EMS service. Joe enjoys traveling and taking RV trips, and his favorite destination is the beaches of Mexico with his wife. He is the proud father of four sons and grandfather to seven grandchildren, whom he loves spending time with.

A fun fact about Joe is that he worked as an auctioneer for more than 20 years! Joe is an incredible member of our team, and we are grateful for everything he does to help keep our operations running smoothly. We're thankful to have him as part of the BOM Bank family!



EDUCATION FOCUS

process that began when LSUA faculty identified an opportunity to rethink how a bachelor's degree could be structured for high-demand, rapidly evolving STEM fields. Faculty developed focused curricula that preserve the full 39-credit-hour General Education core and provide 51 credit hours of intensive major coursework while removing electives that are not essential to degree outcomes.

"These are not shortened degrees. They are intentionally designed, academically rigorous bachelor's degrees focused on the knowledge and competencies students need to succeed," said LSUA Chancellor Liz Beard, Ph.D. "This approval validates the work of our faculty and their willingness to challenge traditional assumptions about how undergraduate education must be structured. More importantly, it gives students another pathway to earn a high-quality LSU degree in less time and at a lower total cost."



The AccB in Information Technology will prepare students for careers in systems administration, networking, cloud computing, and cybersecurity. Coursework has been aligned with industry credentials from CompTIA, AWS, and Cisco, allowing students to develop applied skills and pursue certifications valued by employers while completing their degree.

The AccB in Bioinformatics will combine biology, data science, and computational analysis to prepare graduates for careers in biotechnology, health informatics, genomic research, and other data-intensive life sciences. Students will study genomics, programming, machine learning, and applied artificial intelligence as part of a curriculum built around the increasing role of computational tools in healthcare and biological research.

Nathan Sammons, Ph.D., Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, helped champion the accelerated degree model and led faculty efforts to develop the new curricula. "Particularly in STEM fields, innovation moves quickly," Sammons said. "Our responsibility is to make sure the education we provide evolves with it. Our faculty have identified the knowledge, technical skills, and applied experiences students need, then built these degrees deliberately around those outcomes. The result is a rigorous pathway that reduces time to degree without reducing what graduates are prepared to do."

LSUA developed the programs as students, families, and employers increasingly place greater emphasis on affordability, career relevance, and demonstrable outcomes from a college education. The accelerated structure provides an additional option alongside LSUA's traditional bachelor's programs rather than replacing them, allowing students to select the pathway that best fits their academic and career goals.

DISCOVER YOUR TOMORROW



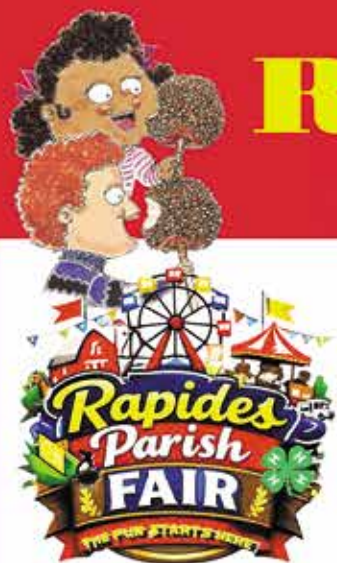
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LSUA



RAPIDES PARISH FAIR OCTOBER 14TH - 18TH



CARNIVAL OPERATING HOURS

(Closing times are approximate):

Wednesday, October 14	4:00pm to 10:00pm
Thursday, October 15.....	2:00pm to 11:00pm
Friday, October 16.....	1:00pm to 11:30pm
Saturday, October 17	11:00am to 11:30pm
Sunday, October 18	11:00am to 7:00pm



FEATURING: Arts & Crafts, Food Vendors, Live Entertainment,
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October 13th!**

2024 Rapides Parish Fair
8149 US Hwy 71 South
(next to the State Evacuation Shelter by LSUA)

**Educational Events
Throughout the Day!**

**FREE Parking
and Trolley Rides
to Any Point
on the Fair Grounds**

* An armband discount will be allowed with a Food Bank donation on Friday, Saturday or Sunday. Also, if a customer brings a food bank donation to the ticket box, the discount will be allowed.

Visit RapidesParishFair.org for complete details

Entertainment Focus

Art

Ongoing-October 10: Between the Lines—250 Years of American Poetry, Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria). In the Overlook Gallery, this special exhibition celebrates the 250th anniversary of the United States. Notable American poets were selected and issued a nationwide call for artist proposals inspired by those literary works. Selected artists then developed commissioned pieces in collaboration with the museum's curatorial team and collections committee. The final exhibition includes 14 artworks by 14 artists representing eight states and explores the relationship between visual art and American poetry through a wide range of contemporary perspectives and mediums. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

Ongoing-October 10: 39th Annual September Competition, Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria). In the Lipsey Gallery, the museum's annual juried exhibition features contemporary artwork from across the country. Open to all artistic mediums, the competition accepts only artwork completed within the last two years, ensuring the exhibition highlights current contemporary practices and emerging artistic conversations. This year's exhibition includes 60 artworks by 50 artists representing 21 states and two countries, spanning a wide variety of contemporary mediums, including two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and video artwork. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

September 8: AMoA Creative Roundtable, Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria), 5:30pm-7:00pm. Are you an artist or creative in Central Louisiana? Are you looking for a place to come and talk to other creatives? Join the Creative Round Table! Being an artist can be isolating, but we can lift each other up! Do you want to learn about grants and artist calls? Talk about process? Maybe you want to learn how other artists market their art or ship their art? Well, come on! Let's talk about it! Cost: Free. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

September 10: Art Out Loud—Between the Lines, Alexandria Museum

of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria), 6:00pm-8:00pm. This one-of-a-kind event merges performance with visual art, inviting actors to perform the poems that inspired the exhibition on view in the Overlook Gallery Between the Lines: 250 Years of American Poetry. Following performances, visual artists will speak about their process of interpreting the written word to a visual medium. Cost: Free. 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

September 12: Second Saturday at the Museum, Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria). Enjoy the Alexandria Museum of Art without admission charge on the second Saturday of the month. Cost: Free. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

September 12: Plein Air Marksville (PAM), Gallery on the Square (122 East Mark Street, Marksville), 9:00am. All skill levels are welcome to participate in the annual Plein Air Marksville (PAM), spending the day out painting in beautiful Avoyelles Parish. Paintings are returned for judging at 3:00pm and reception, awards, and art sale are scheduled at 5:00pm. Cost: \$35.00 in advance; \$40.00 on the day. Call: 225-287-6623.

September 17: Corks & Canvas, Avoyelles Arts Council (122 East Mark Street, Marksville), 5:30pm-7:30pm. Join the Avoyelles Arts Council and artist, Amber LaPrairie, for a fun-filled painting class where you can explore your artistic side and learn valuable painting techniques. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced artist, this class is suitable for all skill levels. BYOB! Spots are limited, don't delay! Cost: \$25.00 Members; \$35.00 Non-members. Call: 318-264-1826. avoyellesarts.com

September 26: Urban Sketching, 2121 White Street, Alexandria, 10:00am. The next Urban Sketching gathering will take place at a private Garden District residence, but is open to all. Urban Sketching is an opportunity to slow down, look closely at the world around you, and draw what you see. Bring your own supplies, or use ours—we've got you covered. You don't have to be an artist; you just have to be willing to try. Cost: Free. fumca.org/art

Music

September 4: ACCL Presents BritBeat, Coughlin-Saunders Performing Arts Center (1202 3rd Street, Alexandria), 7:30pm. Imagine the perfect fusion of music, visuals, and storytelling—that's what BritBeat brings with the world's number one, award-winning, immersive Beatles concert experience. BritBeat elevates its live performances to a whole new level, providing concertgoers with the most stunning and engaging concert event that you can imagine. By seamlessly blending captivating visuals with the emotive power of the music of the Beatles, BritBeat's mesmerizing 'Immersive Beatles Experience' transports audiences into a world where sight and sound are perfectly synchronized. This synergy creates an atmosphere that captivates, resonates, and stimulates your senses. \$23.00+. 318-484-4474. louisiana-arts.org

September 5: Craig Morgan, Paragon Casino Resort (711 Paragon Place, Marksville), 8:00pm. Craig Morgan will bring hits like "That's What I Love About Sunday," "Redneck Yacht Club" and so many more to the Mari Center for this all-American country concert on Labor Day Weekend. Cost: \$55.00+. paragoncasinoresort.com

September 19: FUMCA Gospel Brunch, First United Methodist Church Alexandria (2727 Jackson Street, Alexandria), 10:00am. First United Methodist Church Alexandria invites all to their Gospel Brunch featuring live gospel music, delicious brunch food stations, and table seating. You're invited to enjoy great food, music, and community! Pre-registration is required. Free. 318-443-5696. fumca.org/music

September 19: Semi-Charmed—The Ultimate 90s Rock Experience, Bailey's on the Square (113 E Ogden Street, Marksville), 8:30pm. Your youth called; it wants one more Saturday night! For one night, Bailey's on the Square becomes a time machine as Semi-Charmed—The Ultimate 90s Rock Experience takes the stage bringing you right back where it all started! You might not remember the name of the album. You might not remember what year they came out. But somewhere around the first three seconds, something happens. You remember every. single. word.

