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The Community Lifestyle/Business Profile Journal of CenLA

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October 2025

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# Contents



**cover story**

Louisiana Central Is Manufacturing Central.....page 6-9

**history focus**

The Battleship Missouri: The Rest of the Story..... page 10-11

**home & garden focus**

Rooted in Louisiana: The Case for Native Fruit and Nut Trees..... page 14-15

**faith focus**

What Is Faith? ..... page 18-19

**cenla sportsman**

8th Annual Gleaux for the Girls ..... page 20

**medical focus**

The Latest from Cenla’s Medical Community..... page 24-31

**financial focus**

Financial Food for Thought .....page 34

**avoyelles focus**

Spooky Season in Centre de la Louisiane ..... page 40-41

**entertainment focus**

What’s Happening in Cenla ..... page 44-50

**lifestyle focus**

Breaking Free from Trauma ..... page 55

**who’s cooking**

Make This Halloween a Treat for Health, Fun, and Fellowship!..... page 56-57



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# LOUISIANA CENTRAL IS MANUFACTURING CENTRAL



As Louisiana Central and local partners promote Manufacturing Month during October, Central Louisiana is poised for significant economic growth, particularly within its robust manufacturing sector. Louisiana Central, the regional economic development organization for the ten parishes of Allen, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon, and Winn, is spearheading a comprehensive strategic planning effort to capitalize on this momentum, driving investment and fostering long-term prosperity.

The optimism surrounding Central Louisiana's manufacturing sector is not just aspirational; it's backed by solid data. According to the recent Louisiana Central Manufacturing Industry report, compiled by economic modeling research partner Lightcast, manufacturing employment in Central Louisiana is projected to continue to outpace the national average. The ten-parish area is expected to see a 13% increase in manufacturing jobs, translating to over 1,300 new positions by 2029. This surge is in stark contrast to national trends, which project a slight decline in manufacturing jobs over the next few years.

Manufacturing is already a cornerstone of the regional economy, with over 10,000 people employed in the sector. These jobs offer competitive wages, with average salaries exceeding \$81,000 per year, driving a crucial multiplier effect that generates further jobs in other sectors.

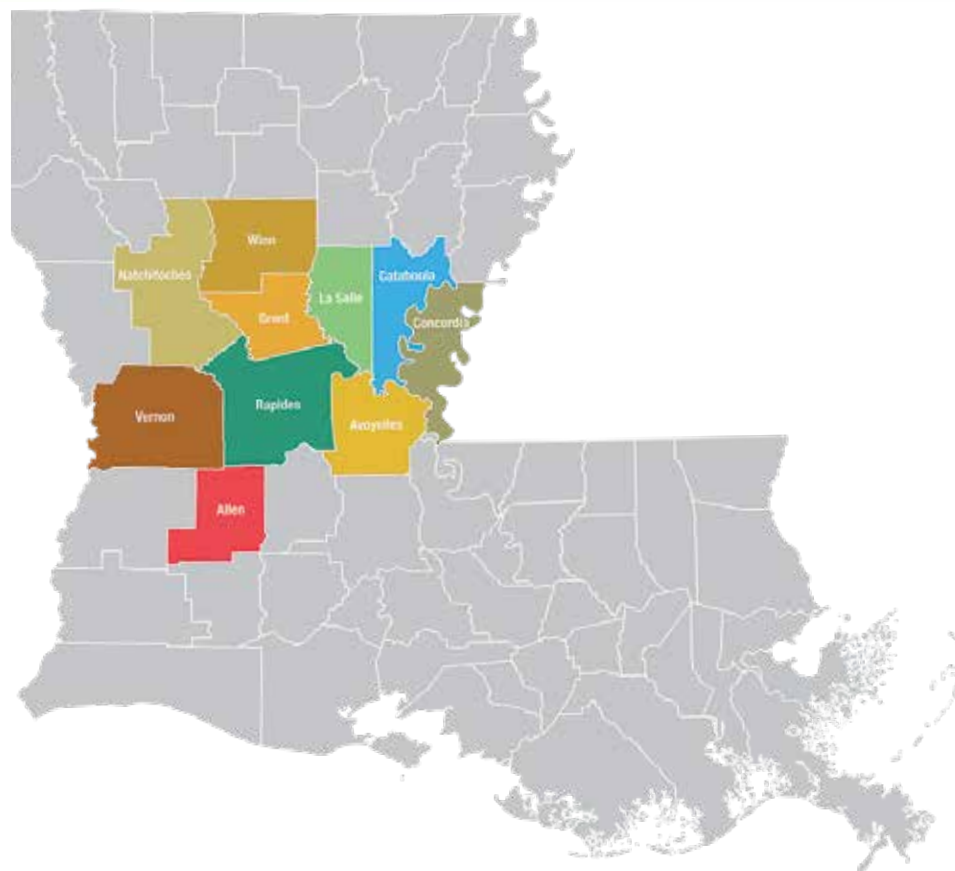
## A New Chapter for Economic Growth



Chris Masingill, CEcD, recently assumed the role of President & CEO of Louisiana Central. In early September, at the annual Rapides Foundation Symposium, Masingill introduced an ambitious plan for his first 100 days, emphasizing the region's "right ingredients" for transformational economic development: well-positioned existing industry sectors, opportunities for a skilled

workforce, and robust transportation assets including developable acreage, air, rail, port, and interstate highway infrastructure. "In economic development, people and partnerships are critical to success," said Masingill. "I am eager to build strong relationships and collaborate with the incredible people and organizations in this region to enhance our economic prosperity and intrinsic value."

PAGE 6 [www.cenlafocus.com](http://www.cenlafocus.com)



Louisiana Central has launched a comprehensive regional strategic planning initiative, building upon Louisiana Economic Development's (LED) March 2025 release of "Positioning Louisiana To Win," a comprehensive statewide plan focused on strengthening the state's economic competitiveness. Louisiana Central's new strategic plan, developed in partnership with LED and Emergent Method, a Louisiana-based consulting firm, aims to serve as a roadmap for economic development over the next three years, with completion expected by the end of 2025 and launch in early 2026.

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# We Make Good Stuff: Engaging Manufacturers for Shared Success

A cornerstone of this strategic planning process is Louisiana Central’s “We Make Good Stuff” Economic Development Roadshow that is kicking off this month. This initiative involves traveling across the entire 10-parish region to meet in-person with business and community leaders, engaging local stakeholders, and gathering feedback from diverse communities. The Louisiana Central team will also host regional and parish-level listening sessions to discuss current economic and workforce conditions and identify opportunities for growth.

Louisiana Central has a history of working with manufacturers in the region to identify opportunities, address challenges, and explore incentives for continued economic growth, new capital investment, and job creation through regular one-on-one meetings, and networking and technical assistance as part of the organization’s regional Manufacturing Council. Feedback from area manufacturers during the planning process and the “We Make Good Stuff” Economic Development Roadshow is critical to the success of the process. This collaborative approach ensures that the strategic plan reflects the unique needs and potential of Central Louisiana’s manufacturing

landscape. As Masingill stated, “Part of our call to action for our community and business leaders is to share with us your unique perspectives on our region’s key strengths, needs, opportunities, and areas for improvement to help inform this strategic plan, which will be our roadmap over the next three years to creating jobs and attracting new investment in our regional footprint.”



The region’s central location, unique culture, business climate, and infrastructure provide a compelling offer for new and existing companies looking to build, invest, and grow. Furthermore, a critical aspect of supporting manufacturing growth is a trained and ready workforce. Recognizing that over 1,300 new manufacturing positions will require a skilled labor force in the next few years, Louisiana Central actively leverages partnerships with local manufacturers, economic development partners, workforce partners, nonprofits, K-12 educators, and higher education institutions. This collaborative effort ensures that the future generation is well-prepared for high-paying manufacturing careers, helping to retain and attract talent to the community.

In addition to developing a regional workforce pipeline, Louisiana Central is proud to partner with Central Louisiana Regional Chamber of Commerce and Explore Alexandria Pineville (formerly the Alexandria Pineville Convention & Visitors Bureau), as well as many local private







investors to promote “The Real Easy” talent attraction and regional branding initiative. As more jobs are available currently and in the future, it is critical that regional partners work together to promote Central Louisiana’s assets and opportunities using consistent brand messaging locally, statewide, and nationally. “The Real Easy” is a professionally-designed marketing and engagement initiative that includes research-based branding, a resourceful website, and targeted digital and social media strategies, in addition to an influencer and ambassador program that engages local residents in “The Real Easy” movement. For more information about “The Real Easy,” visit [www.RealEasyLA.com](http://www.RealEasyLA.com) and follow Central Louisiana-The Real Easy on social media platforms.

As Central Louisiana celebrates Manufacturing Month, the message is clear—the region is not just witnessing job growth, it’s actively building it. Through strategic planning, proactive engagement, and strong partnerships, Louisiana Central is

committed to ensuring that the manufacturing sector continues to thrive, driving job creation and long-term prosperity for all ten parishes. The comprehensive strategic plan will serve as a living roadmap, guiding Central Louisiana towards a future of sustained economic success and a continued reputation for making good stuff.

Under Masingill’s leadership, the Louisiana Central team is guided by four key pillars:

- Organizational Excellence: Building upon staff expertise and capacity; enhancing operational effectiveness; and raising resources.
- Economic Development Strategy: Positioning the existing industrial and





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- Marketing & Engagement: Proactively telling Central Louisiana’s story to the world; elevating partnerships; and enhancing collaborations.

“I’m grateful to the Louisiana Central Board of Directors for the opportunity to lead this distinguished regional economic development organization, which has a legacy of impactful work in Central Louisiana, and I’m looking forward to continuing to expand its legacy,” said Masingill. “Now that I’ve stepped into this role and am on the ground, I’m even more laser-focused on positioning the organization and region for economic success.”

For more information about Louisiana Central, visit [www.louisiana-central.com](http://www.louisiana-central.com) and follow Louisiana Central on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.



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# The Battleship Missouri: The Rest of the Story

By Dr. Jerry Sanson



DR. JERRY SANSON

The battleship Missouri is one of the most famous ships in U. S. Naval history. Its role hosting the Japanese surrender ceremony that ended the bloodiest war in history assured it a place in the pantheon of famous ships along with the Constitution, Maine, Monitor, Arizona, and other names carved into American memory. The Missouri had its fifteen minutes of fame in Tokyo Bay on the morning of September 2, 1945, photographed, filmed, and written about, but have you ever wondered what happened to it after the ceremony concluded?

The Missouri was a relatively new ship on that historic morning; one of four Iowa-class battleships built for the Navy during the war. The Iowa, New Jersey, and Wisconsin were all completed before the Missouri, so it was the last battleship ever built by the United States. Construction started on the Missouri in the New York Naval Shipyard during early January 1941. It was launched in late January 1944 and commissioned in June 1944. By the time it was decommissioned for the second time in 1992, it had received three battle stars for its service in World War II and five more for its service during the Korean War.

Missouri completed trials, shakedown, and battle practice in Chesapeake Bay and left Norfolk, Virginia, in early November 1944, transited the Panama Canal, and was fitted out in San Francisco. It arrived at Ulithi, West Caroline Islands, in mid-January 1945 and quickly began its battle career.

It first served in the screen of the Lexington carrier task group which carried out the first air raids on the Japanese homeland since the Doolittle Raids in 1942. It then went to Iwo Jima, where its guns provided direct and continuous support for Allied landings. It was next ordered to bombard the Japanese Home Islands from the Inland Sea. It also participated in the Allied attack on Okinawa as part of a decoy force that bombarded the southeast coast of the island to draw attention from the west coast beaches that were the actual invasion site.



Three continuous months of participation in the Okinawa campaign revealed how useful the ship could be in battle. Its guns shot down five enemy planes during that time, assisted in the downing of six others, and was credited with one probable downing. It helped repel twelve daylight attacks and four nighttime attacks on task groups that it escorted during the campaign. In addition, its shore bombardments destroyed several gun emplacements and military, government, and industrial buildings on the island.



## Welcome! Carman Choate

**BOM Bank is pleased to welcome Carman Choate to the BOM family! Carman will be joining our Coliseum branch as a teller. Carman has been in frontline banking for many years and enjoys helping people and building meaningful relationships with customers. Originally from Louisiana, her journeys have taken her across the country, from Connecticut to Colorado, Washington State, and Virginia, before bringing her back home. Since returning, she has embraced the quiet rural lifestyle, learning to take care of her blueberry plants and growing her collection of houseplants. Carman stated, "I am proud to be a part of the BOM Bank team and excited to continue serving my community!"**

Welcome, Carman!



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Inland Sea operations followed which included the Missouri being part of 3d Fleet's bombardment of major installations within the home islands, in Missouri's case, moving close to shore and bombarding the Nihon Steel Company and the Wanishi Ironworks on Hokkaido.

As World War II drew to a close during the summer of 1945, the Missouri continued to bombard targets on the home islands and to support task groups launching other attacks. Allied attacks were so effective that military historians maintain that the Japanese had no more home waters or control of the air by the end of July. The strikes resumed on August 9th after the bombing of Nagasaki, and the Missouri's crew heard unofficially on August 10th that the Japanese were likely to surrender soon.

The ship entered Tokyo Bay on August 29th to prepare for hosting the official ceremonies ending World War II on September 2nd. It sailed from Tokyo Bay on September 7th bound for Guam to pick up homeward bound passengers, stopped at Pearl Harbor for about a week, and arrived in New York in late September.

Refurbishing and a return to service awaited the ship. It served in training maneuvers and routine missions until mid-September 1950 when it was the first American battleship to reach Korea in support of the Inchon Landings.

Relieved of duty in the Far East in late March 1951, the Missouri returned home for overhaul and training duty until recalled to Korea in 1953, followed by more training duty after the end of the conflict. It entered Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in



late 1955 for decommissioning. It was a tourist attraction at the Bremerton, Washington, naval shipyards before being recommissioned in 1986 as part of President Ronald Reagan's plan to strengthen the United States Navy presence in the world's oceans.

Missouri experienced one more brush with fame in 1989 when rock star, Cher's, producers requested a Navy ship to tape a video of her hit song "If I Could Turn Back Time". Navy officials originally suggested the deck of the battleship New Jersey as a suitable location. It was unavailable, so the officials suggested Missouri as an alternative. The Navy did not have funds for recruitment advertising at the time, and the officials hoped that young people watching the music video would turn it into

an unofficial recruitment advertisement. The original plans called for Cher to wear a jumpsuit while she performed the song as though performing a concert for the crewmembers. Cher, being typically Cher, showed up for the taping wearing much less than a jumpsuit, and the resulting video was controversial, especially among members of the World War II generation who considered it disrespectful to an honored battleship and recognized historic site. One account of the incident reports that Cher "made even the Navy blush."

Missouri supported the Persian Gulf War in 1990-91 during which it fired its first Tomahawk missiles and was decommissioned again in 1992. It was subsequently moved to Pearl Harbor and opened as the USS Missouri Memorial adjacent to the USS Arizona Memorial in 1999, thus recognizing the two major events that began and ended United States participation in World War II.

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# Plant Garlic This Fall for a Flavorful Louisiana Harvest

By Molly Lyles



Fall in Louisiana marks the beginning of garlic planting season. This crop is used in nearly every Louisiana dish. It is not only flavorful but also relatively easy to grow, with proper timing and care. While it requires a long growing season, patience will reward you with a bountiful spring harvest and a long-lasting storage crop.

Planting in October through November ensures your garlic gets the required cold period followed by long days that are both important for good bulb formation. Spring planting is not recommended in Louisiana since it won't allow enough time

for this critical cycle.

In southern climates like Louisiana, soft neck garlics perform best due to their adaptability to milder winters. The three types most grown here are: elephant, Creole, and Italian garlics. Technically more closely related to leeks than true garlic, elephant garlic produces large, mild bulbs. Its larger size and milder flavor make it a popular choice for roasting and cooking. Creole garlic produces medium sized cloves with white skin. It has a mild garlic flavor and is well suited to Louisiana's climate, though it doesn't store as well as other types. Italian garlic is known for its strong, robust flavor and has small, pink skinned cloves. It's the most pungent variety commonly grown here and has good storage life.



