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The Community Lifestyle/Business Profile Journal of CenLA

Volume 28 • Issue 8  
August 2025

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ISSUE

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# CREATE YOUR SENSATIONAL Cenla *Wedding* Celebration

Cenla isn't just a great place to live, it's a great place to celebrate your big day. From popping the question to the first dance at your reception, you can make your wedding a day to remember right here at home. We've asked some area experts to share their knowledge to help you create your sensational Cenla wedding celebration!

## ***Custom Engagement Rings as Unique as Your Love***

By Amy Boone

In an era where individuality is celebrated, custom engagement rings have emerged as a compelling choice for couples seeking to symbolize their unique love stories. Unlike mass-produced options, custom rings offer a personal touch that reflects the distinct personalities and shared experiences of the couple. This personalization not only enhances the emotional significance of the ring, but also ensures that it stands out as a true representation of their commitment.

Furthermore, investing in a custom engagement ring allows couples to take control over various aspects of the design process, including gemstone selection, metal type, and overall style. This level of customization enables individuals to create a piece that resonates with their aesthetic preferences, while also considering factors such as ethical sourcing and sustainability. In today's conscientious consumer landscape, many couples are increasingly inclined to support ethical practices by opting for

conflict-free stones or recycled materials—an option often more accessible through bespoke designs.

Moreover, custom engagement rings can serve as heirlooms that transcend generations. A well-crafted piece imbued with personal meaning can become a cherished family artifact passed down through time. By choosing to create an original design rather than opting for a generic ring, couples invest not only in their present but also in future memories and traditions.

Custom engagement rings represent more than just jewelry; they embody love's uniqueness and commitment's authenticity. By selecting or designing an engagement ring tailored specifically to their relationship, couples affirm their dedication while embracing creativity and ethical consciousness—a decision worthy of consideration in today's marketplace.

## ***Picking the Perfect Wedding Venue: Making the Right Choice***

By Scott Laliberte

Choosing the perfect wedding venue is one of the most important decisions a couple makes when planning their big day. The venue sets the tone, influences the style, and often dictates the guest count and overall budget. With so many options available—from romantic vineyards and elegant ballrooms to rustic barns and beachside resorts—it can be overwhelming. However, by focusing on a few key factors, couples can confidently select a venue that brings their vision to life.



Before touring venues, it's essential to have a clear idea of the wedding style you want. Are you envisioning a classic, black-tie affair or a laid-back outdoor celebration? Do you prefer a historical setting, a modern space, or something unique like a museum or garden? Your venue should align with your aesthetic and help tell your love story. Starting with a theme or mood board can help narrow down locations that fit the atmosphere you're trying to create.

Your venue should comfortably accommodate the number of guests you plan to in-





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vite. Booking a space that's too small can feel cramped and stressful, while a venue that's too large may lack intimacy. Always check the capacity limits and ask how the venue handles different guest counts. Some venues offer flexible layouts or multiple rooms that can be adjusted to your needs.

The venue's location plays a major role in your guests' experience. If many of your loved ones are traveling, consider venues near airports or with nearby lodging options. It's also helpful to provide clear directions and transportation details.

Venues often make up a significant portion of the wedding budget, so it's important to know what's included in the rental fee. Some venues are full-service—offering tables, chairs, linens, and even catering. Others may require you to bring in individual vendors. Make sure to factor in the total cost, not just the base rental fee, when comparing venues. Always ask about additional charges such as overtime fees, cleanup costs, and service fees.

When touring venues, come prepared with questions. What's the backup plan for bad weather? Are there noise or time restrictions? Is there ample parking or valet service? How flexible is the space for décor and setup? Getting detailed answers will help you envision your day more clearly and avoid surprises later.

Finally, trust your gut. When you find the right venue, you'll feel it. The setting will inspire you, and the logistics will feel manageable. Don't rush the decision—visit a

few places, take notes, and imagine yourself walking down the aisle there.

One great choice for your big day is Loyd Hall in Cheneyville. A captivating bed-and-breakfast nestled on a working 640-acre farm, framed by stately oaks, sugar cane fields, and pastoral land, Loyd Hall was built around 1820 in a Classical Revival/Georgian style. It's listed on the National Register of Historic Places and stands out as the only brick plantation house in the upper Bayou Boeuf region

Guests stay in one of six individually decorated cottages or suites—like the Jenkins, Fitzgerald, McCullough, and Minda—each featuring air conditioning, flat-screen TV, kitchenette or full kitchen, and bathrooms with soaking tubs or showers. Most accommodations include fireplaces, and all offer free Wi-Fi and parking

On-site amenities include an outdoor pool, lush lawns, and picnic areas. A home-made breakfast is included during much of the year. Ideal for romantic getaways, family reunions, retreats, or small weddings, Loyd Hall blends Southern charm with historic elegance just 16 miles south of Alexandria.

In the end, the perfect wedding venue is the one that reflects your love story, fits your needs, and feels just right. With thoughtful planning and a clear vision, you'll find the ideal space to celebrate the start of your forever.

### ***Wedding Bells Ring Again at OakWing***

By Brady Nolan

When I arrived at OakWing nearly two years ago, hosting a wedding here felt like a distant memory—something the facility hadn't seen much of since its heyday in the early 2000s. Back then, OakWing was one of Cenla's most attractive wedding venues. I'm proud to say: we're bringing that legacy back.

With years of experience at some of the most exclusive resorts in the world, including Kiawah Island Golf Resort, I understand what it takes to create a truly unforgettable

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wedding day. After relocating from Washington, D.C., I experienced a bit of culture shock when it came to expectations and pricing in this area—but like the new OakWing, we’ve overcome every hurdle.

Today, we’ve built a professional, passionate team and created the best all-inclusive wedding and event offering in Central Louisiana. We are Alexandria’s only true turnkey venue, and our pricing simply can’t be beat. With every rental, we include: Linens and chair covers; servers and drink stations; and a dedicated event team, all at no additional charge. Our facility can comfortably accommodate up to 150 guests with no extra rentals required.

In 2025, we expanded our offerings to include ceremonies on our beautifully manicured driving range. This unique outdoor space, set

against the rustic elegance of our clubhouse, creates a stunning and memorable backdrop for your special day.

Our culinary team specializes in large functions, offering everything from filet mignon and rock lobster to elegant charcuterie boards. On a tighter budget? A hearty Cajun chicken pasta will still wow your guests without breaking the bank.

We also offer daytime venue use with no facility fee, just a modest food and beverage minimum. Non-profit and weekday event discounts are available, too. So as you plan your wedding—or fundraiser, or corporate event—think of OakWing, Alexandria’s only WeddingWire- and The Knot-approved venue.

There’s something special happening at OakWing. Come see the difference for yourself!

## Lessons from the Other Side of “I Do”

By Hannah Broom

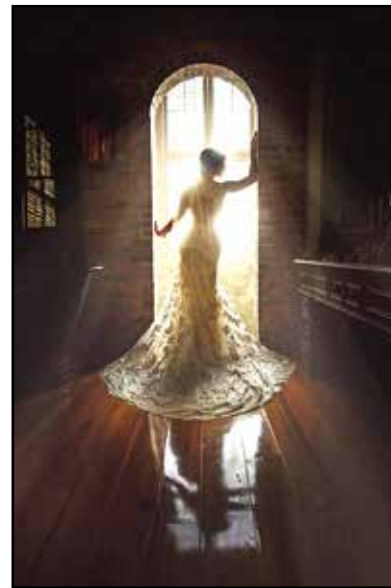
One of my favorite parts of coordinating weddings happens after the day is over—when I get to check in with the couple, hear how they’re settling into married life, and quietly reflect on how everything unfolded. More often than not, somewhere in the conversation, I hear it: “If we could do it again...” It’s not regret; it’s just perspective. Gentle things they realized only after the whirlwind passed—things they might have done differently to make the day feel more present, more peaceful, more them.

One thing that comes up often? Choosing not to do a first look. It’s such a personal decision, and there’s no one-size-fits-all. But so many couples later say they wish they’d taken that time together before the ceremony. A first look doesn’t take away the emotion of the aisle moment—it just gives you one more moment to breathe, to connect, to slow down. It also helps ease the photo timeline and gives you more freedom to enjoy your guests afterward without rushing off for portraits.

Another one I hear: “We invited too many people.” It’s easy to feel pressure from



family, church, or community to include everyone—but sometimes that turns what should be a joyful gathering into a big blur. Brides have told me they barely remember who was there, or that it felt like they spent the whole night trying to greet people instead of actually soaking it all in. When your guest list reflects your real relationships, the whole day feels more grounded.




Let’s talk about photos and video, too—because that’s another big one. I’ve had brides come back to me and say they wish they’d hired a more experienced photographer or not skipped the videographer. These are the people responsible for capturing the day you’ll never get to live again. While it can be tempting to cut corners here, this is often where couples wish they’d gone bigger. Photos and video are what let you relive the emotion, the laughter, the prayers, the voices of the people you love. It’s worth it.


And finally—the pace of the day matters. A packed schedule might look great on paper, but when the timeline leaves no room to breathe, it’s hard to actually feel the day. The sweetest moments often aren’t the planned ones, they’re the in-between ones—a deep breath before

you walk down the aisle, a few extra seconds to take in your reception space, a quiet hug with your mom.

If you’re in the middle of planning right now, here’s your permission to pause. Ask yourself: “What’s going to matter most to me when I look back?” Because, at the end of the night, that’s what you’ll carry with you—and that’s what I want most for you to remember.



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# The Biggest War in the World

By Jerry Sanson, PhD



Japan surrendered to the Allies eighty years ago this month, bringing the biggest war that the world has ever known to an end. The conflict has been the subject of many academic studies and remains a subject of interest in pop culture. Many studies focus on a single battle, a single campaign, or a group of soldiers, but it is sometimes useful to think about how enormous that war was because we can sometimes forget exactly what a “world war” entails.

Historians trace the deep roots of World War II to Japanese aggression toward its neighbors, especially China, during the early 1930s, but popular consciousness often dates the beginning of the war to Germany’s surprise invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939 that sparked 2,194 days, or six years and one day, of war. Wars claimed an estimated 70 to 85 million victims during that conflict, counting military and civilian lives lost, making it the deadliest war in world history.

German Chancellor Adolf Hitler followed the dawn invasion of Poland with “blitzkrieg,” or “Lightning War,” that quickly overran the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, and pushed about 300,000 British and Allied troops off the European continent at Dunkirk, France. Success in the west led a confident Hitler to order German

troops to invade the Soviet Union in June 1941, a campaign that led them to the gates of Moscow and to the fierce Battle of Stalingrad from July 1942 until February 1943 that cost almost two million casualties in a deadly siege before Soviet troops turned the tide.

Western Allies invaded Sicily and southern Italy, causing the fall of Benito Mussolini’s Nazi-allied Fascist government during July 1943, before slowly fighting their way up the Italian Peninsula against German troops who were determined to make the Allies pay dearly for every inch of ground they captured. The Western Allies staged the greatest amphibious invasion in history on D-Day, June 6, 1944, on the beaches of Normandy, France, thus opening a Western Front of the war. They

liberated Paris from Nazi control on August 25th and Brussels less than two weeks later. Allied and German casualty figures for June 6th until August 30th, when the Germans retreated across the Seine River and evacuated France, numbered about 420,000.

Germany could not fight the two-front war that it now faced but found reserve strength to stage one last desperate battle to split the Allied lines in the Ardennes Forest in Belgium and Luxembourg, December 1944 through January 1945, but Allied lines held. The Battle of the Bulge cost the Allies about 20,000 mostly American casualties, but Allied lines held. The Soviet Union staged a Winter Campaign on the Eastern Front that placed additional drain on Nazi forces.



## Congratulations! Ragan Hale

**BOM Bank is proud to congratulate Ragan Hale on her promotion to Business Development Officer! Ragan graduated from Louisiana State University in May 2024. She majored in Mass Communication with a concentration in Political Communication and a minor in Psychology. Ragan has interned at BOM for the past four summers. She hopes to learn as much as she can and hopes to develop strong relationships with new and existing customers. Ragan stated, “I love the BOM family and how much we truly care for and give back to the community. BOM means so much to me and my family and I’m passionate about helping BOM continue to grow and succeed.”**

**Congratulations, Ragan!**



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Firebombing of Dresden and other German cities led to tens of thousands of civilian deaths, armies of the Western Allies crossed the Rhine River into Germany, and Soviet troops continued to fight their way across Germany from the East. Allied troops discovered the horror that the Nazis inflicted in their concentration camps as they crossed territory under Nazi control. Whether they were classified as work camps or death camps often did not matter much to those held there. They were either worked to death or were killed as part of the Nazi plan to eliminate entire groups within the European population. Estimates of their numbers total about six million.



about 26,000 casualties on Iwo Jima and about 50,000 casualties on Okinawa, the bloodiest and fiercest battle in the Pacific Theater of the war.

After the lessons learned from the Japanese defense of Iwo Jima and Okinawa, Allied commanders concluded that the initial invasion of the Japanese home islands would cost an estimated one million Allied casualties. President Harry Truman decided to abandon plans for a traditional invasion and resort to using new American atomic weapons after giving Japanese government ministers the option of surrender rather than face this new technology of destruction.

Hitler committed suicide in his Berlin bunker on April 30, 1945, as his “Thousand Year Reich” collapsed around him. His successor, Grand Admiral Karl Donitz, authorized General Alfred Jodl to sign an unconditional surrender on May 7, 1945. The Soviet government demanded a separate surrender, and Jodl signed it the next day. Donitz later received a sentence of ten years imprisonment and Jodl received a sentence of death by hanging at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal.

Meanwhile, Japan was busy expanding its Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere in the Pacific, heavily damaging American forces at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in December 1941, and building an empire across the Pacific until taking on the United States Navy at the Battle of Midway in June 1942 that turned the tide in the Pacific Theater of Operations.

The Allied strategy of “Island Hopping” across the Pacific led to the decisive battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa in the winter and spring of 1945. The Japanese lost the last of their naval power, but the price paid by the Allies for these victories numbered

The first atomic bomb used in warfare exploded above the Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, resulting in about 70,000 casualties instantly and tens of thousands of others later from radiation poisoning or wounds incurred in the blast.

Japan faced additional pressure when the Soviet Union declared war on August 8th and even more when the U.S. used another atomic weapon on the city of Nagasaki on August 9th that caused an estimated 39,000 to 70,000 deaths and additional tens of thousands caused by radiation sickness and injuries from the explosion. The Japanese cabinet was deadlocked on the subject of surrender even after these unprecedented attacks until Emperor Hirohito announced on August 15th his decision that Japan would surrender.

American General Douglas MacArthur accepted the Japanese surrender aboard the USS Missouri anchored in Tokyo Bay along with more than 250 other Allied warships on September 2, 1945. MacArthur announced to the world that: “Today the guns are silent. A great tragedy has ended. A great victory has been won.”

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## Learn the Benefits and Basics of Composting with LSU AgCenter

By Molly Lyles



MOLLY LYLES

As more homeowners and gardeners adopt sustainable practices, one that has proven to be easy and effective is composting. Composting uses plant material and other biodegradable products to create organic matter, an important addition to our gardens. Organic matter improves drainage, promotes nutrient recycling, and helps build rich, living soils full of beneficial microorganisms.

There are three particles that make up soil—sand, silt, and clay. The other three components of soil are water, air, and organic matter. The amounts of sand, silt, and clay differ depending on your location, often in relation to distance from our river systems. River flooding deposits sediment of varying texture, depending on energy levels. Sandy soils are found closer to the river systems while clay particles are smaller and stay suspended for longer, so they are found further away from the river systems. In Central Louisiana, we can find a variety of soils, each with its own challenges. Heavy clay soils throughout the region cause slow drainage, while sandier soils are more depleted in nutrients.