From the opening chord, Semi-Charmed is built around one idea: make the audience part of the show! Cost: \$16.55. semi-charmed.net

October 7: Cenla Songwriter Circle, Fighting Hand Brewing Company (1600 Military Highway, Pineville), 4:00pm. Each month, songwriters take turns sharing their original songs in a true "round-table" style—one song at a time around the Circle. This isn't a performance; it's a creative hangout where you can: share the stories behind your songs, swap songwriting tips and techniques, connect with other local writers, hear about upcoming festivals and songwriter opportunities, find inspiration (and maybe your next co-writer)! Bring your instrument and your songs—amps are welcome (though not required)—keyboards are welcome, too! Original music only—no covers, please! Must be 21 or older to enter.

October 8: Musical Roots, First Presbyterian Church (357 Windermere Blvd, Alexandria), 7:30pm. Join the Red River Chorale for its new season celebrating America's 250th Anniversary through music. This season features four concerts which will celebrate American composers and delve into our great country's history, poems, folk songs and much more. The first concert is entitled "Musical Roots". Cost: \$20.00 Adults; \$5.00 Students. Call: 318-484-4463. redriverchorale.com

Theatre

September 7, 14, 21, 28 & October 5: Military Monday at the Movies, Grand Theatre Alexandria (2039 North Mall Drive, Alexandria). All military personnel and first responders can enjoy the ultimate movie experience at Santikos Entertainment for just \$5.00. Along with \$5.00 movie tickets, they'll also have access to a \$5.00 large drink and a \$5.00 large popcorn, making their cinema experience even more enjoyable and unforgettable. Valid ID required. Cost: \$5.00.

September 14: Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers, Hearn Stage at Kress Theatre (1102 3rd Street, Alexandria), 7:00pm. The 2026 Southern Circuit of Independent Filmmakers kicks off with a screening of "When a Witness Recants". In 1983, Ta-Nehisi Coates

Entertainment Focus

learns of a Baltimore middle schooler's murder and revisits the case, uncovering how false testimony wrongly imprisoned three teenagers for 36 years. Meet the filmmaker, Dawn Porter, an acclaimed American documentary filmmaker and founder of Trilogy Films, for a Q&A after the screening. Cost: \$10.00 Adults; Students Free. Call: 318-484-4474. louisiana-arts.org

September 25-27: Frozen the Musical, Coughlin Saunders Performing Arts Center (1202 Third Street, Alexandria). In the beautiful mountainous kingdom of Arendelle, Princesses Anna and Elsa grow up sheltered inside their castle, isolated from the world and increasingly distant from each other. When Elsa is crowned queen, the magical powers she's desperately tried to conceal from her sister take control, and she flees into the mountains. As a ferocious winter descends on Arendelle, Anna sets off on an epic journey to find Elsa and bring her home – with the help of hardworking ice harvester Kristoff, his loyal reindeer Sven, and a happy-go-lucky snowman named Olaf. Performances begin nightly Friday and Saturday at 7:30pm; Sunday matinee begins at 2:30pm. Cost: \$12.25-\$22.55. Call: 318-487-8243. lagniappetheatre.com

October 8-18: CPP Presents 'Misery', Hearn Stage at Kress Theatre (1102 3rd Street, Alexandria). "Misery" follows successful romance novelist Paul Sheldon, who is rescued from a car crash by his "number one fan," Annie Wilkes, and wakes up captive in her secluded home. While Paul is convalescing, Annie reads his latest book and becomes enraged when she discovers the author has killed off her favorite character, Misery Chastain. Annie forces Paul to write a new Misery novel, and he quickly

realizes Annie has no intention of letting him go anywhere. The irate Annie has Paul writing as if his life depends on it, and it does. Adult language, violence, and intense scenes. Performances begin nightly Thursday-Saturday at 7:30pm; Sunday matinees begin at 2:30pm. Cost: \$15.00 adults; \$12.00 seniors; \$7.00 students; and \$5.00 all Thursday performances. cpptheatre.com

Events

Ongoing-September: New Hope Al-Anon Group, Horseshoe Drive Methodist Church (1600 Horseshoe Drive, Alexandria), 7:00pm. The New Hope Al-Anon Group meets each Tuesday and Thursday evening. Al-Anon is a mutual support group for anyone having experienced a problem with someone else's drinking or addiction. You are free to ask questions or to talk about your situation or just listen. Every meeting is different. Each meeting has the autonomy to be run as its members choose, within guidelines designed to promote Al-Anon unity. Cost: Free.

September 4, 11, 18, 25 & October 2: MahJongg, First United Methodist Church of Alexandria (2727 Jackson St, Alexandria), 1:00pm-3:00pm. All sessions are open to all levels of play. Bring your 2025 National Mahjongg League, Inc. card if you have it. Beginners table available on the 2nd Friday of the month. Cost: Free.

September 5: Alexandria Garden District Yard Sale Day, Alexandria Garden District, 8:00am-2:00pm. This neighborhood-wide event brings individual yard sales together, giving residents an opportunity to clean out closets, garages and attics while drawing shoppers from throughout Central Louisiana into Alexandria's historic

Garden District. Shoppers can expect everything from furniture, household goods and clothing to antiques, vintage finds, toys, tools and unexpected treasures. For the latest details, follow @GardenDistrictAlexLa on Facebook. Cost: Free.

September 5: Creative Con 2026, Westside Regional Library (5416 Provine Place, Alexandria), 9:00am-1:00pm. Zoinks! Get ready for a mystery-packed adventure at Creative Con, Rapides Parish Library's annual friendly neighborhood Comic Con! This year, we're hopping straight into the world of Scooby-Doo, and trust us—there's no mystery about it... it's going to be a blast! So, grab your friends, hop in the Mystery Machine, and head over for a day of fun, fandom, and maybe even a spooky surprise or two! Cost: Free. rpl.org

September 5: Dolly Parton's Imagination Library 9 to 5 Campaign Kickoff & Dedication, Treehouse Children's Museum (1403 3rd Street, Alexandria), 10:00am-12:00pm. Treehouse Children's Museum will celebrate Dolly Parton's impact on childhood literacy with the kickoff of the Imagination Library 9 to 5 Campaign and a special dedication honoring the woman who has helped provide millions of children with access to books. Families are invited to join us as we celebrate reading, imagination and Dolly's extraordinary commitment to young readers. Cost: \$7.00. treehousecenla.org

September 8, 15, 22, 29 & October 6: Alexandria Farmer's Market, First United Methodist Church (2727 Jackson Street, Alexandria), 3:00pm-6:00pm. The Alexandria Farmers Market is a weekly gathering that connects the community of Alexandria with the farmers, ranchers, and agricultural artisans of Central Louisiana. This connection strives to improve the physical, social, and economic well-being of the region by providing access to fresh, healthy, local food for residents, fostering community relationships, and serving as a business incubator for growers and producers. Cost: Free. Call: 318-441-3407.

September 9: Child Safety Seat Check, Rapides Regional Medical Center Main Entrance (211 4th Street, Alexandria), 2:00pm-5:00pm. A trained

child passenger safety educator will take a look at your car seats, make sure they are not under recall, make sure the seat is installed properly and show you how to install the car seat. The car seat check process takes between 15-25 minutes, depending on how many car seats are in the vehicle. The seat checks normally are held the second Wednesday of each month. Cost: Free.

September 10: Cub Vision Quest, Westside Regional Library (5416 Provine Place, Alexandria), 5:30pm-7:30pm. The Lions Club invites you to come explore, learn, and play in a fund, hands-on evening all about vision! Try interactive games and discover how others experience the world without sight. The evening will include non-invasive vision screenings, Ted's Talk—an inspiring story of navigating life without sight, the chance to recycle old eyeglasses and cases, and fun activities for the kids! Call: 318-229-5405.

September 10: Be the Change Gala & Auction 2026, Randolph Riverfront Center (707 2nd Street, Alexandria), 6:00pm-9:00pm. The gala will feature both a silent and live auction, testimonials, along with dinner, complimentary wine and beer, and a cash bar! Proceeds benefit the Children's Advocacy Network (CAN). Cost: \$100. 318-445-5678. childrensadvocacy.net

September 11: 9/11 Walk of Remembrance, LSUA Caffey Ballroom (8100 Highway 71 South, Alexandria), 5:30p. LSUA Student Life invites our campus and surrounding community to come together we mark the 25th anniversary of September 11, 2001. Through a 2,977 step memorial walk (the number of lives lost on September 11, 2001), we will remember the lives forever changed, honor the courage and service of so many, and reflect on the unity and compassion that brought people together following the attacks. The 60 participants to cross the finish line will receive a limited Untied 9/11 Challenge Coin. Cost: Free. lsua.edu

September 12: StoryCon—Discover Your Reading Superpower!, Treehouse Children's Museum (1403 3rd Street, Alexandria), 10:00am-3:00pm. Every hero has a story! Treehouse Children's Museum, Cenla Playdates & Mom Breaks and the Cenla Collective for



Scan for a full listing of events at



Entertainment Focus

Healthy Families invite families to StoryCon, a free superhero-themed celebration of reading and early literacy. Children can discover their own “reading superpower” through a day of stories, imaginative activities and hands-on family fun. Free. treehousecenla.org

September 12-13: Cenla Shrine Circus, Laborde Earles Coliseum (5600 Coliseum Blvd, Alexandria). The Circus is Coming back to Cenla, where unforgettable family fun meets an even bigger purpose! Thrilling performances, amazing entertainers, and family-friendly excitement all in support of children in need. Showtimes are Saturday at 10:00am, 2:00pm, and 6:30pm; Sunday 1:00pm and 5:00pm. \$20 Adults; Children (12 & under) Free.