Before planting, garlic cloves should be left whole until just before planting. Then, gently break the bulbs apart into individual cloves which will be individually planted. Plant cloves 5 to 6 inches apart in well-drained soil with the pointed end up and just below the surface. Good drainage is essential to prevent rot, so consider planting in raised beds or high rows, as needed.

Garlic benefits from a balanced fertility throughout its long growing season. Prior to planting, apply fertilizer to enrich the soil. For every 30 square feet, mix in 1 cup of 13-13-13 or based on your soil recommendations. Side-dress with nitrogen three times during the growing season—one month after planting when shoots first emerge, in late winter, and again in mid-spring during active bulbing.

If your soil is alkaline (pH above 6.0), consider using ammonium sulfate as your nitrogen source to help increase pungency as sulfur plays a key role in garlic flavor development. Weed control is crucial, as garlic has a long growing season. Competing weeds can significantly reduce garlic yields, so consider mulching between rows to retain moisture, suppress weeds, and keep soil temperatures consistent.

Garlic is typically ready to harvest in mid-May through June, when about one-third of the leaves have yellowed. Use a garden fork to gently lift the bulbs from the soil. Cure garlic in a shaded, well-ventilated area. Once dry, trim the roots and tops, then store the heads in mesh bags or braid the stalks for hanging. Properly cured garlic will last for months and provide seed stock for the next planting season.



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# Rooted in Louisiana: The Case for Native Fruit and Nut Trees

By Michael Polozola, II, PhD



Long before orchards were planned and planted, native fruit and nut trees shaped Louisiana's landscapes and traditions. These trees have grown alongside our soils, rainfall patterns, and seasonal rhythms for generations. They know how to handle wet feet in a floodplain, shrug off a late frost, and thrive in the heat and humidity that challenge many other popular orchard varieties.

Native trees also tend to require less input, once established. Their natural resistance to local pests and diseases means fewer sprays and less worry. For homeowners who want to grow fruit without a full-time commitment—or who simply want to plant something that will last—native trees

are a smart choice.

The benefits go beyond the orchard. Native fruit and nut trees support pollinators, birds, and other wildlife in ways that imported species often can't. Their blooms feed native bees in early spring, and their fruits nourish everything from deer to songbirds in fall. Planting a mayhaw or persimmon isn't just an investment in your landscape—it's a contribution to the broader ecosystem.

Mayhaws (*Crataegus spp.*) are small, floodplain-native trees that have long been part of Louisiana's cultural and culinary heritage. Their tart red fruits ripen in late April to early May, just as spring gives way to summer. Though they resemble crabapples, mayhaws are actually hawthorns—adapted to wet soils and seasonal flooding, especially in bottomland hardwood areas.



For homeowners, mayhaws offer both beauty and utility. Their early spring blooms are among the first to feed native pollinators, and their fruit can be made into prized jellies and syrups. Wild trees still grow throughout central and southern Louisiana, but improved selections like "Maxine", "Red Champ", and "Double G" are now available for orchard planting, offering better yields and easier harvesting.

Mayhaws thrive in full sun and moist, well-drained soils. They are also a great choice for low-lying areas that stay damp in winter but dry out by summer—conditions that challenge many other fruit trees.

The American persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) is a true Southern native—rugged, reliable, and rich with fall flavor. These trees grow wild throughout Louisiana, often along fence lines, woodland edges, and old homesteads. Their deep orange fruits ripen in late fall and are famously astringent until fully soft, at which point they become sweet and custard-like.



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Persimmons are especially valuable in low-maintenance landscapes. They tolerate drought, poor soils, and partial shade, making them a good fit for areas where other fruit trees might struggle. Their upright growth habit and striking fall foliage also make them an attractive addition to the yard.

While wild persimmons are often dioecious—meaning male and female flowers occur on separate trees—several improved hybrids are now available that are self-fertile, producing fruit reliably without the need for a second tree. Varieties like “Deer Candy” and “Deer Magnet” were originally bred for wildlife plots but are well-suited to home landscapes. These selections combine native hardiness with better fruit quality, earlier ripening, and consistent yields, making them ideal for homeowners who want dependable fruit from a single tree.

Wild plums (*Prunus spp.*) are often overlooked, yet they offer striking spring blooms, tart summer fruit, and excellent wildlife value. One of the most common species in the region is the Chickasaw plum (*Prunus angustifolia*), a thicket-forming tree that thrives in poor soils and open spaces.



Chickasaw plums bloom early—often before many other fruit trees—which makes them a valuable nectar source for native bees. Their small, red to yellow fruits ripen in late spring to early summer and can be used for jelly, wine, or eaten fresh if you catch them before the wildlife do. The fruit is tart but flavorful, and the trees

themselves are hardy and drought-tolerant, once established. Because they spread by suckers, Chickasaw plums are ideal for naturalized areas, hedgerows, or erosion-prone sites.

Pecans (*Carya illinoensis*) are deeply woven into Louisiana’s landscape and agricultural history. Native pecans have been part of the landscape for centuries, growing along riverbanks and floodplains where their deep roots anchor the soil and their towering canopies provide shade and food.



Pecans are known for their longevity, resilience, and ability to thrive in challenging conditions. Selections like “Woodman” and “Manda”—both Louisiana natives—are gaining attention for their consistent production and disease tolerance in unsprayed settings. These trees represent a bridge between wild genetics and orchard performance, offering homeowners a chance to plant something both practical and deeply rooted in local history.

Native fruit and nut trees offer more than just seasonal harvests—they connect us to the land, support local ecosystems, and carry forward traditions rooted in Louisiana’s natural history. Whether you’re planting a mayhaw in a low spot, a persimmon along the edge of your woods, or a pecan that will outlive you, each tree is a quiet investment in resilience and renewal. This fall, consider adding one native tree to your landscape—not just for the fruit it may bear, but for the legacy it leaves behind.

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### Terry Goynes – Realtor®

Terry brings a strong background in community engagement and client advocacy. His sense of humor, discipline, and integrity make him a trusted guide for sellers navigating the complexities of today's market in a light hearted way. Terry is known for building relationships that last long beyond the closing table, always putting his clients' best interests first.

### Sara Richey – Realtor®

Sara's passion for helping families is evident in every transaction. With a strong commitment to customer service and a keen eye for understanding buyers' needs, she helps sellers highlight their homes' most marketable features. Her enthusiasm and client-centered approach create a smooth, enjoyable experience for sellers and buyers alike.

### Stacy Tucker – Realtor®

We're excited to welcome Stacy as the newest member of our team. Stacy brings fresh enthusiasm, strong organizational skills, and a drive to serve Central Louisiana families with excellence. She is passionate about real estate and committed to building long-lasting relationships with clients, making her a strong addition to the Service First Realty family.

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# Introduction to Judaism Class Offered at Jewish Temple

Have you ever wanted to know more about Judaism? Are you in an Interfaith Relationship? Do you have questions about what is happening in the Middle East? If so, then, this class may be for you. The Jewish Temple will offer an "Introduction to Judaism" Class at the Temple on Saturday, November 1st from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.



The class will be taught by Rabbi Judy Ginsburgh and is free and open to the public. The class will give a brief overview of Jewish beliefs, history, customs, holidays, life cycle events, and more. There will be a Question-and-Answer segment at the end. The class will also include a tour of the sanctuary and the museum and a sampling of some Jewish foods. Reservations are required for planning purposes by emailing [secretary@jewishtemple.org](mailto:secretary@jewishtemple.org)

Rabbi Ginsburgh truly believes that education is the key to understanding others and creating harmony in our world. If we know more about each other, we will be able to celebrate our similarities instead of dwelling on our differences. We hope the community will attend to learn more about our rich culture, traditions and celebrations.

The Temple is located at 2021 Turner Street in Alexandria. Please enter through the gate or the glass doors on Turner Street. Security will be there to let you in. We encourage anyone who wants to know more about Judaism to attend. The event is casual and open to all.

This event is supported by a grant from The National Center to Encourage Judaism.

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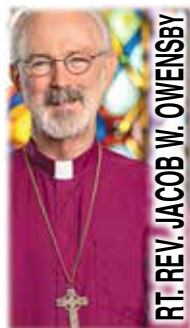
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# What Is Faith?

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



RT. REV. JACOB W. OWENSBY

My mother and I were living in a battered old car. She had less than a dollar remaining from the cash she had managed to squirrel away. Our stomachs were growling. We hadn't eaten since the previous day and it was supper time. So, mom went to the back door of a restaurant and asked for food. She came back with some peanut butter and a few slices of bread. I was

eleven years old.

At the beginning of that summer, we had escaped my abusive father, secretly hopping a bus for a distant city. Initially, mom worked as a waitress. We slept in a pay-by-the-week motel. Eventually, the job ended. The money ran out. A car became our address. We were desperate. And, at least in my experience, desperation can lead in two very different directions. One is despair and the other is faith. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's linger for a moment on what it means to be desperate.

Desperation is what people in recovery call hitting bottom. It's the lived experience of powerlessness. An "I can't..." that we feel in our bones. This is no mere lack of self-confidence. It's a moment of clarity. An awareness of a brute reality. There is something more powerful than our own will.

Plenty of us grew up to the Gospel of "The Little Engine Who Could". We can climb any hill so long as we believe in ourselves: I think I can, I think I can, I think I can. Our friends urge us on: "You've got this." Influencers assure us, "You can do hard things." And strictly speaking, this is all good and true—in a limited way. Agency is important to life's meaning. The ambition to grow, to accomplish noble things, and to overcome injustices is virtuous. Nevertheless, our strength and our wit are finite.

You may not have hit a bottom. So, this may sound defeatist. But if you've been unable to mend a broken marriage, repair the damage done to another by your own hand, or rescue a loved one from addiction, you get



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my point. Besides, no one reading this will defeat death with their own willpower.

One response to desperation is despair. As the writer of Ecclesiastes put it: “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity” (1:2). Or, more simply, “This is pointless.” As long as life’s meaning hinges on my ability to bring about the results I desire, powerlessness will be a bitter pill to swallow. It erodes our sense of purpose and self-worth. Despair frequently expresses itself in cynicism, aggression, and addiction of one sort or another.

By contrast, desperation can be the occasion for a radical reorientation of our soul. Paul crystallizes the shift with this paradox: “Power is made perfect in weakness” (1 Corinthians 12:9), This reorientation is what we mean by faith.

For clarity’s sake, start with what faith is not. Faith is “not a system of ideas we devise for ourselves” (Rowan Williams, Tokens of Trust). Faith is “not a leap in the dark” (N. T. Wright, Simply Christian). Faith is not a psychological effort. Faith is not a human achievement.

Faith is a way of being in this world centered on our relationship with God in Christ. Jesus initiates; we respond. Not merely with our intellect or even

with our hearts, but with the habitual patterns of our daily lives. His presence transforms who we are within every real and complex context we inhabit.

Jesus urges us to do the impossible. To do what we cannot do. For instance, he teaches us to forgive the unforgivable. Even the habitual moral offender. As he puts it: “And if the same person sins against you seven times a day and turns back to you seven times and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive” (Luke 17:4). “I can’t,” is basically what his followers said. And that’s why they also said, “Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). In other words, they opened themselves to a power beyond themselves and greater than themselves. Remarkably, that power was already reaching out to them.

Faith, you see, is a gift, not an achievement.

*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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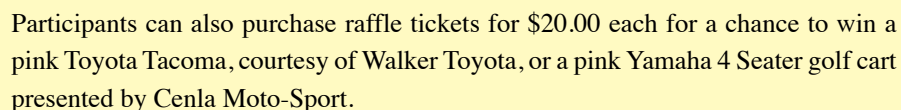
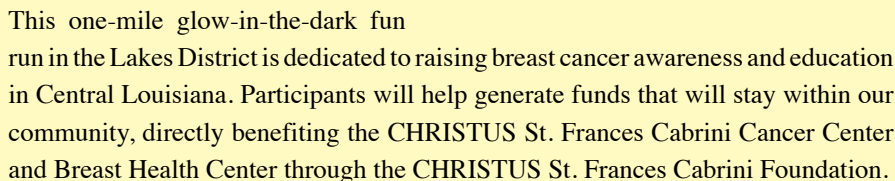
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 @CenlaFocus – OCTOBER 2025 PAGE 19



The eight annual Gleaux for the Girls, also known as the “Breast Race in Cenla,” is set for 6:00pm on Saturday, October 11th at Walker Toyota, located at 5735 Coliseum Boulevard in Alexandria.



Register for the race and buy raffle tickets at <https://www.christuscabrinifoundation.org/gleaux>. Registration fees are \$30.00 for regular runners and \$15.00 for survivors or children.

**PAGE 20** [www.cenlafocus.com](http://www.cenlafocus.com)



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8 pm	Raffle Winners Announced

#### Pink Toyota Raffle

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For more information, visit [www.christuscabrinifoundation.org/gleaux](http://www.christuscabrinifoundation.org/gleaux)

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## Derby Daze Rolls Back into Leesville!

The rumble of wheels, the gleam of chrome, and the cheers of the crowd—Leesville's Derby Daze is back, and it's bigger, bolder, and more thrilling than ever on Saturday October 25th on Leesville Main Street, starting at 8:00am. As the only officially recognized Soap Box Derby in Louisiana, this beloved event isn't just a race—it's a celebration of creativity, craftsmanship, and community pride. According to long-time supporter, Harry McCloud, "Watching these kids race down Third Street with homemade cars and huge smiles—it's the best part of the year."

There's still time to build your own racer! Whether it's sleek and speedy or quirky and colorful, every car tells a story—and yours could be the next champion. "Derby Daze isn't just a race—it's a celebration of creativity, craftsmanship, and community," said Grant Bush, event organizer. "It's about bringing people together, honoring local talent, and giving every racer—from kids to grown-ups—a moment to shine." Specs are available online at [leesvillela.gov/228/Derby-Daze](http://leesvillela.gov/228/Derby-Daze), and all ages

are encouraged to join the fun.

Whether you're racing, spectating, or just soaking in the atmosphere, Derby Daze promises a joyful celebration of Leesville's ingenuity and hometown spirit. As Louisiana's premier Soap Box Derby event, it's a chance to showcase local talent, build unforgettable memories, and keep the wheels of tradition turning.



In addition to the Derby, the day will feature a Classic Car Show. Stroll through downtown Leesville and admire a stunning lineup of vintage vehicles. From muscle cars to timeless cruisers, this show is a feast for auto enthusiasts and curious kids alike. All the while, a local band will keep the energy high with lively tunes throughout the event. From food trucks to handmade crafts, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Grab a bite, find a treasure, and support local makers.



For vendor or sponsorship opportunities, contact Grant Bush at (337) 404-4078. Learn more about racer specs and event details on the official website of the City of Leesville at [www.LeesvilleLA.gov](http://www.LeesvilleLA.gov).



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# FUMC Alexandria Announces Annual Pumpkin Patch and Fun Fall Festival

By Bill Sumrall

First United Methodist Church Alexandria (FUMCA) will have their 27th annual Pumpkin Patch beginning Thursday, October 23rd through Monday, October 27th. Pumpkins of all shapes and sizes will be for sale with plenty of wonderful photo opportunities. The pumpkin patch has been a tradition of the church since 1998. In addition, on Sunday, October 26th, there will be a Fun Fall Festival fundraiser from 12:00pm to 3:00pm.

Highlights of the Fall Festival will include music, jumpers, art and craft activities for young children, a petting zoo, and Trunk or Treat decorated cars. Tickets will be for sale Sunday afternoon at the Festival. A Jambalaya plate lunch will be sold along with hot dogs, cotton candy, popcorn and snow cones.