Organic matter is made up of carbon-based compounds that come from the decomposition of living organisms. This may seem like a complicated concept, but it is simple and, oftentimes, all around you. If you go outside to a pile of mulch under a tree or in a landscape bed and move the top layer, you will often find that the mulch underneath is more decomposed and broken down. This is organic matter. The wood chips you may have put down as mulch were once part of a living organism. They have now been chopped into small pieces and are in the process of breaking down into organic matter. This is nature's recycling method, and we can utilize it to create healthier soils with more organic matter.



One way you can do this is through composting. Composting is a method that humans have learned from nature. We take our organic materials—like vegetable and fruit scraps, leaves, paper, and coffee grounds—put them in a pile, and let them decompose until we have what we call compost. We then take this compost and add it to our garden beds. While the mineral particles (sand, silt, and clay) in soil remain the same in our soil, compost can be added to improve soil structure by helping bind them into aggregates. Adding compost to clay soil increases aeration and drainage, which helps prevent plants from being saturated with water. Adding compost to sandy soil increases moisture retention and helps retain nutrients longer.

If you are interested in learning more, the Central Louisiana Master Gardener Association is hosting a Compost Seminar that will discuss composting basics, an overview of the 3-bin compost system, and vermicomposting on Saturday, September 13th from 8:30am to noon at 300 Grady Britt Drive in Alexandria. Registration is just \$10.00 and you can reserve your spot by emailing Molly Lyles at [mlyles@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:mlyles@agcenter.lsu.edu)



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## Muscadines: A Southern Fruit Built for the Heat

By Michael Polozola II, PhD



As August scorches Central Louisiana, most fruits have long since faded from the landscape—but not muscadines. These native grapes thrive in the heat, ripening just as other fruits retreat. For gardeners and fruit lovers alike, muscadines offer a taste of tradition, resilience, and reward.

Muscadines (*Vitis rotundifolia*) are native to the southeastern United States and have been cultivated for centuries. Their thick skins, bold flavors, and natural disease resistance make them a favorite across the South. Unlike many fruits that struggle in Louisiana's heat and humidity, muscadines embrace it. In fact, they often perform better in hot, dry years than in wet ones.

These grapes come in a range of colors—from deep purple to golden bronze—and are often enjoyed fresh, but they also shine in jellies, juices, and homemade wines. Their flavor is unmistakably Southern: rich, sweet, and just a little wild.

In Central Louisiana, muscadines typically begin ripening in late July through August, depending on the variety. Ripe fruit will separate easily from the vine with a gentle tug and have a rich, sweet aroma. Don't wait for them to fall—muscadines are best picked at peak ripeness, and they don't all ripen at once. Expect to harvest every few days over several weeks.

If you're buying muscadines at a local market, look for fruit that's plump, fragrant, and free of splits or shriveling. They don't store as long as table grapes, so enjoy them fresh or refrigerate them promptly.



If you're thinking about growing your own, muscadine vines are widely available at local nurseries in late summer and fall, making this a great time to plan your



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## Grow a Bee-Friendly Lawn

By Melinda Myers

Boost the bee and pollinator appeal of your lawn by incorporating microclover, self-heal, creeping thyme, crocus, grape hyacinths, and other bee-friendly flowering plants in your lawn. You'll create and enjoy a carpet of green with splashes of color and one that requires less ongoing maintenance. The pollinators will benefit from the nutritious sources of nectar and pollen your bee lawn provides.

Flowering bee lawns include traditional lawn grasses combined with other hardy grasses, like fine fescues as well as warm season centipede grass. Kentucky bluegrass and Bermuda grass also combine well with bee-friendly plants but require more ongoing care than fescues and centipede grass. You'll be creating a more diverse lawn that not only appeals to bees but also is more resilient to pests and environmental stressors than traditional lawn grasses. Consult your local LSU Ag extension office for help in selecting the best lawn grasses and bee-friendly plants.



Like any new addition to the landscape or garden, it does require some effort. But once established, you'll be spending less time with ongoing care like watering, mowing and fertilization.

Start by evaluating your current lawn situation. If grass is growing well in the area, so will a bee lawn. This is not an all or nothing endeavor and like any new undertaking, starting small is always a good strategy.

Consider converting just lesser-used spaces. This allows bees and butterflies to forage in peace. Even though native bees are docile and typically don't sting, neither the kids nor bees want to share the same space. Likewise, keep your neighbors in mind when selecting a space for your bee lawn. Those neighbors with pristine lawns may be less tolerant of your bee lawn. Selecting areas surrounded by walks and drives will also help keep aggressive plants inbounds.

Consider starting your bee lawn by overseeding the white microclover into your existing lawn. Clover is adaptable, tolerates foot traffic and drought, and blooms for a long period, providing bees with high-sugar-content nectar and protein-rich pollen. Microclover can also be combined with other bee-friendly plants. You can seed these at the same time or add them later as you expand your bee lawn.

Sow microclover seed in late winter, early spring, or late summer in Central Louisiana. Outsidepride's Miniclover with Nitro-Coat aids in establishment and allows you to use no-till, minimum-till, and broadcast seeding techniques. Even though it is not native, research found clover attracts and supports a diverse group of native bees.

Once your bee lawn is established, mow high, at least three inches, so the flowering plants can bloom and support the bees and other visiting pollinators. Leave the grass clippings on the lawn. This is a good practice for both traditional and bee lawns.

Short clippings break down quickly, adding moisture and nutrients back to the soil. Once established, you'll only need to water during extended dry periods, and seldom, if any, fertilization. Skip the pesticides that can harm the pollinators you are trying to attract.



Increase your landscape's pollinator appeal further by growing more bee- and pollinator-friendly plants in your gardens. Helping these important members of our community is good for the environment and all of us.

*Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition and Small Space Gardening. She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" instant video series and the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine and was commissioned for her expertise for this article. Myers' website is [www.MelindaMyers.com](http://www.MelindaMyers.com).*



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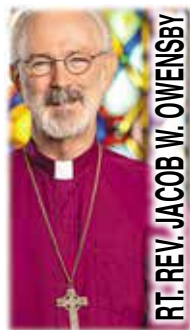
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# The Infinite in the Everyday

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



We yearn for love, meaning, belonging, and transcendence. This is our soul's holy longing, whether we name it that or not. And we remain restless until we find what we seek.

If you're not especially religious, you might wonder why I've included transcendence in this list. Love, meaning, belonging. Sure. But transcendence? That sounds like God-stuff. Not everybody seeks God—or at least not God as Christians understand it. Right? Let's reframe transcendence for both the spiritually curious and those who reject the idea of a higher power. In its simplest terms, transcendence means beyond.

We yearn to connect to something beyond ourselves. Beyond our ego. Beyond our achievements. Beyond applause that fades. Beyond the stuff we've accumulated. Beyond even our death. This is more than just religious longing—it's a universal spiritual desire. A search for meaning and purpose that outlives our circumstances.

Surveys reveal how widespread this longing really is. Take Generation Z, the people born between 1997 and 2012. They are the least religious generation in modern history. They rarely attend worship services. They often doubt God's existence—or reject it completely. And yet, 83% of Gen Z believe in an afterlife. They believe in something beyond this life. To me, even the barest belief in life after death isn't just intellectual. It's emotional. It's existential. It's a yearning—an ache for something

eternal. A desire that no social feed or career milestone can satisfy.

In our time, there's no single way to talk about this. No shared language for soul hunger. No consensus on what spiritual experiences mean. But the yearning itself hasn't disappeared. It's what keeps us looking for a spiritual pathway. Longing for transcendence isn't about escaping to a better place. It's about anchoring ourselves in something real. Something deep. Something that fills this life with meaning that doesn't fade.

The letter to the Colossians offers a glimpse into how the transcendent guides and informs our everyday existence. "We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven" (Colossians 1:4-5). Hope for what's beyond shapes how we love in the here and now. Our connection to the transcendent molds our character. It forms our patience, our courage, our capacity for joy—even in suffering.

Colossians says it like this: "May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father" (Colossians 1:11-12). This longing isn't a drive to be satiated. It's our finite soul's longing to be stretched—to have more and more space within us to receive the infinite God.

Modern life tells us that our worth depends on how much we produce and what



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we achieve. But the Christian story tells us something deeper. In the Incarnation, God crossed the universe to connect with us—and in doing so, gave our lives meaning.

This is at the heart of what the writer of Colossians is saying: “Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:15–17).

I realize that the idea of the Incarnation doesn’t resonate with everyone. Some people don’t believe in God. Others may accept the idea of a divine presence but struggle to see God as personal—or to believe that Jesus was God in the flesh. Still, there’s a place where many of us meet: we are spiritual beings. We long for love, meaning, belonging, and connection to something beyond ourselves. The practices we follow to pursue these longings form what I call our spiritual pathway.

There are countless spiritual pathways in today’s world. And yet, at the deepest level, I believe they fall into two basic types. The first sees meaning as something we must achieve. On this path, we try to create significance through career success, social influence, power, or wealth. We are told that human life is about becoming somebody—earning our place, proving we matter. The second kind of path sees meaning as something received. It flows from relationship—communion with something or someone beyond ourselves. We find significance not through effort, but through being loved.



The first pathway depends on constant striving. Andrew Root describes this as the will to power—the relentless drive to overcome limitations, conquer challenges, and assert control. Sociologist Hartmut Rosa adds that in our accelerating world, we must move faster and do more just to keep up. This path often leads to exhaustion and alienation.

By contrast, the second path is marked by expectation, openness, and trust. We don’t seize meaning. We wait for it. As Simone Weil put it, “We cannot take a step toward the heavens. God crosses the universe and comes to us.” That’s the essence of Christian spirituality.

This doesn’t mean followers of Jesus are passive. Colossians urges us to be deeply engaged in this relationship: “Continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard” (Colossians 1:23).

Our lives become a response to the love we actively receive. The Benedictine motto “ora et labora”—“pray and work”—captures this rhythm. We open our hearts to God in prayer. God sends us into the world in love. And then calls us back again to deeper communion.

*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 newest book is entitled, “A Full-Hearted Life: Following Jesus in a Secular Age” and is available now from your favorite bookseller. Find Bishop Jake online at [jakeowensby.com](http://jakeowensby.com).*



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# LDWF’s Fish Hatcheries Complete 2025 Spring Florida Bass Stockings

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Inland Fisheries Section, in cooperation with the USFWS’ Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery and the City of Shreveport’s Cross Lake Fish Hatchery, produced and stocked approximately 5.3 million freshwater sportfish into 56 waterbodies statewide during the spring 2025 stocking season, from January to June of this year. The stocked fishes primarily consisted of Florida Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*). Although the number of bass produced at LDWF hatcheries is high (generally around two and a half million per year), those numbers pale in comparison to what Mother Nature produces in Louisiana’s waterbodies.

Florida Bass stocking is not typically performed to increase the abundance of bass in Louisiana waterbodies, but rather to increase the size potential of bass in Louisiana waterbodies. The Florida Bass species is capable of growing larger than Louisiana’s native Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus nigricans*) species. The two species readily hybridize, and individuals reaching or exceeding 10 pounds in Louisiana usually have some degree of Florida Bass genetic influence as a result of LDWF’s stocking efforts. Stocking Florida Bass into existing native populations of Largemouth Bass, where successful, increases the potential for anglers to catch quality and/or trophy bass.

With a limited supply of Florida largemouth bass available for stocking each year, it is important to place them in waterbodies that provide good conditions for survival and growth. LDWF prioritizes stocking waterbodies where this fisheries management tool has demonstrated success. Some highlights of stocking in Cenla



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waterbodies included: 26,200 fingerlings in Cotile Lake; 71,000 fingerlings in Iatt Lake; 38,000 fingerlings in Kincaid Lake; 80,500 fingerlings in Larto Lake; 77 adults in Lake Buhlow; and almost half a million fingerlings in Toledo Bend.

For the full list of LDWF stockings or for more information about the LDWF Freshwater Fish Hatcheries, visit <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/freshwater-fish-hatcheries>.



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## The 14th Annual Le Tour de Bayou

Locals and visitors to the area are sure to see what has become Le Tour's signature calling card—the bikes! When colorful bikes begin appearing, you know Le Tour de Bayou is drawing near! Kent Plantation House once again invites bike riders and families to join us for the 14th Annual Le Tour de Bayou on Saturday, September 20th, rolling rain or shine! Le Tour de Bayou is a unique cycling opportunity for people to get up and get moving as well as showcase the hidden gem that is the Kent Plantation House. This family-friendly bike ride—with a 2-mile bike ride/walk option for families and supporters of Kent House—is followed by a post-ride party with delicious food, beer, music, and a lot a fun.



Le Tour de Bayou offers a bike ride for every skill level and everyone is welcome. Experience the breathtaking bayous and wooded forests of Central Louisiana from a different perspective! The ride begins at Kent Plantation House, located at 3601 Bayou Rapides Road in Alexandria, and follows a variety of routes through some of the most scenic parts of Rapides Parish. All proceeds from this event benefit Kent Plantation House.



“Le Tour de Bayou is the primary fundraising event for Kent House,” said Alice Scarborough, Kent Plantation House Director. “Each year, we’ve seen more and more people register. We’re currently accepting additional sponsors to make this event better than ever.”



Registration for riders will close at midnight on Thursday, September 18th. Participants who want a t-shirt will need to register by Wednesday, August 20th at [bikereg.org](http://bikereg.org). The cost to register for the 101-, 69-, 40- and 25-mile rides is \$60.00. Registration for the 10-mile ride is \$40.00, and registration for the 2 Mile Family Fun Run/Walk/Ride is \$20.00 for a family of four and \$5.00 for each additional family member. Registration includes a t-shirt, food, drinks, and after party.

Packet pickup is Friday, September 19th from 9:00am to 6:00pm at Kent Plantation House. The first ride begins at 7:00am Saturday morning, with a Blessing of the Bikes beginning at 6:45am. For more information, call Kent Plantation House at (318) 487-5998 or message us through the Le Tour de Bayou website at [letourdebayou.com](http://letourdebayou.com).



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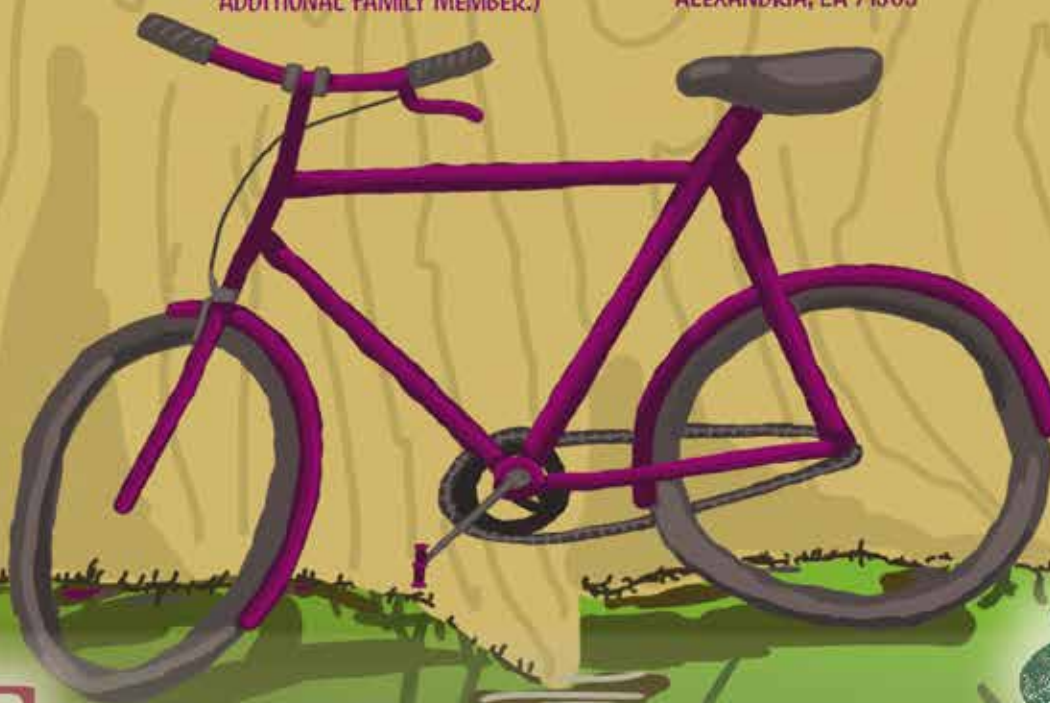
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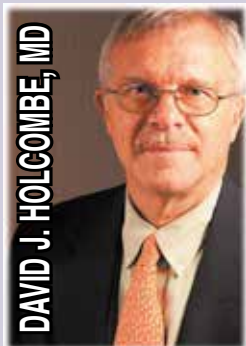
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# Tardive Dyskinesia (TD), What Is It?