September 12: AMoA Stitching Circle, Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria), 11:00am-3:00pm. Anyone can come and knit in the galleries. Open to all ages. Just getting started? AMoA has limited materials to get you started. Cost: Free. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

September 16: Cenla Women's Connection Luncheon, Hotel Plantation (2727 Monroe Highway, Pineville), 12:00pm-1:30pm. Please join the bi-monthly luncheon featuring guest speaker, Donna Mann, as she shares “God’s Plan for Belonging”. Special feature will be Timeless Med Spa on skin care and body rejuvenation. Please pre-register by September 11th. Cost: \$25.00. Call: 318-447-4673.

September 17: A Perfect Fit Foundation Pancake Breakfast, St. James Episcopal Church (1620 Murray Street, Alexandria), 6:30am-11:00am. Come enjoy a stack of hot, fresh, fluffy pancakes for breakfast while helping deserving elementary school children in Rapides Parish. Each breakfast comes with a short stack of pancakes, sausage, fresh fruit, and a beverage. 100% of proceeds will go directly toward the mission of the Foundation. Breakfast plates will be available to enjoy at St. James on the morning of the event, packaged to go or delivered to your Alexandria/Pineville place of business for orders of 10+. For patrons dining in, the pancakes are all you care to eat! Cost: \$8.00. Call: 318-442-8277.

September 20: Central Louisiana Orchid Society Meeting, St. James Youth Building (1546 Albert Street, Alexandria), 2:30pm. Learn everything you need to know about orchids and how to grow them. Get hands on help with your plants! There is a monthly plant raffle, blooming orchid entry for Show and Tell plus refreshments. In addition, there are opportunities to attend American Orchid Society shows/sales throughout the year. centrallouisianaorchidsociety.org

September 24: Cenla Author's Club Meeting, Westside Regional Library (5416 Provine Place, Alexandria), 6:00pm-8:00pm. The Cenla Authors' Club is open to authors and writers of all levels and genres, and anyone interested in learning more about the book-writing process, even if you haven't written your first word (yet!). Nationally-known health care advocate Jeremy White, plus AI book-writing and artwork creation expert Bob Winans will offer presentations. Free. Call: 318-442-2483.

September 24: SCARF Cenla 2026 Annual Gala, Alexandria City Hall Convention Center (915 Third Street, Alexandria), 6:30pm. This inspiring evening is dedicated to honoring the courage and resilience of individuals and families living with sickle cell disease while recognizing the healthcare professionals, advocates, and community partners who stand beside them in the fight. Although sickle cell disease is often called an invisible disease, its impact is felt every day by those living with it. Together, we can help make the invisible impossible to ignore. The theme for the evening is “Battle Ready: Fighting Sickle Cell’s Invisible Disease” and will include dinner, music, and raffles! Cost: \$50.00. Call: 318-314-3070. scarfcenla.org

September 26: Intro to Qi Gong Practice, Big Island Field in Alexandria City Park (2006 Babe Ruth Drive, Alexandria), 8:00am. Looking for a way to slow down, breathe deeper, and bring a bit more grace into your daily routine? You are invited to step into an ancient Chinese somatic practice at an upcoming community practice led by Gar Pickering, Somatic Healing Coach. Wear loose, comfortable clothing, bring an open mind, and bring a yoga mat (optional) if you have one. Come find out how a simple, shared practice can

become a meaningful, relaxing part of your week. Cost: Free.

September 26: Worldwide Day of Play, Treehouse Children's Museum (1403 3rd Street, Alexandria), 9:00am-12:00pm. Get up, get out and play during Treehouse's Our World: Worldwide Day of Play! Part of Nickelodeon's global Our World initiative, this annual celebration brings children and families together for joyful learning through play. Treehouse joins children's museums across the country in encouraging kids to explore, move, create and experience the power of play. Cost: Free. treehousecenla.org

September 26: Live Gator Feeding Show, Paragon Casino Resort Hotel Atrium (711 Paragon Place, Marksville), 4:00pm. Join the crowd in the hotel lobby on the last Saturday of each month for a live alligator feeding show. Bring the children for photos with a baby gator after the show. You will also hear traditional songs and stories of south Louisiana's flora and fauna performed by Tunica-Biloxi tribal members Donna

Pierite and family. Cost: Free.

September 26: Huck's Cheer'n for Charity, Huckleberry Brewing Company (4724 Sterkx Road, Alexandria), 4:00pm. Join Huckleberry Brewing Company for a day of brews, ballgames, and more to benefit the Friends of the Alexandria Zoo (FOTAZ). Zookeepers, zoo staff, FOTAZ board members, and maybe even some four-legged friends will be on hand with the Tigers playing on the big screen. huckleberrybrewingco.com

October 3: Experimental Aircraft Association 1st Saturday Breakfast, Buhlow Lake Airport (200 Lake Buhlow Road, Pineville), 7:30am-10:00am. Come enjoy a hearty breakfast of eggs, sausage, pancakes, grits, potatoes, milk, orange juice, and more! Anyone interested in aviation and general cordial chatter with lakeside ambience is welcome and invited to come to enjoy breakfast with us! Cost: \$10.00 Donation.

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318-487-0007

Entertainment Focus

October 3: Fall Herb Day, Arts & Crafts Fest and Yard Sale, Kent Plantation House (3601 Bayou Rapides Road, Alexandria), 8:00am-1:00pm. We'll have an amazing selection of quality herbs and plants with gardening experts on hand to help select the perfect plants for your house or fall garden. Browse the wide selection of local arts, crafts and food vendors as well as our gigantic indoor Yard Sale for your shopping pleasure. Herb Day and the Yard Sale serve as fundraisers for educational programs at Kent Plantation House. Help support our mission to preserve Central Louisiana's history and culture! Cost: Free. Call: 318-487-5998. kenthouse.org

October 3: Central Louisiana Dutch Oven Cookers First Saturday Gathering, Indian Creek Recreation Area (100 Camp Ground Road, Woodworth), 9:00am-12:30pm. A delicious day with Dutch oven cooking enthusiasts. There is no charge for food, however, donations are accepted. Regular park admission applies. Call: 318-625-1762.

October 9-10: Cenla Orchid Society Show & Sale, Kees Park Community Center (2450 Highway 28 East, Pineville). Enjoy amazing displays and galleries of orchids, chat with orchid growers for tips on growing and repotting, and choose from a wide selection of beautiful orchids for purchase. The show is open Friday from 2:00pm to 5:00pm and Saturday from 8:00am to 4:00pm. Cost: Free. centrallouisianaorchidsociety.org

October 9: Tales Along the Bayou, Kent Plantation House (3601 Bayou Rapides Road, Alexandria), 6:00pm-8:30pm. Have a ghoulishly good time listening to (not so) scary tales! Kids (in their costumes) can bring their candy baskets, pails or containers and Trick-or-Treat around the grounds of the Kent House from various community partners! It's Tales and Treats! Don't miss this fun family evening which will be filled with face painting, food vendors, and spooky tales! Bring your blanket, lawn chairs, and money for some food, drinks, and glow sticks! Call: 318-487-5998. kenthouse.org

Sports

September 8, 15, 22, 29 & October 6: Yoga in the Gallery, Alexandria Museum of Art (933 2nd Street, Alexandria), 5:45pm. Chill out every Tuesday with yoga classes taught by Learn with Laci. Registration is not required. Cost: Free. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

September 8: KFF Fly Tying 101, Westside Regional Library (5416 Provine Place, Alexandria), 6:00pm. This introductory fly tying course, presented by Kisatchie Fly Fishers, is a great foundation to the art of fly tying. In this 3-hour workshop, you'll learn about the tools, types of materials and techniques required to get started successfully in tying flies. Space is limited; please pre-register by September 4th. Cost: \$10.00. kisatchiefly.com

September 12: Safari Smash Pickleball Tournament, Alexandria Tennis Complex (98 Sylvester Drive, Alexandria), 7:30am. Get ready to hit the courts for a cause! Serve, smash, and support Alexandria Zoo at this fun-filled, competitive event for intermediate and advanced pickleball players. The tournament is open to players ages 15 and up who will compete in Men's singles/doubles, Women's singles/doubles, and Mixed doubles. Individuals can compete in more than one division. T-Shirts will be provided on a first come, first served basis for registered participants. All teams are guaranteed a two-game minimum. The City of Alexandria's Youth & Teen Center will be open to relax, cool off, and have some fun. Food trucks will be on site. Please pre-register online by Friday, September 11th. Cost: \$30.00 individual; \$60.00 per team. thealexandriazoo.com/Pickleball.html

