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The Community Lifestyle/Business Profile Journal of CenLA

Volume 28 • Issue 9
September 2025

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in this
ISSUE

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BUNKIE TRADE DAYS:

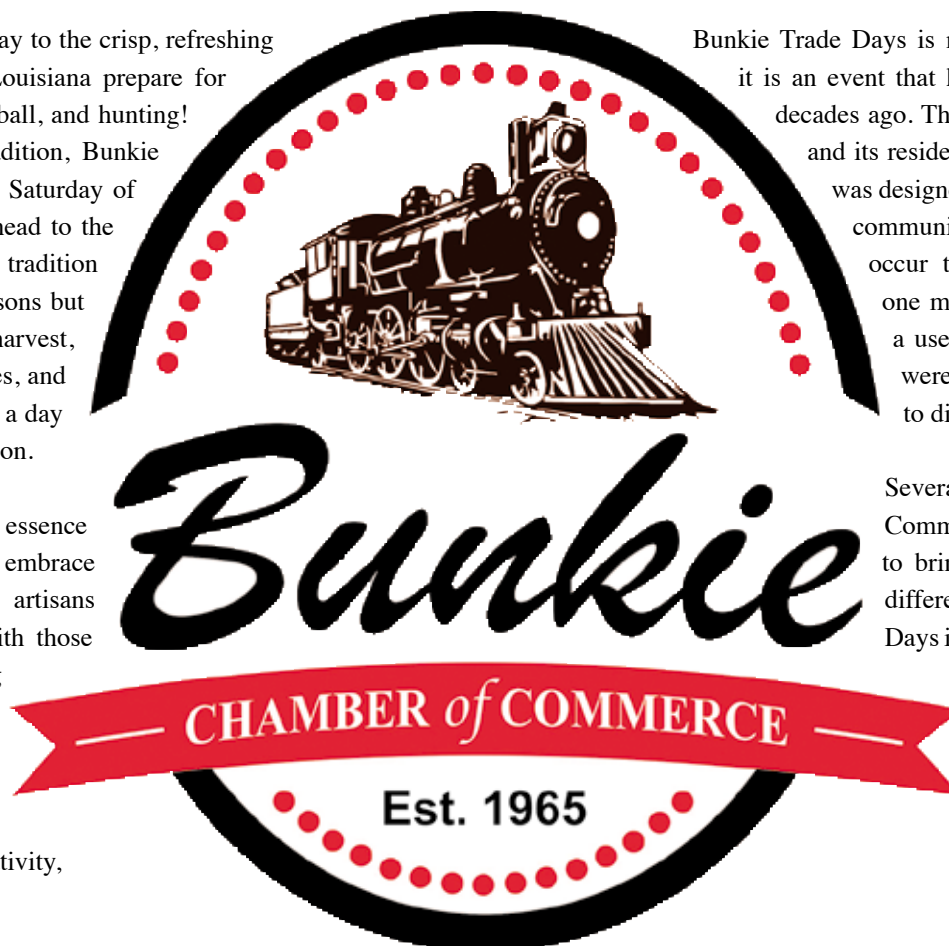
A TRADITIONAL TOWN EXTRAVAGANZA

As the sweltering summer days give way to the crisp, refreshing air of autumn, communities around Louisiana prepare for the most anticipated seasons: fall, football, and hunting! The Town of Bunkie has its own tradition, Bunkie Trade Days, held typically on the first Saturday of October—perfect for when husbands head to the camp for squirrel season! This beloved tradition not only symbolizes the change in seasons but also celebrates the bounties of the harvest, encourages local artisans and businesses, and brings together families and friends for a day of joy, laughter, browsing, and connection.

Fall festivals and trade days capture the essence of community spirit. They remind us to embrace the changing seasons, celebrate local artisans and farmers, and strengthen bonds with those around us. As you enjoy everything these festivals and events have to offer, take a moment to appreciate not just the pumpkin spice lattes and cozy sweaters but also the communal atmosphere that fosters creativity, sustainability, and local pride.

Bunkie Trade Days is not a new concept for the town. Instead, it is an event that has been “recycled and revitalized” from decades ago. The event was a popular success for Bunkie and its residents. Held regularly each year, Trade Days was designed to encourage local commerce and foster community spirit. Typically, a rummage sale would occur throughout town on Trade Days, where one might find exquisite treasures, furniture, or a useful household item. Events such as these were popular in small communities but tended to die out over time.

Several years ago, the Bunkie Chamber of Commerce and the City of Bunkie decided to bring back the concept, but with a slightly different twist and format. Now, Bunkie Trade Days is set up in the tradition of a farmer’s market along Main Street, which is centrally located for residents and visitors. The Bunkie Service League has used Trade Days to have a rummage sale and sell its popular pulled pork sandwich as a fundraiser. Profits earned from the event are reinvested in the community as part of its beautification.





This year's Trade Days will be held on Saturday, October 4th. Any interested vendors or traders may contact the Bunkie Chamber of Commerce to obtain an entry form or for more information. A small event fee is required, which helps to offset the costs of the event and cleanup efforts. The Chamber of Commerce cannot provide any electricity for this event, but vendors can bring portable generators for their booths. We encourage a variety of goods for Trade Days, including antiques, art, jewelry, home goods, homemade jams and jellies, and gently used items. Food vendor? No problem, we encourage food trucks to participate as well!

Where can you find Bunkie Trade Days? It's easy! Just check out Highway 71 or the "Old Jefferson Highway." Bunkie is approximately 30 minutes south of Alexandria. Trade Days is set up in the grassy area between the corners of Oak Street and the intersection of Lexington Avenue and Main Street. A perfect shady area for everyone! Vendors may arrive early in the morning of the event to set up, as instructed by the Chamber and event volunteers. This is a first-come, first-served event for vendors.

While at Trade Days, the Bunkie Chamber of Commerce encourages visitors to see what the town has to offer and shop local. You can spend the day browsing the shops along Main Street or in some of the designated shopping areas. The town features a variety of shopping options that can all be found in Bunkie, including restaurants, clothing, gifts, jewelry, antiques, and much more! There are simply too



many fantastic stores and businesses to name—you have to see for yourself! You can spend the day wandering Bunkie and all it has to offer, while supporting a local merchant, artist, or business!

Join us on October 4th when the colors, sounds, and tastes of autumn are around the corner and will be on display on Main Street for Trade Days. Bunkie offers a picturesque landscape of decorated booths and shops, while locals and visitors stroll the streets. The town can't wait to display a variety of goods—art, handmade crafts, jewelry, food, antiques, and so many more treasures!

Trade Days isn't just about the immediate enjoyment. Local events and festivals have a positive impact on the whole community. These tailored events make a significant contribution to local economies by attracting visitors who spend money not only at the event but also at nearby restaurants, hotels, and shops. Local festivals and events often lead to increased community cohesion, as residents gather to celebrate shared traditions and cultivate relationships with their neighbors. Trade Days also provides an excellent platform for local businesses to network and collaborate. Entrepreneurs may share ideas, partner on projects, or brainstorm ways to enhance their offerings. This collaborative spirit can lead to innovative ventures that benefit the entire community.



Moreover, Trade Days creates a platform for community identity, celebrating the unique culture and heritage of the town. Trade Days allows the community and parish to showcase our strengths, inviting guests to learn about the history and culture of the area and what makes it such a special and unique place.

Events such as Trade Days are not possible without the support of the City of Bunkie, local businesses, organizations, and volunteers. The Bunkie Chamber of Commerce is grateful for the continued support and dedication to our town. We are excited to draw attention to the local charm and all that Bunkie and Avoyelles Parish have to offer!



So, whether you're an attendee seeking seasonal delights or a vendor hoping to showcase your goods, Bunkie Trade Days offers an excellent opportunity to celebrate the richness of life during this beautiful time of year. For more information or to register for Trade Days, please get in touch with the Bunkie Chamber of Commerce. You may call (318) 346-2575 Monday through Friday from 9:00am to 2:00pm or visit the Chamber's website at www.bunkiechamber.org. We encourage those interested in participating in Trade Days to register early, so don't delay! Please follow us on our social media platforms for future events happening in upcoming months in November and December. We'll see you soon!



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Vendor App

The Art of David Holcombe

By Michael Wynne



David Holcombe is known all over for so many things: an outstanding practitioner of the medical arts, an author, a playwright, a cultural supporter (along with his wife Nicole) of the Czech community, a philanthropist (again, along with his wife Nicole), a cultural ambassador for central Louisiana, a community leader and organizer, a collector of the fine arts and curiosities, and a Cenla Focus “Cenla-ian of the Year” honoree. Quite frankly, a book could (and should) be written on his life. I have previously touched on his accomplishments in my columns (March 2019), as well as the many accomplishments of his wife Nicole (August 2023). So,

I thought that I would ask a couple of questions and just let David speak here on his art and art in general.



David, with all that you have going on, why did you ever choose to pick up the brush also?

“It’s simply genetic. My mother was very talented in art. She had a sketch book full of anatomical drawings of animals and human beings and their musculature. But my great uncle, Eli Harvey (1860-1957) of Washington Courthouse, Ohio, became a national renown animal sculptor. My mother inherited that same artistic gene and was an excellent painter who also created beautiful mosaics. So, I started drawing at a very early age and she encouraged me. The best example of that was when she enrolled me in art classes (as an adolescent) and one of those was life drawing (nude) classes. So, at the age of 13, I’m sitting there with all adults drawing naked models, and I found that perfectly normal (laugh). I later took art classes in high school and some in college too. I found that to be a wonderful experience.

“When I attended the University of California at Davis, there was all these famous people (artists). I started (drawing and painting) agricultural fields as well abstracts there. I then went to Gainesville (University of Florida) and continued drawing there

while studying Poultry Science. I ended up going to medical school in Belgium and created a whole series of pen and ink drawings with water color washes done over there. Because I was so poor, I sold my drawings in the market to have some money. I did sell quite a few- all scenes of Brussels... and one actually ended up in the Royal Collection of King Baudouin.

“After medical school, residence and the first years in Alexandria were extremely difficult, so I quit painting for a while. I picked up art again in the 90’s when I had a bit more time.”



Was painting a way to relieve the stress of day-to-day work?

“Actually, painting is work itself, but a different kind of work. Painting takes you into another realm. People who are real artists, don’t care if they sell or don’t sell, they just want to create. It’s like Van Gogh; he didn’t sell a damn thing, but he never stopped painting. It was a passion for him and all artists. I think I am more stable than Van Gogh, being able to balance art and a professional career. So, somebody who has those creative genes and creative impulse, they are going to create, whether they are recognized in their lifetime or not. In that way, artists are like writers. A writer is somebody who writes, not necessarily someone who publishes or sells.

“My early drawings were generally not politically themed. That changed when I got back in the United States. I was also able to buy better painting equipment, including real canvases. My landscapes were usually very popular, but my portraiture is extremely personal, and can sometimes be considered extremely political. In that respect, the artist has the privilege of being able to choose his subjects (unless they are commissions) who are immortalized in his paintings. They say of writers, the spoken word can pass away, but the written word lasts forever. For paintings, it is the same, the artists passes away, but their works remain (although perhaps not forever).”

The Japanese Surrender Ceremony

By Jerry Sanson, PhD



An American propaganda poster from World War II featured an image of Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto and a quote attributed to him: “I am looking forward to dictating peace to the United States in the White House at Washington.” The Instrument of Surrender that ended the biggest conflict in human history was not dictated by the Japanese military, nor was the ceremony conducted in the White House. Instead, representatives of the Allied Powers met with Japanese government and military representatives to conclude fighting on an American warship anchored half a world away in Tokyo Bay with a document that specified terms reflecting Allied requirements for a peaceful settlement of the war.

It became apparent by mid-1945 that Japan was close to following its ally, Nazi Germany, into a physical condition in which it could no longer carry on its war against the Allied Powers. Allied troops followed the island-hopping campaign implemented by their commanders in the Pacific Theater and drove Japanese forces out of many of the areas that the country claimed as part of its new empire, drawing ever closer to the Japanese home islands. Allied bombing and naval battles destroyed key components of the Japanese Navy. Atomic weapons practically destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Soviet Union, eager to be included in the peace settlement, declared war on Japan soon after the first atomic weapon dropped on Hiroshima and quickly sent troops to occupy portions of Manchuria on the Chinese mainland that Japan claimed since the early 1930s.

Japanese Emperor Hirohito decided in the midst of the country’s collapsing fortune that the Land of the Rising Sun had only one option left—surrender to the victorious Allied powers. He delivered the “Jewel-Voice Broadcast” on August 15th, announcing to the Japanese people and military his decision that the country would seek peace with its adversaries, the first time the Japanese people had heard his voice. Hirohito’s decision led to scrambling in the United States War Department as staff finalized an official Instrument of Surrender containing eight short paragraphs approved by President Harry Truman.

The morning set for the official surrender ceremony, Sunday, September 2, 1945, eighty years ago this month, was calm and overcast as the U.S.S. Missouri, chosen as the site of the ceremony because of its participation in Pacific Theater battles after its completion in 1944 and because it bore the name of President Truman’s home state, lay at anchor in Tokyo Bay surrounded by about 250 other Allied vessels in a show of remaining Allied military power.

The crowd of officers and sailors aboard the Missouri stood silent and attentive as the Japanese delegation, led by Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu and General Yoshijiro Umezu, arrived at 8:56am in formal attire to perform their task of surrender. The crowd listened as American General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers and master of ceremonies for the occasion, delivered a brief speech outlining the purpose of the ceremony. We are here, he said in his opening remarks, to conclude “the most tragic war in history,” and to build a “better world out of the blood and carnage of the past.”