By David J. Holcombe, MD, MSA



They can occur, as the name implies, very late in treatment with certain medications.

Tardive dyskinesia is caused by a host of medications, notably antipsychotics, also called neuroleptics (first or second generation). The first-generation typical group includes: chlorpromazine, haloperidol, thioridazine and trifluoperazine. The second-generation atypical group includes: risperidone and olanzapine. Again, they are used for psychosis, a serious mental illness that may involve hallucinations and a total disconnect from reality. They can also be used in bi-polar disorder and other psychiatric conditions with psychotic characteristics.

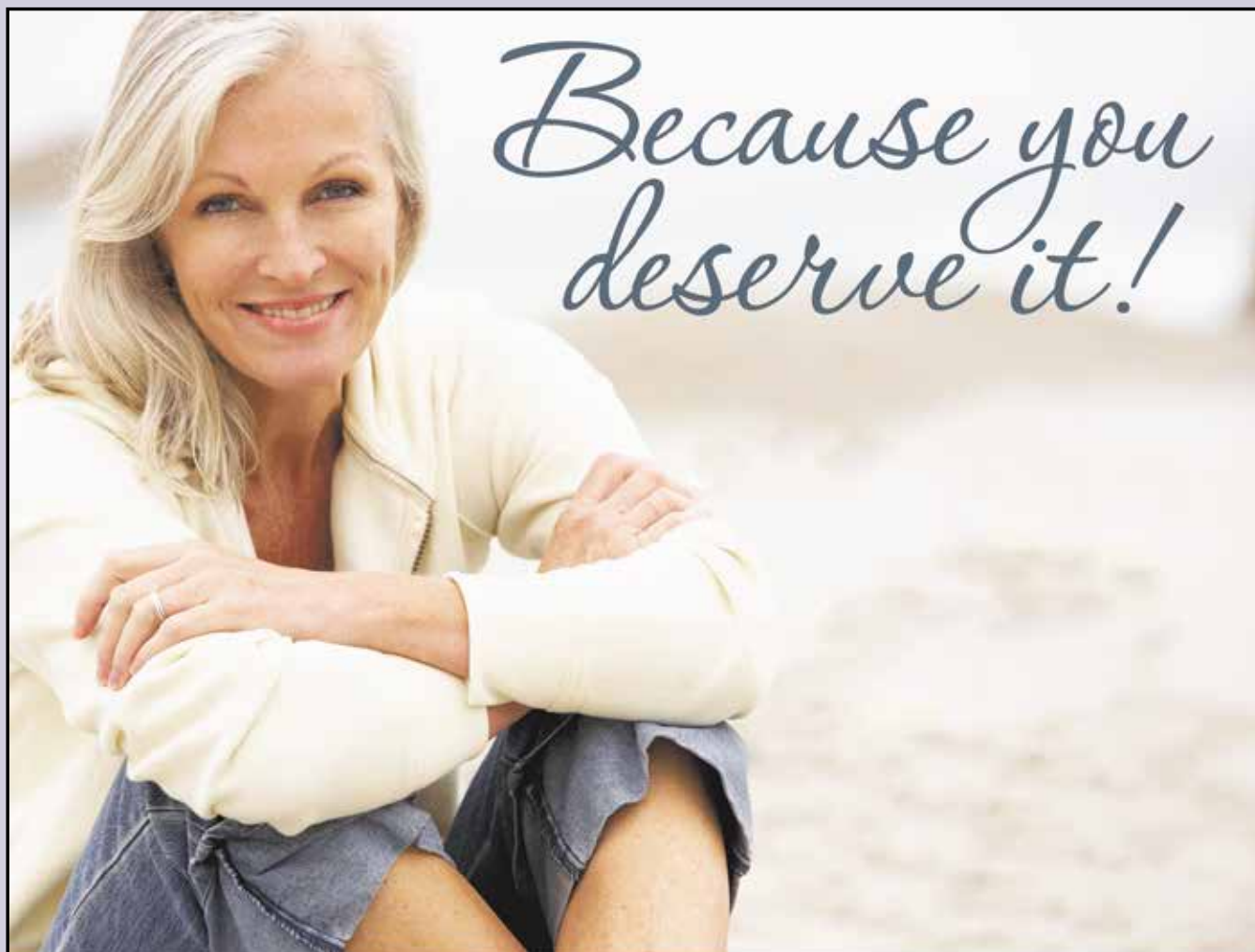
Other medications that can cause tardive dyskinesia include drugs often used for nausea and vomiting (metoclopramide and prochlorperazine) as well as some common antidepressants (trazadone, amitriptyline, and fluoxetine). Certain anti-seizure medications (phenytoin and phenobarbital) can sometimes cause tardive dyskinesia. In these latter groups, it is a much rarer side effect than with the first- and second-generation neuroleptics.

There are some factors which increase the risk of TD which include older age, substance abuse, HIV, diabetes, Black or Asian ethnicity, and any pre-existing brain trauma. Since some of these conditions are common, many Americans face a higher risk of TD and should carefully discuss the use of any of these medications (especially

Anyone who has watched television recently has noticed the ads concerning a medication for tardive dyskinesia. It is a rare, but well-known syndrome causing involuntary twitching movements, primarily of the face or hands. It can also cause jerking of the extremities and problems swallowing. The person cannot control these movements and

neuroleptics) with their physician. It is critical to detect symptoms of TD as early as possible and stop the medication involved, if at all possible.

One of the principles of pharmacology is that, if a medication causes a side effect, stop the medication rather than trying to treat the side effects. There are two problems with this approach in the case of medications causing tardive dyskinesia.



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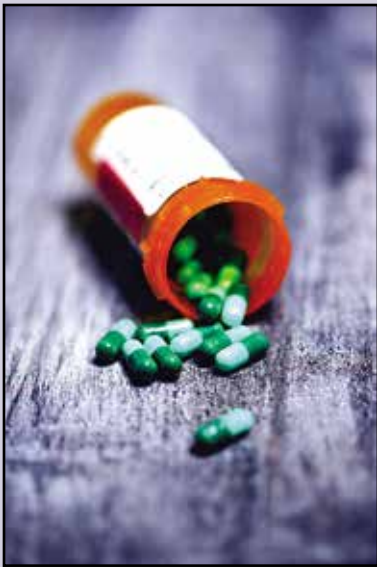
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First, sometimes, the patients only respond to the incriminated medication and no others. This may be particularly true in cases of severe psychosis. Most of the other medications can be stopped and something else substituted. The second, more serious problem is that tardive dyskinesia may be irreversible. In other words, it will not go away even if the medication is stopped.

In that case, medications to treat TD like tetrabenazine or valbenazine should to be considered. There has been a lot of publicity for these medications in recent direct-to-consumer TV advertising. Since tardive dyskinesia is uncommon, you might wonder why? The

answer is usually economic. Without insurance, the retail price for a one-month supply of valbenazine 40mg will cost around \$8,000, while the 80mg tablets will run around \$8,700. Of course, those with insurance or benefiting from financial assistance program may pay as little as \$10.00 a month.

Remember the list of medications that can cause tardive dyskinesia and remain vigilant for any signs of involuntary twitching anywhere in the body if you take them. All medications have a risk/benefit ratio, so just make sure you are taking the right medications for the right reasons. Your physician, of course, should be your partner in this discussion. Also, remember that if a prescription medication is advertised on television, it's probably very expensive.

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# Start Sun Protection at an Early Age

By Dr. Phillip L. Carney, Jr.



Years of exposure to harmful UV rays from the sun can have damaging effects on the eyes later in life. It can also negatively affect the skin around the eyes. Melanoma is considered the most dangerous form of skin cancer, and can even occur on the iris (colored portion) of the eye. Since the facial area and eyes are most exposed to the rays of the sun, steps should be taken—even for children—to reduce exposure. This may be simply wearing hats to shade the face and sunglasses to protect and cover the eyes. Bad sunburn increases the risk for melanoma later, so sunscreen should be used whenever outdoors for any

length of time.

People who have had a large amount of unprotected UV exposure over the course of their lives are at a much higher risk of age-related eye disease such as cataracts (clouding of the lens inside the eye) and macular degeneration (retinal disease). Sometimes, sun damage is seen just as yellowing of the white part of the eye, which may not be sight threatening but is less than cosmetically appealing. So, cover up this summer and use plenty of sunscreen to protect the eyes and skin around them.

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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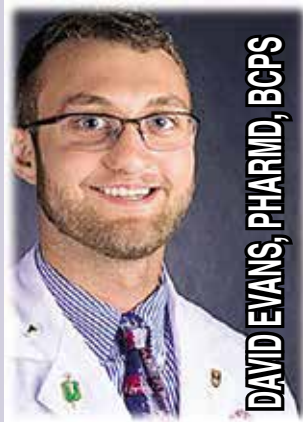
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FAMILY CLINIC



# Back to School: Ways to Ensure a Great New Beginning

By David Evans, PharmD, BCPS



DAVID EVANS, PHARM.D, BCPS

As soon as summer begins, it feels like summer ends and the start of another school year quickly approaches. Here are some recommendations among the ever-growing school supply lists to ensure your child is best prepared for the new semester.

Individuals older than three years of age are recommended to have a yearly wellness visit. Scheduling a wellness visit, also known as an annual preventive health exam or annual physical, ensures that any potential issues are caught early. Wellness visits provide several benefits, including:

- **Prevention**—Ensuring all children are up to date on immunizations helps prevent illness and dangerous outbreaks.
- **Tracking growth and development**—Evaluating growth and developmental milestones is a crucial part of a physical examination. Early recognition and intervention of growth and development failures provide more positive outcomes.
- **Vision screening**—Evaluating vision can help detect risk factors or reduced acuity that may threaten the appropriate growth and development of a child's eyes and visual system. Many eye problems can be asymptomatic; therefore, screening can facilitate early diagnosis and treatment.
- **Sports physical**—A sports physical can be done at the same time as the annual physical. It focuses on reviewing the child's current health status and medical history to ensure that the child is healthy enough to play their desired sport.

The ideal time to communicate with schools and teachers is after they return from summer break and before school begins. Appointments can be set up to meet school personnel regarding any special needs or accommodations required for the child. This is also an ideal time to provide health-related paperwork:



- **Vaccine exemptions**—Exemptions from state or local immunization requirements may apply to some children. All states allow a medical exemption when a child has a medical condition that prevents them from receiving a vaccine. Some states require new paperwork each year for vaccine exemptions however so it's important to check beforehand.
- **Medications and medical devices**—All medications and medical devices should come to school in the hands of an adult and be handed to another adult. Medications must remain in the original containers. Any accompanying forms should be filled out completely and delivered with the medication or device. Injectable medications for allergies or hypoglycemia should be kept near the child, and the expiration date should be strictly followed.
- **Allergies**—Children with food allergies and their parents have firsthand experience with allergic reactions and are most familiar with a child's unique signs and symptoms. Parents should give the school documentation that supports a physician's diagnosis of a food allergy, as well as information about the child's prior history and current risk of anaphylaxis.
- **Individual health plans**—Children with chronic or serious health conditions may



benefit from having an individual health plan that defines what school health workers will do in case of emergency and in everyday situations, including the administration of medication.


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# What If I Don't Want Surgery?

By Cornell D. Leblanc, D.C.



Central Louisiana, did you realize that Alexandria Spine & Rehab Center is the only Disc Centers of America location in Alexandria? We offer the latest in technology from Accu-Spina in Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression. The Accu-Spina Non-Surgical Decompression table specially targets and relieves chronic neck and low back symptoms like sciatica, disc herniation, numbness, tingling, burning, limited range of motion, arm or leg pain, and stenosis. Compared to traditional surgical methods, this advanced therapy offers a non-invasive approach that promotes natural healing and provides effective pain relief.

The Accu-Spina system is a form of Intervertebral Differential Dynamic (IDD) therapy, which was a computer-controlled traction that specifically targets the spinal disc involved to promote disc rehydration and alleviates nerve compression. It uses negative pressure within the disc space, enabling the bulging or herniation disc to withdrawal back into the disc. With consistent treatments, this process can lead to decrease in irritation, increase in range of motion, and promote healing that can last.

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The Accu-Spina uses the most advanced technology and has had some of the best results. In "A Single Session of Spinal Decompression," an article by Richard E. Busche III D.C., Prahlad G. Menon, and Sergey Leo Sorin M.D. DABFM, they concluded that, "IDD Therapy using Accu-Spina may achieve 92% positive results because the secondary oscillatory signal induces mechano-transduction of mechanical stimuli into electrochemical activity at the cellular level."

In another article, "Intervertebral Differential Dynamics Therapy," by C. Norman Shealy, M.D., PHD, he states that, "the latest study demonstrates not only an average 65% decrease in pain on completion of IDD therapy, but average pain reduction of 76% one year after treatment."

When you are looking for a safe alternative to invasive spinal surgeries, then make an appointment at Alexandria Spine & Rehab Center and Disc Centers of America Alexandria by calling (318) 561-6250 and let's take a journey to a promising path towards your pain relief today.



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When life throws you a curve—a car wreck, a workplace injury, or another unexpected accident—choosing the right attorney makes all the difference. That’s why so many across Central Louisiana turn to Sam Spurgeon.

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Sam continues to grow successful businesses and is preparing to open a brand-new law office—a beautifully crafted space that stands as both a modern resource and a potential landmark. With time, it may even earn a place on the historic registry—a lasting gift to the heart of Central Louisiana.

When you’re in a jam, call Sam Spurgeon, your local personal injury attorney—someone you’ll see at church, at civic events, and supporting our schools—a neighbor you can truly count on.



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## Health Savings Accounts

By Wesley Watkins



Health insurance premiums are expected to increase in 2026 and get ready for larger increases than previous years according to health insurance companies. If you haven't looked more closely at your health insurance and the way you use it, please do so now. You will want to make sure your dollar goes as far as it can. One way to use your health care spending dollars wisely is to leave your PPO plan with copays, and buy a high-deductible health plan (HDHP) and deposit money into a Health Savings Account (HSA).

A High Deductible Health Plan, is an insurance plan with higher deductibles than traditional PPO plans and no copays. However, HDHPs carry lower premiums than traditional insurance plans, and in most cases, the cost savings in premiums alone are significant. This means that if you have an HDHP, you will have lower monthly payments, but your out-of-pocket medical costs will be higher.

A Health Savings Account is a special savings account used to pay for healthcare-related expenses. You must have a qualified high-deductible health plan to open an HSA. HSAs are tax-free accounts. So, long as you use it correctly, money that moves in and out of an HSA is 100% tax-free. The money you deposit in an HSA never expires, and any money in the account rolls over from year to year. It is not a use-it-or-lose-it account like other common health spending accounts. When used correctly, HSAs can reduce overall healthcare costs.

HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS	2025	2026
SINGLE	\$4,300	\$4,400
FAMILY	\$8,550	\$8,750
CATCH-UP (age 55 and older)	\$1,000	\$1,000

HSAs are bank accounts, so you can open one through your local bank, if offered, such as Red River Bank, First Federal Bank, Sabine State Bank, BOM Bank, Southern Heritage Bank, or a credit union. You can also open one online. There are rules you need to know to open a Health Savings Account:

- You must be currently enrolled in a High Deductible Health Plan ("HDHP").
- You must be a U.S. taxpayer.
- You cannot be claimed as a dependent on another person's tax return.
- You cannot be covered by any other disqualifying insurance coverage such as Medicare or Medicaid.

For more information on whether or not you qualify for an HSA, check out IRS publication 969.