September 19: 15th Annual Le Tour de Bayou, Kent Plantation House (3601 Bayou Rapides Road, Alexandria). The 15th Annual Le Tour de Bayou features six bicycle events ranging from a family friendly 2-mile fun ride to an ambitious 101-mile ride! The blessing of the bikes will begin at 6:45am. So, grab a group of friends, your bike helmets, and come make some memories riding along the bayou. Cost: \$60.00 101-, 69-, 40- and 25-mile rides; \$40.00 10-mile ride; \$20.00 family of 4 2-mile fun run/ride. Call: 318-487-5998. letourdebayou.com

September 19: Into the Light 5K, Marksville Courthouse (312 North Main Street, Marksville), 8:00am. Help

shine a light on mental health awareness and suicide prevention at this family-friendly event filled with purpose, fun, and community spirit. After the race, we will hold a Memorial Butterfly Release in honor of those we've lost to suicide. Cost: \$30.00. savecenla.com

September 26: Louisiana's National Hunting and Fishing Day, LDWF Outdoor Education Center (661 Robinson Bridge Road, Woodworth), 8:00am-1:30pm. Louisiana's National Hunting and Fishing Day events include exhibits on LDWF's research and conservation efforts, shooting and fishing demonstrations, and exhibits. Attendees can try their skills at the shooting ranges, fishing ponds, and boating activities and learn about wildlife with live animal demonstrations. RRM personnel will be teaching ATV safety as well as Stop the Bleed training. Free. wlf.louisiana.gov

October 10: Third Annual Healing Tribal Strong Rez Run 5K & Walk, Tunica-Biloxi Reservation (150 Melacon Road, Marksville), 7:00am-12:00pm. The Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana,

will welcome runners, walkers, survivors, caregivers and community supporters to the Healing Tribal Strong 5K Walk/Run, offering participants an opportunity to celebrate cancer survivors, support those undergoing treatment and honor loved ones lost to cancer. Proceeds will benefit the Mary Bird Perkins Foundation, helping support cancer-related resources and services for patients and families throughout the region. Cost: \$25.00. healingtribalstrong.com

October 10: Gleaux for the Girls, Walker Toyota (5735 Coliseum Blvd, Alexandria), 6:00pm. This glow-in-the-dark, 1-mile fun run is known as the "Breast Race in Cenla" bringing awareness and raise funds to expand and enhance the local treatment capabilities, rehabilitation programs, support services and community outreach. 100% of the funds stay local, directly benefitting CHRISTUS St. Frances Cabrini Hospital's Cancer Center and Breast Health Center. Enter for your chance to win a Pink Toyota or Pink Golf Cart! christuscabrinifoundation.org/gleaux

**All events subject to change.*

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Frozen Is Coming!

By Ross Schexnayder



Alexandria is getting an early freeze and the reason couldn't be cooler. Lagniappe Theatre Company presents the smash Broadway musical, Frozen, September 25th through 27th at the Coughlin- Saunders Performing Arts Center, located at 1202 3rd Street in Downtown Alexandria.

In the beautiful mountainous kingdom of Arendelle, Princesses Anna and Elsa grow up sheltered inside their castle, isolated from the world and increasingly distant from each other. When Elsa is crowned queen, the magical powers she's desperately tried to conceal from her sister take control, and she flees into

the mountains. As a ferocious winter descends on Arendelle, Anna sets off on an epic journey to find Elsa and bring her home—with the help of hardworking ice harvester Kristoff, his loyal reindeer Sven, and a happy-go-lucky snowman named Olaf. Can Anna calm the storm within Elsa, and save their home? You'll have to come to the show to find out! Including all your favorite songs like: "Let it Go", "First Time in Forever", and "Love is an Open Door."

The Disney classic is great for the whole family, so bring them all. For tickets, go to www.lagniappetheatre.com, call (318) 48-STAGE, or scan the QR code on this page. Come see Lagniappe Theatre's Frozen the Musical. Get your tickets now, so you don't get left out in the cold!



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Entertainment Focus

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Have you ever wanted to try theater but didn't know where to begin? "Theater 101" is a free, half-day workshop for ages 14 and up on Saturday, October 3rd at 1:00pm. Perfect for complete beginners, participants will learn theater basics, try improv and storytelling, get audition tips, explore scripts, and more. Registration is required. Get more details and register at cpptheatre.com today!

The CPP season continues with its next opening on Thursday, October 8th with a thrilling production. Based on Stephen King's best seller, William Goldman's "Misery" follows successful romance novelist Paul Sheldon, who is rescued from a car crash by his "number one fan," Annie Wilkes, and wakes up captive in her secluded home. While Paul is convalescing, Annie reads his latest book and becomes enraged when she discovers the author has killed off her favorite character, Misery Chastain. Annie forces Paul to write a new "Misery" novel, and he quickly realizes Annie has no intention of letting him go anywhere. The irate Annie has Paul writing as if his life depends on it...and it does. Directed by Jared Guillory, "Misery" includes adult language, violence, and intense scenes. Advance tickets are highly recommended for this show!

For showtimes, more information and tickets, visit cpptheatre.com.



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by William Goldman
Directed by Jared Guillory

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Supported by a grant from the Louisiana Division of the Arts, Office of Cultural Development, Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism in cooperation with the Louisiana State Arts Council, and as administered by the Arts Council of Central Louisiana. Funding has also been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, Art Works.

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This Grasshopper Had a Sting

By Jerry Sanson, PhD



The story of the airplane that World War II American pilots knew as the “Grasshopper” began with the ambition of William T. Piper to create an airplane that would be affordable to virtually anyone who wanted to fly. It is almost possible to think of him as the Henry Ford of airplanes because, while Ford wanted to put the nation on wheels, Piper wanted to put it into the air.

The ancestor of the Piper Cub was the Taylor E-2, first completed and tested in 1930 and built by the Taylor Aircraft Company run by Gilbert Taylor and William Piper. This plane was originally equipped with a two-cylinder Brownback “Tiger Kitten” engine, so the company accountant suggested the name “Cub” for it. The company continued to use the name, even after the engine was replaced because it was not powerful enough for successful flight. Engineers found that the original design had several other problems, so the company arranged for aircraft designer Walter Jamouneau to modify it. The new design, designated as the J-2 Cub, appeared in 1936.

Taylor did not like the redesign plans, so Piper bought out his share of the company in 1935 and organized the Piper Aircraft Corporation in 1937. The company unveiled the J-3 Cub powered by a Continental-40 engine rated at 40 horsepower also with an improved cabin in the same year. The company added several other improvements,

including a steerable tail wheel, brakes, more horsepower, increased fuel capacity, and a stronger frame, before the United States military chose the airplane for use during World War II. Its first military use developed when flight officers chose it as the primary training plane for the Civilian Pilot Training (CPT) program, even before the country entered the war. About 75% of all pilots trained in this program eventually learned to fly in a Cub.

The United States entry into the war brought an even more active role for the airplane. Piper learned to send a Cub from its factory every 20 minutes during the war and sold almost 5,700 to the military for use in observation, ambulance rescue, cargo delivery, and other uses. Every branch of the military used the Cub, originally labeled as the O-59 before each branch gave it a unique designation. The Army called it the L-4, the Navy used NE-1, Marines used NE-2, and there was also a specialized glider training version was known as TG-8A.

The airplane was commonly known as the “Grasshopper” because of one of its useful attributes. Its small size and weight allowed it to use short front-line landing areas that hardly qualified as airstrips in their unimproved state. As the plane made its way down these bumpy strips that other planes could not use, potholes and piles of dirt caused it to bounce comically. Its up-and-down bouncing led to comparison to grasshoppers as it hopped about.

WELCOME



Emerson Rodrigue
Administrative Assistant



BOM
Financial Services

Say hello to Emerson Rodrigue, Administrative Assistant with BOM Financial Services!

Emerson is a 2025 graduate of Northwestern State University with a degree in General Studies. He is originally from Haiti and speaks three languages. In his free time, Emerson enjoys hunting, playing basketball and coaching cheerleading.

Emerson is a wonderful addition to our team and we are grateful to have him on board!

Please join us in welcoming him to the BOMFS family!

No matter its designation, the military Cubs were undeniably small with a wingspan of 35 feet 3 inches; length of 22 feet 5 inches; and its height stood at 6 feet 8 inches. It weighed 1,200 pounds unloaded, and its Continental A-65-8 engine produced 65 horsepower. Its cruising speed was 73 miles per hour, and its ceiling was 11,500 feet.

Grasshoppers were not usually armed, but two instances when they were created two stories in Army lore. The first involved high school history teacher Charles “Bazooka Charlie” Carpenter who abandoned his classroom to fight Nazis during the war. Unsatisfied with his role of flying an unarmed observation plane, he mounted six to eight bazookas on the struts of his plane, “Rosie the Rocketeer,” and bounced down the runway to hunt German armor. He is credited with destroying six German tanks, other armored vehicles, equipment, and supplies by the end of the war. His awards include the Silver Star, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with four campaign stars, American Campaign Medal, and World War II Victory Medal, all won in an officially “unarmed” airplane that could cruise at only 73 miles an hour.