Proceeds from the pumpkin sales and Festival activities will benefit the church's preschool

and daycare and will be used to provide sunshades for the preschool playground, ensuring that the children will have safe and extended seasons for outdoor play. The preschool and daycare facility have been a mission of the church for 69 years.



The Pumpkin Patch will be located on the lot across from the church at 2727 Jackson Street and will be open to the public from 11:00am to 6:00pm on Thursday through Saturday, and from noon to 6:00pm on Sunday, then and again from 11:00am until 6:00pm on Monday. The Fall Festival will also be held in that lot.

Rev. Kennon Pickett, lead pastor, would like to invite the community to participate in this fall tradition of selecting pumpkins with the added benefit of a fun-filled Sunday afternoon.

For more information, contact the church office at (318) 443-5696 during business hours.

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# Acetaminophen: Is It safe During Pregnancy or Not?

By David Evans, PharmD, BCPS



September brought a bombshell announcement from the HHS director and President who announced an association of acetaminophen (or brand name Tylenol) use in pregnancy. They claim that the increased incidence of autism diagnosis is correlated with the increased use of acetaminophen in pregnancy. This claim was given with reference to an analysis of 46 studies which resulted in 27 positive associations (positive correlation), 9 null associations (no correlation or causation), and 4 negative associations (acetaminophen use resulted in less incidence of neurodevelopmental disorders than control group).

It is worth noting, however, that the DSM-IV, released in 1994, broadened the categorization of autism as a spectrum disorder. It added Asperger's disorder, childhood disintegrative disorder (CDD), and Rett syndrome as "types" of autism that may manifest in different ways. These changes, plus other factors, resulted in the rate of autism diagnosis expanding dramatically. In the early 2000s, various studies estimated rates to be about 1 in 150, and later reaching 1 in 88 by 2008. Children who exhibited more mild forms of autism were now more likely to be diagnosed with the disability. This primarily consisted of those with Asperger's disorder and pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS).

There may be other factors for the increase in autism diagnosis rates as well. It has been found that rates of intellectual disability have decreased while rates of autism have increased. It is possible that children who were previously misdiagnosed with intellectual disabilities are now being correctly diagnosed with autism. In addition, since 2001, all fifty states have passed insurance mandates requiring almost all insurance plans to cover behavioral therapies for autism. Doctors and parents may be pushing harder for a diagnosis to benefit from the increased coverage of behavioral therapies. Another factor may have been the American Academy of Pediatrics recommending all children between 18 and 24 months get screened for autism during routine visits to the pediatrician. Increased screening in Hispanic and African-American communities (who traditionally have not been diagnosed at the same rate of autism as white communities) has also resulted in higher rates of diagnosis, and consequently, better access to behavioral therapies.

A separate population-based study in Sweden of over 2 million children showed that "without sibling control, use of acetaminophen during pregnancy was associated with marginally increased risk of autism (HR 1.05 [95% CI 1.02-1.08]), however, sibling control analysis found no evidence that acetaminophen use during pregnancy was associated with autism (HR 0.98 [95% CI 0.93-1.04]). This suggests that associations observed in other models may have been attributable to familial confounding." This study suggests that there is not one single confounder, but rather that multiple birthing parents' health and sociodemographic characteristics each explained at least part of the apparent association. The study states that it did not identify a causal relationship between acetaminophen use in pregnancy and autism diagnosis.

The current recommendation by the Food and Drug Administration is: "It is



important to note that while an association between acetaminophen and neurological conditions has been described in many studies, a causal relationship has not been established and there are contrary studies in the scientific literature. It is also noted that acetaminophen is the only over-the-counter drug approved for use to treat fevers during pregnancy, and high fevers in pregnant women can pose a risk to their children. Additionally, aspirin and ibuprofen have well-documented adverse impacts on the fetus. Even with this body of evidence, the choice still belongs with parents. The precautionary principle may lead many to avoid using acetaminophen during pregnancy, especially since most low-grade fevers don't require treatment. It remains reasonable, however, for pregnant women to use acetaminophen in certain scenarios."

Ultimately, all medication usage of any dose, whether it be prescription or over-the-counter medication, should be discussed between patient and doctor. An established line of communication and mutual trust between patients and doctors is the best way to ensure safe and effective outcomes for all.





# Let's Get Back in the Game!

By Cornell D. Leblanc, D.C.



Fall weather is right around the corner and for a lot of people that can mean an increase of stiffness, arthritis, and chronic neck and lower back pain. Oftentimes, we don't address the issue until it gets to the point that we cannot tolerate it anymore. Our mission at Alexandria Spine & Rehab Center is to be ready for any of your needs in helping stay in the game and having a great quality of life. One of the biggest game-changers to our community is that we offer state-of-the-art non-surgical spinal decompression table by Accu-Spina that can help restore your disc and quality of life that you want.

Temperatures will be falling and exposure to cold weather can lead to tissue swelling and stiffness around joints. This particularly affects people with arthritis, degenerative disc disease, and other spinal disorders. Colder weather can also decrease blood flow and increase pressure on spinal discs and nerves. So, if you have ever experienced sciatica, herniated disc, or chronic neck and lower back pain, then this time of the season can magnify your symptoms.

It is a busy time of the year, so things can get ignored. Our team at Alexandria

Spine & Rehab Center wants to remind you anything you ignore today most likely will be a bigger problem tomorrow. You might feel you are out of options except for an injection or surgery. We want to continue to introduce non-surgical spinal decompression therapy, which has given us an 88% to 92% success rate in relieving neck and low back symptoms and helping avoiding surgery. Our non-surgical spinal decompression table uses a negative pressure that draws the disc back inside itself, thus, hydrating the disc and bringing nutrients back into the disc. This allows for improved circulation to promote the healing process. We have firsthand testimonies

with patients that have had tremendous success with our table. We had a retired veteran that has been using walker that can now walk with no assistance. There is a great story of a full-time nurse that was having trouble working a full shift, however did not want to do surgery, and is now back to work full time and even picking up additional shifts. We have a teacher that was unable to stand in her classroom by the end of the school year, and is now thriving as a teacher, mother and active with school events.

So, if you want your fall season to be a wonderful experience this year, and if you looking for answers to challenges in your health and disc, then come and make an appointment at Alexandria Spine & Rehab Center today by calling (318) 561-6250. Let's make this fall season one of the best yet!



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# Changes in Blood Sugar Levels and Blurred Vision

By Dr. Phillip L. Carney, Jr.



When people have a complaint of a dramatic change in vision, blood sugar levels are always a concern to the eye doctor. A large change in the person's current prescription or recent blurry vision that fluctuates between clear and blurry is sometimes a red flag for elevated blood sugar levels and possibly diabetes. Increased blood surge causes a swelling of the lens inside the eye. This swelling shifts the eye's vision. Sometimes this shift temporarily "improves" vision. The person notices they see better without their glasses, or previously blurry vision is improved. Sometimes

if blood sugar levels are very unstable, the vision will change day to day. Any of these symptoms are suspect for diabetic eye changes.

The only way to know if a change in vision is natural aging or some other problem is through a comprehensive eye exam. If diabetes or other disease is suspected, a prompt referral to a specialist is usually the best course of action. Once blood sugar levels are stabilized by diet, exercise and/or medication, vision usually returns to normal.

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



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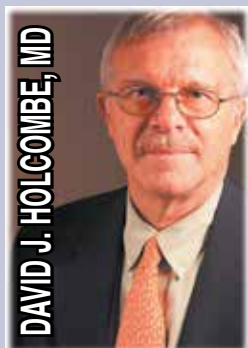
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# Vaccination Recommendations: Prepare For Turbulence

By David J. Holcombe, MD, MSA, FACP



Most Americans have never heard of the ACIP (Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices), but it has played a critical role for decades in determining who gets what vaccines and when. Far from being glamorous work, this is a tedious process of evaluation of scientific data by highly specialized and knowledgeable professionals. The ACIP goes over the research to determine which vaccines are both safe and effective and when they should be given.



The end result is a series of complicated charts for physicians and public health officials that show which vaccines are recommended for differing age groups. Vaccine development has accelerated in recent years due to the more sophisticated technologies, such as mRNA (messenger ribonucleic acid) and gene editing with CRISPR. But even newly developed vaccines must undergo rigorous testing.

Early testing involves animals and then humans in placebo vs. the new vaccine (or medication) trials. This includes random distribution in one of the two groups and then a statistical analysis of the outcomes to determine true differences. Often, such early studies need to be duplicated to ensure scientific integrity. Any human




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studies at any location are approved and overseen by an Institutional Review Board that follows strict ethical practices. Those boards are themselves overseen by the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Once a vaccine or drug is approved, it is authorized for human use on a national scale. This process, however, is not foolproof. Any vaccine or medication has some side effects and it often requires wide population use to see them. There were some problems with the live polio vaccine and others with the swine flu vaccine. A totally side effect-free product is probably “ineffective” as my medical school pharmacology professor used to say.

If every effective vaccine or drug has side effects, why are they approved at all? It comes down to a careful risk/benefit ratio study by the ACIP for vaccines (and for the FDA for other medications). The benefits to recipients must exceed the potential for serious side effects for a medication to be approved. Evaluating the various studies is, as mentioned, a tedious and difficult process. Historically, members of the ACIP all had solid medical and scientific backgrounds for those kinds of evaluations, though that has shifted drastically this year.

As a result of these changes on the national level, the American College of Pediatrics, as well as some state public health departments, announced that they will no longer base their vaccine recommendations

of those of the ACIP. Lacking confidence in the people and process, they prefer to rely on their own advisors. ACIP recommendations not only dictate vaccine practices, they also determine insurance reimbursement for vaccines for both children and adults. So, what will be paid for and by whom remains in turmoil.

Other professional organizations may follow suit resulting in a mish-mash of conflicting recommendations. Such chaos will surely create even more distrust and confusion in the public who is regularly bombarded with internet misinformation. To add to the chaos, Florida just eliminated childhood vaccination mandates to enter school, a predicably dangerous precedent. In short, prepare for vaccine turbulence.

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# A Legacy of Giving: RoyOMartin Supports LSUA Health Education Campus

By Adam Lord

Louisiana State University at Alexandria (LSUA) has secured initial funding for the development of a state-of-the-art health education center in downtown Alexandria. This project is made possible by collaborations with local partners and the state legislature, like Martin Sustainable Resources, LLC (dba RoyOMartin), contributing \$750,000 to the LSUA Foundation in support of LSUA's Health Education Campus.

This gift follows three previous ones made by the Martins to support projects across the LSU system, including \$2 million for LSUA's Martin Family Student Success Center, which is slated to open next month, \$1 million for the LSU Interdisciplinary Science Building in Baton Rouge, and \$500,000 for LSU Health Shreveport's Center for Medical Education.

In downtown Alexandria, the planned 70,000-square-foot facility is designed to address the region's growing demand for healthcare professionals by providing students with access to advanced technology and modern training environments across multiple healthcare disciplines.

"Our company employs and depends on nurses to keep our team members safe and in



good health at each facility. Nurses have provided elderly care to my family in Cenla for decades," states Chairman and CEO Roy O. Martin, III. "We owe this profession a great deal, and our family is committed to advancing the education of those in our communities. This state-of-the-art center will provide much-needed opportunities for those in our area, and we are honored to play a role in its development."

P. Steven Arnold Jr., DMD, MD  
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Like many states, Louisiana faces a shortage of nurses and allied health professionals. There are currently over 550 vacancies for registered nurses and 170 for allied health positions within area hospitals, clinics, and physicians' offices.

In partnership with regional stakeholders, LSUA seeks to respond to local workforce needs by enhancing existing programs and utilizing the new facility to increase its annual number of nursing graduates to approximately 250. The Health Education Campus will offer interdisciplinary learning opportunities and advanced technological resources, equipping graduates to meet the increasing demand for skilled healthcare professionals while strengthening ties with the broader community.

“It is with heartfelt appreciation that we thank the entire RoyOMartin Family for their multi-generational support of LSUA



and the growing number of students being served and entering the workforce in central Louisiana,” said LSUA Chancellor Paul Coreil. “The generosity and inspirational leadership provided by the entire Martin Family continues to drive higher education excellence that effectively addresses critical health-related workforce shortages in nursing and allied health professions across Louisiana.”

Strategically located in downtown Alexandria near major hospitals and healthcare providers, the LSUA Health Education Campus will expand capacity for all health education programs. Individuals interested in supporting LSUA may contribute to the LSUA Foundation. Further information is available at [www.lsuafoundation.org](http://www.lsuafoundation.org).



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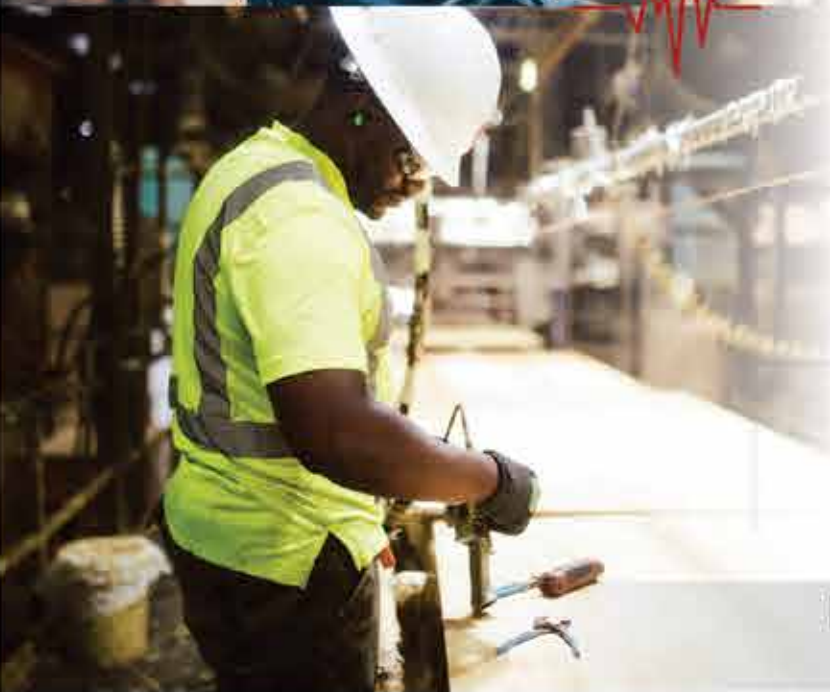
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– E. Scott Poole  
RoyO Martin President and COO

Like a pulse that sustains life, manufacturing fuels growth. At RoyO Martin, every product reflects innovation, precision, and a commitment to excellence. Advanced automation and state-of-the-art equipment help us produce with

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***RoyO Martin is built on yesterday,  
but focused on tomorrow.***

– Roy O. Martin III, Chairman and CEO



# BEAT CAPTURING

ing the pulse of progress

that meet the highest standards of quality and safety. This Manufacturing Month, we celebrate the men and women who harness technology, embrace innovation, and build stronger communities with every product we create. Together, we're not just making materials, we're building tomorrow.

## Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

More than a century ago, our founders built RoyOMartin on a foundation of determination and vision. Today, that legacy continues in facilities equipped with cutting-edge automation, modern safety systems, and highly-skilled team members who lead the way.

RoyOMartin is rooted in excellence, serving our stakeholders today, and shaping a legacy of leadership for the century ahead.