In order to use the money in your account and not pay taxes, you need to buy something that is a "qualified medical expense". A Qualified Medical Expense (QME) is a healthcare-related item or service designated by the IRS that you can write off when you do your taxes. There are thousands of medical procedures, services, and types of equipment that are considered QMEs, and the IRS frequently updates the list. The list of QMEs can be given to you by your health insurance agent.

Healthcare is easily one of the most significant expenses you will face over your lifetime. Because money that comes out of a HSA is tax-free, HSAs are generally a more cost-effective way to handle health expenses. With a HSA, you can make contributions, invest those contributions, earn interest, and even take out withdrawals to pay for medical expenses, all completely tax-free. That is widely known as the triple tax advantage of a HSA, which is nearly impossible to find with any other savings or retirement account.

Your HSA funds do not expire. Ever. Period. The funds in your HSA account roll over from year to year. Because your HSA funds never expire, you can spend the money you contribute on qualified medical expenses this year, next year, in 15 years, or many years from now, completely tax-free. This portability feature is significant and carries several benefits, including the ability to use funds from your HSA in retirement, even while you may be on Medicare.

In the chart included with this month's article, you will see the 2025 and 2026 contribution limits to health savings accounts (how much you can deposit in your account). While HSAs are not a silver bullet that will fix our healthcare problems, they are still one of the strongest tools available to help reduce costs.

Talk to your Agent to get help. One of the best places to start is by contacting someone who is knowledgeable and reputable and will educate you without "selling" you. Reach out to Gallagher today at (318) 445-9464 to learn more about HDHPs and HSAs we provide individuals and companies.



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# What to Do If You Can No Longer Work Due to Your Impairments

By Annie Lemoine Newton



ANNIE NEWTON

If you're finding it harder to keep working because of your health, you're not alone. Many people notice signs that their bodies are beginning to decline before they stop working entirely. You might find yourself missing several days of work each month, or pushing through pain and discomfort just to make it through the week.

According to vocational experts, most employers will only tolerate one to two unexcused absences per month. Anything beyond that can put your job at risk. If you're still working but your health is causing serious strain, that's often a sign that it may be time to step away.

Social Security considers someone to be working at a "substantial gainful activity" (SGA) level if they earn at least \$1,620 per month (before taxes). If your health limits your ability to maintain work at or above this level, you may be eligible for disability benefits.

We always tell claimants, "Your body will tell you when it's time." When you feel that you can no longer work consistently due to your impairments, reach out to us. We'll help guide you through the process of applying for Social Security Disability



benefits and make sure you have the support you need.

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.lemoinefirm.com](http://www.lemoinefirm.com).

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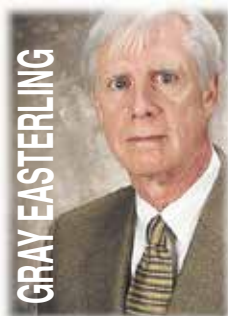
PUBLISHED ARTICLES: "The Worn-Out Worker Rule Revisited", "Significant  
Work-Related Limitations of Function under SS 12.05C", "Questionable  
Retirement and the Small Business Owner", "Crisis of Confidence: The  
Inadequacies of Vocational Evidence Presented at Social Security Hearings",  
"An Unsolved Mess: Analyzing the Social Security Administration's  
Methodology for Identifying Occupations and Job Numbers".

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# Being A Grandparent Ain't Cheap

By Gray Easterling



The July 14th online version of Kiplinger Personal Finance had an essay on the cost of being a grandparent. Since I am one, I found it interesting and thought I would share some of the highlights. Acknowledging that there is a special relationship between a grandparent and grandchild that can bring unlimited joy and hope into our lives where we can provide free gifts of nurturing, wisdom and support, there can also be financial decisions to be made. In a study published by The Senior List, 1,200 seniors were surveyed about the support they provide to grandchildren. They found that 96% incurred costs approaching \$4,000 per year, which, in some cases, results in delaying retirement or taking money out of savings, neither of which is a positive outcome. The survey listed different categories of support and some of the major expenses were: tuition, housing, groceries, and rent for college students. On the flip side, in addition to later retirement or financial strains, grandparents may have to plan on a more frugal lifestyle, reducing retirement benefits, or even taking on new debts.

What are the results of your generosity? Gifts and trips can deepen your family bonds, encourage family togetherness, and help secure a grandkid's educational opportunities. Your help can result in a grandchild being able to realize his or her full potential in the job market and interaction with peers. If you contribute to a college savings plan, you can save on taxes and preserve savings for healthcare needs later on. On a non-monetary basis, your spending could give you a joy that cannot be measured.

Having said that, there could be a few less positive outcomes. As mentioned above, the more you give grandchildren, the less there is in your portfolio—less for spontaneous trips, less for unexpected repairs, less for eating out, less for gifting to your church, etc. If you respond to every request, you may create a situation where your grandchild becomes dependent on you in lieu of learning the importance of work. Worrying about your decision to help or not help can contribute to emotional distress that is not good, physically or mentally. So, as you enter this phase of your life, plan your giving on reality, not feelgood decisions. You have worked for a long time to secure a safe and peaceful retirement. Help when possible, but protect your future lifestyle. Also, if you need help and a second voice, consider meeting with your tax, legal, and/or your financial advisor.

Coming out of church a few weeks ago, Beverly and I noticed a young mockingbird on the ground flapping his wings, attempting to make it back to his nest and safety, the mother bird was hovering over him, trying to guide him in the right direction. The more she chirped, the more he hopped and flapped. By the time we got in our car and started home, the baby was forty yards across a field and the mother was doing her best to move him towards the nest. The bottom line, however, was that the baby was too young to fly and the mother could not put him back in the nest, even if he followed her lead. I suspect the church cat was watching all this with a smirk on his face, knowing lunch was taken care of. Witnessing all this made me wonder how God reacts when we fall out of the nest of His loving arms and decide to follow a path leading away from salvation toward damnation. I believe that, even more than a proud grandparent, God is going to keep the door open for us to return, sending us gentle prods, spiritual gifts, and an open line for prayer and repentance. The difference between the baby bird and you and me is that our God is all knowing, all powerful and forgiving, with the power to bring us back to Him. And, best of all, we don't have to know how to fly. We just need to ask, to knock, and the door will be opened. Never give up, never give in. God wants you back!



*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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We believe that our office building provides a fantastic work environment. As "cool" as the structure might be, it only supports the friendly and helpful team that you have become familiar with over the last four decades. We believe that providing financial advice is important, but no more important than helping guide our clients in life changing decisions. If you have questions regarding your future financial independence, life insurance or long term care options, please come by for a visit. There's no obligation, no pressure, and no charge.

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# Cruisin' Through the Bunkie Buz District

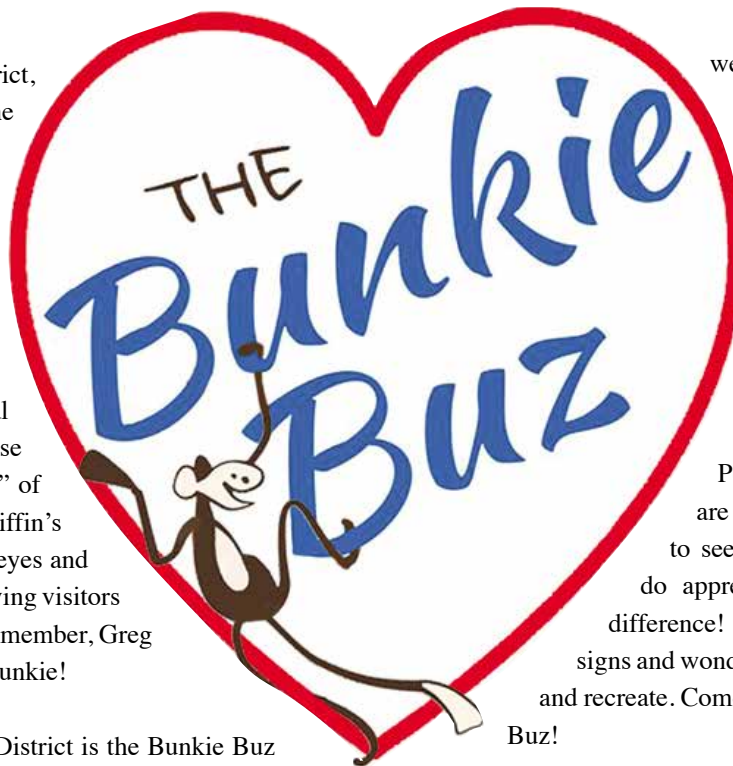
By Robert Smith

Joy ride through the heart of the Bunkie Buz District, cruisin' Main Street Bunkie for a rendezvous at the intersection of Highway 71 (Main) and Highway 115 (Evergreen), with a weaving of Highway 112 thrown in for good measure! To relax, refuel, refresh, and recreate in our beautiful Bunkie Buz District has never been more enjoyable as we celebrate the official grand opening of Griffin's Service Station with super gas specials, victuals, libations, sweet sensations, and the inaugural Cruisin' Back in Time Car Show! To see all of those colorful cars cruisin' around Bunkie in a "varoom" of vibrant colors to match the colorful signage of Griffin's new gas and service station is truly a feast for the eyes and fuel for the growth of Bunkie as a lively pit stop serving visitors from all over! Kudos to fellow Bunkie Buz family member, Greg Kojis, for his contribution to the growing Buz of Bunkie!

Also on the move in the heart of the Bunkie Buz District is the Bunkie Buz Tourist Infeaux Center! Originally adjacent to Fitzgerald's Antiques & Gifts at 227 SW Main Street, our official Buz Tourist Infeaux center will cruise a block up to its new home within Saxon Studio at 108 SW Main (next to the Farmer's Market)! Hours of operation will increase, also. Stop by any time from 8:00am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday and 8:00am to 2:00pm Saturday for an expanded six day-a-week opportunity for infeaux seekers to enrich their knowledge of where to geaux and what to see in Bunkie and beyond! The Buz Tourist Infeaux Center joins hands with the Avoyelles Tourism Commission and the Louisiana Travel Association (LATA) to make our Central Louisiana area welcoming and helpful to newbies, not so newbies, and recent returnees, all with a pat o' the paw, smile o' the face, and of course, a shake o' the long tail! Come and see!

Speaking of the big "T" (tourism that is), we at the Bunkie Buz were delighted to host just shy of two dozen tourism and travel representatives, along with Charlie Waltman (LATA) and Wilbert Carmouche (Avoyelles Tourism—with Mary, too!). They came flowing through the door of the Saxon Studio near lunch time and gathered around long enough for Bob and Joel to pitch the concept of the Bunkie Buz, our manifold marketing strategy (Buz Family, Facebook, Cenla Focus, Radio, and brand) for tourism, including an official Bunkie Buz infeaux packet with the official Bunkie Buz lapel button (Heart for Bunkie) before being whisked away to their next stop at Griffin's Antiques & Market. Promotion thy name is Wilbert and Charlie! Thank you for the opportunity to make Bunkie shine in your joint effort for tourism infrastructure! These are the representatives that sing our praises to others that want to travel and experience the "you" in your area! What a Buz for Bunkie bizness it was! So, stay tuned! There's more to come!

On the airwaves, we have been developing more connective tissue for tourism with several other likeminded and likers of the Bunkie Buz Live concept! Since



we announced the availability to live stream the show, listener-ship has increased and so have the favorable comments from North of Alexandria/ Pineville to Opelousas and Lafayette, and east to west! Sponsorships are still available. The Buz is spreading! Support your Bunkie Buz!

We've learned that tourism begins with hospitality—things as simple as a smile and a welcoming wave to visitors. A smile along with a positive perspective is always a sure winner. Polishing your apples and pointing out others that are polishing theirs promotes kinship. It offers more to see and more reason to stay. Visitors do notice and do appreciate the effort. Making the effort makes the difference! That's how the concept of the "Buz" works. The signs and wonders point the way—come see, relax, refuel, refresh, and recreate. Come to visit, come to stay. Come and catch the Bunkie Buz!



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# Beat the Late Summer Heat in Avoyelles

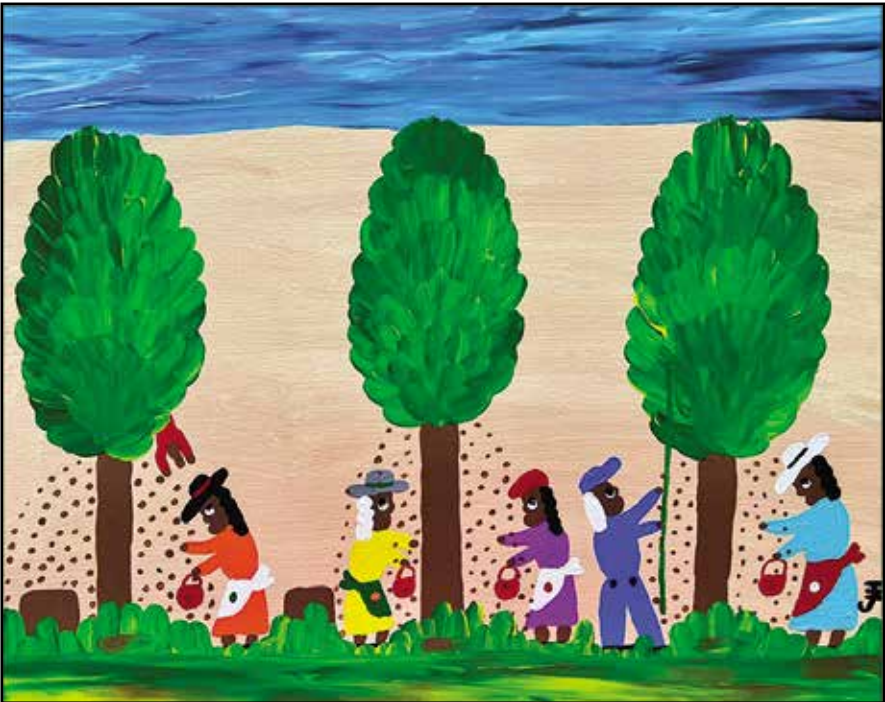
By Wilbert Carmouche



Time to find activities to beat the heat! Avoyelles offers simple pleasures that you can do from early in the morning such as getting your steps in on walking trails under a canopy of trees at the Tunica Biloxi Walking Trail or the Marc Dupuy Wildlife Trail in Fifth Ward.

Take time to visit the Gallery on the Square, home to the Arts Council for Avoyelles, and see the works of James Hunter, grandson of Clementine Hunter.

The artistic style of renowned folk artist Clementine Hunter lives on through her grandson, James Hunter. This art, which depicts the everyday life of the Black workers in plantations, will be displayed in the Gallery on the Square, located at 122 E. Mark Street in.



Clementine’s work has featured in Smithsonian Institute and other galleries worldwide and is some of the most collected folk art. American Folk Art is colorful, simplistic, and created without formal training. Clementine’s work epitomized that description. She, like her family before her, worked the Melrose cotton plantation around Natchitoches. In the 1940s, she began painting scenes of her life growing up on the Cane River from memory. James fashions his style and subjects after his grandmother. He became inspired to do this after studying her art.

“When my wife bought me a book of my grandmother’s paintings... I fell in love with my grandmother’s works,” he said. He is 57 and has now been an artist for over twenty years. The joy that his art provides for others is what keeps his going. “I like making people happy,” he explained. “I paint like my grandmother and they like my work.” His main inspiration is his wife, and his boss Bobby, who bought his first painting. “I took off from there.”

At the beginning of his career, James worked with oil. He found, however, that oil paint didn’t dry fast enough. After it was suggested to him by a friend, he switched over to acrylic on canvas. His favorite snapshots of plantation life to paint are baptisms and cotton-picking scenes.

The exhibition, “Cane River Culture,” will be on display from through Friday, September 12th.