The other story involves L-4 pilot Lt. Duane Francis and observer Lt. William Martin. These two soldiers took off on the morning of April 11, 1945 for a routine scouting flight for the 5th Armored Division. Out of curiosity, they followed a German motorcycle speeding down a road about 100 miles west of Berlin when they



spotted a German Fiesler Fi 156 Storch flying just above the treetops. Not wanting the German observation plane crew to locate and report the presence of the 5th Armored Division, Francis and Martin decided to attack using the only weapons available on board their unarmed plane—their standard issue M-1911 Colt service revolvers. Francis flew so close to the Storch that he reported later, “The planes were so close I could see the German’s eyeballs, as big as eggs, as we peppered them.” The Storch pilot dug one of his plane’s wingtips into the ground in an effort to escape and crashed. Francis and Martin landed and took the two Germans in the Storch crew prisoner.

The irony of this episode is that this encounter between these two small unarmed observation airplanes marked the last recorded air-to-air combat between the United States and Germany during World War II—and the two Americans won it using pistols!

Less dramatically and closer to home, L-4s were used as observation planes during the Louisiana Maneuvers. Umpires used them to observe and rate the operations of the Red and Blue armies as they made their way across the Central Louisiana countryside learning the techniques of modern warfare along the way. If we had lived in Cenla during the Maneuvers, we might have seen L-4s painted military green rather than customary Cub yellow flying overhead.

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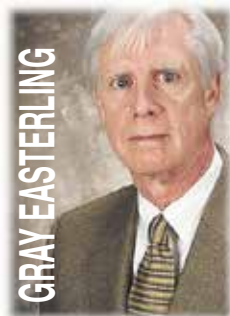
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Which Door Should You Choose

By Gray Easterling



Many years ago, there was a game show that, after finding your way to winning a prize, you had to pick a door and hope that there was something of value waiting for you when the door was opened. Well, there are also options available when deciding when to take your required minimum distribution (RMD). I know I wrote about RMD's last month, but I thought this information might help you plan for next year. An article on the Morningstar website gives some pros and cons to consider before making a distribution. One choice is to wait until the end of the year. Doing this gives your portfolio more time to grow, assuming positive market returns. Also, because the portfolio is in a tax-deferred "wrapper", there is tax deferral on any dividends or capital gains if the money stays within the IRA. One disadvantage is the chance of getting busy with year-end holidays and travel and forgetting to take the RMD, which would result in having to pay a penalty to the IRS.



Another choice is to take the RMD early in the year. This ensures that you don't forget to take the distribution. Also, if you are using the distribution to help with costs of living, you don't have to worry about a pullback in the market later in the year that could impact the contribution to your budget. Obviously, a possible disadvantage to the early distribution is the loss of portfolio gains in a good market environment.

One other choice is to take semiannual, quarterly, or monthly distributions throughout the year. You may have a concern with the logistics of timing these periodic payments, but most providers have RMD services that calculate and disburse installment payments on the schedule you dictate. This method provides regular cash flow from your IRA, which can help with household budgeting. Also, if you schedule and pay quarterly estimated taxes during the year, this choice could help match your withdrawals with your tax payments. Your IRA has given you the gift of tax deferral for many years, but your IRS is not going to allow you to escape

the return of some of the tax savings you have enjoyed. Schedule meetings with your tax and financial advisors to make sure you pick the "door" that works best for you.

My office manager gave me a meditation that talks about choices. "God did not create you to be a robot. He intentionally gave you free will because love is not real unless it is chosen. Every morning you wake up, you are handed the steering wheel of your attitude, your words, and your actions. This capacity to choose is a sacred gift, but it also carries immense responsibility. When God tells His people to "choose life", He is reminding us that our decisions have a pulse—they either bring growth, peace, and vitality to our souls, or they breed spiritual decay. Realize today that you are not a victim of your circumstances; you are an active participant in your destiny through the power of your choices." Don't be selfish. Share the good news of God with family and friends. It is really important.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual. Please discuss your specific situation with your financial advisor. All investing involves risk including loss of principal. No strategy assures success or protects against loss. Financial Solutions Group is located at 128 Versailles Blvd, Alexandria, LA 71303. We can be reached at (318) 448-3201. Securities and advisory services offered through LPL Financial, a registered investment advisor, Member FINRA/SIPC.

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Common Myths About Social Security Disability

By Annie Lemoine Newton



Many people believe that having a serious diagnosis automatically qualifies someone for Social Security disability benefits. In reality, Social Security focuses less on the name of the condition and more on how it limits the person's ability to work consistently. A doctor's statement that someone is "disabled" can help, but it does not guarantee approval. Medical records should explain specific limitations involving sitting, standing, walking, lifting, concentrating, interacting with others, maintaining attendance, or completing tasks. A person does not have to be bedridden, and mental health conditions can be just as disabling as physical impairments. The main question is whether the person can reliably perform substantial work despite all documented conditions.

Another common myth is that an initial denial means the case is over. Many deserving applicants are denied and later approved through the appeals process, so it is important to appeal on time, continue medical treatment, submit updated records, and complete every form carefully. Social Security disability is not a short-term or partial disability program; generally, the condition must prevent substantial work and last or be expected to last at least 12 continuous months. Applicants should also understand that SSDI and SSI are different programs with different financial requirements. Ultimately, a successful claim depends on consistent medical evidence, clear descriptions of daily and work-related limitations, complete information, and careful attention to deadlines.



The law firm of former Social Security Judge Peter J. Lemoine has offices in Cottonport, Alexandria, Baton Rouge, and Lafayette. Call (318) 876-3174 to set up a consultation or visit our website at www.lemoinelawfirm.com.

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What If Health Insurance Disappeared in America?

By Wesley Watkins



If all health insurance in the United States were eliminated overnight, the country would shift to a mostly self-pay, out-of-pocket health care model. That would mean no employer-sponsored coverage, no Medicare, no Medicaid, no marketplace plans, and no insurance protection against large medical bills. For households, the result would be a major financial shock, though the impact would vary sharply by income level.

At first glance, some people might think losing insurance would save money because they would no longer pay premiums, deductibles, copays, or coinsurance. But health insurance does more than cover routine visits. Its biggest value is protection from catastrophic bills from hospital stays, surgeries, childbirth, cancer treatment, emergency care, and chronic disease management. Without insurance, families would bear the full financial risk.

Low-income households would likely be hit the hardest. These families usually have little savings, limited access to credit, and the least ability to absorb surprise medical bills. Some low-income families currently receive Medicaid or heavily subsidized coverage, so eliminating insurance would not create savings for them; instead, it would remove the protection they rely on most.

In the short term, they might feel some relief if they stop paying premiums. A single emergency room visit, prescription need, childbirth, or hospitalization could create debt that is impossible to repay. Many low-income households would likely delay care because they could not afford it, which would make health problems worse and, ultimately, more expensive.

Middle-income households would face a mixed but still risky outcome. Some will initially see savings if they no longer pay monthly insurance premiums. For example, many workers currently contribute thousands of dollars each year toward employer-sponsored plans. In a no-insurance system, that money would stay in the household budget, at least at first.

However, these households would also lose the financial protection that insurance provides. One serious illness could erase years of premium savings. A surgery, accident, or prolonged hospital stay could cost tens of thousands of dollars or more. Even families who are normally financially stable could be forced to dip into savings, take on debt, or delay important care. For middle-income earners, the main problem would be volatility—they might save money in a healthy year but face devastating costs in a bad one.

High-income households would be the most able to adapt, though they would still face risk. Wealthier families are more likely to have savings and assets that allow them to pay for routine care directly. They may even prefer a cash-based system for minor services, if prices are low enough.

Still, insurance exists to protect against the rare but extremely expensive event, and

even wealthy households can be hit by major medical costs. A serious illness, major trauma, or long-term treatment could still run into six figures. While high-income families are much less likely to experience financial ruin, they would still lose the safety net that insurance provides.

If all health insurance in America disappeared without replacement, the country would likely see lower routine spending for some households, but much greater financial risk overall. Low-income households would be the most vulnerable, middle-income households would face the most uncertainty, and high-income households would be the best positioned to absorb the change. The biggest shift would not simply be from premiums to savings—it would be from protected health care spending to full personal financial responsibility.

Eliminating health insurance would make health care far less predictable and far more dangerous financially, especially for the people least able to afford a medical emergency. Health insurance is expensive, but going without insurance is a huge risk most of us cannot afford. One of the best ways to educate yourself is by contacting someone who is knowledgeable and reputable and will educate you without “selling” you.



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New ALICE Data Shows Rising Cost of Basics Outpaces Overall Inflation in Cenla

Of Louisiana's 1,836,752 households, 19% (344,381) were below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and another 30% (548,775) were ALICE — households with income above the FPL, but not enough to afford the ALICE Household Survival Budget for their household composition and location. Combining these two groups, 49% (893,156) of households were below the ALICE Threshold.



UNITED WAY Central Louisiana

apply at <https://www.uwcl.org/apply-community-investment-grant> or by scanning the QR code on this page.