Congratulations! Allyson Blais

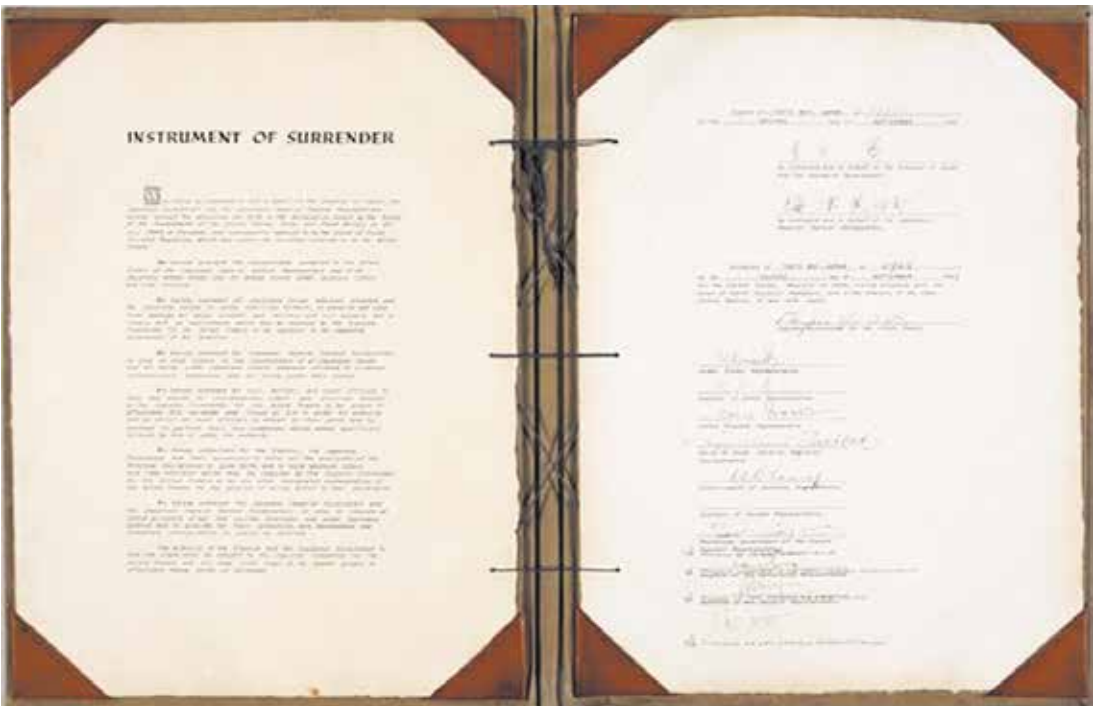
BOM Bank is proud to congratulate Allyson Blais on her promotion to Head Teller at Kingsville! Allyson has been with BOM since 2023. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her boyfriend and family, playing with her miniature poodle and weenie dogs, and fishing. Allyson’s goal within BOM is to move up as much as she can. She stated, “I enjoy my job the most because of the customers. I love helping them get into the accounts they need or with any banking business they need to attend to. I am excited to see how far I can go in my career at BOM!”

Congratulations, Allyson!



BOM

Foreign Minister Shigemitsu signed his name “By command and in behalf of the Emperor of Japan and the Japanese Government” to two copies of the Instrument of Surrender (one for the Allies, one for Japan) at 9:02am. General Umezu followed him and signed his name to the document “By Command and in behalf of the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters.” General MacArthur then signed “for the United States, Republic of China, United Kingdom, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and in the interests of the other United Nations at war with Japan.” The time was recorded as 9:04am.



Colonel Bernard Thielen brought the surrender document back to Washington on September 6th and delivered it to President Truman in a formal ceremony at the White House on September 7th. General Jonathan Wainwright opened an exhibit at the National Archives during which the public could view the Instrument of Surrender until October 1, 1945, when it was placed in the Records of the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff; Record Group 218 in the National Archives.

President Truman looked forward hopefully to the better future that the end of warfare made possible for the United States and the world when he delivered his speech acknowledging the end of the conflict. “From this day, we

Individual Allied representatives added their signatures, signifying that each of their countries agreed with the terms of surrender. That list included C. W. Nimitz, United States; Hsu Yung-Ch’ang, Republic of China; Bruce Fraser, United Kingdom; Kuzma Derevyanko, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; Thomas Blamey, Commonwealth of Australia; L. Moore Cosgrave, Dominion of Canada; Jacques Le Clerc, Provisional Government of the French Republic; C. E. L. Helfrich, Kingdom of the Netherlands; and Leonard M. Isitt, Dominion of New Zealand. The entire ceremony ending the biggest war that cost more lives than any other in history was timed at twenty-three minutes.

move forward. We move toward a new era of security at home,” he said. “With the other United Nations, we move toward a new and better world of cooperation, of peace and international goodwill. God’s help has brought us to this day of victory. With His help, we will attain that peace and prosperity for ourselves and all the world in the years ahead.”

Even though many questions and hardships remained for post-war officials to solve, World War II was officially well and truly over.

A large advertisement for Louisiana Blue featuring a marching band in yellow and purple uniforms running on a street. The ad includes the text "LIVE Louisiana", "You're free to live your life out loud!", "Because you've got the compassion of the cross, the security of the shield, and the comfort of Blue behind you.", "LOUISIANA BLUE", "lablue.com", and "PROUD PARTNER OF LSU ATHLETICS".

Learn Native Plants with LSU AgCenter

By Molly Lyles



MOLLY LYLES

Join us at the Rapides LSU AgCenter Extension Office for a morning focused on native plants. A Native Plant Workshop will be held on Saturday, October 11th, from 9:00am to 12:00pm at the Rapides Parish Extension Office, located at 300 Grady Britt Drive in Alexandria.

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.



The cost to attend is \$5.00, and space is limited. To register, email mlyles@agcenter.lsu.edu or call (318) 767-3964.



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October 11, 2025

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

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When Pecans Fall Too Soon: What It Means and What You Can Do

By Michael Polozola, II, PhD



Each year, as summer fades and pecan season approaches, growers across Louisiana begin to notice a familiar sight: pecans falling from their trees. For some, it's a few scattered nuts. For others, it's a concerning carpet of green shells beneath the canopy. Whether you're tending a single tree in your backyard or managing a small orchard, nut drop can raise questions—and sometimes alarm.

Is it normal? Is it a sign of stress? Could it have been prevented? Understanding when and why pecan trees shed their nuts is key to interpreting what your trees are telling you. Some nut drop is natural and even beneficial. Other times, it's a symptom of deeper issues like drought,

nutrient imbalance, or pest pressure. Knowing the difference can help you respond wisely and plan for a better crop next year.

So, what's normal and what's not? Pecan trees shed nuts at several points during the growing season. Here's how to tell the difference between what is normal and what may be signs of stress:

1. June Drop (Self-Thinning)

- Timing: Late spring to early summer.
- Normal: Yes. This is the tree's way of shedding excess nuts it can't support.
- When to be concerned: If drop is unusually heavy or paired with poor leaf color, it may signal drought stress or nutrient deficiency.

2. Mid-Summer Drop

- Timing: July to early August.
- Normal: Sometimes. A few nuts may drop due to natural thinning or minor stress.
- When to be concerned: If green nuts are dropping in large numbers, especially if they're poorly filled or undersized. This often points to drought, boron deficiency, or poor pollination.



3. Late Summer/Early Fall Drop

- Timing: August to September.
- Normal: No. This is typically a sign of trouble.
- When to be concerned: If large green nuts are falling before shucks begin to split, especially if kernels are blackened, shriveled, or missing. Common causes include: Insect damage (pecan weevils, stink bugs); Disease (pecan scab affecting shucks); Overbearing (trees shedding nuts they can't finish developing); or severe drought or nutrient stress.

4. Pre-Harvest Drop

- Timing: Late September to October.
- Normal: Yes. This is part of the ripening process.
- When to be concerned: Only if nuts are dropping before they're fully mature or if kernel quality is poor.

If your pecan trees are dropping nuts and you're unsure why, there are several practical steps you can take to assess the situation and support your trees moving forward:



1. Observe Leaf Color and Nut Fill

- Leaves that are pale, yellowing, or show tip burn may indicate nutrient deficiencies—especially nitrogen, zinc, or boron.

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- Poorly filled nuts or blackened kernels often point to stress during nut development.
- Take note of whether dropped nuts are mature or green, and whether shucks are splitting normally.

2. Water Deeply During Dry Spells

- Drought stress is one of the most common causes of premature nut drop.
- Trees benefit from slow, deep watering that reaches the root zone—especially in sandy

soils or during extended dry periods.

- Mulching around the drip line helps retain moisture and reduce competition from grass or weeds.

3. Consider Soil or Foliar Testing

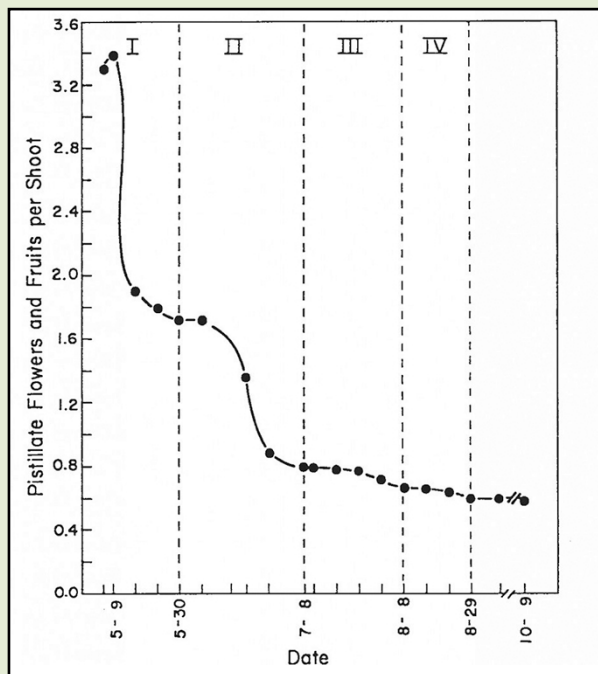
- If nut drop is severe, recurring, or accompanied by poor leaf color, testing can help identify nutrient imbalances.
- Foliar samples taken in July can guide next year's fertility plan, while soil tests can be done in fall or winter.

4. Monitor for Insect and Disease Pressure

- Check dropped nuts for signs of stink bug or pecan weevil damage—such as puncture marks or internal rot.
- Watch for scab symptoms on shucks, especially in wet years or on susceptible cultivars.
- If pest or disease pressure is high, consider adjusting your management plan next season.

5. Plan Ahead for Next Year

- Trees that overbear one year often struggle the next. Thinning heavy crops early in the season can reduce stress and improve nut quality.
- Evaluate pollination partners if nut fill is consistently poor— isolated trees may need compatible cultivars nearby.
- Keep records of drop timing, leaf condition, and weather patterns to help identify trends over time.



Nut drop in pecans is a natural part of the tree's life cycle—but it can also be a signal that something's off. By learning to recognize the difference between normal shedding and stress-related drop, growers can respond with confidence rather than confusion.

Whether you're managing a few trees for family harvests or a small orchard for local sales, the key is observation. Pay attention to leaf color, nut fill, and drop timing. Keep records, ask questions, and don't hesitate to dig a little deeper when something seems off. With each season, your understanding grows—and so does your orchard's potential.



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Patrick Moore Honored for Lifetime Achievement

Leaders for a Better Louisiana announced that Patrick Moore of Alexandria has been recognized for his service to the Council for A Better Louisiana (CABL) and the state of Louisiana with an Award for Lifetime Achievement. The award was granted in late 2024 by CABL, just prior to the merger of CABL with the Committee of 100 for Economic Development to create the new organization, Leaders for a Better Louisiana.

Founded in 1962, CABL was a statewide nonpartisan organization with the mission to promote public policies at the state level to move Louisiana forward. It also created and led the widely-recognized Leadership Louisiana program, which continues under Leaders for a Better Louisiana.

Moore's association with CABL lasted for more than 35 years, more than half of the organization's history. He was a member of CABL's inaugural class of Leadership Louisiana in 1989. He later became a board member and officer, rising to chairman of the board in 2012-2013 where he oversaw CABL's 50th anniversary celebration. He remained active in the organization through the merger earlier this year.

LEADERS FOR A
BETTER
LOUISIANA
C100 + CABL



"Patrick was a mainstay with CABL for longer than anyone I know," said Barry Erwin, the former CEO of CABL and current Chief Policy Officer

at Leaders for a Better Louisiana. "As a business owner, planner, and landscape architect for more than 40 years, his unique understanding of our cities, parishes, and regions provided a great resource to CABL that served our long-term strategic planning efforts."

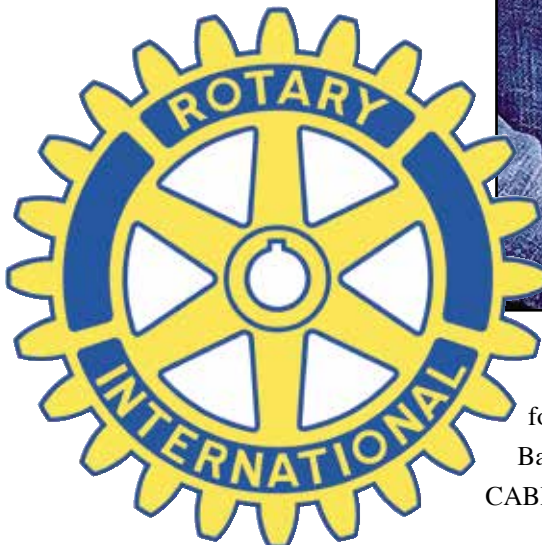
One of the key areas of focus for CABL was in providing wider access to quality early childhood education for children and families across Louisiana. That is an issue that resonated with Moore and one he has continued to embrace. In 2023, his leadership encouraged the Rotary Club of Alexandria to take on a major project to increase early childhood educational opportunities in Central Louisiana. He helped create a business model for an early childhood education campaign that raised more than \$2.3 million.

That effort doubled in value when the state of Louisiana matched those revenues to generate more than \$4.7 million in total for early childhood services in the region. The net return on that investment was the opening of more than 300 slots for quality early childhood education for children whose families would have otherwise been unable to afford it.

That effort was replicated again in 2024-2025 for a two-year total return of more than \$9 million supporting families and contributing to the stability of the workforce in the region.

"Patrick's work with Rotary and a wide range of community partners mirrors his efforts at CABL," Erwin said. "He has always worked diligently to make both

the state and Central Louisiana a better place for all. What better way to do that than to focus on our youngest children by giving them the solid foundation upon which they will build our future."



Jesus' Miracles: The Wonders That Transform Hearts and Minds

By Rev. Steve Blount



I hope these words find you in peace and light. I feel compelled to share thoughts on a subject that has ignited hope and wonder in countless hearts across centuries—Jesus' miracles.

When we speak of miracles, we often envision the extraordinary: water turned into wine at Cana, sight restored to the blind, and the dead brought back to life. These events surpass natural explanation and point to a divine hand at work. Yet, more than their physical manifestations, Jesus' miracles hold profound spiritual truths that continue to inspire and guide us.

Each miracle was an act of love, not mere displays of power. In feeding the five thousand, Jesus did not just satisfy physical hunger but demonstrated the boundless generosity of God. It was a lesson in abundance—that in the hands of faith, even the smallest offering can multiply to nourish multitudes. How often, then, do we overlook our own potential to share and multiply goodness in a seemingly insufficient world?



Consider the healing of the leper, the outcast whom society shunned. Through this act, Jesus revealed the inherent worth of every individual. By extending His hand, He broke barriers of fear and prejudice, showing us that compassion has the power to restore not just bodies but dignity and belonging. What might change in our communities if we, too, reached out to those cast aside?

The miracles were also a testament to faith. When Peter walked on water, he succeeded only while fixing his eyes on Jesus. The moment doubt crept in, he began to sink. This reminds us that faith does not remove life's storms but equips us to

navigate them, walking steadily even amid uncertainty.

Perhaps one of the most profound miracles is the raising of Lazarus. Beyond the awe of restored life, it is a story of hope—hope that, even in our darkest moments, in the metaphorical tombs of despair, Jesus calls us out into light and life. It is a reminder that no situation is beyond redemption.