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heart of hard work.***

**– Dr. Donna P. Bailey**  
RoyOMartin Vice President of HR



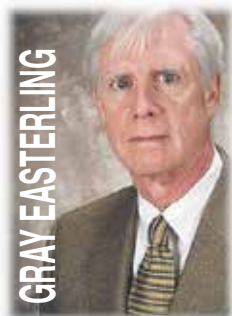
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# Financial Food For Thought

By Gray Easterling



In a recent weekend version of the Wall Street Journal, there was an interesting discussion asking whether you should at least consider switching to an electric vehicle. If you travel/drive long distances for work, haul heavy loads long distances, can't charge an EV at home or work, or are in the market for a used car, you probably can stop reading. Otherwise, let's move forward. First, EV's are more affordable. For under \$40,000, you can find a vehicle that will meet most of your needs. Many are made by American carmakers and many of the other brands are made in the U.S. The new models charge quickly, have ranges in the neighborhood of 300 miles, and include the latest "bells and whistles". They are also more reliable, high performance, and allow you to wave at gas stations. Here is an interesting statistic: according to the Federal Highway Administration, the average driver travels 33 miles a day. An old-fashioned wall socket should be enough to recharge that amount of energy overnight at a cost much less than gasoline. If you drive more, have an electrician install a 240-volt (think electric dryer) socket in your garage for faster charging.



Another consideration is the costs associated with an EV. An EV can save you on fuel and maintenance costs. A new car in the U.S. will cost about \$49,000. Many of the newer EV's will come in around \$40,000. Bear in mind that, while you save on gas and oil changes, you will pay about 50% more for insurance. Of course, since many drivers in Louisiana don't bother with having insurance long-term, that might not be a problem. On the downside, since EV's are heavier and accelerate faster, tires don't last as long. On a positive note, batteries are not an issue on newer models. According to the article, EV batteries on newer models should outlive the car they power. Also, manufacturers built more cars than the public wanted, so there are great deals out there. Competition between the carmakers should mean that the good deals will persist for the near future. If you are a two-car family, it might make sense to at least explore the EV marketplace for the local commuting vehicle, while keeping the traditional gas machine for longer trips. You are already seeing upgraded golf carts on the city streets. Why not test drive a safer version with lights, horns, and safety belts? How's this for fair and balanced reporting?

Recent events may tempt us to ask, "Where was God and why didn't He act to

prevent this disaster?" From a post by Scott Reece, there are moments in life where divine sovereignty doesn't align with human expectations. When that happens, our theology must not collapse, it must deepen. Sometimes, God restrains His hand so that a greater kingdom revelation might emerge, even through the ashes of grief. Even though we cannot answer "why," believers must remind the people of God of what is unshakably true. God is good. The cross remains the proof of His love, not our circumstances. He is just. Every tear will be accounted for, every injustice will be made right, every hidden pain will be healed. He is still working. From Romans 8, "and we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called to His purpose." While we don't have all the answers, we do have a God who still speaks, a Gospel that still saves, and a Kingdom that cannot be shaken." Don't give up on God because He never, ever, gives up on you. From a hymn even I can sing: "Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and the door shall be opened unto you; allelu, alleluia!"

*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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## 2026 Medicare & Individual Policies

By Wesley Watkins



Medicare Annual Open Enrollment runs from October 15th through December 7th. If you are enrolled in Medicare, you can change your Part D drug plan or your Medicare Advantage plan with no medical questions. Now is your time to evaluate and select your plan for 2026.

You can evaluate and change your Part D drug plan each year during the annual enrollment period. Please do your research or have your agent help you determine what plan is right for you. You can use [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) to determine which specific plan is right for you based on your prescriptions and your specific pharmacy. We are conducting evaluations at no charge for our clients. Most Medicare drug plans have a deductible and that deductible will be \$615 in 2026. The most you will spend on prescription medicine in 2026 is \$2,100.


Medicare Part B Premiums are going up in 2026. According to some sources, the base part B premium will be approximately \$206.50 per month in 2026 (up from \$185 in 2025).

Your Medicare Part B deductible in 2025 is \$257. That deductible will increase to approximately \$288 for the calendar year of 2026. Those people who have a supplement Plan G will need to know of this slight increase in deductible.

Medicare Advantage (Part C Medicare) can be a good choice for people in certain situations, but the devil is in the details. Be certain you know whether your doctors are in the network, that you will pay more as you use the plan, and the care is managed differently than Medicare (such as inpatient rehab). If you can accept those major differences, then you can save premium dollars by selecting a Medicare Advantage Plan, which includes dental, vision, and prescription coverage. Talk to your Agent or Benefits Team to get help.

Individual Policy rates will increase double digits for 2026 in most cases. Less federal funding for individual policies on The Marketplace has worried health insurance companies and this will increase premiums. This was predicted; however, this sunset in COVID funding costs all of us more. One of the best ways to buy an individual policy is to receive tax credits, if you can. Always ask if you qualify.

With the high price of medications along with other increasing health related costs, premiums aren't going down any time soon. Group policies only need two people to start a group! Get tax credits when you can, take group insurance options if available and talk to someone who is trusted in the community who sells these policies. 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 us today to learn more about health insurance products we provide individuals and companies.




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# October is Cybersecurity Month!

If you've ever received a phone call from someone claiming to be your long-lost cousin, a prince in a faraway country, or the IRS demanding payment in gift cards, congratulations! You've met a scammer. Trust us, they're not nearly as clever as they think they are. October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, and at First Federal Bank of Louisiana, we've seen plenty of financial scams come and go, but one thing stays the same—scammers are counting on you to panic, click too fast, or trust too easily.



**CYBERSECURITY  
AWARENESS  
MONTH**

The more you know about scammers, the better chance you have of hanging up, deleting texts, or simply laughing at their outrageous attempts. While scammers may think they're clever, we know this community is smarter, stronger, and too savvy to fall for their tricks.

If you think you've been the victim of a scam, contact your bank immediately. For more information on scams, visit [www.ffbla.bank/online-security](http://www.ffbla.bank/online-security).

Natalie Kelly, Branch Manager and Lender of the Coliseum Boulevard Branch in Alexandria says the best defense is awareness, "Scammers can seem smart, but you can be smarter. If something sounds too good to be true—or too urgent to wait—it's probably a scam." Scams are like fashion trends: what's "hot" changes every so often, but the basics stay the same.

**The "Grandparent" Scam:** The phone rings, and the voice on the other end says, "Grandma, it's me! I'm in trouble and need money fast." The scammer thinks you'll cave in to the needs of your favorite grandkid. Always ask something only your grandkid would know—like their favorite pizza topping or the name of a childhood dog. Or simply hang up and call them back using their actual number.

**Romance Scams:** Yes, love is in the air, but so are scams. Online "sweethearts" may love-bomb you with compliments before asking for money to visit, pay medical bills, or cover "emergencies," but true love will never ask for your bank's routing number.

**Fake Bank or IRS Calls:** "No, the IRS will not call you demanding to pay your taxes with gift cards," says Kelly. "And your bank will never ask for your debit card number." Always hang up and call your bank directly—we promise, we'll answer!

**Phishing Emails and Texts:** These messages may look official and even include logos, but there's always a catch—a suspicious link. The scammer will do anything to get you to click that link so they can get access to your financial and personal information. Remember, no reputable company will ask you to verify personal details via email or text.

"Scammers don't discriminate," adds Kelly. "They'll try their tricks on any age and any range of experience with tech." Most people may not realize that scammers tend to work in teams, not solo. They share scripts, test what works, and even hold meetings to trade tips. They think they have a better chance with a united front against consumers. While many scammers come from overseas, plenty originate right here in the U.S. In fact, scammers often research their victims first. They may know your name, your city, or even where your kids go to school. "It's not about being gullible; it's about being human," says Kelly. "Scammers exploit emotions like fear, love, and urgency. That's why awareness is key."

## Here Are Ways to Protect Yourself:

- Slow down. "Scammers want you to feel rushed so you'll make quick decisions," offers Kelly. "Take a breath before you react."
- Verify. If you get a call, text, or email, don't use the number or link provided. Look up the official contact information yourself.
- Guard your info. Treat your account numbers like your toothbrush and don't share them. If you've been compromised, contact your bank immediately.
- Talk about it. "It's important to share scam stories with friends and family," says Kelly. "It helps spread information. If you've been targeted, others likely have, too."



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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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# Why You Need to See a Doctor for Your Disability Claim

By Annie Lemoine Newton



When applying for Social Security Disability, one of the most important things you can do is see a doctor regularly. If you don't see a doctor, it's much harder to win your case. Medical records are the foundation of your disability claim and they can make or break your application.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) won't approve your claim without medical evidence. That means you need records from doctor visits showing your diagnosis, symptoms, and how your condition affects your ability to work. SSA needs proof from your providers. Regular visits show your condition is ongoing. Tests and records (like MRIs or lab work) help back up your claim. If you cannot afford a doctor, try looking for free or low-cost clinics, community health centers, or see if you qualify for Medicaid. Some options offer sliding-scale fees based on your income.

For more information about filing your claim, we are here to help. The law firm of former Social Security Judge Peter J. Lemoine has offices in Cottonport, Alexandria, Baton Rouge, and Lafayette. Call (318) 876-3174 to set up a consultation or visit our website at [www.lemoinelawfirm.com](http://www.lemoinelawfirm.com).



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# What Does the Future of Social Security Mean for Your Retirement?

By Lori Decker

LORI DECKER



Social Security remains a critical component of most Americans' retirement plans and questions persist around its long-term solvency. While the number of Social Security beneficiaries is expected to continuously grow over the next decade, payments into the program via payroll taxes are likely to slow. This dynamic is creating anxiety for many about whether they can rely on Social Security to help fund their retirement. It can be beneficial to explore the role that Social Security may have in your retirement and how to best prepare if there are meaningful changes to the program.

If you have been following financial news, you may have heard industry pundits commenting on the solvency of Social Security and its ability to pay full benefits over time. Indeed, Social Security is currently paying out more than it is taking in, which many view as problematic. In May of this year, the Social Security and Medicare Trustees released their annual report, which predicts that, by 2033, assets of the program will be depleted. It is expected that, in 2033, the Social Security's Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) fund will only take in 79% of tax revenue needed for benefit payments. As a result, payments under the program could be reduced by 21%. It's widely expected that Congress may act to shore up the program before this happens, however there are no guarantees. Planning ahead can help shield your retirement income, should Social Security be unable to fully meet its obligations.

Determine the role Social Security has in your retirement plan. It is important to understand where Social Security fits into your retirement plan. For many retirees, Social Security benefits provide key supplemental income because the program alone will not provide enough income to cover all essential and desired lifestyle expenses. Additionally, each individual's benefits will vary depending on their lifetime earnings and the age at which they begin taking distributions. If future payments are adjusted lower to make up for the deficit of flows coming into the fund when you retire, it may be wise to plan on



utilizing other means for retirement income. Take some time to determine your desired lifestyle during retirement and the associated costs, so you can craft a Social Security plan that aligns with your retirement goals.

Work with a financial advisor to adapt your retirement plan. A financial advisor can help determine the optimal payment plan for Social Security in your retirement. The age at which you begin taking distributions and where these distributions fit into the whole of your retirement plan is unique to you. An advisor can assist you

in evaluating the variables that may impact the time at which you begin collecting benefits such as your health and life expectancy. With careful financial planning, you can consider a variety of income producing investments that may contribute to your retirement security.

How Social Security programs morph and change in future is largely outside of your control, so plan for what you can. It is never too soon to work with a financial advisor to plot various scenarios for retirement based on factors that are unique to you. Ultimately, knowing you're prepared can help you feel more confident about retirement.

*Lori Decker, CMFC is a Financial Advisor with Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC. in Alexandria, LA. She specializes in fee-based financial planning and asset management strategies and has been in practice for 18 years. [www.ameripriseadvisors.com/Lori.Decker/](http://www.ameripriseadvisors.com/Lori.Decker/) Investment products are not insured by the FDIC, NCUA or any federal agency, are not deposits or obligations of, or guaranteed by any financial institution, and involve investment risks including possible loss of principal and fluctuation in value. Ameriprise Financial cannot guarantee future financial results. Securities offered by Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC. Member FINRA and SIPC.*



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# A Brisk Breeze is Blowing Through the Bunkie Buz District

By Robert Smith

Summer has been slowly releasing the environs of the Bunkie Buz District from its hot and humid grip. There’s a subtle sensation, now a palpable, pronounced, pulsating profusion of pumpkin pandemonium at the Palace Farmer’s Market! It’s joined by the many golds and oranges and reds and yes, even browns proudly shown in the window displays of New Parrino’s, BeEncourage Resale, Saxon Studio, Cherries Pick’ns, Griffins Antiques, Leslie Catherine’s, Hoover’s 5 & 10, and especially at Steele’s Florist (and Jewelry), where we anticipate the talented ladies will continue wowing us with their wonderful windows!

Indeed, the flavor of fall is in the air when taking in the autumn window wonderland that is the Buz District! Fab festive feasting is wide-ranging and widespread with delicious delectables made to order. Enjoy sit down steak and shrimp at Rocky’s, Bodacious Burgers at Bernice’s, Gyros at Griffin’s, Pizza at B-Shack on the T track, Chicken at Crispy Cajun, and sweet treats at Poppa J’s. The Bunkie Buz Menu has got both visitor and adoptee culinarily covered! And now, we are pushing the international scene, grilling gyros and welcoming and wowing you with shawarma!

The Buz also boasts the non-edible services of our Buz Family members. Check out the Service Express at Rocky’s (for all your wheel woes) and the hair haven/pamper parlor at Twisted Scissors. All this Bunkie Bruhaha is brought to you by the Bunkie Buz Tourist Infeaux Bureau (located inside Saxon Studio) where we are proudly boasting about and shamelessly promoting our Bunkie Buz Family!

On the tourism front, with Visit Avoyelles and LA Travel Association in seasonal high gear, our Bunkie Buz District has become nationally as well as internationally known, as our studio has now had happy visitors from many far-flung states such as Colorado, California, Arizona, Minnesota, Illinois, New York, and Tennessee. We even have adoptees from across the pond via Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, and Britain! Many are filtering down from Chicago on their way to New Orleans. Wilbert “Visit Avoyelles” Carmouche shepherded a group of 50 Home School Association members and parents on a visit along the Northup Trail through the Bunkie Buz District in late September. All of these visitors were greeted with a smile, a helping paw, and were delighted to become official Buz family members



and ambassadors for the Bunkie Buz! Our official L’il Bunkie mascot also accompanied many of our new ambassadors back home to help spread the Buz!

Speaking of spreading the Buz, our Bunkie Buz Live at Five Radio Show (on the air at 5:00pm Tuesdays on KVPI FM) has just added another sponsor: Twisted Scissors Salon. Hooray! Sponsorship is available for the show! Contact Misty at KVPI for more information. Judging from the new visitors from Acadie Nord, the Bunkie Buz is definitely making an impact, boasting visitors from the Mamou, Opelousas, and Lafayette areas! C’est bon!!

All in all, our Bunkie summer has been sizzling with more than high temps! With new interests and additions to the Bunkie Buz District, the tourism flow continuing to rise, and temperatures continuing to fall, the change of the season is ushering in happenings, hope, and holiday cheer! Remember, tourism begins in your own backyard. Visit us in Bunkie. The Buz is always free and the calories don’t count!



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PAGE 39



# Spooky Season in Centre de la Louisiane

By Wilbert Carmouche



October in Centre de la Louisiane is where fall truly comes alive—cool mornings, golden afternoons, and weekends filled with the sights, sounds, and flavors of the season. From pumpkin patches and fall festivals to music, food, and family traditions that bring the community together, October offers endless ways to celebrate autumn. Whether you’re looking for crisp outdoor adventures, cozy cultural events, or a taste of local flavors, you’ll find the perfect excuse to get out and enjoy the magic of fall.

Celebrate history with the Simmesport Historical Society as we commemorate 100 years of incorporation of the Village of Simmesport on Thursday, October 9th at 11:00am. The event will be held at the Simmesport Library with introduction of special guests, a brief history of the Simmesport Area and a conversation with a Voice from the Past. A plaque will be unveiled during the celebration.

Come join in for a day of aviation fun at “Wings and Wheels” on Saturday, October 11th, from 8:00am to 2:00pm at the Marksville Municipal Airport. The day will feature an impressive lineup of aircraft, a variety of classic cars, and Hangar 9 Live Band. A raffle for a free flight for eligible attendees will be held while food and drinks will be available for purchase. Call Laura at (318) 240-3088 with any inquiries.