EXPLORE AVOYELLES

CALENDAR of EVENTS

Griffin’s Service Station Grand Opening

Downtown Bunkie (Jefferson Highway, US 71)

August 2, 2025 (8am – 2pm)

FB Griffin’s Antiques & Main St. Market

AKA MMA Fights

Paragon Casino Resort

August 2, 2025

Ticketmaster.com

James Hunter Art Show

Gallery on The Square

August 6, 2025 (5:00-7:00pm)

318.264.1826

Wine Down Wednesdays

Bailey’s on the Square

August 6,13,20, 27, 2025 (5pm)

318.240.3495

Casual Cajun Wednesdays

La Petite Café – Marksville

August 6,13,20,27, 2025 (6pm)

318.528.1300

ACOA Community Health Fair

Bordelonville VFD Training Center

August 14, 2025 (9:00am – Noon)

318.253.9771

Open Mic Night

Bailey’s on the Square

August 15, 2025 (7pm)

318.240.3495

Alligator Feeding Show

Paragon Hotel Atrium (4pm)

August 30, 2025

www.paragoncasinoresort.com

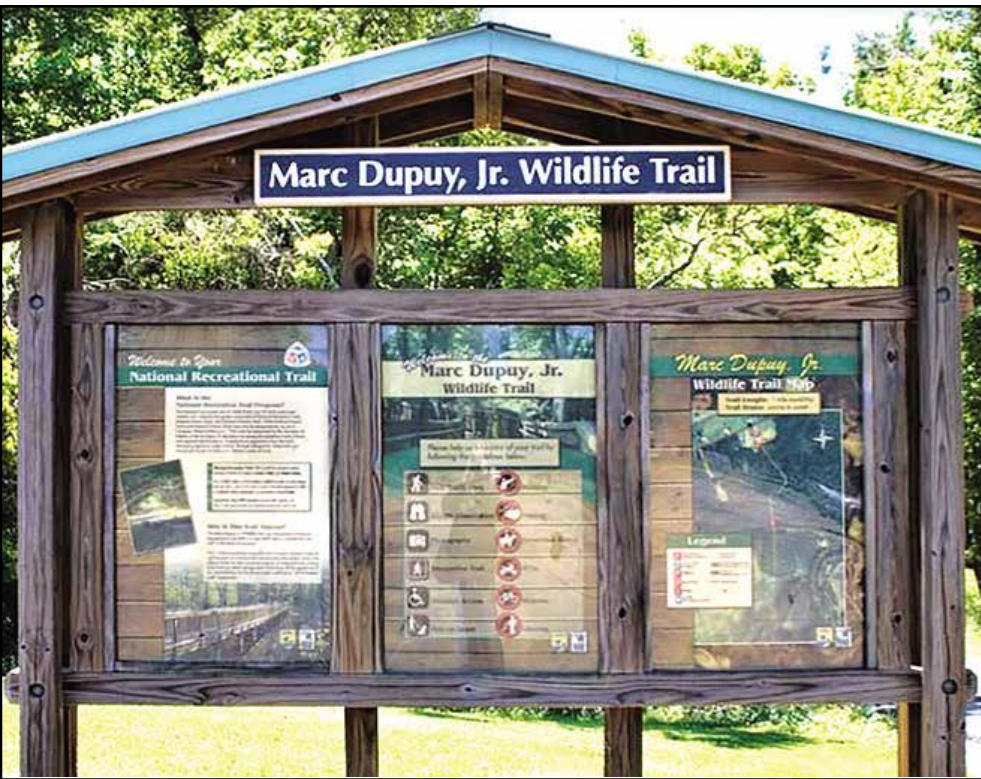
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Wednesdays are made to Wine Down with Casual Cajun meals in Avoyelles. Bailey’s on the Square opens its doors at 5:00pm for Wine Down Wednesday and La Petite Café’ around the corner opens at 6:00pm for Casual Cajun Suppers every Wednesday night in August. At Bailey’s, you will find a casual atmosphere where you mix with the locals over the beverage of choice as you listen to tunes to relax before a great dinner at “The Café”. Hope you to see you Wining Down with us.

Avoyelles Council on Aging is hosting their annual ACOA Community Health Fair at the Bordelonville Volunteer Fire Department Training Center (former Bordelonville High School) on Thursday, August 14th from 9:00am to noon. Come for a free health checkup, free breakfast, listen to a guest speaker, play bingo, and register for door prizes. Wellness Resource representative will be on hand for inquiries. For more information, call (318) 253-9771.

Are you ready for Open Mic Night? Open Mic Night at Bailey’s on the Square is geared towards musicians who play and sing their favorite songs or original music,



not to be mistaken for karaoke. Next OMN is scheduled for Friday, August 15th with several performances. Open to all ages, there’s never a cover, always a vibe! Doors open at 6:30pm and the mic is turned on at 7:00pm.

Paragon Casino Resort hosts its legendary Gator Feeding Show Saturday, August 30th at 4:00pm. Hotel guests, casino visitors and the public can enjoy a free, educational and entertaining 30-minute live-feeding with the live alligators in the “Gator Bayou” located inside the hotel’s atrium. Photo opportunities with a baby alligator and a “holding” snake will take place after each show and will be free to the public, also featured is a performance by the Legend Keepers!

Reminder, while you are in “daParish”, drive to Old River Road and take your selfie at the CenterPoint of Louisiana—Centre de la Louisiane!

For additional information, contact Mary, Murial, or Wilbert to plan your travels to [www.travelavoyelles.com](http://www.travelavoyelles.com) by calling (800) 833-4195, emailing [tourism@krocket.net](mailto:tourism@krocket.net), or liking us on Facebook @TravelAvoyelles.

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 @CenlaFocus – AUGUST 2025 **PAGE 37**



## Rapides Parish Library Invites You to “Check Out LA”

Rapides Parish Library (RPL) is proud to announce its participation in the “Check Out Louisiana Museums” initiative, a pilot program from the State Library of Louisiana that gives local library cardholders free access to some of the state’s top museums and historic sites.

Launched by the State Library of Louisiana in partnership with Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser, this exciting initiative builds on the successful “Check Out Louisiana” campaign that already offers free entry to state parks. The second phase now expands to include a range of cultural attractions and museums across the state—bringing history, art, and heritage within easy reach for Rapides Parish residents.

“We’re thrilled to be part of this initiative that turns your library card into a gateway to Louisiana’s rich culture and history,” said Celise Reech-Harper, Director for Rapides Parish Library. “It’s a wonderful opportunity for families, students, and lifelong learners in our parish to explore the treasures of our state—at no cost.”

With a valid RPL library card, patrons can reserve electronic passes to participating museums for available dates by visiting [CheckOutLouisiana.org](http://CheckOutLouisiana.org). Participating institutions include:

- The National WWII Museum (New Orleans)



- Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame & Northwest Louisiana History Museum (Natchitoches)
- New Orleans Jazz Museum at the Old U.S. Mint
- Capitol Park Museum (Baton Rouge)
- Louisiana Civil Rights Museum
- E.D. White Historic Site
- The Presbytère
- The Cabildo
- 1850 House
- Wedell-Williams Aviation & Cypress Sawmill Museum

Each museum offers a unique perspective on Louisiana’s diverse history, culture, and contributions to the world. “As Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser says, ‘Your library card can now be used to unlock Louisiana’s incredible

museum collections and the stories that make our state so unique,’” Reech-Harper added. “We encourage everyone in our community to take advantage of this program while passes last.”

Passes are limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis, so patrons are encouraged to plan ahead and reserve their visit early.

To learn more and check availability, visit [CheckOutLouisiana.org](http://CheckOutLouisiana.org) or stop by your nearest Rapides Parish Library branch for assistance.



### Welcome! Taylor Fuller

**BOM Bank is pleased to welcome Taylor Fuller to the BOM family. He will be joining us at our Operations Complex as a Wire Clerk! Taylor lived in North Carolina for 15 years and recently moved back to Natchitoches to be closer to his family. In his free time, Taylor enjoys card and board games, playing the violin, and hiking and camping when the weather permits!**

**Welcome, Taylor!**



# BOM



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# EDUCATION FOCUS

## LSUA Partners with U.S. Army to Expand Educational Opportunities for Military Community



Louisiana State University of Alexandria (LSUA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United States Army Garrison at Fort Polk, formally establishing an educational partnership designed to serve

military personnel, families, retirees, and the broader Fort Polk community. Through this strategic collaboration, LSUA will extend affordable, high-quality educational opportunities directly to the installation, enhancing academic access and supporting military readiness.



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**09.18.2025**

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Under the agreement, Fort Polk's Education Services Office (ESO) will work closely with LSUA staff to facilitate soldiers' access to Army tuition assistance and provide necessary space for administrative personnel, faculty, and classroom instruction. Classes will primarily be offered during off-duty hours, prioritizing military members and their families, with additional enrollment capacity open to others, as available.

Brig. Gen. Jason Curl, Commander of the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and Fort Polk, emphasized the significance of the partnership for the military community, stating, "It's another opportunity for our Soldiers to get an education. For

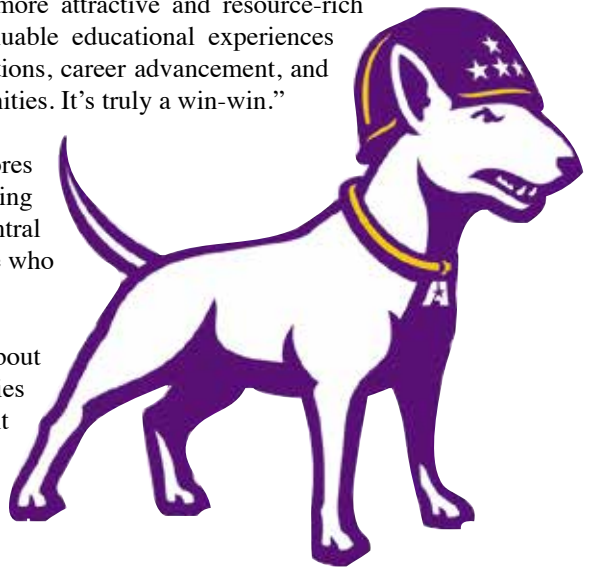
both Soldiers and family members, it's a great opportunity. The more opportunities, the better."

For LSUA Chancellor, Dr. Paul Coreil, the agreement carries both educational and patriotic significance. He explained, "Our mission is to educate the region, enhancing workforce development for our communities. However, partnering with Fort Polk holds a deeper meaning due to our profound respect for military service. LSUA is dedicated to supporting soldiers and their families by ensuring they have exceptional educational opportunities that honor their sacrifices. It's a higher calling beyond our fundamental educational mission."

Col. Adam Barlow, Fort Polk Garrison Commander, noted the benefits of having LSUA on-site: "Having LSUA classes at Fort Polk ensures that our soldiers and families can access quality education without leaving the installation. This partnership makes Fort Polk an even more attractive and resource-rich environment, providing valuable educational experiences that directly support promotions, career advancement, and future employment opportunities. It's truly a win-win."

This partnership underscores LSUA's commitment to serving the educational needs of Central Louisiana, particularly those who serve our nation.

For more information about educational opportunities available at LSUA, visit [explore.lsua.edu](http://explore.lsua.edu).





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# Entertainment Focus

## Art

**Ongoing-October 11: AMoA 38th September Competition,** Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria). The annual September Competition exhibition is selected by a guest juror from national and international submissions. The exhibition highlights contemporary art practices in all media. Additionally, the September Competition connects the museum with artists who excel in their field and media. Cost: Regular admission; Free AMoA members. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

**August 9: 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

**August 9: Art Together—Cyanotype Collages,** 1:00pm. Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria). Participants will be inspired by works in the 38th September Competition and create cyanotypes. Pre-registration is required. Cost: \$20.00 non-member groups of up to 5; AMoA members of up to 5 Free. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

**August 12 & September 9: 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

**August 16: Summer Arts Studio Student Show,** River Oaks Square Arts Center (1330 2nd Street, Alexandria), 4:00pm-5:00pm. One of the most heartwarming events of the year, the show will feature over 100 pieces of artwork created by campers during Central Louisiana's largest visual arts summer program. Selected based on artistic merit by instructors, each piece represents the creativity and growth of a new generation of young artists. Cost: Free. Call: 318-473-2670. RiverOaksArtsCenter.com

**August 28: River Oaks Exhibit Opening Reception,** River Oaks Square Arts Center (1330 2nd Street, Alexandria), 5:00pm-7:00pm. Celebrate the opening of new exhibits at River Oaks. Clyde Downs' exhibition "Rhythms of Nature" will fill the Bolton-Davis Gallery; Margie Tate presents "Color Poetry" in the Galerie des Amis; and the Stokes-Harris Gallery will feature dual exhibitions, titled "Trust the Process" and "Landscapes SXSW" by granddaughter/grandfather team, Robin and Robert Ratcliff, respectively. Following the reception, the exhibits will remain on view through October 11th. Cost: Free. Call: 318-473-2670. RiverOaksArtsCenter.com

**August 30: The Muse Printmaking Workshop,** Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria), 1:00pm-

4:00pm. Teens will learn printmaking inspired by works in AMoA's September Competition during this workshop. Open to ages 13 to 19. The youngest participants must have turned 13 within a month of this event to participate. Cost: Free. 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

**September 4: Renegade Tour with Marjorie Shanks,** Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria), 6:00pm-7:30pm. Join September Competition invited artist and plein air painter, Marjorie Shanks, for an in-depth view into this year's competition. Renegade Tours are led by guest tour guides who are given total creative control. Unsure if museums are for you? Come enjoy this one-of-a-kind experience at AMoA! Cost: Free. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

## Music

**August 30: Rick Ross,** Paragon Casino Resort Mari Showroom (711 Paragon Place, Marksville), 8:00pm. Join DJ Troy-D for an evening with hip-hop superstar, Grammy-nominated rapper Rick Ross, performing hit after hit like "Hustlin," "B.M.F.," "Maybach" and so many more! Must be 21 + to attend. Cost: \$50.00+. paragoncasinoresort.com

**September 6: Chubby Checker,** Paragon Casino Resort Mari Showroom (711 Paragon Place, Marksville), 8:00pm. It's time to "Twist" with the legendary rock 'n' roll singer and dancer Chubby Checker! Come see a living legend live on the Mari Showroom stage! Cost: \$30.00+. paragoncasinoresort.com

## Theatre

**Ongoing-August 10: The Outsiders,** Fox Theatre (111 S. Washington Street, Marksville). The Outsiders is a Teen Production directed by Logan Poret featuring actors ages 14-18 from the Central Louisiana Community! Don't miss this special show. Performances begin nightly Thursday through Saturday at 7:00pm; Sunday matinee begins at 2:00pm. \$23.18+. MarksvilleFox.com

**August 11, 18, 25 & September 1, 8: 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.

**August 14-24: The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time,** Hearn Stage at Kress Theatre (1104 3rd Street, Alexandria). When 15-year-old Christopher Boone is wrongfully accused of killing a neighbor's dog, he sets out to solve the mystery—unraveling far more than he expected. Based on the bestselling novel, this powerful play is a visually stunning, emotionally charged journey through the eyes of a brilliant, neurodivergent mind navigating a world that doesn't always make sense. Directed by Jared Guillory. Performances begin nightly Thursday-Saturday at 7:30pm; Sunday matinees begin at 2:30pm. Cost: \$5.00 Thursdays; \$15.00 General Admission; \$12.00 Seniors (>60) & Military (w/ ID); \$7.00 Students. Call: 318-484-4478. cpptheatre.com

**August 16: Comedian Jon Reep,** Coughlin-Saunders Performing Arts Center (1202 3rd Street, Alexandria), 7:00pm. Jon Reep is a legendary powerhouse comedian! A national touring comedian whose contemporary country point of view has won over legions of fans in theaters, comedy clubs, and on tv and in film. As a stand-up he's built a following through his hilarious comedy specials on Comedy Central, Netflix, and Amazon Prime. You might remember him as Dodge Ram Truck's "That thing got a HEMI?" guy or the comedian who won "Last Comic Standing." Cost: \$35.00-\$50.00. coughlin-saunderspac.org

## Events

**Ongoing-August: 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



Scan for a full  
listing of events at





# Entertainment Focus

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.