These miracles are not distant tales confined to ancient times; they are living parables. They invite us to see the miraculous in the everyday—the kindness of a stranger, the resilience of the human spirit, and the quiet moments of grace that transform an ordinary day into something sacred. They challenge us to become vessels of miracles in our own right, to heal, uplift, and inspire wherever we walk.

As we reflect on these wonders, may they not simply be stories we admire but truths we embody. Let us, in our own small ways, become bearers of love and light, creating ripples of the divine in the world around us.

The Reverend Steve Blount is Associate Pastor of Church on the Levee and Lead Pastor of Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church. He is the proud father of two children, Marilyn and Hayden, and grandfather of three grandchildren.

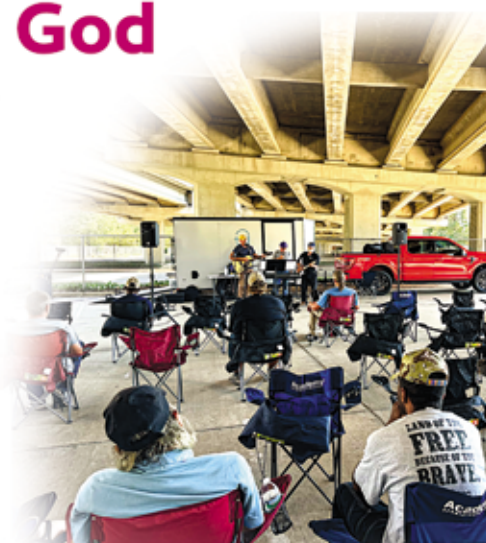


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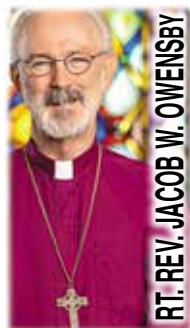
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The Infinite in the Everyday, Part II

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



RT. REV. JACOB W. OWENSBY

The woman sitting across from me was warm, sincere, and intelligent. She belonged to the church I was serving and had asked to meet so we could get to know each other better. “I’m not exactly Christian,” she said. When I asked her to say more, she explained that no single tradition—including Christianity—could claim the whole truth. “So, I’ve woven together a spiritual path that fits who I am,” she said.

Her approach was thoughtful and intentional, shaped by a desire to live authentically. In many ways, she was doing what our culture encourages: finding a path that expresses the self within. But I’ve come to believe that the deepest authenticity is not something we construct—it’s something we receive. At the risk of oversimplifying, let’s say she walks the path of self-expression. I walk the path of vocation. Here’s the difference:

The Path of Self-Expression: We look inward to discover and accept who we are. We choose a spiritual path that helps us express and affirm that inner identity.

The Path of Vocation: We respond to a voice beyond us. A call draws us forward, and by walking that path, we become who we truly are.

The letter to the Colossians urges us to walk the path of vocation: “As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him” (Colossians 2:6).

Just as Jesus once called the first disciples to follow him, he now calls each of us. The way of Jesus is not something we choose to validate who we already are. It’s a life we’re invited into—a way that reshapes us, that forms us into who we’re meant to be.



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At the same time, Colossians warns that the path of self-expression can become a dead end: “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8). The Colossians were cobbling together a spiritual mix from various sources. It was a kind of religious buffet: a little of this, a little of that—whatever seemed helpful, appealing, or empowering.

But when we pull isolated practices or ideas out of their original context, we cut them off from the deep roots that gave them life. What we’re left with may look spiritual, but it often lacks the power to sustain real transformation. We end up wading in shallow water. What’s more, when we select only what aligns with our preferences, we risk turning our spiritual life into a mirror of our own desires. A faithful spiritual path doesn’t just affirm us—it confronts us. It names our limits. It surfaces our sin. And in doing so, it opens us to grace. That’s how growth happens. That’s how we become more than we already are.

Those of us who walk the path of vocation believe that we discover our true selves not by curating a spiritual identity, but by answering the call of the One who already knows us and loves us. To start my current sabbatical, I got out of town for a week. I needed to slow my internal pace, and a change of scenery seemed like a good way to start. When I told friends I was heading to Portland, they lit up—until I clarified: Oregon, not Maine. They didn’t say anything outright, but their faces said it all: Why would you go there? You won’t find what you’re looking for in that place. Well, just for the record, I did. But this reflection isn’t about the merits of the Pacific Northwest. It’s about the spiritual destinations we set our hearts on—and whether they can truly satisfy us.

As I said last month, a holy longing animates our lives. We’re all on a path toward



something we believe will make life meaningful in an enduring way. Each of us is devoted—whether we know it or not—to reaching what theologian Paul Tillich called our “ultimate concern.” The pressing spiritual question isn’t whether we’ve chosen something evil. It’s this: have we set our sights too low? Will our chosen destination truly satisfy our longing—for love, meaning, belonging, and transcendence?

Colossians urges us to aim high: “If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:1–2). In other words, direct your devotion toward the living God—not a substitute. Not an idol. An idol is a phony god. It promises to fulfill our deepest longings in exchange for our total devotion. And often, the “earthly things” we give ourselves to aren’t obviously bad. They’re familiar—possessions, power, and status. Some chase wealth to feel secure.

But money can lose value, markets can shift, and enough never feels like enough.

Others seek safety in power. But the more we depend on our strength alone, the more we obsess over threats we can’t control. And status? That’s applause we have to keep earning. It fades as soon as someone newer, shinier, or louder comes along. These idols can’t deliver what they promise. They’re fleeting. Finite. And our longing is for something infinite. Something more.

In Christ, the beyond—the infinite—meets us in the midst of our finite lives.

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.



Welcome! Gracie Borders

Gracie is joining our Washington Street Branch as a Teller, and we’re thrilled to have her on board. A proud Natchitoches native, Gracie was raised by her “Weezie” and recently earned her Bachelor’s degree in Social Work from Northwestern State University in 2024. In her free time, she enjoys reading on her Kindle, spending time with family and friends, and making the most of crawfish season! Gracie shared, “I look forward to succeeding in my position here at BOM and hope to grow within this bank!”

Welcome, Gracie!



2025 Into the Light 5K Walk/Run

We are excited for our 9th annual Into the Light 5K to help shine a light on mental health awareness and suicide prevention at this family-friendly event filled with purpose, fun, and community spirit. SaveCenla works to end the stigma of mental illness, so that people who suffer in silence will feel safe to seek help. We believe that the success of suicide prevention depends on community effort, so join us for a fun-filled, yet serious celebration beginning on the Marksville Courthouse steps on Saturday, September 20th, with the Commencement Ceremony starting at 9:00am.

Participants will be able to pick up their packet that includes a runner's shirt, name tag, and instructions starting at 8:00am. The 5K Walk/Run race will begin at the Marksville Courthouse Square immediately following Commencement. There are three categories for both men and women (under 14, 14-18, and 19 and up). First through third place winners in each category will be awarded a medal. 17 veterans lose their lives to suicide every single day. If you are a veteran, actively serving,

know someone who has served, or want to represent a soldier who has lost his/her life to suicide, and would like to carry a pair of military boots on the 5K to honor a soldier, please go to the line of military boots where someone will help distribute the boots (first come, first serve). You will need to sign your name, take a group picture, and return the boots as you return from the 5K.

In addition to the 5K, the day will feature delicious food, vendors, a silent auction, and numerous ways to remember loved ones lost to suicide. Everyone in attendance is invited to visit one of two free Bead Boards to select the color beads to wear throughout the day that signify why you support the cause. Jambalaya plates will be available for \$6.00, with sodas, sports drinks, cotton candy, and popcorn also for purchase. Following the race, we will hold a Memorial Butterfly Release in honor of those we've lost to suicide. If you have lost a loved one to suicide, please add their name to the memorial list at the SaveCenla tent. When you do, you will receive one free ticket for a butterfly; additional butterflies may be purchased as well. In addition to the Butterfly Release, participants are invited to bring a photo of a loved one lost to suicide to include in the memory board and to share a heartfelt note on the story board.

Everything you need—registration, event shirts, donations, and more—can be found at savecenla.com/copy-of-asist-registration. Let's come together as a community to walk, run, and support a cause that touches us all!



JOIN US FOR THE INTO THE LIGHT 5K!

Help shine a light on mental health awareness and suicide prevention at this family-friendly event filled with purpose, fun, and community spirit.

We're currently seeking:

- **5K runners** (6 categories)
- **Vendors** (crafts, food, informational booths, etc.)

- ✓ Register to run in the 5K
- ✓ Form a team and raise donations by asking people to donate towards your team - the team with the highest contributions will be featured on our Annual Sponsor Banner
- ✓ Pre-order an event shirt
- ✓ Attend and show your support – even if you're not racing! Note: no need to pre-register if you will be walking or participating on the grounds - it is free to do so.
- ✓ Become a vendor – we welcome food, craft, and informational booths (free)
- ✓ Donate an item to our Silent Auction

Special Moment: After the race, we will hold a Memorial Butterfly Release in honor of those we've lost to suicide.



REGISTER AT
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Let's come together as a community to walk, run, and support a cause that touches us all.





Thank You to our 2025 Sponsors!
We'll see you Saturday, Sept. 20!



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| 7 pm | 1 Mile Fun Run Shotgun Start |
| 8 pm | Raffle Winners Announced |

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Safari Smash Pickleball Tournament

Get ready to hit the courts for a great cause! Serve, smash, and support Alexandria Zoo at this fun-filled, competitive event for pickleball players of all skill levels on Saturday, October 4th at the Alexandria Tennis Complex, located at 98 Sylvester Drive in Alexandria. Check-in begins at 7:30am and the tournament kicks off at 8:00am.

The tournament is open to players of all levels, ages 10 and up, who will compete across four divisions— Junior (Ages 10-14), Men, Women, and Mixed. Individuals can compete in more than one division and players must provide their own paddle. Matches consist of one game of first to 15 points, winning by at least two. A point is scored by the player or team that wins a rally, except as provided for scoring the Game-Winning Point. The game-winning point can only be scored by the serving player or team. When a player or team is at game point and the opponent serves and loses the rally, it is a side out and no point is awarded. All teams are guaranteed a two-game minimum. All matches will last a maximum time of 35 minutes. A 5-minute warmup, if needed, will take place prior to the match's 35-minute time frame. Water breaks may be given at any time if needed by either team. Standard rules apply, if in need of tournament rules or questions ask tournament desk for help.



Registration is \$60.00 per team and includes tournament t-shirts, provided on a first come, first served basis for registered participants; if we run out of your selected size, we will provide the next available size. Registration is online only at thealexandriazoo.com/Pickleball.html and closes on Friday, September 26th.

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

Got time between pickleball games? Don't just sit around! Stroll over to the City of Alexandria's Youth & Teen Center to relax, cool off, and have some fun. The Center features a pool table, ping pong, air hockey, and foosball ready for you to enjoy. Play pickleball during the week at the Teen Center Mondays and Wednesdays from 5:00pm to 7:30pm; Tuesdays and Fridays from 9:00am to 12:00pm.

For more information or to register, visit the Tournament website at thealexandriazoo.com/Pickleball.html.



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LDWF National Hunting and Fishing Day 2025



Louisiana’s National Hunting and Fishing Day (NHFD) will be held Saturday, September 27th at four locations across the state hosted by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). In Cenla, the event will be held at the Woodworth Shooting Range, located at 661 Robinson Bridge Road in Woodworth from 8:00am to 1:30pm.

NHFD has become a tradition since its establishment in the early 1970s. Since then, every fourth Saturday in September is dedicated to Louisiana’s popular outdoor pastimes. LDWF

introduced its first NHFD event in 1982 at the Monroe District Office, and in the following years, additional locations were added to its roster.

Each location’s event varies but all include exhibits on LDWF’s research and conservation efforts, shooting and fishing demonstrations, and exhibits from local chapters of Ducks Unlimited, the Safari Club, and the Coastal Conservation Association, as well as local businesses and sponsored by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation. Representatives from RRMC will be on hand teaching ATV safety as well as Stop the Bleed training.

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Attendees can try their skills at the shooting ranges, fishing ponds, and boating activities, and learn about wildlife with live animal demonstrations. It’s the perfect opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors with family and friends.

For more information, go to <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/nhfd> or call (318) 484-2276.



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Celebrate National Sickle Cell Awareness Month with SCARF!



The Sickle Cell Anemia Resource Foundation presents Giving Sickle Cell the Boot Gala, taking place on Thursday, September 18th at 6:30pm at the Alexandria Convention Hall, located at 915 3rd Street in Alexandria. This elegant evening will bring together community members, advocates, and healthcare professionals to raise awareness and funding for individuals and families impacted by Sickle Cell Disease.

The gala will feature a night of inspiration, music entertainment, dinner, guest speaker, and a celebration of those making a difference in the fight against Sickle Cell Disease. Attendees are encouraged to wear casual boots and jeans for the event. Funds raised will support programs that improve the quality of life for individuals living with Sickle Cell and provide essential resources for their care and support.

SCARF's mission is to increase the quality of life for individuals with Sickle Cell Disease and Sickle Cell Trait. This event is a powerful way to bring the community together to honor that mission and support the individuals and families we serve.

For more information or to purchase tickets, please call (318) 314-3070.



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Prepare Your Children Visually for Their New School Year

By Dr. Phillip L. Carney, Jr.



With all of the preparations involved in getting the kids ready for back to school, parents and guardians should not forget to have their children receive a comprehensive eye examination. Early correction of visual problems is the key to comfortable, clear vision for the child. Children that seemingly “see okay” may have focusing problems or oculo-motor (muscle coordination) dysfunction. Even though the child may be able to read the eye chart, they may have to strain or “over-focus” the eyes when reading or performing school work. If one eye is stronger than the other, they may suppress one eye, causing it to be lazy. If reading is difficult



for the child, it may be an issue of eye tracking or a sign that the child is not using the eyes together (eye teaming).

A comprehensive eye exam tests not only the visual acuity but color vision, depth perception, and the ability of the eyes to work together. Some underlying problems may be overlooked by simple screenings or simply reading an eye chart. Early detection of visual problems can help decrease reading and learning difficulties.

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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Dr. Noah LaHaye Miller Now Accepting Patients at theCLINICS



Noah LaHaye Miller, MD, originally from Vidrine, was raised on the rice and cattle farms of Evangeline Parish. Dr. Miller grew up in a very large and close-knit family, with his mother a social worker, and his father a registered nurse. He enjoys just about anything outdoors—fishing, cooking, hunting, golfing—spending time with family. A graduate of LSU in biology, he received his Doctorate in Medicine from LSUHSC, continuing on to receive his board certification in Family Medicine at Memorial Hospital in Lake Charles.

After completing this residency program, Dr. Miller returned to Vidrine to join his two uncles in their medical practice at Vidrine Community Clinic, where he provided exemplary care to the community that helped to raise him for over three years before joining theCLINICS here in Alexandria.