The crux of the struggle for ALICE families is the gap between wages and expenses. In 2024, a family of four in Louisiana needed \$81,912 just to cover the essentials—nearly

three times the Federal Poverty Level of \$31,200. Yet, even with both parents working full time in two of the state's most common jobs—a cook and a teller—this family's combined income still fell short of the cost of basics by \$24,042. With a state average income of \$60,986, many households, especially in Central Louisiana, struggle financially.

ALICE is an acronym that stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. This is a population of the workforce that is above the FPL, yet struggles to make ends meet, often compounded to lack of qualification for governmental or income-based assistance programs. "United For ALICE" is a United Way-led national research initiative, founded and led by United Way of Northern New Jersey, with United Ways and partners across the country using the research for their communities. In Louisiana, this work is connected through the Louisiana Association of United Ways and local United Ways, such as United Way of Central Louisiana.

"ALICE gives us a much clearer picture of what is happening around the kitchen tables of working families across Central Louisiana. These are people who are working, contributing to our communities and doing many of the jobs our region depends on, but their income still may not cover the basic cost of living," said Lafe Jones, President and CEO of United Way Central of Louisiana. "For United Way of Central Louisiana, this research is more than a set of statistics. It gives us credible local information we can bring to businesses, nonprofits, funders and community leaders so we can better understand the challenges facing our region and work together on solutions. It also helps us use data to make decisions about which local programs and agencies we should support financially with our community impact grants."

The United Way of Central Louisiana's Community Investment Grant for 2026 is now open and will remain open until October 15th at 12:00pm. Organizations can

United Way of Central Louisiana's larger role is to serve as a regional connector and resource for the region. "United for ALICE" gives the organization credible data that can be brought to employers, nonprofits, funders, government, and community leaders to help everyone better understand the economic realities facing working households in Central Louisiana. This allows United Way of Central Louisiana to be community connectors instead of competitors. "The ALICE research shows that the affordability crisis is not new," said Stephanie Hoopes, Ph.D., National Director at United For ALICE. "Already stretched thin, ALICE families have no cushion for rising gas or utility costs—forcing tough tradeoffs with other necessities. That's the insight policymakers and community leaders need to build a stronger future for ALICE and all."

More state and local data is available through the interactive dashboards on UnitedForALICE.org/Louisiana.





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Celebrate Family Meals Month with Easy Home Cooking

By Jennifer Duhon, MS, RDN, LDN



Each September, we celebrate National Family Meals Month, a nationwide event designed to support families in enjoying more meals together using items purchased at the grocery store and, as a result, reap the many health and social benefits of doing so. As a busy mom, I know the struggle of finding the time and energy to prepare home-cooked meals. At the end of a hectic day, eating out or ordering in might feel like the easiest option. But convenience and processed food can take a significant toll on our mood and health. Cooking at home has numerous benefits including having control over ingredients, being budget friendly, and most importantly, spending time with family.

When we cook at home, we can manage the amount of salt, sugar, and fat going into a recipe, determine the portions, the size of the plates used, and control the cleanliness of our kitchen. For families who deal with hypertension, diabetes, or other health complications, managing these aspects is essential.

Preparing meals at home will be less expensive than eating out. Food costs, labor, and facility expenses all go into the price of a restaurant meal. Eating out typically costs 5 to 6 times more than what we spend to prepare that meal at home. Plus, we are saving on fuel cost from travel by preparing an in-home meal.

Cooking at home is also a great way to spend time with others. Shopping, chopping, and learning culinary techniques are great life skills that are best taught within the family home. Cooking can bring our families together while, at the same time, making sure that everyone gets fed a healthy and nutritious meal.



One kitchen gadget that has made home cooking easier is the Air-Fryer. The Air-Fryer we know today was introduced in 2010. An Air-Fryer is a countertop appliance designed to simulate deep frying without submerging the food in oil. It operates like a small convection oven, circulating hot air to cook and brown the food. Air-Fryers are efficient. They are easy to use, cut frying time in half and produce healthier meals; making it a perfect add to our family kitchen.

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THIS WEEK

Preheating isn't necessary in the air fryer. It's not necessary to preheat the air fryer before cooking. If you do, it could change the cook time of your recipe. Only preheat if the recipe you're following says to do so.

Use minimal oil. Foods in the air fryer don't need much oil to crisp. Just lightly spray foods with a fine mist of oil. It is best not to use nonstick cooking oil sprays/aerosols. These products contain additives that could harm air fryer or cooking process. For best results, shake your food or turn over at least once during cooking to get it nice and crispy all around.

Don't overcrowd the basket. Food needs space and air circulation in order to get crispy in the air fryer. Be sure to keep cooking times handy. The more you use your air fryer, the easier it gets to know how long and what temperature to cook your regular foods on, but it is recommended to use the time guide from your manufacturer's product information. And use a food thermometer to check internal temperatures especially for meats.

Once the cooking is complete, soak the basket right away for easy cleanup. For best results, soak it immediately, while it's still warm, in hot, soapy water. If you transfer the basket right to the sink and soak it, it will be super simple to clean it out.

Another great kitchen appliance that saves on time is Instant Pot, or pressure cooker.

An Instant Pot is a multicooker that has tons of functions, including pressure cooking, slow cooking, rice cooking, steaming, warming and sautéing—all in one appliance that helps expedite the cooking process. The first-ever Instant Pot was introduced back in 2010. Fast forward to 2021, and Instant Pots come in plenty of different models, with sizes ranging from 3-quart to 8-quart.

Some people are uncertain about Instant Pot and its safety. While pressure cookers of the past might have been dicey safety-wise, an Instant Pot is comprised of an outer pot (or base), a stainless-steel inner pot, and a lid, all of which have plenty of safety mechanisms built-in so that you don't need to worry about them being dangerous. They have a silicone gasket that prevents steam from escaping, which helps regulate pressure. As an added safety feature, the Instant Pot also features a floating valve, an indicator that pops up when it's unsafe to open the lid while cooking foods. When the floating valve is raised, the lid will automatically lock when it's at a pressure level that could be dangerous.

To release the pressure post-cooking, you can either use the quick release feature, which ejects steam from the pot quickly (typically over 1 to 2 minutes), or a natural release, which lets out steam over time. Your recipe will often indicate whether you should use quick or natural release, but as a rule of thumb, natural release is best for stews and other foods that won't overcook, while quick release is recommended for dishes like pasta that are at risk of overcooking. If you do use quick release, you should use tongs (instead of your bare hands) to move the nozzle and release steam.

When it comes to food safety, the Instant Pot's automatic keep warm setting can also help keep your food out of the "danger zone" (the temperature range in which bacteria rapidly multiply in food, which spans between 40 degrees Fahrenheit and 140 degrees Fahrenheit).

Instant pots come with an easy to read and understand digital control panel. Instructions for many recipes are also included. So don't be afraid. You just have to start somewhere and a quick home-cooked meal will be the reward!

Easy Air Fryer Chicken

2-4 Boneless Chicken Thighs or Breasts

2 Teaspoons Olive Oil

1/2 Teaspoon Salt

1 Teaspoon Paprika

1/2 Teaspoon Garlic Powder

1/4 Teaspoon Onion Powder

1/4 Teaspoon Black Pepper



Place the chicken in a large bowl and drizzle with the olive oil. In a small bowl, stir together the salt, paprika, garlic powder, onion powder and black pepper. Sprinkle the spice mixture over the chicken. Heat air fryer to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Place chicken in air fryer. Cook for 6 to 8 minutes. Flip the chicken and continue cooking for another 6 to 8 minutes. Chicken is ready when the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Use a food thermometer to check because, depending on your model, it may require additional time.

Pancakes + You = A Perfect Fit!



A Jerry Harp Memorial Foundation

Come enjoy a stack of hot, fresh, fluffy pancakes while helping deserving elementary school children in Rapides Parish! A Perfect Fit Foundation will host its annual Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser on Thursday, September 17th from 6:30am to 11:00am (or until they're all gone!) in the Parish Hall of St. James Episcopal Church, located at 1620 Murray Street in Alexandria (across Bolton Avenue from the Alexandria Police Department). Each stack of pancakes comes with breakfast sausage, fresh fruit,

and a beverage. 100% of each \$8.00 donation will go directly toward the mission of the Foundation. Breakfast plates will be available to enjoy at St. James on the morning of the event, packaged to go, or orders of 10+ delivered to your place of business in Alexandria/Pineville free of charge. For patrons dining in, the pancakes are all you care to eat! You won't find a better breakfast deal in town!

A Perfect Fit Foundation was established in 2006 to honor the memory of Jerry Harp, a local shoe salesman who helped generations of Cenla residents find a perfect fit of their own for over 50 years. The Foundation provides well-fitted, uniform-approved shoes to underprivileged school children in the Rapides Parish School System, where the need has been identified by the teachers. To date, the Foundation has provided shoes to thousands of deserving students. Through the generous sponsorship of



corporate partners and individual donations, 100% of the funds raised by A Perfect Fit Foundation at events like the annual pancake breakfast goes directly towards the purchase of shoes. The Foundation's funding is managed in partnership with the Central Louisiana Community Foundation.