**Ongoing-August 15: Summer Meals for Kids,** Rapides Parish Library. The Food Bank of Central Louisiana, Inc. is participating in the Summer Food Service Program. Meals will be provided to all eligible children without charge at the Main Library, Martin, Robertson, and McDonald branches and are only available during posted times. Meals must be eaten at the Library. This institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider. For location specific dates and times, visit the Rapides Parish Library calendar online at [www.rpl.org](http://www.rpl.org). Free.

**Ongoing-August 29: Paragon Indoor Pool Party,** Paragon Casino Resort (711 Paragon Place, Marksville), 2:00pm-5:00pm. Make a splash at Paragon Casino Resort with new weekly pool parties every Saturday this summer! Open to all ages, the party will feature swimming, DJ, and the pool bar open for refreshments. Cost: \$25.00 (Ages 13+); \$10.00 (Ages 2-12); Registered Hotel Guests Free. Call: 800-946-1946. [paragoncasinoresort.com](http://paragoncasinoresort.com)

**August 8 & 22: D&D Fridays,** Rapides Parish Main Library (411 Washington Street, Alexandria), 3:00pm-5:00pm. Unwind after school and join us for adventures in our Afterschool Dungeons and Dragons Club. Cost: Free. RPL.org

**August 9: What's Your Move: Teen Edition!,** Martin Branch Library (801 West Shamrock, Pineville), 10:00am-12:00pm. Welcome teen tabletop gamers! This day is yours: a relaxing and engaging time to enjoy your favorite games with your friends. We will have chess, backgammon, Uno, battleship, and more! You are more than welcome to bring your own games as well. The Martin Library is excited to have you! Game on! Cost: Free. RPL.org

**August 9: 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](http://themuseum.org)

**August 12, 19, 26 & September 2, 9: 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.

**August 13: Growing Herbs with Molly Lyles,** Rapides Parish Main Library (411 Washington Street, Alexandria), 1:30pm-4:00pm. Join Molly Lyles from the LSU AgCenter as she shares the basics of Growing Herbs! Learn how to plant, care for, and harvest a variety of herbs—perfect for adding fresh flavor to your meals and beauty to your garden. Cost: Free. RPL.org

**August 13, September 10: 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.

**August 14: Author of the Month Book Signing,** Westside Regional Library (5416 Provine Place, Alexandria), 11:00am-12:30pm. Mike Wynne will be doing a book signing at Westside Regional Library for his latest book, "Haunted Central Louisiana". Participants will also be among the very first to obtain copies of the new book, the complete and true story of the ghosts and spirits who roam forever through Central Louisiana. Cost: Free. RPL.org

**August 16: "No Limits, Just Possibility" with Karren Alexander,** MLK Branch Library (1115 Broadway Avenue, Alexandria), 10:00am-11:00am. Karren Y. Alexander, WGNO's 2025

Remarkable Women Winner, will be here to highlight her book "Invisible Hand: Overcoming Obstacles and challenges." Karren was born and raised in Alexandria. Her journey is one that will uplift and inspire. Affectionately and proudly called a "Canologist," Karren is a phenomenal conference and keynote speaker, as well as, an author, songwriter, and mentor. Books will be available for purchase. Free. RPL.org

**August 16: Haunted Central Louisiana.** Don't miss your chances for the release of the brand-new book, "Haunted Central Louisiana." Based upon almost 60 interviews in 17 parishes, author Michael Wynne reports on extraordinary sightings, spiritual happenings, and ghostly experiences in our area. Meet the author and hear from four local witnesses featured in the book. A limited selection of numbered copies will be available for purchase. The first presentation will take place at the Martin Branch Library (801 W Shamrock Ave, Pineville) at 10:00am; and the second will be at Kent Plantation House (3601

Bayou Rapides Road, Alexandria) at 1:00pm. Cost: Free.

**August 17: Central Louisiana Orchid Society Meeting,** St. James Episcopal Church EYC 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.

**August 18: Cenla Diabetes Support Group,** New Horizons Living Center (3717 Government Street, Suite 1, Alexandria), 10:00am-11:30am. New Horizons Independent Living Center and the Alexandria Lions Club have partnered to create a support group where you can share your experiences living with diabetes. The meeting will offer a sample tasting of a diabetic-friendly dish. All Cenla residents living with Type I, Type II, or Gestational Diabetes

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**Sunday: Noon - 8:00pm**



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# Entertainment Focus

are invited to attend. Cost: Free. Call: 318-484-3596.

**August 19: Anime Club: Pictionary,** McDonald Branch Library (1075 Highway 497, Glenmora), 4:00pm-5:00pm. Nani!? Anime Pictionary at the Library!? Sugoi! Join us at the McDonald Branch to play classic Pictionary with an anime-flavored twist! Guess characters, shows, special moves, and even phrases with nothing but a drawing for a clue. Guess correctly and your team scores a point! Seating limited; registration required. Scan RPL's QR code in this month's calendar to register. Free RPL.org

**August 21: Diabetes Management Class,** Rapides Women's and Children's Hospital Cascade Room (501 Medical Center Dr, Alexandria), 5:30pm-7:00pm. This program is designed for adults with newly diagnosed diabetes and for people needing a refresher course in diabetes

management. This is a basic diabetes program; therefore, no physician referral is required. The program content follows the American Diabetes Association guidelines and uses a variety of teaching methods to enhance learning. Topics include meal planning, monitoring blood sugar, medications, complications, and learning to deal with a chronic disease. The course is taught by a Registered Nurse and Registered Dietitian. Please pre-register. Cost: Free. 318-769-4440.

**August 27: Fall Photo Shoot with Your Pets,** Robertson Branch Library (809 Tioga High School Road, Ball), 9:00am-1:00pm. Come take your Fall Photos at the Library! Well-behaved pets (and humans) welcome! You will receive an emailed link to a personal Dropbox containing all your photos. You are free to use them as you wish. Cost: Free. RPL.org

**August 28: 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!). This month's speaker will be Margart Simon, of New Iberia who is the author of many books, a blogger and a well-noted published poet. Her many books include the stand-out children's poetry book, "Bayou Song," as well as biographies including the newly released "Were You There: A Biography of Emma Wakefield Paillet," co-authored with Dr. Phebe Hayes. Free.

**August 30: Creative Con 2025,** Westside Regional Library (5416 Provine Place, Alexandria), 9:00am-1:00pm. RPL's "Creative Con" is our library's friendly neighborhood Comic Con. This year's theme is Pokémon! We'll be painting baseball caps with fabric paint and stencils to make Pokémon-themed baseball caps. We will have games throughout the library such as a scavenger hunt, cosplay bingo, and Jeopardy to win themed prizes. Our cosplay contest will be at noon for a chance to win BAM gift cards. The categories are: kids (under 13), teens (13 and over), and adult for 1st, 2nd, 3rd place prizes. And of course, we'll have vendors, virtual reality, Mario Kart/Pokémon mini-Stadium Games, and concessions and ice cream available for purchase. Ice cream will be available after 11:00am from Mz Breezes Ice Cream Truck. We hope to see you at Westside Regional Library over by the Coliseum! Follow us on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/rplcreativecon> for vendor information and more info on CC25! Cost: Free. RPL.org

**August 30: 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 6: 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.

**September 6: 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.

**September 6: International Culture Awareness Day,** Alexandria Zoo (3016 Masonic Drive, Alexandria), 9:30am-11:30am. Did you know that vultures play a crucial role in our ecosystem? Learn more about these amazing birds with Discovery Carts, Keeper Chats, and a craft. Cost: Regular Zoo admission; Free for FOTAZ members. [thealexandriazoo.com/LagniappeSeries.html](http://thealexandriazoo.com/LagniappeSeries.html)

**September 7-9: 4th Annual Louisiana Rural Economic (LaRuE) Development Summit,** Paragon Casino Resort (711 Paragon Place, Marksville). Participants in the LaRuE Summit will get to hear and learn from business professionals, industry experts and state/local elected officials across several topics such as grant funding, rural economic development, agriculture, education, accessible healthcare, technology and more. Cost: Free. Call: 318-427-7406. [LaRuE.la](http://LaRuE.la)

## Sports

**August 12, 19, 26 & September 2, 9: 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](http://themuseum.org)

*\*All events subject to change.*



## Entertainment Focus

# Mid-Season Symphony Summer Sale

By Joshua Zona

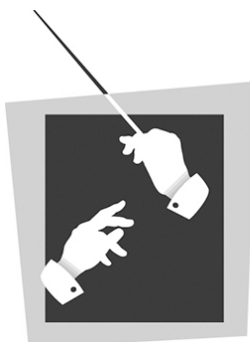


We are exactly halfway through our 2025 Concert Season, so we at the Rapides Symphony figured it was time for a mid-season Summer Sale! You can now purchase a pair of tickets so that you and a mate can attend each of the final three Symphony concerts of the season for a total of \$100. That works out to a 33% savings on individual ticket prices.

The first of the three performances for which you will receive tickets is Mozart's opera, the timeless tale of lust, murder, and damnation, "Don Giovanni" on Saturday, September 20th. Next up, on Saturday, October 18th, is "Something Wicked," featuring music appropriate for the scary season, including music from Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho," Mussorgsky's eerily atmospheric "Night on Bald Mountain," and Richard Strauss's wickedly steamy "Dance of the Seven Veils" from the opera "Salome." Rounding out the season, on Sunday, December 7th, is "A Worldwide Yuletide," the Symphony's annual holiday-themed concert with sounds of the season from around the globe.



The best way to take advantage of this sale is to visit RapidesSymphony.org and click on the banner at the top of the page. Or you can call our office at (318) 442-9709. I hope to see you at the Coughlin-Saunders Performing Arts Center this fall!



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# Back to School, Back to Fueling Right!

By Jennifer Duhon, MS, RDN, LDN



It's that time of year again—new backpacks, sharpened pencils, and fresh notebooks mean school is just around the corner! As routines shift back into gear, don't forget one of the most important school supplies: good nutrition. The right foods can make a huge difference in how kids focus, feel, learn, and grow throughout the school year. Let's make healthy eating simple, fun, and doable with some quick and practical tips. Check with your school board for rules.

Make breakfast count. Breakfast is the brain's morning fuel! A balanced breakfast helps kids stay focused, energized, and ready to learn. Aim to include:

1. Protein: eggs, peanut butter, yogurt, cottage cheese.
2. Whole grains: oatmeal, whole wheat toast, whole grain

cereal.

3. Fruits or veggies: banana slices, berries, fruit smoothies, spinach in omelets.

Try a breakfast wrap with scrambled eggs, spinach, and low-fat cheese in a whole wheat tortilla. Let the kids help make it—it's a great way to get them involved!

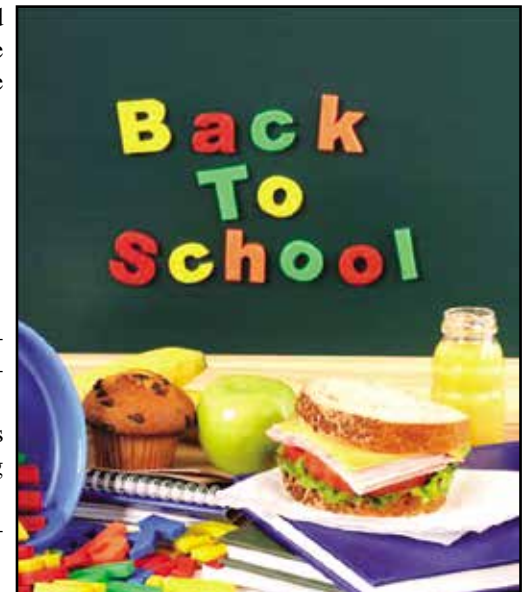
If you have a picky eater, blend fruits and veggies into smoothies or mix finely chopped veggies into scrambled eggs or muffins. Let kids choose their favorite fruit toppings for yogurt or oatmeal.

Pack healthy lunches. Valanced lunches don't have to be complicated. Use the MyPlate method:

- 1/2 fruits and veggies;
- 1/4 protein;
- 1/4 whole grains;
- a dairy or dairy alternative.

Fun Lunch Combos to Try:

1. Turkey & cheese pinwheels + cherry tomatoes + apple slices + low-fat yogurt.
2. Hummus + whole grain crackers + baby carrots + grapes + string cheese.
3. Grilled chicken + brown rice + cucumber slices + fruit cup.



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Pack lunches the night before and let kids help choose items—they're more likely to eat what they helped prepare! For picky eaters, offer a "build-your-own" lunchbox with small portions of different foods. Include at least one "safe" food they already like, and introduce new foods in small, no-pressure ways.

Snack smart. After-school snacks should be nutrient-rich and energy-boosting to keep kids going until dinner. Smart snack ideas include:

- 1. Apple slices with peanut butter
- 2. Trail mix with nuts, seeds, and raisins
- 3. Low-fat yogurt with berries

Pre-portion snacks into grab-and-go containers for easy access in the fridge or pantry! For picky eaters, make snacks fun—use cookie cutters for fruit shapes, create snack "kabobs" with toothpicks, or let kids make their own trail mix from a selection of healthy ingredients.

The back-to-school season can be hectic, but with a little planning and creativity, healthy habits can stick all year long. Make sure to check with your school parish's Child Nutrition program. Most students receive free meals across our state. These meals are well balanced and a time saver for busy parents. Let's work together to build strong bodies and sharp minds—one bite at a time!

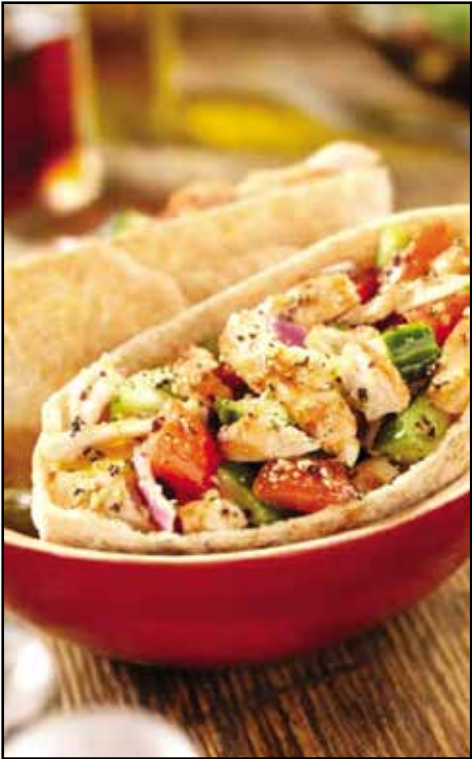
*Kirsten Thiels, LA Tech Dietetic Intern, contributed to this article.*



# Mini Whole Grain Pita Pockets

- 2 Mini Whole Grain Pita Pockets
- 1/4 Cup Hummus or 1/4 Cup Cooked, Shredded Grilled Chicken
- 1/4 Cup Shredded Carrots
- 1 Handful of Baby Spinach Leaves
- 1/4 Cup Cherry Tomatoes, Halved
- Optional: Low-Fat String Cheese or a Small Yogurt Cup

Carefully open the pita pockets to create space for filling. Spread hummus or add chicken inside each pocket. Stuff with spinach, carrots, and cherry tomatoes. Serve with a side of string cheese or yogurt for a complete MyPlate snack!