“Being from a small town, I have of course frequented Alexandria for shopping, swim meets, movies, and sporting events, so it’s always been enjoyable to visit here. I even have some family in Alexandria that I am excited to see more often,” says Dr. Miller. “But, to tell the whole truth, the most important reason I have decided to make this move is that I am marrying a beautiful and intelligent woman who hails from the area. I am extremely grateful to have been given this opportunity to work in a larger medical community with some truly amazing physicians, and all the more blessed be able to start a family of my own in this area.”

To book your appointment with Dr. Miller, call the Clinics today at (318) 445-9823 or visit their website at theclinics.us.



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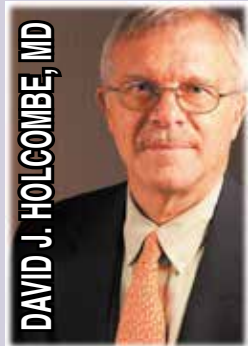
Noah LaHaye Miller, MD

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Fatty Liver and NASH on the Rise

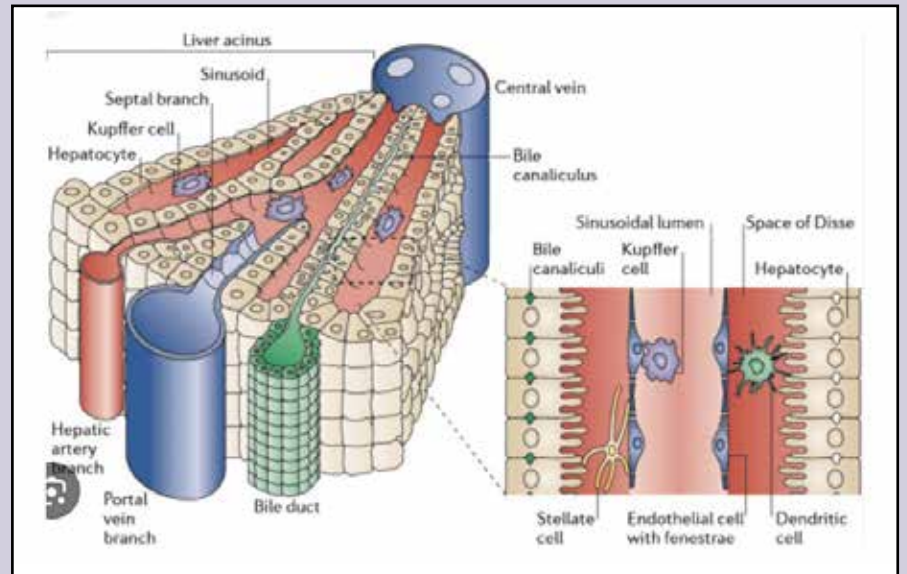
By David J. Holcombe, MD, MSA, FACP



Many patients have heard the term “fatty liver,” and often receive some sort of medication to address it. Fatty liver has risen—along with obesity and diabetes—and affects more and more Americans each year. The term refers to the accumulation of fat in the liver to the point that it may eventually turn into something far worse, NASH. NASH stands for Non-Alcoholic SteatoHepatitis and reflects the presence, not just of fat, but of inflammation and scarring.

NASH has the same risk factors as fatty liver disease, including obesity, hypercholesterolemia, hypertriglyceridemia, diabetes, and the metabolic syndrome. As mentioned, when the fat accumulation becomes too great, the liver becomes inflamed (causing hepatitis), which can progress to scarring of the liver (fibrosis) and, ultimately, to cirrhosis and liver failure. NASH also increases the risk of hepatocellular carcinoma, or liver cancer.

The level of scarring in NASH needs to be scored by determining the level of severity in the “sinusoidal space” from F0 to F4. Without getting into too much detail, the liver acts as a filter, with venous blood coming from the portal vein which flows



toward the central vein through the sinusoidal space. The sinusoidal space is lined with cells and there is another space (the Space of Disse) which separates these cells from the liver cells (hepatocytes). This space is where the scarring occurs.

Alexandria Oral Surgery is excited to announce that **Dr. Matthew Kennedy, DDS, MD** will be joining our practice July 2025. Dr. Kennedy comes to us following the completion of his Oral and Maxillofacial surgery residency at LSU Shreveport. He will be available for appointments beginning in late July.



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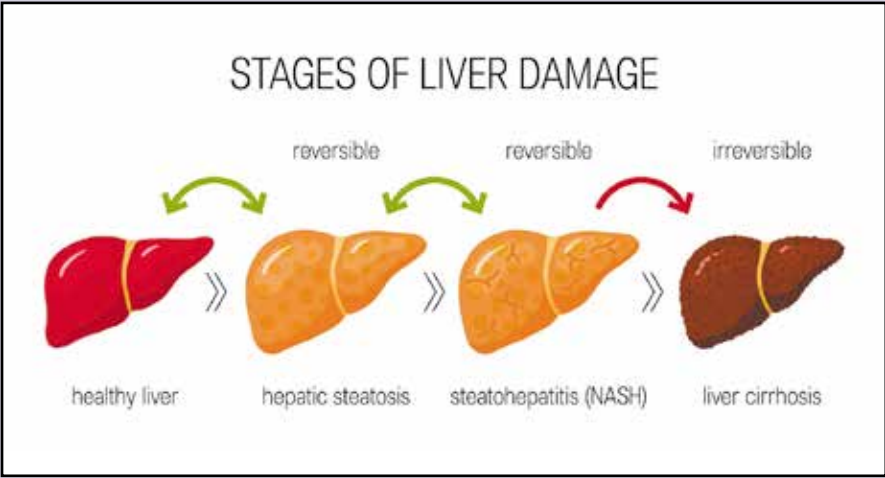
F0 shows no fibrosis. F1 means mild fibrosis limited to the perisinusoidal area. F2 has advanced to moderate fibrosis. F3 shows severe fibrosis, while F4 represents cirrhosis with irreversible scarring and abnormal liver function. This progresses to liver failure and death without a liver transplant. This NASH Clinical Research Network (CRN) Scoring system depends on liver biopsies, which, while often performed, are invasive and associated with some risk and morbidity.

There are other, non-invasive methods of evaluating the severity of NASH which include (1) elastography (which measures the stiffness of the liver), (2) MRI proton density fat fraction (MRI-PDFF), (3) various blood markers with scoring systems like the FIB-4 index, and (4) clinical prediction models. The FIB-4 score takes age multiplied by AST divided by the platelet count times the square root of the ALT/AST ratio (the latter being hepatic enzymes). If your head is spinning, relax! These scoring methods are the domain of hepatic specialists, not the general public.

Scoring is important to determine the prognosis and the treatment. First line treatments always include weight loss, reduced carbohydrates, exercise, and strict diabetic control. What is new is the approval of a new oral medication, Resmetirom (trade name: Rezdiffra). This is a new class of medication, a thyroid hormone receptor-beta agonist, that stimulates liver fat metabolism. It helps the liver to breakdown fat, thus slowing down fibrosis and the progression to cirrhosis.

Resmetirom, like all new medications, has some side effects like nausea and diarrhea and may cause cholecystitis (gall bladder inflammation). As with all new medications, cost remains a factor with an annual cost estimated at \$47,000 a year. The Institute for Clinical and Economic Review estimates that a price between \$40,000 and \$50,000 a year would be cost effective considering the high cost of liver failure and transplants.

The best approach is to avoid fatty liver in the first place with weight control, limited carbohydrates, increased exercise, and strict diabetic control. With one-third of Louisianans overweight and another third obese, that's a tall order, but not an impossible one. Don't let fatty liver progress to liver failure.





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How to Enjoy Sportsman's Paradise!

By Cornell D. Leblanc, D.C.



It's that time of the season again and football games are back in full action again. Some people go to football games with neck and low back pain that can be aggravating, making it hard to enjoy the game. The long hours sitting on hard bleachers, standing in concessions lines, and even walking long walks back and forth from the parking lots can leave football fans with neck and back stiffness and even sciatic pain. That is why chiropractic care can be so vital to people that suffer with neck and low back pain. That is where we come in. Here at Alexandria Spine & Rehab Center, we provide expert chiropractic care and specialize in non-surgical spinal decompression therapy.



Some people may have hidden problems like sciatica, disc herniation, spinal stenosis, and degenerative disc disease. The task of just sitting up throughout the game can be demanding on some people causing dis-ease. The chiropractic adjustment can help align the spine and decrease pain and inflammation, therefore, restoring the quality of life back to the person again.

For people with more advanced or persistent symptoms, here at Alexandria Spine & Rehab Center, we offer a Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression table that is state-of-the-art and is specific to the disc area that is involved. It softly stretches the spine, alleviating pressure off the nerve and spinal disc. It uses negative pressure as a pumping mechanism and to help rehydrate the disc and draw the fluid back in the

disc. You may have already experienced a not-so-great football season experience before due to neck or low back pain; our Accu-Spinal Non-Surgical Decompression table can give you tremendous relief with long-term satisfying results.

Let us help you this fall. Whether it's for football, fishing, or hunting, if you or a loved one is suffering with, neck or lower back problem, make an appointment at Alexandria Spine & Rehab Center today, by calling (318) 561-6250 and let's make this the best football season you will ever remember.

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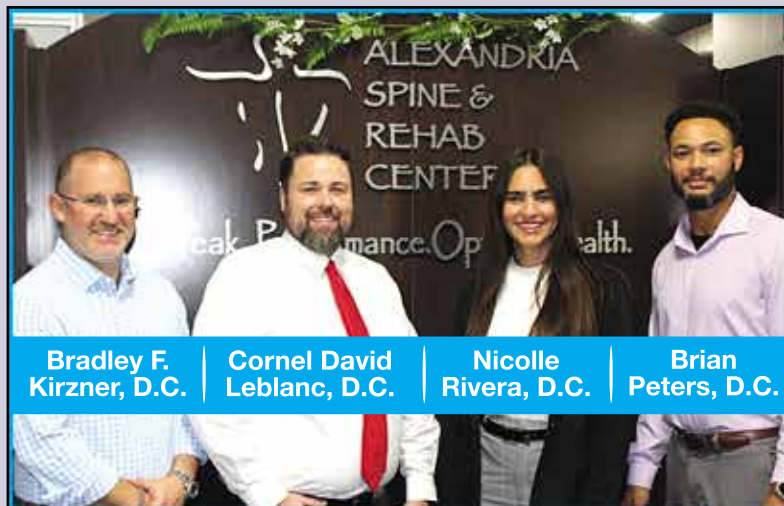
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"Our top priority has always been providing exceptional care to our residents," said Jennifer Peters, Administrator of Garden Park in Shreveport. "To be one of only three facilities nationwide to earn the 2025 Gold Award is an incredible honor and a testament to our team's unwavering commitment to quality, safety and service. This is a victory for all Louisiana nursing facilities that tirelessly pursue quality improvement."

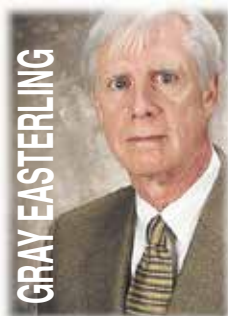
"The hardworking staff at Garden Park Nursing & Rehabilitation Center have achieved one of the most prestigious honors in our profession," said Mark Berger, executive director of the Louisiana Nursing Home Association (LNHA). "Earning the Gold - Excellence in Quality Award is an extraordinary achievement that recognizes exceptional caregiving and tireless dedication to continuous quality improvement. This year, only three facilities in the nation received this award, placing Garden Park among the best in the country. Louisiana has secured its place among the nation's top achievers in quality awards with 74 bronze, 37 silver and one gold since 2018."

The National Quality Award Program by the American Health Care Association and the National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) has three progressive levels of achievement – bronze, silver, and gold. Implemented by AHCA/NCAL in 1996, the National Quality Award Program is centered on the core values and criteria of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program. The program assists providers of long term and post-acute care services in achieving their performance excellence goals. The awards will be presented during AHCA/NCAL's 76th Annual Convention and Expo in Las Vegas, Nevada on October 19-22, 2025.



What To Do?

By Gray Easterling



There is a genuine problem in our country. Unfortunately, it is not a new one and does not seem to be getting any better. With the cost of living what it is, stay-at-home moms are a rare fixture in today's families. According to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal, a year of daycare can cost more than a year of tuition at an in-state college. Not only does the cost destroy a young family's budget, it will probably discourage the thought of having a second child. Other young couples in their social group may decide to have no children because of the expense. Contributing to the expense is the staffing cost. State regulations enforce strict staffing ratios to ensure safety and quality. Trimming costs are not easy. AI cannot change diapers or hire a remote worker to give a baby a hug. Statistics indicate that a typical daycare could spend between 60% and 80% of its budget on wages. It makes it difficult to offer good pay. Childcare employees are some of the lowest paid workers with very few benefits. As a result, it is hard to retain or find good workers, making it even harder for parents to find a good daycare slot. If wages go up, tuition goes up, and already squeezed families can't afford the increase. On average, 22% of a young family's income is spent on daycare. So, what to do?

One idea is to empower local community colleges to add classes leading to a "Child Development Associate" credential for any daycare teacher "in charge of" a classroom. The extra training improves the quality of teaching and helps reduce turnover. The training should take a couple of months and involves training in classroom management and childhood development. It is also helpful when the daycare owner receives coaching on how to run a business. Having classes and/or mentors that can provide guidance on tax preparation, writing contracts, and how to tighten up business practices can be key to helping the daycare become profitable and more efficient. Local and state governments could provide help by eliminating property taxes on in-home daycare owners and putting caps on increases in liability insurance. Some businesses are trying to help solve the problem by paying for backup care or even offering subsidized daycare centers on site, knowing it can save money because of the cost of finding, hiring, and retraining new employees is steep. A few states are starting to help childcare providers because there is a growing belief that good daycares and preschools are good for a child's social and mental development. Believe it or not, Louisiana is using tax revenue from sports betting, cannabis-derived products, and casinos for early childhood education. Churches that operate a good daycare and preschool program find that, with good leadership and a drive for excellence, the Sunday crowd may start growing with new and younger families. A lot to think about!

Anybody remember the Joe Cocker cover of the Beatles' song, "With a Little Help From My Friends"? One stanza goes like this: "What would you do if I sang out of tune? Would you stand up and walk out on me? Lend me your ears and I'll sing you a tune and I'll try not to sing out of key." Every time I even think about singing in church next to Beverly, I think of those words. I make a joyful noise, and Bev

sings like an angel. More proof that opposites attract. Another stanza follows: "Do you need anybody? I just need somebody to love. Could it be anybody? I want somebody to love." If this touches any of you, consider this. From a discussion by Rev. David Elliot: "Baptism is not something we do for ourselves and not really a decision we make on our own. It is something God does; it is an action that God takes in bestowing upon each and every one of us the all-encompassing love of almighty God-God's acceptance, God's forgiveness, and God's grace. When that Baptismal water is poured on us, God makes a covenant with us that God will never, ever break. He promises to love us, accept us and forgive us for the rest of our life. There is nothing we can ever do to fall out of God's love!" If, as the song suggests, you need someone to love, you want someone to love, accept God's offer and promise. Receive the sacrament of Baptism and let His love fill your mind, body, and soul. For sure, you will get by with a little help from your friends and a lot of love from your Lord and Savior. You will never walk alone again.