Come join us for St. Joseph’s School Fair in Plaquemine on October 11th and 12th. The school will be celebrating 126 years of Catholic education, tradition, and the legacy of their small school. Fun begins after 4:00pm Mass on Saturday at Mater Dolorosa Church. On Saturday, Philip Meche, The Cajun Outlaw will open for headliner Semi Charmed! Enjoy fried fish dinners served by the Knights of Columbus along with additional local favorites. Bingo (in the gym) will be played and there will be games for the children. Sunday dinners consist of traditional Cochon-de-lait Pork and BBQ chicken with trimmings served in the cafeteria. Tickets are available at the St. Joseph School office. Call (318) 922-3401 for tickets and additional information.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and the Pink October Crusaders will host the 30th Annual Pink October Ladies Night Out, From Grit to Grace, on Thursday, October 16th at 6:00pm in the Mari Center at Paragon Casino Resort.

Tickets are \$30.00 each, which include light refreshments and door prizes. To reserve your table of 10 for \$400 or purchase individual tickets, call Debra Bordelon at (318) 253-6186.

Fair time continues October 18th and 19th at the 60th Sacred Heart School Fall Festival in Moreauville! Saturday’s festivities begin with a 5K Run/1-mile Fun Run

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318.359.3732

Burgers for Badges

Avoyelles Cottonport Banks

October 10, 2025 @ 10:00am to 2:00pm

318.253.9612

Wings & Wheels

Marksville Municipal Airport

October 11, 2025 @ 8:00am to 2:00pm

318.240.3088

St. Joseph's School Fair

Plaquemine LA

October 11-12, 2025

318.922.3401

Autumn Painting Workshop

Sarto Old Iron Bridge

October 18, 2025 @ 10:00am

318.500.4036

RISE Health Fair & Cancer Walk

Simmesport Health Hub

October 18, 2025

318.587.1058

Monster Ball

Paragon Casino Resort

October 18, 2025 @ 7:00pm

www.paragoncasinoresort.com

Family Halloween Dance

Haas Auditorium

October 18, 2025 @ 5:30pm - 8:00pm

318.346.2575

Sacred Heart School Fair

Moreauville LA

October 18-19, 2025

318.985.2772

Alligator Feeding Show

Paragon Casino Resort

October 25, 2025

www.paragoncasinoresort.com

Halloween Movie Night

Sarto Old Iron Bridge

October 25, 2025 @ 5:00pm

318.500.4036

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Avoyelles 4-H

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with registration from 7:00am to 7:45am. Poker Run (12:15pm registration, \$30.00), first bike (Antique Cars and Jeeps are also welcomed) out at 1:00pm. Come for a Fried Catfish Dinner for \$12.00 on Saturday at 5:00pm after the 4:00pm vigil Mass. Sunday Cochon de Lait Dinners with BBQ Chicken for \$15.00 start at 10:30am after 9:30am Mass. Both days will offer a silent auction, bingo, games, cakes, country store, split the pot, Rock Monster, Toxic Meltdown Inflatables and much more fun with music by The Cajun Outlaw Band! Get your raffle tickets to win a 500lb. butcher calf, \$500 cash, 2 LSU vs Western Kentucky tickets, \$300 cash, Chromebook, \$250 cash, Religious Concrete Statue, or \$150 cash. The drawing will take place at 3:00pm on October 19th! For further information, contact Karen Moreau at (318) 985-2772.

Ride on over to the Sarto Iron Bridge/Adam Ponthieu Grocery Store for an Autumn Painting Workshop on Saturday, October 18th. Artist Brittany will guide you through a great painting workshop and you will go home with your very own fall creative piece. The fun will begin at 10:00am. Registration is \$5.00 cash for participation. Call (318) 500-4036 for details.

Halloween is also for the “young at heart”! Come to Paragon on Saturday, October 18th from 7:00pm to 9:00pm for The Monster

Ball. Ladies get 4 free drink tickets until 8:00pm, costume contest with cash prizes, and live music by Pants Party! Get your \$10.00 general admission tickets at [www.paragoncasinoresort.com](http://www.paragoncasinoresort.com).

Halloween Movie Night at Sarto Old Iron Bridge will be held on October 25th at 5:00pm. \$10.00 cash per person will get your ticket to movie, games, prizes, crafts, and, of course, come in costume! All treats, no tricks at “The Bridge”. Email [BigVendMuseum1927@gmail.com](mailto:BigVendMuseum1927@gmail.com) for more information.

Save the dates in November for Art in the Rafters on November 6th, Open Hands Fundraiser on November 8th, Veteran’s Day Observance in Fifth Ward on November 8th, Christmas on the Island on November 15th, Christmas Extravaganza on November 22nd, Cruisin’ Southern Style ’25 on November 21st and 22nd, and Holiday Market in Hessmer on November 29th.

For all your Avoyelles Parish travel needs, contact Mary, Murial, Nelda, Bayli, or Wilbert at (318) 964-2025, (800) 833-4195, visit 8592 Highway 1, Suite 3 in Mansura, or online at [www.travelavoyelles.com](http://www.travelavoyelles.com) and Facebook @TravelAvoyelles or @AllonsAvoyelles.

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**The Monster Ball**

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# Welcome! Jorian Dodd

**BOM Bank is pleased to welcome Jorian Dodd to the BOM family. He will be joining our Operations Department as an HR Assistant! Jorian is originally from Dallas, Texas, and he graduated from Northwestern State University with a degree in Engineering Technology. He is a cheer coach at Natchitoches Flipping Athletics (NFA) as well as at Northwestern State, where he cheered during college. In his free time, Jorian enjoys coaching cheer and cooking!**

**Welcome, Jorian!**



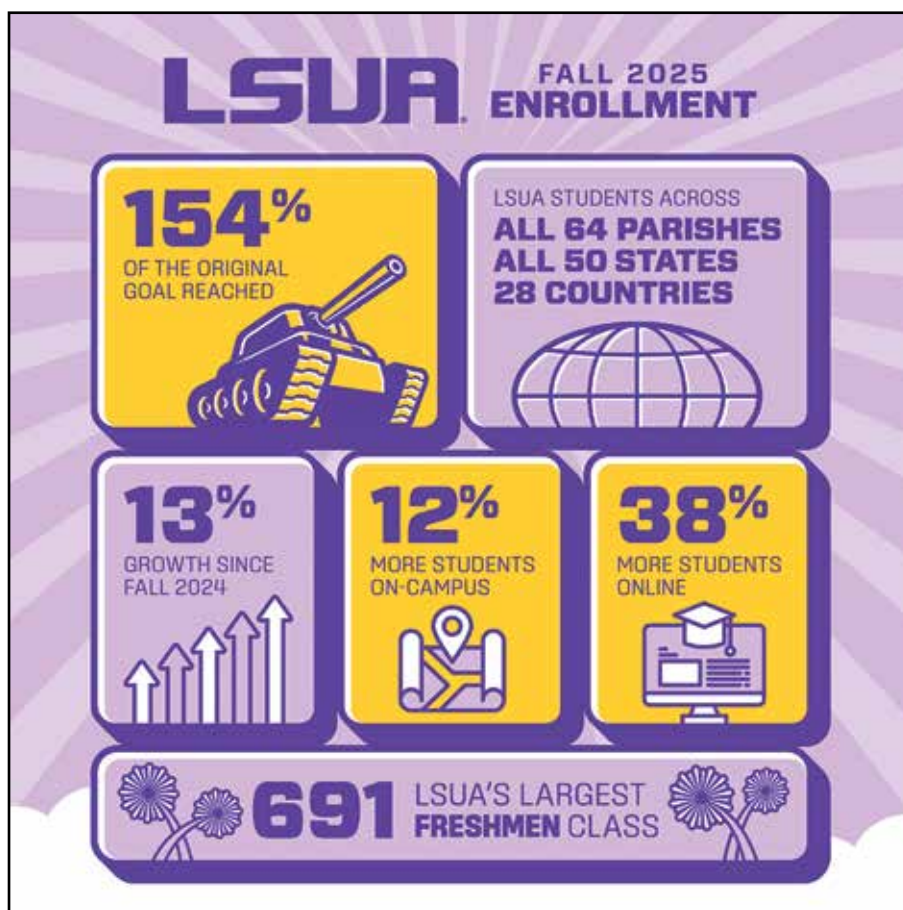
**BOM**



# EDUCATION FOCUS

## LSUA Defies National Trends, Surging to 7,684 Students with Record-Setting Fall Enrollment

While colleges and universities across the United States continue to grapple with enrollment declines and financial instability, Louisiana State University of Alexandria (LSUA) has announced a record-breaking 7,684 undergraduate students enrolled for Fall 2025, achieving 154% its original goal of 5,000 students by 2025.



This milestone marks the culmination of a six-year transformation. In 2019, when Chancellor Paul Coreil returned to lead LSUA, the institution set what many saw as an ambitious target: to grow from 3,285 students to 5,000 by Fall 2025. Instead, LSUA crossed that threshold two years early with 5,104 students in Fall 2023, then surged to 6,815 students in Fall 2024—a 33.5% year-over-year jump, the largest in school history. Now, just one year later, the campus has added another 869 students, representing a 12.8% increase over last fall and a 134% increase overall since setting their goal in 2019.

Abbey Bain, LSUA Vice Chancellor for Student Engagement exclaimed, “We are thrilled to welcome almost 7,700 students to LSUA this fall! This milestone reflects the incredible momentum and excitement surrounding our university. With a record-breaking freshman class that is almost 20% larger than last year’s, it’s clear that students want to be part of the Generals family. As one of the fastest-growing university in the south, LSUA continues to rise to the challenge: expanding





opportunities, enhancing student life, and preparing the next generation of leaders for success.”

LSUA is Louisiana’s singular undergraduate-only public institution. LSUA’s enrollment growth has been fueled by both a surge in online students and a strengthening on-campus experience. On-campus enrollment reached 3,035 students, up 11.6% from Fall 2024, while online enrollment jumped 38.3% in a single year, adding 1,286 students. Since 2019, online enrollment has exploded by 567% and now accounts for nearly 60% of LSUA’s total enrollment, largely comprised of local, non-traditional students balancing coursework with careers and families.

The university is also celebrating its largest freshman class since becoming a four-year institution in 2001, enrolling 691 full-time first-year students, an 18.9% increase from last fall and a 58.5% increase since 2019. “The nearly 20% growth in our on-campus first-year student population is particularly exciting,” said Shelly Gill, Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management. “It shows that more students are choosing to make LSUA their home. We are committed to providing a high-quality education and a vibrant campus community, and these numbers reflect that our efforts are resonating with prospective students and their families.”



LSUA’s ascent stands out sharply against a national backdrop marked by widespread enrollment contraction. According to the Hechinger Report, U.S. colleges and universities are now closing at an alarming rate of about one per week, up from just over two per month in the previous year. Nearly 10% of four-year institutions are considered in financial peril, and experts warn that the wave of closures and mergers could accelerate if the imbalance between institutional capacity and student demand persists.

These pressures have been particularly acute for small regional colleges, which often serve as critical educational and economic anchors in their communities. By contrast, LSUA has positioned itself as an outlier—leveraging affordable tuition, career-aligned programs, and strong local partnerships to attract students at a time when many peers are shrinking. In fact, to meet enrollment demands, LSUA has created and hired more than 100 new positions over the last 18 months.

At the same time, public sentiment toward higher education may be rebounding. A 2025 Gallup poll found that 42% of Americans now say they have “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in colleges and universities, up from 36% in 2023 and 2024. Those expressing “very little” or no confidence dropped from 32% a year ago to 23% today, marking the first measurable increase in public trust in over a decade.

At a recent on-campus event, LSU Interim President Matt Lee echoed this sentiment stating, “Public confidence in higher education is beginning to rebound, and that’s because of institutions like LSUA that are deeply embedded in their communities



and delivering on their mission. Students vote with their feet and parents vote with their pocketbooks—and they’re choosing LSUA because it delivers excellence.”

LSUA’s strategy is closely aligned with what students say they want from higher education: clear workforce pathways, personal attention from faculty and staff, and affordability. These factors have become increasingly critical as families scrutinize the return on investment of a college degree.

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# Entertainment Focus

## Art

**October 11 & November 8: 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

**October 14: 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

## Music

**October 9: Red River Chorale Fall Concert,** First Presbyterian Church Alexandria (357 Windermere Blvd, Alexandria), 7:30pm. "Remembrance", presents a collection of pieces that will highlight the art of storytelling, and how much music brings recollection and memories from the past to our minds. These excellent vocal selections evoke many images and memories from different times, places and corners of the heart and soul. Cost: \$20.00 adults; \$5.00 students. redriverchorale.com

## Theatre

**October 13, 20, 27 & November 3: 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.

**October 16-26: CPP Presents "Rumors",** Hearn Stage at Kress Theatre (1102 Third Street, Alexandria). Neil Simon's "Rumors" is a comedy

that begins with a missing host and ends with absolute pandemonium. Think quick dialogue, hilarious misunderstandings, and the kind of theatrical chaos that can only happen in a Neil Simon comedy. Directed by Jared Guillory and featuring Jacob Parker, Jill Dupont, De'Anna White, Jay Purdy, Samantha O'Banion, Landon Proctor, Jaeda Garner, Alan Rogers, and Kenyada Chaney. Showtimes are Thursday through Saturday at 7:30pm and Sundays at 2:30pm. Cost: \$15.00 Adults; \$12.00 Seniors; \$7.00 Students; \$5.00 Thursdays. cpptheatre.com

## Events

**Ongoing-October: Mah Jongg at FUMC,** First United Methodist Church of Alexandria (2727 Jackson St, Alexandria). Join in for open play Mah Jongg on Wednesday evenings from 5:30pm to 7:30pm; and Friday afternoons from 1:00pm to 3:00pm. Please bring your 2025 National Mah Jongg League, Inc card if you have one. Cost: Free.

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

**October 7, 14, 21, 28 & November 4: 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.

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# Entertainment Focus

**October 8: 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.

**October 8-12: 2025 Rapides Parish Fair,** Rapides Fairgrounds (8149 Highway 71 South, Alexandria). Enjoy great entertainment for the whole family, including food vendors, thrilling rides provided by the Mighty Thomas Carnival, livestock shows, games, live entertainment and more! Cost: \$2.00 ages 6+. rapidesparishfair.org

**October 9, 21, 23, 27 & November 4, 6: Medicare Education Class,** 10:00am. This is a 1-hour community event where you can get your questions about Medicare answered and an honest, straightforward overview of the facts that are important to you. October 9, 23 & November 6: Natchitoches Library; October 21st & November 4th: Libuse Branch Library; October 27th: Westside Regional Library. Cost: Free. Call: 318-237-8667.

**October 9: McDonald Costume Party,** McDonald Branch Library (1075 Highway 497, Glenmora), 4:00-5:00pm. Vampires, Ghouls, and Zombies are all welcome to join us for a spooktacular costume party! Seating limited. Registrations required. Free. rpl.org

**October 11: Native Plant Workshop,** Rapides LSU AgCenter Extension Office (300 Grady Britt Drive, Alexandria), 9:00am-12:00pm. Christina Calcaterra will present "Plant ID 101," covering basic plant terminology and notable Louisiana plant families. John Michael Kelley will follow with "Why Wildflowers? Ways to Know and Love Them," exploring the value and beauty of native wildflowers. Native plants will also be available for purchase from Grown by Grace Native Plants. Please pre-register. Cost: \$5.00. 318-767-3964.

**October 11 & November 8: 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

**October 12: Fall Into Fitness,** England Airpark Community Center (1718 Keglman Boulevard, Alexandria), 2:00pm-6:00pm. Join the Lions Club for this family-friendly event that will focus on mental health and wellness for the whole family and will encourage bonding through exercise and outdoor activities. 9-mile trail available. Free.