## SOUTHERN CREATIONS

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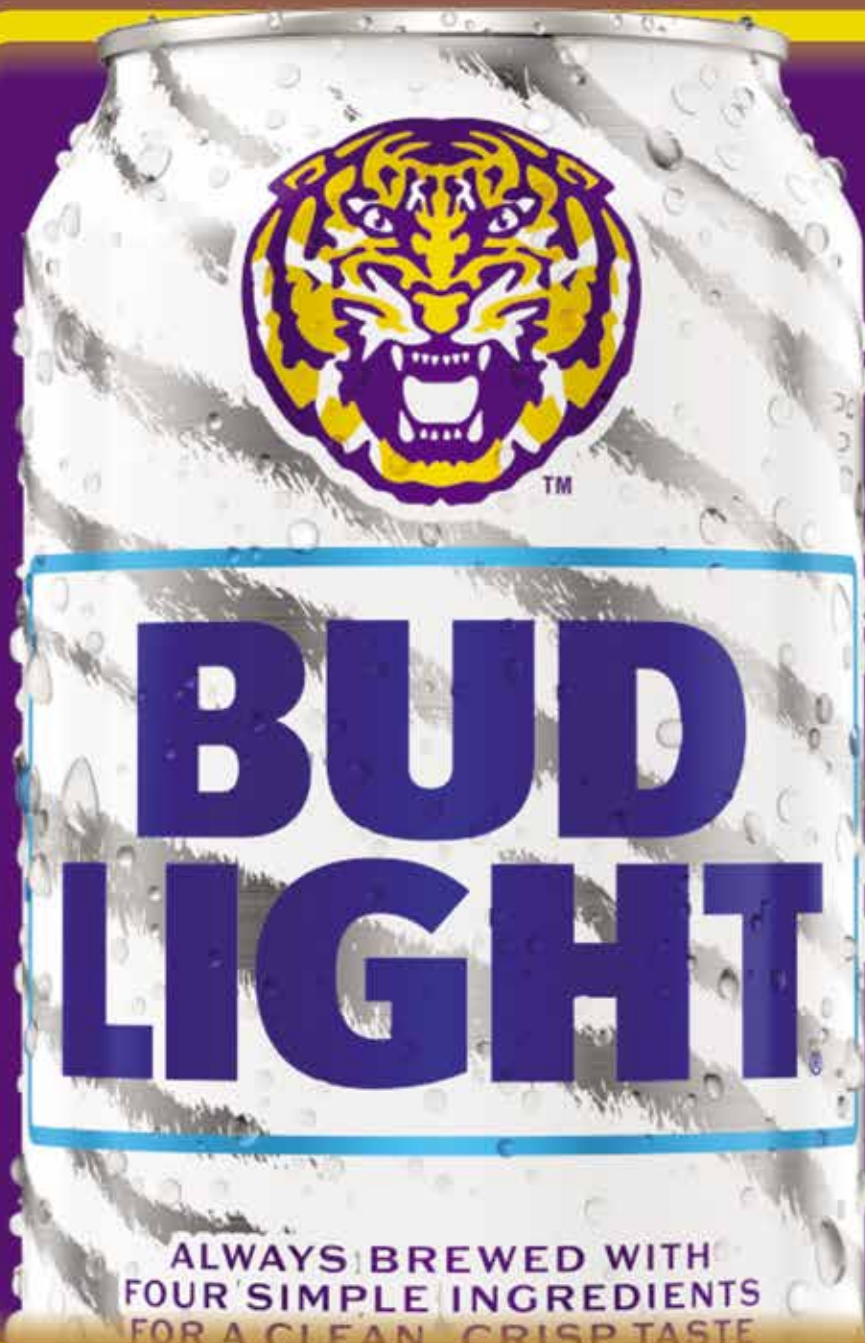
The building has a dark blue metal roof and white siding. Signs on the building include "LUNCH BUFFET", "SOUTHERN CREATIONS", "BANQUET ROOM", and a logo with the letters "SC".

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Decorative elements include white roses, green leaves, two champagne glasses filled with yellow liquid, and two gold wedding rings.





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# Hot Hoagies, Tortilla Rolls, and Surprise Apple Salad

By Wilbert Carmouche

School buses are rolling and bells are tolling, bringing in the new school year to a great start! You know the children are hungry when they come home and want an immediate snack. Below are a few make-ahead recipes that are easily ready when they come home.

## Hot Hoagies

3/4 Cup Butter, Softened  
1 Envelope Italian Salad Dressing Mix  
12 Thin Sliced Cheese  
6 Hoagie Buns, Split  
12-16 Ounces Sliced Sandwich Meat of Choice  
Combine butter and salad dressing mix; spread 1 tablespoon inside each bun. On the bottom of each bun, layer one slice of meat, two slices of cheese, and another slice of meat; replace tops. Spread 1 tablespoon butter mixture over

top of each bun. Place it on a baking sheet. Broil 6 inches from the heat for 2 to 3 minutes or until the tops are lightly brown.

## Tortilla Rolls

1 Package Large Tortillas  
1 (8 Ounce) Package Cream Cheese  
1 Package Taco Seasoning  
1 Jar Salsa  
Mix the cream cheese and taco seasoning together. Spread mixture on to tortillas. Roll up tortillas and cut into bite size pieces. Serve pieces with salsa on the side for dipping.

## Surprise Apple Salad

10 Miniature Snickers Candy Bars  
3 Medium Apples Peeled and Chopped  
1 (8 Ounce) Carton Cool Whip (Thawed)  
1 Small Package of Vanilla Instant

Pudding Cut Snickers candies into four pieces and place them in freezer until hard. In a large bowl, mix apples and cool whip. Add frozen Snickers and fold in vanilla instant pudding. Refrigerate until served. Serves six.

Recipes were taken from the

“Bordelonville Volunteer Fire Department Cookbook” which is available for purchase for \$10.00, include additional \$6.00 for shipping, at the Avoyelles Commission of Tourism Office, 8592 Highway 1, Suite 3, Mansura, LA 71350 or email [tourism@krocket.net](mailto:tourism@krocket.net).




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# The Art Days of Summer Are Arriving at River Oaks

As the height of summer arrives, River Oaks is set to showcasing the works of Clyde Downs, Margie Tate, and the grandfather-granddaughter duo Robin and Robert Ratcliff, beginning August 28th. The exhibitions highlight a wide spectrum of artistic voices, from seasoned professionals to rising talents. “We’re thrilled to celebrate the talents of seasoned professionals like Clyde, Margie, Robert, and Robin, while also shining a spotlight on the incredible promise of our youngest artists. It’s a beautiful full-circle moment,” says Rachael Dautzat, Executive Director.

Clyde Downs’ exhibition “Rhythms of Nature” will fill the Bolton-Davis Gallery.

Downs began his artistic journey at a young age, inspired by his grandfather’s chalkboard drawings and fueled by early experiences at River Oaks as a studio artist in the late 1980s. He served for more than three decades as a professor at Northwestern State University.

“Rhythms of Nature” is a visual exploration that merges emotion and environment, using abstraction as a way to evoke natural phenomena. Through expressive brushstrokes, rich textures, and a deep understanding of color theory, Downs interprets the emotional resonance of landscapes rather than replicating them. His work invites viewers to engage with nature on a visceral level—transforming familiar elements like trees, skies, and rivers into symbols of internal experience.

In the Galerie des Amis, resident artist Margie Tate presents “Color Poetry,” a series of landscapes inspired by the written word. Tate draws her primary inspiration from the natural beauty of Central Louisiana—its pines, oaks, creeks, and rolling hills. Over the course of her career, Tate has worked in oil, pastel, acrylic, and watercolor, developing a versatile style rooted in capturing the soul of the Southern landscape.

Tate’s exhibition blends visual and literary art by pairing each painting with lines from nature-themed poems that inspired the work. In this way, Tate likens her use of color to a poet’s use of language—both aiming to distill emotion and provoke thought. By uniting her love for nature with her passion for poetry, Tate offers an immersive, multisensory experience that encourages viewers to reflect on their own emotional connections to the land.

The Stokes-Harris Gallery will feature a unique joint exhibition by Robin Ratcliff and her grandfather, Robert T. Ratcliff. The dual exhibitions, titled “Trust the Process” by Robin and “Landscapes SXSW” by Robert, are not only a celebration of individual artistic voices but also of intergenerational creativity and mentorship. Robin, a Studio Art major at LSU, began her artistic journey as a child and deepened her commitment to the craft during her high school years. Robert, after decades of success in the construction and development industry, rekindled his passion for watercolor painting during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Together, their works present a dynamic juxtaposition of experience and fresh perspective. Robin’s pieces invite viewers into her evolving artistic identity. Robert’s watercolors, inspired by both the lush landscapes of Louisiana and the dramatic vistas of New Mexico, offer a contemplative and seasoned vision of place and memory. Their joint exhibition is a heartfelt reminder of the power of art to connect generations and create enduring bonds through shared passion.

River Oaks will also host a workshop, “Expressive Landscape Techniques,” by Clyde Downs on August 27th and 28th as part of the GAEDA/CVB Education Series. Designed for intermediate painters, this class uses acrylics which allow for quicker experimentation and layering than oil, Downs will guide participants



through exercises focused on brush motion, color, and texture to evoke mood rather than replicate landscape scenery.

An opening reception is set for Thursday, August 28th from 5:00pm to 7:00pm at River Oaks Square Arts Center. This event, like the exhibitions themselves, is made possible thanks to the generous support of sponsors including the Alexandria/Pineville CVB, Hotel Bentley, Red River Bank, GAEDA, the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development, Diamond Grill, and the Louisiana Division of the Arts.

River Oaks is also gearing up for one of the most heartwarming events of the year—the Summer Arts Studio Student Show. Set for Saturday, August 16th from 4:00pm to 5:00pm, the show will feature over 100 pieces of artwork created by campers during Central Louisiana’s largest visual arts summer program. Selected based on artistic merit by instructors, each piece represents the creativity and growth of a new generation of young artists.

For more information about the upcoming exhibitions, classes, or community events, contact River Oaks Square Arts Center at (318) 473-2670, visit [RiverOaksArtsCenter.com](http://RiverOaksArtsCenter.com), or follow River Oaks Arts Center on Facebook @riveroaksartscenter.

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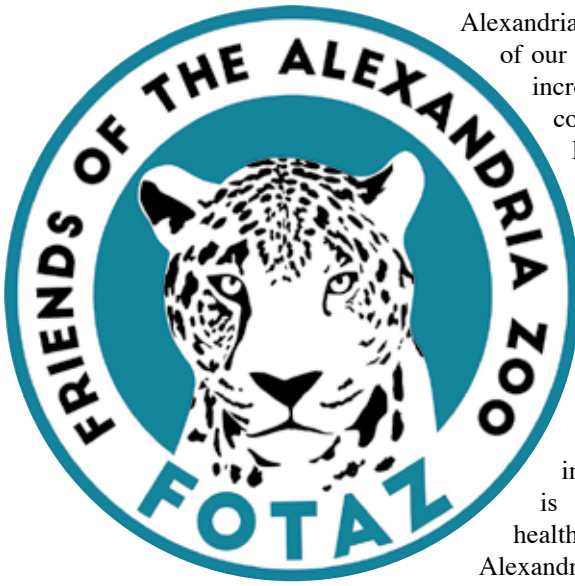
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# They All Ask for You at the Alexandria Zoo!



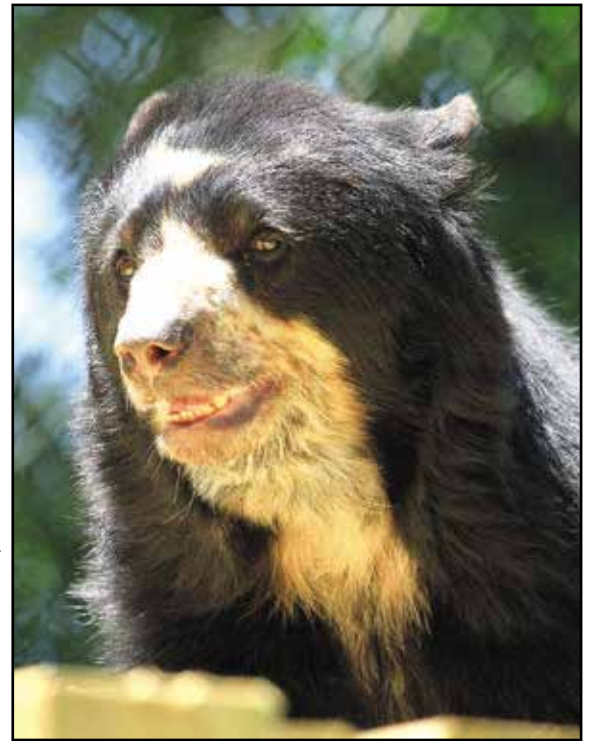
Alexandria Zoo is a beloved cornerstone of our community, offering families incredible opportunities to connect with wildlife from Louisiana and around the globe. While visitors enjoy the sights and sounds of the animals, behind the scenes, a dedicated non-profit organization, Friends of the Alexandria Zoo (FOTAZ), plays an indispensable role in ensuring the Zoo not only thrives but continuously improves. Supporting FOTAZ is a direct investment in the health, success, and future of the Alexandria Zoo itself.



A recent example of FOTAZ's support is the renovation of the flight cage within the award-winning Louisiana Habitat exhibit. This spacious enclosure, home to majestic pelicans, vibrant ibis, and distinctive spoonbills, required updates to ensure the best possible environment for these iconic Louisiana birds. This important renovation project was funded by Friends of the Alexandria Zoo, demonstrating how community support channeled through FOTAZ directly translates into improved animal habitats and a better zoo experience.

In addition, FOTAZ and the Alexandria Zoo were thrilled to welcome Chaska, the Zoo's magnificent new Andean bear! Born on January 15, 2010 at the Smithsonian's National Zoo, Chaska recently joined us from Salisbury Zoo and is settling into her new home! The Andean bear, also known as the spectacled bear, is the only species of

bear found in South America. They are true arboreal bears, using their long, sharp front claws to climb and forage for food. They are also good swimmers. The markings on an Andean bear's head, throat, and chest are unique to each individual, like a human's fingerprint. They are thought to use vocal communication more than any other bear except the giant panda.



FOTAZ generates its operational funding through various avenues, all of which rely on community participation. Every membership bought, every souvenir purchased, and every donation made through FOTAZ channels directly fuels the Alexandria Zoo's mission. It allows for essential projects, like the flight cage renovation, to move forward, ensuring our Zoo remains a source of pride, education, and enjoyment for the entire community.

FOTAZ acts as a vital partner to the Alexandria Zoo and supports a wide array of ongoing projects and essential needs across the Zoo, including:

- **Animal Care and Habitat Enrichment:** Ensuring the well-being of the Zoo's residents.
- **Construction and Maintenance:** Providing supplemental funding for new exhibits and maintenance of existing ones according to the Zoo's Master Plan.
- **Staff Support:** Assisting with resources needed for the dedicated Zoo team.
- **Education Programs:** Enabling learning opportunities for visitors of all ages.
- **Conservation Initiatives:** Supporting efforts to protect wildlife both locally and globally.
- **Public Services:** Enhancing the visitor experience.

You directly contribute to FOTAZ's mission—and therefore the Zoo's success—every time you:

- **Purchase or Renew an Annual Zoo Membership:** Providing consistent, year-round support.
- **Make a Personal or Corporate Donation:** Offering direct financial aid for FOTAZ's goals.
- **Shop at the Zootique Gift Shop:** Where proceeds go back into supporting the Zoo.
- **Buy Train Tickets:** Enjoying a fun ride that also benefits the animals.
- **Rent Strollers or Wagons:** Convenience for you, support for the Zoo.
- **Purchase Fish Food and Visit the Aviary:** Engaging with the animals while contributing funds.
- **Attend Zoo Special Events:** Participating in fun activities that double as fundraisers.

By supporting Friends of the Alexandria Zoo, you become an active partner in preserving and enhancing this invaluable local treasure for generations to come!

To become a FOTAZ member or renew your membership, visit [thealexandriazoo.com/BecomeAMember.html](http://thealexandriazoo.com/BecomeAMember.html) or scan the QR code on this page.



# Easing Back-to-School Anxiety

By Christy Pennison, LPC



It's that time of year again—new backpacks, sharpened pencils, and the familiar shift from the slower pace of summer back into the routine of school. For some kids, this transition is exciting. For others, it can stir up a wave of anxiety that shows up in big feelings, resistance, or physical symptoms like headaches or stomachaches.

Back-to-school anxiety is incredibly common. Change—even positive change—can feel overwhelming to a child's developing brain. New teachers, unfamiliar classrooms, shifting schedules, and social dynamics all combine to create uncertainty. And uncertainty is where anxiety likes to hang out.