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 Boulevard, Alexandria, LA 71303. We can be reached at (318) 448-3201. Securities and advisory services offered through LPL Financial, a registered investment advisor, Member FINRA/SIPC.



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

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How Social Security Decides Your Disability Payment

By Annie Lemoine Newton



ANNIE NEWTON

When you get approved for Social Security Disability (SSDI), the amount you'll be paid each month depends on your past work and earnings, not on how serious your disability is. The Administration will look at your work history. Social Security reviews the years you worked and how much you earned. Next, they will adjust your past earnings. They adjust (or "index") your past wages so that older paychecks are compared fairly with today's wages. They will then find your average monthly earnings.

They take your highest-earning years and figure out your average monthly income. Lastly, they will run it through a formula they use to come up with your basic benefit amount. The average SSDI check is around \$1,500 a month, but your exact amount is based on your own work history.

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



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(318) 717-1995

Should I Enroll in Medicare?

By Wesley Watkins



Is your 65th birthday coming up? Do you have coverage through work or your spouse's employer? You may need to sign up for Medicare! If you're turning 65, here are some circumstances to consider:

If you're covered by an employer plan at an organization with more than 20 employees, you can remain on your employer-sponsored health plan. When you lose your group insurance, you can sign up for Medicare Parts A and B without facing a late enrollment penalty. Some experts recommend that people with job-based coverage enroll in Medicare Part A when they turn 65, as it can help cover expenses primary insurance doesn't cover.

If you're covered by an employer plan at an organization with fewer than 20 employees, check with your employer. There's a good chance you'll need to sign up for Medicare Parts A and B. After you turn 65, your job-based coverage may not cover the full cost of your health care if you work for a small employer.

If you're currently covered by COBRA, enroll in Medicare Parts A and B as soon as you're eligible. You won't be entitled to a special enrollment period when your COBRA coverage ends, so you may face financial penalties if you sign up for

Medicare late.

If you're covered by a high-deductible health plan at an employer with more than 20 employees and would like to continue contributing to a Health Savings Account, you may want to delay enrollment in Medicare, since you won't be able to contribute to your HSA after you enroll. Plan on making your final contribution to your HSA at least six months before you enroll in Medicare to avoid a tax penalty.



If you're covered by a high-deductible health plan at an employer with fewer than 20 employees, you'll probably enroll in Medicare as soon as you're eligible, given that your employer-sponsored coverage may not cover all your medical expenses after you turn 65. After you enroll in Medicare, you'll no longer be able to contribute to your HSA.

Lastly, if you're covered by a group plan that is not "creditable coverage," such as TRICARE, the VA, COBRA, or the FEHB, you'll probably want to sign up for Medicare Parts A and B to avoid late enrollment fees. You may be able to delay enrolling in Medicare Part D without penalty.

Each situation is unique, and a licensed, professional insurance agent or broker can help you determine when you should enroll in Medicare to avoid financial penalties.


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Fall at River Oaks

River Oaks Square Arts Center is heading into a packed fall season with signature events that bring our community together through creativity, tradition, and hands-on making. From a spellbinding Van Gogh Gala to the nationally acclaimed 10th Annual 5x5x5 Show—and the beloved Porch Sale right alongside AlexWinterFête—there’s something for everyone who loves art in Central Louisiana.

“This fall truly showcases everything River Oaks stands for—creativity, community, and celebration,” says Rachael Dauzat, Executive Director at River Oaks. “From the enchanting Van Gogh Gala to our nationally recognized 5x5x5 Show and the ever-popular Porch Sale, there’s an energy in the air that reminds us why River Oaks continues to be the heart of the arts in Central Louisiana.”

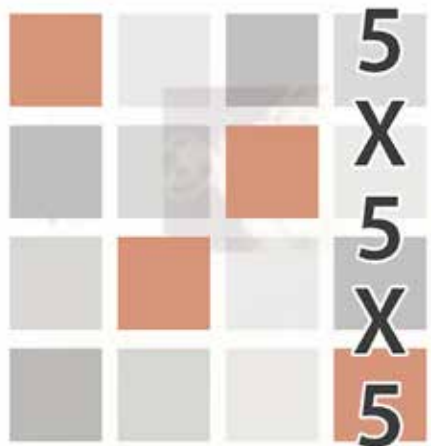


The Van Gogh Gala returns Saturday, October 18th at 7:00pm with a theme that’s sure to cast a stylish spell: “Dark Fairy Tales.” Think moody forests, Brothers Grimm folklore, and couture with a shadowy twist. Tickets are \$70.00 per person. Reserved tables are \$750 (seats 10 with preferred seating). To purchase, call the office at (318) 473-2670 or contact any River Oaks Board Member. Traditionally the most enchanting and imaginative night of the year at River Oaks, the Gala transforms the arts center into a living fairy tale—dark, daring, and filled with mystique. It’s the perfect excuse to gather your friends, slip into your most spellbinding attire, and step into an evening of mystery, magic, and celebration of the arts.

That’s only the beginning of an exciting fall! We’re also celebrating a decade of #Triple5! The 10th Annual 5x5x5 Show with Guest Juror Ross Jahnke will be on display

November 13th through February 7, 2026. A printmaker and painter, Jahnke’s work has been exhibited throughout the United States. He is a recipient of the Louisiana Division of the Arts Fellowship, has received numerous grants for visual art projects, currently serves on the faculty at Nicholls State University, and has been a longtime friend of River Oaks.

The national call is live on callforentry.org (CaFÉ). Works must comply with the 5x5x5 standard that has made this exhibition so famous. 2D pieces no larger than 25 square inches, while 3D works must fit within a 5x5x5-inch cube. This milestone year promises an especially stellar cadre of entries from across the country. Don’t miss your chance to be part of a national showcase that celebrates powerful ideas in small formats.



Last, but not least, mark your calendars for the Annual Porch Sale, which takes place Saturday, December 6th. This one-day, open-house style art market has become a holiday shopping tradition at

River Oaks and, as in recent years, it coincides with AlexWinterFête downtown. Expect a festive mix of fine crafts, ceramics, original paintings, prints, and gifts in every price range. It’s the ideal way to support artists, find one-of-a-kind presents, and soak up the holiday spirit in the heart of our creative community.

By the way, if you’ve been wanting to get your hands in clay, River Oaks offers ongoing ceramics classes for adults. They’ve been going strong for over a year and continue to fill quickly. Explore wheel throwing, hand-building, glazing techniques, and studio best practices with instructors who support beginners and returning makers alike.

To register, visit our HiSawyer portal and search River Oaks Square Arts Center for current class dates, details, and enrollment. It’s an easy way to grab your spot and start making.

These events are in part made possible by the generous support of our sponsors including the Alexandria/Pineville CVB, Hotel Bentley, Red River Bank, GAEDA, the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development, Diamond Grill, and the Louisiana Division of the Arts.

For Gala tickets and tables, #Triple5 entry info, Porch Sale details, or adult ceramics classes, call (318) 473-2670, visit RiverOaksArtsCenter.com, or follow River Oaks Arts Center on Facebook. Fall is a fantastic time to experience River Oaks! See you at the Gala, on CaFÉ, in the studio, and at the Porch Sale.

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It's a Sizzlin' September in Avoyelles

By Wilbert Carmouche



Calling all artists, Plein Air Marksville (PAM) and Gallery on the Square, home of Avoyelles Arts Council, invites you to their annual plein air painting on September 13th. Check-in time is 9:00am at The Gallery. Paintings are returned for judging at 3:00pm and reception, awards, and art sale is scheduled from 5:00pm to 7:00pm. The entry fee is \$30.00 per artist; pre-register via Facebook (PAM) or for \$35.00 on event day. A Youth Plein Air division is added this year for \$10.00 registration fee. Email MargeShanksArt@gmail.com or call (225) 287-6623 for more information.

Paragon Casino Resort continues to bring welcomed entertainment! At 8:00pm on Saturday, September 13th, Rock Show NOLA takes the stage for an evening tribute to the classic rock of Def Leppard and Bon Jovi. Led by vocalist Derrick Lefevre, Rock Show NOLA specializes in performing “Tributes” to the hottest bands of the 70s and 80s. Tickets begin at \$15.00. To reserve your tickets, visit www.paragoncasinoresort.com/entertainment.



Test your knowledge at Faith House Trivia Night “Through the Decades” on Friday, September 19th in Paragon Casino Resort’s Arsene/Belazaire Rooms. Hold on to your hats, folks, special appearance by the one and only Chloe Marie. Food, silent auction, and prizes will complete the night. Doors will open at 6:30pm for cocktails and the competition begins at 7:00pm. Participants must be 21 years of age. For more information, call Mitzi Smith at (318) 253-2383.



Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Fifth Ward invites you to celebrate with them on September 20th and 21st at their Annual Church Fair! Festivities begin with a Jambalaya Cook-Off; you can register by calling (318) 305-2770 or (318) 359-8759. The fair continues after 4:00pm Mass on September 20th and continues to September 21st. Saturday’s events will include a raffle, football game watch,

children’s games, jump house, DJ, bingo, and food. Pork or Chicken dinners are available with advanced tickets for just \$12.00 on Sunday from 10:00am to 12:30pm. Call (318) 253-9936 or (318) 240-0641 for more information.

Also on September 20th and 21st is the St. Peters/St. Michael’s Church Fair at the Bordelonville Volunteer Fire Department Training Center, located at 4475 Highway 451 featuring games, food sales, and yes, Bordelonville cakes will be available. Visit the ticket booth for your ticket purchases. The fun starts after 4:00pm Saturday Mass and continues until 11:00pm. Sunday brings the sought after Cochon de Lait dinner served from 10:30am to 1:00pm along with cakes and drinks. Bonne appetite!

Let’s go to Echo, Echo, Echo for their Annual St. Frances de Sales Church Fair

September 27th and 28th, sponsored by KC Council #9294. Saturday’s events begin at 5:00pm with game booths (\$1.00 per game), Homemade Cakes, Hot Cracklings, Chuck Wagon, and Street Dance with music by Phillip Meche “The Cajun Outlaw”. All-you-can-eat dine-in Gumbo will be served. Bingo will start at 5:30pm (\$25.00 wrist bands for three cards, play all night). Sunday, September 28th, the events begin at 10:30am for dinner pickup and homemade cakes, bingo (\$20.00 to play all day) and raffle. For more information, call (318) 787-3252 or (318) 709-0443. “Come pass a good time, cher!”

The banks of Bayou Rouge and the Town of Cottonport is the place to be on Saturday, September 27th beginning at 7:00am for the annual “Sale-ing on the Bayou”. The community event is sponsored by Cottonport Women’s Commission. Sales will begin at 7:00am with locations throughout Cottonport, along the bayou, at home locations, and Downtown Cottonport Square. For more information, call (318) 201-7355 or visit Cottonport Mayor’s Commission for Women on Facebook.

While in Cottonport, visit The Quilt Show at the Cottonport Fire House on Choupique Street hosted by the Cotton Quilters Guild. The display of quilts will open at 9:00am and continue until 5:00pm. Contact Mary Marcotte at (318) 240-4399 for more information.

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

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www.larue.la

Rock Show Nola
Paragon Casino Resort
September 13, 2025
@ 8pm, doors at 7pm
www.paragoncasinoresort.com

Save Cenla 5k Run
Marksville LA
September 20, 2025

Our Lady of Lourdes
Church Fair
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318.253.9936

St. Peter's Church Fair
SPCC/SMCC - Bordelonville
September 20-21, 2025
318.359.9121

St. Francis de Sales
Church Fair
SfDs - Echo
September 27-28, 2025
318.709.0443

Alligator Feeding Show
Paragon Casino Resort
September 27, 2025 @ 7am
www.paragoncasinoresort.com

Community-Wide
Garage Sale
Town of Cottonport
September 27, 2025 @ 7am
318.201.7355

Cottonport Quilt Show
Fire House - Cottonport
September 27, 2025
@ 9am-5pm
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The Buz is Growing in Bunkie and Beyond!

By Robert Smith

Following the paw prints of our previous month's prophesies and prognostications of new phenomenon within the proportional precincts of the Bunkie Buz, readers got the impression and an inkling of new developments within. It's something more than tall "tails" told; we've got big Bunkie Buz news! We have new members!

Welcome to Jackie, Rocky (Sr.), and Rocky (Jr.) Slocum, owners of Rocky's Service Express; and to Megan McCoy Ferguson, owner of Twisted Scissors Salon! Here's the scope of the scoop, whoop and hoot, bio and basics on our newest newbies!

Rocky and Jackie Slocum are well known in Bunkie and the surrounding area, leading the pack in hard work and dedication to excellent customer service, specializing in wheel work—alignments, balance, and front-end repair. It all began over 42 years ago when Rocky worked with his dad at Rocky's Gulf, eventually taking the helm under the brand, Rocky's Fuel Express LLC. Adding son Rocky, Jr., they united to become Rocky's Express Service. They are known for friendly and honest service provided to their devoted customers and still located at 903 SW Main Street. We are honored to have Rocky's join our Buz family!

Megan McCoy Ferguson has been a licensed cosmetologist for over 20 years, having opened Twisted Sister Salon, located at 110 Chevy Lane, in November of 2011. Along with her fellow licensed aestheticians, Angel Graser and Olivia Kidder, these Bunkie beauties are not only seriously experienced, but also offer a phenomenal hair and skin care experience. They are dedicated to make every guest feel comfortable, cared for, and confident! The latest styles, techniques, and product knowledge bring clients the very best as well as a full line of tried-and-true products!



Being connected to this kind of growth most certainly fuels the Buz and revitalizes "Grow on the go" attitude of the Buz family! All this on the heels of Greg Kojis' Griffin Service Station grand opening and auto extravaganza! Refreshing like an old electric fan on a sizzling summer day—and we thank God that the summer sizzle is subsiding.

We are riding waves of the Tuesday Bunkie Buz Radio Live @ Five broadcast on 92.5 FM KVPI. Live streaming works! We have caught the attention of our Southern neighbors with our rants and ravings, and raucous Buz about beauteous Bunkie. We look forward to meeting with other parishes' reps who like what they hear, desire to know more, and to grow together with our efforts!

In the "Where's Bunkie?" department, our tiny tenacious trekster and altogether amiable ambassador of goodwill, Lil Bunkie, has been spotted in Las Vegas, Santa Fe, and Minnesota! Lil' Bunkie has just departed to the UK and Europe, bound for adventure with that official winsome smile and official Bunkie Buz "One Heart for Bunkie" button snuggled upon the heart. We also are expecting some images from a pair of Austrian/German newlyweds who dropped into the Saxon Studio Bunkie Buz Tourist Infeaux on their way to visit New Orleans from Chicago! They were delighted to snag infeaux from our tourism department, but were more delighted to chat (in German) with brother Joel and adopt Lil' Bunkie to take back home! Scotland also contacted the studio to have one sent to Recreate in Scotland! Good on Ya! Mòran taing, Chris! Thanks to our intrepid Lil Bunkie and so many gracious hosts and traveling companions, Bunkie is becoming internationally known! Now, "Where's Bunkie" next?