Tickets for the breakfast are available the day of the event or in advance by calling the Cenla Focus Offices at (318) 442-8277. Orders of 10 or more plates (or equivalent donation) qualify for free delivery in the Alexandria/Pineville area. Can't make it to the event but still want to support this great cause? Make your secure donation to support A Perfect Fit Foundation online at <https://tinyurl.com/perfectfitfoundation> or by scanning the QR code on this page.



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A Clear Choice: Saia Wholesale Containers at Pineville Farm Stand

By Sarah Drell

Looking for glass jars and bottles without making a trip to a big box store? Saia Wholesale Containers is making it easier for Louisiana customers to stock up locally, with affordable glass jars and bottles available for pickup at the Pineville Farm Stand.

For Steve Saia, CEO of Saia Wholesale Containers, the appeal of glass goes beyond convenience and price. "Glass is a safer alternative because you're not introducing microplastics into your food and drinks." From mason jars and canning containers to glass bottles, Saia Wholesale Containers offers practical options for customers who want to store food and beverages in glass rather than plastic. And, in many cases, Steve says customers will get a better price than they would find at any big box retailer.

The need for greater local awareness became especially clear during a recent honey convention in Alexandria.

Several honey producers stopped by Pineville Farm Stand and purchased jars in large quantities, surprised to discover that the containers they needed were available right here in Pineville. One regular customer, a lawyer in Tennessee, orders eight-ounce stout bottles to keep clean drinking water in a glass container in his office lobby for clients, demonstrating just how versatile glass containers can be.

Customers are encouraged to visit saiawholesale.com to browse available containers, get answers to common questions, and place their orders online. Then, simply pick up the order at Pineville Farm Stand and go. Preordering helps customers avoid waiting in busy retail traffic while also keeping the farm stand running smoothly.

Saia Wholesale Containers products are available for pickup six days a week at Pineville Farm Stand, located at 1634 Military Highway in Pineville. Customers can use the website to shop, order, and confirm pickup details before making the trip!



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Fall Fairs and Flavors of Avoyelles

By Wilbert Carmouche

Louisiane!

Church and school fairs are in full swing across Avoyelles Parish—Centre de la Louisiane! September and October are prime time for these beloved fall fundraisers, where good food, good folks, and good times come together. Thanks to the wonderful diversity of people and cultures that make Avoyelles so special, you never quite know what delicious flavors and seasonings you'll discover from one weekend to the next. That's part of the fun—come hungry and be ready to enjoy!

Pasta Jambalaya

- 1/2 Cup Italian Salad Dressing
- 1/4 Cup Soy Sauce
- 6 to 8 Boneless Chicken Thighs
- 2 Links Smoked Sausage, Chopped
- 1/4 Cup Olive Oil
- 2 Onions, Chopped
- 3 Ribs of Celery, Chopped
- 1 Green Bell Pepper, Chopped
- 2 (10 ounce) Cans Chicken Stock or Broth
- 1 Garlic Clove, Crushed



So, here we go! We've selected two recipes, savory and sweet, that just might remind you of something you'd find cooking up at one of our local fairs. They're a taste of the homemade goodness and community spirit that make fall in Avoyelles something special. Come on, y'all—grab a plate and enjoy a little taste of Centre de la

- 1 Teaspoon Salt
- 1/8 Teaspoon Black Pepper
- 1 (12 ounce) Package Spaghetti (Regular or Whole Wheat) Broken into Thirds
- 8 Ounces Fresh Mushrooms, Sliced

Combine the salad dressing and soy sauce in a shallow dish. Add the chicken and turn to coat well. Marinate in the

refrigerator for 2 to 3 hours. Brown sausage in olive oil. Add the chicken thighs and sauté until brown. Add onions, celery, bell pepper, chicken stock, garlic, salt, and pepper, then mix well. Bring to a boil. Add the spaghetti, mushrooms, and enough water to cover. Cook covered for 15 minutes. Best if it rests for 30 minutes or more before serving.

Golden Butter Rum Cake

- 1 Box Duncan Hines Butter Recipe Golden Cake Mix
- 1/2 Cup Cooking Oil (Use Mazola)
- 8 Ounces Sour Cream
- 1/2 Cup Sugar
- 1 Tablespoon Light Rum
- 4 Eggs
- 1 Cup Pecans, Chopped

Grease and flour a bundt pan. Sprinkle pecans in bottom of pan. Mix all ingredients, except eggs, together. Add eggs one at a time, beating after each. Mix well. Pour cake batter over pecans. Bake at 300 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 minutes. Raise temperature to 325 degrees Fahrenheit and bake for 30 to 45

minutes (check at last 15). While warm, use a spoon and pour part of the glaze around the cake while it's still in the pan. Let cool and turn out on a plate. Brush the rest of the glaze on the cake.

Glaze

- 1/2 Cup Sugar
- 1/4 Cup Buttermilk
- 1 Tablespoon Margarine
- 1 Tablespoon Light Rum
- 1/4 Teaspoon Soda
- 1/4 Teaspoon Salt

Mix all ingredients into a small saucepan and bring to a boil. Cook for 2 or 3 minutes. Use as directed.

Avoyelles Parish cookbooks are available for sale in the gift shop at ACT Office, located at 8592 Highway 1, Suite 3, Mansura, LA 71350. These recipes were selected from "Cotton Pickin' Good," a collection of recipes of the Local Bayou Cuisine recipes from the Cottonport Museum. The cookbook cost is \$10.00 plus \$6.00 for postage and handling. Call (800) 833-4195 or email us at tourism@cricket.net for details.

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Fall at River Oaks Brings Midnight at the Met, #Triple5 and Holiday Traditions

Fall is always one of the most exciting seasons at River Oaks Square Arts Center, and 2026 is shaping up to be no exception. Over the next several weeks, the Arts Center will welcome the return of its signature Van Gogh Gala and prepare for the 11th Annual 5x5x5 Show National Call, and celebrate the remarkable work being created through its outreach programs. It's a busy stretch of the calendar, but one that beautifully reflects the many sides of River Oaks—exhibitions, education, outreach, fundraising, and plenty of opportunities for the community to experience the arts.

Leading the excitement is the Van Gogh Gala, River Oaks' largest annual fundraiser and undoubtedly one of its most imaginative traditions. This year, guests are invited to experience "Midnight at the Met" on Saturday, October 24th, beginning at 7:00pm. For one night, River Oaks will take on the atmosphere of a candlelit museum after hours, where the grandeur of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art meets the mystery of All Hallows' Eve.



Black-tie elegance, gothic glamour, art, fashion, and fantasy will all come together for an evening unlike anything else on the River Oaks calendar.

The dress code is Haunt Couture, and guests are encouraged to become part of the art themselves. Inspiration can come from iconic paintings, celebrated artists, mythology, sculpture, fashion, or fantasy. The evening will include cuisine, signature cocktails, live entertainment, silent and live auctions, and the kind of theatrical touches that turn the entire Arts Center into part of the experience. "The Van Gogh Gala has

always been the night when this community gives itself permission to be as creative as our artists are," says Rachael Dautat, Executive Director at River Oaks. "It is a fundraiser, absolutely, but it is also one of the truest expressions of who we are as an arts center."

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At the heart of the Gala is one of River Oaks' most beloved traditions: the collaboration between guest artists from the community and seasoned Mentor Artists. Over a period of months, these pairings work together to create original pieces that ultimately become part of the Gala auction. Before the event itself, those collaborations will be placed on public display during the Van Gogh Gala Exhibition—Collaborations with Mentor Artists. The exhibition gives patrons an opportunity to see the work up close and appreciate the time, imagination, and collaboration that go into each piece.

Proceeds from the Gala help support River Oaks programming throughout the year, including exhibitions, educational opportunities, artist residencies, community outreach, and Summer Arts Studio. Individual tickets are \$70.00 per person, with reserved tables available for \$750 and seating ten. Tables are limited, and tickets go on sale in September. The 2026 Gala is sponsored by Rapides Regional Medical Center, Red River Bank, Southern Heritage Bank, and Explore Alexandria Pineville CVB.

Artists across the country are working within a much smaller format for another River Oaks favorite. The national call for the 11th Annual 5x5x5 Show is now open, with entries due October 17th. Affectionately known as #Triple5, the exhibition challenges artists to create meaningful work within roughly 25 square inches—no more than five inches in any direction—in either two or three dimensions and in any medium. The size restriction is part of what makes the exhibition so compelling. It asks artists to distill an idea, composition, or emotion down to what matters most, and it invites viewers to step closer and spend time with the details.

This year's Guest Juror is Tyler Barnes, a second-generation artist originally from Alexandria. Barnes earned his BFA in graphic communications from Northwestern State University in 2008 and his MFA in graphic design from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in 2016. He has taught at the university level since that year while maintaining his own design practice, T.Barnes Graphics. His work focuses on brand strategy, visual identity, typography, and packaging, and his career has earned him

numerous awards and distinctions.

Artists may submit up to three entries for \$15.00 per artist through CallForEntry.org, commonly known as CaFÉ. All submitted work must be original and available for sale. Awards include \$500 for Best in Show, the \$100 Beck Crowell Creative Award, two \$100 merit awards, and honorable mentions. Accepted artists will be notified October 23rd, with artwork due at River Oaks by November 3rd. Full specifications for the call are available at RiverOaksArtsCenter.com.