**October 13: Professional Women's Network of Cenla (PWN),** Brocato's (5515 Coliseum Blvd, Alexandria), 12:00pm-1:00pm. PWN will hold its monthly lunch meeting. No reservation needed. Lunch available for purchase prior to meeting. Cost: Free. Call Anh Stubbs: 318-451-7722.

**October 17: Hineston Library Fall Fest,** Hineston Branch Library (1810 Highway 121, Hineston), 4:00pm-5:00pm. Come celebrate the season at Hineston's Fall Fest! Enjoy food, games, prizes, a book walk, and plenty of fall fun for all ages. Don't miss out on the festivities. Cost: Free. rpl.org

**October 17: Fall ArtWalk 2025,** Downtown Alexandria, 5:00pm-9:00pm. The streets of Downtown Alexandria come alive as local artists demonstrate and sell their works of art! Fall ArtWalk features artists and craft vendors offering handmade jewelry, original paintings, sculpture, pottery, children's clothing, natural bath products, home décor, and more! Food vendors will also be on hand with a variety of delicious options & our community stage will feature local talent! Cost: Free. louisiana-arts.org

**October 17: Tales Along the Bayou,** Kent Plantation House (3601 Bayou Rapides Road, Alexandria), 6:00pm-7:00pm. Have a ghoulishly good time listening to scary tales! This storytelling event will include musical entertainment from Brian and Terri Kinder, not-so-scary stories by master storyteller Sylvia Yancy Davis and then kids (in their costumes) can bring their candy baskets,

pails or containers and Trick-or-Treat around the grounds of the Kent House from various community partners! It's Tales and Treats! Don't miss this fun family evening which will be filled with face painting, food vendors, and spooky tales! Bring your blanket, lawn chairs, and money for some food, drinks, and glow sticks! In the event of rain, this program will be moved to Westside Regional Library. Call: 318-487-5998. kenthouse.org

**October 18: Spooktacular Fall Fête,** Martin Branch Library (801 West Shamrock, Pineville), 10:00am-2:00pm. Celebrate the season with us at the Fall Fête—a festive outdoor event full of autumn fun! Enjoy decorated trunks, costumes, candy, and community cheer right in the library parking lot. There'll be music, photo ops, and treats for all ages in a safe, family-friendly setting. Come dressed in your Halloween best and soak in the magic of fall with neighbors and friends! Cost: Free. rpl.org

**October 18: Zoo Boo,** Alexandria Zoo (3016 Masonic Drive, Alexandria),

10:00am-6:00pm. It's the most spooktacular event of the year! Enjoy the sights, sounds, and interactive family fun at Cenla's "wildest" family-friendly Halloween extravaganza. See all of your favorite zoo animals while you explore the treat trail, enjoy kid-friendly activities, spooktacular displays, entertainment and lots more! Last entry at 4:00pm. Cost: \$25.00 Fast Pass (express admission, all-day train pass); \$12.00 general admission (ages 2+). thealexandriazoo.com/ZooBoo.html

**October 18: 5th Annual Southern Forest Heritage Museum Fall Festival,** Southern Forest Heritage Museum (77 Long Leaf Road, Long Leaf), 10:00am-7:00pm. The historic 1900s sawmill town has several of its original buildings. There are currently eight museums, including a WWII museum, the original commissary, and other original buildings. There will be vintage rail, bus rides, model T car rides, free museum tours, inflatables, and activities for children, arts and crafts, booths, food trucks, an antique tractor display, live blacksmithing, operating grill and

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# Entertainment Focus

sawmill, working small steam engine, replicas, and the unique Sheffield rail car available for rides on the rails. Original locomotives, and the antique mechanic shop will also be on display. Cost: \$10.00 per car.

**October 18: Van Gogh Gala 2025,** River Oaks Square Arts Center (1330 2nd Street, Alexandria), 7:00pm. Step into the dark side of your favorite storybook for this year's theme, "Dark Fairy Tales: Storybook Villains & Fairytale Foes." Think moody forests, Brothers Grimm folklore, and couture with a shadowy twist. Guests are encouraged to "come dressed to distress!" Take part in the Star & Mentor Art Auction. Cost: \$70.00. Call: 318-473-2670. RiverOaksArtsCenter.com

**October 18: The Monster Ball,** Paragon M&ri Showroom (711 Paragon Place, Marksville), 7:00pm-9:00pm. Join the biggest Halloween party in the region! Live Music from Pants Party Band, Costume Contest with Awesome Prizes, ladies receive four free drink tickets until 8:00pm. Must be 21+. Masks, face paint and costume weapons not allowed on casino floor. Cost: \$10.00. paragoncasinoresort.com

**October 19: 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.

**October 20-23: Lawyers in Libraries.** With the hope of reaching as many patrons as possible, we will be hosting in-person and by phone Ask-a-Lawyer consultations. We will also be providing daily legal presentations livestreamed on the Lawyers in Libraries Facebook page by attorney volunteers, focusing on common legal issues such as tenants' rights, divorce and custody, estate planning, etc. Patrons will be seen on a first come first serve basis when the attorneys are present. October 20: Westside Regional Library 1:00pm-3:00pm; October 22: Rapides Main Library 9:00am-11:00a, & 1:00pm-3:00pm; October 20: Westside Regional Library 1:00pm-5:00pm. Free. rpl.org

**October 22: Feast for Good,** Randolph Riverfront Center (707 2nd Street, Alexandria), 5:30pm. Enjoy a night of food, fun, and fellowship to support St. Mary's residents with developmental disabilities. This year's event features the first-ever St. Mary's Cookoff, where local favorites Amy Pillarissetti and John Ed Laborde go head-to-head with Chef Jay Ducote in a high-stakes appetizer showdown. You taste, you vote—all during Happy Hour with an open bar and hors d'oeuvres. Then, settle in for a gourmet dinner and a live cooking demonstration by Chef Jay, followed by our largest auction yet, packed with exclusive items and new vendors. \$100. stmarysalexandria.org/feast-for-good

**October 23: LSUA's Trick or Treat Street,** LSUA (8100 Highway 71 South, Alexandria), 5:00pm-7:00pm. Join LSUA for its 21st annual Trick or Treat Street on the LSUA Campus. Children can trick or treat in a safe environment with over 40 Student Organizations and community members. This event

is a fundraiser for LSUA student organizations. Last entry: 6:30pm. Everyone ages 3+ will need a ticket. Cost: \$7.18. lsua.edu

**October 23: 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 Ann Bausum, author of "White Lies; How The South Lost The Civil War, Then Rewrote The History," plus 17 other titles. This is a first for her to speak in Louisiana. Free. 318-442-2483.

**October 23: City of Pineville Family Fall Fest,** Ward 9 Sports Complex (3311 Donahue Ferry Rd, Pineville), 6:00pm-8:00pm. Join us for a spook-tacular time at our Pineville Family Fall Fest in a brand-new location! We will have lots of candy for all ages, a petting zoo fun for the little ones, jumpers for kids to get their bounce on, horse rides, and delicious hot dogs for all! Cost: Free. Call: 318-449-5650. Pineville.net

**October 23-27: FUMC Pumpkin Patch,** First United Methodist Church Alexandria (2727 Jackson Street, Alexandria). First United Methodist Church Alexandria's annual Pumpkin Patch offers an opportunity to pick your own pumpkin for decorating. On Sat., enjoy a fall festival of family friendly fun activities, music, jumpers, arts and crafts activities for young children, a petting zoo, and Trunk or Treat decorated cars! Free 318-443-5696.

**October 24: Crush the Crisis Drug Take Back Day,** Mac's Fresh Market (Alexandria & Pineville), 4:00pm-6:00pm. Rapides Regional Medical Center and Rapides Parish Sheriff's Office are partnering for Crush the Crisis Prescription Drug Take Back Day. Join us by dropping off any unneeded medications and prescription drugs from your house to prevent medication misuse. The collection site includes a convenient drive through, medication drop-off option for unused or expired prescription and over-the-counter medication. Cost: Free.

**October 25: Campfire Cookin',** Forts Randolph and Buhlow State Historic Site (135 Riverfront Street, Pineville), 10:00am-12:00pm. Join us at the Forts as Re-Enactor Ms. Elizabeth Walker presents mid-1800s campfire cooking techniques! Cost: \$6.00. Contact: forttrandolphintl@crt.la.gov

**October 25: 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.

**October 31: Boo at Bringham,** Bringham Field (1 Babe Ruth Drive, Alexandria), 4:00-8:00pm. Enjoy hot air balloons, face painting, hayrides, Halloween maze, games inflatable attractions, carnival rides, DJ, food trucks, music, and more! Sponsored by City of Alexandria Div. of Community Services. Free. 318-449-5225.

**October 31: Rrr... It's A Pirate Halloween Festival!** Libuse Branch Library (6375 Highway 28 East, Pineville), 4:00-5:00pm. Ahoy mateys! Join in for piratey games, prizes, and treats. The Libuse Pirate Crew welcomes all to wear their Halloween costume and come by for a good time! Please register so the crew can have enough supplies aboard. Seating is limited. Registrations are required. Free. rpl.org

**October 31: RPL Family Fall Bazaar,** Rapides Main Library (411 Washington Street, Alexandria), 4:00pm-5:30pm. RPL's Family Fall Bazaar features fun games like Monster Bowling, Scary Bag Toss, Scary Storytime, and a Scavenger hunt. We will have a station to paint pumpkins, temporary tattoos, and a backdrop for pictures. Come join us for fun times on Halloween! Free. rpl.org

**October 31: Pumpkin Palooza!,** Westside Regional Library (5416 Provine Place Alexandria), 4:00pm-5:30pm. Join us for all things Pumpkin! Pumpkin crafts for all! Pumpkin cupcake walk! Pumpkin bean bag toss! Pumpkin





# Entertainment Focus

face-painting! Pumpkin smashing! (JK, no pumpkins will be hurt during the Palooza!) Stop by on your way Trick-or-Treating and enter the costume contest! We will have plenty of prizes and candy. Cost: Free. [rpl.org](http://rpl.org)

**October 31: Spooktacular Trick-or-Treat Bash!**, King Branch Library (1115 Broadway Avenue, Alexandria), 4:00pm-6:00pm. Get your costumes ready and join us for a fun and festive Spooktacular Trick-or-Treat Bash! Families are invited to stop by for a safe and spirited Halloween celebration filled with candy giveaways, music, and spooky fun. Whether you're dressed as a ghost, goblin, or superhero, there's a treat waiting just for you! Free. [rpl.org](http://rpl.org)

**November 1: 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! \$10.00 Donation.

**November 1: 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.

**November 1: Cabrini Fest**, St. Frances Cabrini School (2215 East Texas Avenue, Alexandria), 10:00am-4:00pm. This is a fun community-wide event that includes food, games, basket raffles, bingo, talent show, live entertainment and a take-out dinner at the end of the day. Tickets will be available at the door. 318-448-3333.

**November 1: Intro to Judaism**, Jewish Temple (2021 Turner Street, Alexandria), 1:00pm-4:00pm. The class will give a brief overview of Jewish beliefs, history, customs, holidays, life cycle events, and more. There will be a Question-and-Answer segment at the end. The class will also include a tour of the sanctuary and the museum and a sampling of

some Jewish foods. Reservations are required. Cost: free. Contact: [secretary@jewishtemple.org](mailto:secretary@jewishtemple.org)

## Sports

**Ongoing-October 31: Walktober.** Louisiana Christian University's Walktober invites the community to participate in its annual fall fitness challenge by inviting participants to track and record their steps or minutes of physical activity every day. Prizes will be awarded for the top three overall participants and awards for each age group with the most steps. [lcuniversity.edu/walktober](http://lcuniversity.edu/walktober)

**October 7, 14, 21, 28 & November 4: 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)

**October 11: Gleaux for the Girls**, Walker Toyota (5735 Coliseum Blvd, Alexandria), 6:00pm. This glow-in-the-dark, 1-mile fun run is expected to welcome over 1,500 participants from across Central Louisiana to bring awareness and raise funds to expand and enhance the local treatment capabilities, rehabilitation programs, support services and community outreach. 100% of the funds stay local, directly benefitting CHRISTUS St. Frances Cabrini Hospital's Cancer Center and Breast Health Center. Enter for your chance to win a Pink Toyota or Pink Golf Cart! [christuscabrinifoundation.org/gleaux](http://christuscabrinifoundation.org/gleaux)

**October 25: Derby Daze Soap Box Derby & Car Show**, Leesville Main Street, 8:00am. Whether you're racing, spectating, or just soaking in the atmosphere, Derby Daze promises a joyful celebration of Leesville's ingenuity and hometown spirit. As Louisiana's premier Soap Box Derby event, it's a chance to showcase local talent, build unforgettable memories, and keep the wheels of tradition turning. Stroll through downtown Leesville and admire a stunning lineup of vintage vehicles. From muscle cars to timeless cruisers, this show is a feast for auto enthusiasts and curious kids alike. Call: 337-404-4078.

*\*All events subject to change.*



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## Entertainment Focus

# Yet Another Reason to Attend the Rapides Parish Fair

In an effort to support the students in Rapides Parish who have expressed interest in Agriculture and Home Economics, the Rapides Parish School Board has designated Friday, October 10th as “School Day at the Fairgrounds”, located at Highway 71 South, just past LSU Alexandria.

In order to showcase the accomplishments of our 4-H and FFA students, we have arranged the Friday Fair Schedule to include several livestock shows beginning at 9:00am and continuing throughout the day at the DeWitt Building. There will also be several educational activities presented by various agricultural trade organizations as well as governmental agencies like the Rapides Parish Farm Bureau, the LA Egg Commission, the LA Cattleman’s Association, the LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, the USDA Forest Service, and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. These demonstrations will

take place in the North Arena of the EVAC Center and will be available from 9:00am to 12:00pm.

For those students interested in mechanical engineering and physics, a “Behind the Scenes” presentation and tour will be presented by the Thomas Carnival. Students will get to learn about how the rides are designed and built, their focus on safety factors, stress points, and G-forces. To register for the presentation and tour, please contact Jane Beard at [jane.petrus@gmail.com](mailto:jane.petrus@gmail.com).

We also plan to have representatives from LSUA and their Agriculture program to talk with folks about what they offer and the requirements for students to complete a degree in Agriculture. To check out all the daily activities at the fair visit our website at [www.rapidesparishfair.org](http://www.rapidesparishfair.org). See you all at the fair—October 8th through the 12th!







# RAPIDES PARISH FAIR OCTOBER 8<sup>TH</sup> - 12<sup>TH</sup>



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(Closing times are approximate):

Wednesday, October 8 .....	4:00pm to 10:00pm
Thursday, October 9.....	2:00pm to 11:00pm
Friday, October 10.....	1:00pm to 11:30pm
Saturday, October 11 .....	11:00am to 11:30pm
Sunday, October 12 .....	11:00am to 7:00pm



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

Visit [RapidesParishFair.org](http://RapidesParishFair.org) for complete details



## Smithfield Fair to Be Honored as Louisiana Tradition Bearers

October marks Louisiana's eleventh annual Folklife Month, a celebration of the state's living traditions and the individuals who sustain them. This initiative showcases the diverse persons and groups from across the state that contribute to the cultural tapestry of Louisiana. Each artist is nominated by local folklorists and culture workers, and the five tradition bearers or groups will be honored at five events around the state. Cenla's very own Smithfield Fair has been selected and will be recognized during Fall ArtWalk on Friday, October 17th at 7:15pm in the Third Street Mini Park in Downtown Alexandria.