As always, humble gratitude to Cenla Focus, Visit Avoyelles, LA Travel Assoc., KVPI - 92.5FM, and you our Bunkie Buz family

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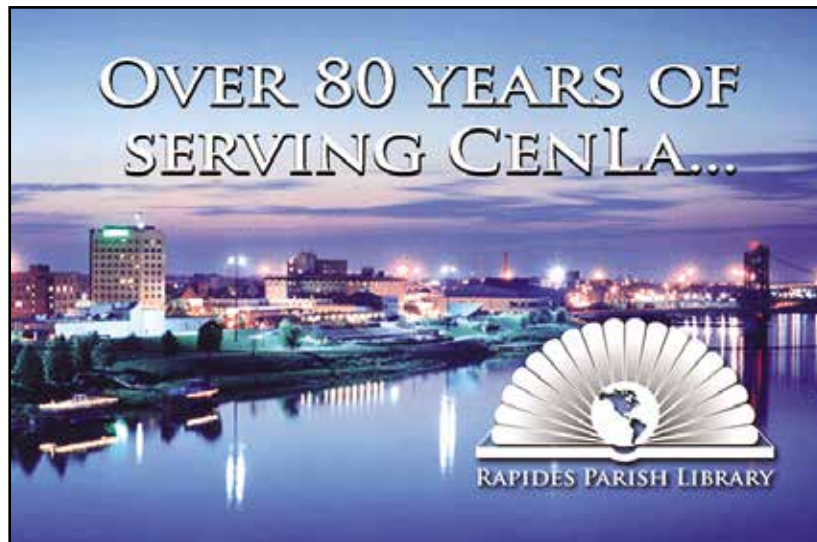
Brian & Erica Carmouche
TerminatorPPM@gmail.com



EDUCATION FOCUS

You Can with Your Library Card!

Rapides Parish is ready to celebrate all we can do with our library cards! September is here, and that means it's Library Card Sign-up Month—a time when the Rapides Parish Library (RPL) just can't contain our excitement about the incredible value a library card brings and all the doors to opportunity it opens. Since 1987, National Library Card Sign-Up Month has been a gentle nudge, reminding our community of the gift of reading and shining a spotlight on all the wonderful treasures our libraries have to offer. It's a chance for folks across the country, and especially in Central Louisiana, to remember that a library card is more than just a piece of plastic; it's a passport to learning, entertainment, opportunities, and connecting with your community.



conveniently located right within your community. The Rapides Parish Library isn't standing still; we're always finding new and exciting ways to meet your family's needs, whether it's for learning something new or just having a good time.

Now, for a bit of extra pizzazz! Starting September 1st, adult patrons will have a special access option—you can trade in your regular library card for a brand-new collectible card. This vibrant card shows off a picture of the Red River at dusk, all bathed in cool shades of RPL blue. It's a tribute to our first locations here in Rapides Parish. If you decide to grab one of these snazzy new cards, just remember that your card number will change. You'll need to update it wherever

This September, the Rapides Parish Library is celebrating Library Card Sign-up Month by giving all our adult patrons the chance to snag a special collectible card. But that's not all! We are also giving a special tote bag to brand new cardholders and featuring all that you can do with your RPL card. From passes to local attractions and places across Louisiana and numerous ways to learn right in your own home to in-branch programs that enrich your life with art, science education, and comradery, your friendly local branch of the Rapides Parish Library is truly a hub of endless possibilities. We are always here, waiting to enrich the lives of your whole family.

you've got it saved, like in our brand-new RPL app or for the handy Check Out Louisiana Museums program. But don't you worry, if you're fond of your current card's familiar look; those original cards will still work just fine. You're more than welcome to stick with the card you know and love! September is also the perfect chance for anyone who hasn't yet discovered the wonders of an RPL card to finally get one. And as a little something extra, we'll even throw in a tote bag for new cardholders, alongside all the valuable access your new card provides.

Finally, we've got some really grand news for our friends in the rural parts of Rapides Parish! Because y'all have been asking for it, and we believe in serving every corner of our community, we're thrilled to announce that all rural library branches will now be open on Mondays! Starting September 8th, our Hineston, McDonald, Johnson, and Boyce locations will swing open their doors every single Monday. This means easier access to all the fantastic things our libraries offer, making sure our vital resources are there for you when you need them most.

So, let's all get together and celebrate everything your library card makes possible. Keep in mind that we are here to serve our community's needs not just this September but every single month of the year! Whether you're a brand-new patron just starting your library adventure or a seasoned cardholder looking to update that RPL card you've had since birth, we are eagerly looking forward to seeing your smiling faces this National Library Card Sign-Up Month! This September, enjoy exploring all you can do with the most valuable card in your wallet.

For more information, drop by your local branch or visit RPL.org.

It's National Library Card Sign-Up Month & I CAN...

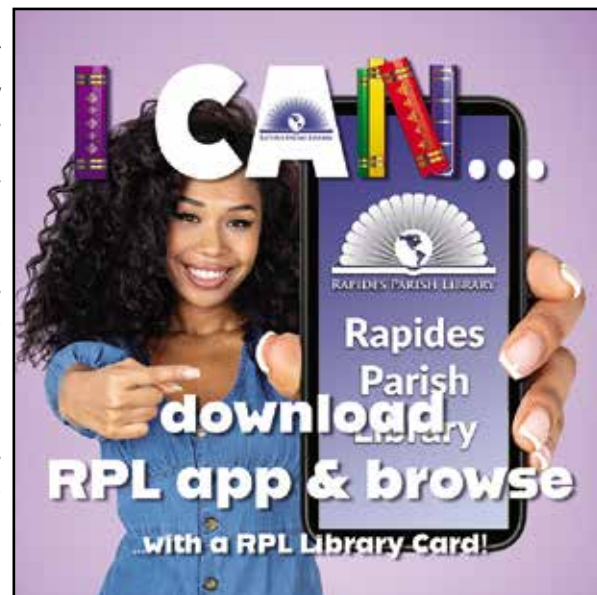
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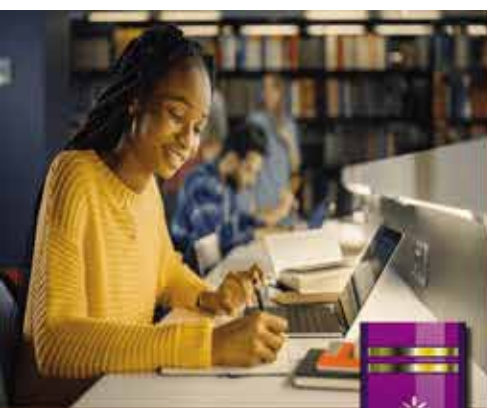
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- **New Members** — Sign up now and receive our Special Edition library card plus a FREE tote bag!
- **Current Cardholders** — You can swap to the new design!

Note: your library card number will change, and tote bags are for new sign-ups only.

Top-notch tutoring to help the kids with their schoolwork, a huge virtual stack of e-books to read on your phone or tablet, powerful research tools for that big project or just scratching a curiosity itch—all of it right at your fingertips with your RPL card and any mobile device you've got handy! With a library card, you get free access to books, movies, magazines, newspapers, study tools, Internet access, zoo passes, and more. Your Library helps folks grow in all sorts of ways. We're talking about connecting with your neighbors and feeling like you belong, getting to appreciate all kinds of art, and even diving deep into the world of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). All these things are just waiting for you at your local branch,

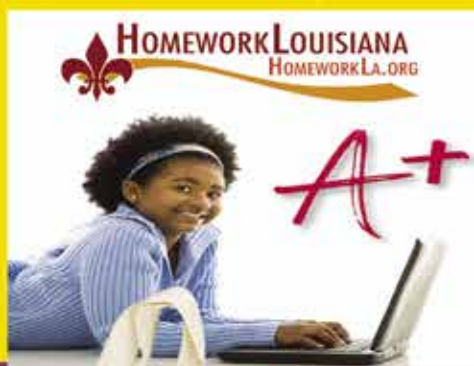




It's National Library Card Sign-Up Month!



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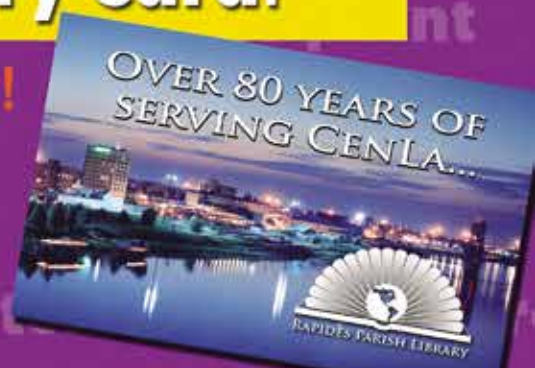


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- **Current Cardholders** — You can swap to the new design! Note: your library card number will change, and tote bags are for new sign-ups only.



EDUCATION FOCUS

LSUA and Cleco Advance Healthcare Initiatives in Central Louisiana

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. 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.



This project is supported through collaborations with local partners and the state legislature, with Cleco contributing \$1.4 million to the LSUA Foundation in support of LSUA's Health Education Campus. "At Cleco, our responsibility goes beyond delivering reliable energy—it's about powering the future of our communities," said Bill Fontenot, president and CEO of Cleco Corporate Holdings LLC. "That's why we're proud to invest in healthcare education. Strong, healthy communities are the foundation of a strong workforce and economy. By supporting healthcare education programs, we're not only helping students pursue meaningful careers, we're building thriving communities where we can live, work, and succeed."

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.

"Our new LSUA Health Education Campus in downtown Alexandria will play a vital role in addressing the critical shortage of nurses and allied health professionals in our region. Cleco's partnership on this transformative project is a powerful example of private industry stepping up to support health workforce development. We are deeply grateful to Cleco and CEO Bill Fontenot for their leadership and commitment to improving the quality of life for communities across Louisiana," said Paul Coreil, LSUA Chancellor.

A promotional graphic for Louisiana State University at Alexandria (LSUA). The top section features the LSUA logo in large yellow and white letters, with "LSU of ALEXANDRIA" in smaller white text below it. Below the logo, the text "LOUISIANA'S FASTEST GROWING UNIVERSITY" is written in large, bold, yellow and white capital letters. Underneath this, a message in white text reads: "Big opportunities start with the Generals. From innovative degrees to championship sports, LSUA prepares you to win with confidence." A yellow button with the text "EXPLORE.LSUA.EDU" is positioned below the message. The bottom half of the graphic shows a photograph of four diverse students (three men and one woman) smiling and standing in front of a modern building with large glass windows. The students are wearing purple and black clothing, some with LSUA logos.



Strategically located in downtown Alexandria near major hospitals and healthcare providers, the LSUA Health Education Campus will expand capacity for all health education programs. Cleco’s contribution was instrumental in demonstrating community backing and securing essential state funds for initiating construction of the project. This investment forms part of the broader \$43 million committed to downtown Alexandria’s revitalization efforts. LSUA, the LSUA Foundation, and regional healthcare organizations acknowledge Cleco’s pivotal role in advancing the future of healthcare in Central Louisiana. Individuals interested in supporting LSUA may contribute to the LSUA Foundation. Further information is available at www.lsuafoundation.org.

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Congratulations!
Brooklyn Broussard

BOM Bank is proud to congratulate Brooklyn Broussard on her promotion to Administrative Assistant! Brooklyn was recently promoted from her position as a Teller at our Washington Street Branch, and we’re excited to see her continue to grow within the BOM family. Outside of work, Brooklyn loves spending time with her baby, husband, and friends. Her favorite place to be is Disney World! Brooklyn shared, “I am so grateful to be able to work with such amazing people, and can’t wait to see what my future at BOM holds!”

Congratulations, Brooklyn!



Entertainment Focus

Art

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

Ongoing-October 11: River Oaks Exhibits, River Oaks Square Arts Center (1330 2nd Street, Alexandria). New exhibits at River Oaks. Clyde Downs' exhibition "Rhythms of Nature" will fill the Bolton-Davis Gallery; Margie Tate presents "Color Poetry" in the Galerie des Amis; and the Stokes-Harris Gallery will feature dual exhibitions, titled "Trust the Process" and "Landscapes SXSX" by granddaughter/grandfather team, Robin and Robert Ratcliff, respectively. Cost: Free. Call: 318-473-2670. RiverOaksArtsCenter.com

September 9: AMoA Creative Roundtable, Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria), 5:30pm-7:00pm. Are you an artist or creative in Central Louisiana? Are you looking for a place to come and talk to other creatives? Join the Creative Round Table! Being an artist can be isolating, but we can lift each other up! Do you want to learn about grants and artist calls? Talk about process? Maybe you want to learn how other artists market their art or ship their art? Well, come on! Let's talk about it! Cost: Free. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

September 13: Second Saturday at the Museum, Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria). Enjoy the Alexandria Museum of Art without admission charge on the second Saturday of the month. Cost: Free. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

September 13: Plein Air Marksville, Avoyelles Arts Council (122 East Street, Marksville), 9:00am-7:00pm. Join us for Plein Air Marksville 2025, a fun outdoor painting event where artists can unleash

their creativity in the heart of nature! Come join us at Avoyelles Arts Council for a fun-filled day of outdoor painting! Plein Air Marksville 2025 is the perfect opportunity for artists of all levels to immerse themselves in nature and capture its beauty on canvas. Whether you're a seasoned pro or just starting out, this event is a great way to connect with fellow artists and enjoy the fresh air. So, pack up your easel and paints, and get ready for a day of creativity and inspiration! Cost: \$33.85.

October 4: Rock 'n Roll Print Party, Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria), 10:00am-5:00pm. Block n' Roll is a family friendly event with fun hands-on printmaking experiences for all ages! Featuring steamroller printing, carving demonstrations, printmaking stations for kids, print-your-own stations, food trucks, music, and more! Whether you're brand-new to printmaking or just want a fun family outing, it's a great way to explore art together. Cost: Free. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

Music

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

September 13: Rock Show NOLA, Paragon Casino Resort (711 Paragon Place, Marksville), 8:00pm. Rock Show NOLA takes the stage for an evening tribute to the classic rock of Def Leppard and Bon Jovi. Led by vocalist Derrick Lefevre, Rock Show NOLA specializes in performing "Tributes" to the hottest bands of the 70s and 80s. Cost: \$15.00. paragoncasinoresort.com

September 23: Uptown-A Celebration of Motown & Soul, Coughlin-Saunders Performing Arts Center (1202 3rd Street, Alexandria), 7:00pm. Join the ACCL as we kick off our Performing Arts Series for 2025-2026 with Uptown! Fusing Bruno-Mars-caliber stage presence with top-tier vocals and wall-to-wall choreography, the men of Uptown combine the smooth stylings of R&B with the fresh hits of today in a unique and modern show that

gets every crowd on their feet! Uptown creates "the most electrifying show you'll see this decade!" Cost: \$20.00+. Call: 318-484-4474. louisiana-arts.org

September 26: Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror, St. James Episcopal Church (1620 Murray Street, Alexandria), 7:00pm. Composer, playwright, author and organ virtuoso, Dorothy Papadakos opens her annual Halloween Horror Tour silent film screenings with "Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror." An unauthorized adaptation of Bram Stoker's 1897 novel, "Dracula," the film will be screened in the Church while Ms. Papadakos will improvise a soundtrack for the film. A simulcast camera feed of the organ console will be seen next to the movie screen. Cost: Free. Call: 318-445-9845.