The 5x5x5 exhibition opens November 12th with a reception and awards presentation and will remain on display through February 6, 2027, placing the show right in the middle of the holiday season when collectors and gift-givers are looking for something truly original. Opening alongside the national call will be an exhibition by Matt Dawson and a major presentation of work from River Oaks' outreach programs. Participating organizations include Rapides ARC, OLS Community Homes, CLSSC, Hope House, Matthews Memorial, and The Honduras Cookie Project, working with instructors Lindsay B. Moore, Carla Guillory, and Chastity Sayer Smith.

Visitors still have time to enjoy the current fall exhibitions, which remain on display through October 10th. Featured are "Reflections of Home" by Larry "Kip" Hayes in the Bolton-Davis Gallery, "Through the Cypress Veil" by Leah Morace in the Galerie des Amis, and "The Shape of Place: Childhood Memories" by Katy Keppinger Arbour in the Stokes-Harris Gallery. Together, the three exhibitions explore Louisiana through memory, landscape, home, and the enduring connection between people and place.

For more information about the Van Gogh Gala, the 5x5x5 National Call, the Annual Christmas Porch Sale, or upcoming exhibitions and classes at River Oaks, call (318) 473-2670, visit RiverOaksArtsCenter.com, or follow River Oaks Arts Center on Facebook.

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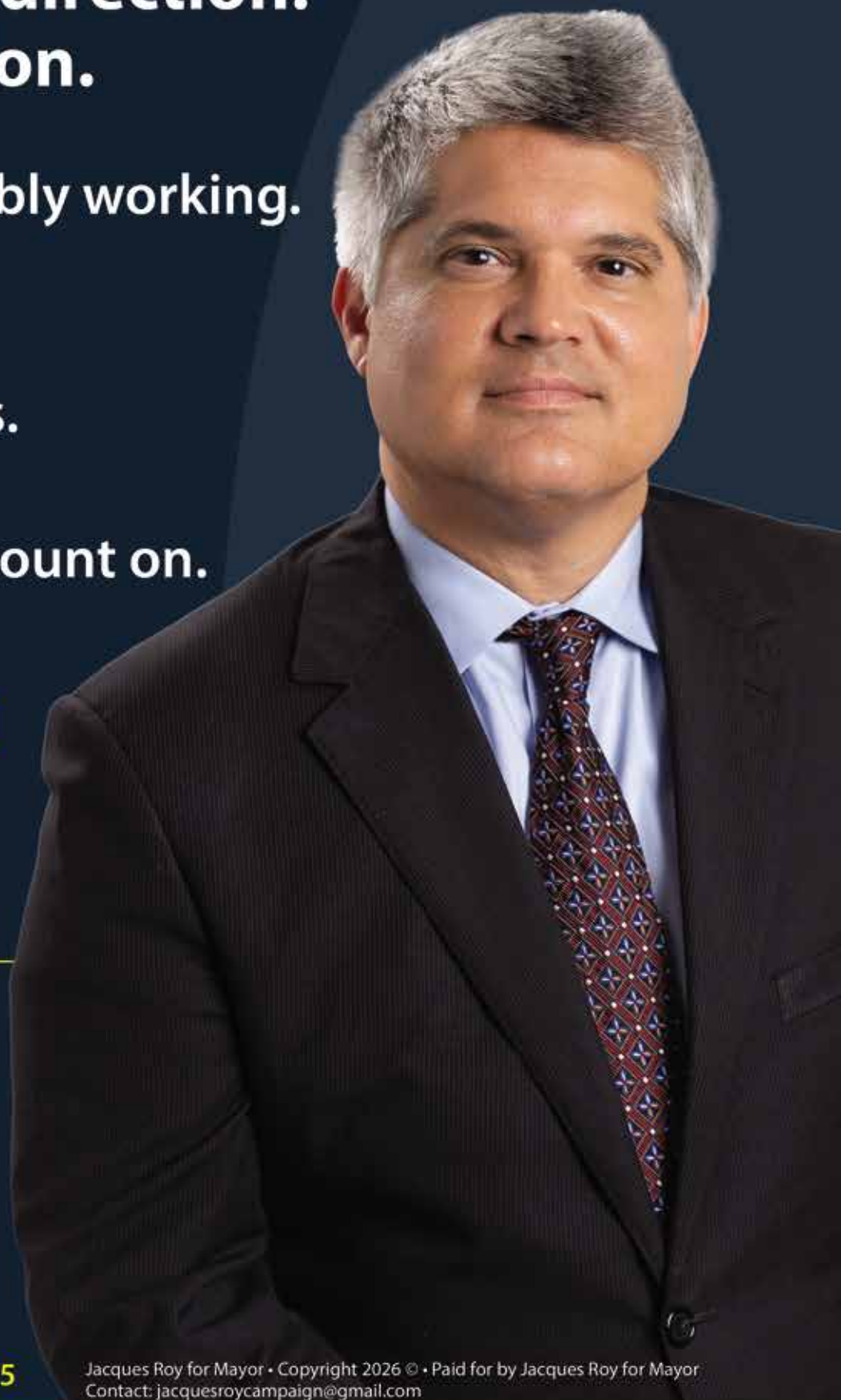
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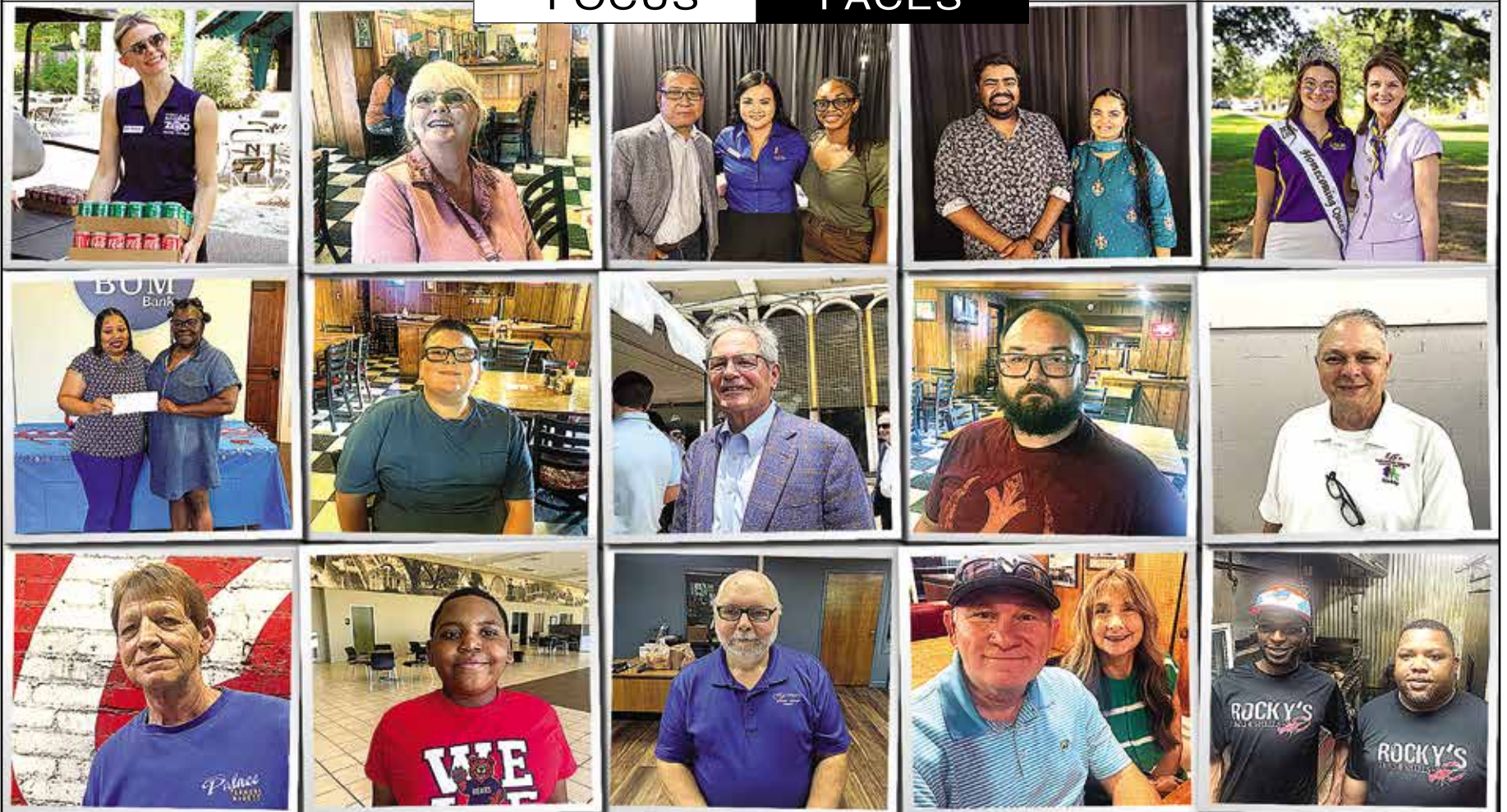


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