Founded by Alexandria singer/guitarist Dudley-Brian Smith in 1973 to focus on roots-oriented original songs in a vocal and acoustic instrument setting, he was soon joined by his brothers Bob on acoustic bass and Joel on acoustic guitar. Upon Joel's temporary departure in 1983 to travel in Europe, singer/songwriter Jan Dedon Smith of a Baton Rouge musical family joined on vocals, accordion, guitar, and piano. In 1989, with the return of Joel Smith, the group changed its name to Smithfield Fair to celebrate its mutual Scottish



heritage and achieved international distribution and recognition. Joel Smith departed again in 1990 and over the following 20+ years, the group continued to release more albums and perform 40 to 45 weekends a year throughout North America and Scotland.

As the Smith brothers had come up through the "Folk Boom" of the 1960s and early 70s, they shared a love

of traditional forms of music. Their father was a noted Cenla swing and church musician, their mother a radio standards singer, and both grandmothers were music and voice teachers. Therefore, the broad variety of music in Louisiana's "Crossroads" resonated strongly with them. Their original songs are a melting pot of folk, swing, pop, blues, gospel, jazz, classical, Celtic and Cajun roots. They have just released their 36th album, adding to their rich collection of both vocal and instrumental recordings. The group continues to receive international radio airplay, and their music has been featured in film, television, web programs and short-form documentaries.

The current and longest-standing line-up is Dudley-Brian Smith (vocals, acoustic guitars, mandolin, harmonica, recorder), Jan Smith (vocals, accordion, piano, acoustic guitars) and Bob Smith (vocals, acoustic bass, percussion), who have now returned to a broader roots-based genre. The group takes pride in being Louisiana's longest continuously performing roots-oriented singer/songwriter ensemble.



## Congratulations! Lanan Laroux

**BOM Bank would like to congratulate Lanan Laroux on her promotion to Wire Clerk! Over the past year and a half, Lanan has been an essential part of our team, showcasing outstanding skills and commitment. Outside the office, Lanan enjoys spending time at Toledo Bend Lake and cooking. She is also enthusiastic about socializing and engaging in community events. Lanan expressed, "I enjoy working at BOM because of how present they are in the community."**

**Congratulations, Lanan!**



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# Van Gogh Gala 2025: Dark Fairy Tales Comes to Life at River Oaks

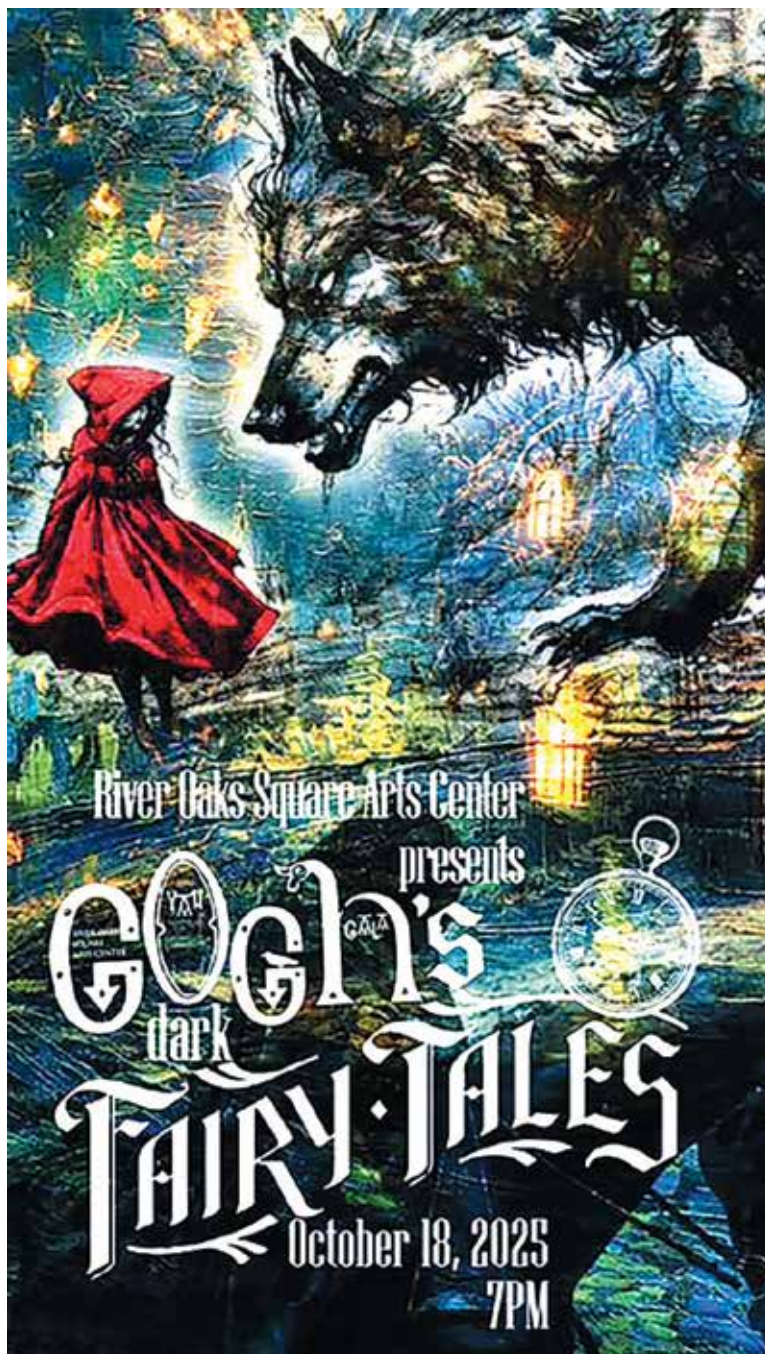
River Oaks Square Arts Center invites the community to step into the dark side of their favorite storybook on Saturday, October 18th at 7:00pm for the annual Van Gogh Gala. This year's theme, "Dark Fairy Tales: Storybook Villains & Fairytale Foes," promises to be one of the most enchanting and imaginative nights of the year.

Think moody forests, Brothers Grimm folklore, and couture with a shadowy twist. Whether you arrive channeling Maleficent's regal menace or Captain Hook's swashbuckling bravado, this is your chance to let your inner villain out to play. Guests are encouraged to "come dressed to distress," making the Gala not only a celebration of art, but a living, breathing fairytale—dark, daring, and filled with mystique.

"The Van Gogh Gala has always been a night where imagination takes center stage," says Rachael Dauzat, Executive Director at River Oaks. "This year's Dark Fairy Tales theme invites us all to play a part in a story where art, community, and creativity meet. It's one of our most important fundraisers, but it's also a night of pure magic that reminds us why River Oaks is the heart of the arts in Central Louisiana."

One of the most beloved traditions of the Gala is the collaboration between Star/Guest Artists—community leaders and notable figures—and Mentor Artists from the River Oaks family. Together, they create unique works of art that are auctioned during the evening, with all proceeds benefiting the ongoing programs and mission of River Oaks Square Arts Center.

Star & Mentor Artists 2025 are: Madalyn Mahfouz & Carla Guillory; Ashley Stehr & Charissa Owens; Dr. Elizabeth McLemore & Lindsay B. Moore; James Hayes; Lynn Hyde & Leah Morace; Allie Netherland, Meredith Crotty, Amy Grimes & Lauren Courville; Casey Antee & Jerry Havens; Sheriff Mark Wood & David Crain; Steven Maxwell & Madilyn Anderson; Mayor Joe Bishop & James Aubrey Bolen III; Caroline Searcy & Chastity Sayer Smith; Dr. Mark Berry; Esther Hill & Carla Guillory; Amy Pillarisetti & Laura Gates; Dr. Morgan McDaniel & Megan Hale; Rachel Fry & Lindsay B. Moore; Lauren Lemoine & Amber Voorhies; Angie



Johnson & Amber Voorhies; Sandy Piland & Julie Blackwell Wood; Lauren Laborde & Carrie Bruyninckyx; Dr. Erin Bear Bordes & Susan R. Corbyn; Lafe Jones & Matt Dawson; Megan Long & Leslie Carmouche; Bella DiStefano & Barbara Clover; Nicole Anthony & Sylvia Kerry; with donations by Simonne Soileau and Lynn Sanders.

Each of these collaborations is expected to result in one-of-a-kind pieces that combine professional technique with community imagination. Guests will enjoy live and silent auctions, costume contests, themed bites and libations, and plenty of enchanting surprises. In true River Oaks tradition, art installations will feature a dark fairytale twist, while guests bid on both collaborative and individual works of art.

The Gala is made possible through the generous support of its sponsors. Title Sponsors: Rapides Regional Medical Center and Red River Bank. Co-Sponsors: CLECO, Explore Alexandria/Pineville CVB, Southern Heritage Bank, and Alexandria Emergency Hospital. The "Gilded Skull" Best Costume Award is sponsored by Queen Bee Marketing.

The Van Gogh Gala is not just an evening of art and entertainment, it is a cornerstone event that sustains River Oaks' mission to provide exhibitions, classes, outreach programs, and a creative hub for Central Louisiana. Don't miss your chance to be part of this unforgettable

evening where fairy tales take flight in the most unexpected ways.

Tickets are \$70.00 per person, with reserved tables available for \$750 (seating ten with preferred placement). As of this writing, tables are sold out entirely with a limited number of tickets still available. To purchase tickets, call the Arts Center office at (318) 473-2670 or reach out to any River Oaks Board Member. For additional information about the Gala, its programs, or sponsorship opportunities, please contact River Oaks directly, visit [riveroaksartscenter.com](http://riveroaksartscenter.com) or call (318) 473-2670.



# Louisiana's First Astronaut

By Michael Wynne



There have lived among us great women and men that we usually only read about in history books. But some of the greatest of the great are those who seek out futures of adventure and the exploration into unknown realms. We, ourselves, can only hope that these people will step forward and serve our nation and our world as they will do things that none of us would ever dream or even consider doing ourselves. Albert Hanlin Crews, Jr., a humble and good man, a man who could be anyone's next door neighbor or just someone who sits in a pew next to us during church service, did live here amongst us. In fact, until his sad passing in June of 2025, maybe we could have sat at his feet to hear his tales of his exploits and life's notable experiences. I would have happily sat and listened and learned from him. But alas, due to his unneeded humbleness of nature, I did not know that he was even my Cenla neighbor, but simply just another good man in our community who lived a life well worth knowing.

Born in Arkansas, raised in the Holloway community, a 1946 graduate of Buckeye High School and later Southwestern Louisiana Institute (now ULL) in Lafayette in the field of Chemical Engineering in 1950, Albert went on to get his Masters of Science in Aeronautical Engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology in 1959. But long before he received his Master's, he was a Jet Pilot for the Air Defense Command for five years, starting in 1952. Due to his exemplary work, he went on to perform one of the most dangerous jobs in existence in the field of flying—becoming a test pilot for the Air Force's new and often secretive projects. Many of the test pilots in this field ended up as casualties, but Albert's innate skills, training, and knowledge allowed him to thrive in these challenges. The U.S. Air Force was the original cutting edge in the development of the space age.



In April of 1962, Albert was featured in a Town Talk article as one of eight potential new astronauts to be selected from 55 test pilots who volunteered for "space duty." It was noted back then that Albert was actually "more qualified" to become an Astronaut than any of the original seven Mercury astronauts!

By 1963, Albert was now an instructor training the new test pilots who were coming aboard, including many future astronauts, and he remained in that position for many years. NASA soon selected him as one of the key personnel for their important manned space program, the program that became the greatest human endeavor in world history. In total, Albert spent 23 years in the U. S. Air Force, 7 1/2 of which were spent classified as a USAF Astronaut. During his years as an Astronaut, he served in the two manned space programs, the Dyna-soar and Manned Orbital Laboratory (MOL) programs, both of which were fundamental programs for the later Space Shuttles and Space Station.

Albert was the first officially named Astronaut ever to come from Louisiana. He would spend 27 years at NASA in various positions in the astronaut directorate and

in NASA Flight Operations, including, but not limited to, as a research pilot. He also served as the pilot who trained other NASA Astronauts by setting up orbital and lunar simulations for them. He remained a pilot for NASA, flying such aircraft as the "Super Guppy" outsize cargo transport, the WB-57F atmospheric research aircraft and the OV-095 SAIL Space Shuttle simulator until he retired at age 65.

On August 20th of this year, the Louisiana Legislature honored this remarkable man with a posthumous commendation. In the Legislature's press release of this event, it read, in part: "Throughout his life, Crews exemplified dedication, innovation and service to his country. His pioneering spirit opened doors for future generations of scientists, engineers and astronauts."

Crews later lived in Florida with his wife and three daughters, but made frequent return trips to Buckeye. May this great man never be forgotten in Cenla, or around the world.



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# Historian Elaine H. Brister

By Michael Wynne

Many great authors are often recognized as such based upon their accumulated published works. Authors like James Patterson, Stephen King, Nora Roberts, and Michael Crichton will likely be honored and best remembered for their total body of works rather than their specific titles. It is challenging, if not impossible, to write just one or two books and expect to become known and honored for all time based on this limited work. One such author from Cenla meets and actually exceeds these criteria and that is the late Elaine Brister of Pineville.

Faustina Elaine Holmes Brister (1905-1998) boasted a proud Louisiana heritage. The granddaughter of legendary north Louisiana Baptist Reverend Lewis Napoleon Holmes (“the man with a thousand smiles”) and the daughter of prominent Pineville and Cenla area citizens James and Mary Elizabeth (Beall) Holmes, Elaine was raised proudly in the Baptist faith. Elaine’s marriage to Commodore Webster Brister, Sr. (1892-1935) ended in tragedy when he was crushed by a gravel truck that he was catching a ride on in Pineville. They were the parents of two beloved children, three grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Elaine was a graduate and former associate professor of history at Louisiana College (now LCU). She obtained her Master’s degree in history from LSU and did post graduate studies at the University of North Carolina and Wisconsin. She was an honorary member of Delta Kappa Gamma. A live oak on the approach to old Huey P. Long Memorial hospital in Pineville is named after Elaine.

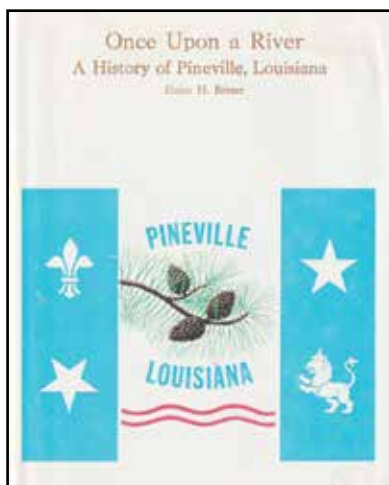
Elaine was a lifelong devotee to education and was elected as the first female member of the Rapides Parish School Board in 1952. As shared by her nationally-known author granddaughter, Ann Bausum, “My grandmother’s opinion of the Supreme Court decision on Brown V. Board of Education regarding integration into schools was that this judgment was to be respected and implemented. Her fellow school board members did not universally agree with her and she eventually lost her position. Time has proven that my grandmother was right.”

Like her late husband and other family members, Elaine was devoted to the First Baptist Church in Pineville, where she taught Sunday school and conducted leadership ministries for over 60 years. She died in Fort Worth, where she was then residing and is buried with her family at Greenwood Cemetery in Pineville. Bausum said of her grandmother, “My grandmother came from a long line of strong women. She certainly exemplified that same strength. She also had a well-honed sense of what was fair and just, and she passed those qualities down the female line with equal determination.”



Elaine authored two books, the important “Once Upon A River,” the definitive history of Pineville and nearby communities north of the Red River, and “The Joy Of Discovery,” a journal of missionary biography. “Once Upon A River” is a remarkable book, particularly of its time. This Pineville history book’s origins began in 1947 when Elaine selected this topic to fulfill her requirements for her Master’s degree. Published in 1968 and bearing a title suggested by Elaine’s daughter, Dolores, the book also contains information that is sadly no longer available today. More importantly, in that prior age of limited historical resources and no internet, Elaine had to interview more than a hundred people and had to manually turn thousands of pages of the Town Talk newspaper in the newspaper archives to find the needed information that she sought. Note that the larger city of Alexandria has no such equivalent historical work (yet) on the city’s history.