Theatre

September 8, 15, 22, 29 & October 6: Military Monday at the Movies, Grand Theatre Alexandria (2039 North Mall Drive, Alexandria). All military personnel and first responders can enjoy the ultimate movie experience at Santikos Entertainment for just \$5.00. Along with \$5.00 movie tickets, they'll also have access to a \$5.00 large drink and a \$5.00 large popcorn, making their cinema experience even more enjoyable and unforgettable. Valid ID required. Cost: \$5.00.

September 12-14: The Little Mermaid, Coughlin-Saunders Performing Arts Center (1202 3rd Street, Alexandria). Based on one of Hans Christian Andersen's most beloved stories and the classic animated film, Disney's The Little Mermaid is a hauntingly beautiful love story for the ages. With music by eight-time Academy Award winner, Alan Menken, lyrics by Howard Ashman and Glenn Slater, this fishy fable will capture your heart with its beloved irresistible songs! Performances begin nightly Friday and Saturday at 7:00pm; Sunday matinee begins at 2:30pm. Cost: \$16.00+. Call: 318-487-8243. lagniappetheatre.com

September 25-28: SSP Presents "The Apartments", Hearn Stage at Kress Theatre (1101 4th Street, Alexandria). Spectral Sisters' new production includes plays that must include four characters from a predetermined list of nine, each

with a unique profile. The selected plays include: "A Bon Chat" by Jeff Goelz; "Concern Party" by Lewis Gauthier and "Forget Me Not" by Melissa Savage; "Roommates" by Catherine Jenkins; "The A-P-T" by Marian Nevill; and "Fred, Bonnie, and the Clown" by Eli Grant and "Apartment Complex Epidemic" by David Holcombe. Performances begin nightly Thursday through Saturday at 7:30pm; Sunday matinee begins at 2:30pm. Cost: \$10.00. spectralsisters.com

Events

Ongoing-September: 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. Bring your 2025 National Mah Jongg League, Inc card if you have one. Free.

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

September 6: Back To School Bash, Kees Park Community Center (2450 Hwy 28 East, Pineville), 9:00am-11:00am. School is back in and we are here to help you get ready! School supplies, fun activities, giveaways and more!!! Join the Pineville branches of the Rapides Parish Library and other community partners at Kees Park on Saturday, September 6, 2025 for our 8th Annual Back to School Bash! There will be school supplies for the first 200 elementary, junior high, and high school students who come through the doors, and lots of fun activities! Cost: Free.

September 6: International Vulture Awareness Day, Alexandria Zoo (3016 Masonic Drive, Alexandria), 9:30am-

Entertainment Focus

11:30am. Did you know that vultures play a crucial role in our ecosystem? Learn more about these amazing birds with Discovery Carts, Keeper Chats, and a craft. Cost: Regular Zoo admission; Free for FOTAZ members. thealexandriazoo.com/LagniappeSeries.html

September 6-7: Cenla Shrine Circus, Laborde Earles Coliseum (5600 Coliseum Blvd, Alexandria). The Cenla Shrine Circus returns to the Coliseum for five performances over two days. Showtimes are 10:00am, 2:00pm and 6:30pm on Saturday; Sunday performances begin at 1:00pm and 5:00pm. Cash only for cotton candy and cracker jacks. Clear bag policy is in effect, and bags will be searched upon entry. Get your tickets at Mac's Fresh Market, Security Sporting Goods, Marksville Farm Bureau, and Laborde Earles Coliseum! Cost: \$20.00 Adults; Free for Children under 12. Call: 318-442-9581. rpclive.org

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

September 8: Robertson Branch LifeShare Blood Center Blood Drive, Robertson Branch Library (809 Tioga High School Road, Ball), 10:00am-2:00pm. Give the gift of life, donate blood! Stop by the Robertson Branch on Monday, September 8 at 10:00am-2:00pm to donate blood. This program is in partnership with LifeShare Blood Center. Cost: Free.

September 9: Bingo at Hineston Branch, Hineston Branch Library (1810 Hwy. 121, Hineston), 10:00am-11:00am. Gather your friends and join us for a lively round of Bingo filled with fun, laughter, and great company! Bring your lucky charm and see if you'll be our next lucky winner! Cost: Free. rpl.org

September 9, 16, 23, 30 & October 7: Alexandria Farmer's Market, First

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

September 9: An Author's Journey—Passion, Perseverance, Partnership, Westside Regional Library (5416 Provine Place, Alexandria), 3:00pm-4:00pm. Join us at Westside Regional Library for an inspiring event as author Mary Vinson shares the incredible true story of how determination and passion helped her achieve her dreams. Together with her friend, tutor, and editor, Linda Dalrymple, Mary will reflect on the unique journey that brought them together—and the powerful outcome of their collaboration. Mary will also discuss her heartfelt children's book, "Born Without a Name". Free. rpl.org

September 9: Louisiana Orphan Trains—The Untold Stories, Rapides Main Library (411 Washington Street, Alexandria), 4:00pm-6:30pm. Join us for a powerful and moving presentation on the Louisiana Orphan Trains, a little-known chapter in American and La history. Guest speaker Martha Aubert from the Louisiana Orphan Train Museum will share the stories of the children who journeyed from the streets of New York to new lives in Louisiana. Discover the experiences of the orphans, the families who took them in, and the cultural impact that continues to shape communities today. Presented by Martha Aubert of the Louisiana Orphan Train Museum and Co-sponsored by Alexandria Historical and Genealogical Library and Museum. Reception at Alexandria Historical and Genealogical Library and Museum will precede the presentation at the Main Library. Light refreshments-served. Free. rpl.org

September 10: Child Safety Seat Check, Rapides Regional Medical Center Main Entrance (211 4th Street, Alexandria), 2:00pm-5:00pm. A trained child passenger safety educator will take

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

September 11: Spanish Storytime, McDonald Branch Library (1075 Highway 497, Glenmora), 10:00am-11:00am. Bienvenido! Join us as we have story time in Spanish! The story will also be read in English as well. Cost: Free. rpl.org

September 13: AMoA Stitching Circle, Alexandria Museum of Art (933 Second St, Alexandria), 11:00am-3:00pm. Anyone can come and knit in the galleries. Open to all ages. Just getting started? AMoA has limited materials to get you started. Cost: Free. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

September 18: A Perfect Fit Foundation Pancake Breakfast, St.

James Episcopal Church (1620 Murray Street, Alexandria), 6:30am-11:00am. Come enjoy a stack of hot, fresh, fluffy pancakes for breakfast while helping deserving elementary school children in Rapides Parish. Each breakfast comes with a short stack of pancakes, sausage, fresh fruit, and a beverage. 100% of proceeds will go directly toward the mission of the Foundation. Breakfast plates will be available to enjoy at St. James on the morning of the event, packaged to go or delivered to your Alexandria/Pineville place of business for orders of 10+. For patrons dining in, the pancakes are all you care to eat! Cost: \$7.00. Call: 318-442-8277.

September 18: Tank Fest 2025, The Quad at LSUA (8100 Hwy 71 South, Alexandria), 5:00pm. LSUA Tank Fest is a vibrant celebration of community and creativity featuring live music, food, and a wellness check. Cost: Free. LSUA.edu
September 18: Martin Library 75th Anniversary Celebration, Martin Branch Library (801 West Shamrock, Pineville), 5:30pm-7:30pm. The 75th anniversary marks a diamond milestone,

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Entertainment Focus

a testament to the library's enduring impact, resilience, and commitment to knowledge-sharing across generations. Join us for an evening of celebration as we honor this remarkable legacy and look ahead to the next chapter. The event will feature guest speakers, live music, and a special presentation recognizing the contributions of the Martin family, whose vision and generosity helped make the library a cornerstone of the Pineville community. A reception will follow, with light refreshments. Cost: Free. rpl.org

September 18: Giving Sickle Cell the Boot Gala, Alexandria Convention Hall (915 Third Street, Alexandria), 6:30pm-10:30pm. The gala will feature a night of inspiration, music entertainment, dinner, guest speaker, and a celebration of those making a difference in the fight against Sickle Cell Disease. Funds raised will support programs that improve the quality of life for individuals living with Sickle Cell and provide essential resources for their care and support. \$50.00. 318-314-3070. scarfcenla.org

September 19: Libuse LifeShare Blood Center Blood Drive, Libuse Branch Library (6375 Hwy 28 East, Pineville), 12:00pm-3:00pm. Give the gift of life, donate blood! Stop by the Libuse Branch on Friday, September 19 at 12:00pm-3:00pm to donate blood. This program is in partnership with LifeShare Blood Center. Cost: Free.

September 21: 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.

September 25: 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 Investigative Reporter Tom Aswell. Aswell, a native of Ruston, has lived in the Baton Rouge area for 30 years and for 10 of those years, ran Capitol News Service, covering state government for about 40 weekly and small daily newspapers throughout the state. Tom is returning to speak on his newest book about the sexual trafficking of children. Cost: Free. 318-442-2483.

September 27: 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 4: Experimental Aircraft Association 1st Saturday Breakfast, Buhlow Lake Airport (200 Lake Buhlow Road, Pineville), 7:30am-10:00am. Come enjoy a hearty breakfast of eggs, sausage, pancakes, grits, potatoes, milk, orange juice, and more! Anyone

interested in aviation and general cordial chatter with lakeside ambience is welcome and invited to come to enjoy breakfast with us! Cost: \$10.00 Donation.

October 4: Fall Herb Day, Arts & Crafts Fest and Yard Sale, Kent Plantation House (3601 Bayou Rapides Road, Alexandria), 8:00am-4:00pm. We'll have an amazing selection of quality herbs and plants with gardening experts on hand to help select the perfect plants for your house or fall garden. Browse the wide selection of local arts, crafts and food vendors as well as our gigantic indoor Yard Sale for your shopping pleasure. Herb Day and the Yard Sale serve as fundraisers for educational programs at Kent Plantation House. Help support our mission to preserve Central La's history & culture! Free. 318-487-5998. kenthouse.org

October 4: Central Louisiana Dutch Oven Cookers First Saturday Gathering, Indian Creek Recreation Area (100 Camp Ground Road, Woodworth), 9:00am-12:30pm. A delicious day with Dutch oven cooking enthusiasts. There is no charge for food, however, donations are accepted. Regular park admission applies. Call: 318-625-1762.

October 4: Mah Jongg "Big Play Day!," First United Methodist Church of Alexandria (2727 Jackson St, Alexandria), 9:00am. Come and celebrate 1 year of Mah Jongg play at FUMC. Prizes awarded at end of play. Please bring your 2025 National Mah Jongg League, Inc. card. Cost: \$20.00. Contact: c3trrobinson@gmail.com.

Sports

September 9, 16, 23, 30 & October 7: Yoga in the Gallery, Alexandria Museum of Art (933 2nd Street, Alexandria), 5:45pm. Chill out every Tuesday with yoga classes taught by Learn with Laci. Registration is not required. Cost: Free. Call: 318-443-3458. themuseum.org

September 20: 14th Annual Le Tour de Bayou, Kent Plantation House (3601 Bayou Rapides Road, Alexandria). The 13th Annual Le Tour de Bayou features six bicycle events ranging from a family

friendly 2-mile fun ride to an ambitious 101-mile ride! So, grab a group of friends, your bike helmets, and come make some memories riding along the bayou. Cost: \$60.00 101-, 69-, 40- and 25-mile rides; \$40.00 10-mile ride; \$20.00 family of 4 2-mile fun run/ride. 318-487-5998. Letourdebayou.com

September 20: Into the Light 5K, Marksville Courthouse (312 North Main Street, Marksville), 8:00am. Help shine a light on mental health awareness and suicide prevention at this family-friendly event filled with purpose, fun, and community spirit. After the race, we will hold a Memorial Butterfly Release in honor of those we've lost to suicide. Cost: \$30.00. savecenla.com

September 27: Louisiana's National Hunting and Fishing Day, LDWF Outdoor Education Center (661 Robinson Bridge Road, Woodworth), 8:00am-1:30pm. Louisiana's National Hunting and Fishing Day events include exhibits on LDWF's research and conservation efforts, shooting and fishing demonstrations, and exhibits. Attendees can try their skills at the shooting ranges, fishing ponds, and boating activities and learn about wildlife with live animal demonstrations. RRCM personnel will be teaching ATV safety as well as Stop the Bleed training. Cost: Free. wlf.louisiana.gov

October 4: Safari Smash Pickleball Tournament, Alexandria Tennis Complex (98 Sylvester Drive, Alexandria), 7:30am. Get ready to hit the courts for a cause! Serve, smash, and support Alexandria Zoo at this fun-filled, competitive event for pickleball players of all skill levels. The tournament is open to players ages 10 and up who will compete in Junior Division (ages 10-14), Men's, Women's, and Mixed. Individuals can compete in more than one division. T-Shirts will be provided on a first come, first served basis for registered participants. All teams are guaranteed a two-game minimum. The City of Alexandria's Youth & Teen Center will be open to relax, cool off, and have some fun. Food trucks will be on site. Please pre-register online. Cost: \$60.00 per team. thealexandriazoo.com/Pickleball.html

**All events subject to change.*



Scan for a full
listing of events at



Entertainment Focus

Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror

By Roy Rosenthal

The 2025-2026 season of the St. James Episcopal Church Concert Series debuts Friday, September 26th at 7:00pm with the return of composer, playwright, author, and organ virtuoso, Dorothy Papadakos as she opens



her annual Halloween Horror Tour silent film screenings. After her Concert Series debut with "Phantom of the Opera" and subsequent screening of "Hunchback of Notre Dame," the 1922 German silent film, "Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror," will be presented in the Church. Ms. Papadakos will improvise a soundtrack for the film showcasing why the pipe organ is known as the king of instruments. A simulcast camera feed of the organ console will be seen next to the movie screen.



Widely considered as the first vampire movie, Nosferatu is an unauthorized adaptation of Bram Stoker's 1897 novel, "Dracula." Various names and other details were changed from the novel, including Count Dracula being renamed Count Orlok. The film was directed by F. W. Murnau, and the Count was portrayed by German actor, Max Schreck.