So, how can we, as parents and caregivers, support children through this season?

1. **Normalize Their Feelings:** It can be reassuring for kids to hear that what they're feeling is normal. Let them know that many students feel nervous before school starts, even those who seem confident. Share a story about a time you felt anxious before starting something new, and how you managed it.

2. **Establish Predictable Routines:** Anxiety thrives on the unknown, so creating structure helps children feel safe. In the weeks leading up to school, start easing into school-year sleep schedules and morning

routines. Knowing what to expect can make the transition smoother.

3. **Practice Exposure in Small Doses:** If possible, visit the school ahead of time, walk the halls, find the classroom, meet the teacher. This reduces the “newness” of the first day. For younger children, even practicing packing a backpack or walking through drop-off routines can help build comfort.

4. **Teach Coping Skills:** Help your child learn tools to calm their body and mind. Simple breathing exercises, grounding activities (like noticing five things they see, four things they hear, etc.), or having a comfort item in their backpack can make a big difference.

5. **Watch for Signs of Escalating Anxiety:** While some worry is normal, ongoing or intense anxiety that interferes with daily life may need extra support. Pay attention if your child avoids school, complains of frequent physical symptoms, or experiences big emotional meltdowns tied to school.



The most important thing you can offer is your presence and support. Sometimes, children just need to know that their feelings are safe with you and that you believe they can handle what's ahead. If anxiety feels too big to manage on your own, counseling can help. A child and teen therapist can work with children and families to address anxiety, teaching coping skills, and helping kids build confidence in navigating transitions. Early support can help children develop lifelong resilience and self-assurance.

Back-to-school season doesn't have to be a time of dread. With understanding, preparation, and support, children can move from anxious beginnings to thriving in the classroom and beyond.

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# Back to School: A Family Affair

By Debbie Guy, LCSW



It's August, and across the state, children will be starting school. But let's face it, it's really our family that will be hitting those doors. For most families, school is fun. They thrive on it all—the academics, the after-school activities, and weekend football games. Facebook is filled with each picture-perfect moment. And then, there's the rest of us—a viral, "You Can't Make This Up!" YouTube video. Consequently, over the summer, we enjoy the break and pray a simple request, "Please let next year be better."

It's easy to focus on the "academic side," the "push for top of the class side," the "what do you want to be when you grow up?" side. The reality is, school is only a fraction of their "finding me" journey. We are entering our sweet darlings into a lifelong race-doesn't-always-go-to-the-swift challenge and we don't want them defeated at the start line.

Therefore, as we scour the store shelves for the coolest pens, binders, and backpacks, let's pick a backpack for our family, too. Families look different these days. With our changing, mobile society, families have adapted to include those whose purpose is simply to provide love and support for our children. Biological embraces chosen—those adults our little ones can trust to do what's best for them.

So, let's prep our family backpack. First, include current contact information of all who can access our children, such as

grandparent, neighbor, etc. Then make sure the school is aware of new health or legal issues, for example, allergies, a standing doctor's appointment, or who can pick up our child. Also, make sure all know our Plan B, in other words, when we get the call "he threw up and/or other sundry surprises," our child is confident someone will be there soon.

Next, add a water bottle and snack. Our mornings start early. We scoop up our crew and head out for school and work. Later, we gather them up, sipping some water on our way to those extracurricular activities. We return home, finishing the night with cooking and homework. Think about it: six in the morning until eight at night

is a long day and takes a toll. So, along with all those must-do's, remember to break for a snack. Our "lick the ice cream cone slow" moment. A quiet time to listen, connect and encourage because it's easy to lose sight of our family in the hustle bustle these next nine months bring.

Lastly, before the second semester begins, let's revisit our backpack. Over the past few months, it's accumulated lots of stuff. We've added extra commitments like, "Sure, I can help", "It's just an hour practice," or, "He needs extra tutoring." In other words, it's full. As a family, let's meet up and clean out. View those add-ons through the lens of: "In the long run, will this benefit our family?" Some will stay and some will go.

So, blessings on our, it's a family affair, school year. Our backpacks are ready and waiting at the door.





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# Is Cenla Haunted? It Certainly Is!



To paraphrase a famous saying, “Yes, Virginia, there are ghosts and spirits in Central Louisiana!” Alexandria, Pineville, Rapides Parish, and all of Central Louisiana are replete with hauntings—both friendly and unfriendly.

For years, I just didn’t believe in the existence of ghosts or spirits. Yes, there is a bit of a difference between the two. A ghost is usually considered “the soul of a deceased person that can interact with the living world, often appearing as a shadowy or translucent figure.” But a spirit is more frequently linked “to a higher, spiritual realm—a connection to God or the divine, with the capacity for higher understanding and contemplation.”

Now, do I believe in ghosts and spirits? Not originally. I thought all of that talk was just make-believe or desires of misguided people. But now I certainly do. Absolutely! And it all started with a surprise telephone call.

In December of 2022, I received a call from Pelican Publishing Company of New Orleans, who, along with their partner, Arcadia Books, publishes an excellent and entertaining series of books devoted to haunted locales. They had heard of my literary reputation and chose me as the one best able to write what would become the first of a series of books on haunted places in Louisiana.

At first, I was both hesitant and skeptical at this offer. My concern was not about the publishers, they are, after all, two of the finest quality publishers in the nation. Rather, my concern was about the theme: ghosts and spirits co-existing around us. Frankly, I just didn’t believe in the spirit world—at least at the time. So, I decided to approach the whole subject as a reporter, interviewing people who have experienced the spirits and, to quote the late Sgt. Friday (Jack Webb), “Just the facts, M’am.” I began intensive research and a comprehensive investigation, conducting numerous interviews—almost 60 in total. I met with people not just from our area, but from all over our state and nation who have visited Central Louisiana over the last quarter of a century.

So, what did I find? I found many good, decent, and honest as well as fascinating folks willing to tell their remembrances of what they saw, what they heard, and what they felt while visiting here.

Now, as an often skeptical but always fact-based person, I can’t rely on any one person’s story, no matter how believable it may sound. People do make up stories for reasons not logical or clear to the rest of us. But what I truly found amazing in my lengthy investigations are various people—who never knew each other or had any connection to each other—telling the exact same story of seeing and experiencing the same exact apparitions! As much as I tried to refute their initially difficult-to-believe stories, I just couldn’t. So, I carefully documented all of what they said and experienced, then performed independent research to verify or refute their stories.

What I came to find and compile might be one of the best documented reports on

what is really going here in Cenla in the spirit world! It is not only the truth, but my new book, “Haunted Central Louisiana,” is entertaining! I expanded my research to include numerous Central Louisiana parishes. In Rapides parish alone, I cover all the important sites (more than 40), including Hotel Bentley, Loyd Hall, Tyrone Plantation, Kent House, and Walnut Grove.

Judge Rae Swent, owner of the magnificent Tyrone Plantation home, told her story (excerpt):

“I did not understand it at the time, but in fact the very first night I spent here at Tyrone I heard the ‘children ghosts’. There was stuff left over from prior owners, including Mr. Edward Robinson. His son married the granddaughter of George Mason Graham, the man who built the house. They had one child and the child was playing on the porch (what is considered the second story or main floor of Tyrone) and fell off the porch and broke her neck. The young Robinsons left the house and rented it out for almost 20 years. The child died in the 30s.”



“My brother and I, we decided to come here and be here when mom and dad arrived (from Virginia). I was sleeping, in fact the room that I still sleep in now (located) on the second floor in the back. And I was waked up in the middle of the night by children laughing and playing. It sounded like a serious game of tag. Yeah, in the middle of the night. I looked out of my window and couldn’t see anybody there, so I wondered if they had gotten into the first floor (the ground floor). There were a lot of children playing. I heard male and female voices just yelling, ‘Hah, Hah, Hah!’” So, I went upstairs to wake and tell my brother. They (the spirits) may have gone down to the first floor because I hollered out of the window, ‘What cha doing?’ He went downstairs and came back and said that there was no one down there. Well, they must have run off and gone home, I thought. I didn’t know for ten years until I had two ladies doing bed and breakfast here and they told me at breakfast, ‘Why were those children running around the porch laughing and playing?’ I knew right away it was the same children that I had heard years before. The two ladies got up out of bed and came up here and they found no one here. Same group of children, like I said. Then I realized that I had actually heard the children ghosts—that is what we call them here.

“I had one other lady, another bed and breakfast guest, who actually heard the children, also. She heard them outside and they also woke her up. When I heard the sound, it was definitely coming from the back yard. When the first two ladies heard it, the sound was coming from the porch. You can clearly hear footsteps. And the other lady heard the children on the (right side) of the house and she told me the same thing. The children woke her up. She looked out of the window and there was no one there.”

In my new book, “Haunted Central Louisiana,” all of Rapides Parish and 16 other state-centered parishes, ranging from Beauregard to Franklin to Concordia to Desoto, have spirit world stories to tell. On Saturday, August 16th, this book will be first released in two public talks in Cenla: at the Martin Branch Library on Shamrock Street in Pineville at 10:00am and Kent House on the same date at 1:00pm. Everyone is invited with no admission charged. Four “victims” of haunted apparitions will come tell their stories of their personal encounters. Afterwards, a special edition of the book will be first released to attendees, with signed, numbered copies on a first-come basis.

Do you believe in ghosts and spirits? After you read the book, you certainly will!



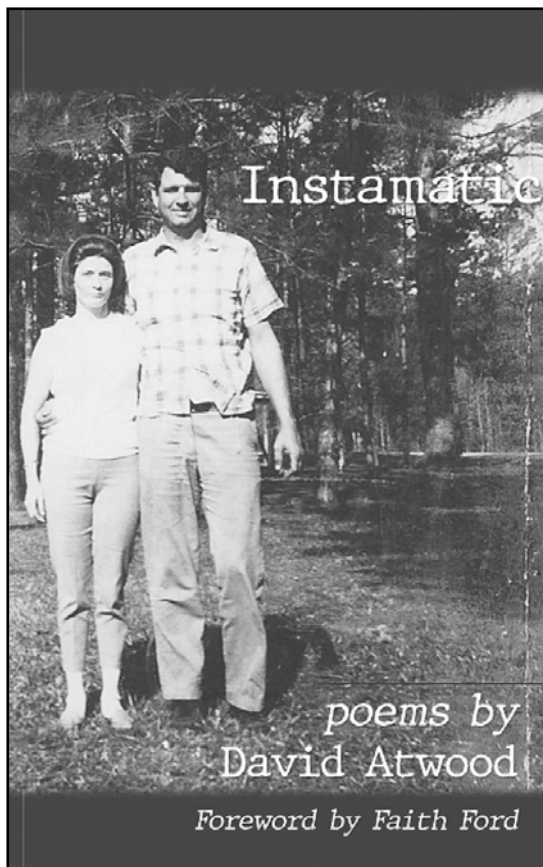
# Poet Extraordinaire David Atwood

By Michael Wynne

Poets are a different sort of writer, not better nor worse than other writers of fiction and non-fiction. While so-called “normal” writers write on subjects commonly not about themselves (other than in autobiographies), poets, in essence, are writing about their inner selves in a broad sense. The words that they choose come through the filter of their soul, regardless of what subject they are writing about. The words that they write are chosen eloquently and succinctly, as though each and every word chosen represents the whole of the poetry that they create. And create they do! The poet is intent at attempting to transfer their own feelings on the subject matter that they are creating for the reader to feel so they will both “see” the same “mind” pictures, and feel the same rustling in each other’s own bones.

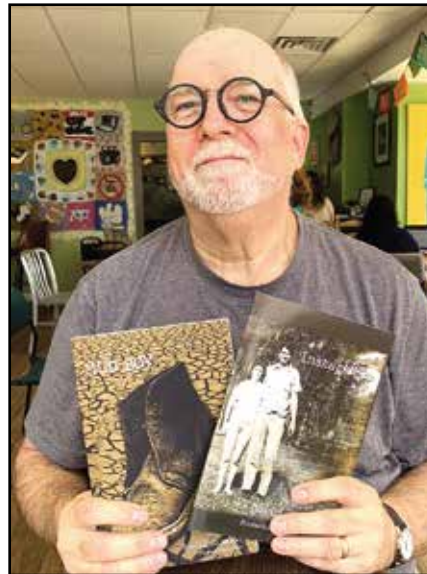
We are blessed with having some of the state’s leading poets right here in Cenla, poets like Shelley Jinks Johnson, Bob Bussey and, of course, Dr. Julie Kane. We also have additional great poets who quietly live and toil away at their craft without expecting, or maybe even wanting, any accolades, including beloved poets and renaissance men like David Atwood.

The son of a railroad man and a “housewife” (as he described), David has lived in several places in the state, sometimes repeatedly. A native of New Orleans, where he has spent his formative years, he actually graduated from ASH. His best youthful memories revolve around cultural themes. “I got turned on to music, radio, and poetry in New Orleans,” David explained while visiting in the Tamp and Grind coffee shop. “There was turmoil in that time of my life due to difficulties in my family. I was looking for an outlet to relieve my angst.”



Initially, the outlet he needed was a set of drums that he could “lock out the world and do what I wanted to do.” Those drums put him in motion to play in local garage bands, later professional bands, and he wound up in L.A. Soon, he met the love of his life, Christie Gabour (featured in my column in August of 2022), a well-known and respected author herself.

David’s life has taken many turns and locations over the years, including a stint working in architecture, but he is now well-known as a very successful voice actor (his voice is quite recognizable). He has also been part of the popular and award-winning “The Melissa and David Show” on local radio station KRRV for nine years now.



The start of David’s poetry career goes back to his youth when he watched the Jim Metcalf program on New Orleans television. “His poetry was so good, I didn’t even know it was poetry at first,” David remembers. “I just loved and admired his use of language.” David got actively in poetry in the mid-90s after the death of his brother. “I was launched into poetry as personal therapy. Poetry had structure and themes which included the theme of grief,” remarked David. He was initially very sensitive about his personal writings, but after finally letting Christie read his work and receiving positive notes from her, he was “shocked” to learn from her that he was actually writing poetry. “It’s a funny

thing about poets accepting this mantle and allowing yourself to be called a poet and thinking of yourself as a poet,” David said with his usual great humility.

I like David on so many different levels. I truly love his four books of poetry, the latest being the magnificent, “Mud Boy.” Each of his books are available on Amazon. Quite frankly, I think you will love his books, too! David can be reached at [Atwoodvoices@gmail.com](mailto:Atwoodvoices@gmail.com).



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**PARIS HILTON COOKWARE**  
**SUN - TUES, AUG 3-26 • 12-10PM**

**\$400,000 BEAT THE HEAT**  
**FRIDAYS IN AUGUST • 6-10PM**

**DRIPPING SPRINGS FRIDAYS**  
**FRIDAYS IN AUGUST • 5-9PM**

**PICK-A-GIFT**  
**SATURDAYS IN AUGUST • 2-6PM**

**LAPTOPS AND FREE PLAY**  
**SATURDAYS IN AUGUST**  
**7:15PM, 8:15PM & 9:15PM**

**BIG BAD BINGO**  
**SATURDAY, AUGUST 23 • 8PM**

## DON'T MISS OUT ON UPCOMING EVENTS!

- **TUESDAYS** • Senior Days
- **WEDNESDAYS** • Bingo 6PM
- **THURSDAYS** • Bingo 6PM, Senior Days
- **FRIDAYS** • 2-for-1 Seafood Buffet
- **SATURDAYS** • 2-for-1 Steak & Seafood Buffet
- **SUNDAYS** • Buffet Breakfast, 8-10:30AM, Buffet Brunch, 11AM-3PM
- **SUPER BINGO - NOW EVERY WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY!**
- **LABOR DAY SUPER BINGO • AUGUST 31**

**Paragon**  
CASINO | RESORT

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [PARAGONCASINORESORT.COM](http://PARAGONCASINORESORT.COM)

For all gift giveaways, actual items may differ from photo. While supplies last. Visit Club Paragon for complete promotional details. Game responsibly. Need help? Call 877-770-STOP (7867)