Elaine H. Brister was a one-of-a-kind lady, still admired today, almost 30 years after her death. Her history book is both Elaine’s legacy and a book that will be read for many centuries to come.



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# One in Eight

By Debbie Guy, LCSW



DEBBIE GUY, MSW, LCSW

Well, regardless of minding our P's and Q's, it seems we find ourselves the "one", in the "1 in 8 may be diagnosed with Breast Cancer" statistic. Cancer, a scary, frighteningly complicated disease.

Our journey typically starts with either finding a lump while taking a shower or a yearly mammogram screening. We hear "suspicious," a diagnostic mammogram is scheduled, and then biopsy. The doctor says he or she will call with

the results. A week later, while at work, we get that punch in the gut, "Sorry, it's cancer," call. The doctor says their office will set up an appointment so we can discuss the results, treatment options, referrals to other doctors, etc. In other words, doctor's homework. On our way home, we yell, cry, beg, and bargain with our Maker. We slowly turn into our driveway to be greeted with "What's for supper?" and "I need a new gym suit." A normal day. Reality check...we've a lot of homework, too.

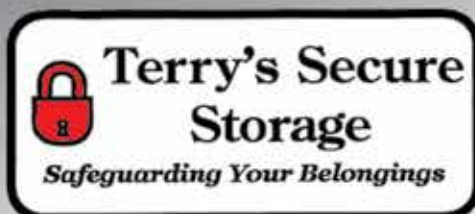
Our work is more prepping for what may or may not happen. And how to keep our family functioning on a daily basis whether we stay here for treatment or have to travel to a research hospital. So, let's get busy! First, we round up our inner circle and appoint a Press Secretary. Updating ever-changing news is exhausting and frustrating. Fielding those innocent questions and challenging each decision churns up stress, doubt, and fear. No doubt nor fear is permitted

past our doors! Secondly, Door Dash and Walmart delivery can only do so much; let people love on us. It's the simple things, like taking our kids to practice, or babysitting after a tough treatment day, or folding that mountain of clean clothes piled on the couch. Then, examine our commitments. If they do not keep the lights on, into the "may bail out" box they go. One treatment is easy-peasy, another one kicks our butt. It's okay to play the "bail out" card. Lastly, nurture our souls with inspirational scriptures and quotes. One of my favorites is by Heidi Garland: "I may not look healthy on paper, yet I am well!" And, 15 years out, it continually directs my focus to the, "It is well with my soul," part of my busy life.

Finally, everyone's homework is turned in, decisions are finalized, it's the first day

of chemo. Our port is accessed; IVs are started. With each click, we pray "one more year, one more year." We wait and see. Well, maybe not about everything. Personally, I drew the line with Adriamycin that "Red Devil" chemo drug concerning my hair. She may say when, but I would say how! No pity party here. So, the morning I ran fingers through my hair and saw strands hanging like icicles on a Christmas Tree, I called Ravon. She said, "Come after my last appointment." My press secretary texted those who wanted to shave their heads in support: "It's happening today at 4:00!" Though miles apart, we were one in spirit. Take that, cancer!

So, blessings on us "one" in 8, doing our homework, living our "it is well" survivor journey. We got this!



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# Breaking Free from Trauma: Understanding Its Impact and Finding Healing

By Christy Pennison, M.S., LPC



Trauma. It's a word we often hear, but it can feel heavy, complicated, or even like it's reserved for "big" life events. The truth is, trauma is simply an emotional response to something deeply distressing—and every one of us experiences events in life that can leave us feeling vulnerable, shaken, or changed.

Whether it's the loss of someone we love, a painful relationship, an accident, a health scare, or even subtle experiences that chip away at our sense of safety, these moments impact us. They shape the way we see ourselves, others, and the world. Here's the thing: experiencing trauma is part of being human. But how we move through it—or sometimes, how we don't—determines how it shows up in our day-to-day life.

When we aren't able to fully process a traumatic experience, our body and mind can get "stuck" in what's called a trauma response cycle. Think of it like your nervous system's alarm that keeps going off, even though the danger has passed. You might notice this in unexpected ways—a quick temper, anxiety that seems to come out of nowhere, shutting down in certain situations, physical symptoms that don't seem to have a medical explanation, or even feeling "numb" to life. Over time, this unprocessed trauma can quietly influence how we show up at work, in relationships, and with ourselves. We may find ourselves avoiding certain situations, repeating old patterns, or feeling like we're always "on edge."



The good news? Healing is possible. Breaking free from trauma starts with awareness—recognizing that what you're experiencing may be connected to something you went through in the past. From there, it's about safely completing the trauma response cycle your body never got to finish. That can mean learning to regulate your nervous system, gently processing memories, and creating new, healthier patterns of thinking and responding.

An important thing to know is that trauma-focused therapies don't always require you to verbally retell or process the traumatic event in detail. Some modalities work directly with the body and brain to release the stored response—helping you heal without having to relive every moment. This can be an empowering and less overwhelming approach for many people.

Trauma work is not about "forgetting" what happened—it's about rewiring your brain so that your body no longer reacts as if it's still happening. Over time, this helps you regain a sense of safety, freedom, and connection with yourself and others.

At Be Inspired Counseling & Consulting, we have therapists trained in specific trauma-focused modalities designed to help you move through these experiences. These approaches can help you heal on a deeper level—so you can live without the constant weight of old pain and without the somatic responses that keep you stuck.

Trauma may shape your story, but it doesn't have to define the rest of your life. Healing is possible. And you don't have to walk through it alone.

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# Make This Halloween a Treat for Health, Fun, and Fellowship!

By Jennifer Duhon, MS, RDN, LDN



For many, autumn events like Fall Fest and Halloween are a time to wear costumes, go trick-or-treating, fellowship with friends, and indulge in lots of sweet treats! It's the season of pumpkin patches, spooky decorations, and the occasional sugar rush. But celebrations like these are also a golden opportunity to sprinkle in some healthy habits—without scaring away the fun!

This year, let's make Halloween a little healthier (and just as magical) by balancing treats with movement, offering better snack choices, and keeping moderation in mind. Here are some playful and practical tips to help your little goblins and grown-up ghouls enjoy the season in a more wholesome way.

Hand out healthier treats that kids actually like! Sure, candy is the star of Halloween—but it doesn't have to be the only guest at the party. Healthier treats can be just as exciting, especially when they come in fun packaging or unexpected flavors. Try these crowd-pleasers:

- Mini boxes of raisins or raisins (they're nature's candy!);
- Trail mix or baked pretzels;
- Graham crackers shaped like spooky creatures;
- Sugar-free gum or hard candy;
- Applesauce pouches or pudding cups;
- 100% juice boxes or sugar-free cider packets;
- Fig cookies or animal crackers.

Want to be the house that kids talk about all year? Skip the snacks and hand out fun trinkets instead! Non-food treats are great for kids with allergies and add a playful twist to the usual candy haul. Ideas that bring the fun:

- Glow sticks (instant costume upgrade!);
- Stickers, whistles, or bubbles;
- Mini coloring books or crayons;
- Temporary tattoos or costume jewelry;
- Pencils, erasers, or bookmarks;
- Pocket-sized games or tiny toys.

Pro tip: Place a teal pumpkin on your porch to show you offer allergy-friendly goodies. Learn more at [foodallergy.org](http://foodallergy.org).

Halloween is the perfect excuse to get moving—whether it's dancing at a party or racing from house to house in costume. Sneak in some exercise with games and active play.

## NON-FOOD TREATS AVAILABLE HERE



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Fun ways to get kids moving:

- Hopscotch or foursquare with sidewalk chalk;
- Jump rope contests or hacky sack challenges;
- Scavenger hunts or spooky obstacle courses;
- Dance-offs to Halloween music.

Even a brisk walk around the neighborhood counts toward the recommended 60 minutes of daily activity. Bonus points if you're dressed as a superhero while doing it!

Moderation is the magic word! Let's be real—kids are going to eat candy. And that's okay! The key is teaching them how to enjoy it without going overboard.

Tips for keeping it balanced:

- Let kids pick a few favorites on Halloween night, then ration the rest over the week;
- Pair treats with healthy snacks—like fruit first, then a fun-size candy;
- Serve veggie trays shaped like jack-o'-lanterns or ghosts at parties;
- Offer roasted pumpkin seeds or cutie oranges decorated with food-safe markers.

This way, treats become part of a balanced lifestyle—not a sugar-fueled frenzy.

Survive the sweet temptations at work. Office candy bowls are like sirens calling you to snack all day. But you can resist—or at least make smarter choices.

Stay strong with these strategies:

- Keep wrappers visible so you're aware of how many you've had;
- Bring your own stash of healthier snacks to avoid temptation;
- Share your goals with coworkers and support each other;
- Be the hero of the break room by bringing in healthier treat options.

Remember, you're not alone in trying to make better choices. A little encouragement goes a long way!

Halloween doesn't have to be a health horror story. With a few creative swaps and a sprinkle of moderation, you can enjoy all the fun while keeping wellness in the



mix. Whether you're hosting a party, handing out treats, or just trying to survive the candy avalanche at work, these tips can help make your Halloween season a little healthier—and a lot more joyful.

So go ahead, dress up, dance it out, and enjoy the season. Your body (and your doctor/dentist/dietitian) will cheer you on!

## Pumpkin Cranberry Bread

By Jennifer Duhon

2 1/4 Cups All-Purpose Flour  
1 Tablespoon Pumpkin Pie Spice  
2 Teaspoons Baking Powder  
1/2 Teaspoon Salt  
1 1/2 Cups White Sugar  
1/2 Cup Brown Sugar  
1 (15 Ounce) Can Pumpkin Puree  
2 Large Eggs  
1/2 Cup Vegetable Oil  
1 Cup Dried Cranberries  
1 Cup Chopped Walnuts



Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Grease and flour two 9x5-inch loaf pans (or 4 mini loaf pans). Combine flour, pumpkin pie spice, baking powder, and salt in a mixing bowl. Combine sugars, pumpkin puree, eggs, and oil in a small mixing bowl. Beat until just blended. Stir the wet mixture into the dry with a wooden spoon until batter is just moistened. Fold cranberries and walnuts into the batter. Spoon the batter into the prepared loaf pans. Bake in the preheated oven until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, about 50 to 60 minutes.

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# Plantation Pralines, Brownies and Fresh Apple Cake

By Wilbert Carmouche

Fair season is in full swing across Avoyelles Parish, and with it comes the irresistible aroma of homemade sweets. From pralines wrapped in wax paper to cookies, cakes, and other hand-held treats, the dessert tables are just as much a draw as the food and games. These timeless favorites don't just satisfy a sweet tooth—they carry the flavor of tradition and community. In the spirit of fair season, here are a few recipes to bring that sweetness home. It may take a little more time to make from scratch, but it's oh so much better!

## Plantation Pralines

by Mary M. Coco

2 Cups Granulated Sugar  
1 Teaspoon Baking Soda  
1 Cup Buttermilk  
Pinch of Salt  
2 Tablespoons Butter or Margarine  
2 1/3 Cups Pecan Halves  
2/3 Cups Perfect Pecan Halves



In a large (8 quart) kettle, combine sugar, baking soda, buttermilk, and salt. Cook over heat 5 minutes, being sure to stir frequently and scrape bottom of

pan. Add butter and 2 1/3 cups pecans. Cook, stirring continuously, until a little mixture forms a very soft ball in water. Let mixture cool slightly. Beat until thickened and creamy; immediately drop on waxed paper, aluminum foil, or greased cookie sheet. Dot with 2/3 cup pecan halves.

## Brownies

by Gloria B. Perkins

2 Squares Baker's Unsweetened Chocolate  
2 eggs  
1/4 Teaspoon Salt  
1/2 Cups Nutmeats  
1/2 Cups Butter  
1 Cups Sugar  
2/3 Cup Sifted All-Purpose Flour  
1 Teaspoon Vanilla

Combine flour, baking powder, and salt. Beat sugar and eggs together until well blended. Melt Baker's chocolate and butter together. Add this to sugar-egg mixture; add flour mixture to this. Blend

well but stir only enough to mix. Add nuts and vanilla. Bake in 8x8x2 inch pan in 350 degrees Fahrenheit oven for 25 minutes. Take care not to overcook!

## Fresh Apple Cake

by Delores Goux

1 Cup Wesson Oil  
2 Cups Sugar  
2 Eggs  
1/2 Cup Buttermilk

2 Teaspoon Vanilla  
3 Cups Flour  
2 Teaspoon Cinnamon  
1 Teaspoon Soda  
1 Teaspoon Salt

Mix together the oil, sugar, eggs, buttermilk and vanilla. In a separate bowl, sift together the flour, cinnamon, soda, and salt. Peel and core fresh apples. Chip into small pieces (enough to measure 3 cups chipped apples). Sift flour mixture over apples. Add 1 cup chopped pecans. Add liquid ingredients to apple mixture and combine well. Bake in greased 10-inch tube pan for 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 1 hour. Can be frozen. It serves about 20 people.



Avoyelles Parish cookbooks are available for sale in the gift shop located at ACT Office, 8592 Highway 1, Suite 3, Mansura, LA 71350. This month's recipes were selected from "La Cuisine des Avoyelles", a collection of recipes from Avoyelles Parish Recipes gathered by members of La Commission des Avoyelles. "La Cuisine des Avoyelles" cookbook cost is \$15.00 plus \$6.00 for postage and handling. Call (800) 833-4195 or email us at [tourism@cricket.net](mailto:tourism@cricket.net) for details.

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# Mind Your Manners!



Each with deep ties to Cenla, Carolyn Rothermel and Mary Ellen Kee are dedicated to equipping children with knowledge and skills of social etiquette that will prepare them to show honor, dignity, and respect to other people while establishing themselves as a polite and successful member of society. Carolyn is a former franchise owner and director of the local Chapter of the National League of Junior Cotillions and developer of etiquette programs for children and adults.

Mary Ellen has a love for children and, as a result of the manners and discipline learned in school, is ready to teach the manners necessary for students to become valued and polite members of society.

Teaching manners to children within a peer group encourages them to make new friends, develop self-confidence and be comfortable together while learning and enjoying themselves. Through role-playing and hands-on experiences young ladies and gentlemen will leave this program with confidence and poise from knowing the proper behavior in life's situations. "We are very excited to bring this new program to the Cenla area with classes

beginning October 19th!" said Carolyn. There are still openings available for students with a deadline for registration of October 15th.

"Our goal is to ensure that students of Mind Your Manners Academy learn basics of social etiquette based on 'Emily Post's Etiquette - 19th Edition'," Carolyn explains. "With this in mind, it is our intention to teach children in our community how to become respectful and self-confident members of society." Age-specific curriculum includes topics such as manners in the home, communications skills, first impressions, paying and receiving compliments, party etiquette, table manners, dinner conversation and more.



Classes will meet on Sunday afternoons and be divided into two sessions by age. First and second grades will meet from 1:00pm to 2:30pm; third through fifth graders will meet from 3:00pm to 4:30pm. Three of the four classes will be held on Sunday afternoons. The fourth class will be held at Trios restaurant and will include a formal three-course meal.

For more information on how a young person in your life can benefit from joining Mind Your Manners Academy, reach out today by phone at (318) 753-2233 or by email at [MindYourMannersAcademy@gmail.com](mailto:MindYourMannersAcademy@gmail.com).

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## BACARDI FRIDAYS

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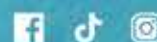
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- **WEDNESDAYS** - Bingo 6PM
- **THURSDAYS** - Bingo 6PM, Senior Days
- **FRIDAYS** - 2-for-1 Seafood Buffet
- **SATURDAYS** - 2-for-1 Steak & Seafood Buffet
- **SUNDAYS** - Buffet Breakfast, 8-10:30AM, Buffet Brunch, 11AM-3PM
- **SUPER BINGO** - Oct 1 & Oct 30, 6PM

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