Currently residing in North Carolina, Dorothy is a Julliard-trained concert organist and composer. She enjoys a reputation as one of the great organ improvisers of our time and this marriage of imagination with talent will be on full display for the concert. Dorothy was the first—and continues to be

the only—woman Cathedral Organist at New York's Episcopal Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine. Her 1990 to 2003 tenure at the Cathedral gave her the opportunity to develop her improvisation skills in playing the Cathedral's world-renowned Great Organ on a weekly basis in both liturgical and concert settings. Indeed, St. John the Divine is well known for its annual All Hallow's Eve silent film screening and accompanying Procession of Ghouls in the vast nave of the Cathedral.

Being the recipient of a generous grant from The McCormick-Smith Fund, Inc., the Concert Series presents "Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror" with complimentary admission and is open to the public. There will be a reception after the conclusion of the concert in the Church Parish Hall. St. James Episcopal Church is located at 1620 Murray Street at Bolton Avenue in Alexandria. For more information or questions, please call the Church office at (318) 445-9845.



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Entertainment Focus

Travel Through the Looking Glass at A Very Merry Market



The Junior League of Alexandria invites you to tumble down the rabbit hole and join us for this year's A Very Merry Market, a whimsical, wonder-filled weekend of shopping, sweets, and seasonal cheer! Mark your calendars for October 9th through 11th, and prepare for three magical days inspired by the charm and curiosity of Alice in Wonderland.

Each year, A Very Merry Market features a wide selection of handcrafted goods and artisan gifts, fashion, home décor and seasonal treats, raffles, entertainment & more festive surprises! It is a fun and meaningful way to support our community! Whether you're crossing off your gift list or just enjoying the holiday vibes, this market has something for everyone—all while supporting the Junior League's mission to empower women and improve lives in Central Louisiana.

Things get started on Thursday, October 9th with Ladies' Night: "Off With Their Heels!" Kick off the fun with an exclusive evening of cocktails, boutique shopping, and royal revelry. VIP Admission begins at 6:00pm and includes an exclusive swag bag and early access. General Admission begins at 7:00pm.

General Shopping Hours begin Friday, October 10th from 9:00am to 5:00pm and



Saturday, October 11th from 9:00am to 5:00pm. Tickets are just \$8.00 per person! On Friday, start your morning with a few friendly rounds at "A Very Merry Mahjong" beginning at 10:00am. Then return at 6:00pm for "Mad Mixology," our adults-only evening featuring curious cocktails and enchanting elixirs.

Saturday is a day just for the little dreamers! Bring the kids to meet Alice, her princess pals, and a few superhero surprises at Teas, Treats & Wonderland Sweets! Enjoy a party of sweet treats and photo ops fit for royalty.

Join us for a weekend that's equal parts heartwarming and topsy-turvy—all in support of the community programs powered by the Junior League of Alexandria. Don't be late for this very important date!

For more information, visit JLAlexandria.com



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LADIES' NIGHT

09 OCT | 6 PM



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**A VERY MERRY
MAHJONG**



10 OCT | 10 AM



WITH DENISE JEANSONNE

SOUTHBOUND

10 OCT | 6 PM

Cookies With Characters Presents
Teas, Treats, & Wonderland Sweets



11 OCT | 9 AM 10 AM 11 AM

Pineville's Smokin' on the River BBQ Cookoff!

Get ready for a day of mouth-watering BBQ, live music, and family fun at Pineville's annual Smokin' on the River BBQ Cookoff from 11:00am to 4:00pm on Saturday, October 11th! This can't-miss event on the Pineville Riverfront brings the community together for an unforgettable experience.

The BBQ Cookoff is a great opportunity to watch top chefs compete in brisket, ribs, and chicken categories for the title of BBQ champion. The competition will be fierce, and the flavors will be out of this world. Whether you're a BBQ connoisseur or just love good food, you won't want to miss the chance to taste some of the best BBQ around.

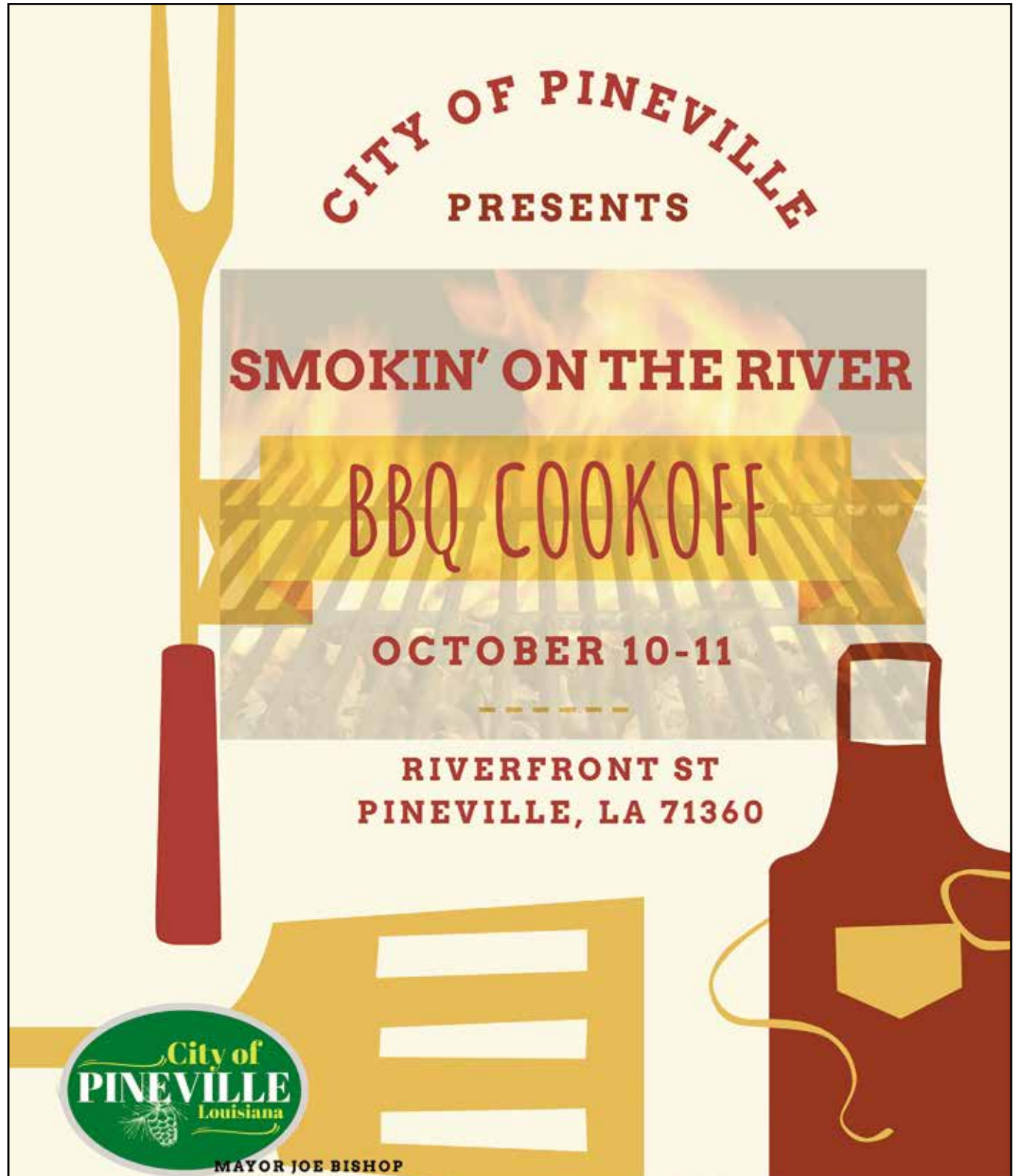


In addition to the great food, explore unique creations and find the perfect one-of-a-kind souvenir from local vendors. From handmade jewelry to artisanal crafts, our vendors offer a variety of items that make great gifts or keepsakes. Support local artisans and discover something special to take home.

Enjoy energetic performances from a local band to keep the vibe lively. The live music will set the perfect backdrop for a day of fun and relaxation. Dance along or simply sit back and enjoy the tunes as you savor delicious BBQ.



Whether you're a BBQ connoisseur or just looking for a fun day out, this event has something for everyone. Bring your family and friends and make a day out of it at the Riverfront. With great food, fantastic music, and unique crafts, Pineville's Smokin' on the River BBQ Cookoff is the perfect way to spend a Saturday. Don't miss out on the fun—mark your calendars and join us at the Riverfront!



Entertainment Focus

Red River Chorale Announces 2025-2026 Season

By Leigh Schneider



Red River Chorale is excited to announce its new season for 2025-2026. This is the 20th anniversary of this incredible organization, and the chorale comes together again, excited to bring you a variety of

musical offerings. Many veteran members return this season along with some new voices, led by Artistic Director, Jacob Wittkopp. Rehearsals have already begun!

The first concert, titled "Remembrance," will take place on Thursday, October 9th at First Presbyterian Church in Alexandria. This collection of pieces will highlight the art of storytelling, and how much music brings recollection and memories from the past to our minds.

Be sure to mark your calendars for the annual Christmas concert at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral on Thursday, December 18th. This concert is always a highlight of the holiday season in Central Louisiana. In the new year, RRC is excited to join the Rapides Symphony Orchestra for their concert celebrating the 250th birthday of the United States, as well as special event in April in remembrance of the Holocaust.

Tickets for individual concerts are on sale now at redriverchorale.com, and season

tickets will be available soon, also on the website. Please consider supporting the arts and helping RRC enrich our local community this season!



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Spectral Sisters Productions Presents “The Apartments”

By David J. Holcombe

Spectral Sisters Productions presents a collection of original ten-minute plays for viewing from September 25th to 28th at the Hearn Stage of the Rapides Foundation Building. This new production includes plays that must include four characters from a predetermined list of nine, each with a unique profile. The challenge for the writers was to develop a 10-minute play using their selection of characters interacting in an apartment complex. The result was an astonishing group of plays with recurring characters, but wildly different interpretations.



The authors are all local writers demonstrating the amazing amount of talent and creativity abounding in Central Louisiana. With five functioning theatre groups, including Spectral Sisters, there is always a choice of something to see at the local theatres.

As mentioned, Spectral Sisters Productions is the only “developmental” theatre group in Louisiana. That means

that they specialize in creating original plays which can push the boundaries of what Cenla audiences may be accustomed to. They provide a unique opportunity for both the writing community and the public to engage in creating and witnessing something new, offbeat and sometimes challenging.

Production will be from Thursday, September 25th through Saturday, September 27th at 7:30pm and on Sunday, September 28th at 2:30pm on the Hearn Stage of the Kress Theatre. Tickets are a modest \$10.00 each and parental discretion is advised due to mature themes and language.

Come be part of something new, exciting, challenging and entertaining. Remember, “The mind, once stretched, never goes back to its original dimensions.”

Learn more at spectralsisters.com.



The selected plays by order of rank include: “A Bon Chat” by Jeff Goelz in first place; “Concern Party” by Lewis Gauthier and “Forget Me Not” by Melissa Savage tied for second place; “Roommates” by Catherine Jenkins in fourth place; “The A-P-T” by Marian Nevill in fifth place; and “Fred, Bonnie, and the Clown” by Eli Grant and “Apartment Complex Epidemic” by David Holcombe tied for sixth place.

As the titles suggest, each author chose to depict an entirely different drama

in the same setting. The themes include dementia and game night, apartments for the deceased, landlord and pet problems, masks and HR issues, and other variations.



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Starfish Book Nook

By Michael Wynne

These days, with all of the competition in the workplace for loyal customers, we look for—and expect—more from our local businesses. Those businesses who step up to the plate and provide more than their usual fare of products and services are usually rewarded with faithful clientele. This extends to all businesses, even governmental ones.

One business that has taken this credo to heart is Starfish Book Nook, located at 5508 Monroe Highway in the Ball community, just a short distance from Ball’s City Hall. Yes, Starfish sells books as an independent bookseller, but there is so much more there to know about. When I asked owner Jessica Lachney why she started this now-growing and well-respected business, she said, “It was just one of those things that was knocking on my heart. God gave me a vision to open a bookstore as a place for his people to gather.”



And gather they do at Starfish Book Nook. When I was visiting and looking around as well as conducting interviews, people of all types were pouring in for what appeared to be their usual visits there for the day—men, women, children, old, young, from near and far. Why? Starfish has become a “home away from home” of sorts, a place of respite, a place of quietness, a place of friendship and, most importantly, a gathering place of friends and family. There is even a special room there, the “Gather” room. It is comfortably furnished and secluded from the rest of the store. Locals, for various reasons, meet there to visit or just contemplate their world around them. I found the room to be quite enjoyable to visit in, as compared to our own hustle-bustle world that can overwhelm us.

Manager Jackie Herrmann clearly reflects the atmosphere of this oasis. Raised by her grandparents, Jackie has had a rollercoaster ride of a life, though her story often reflects more downs in the early years than ups. I was most impressed with her having made a now wonderful life for herself and her family, where many others would possibly have given up hope. She is most proud of her leadership in the community, also running a successful personal business, “Graceful Layers,” a Ball home bakery. “When I gave up my life to Christ, I received the gift of baking and cooking,” says Jackie proudly.



Jackie gave me a tour of the Book Nook with not only many shelves of used and new inspirational books, but eclectic items as well as much needed items suited for any person or family. Some of the great gifts there include, but are not limited to, journals, devotionals, children’s books, home décor, journaling supplies, and even inspirational coffee cups. There are gift cards for all occasions as well as “Scentsy” (nice smelling wax melts), Rowecasa (creams of many sorts), t-shirts, tumbler cups, as well as many Bible-related items that you can share with your family.

Owner Jessica, who was born in Ball, lived in other places before realizing there is no place like home. She says that God gave her a vision for this bookstore, “a place for his people to gather, where they can laugh, cry, share and live life, real life, not an Instagram life, the life all around us,” she says passionately. “It is more than about books, this place is all about people, a place for them to come and be with other people. It is for anybody, everybody, regardless of religion.”

I plan to stop there for a cup of coffee or a smoothie at their excellent coffee corner bar anytime that I pass through the wonderful community of Ball.

T.G.I.F.

By Debbie Guy, LCSW



The air is crisp, well, it feels less wet. It's sweatshirt with shorts. It's fewer mosquitos. It's a second wind, a we-can-make-it-to-the-finish-line. It's the harvest season, Halloween, and Thanksgiving! If the year is a work week, we're creeping up on Friday.

Referencing the work week is my "Debbie" way to frame time. Here are a few examples. Parental advice, "Son, if your high school career is a work week, it's Thursday, get busy!" At 60, hinting for grandchildren, "Hey guys, if our life is a work week, we're Friday a.m.," wink-wink. Now, 70ish, hearing the "Well, at your age..." speech from the doctor presenting treatment options, we quip, "If our life is a work week, we're Friday afternoon, hoping for overtime," in subdued shock.

We think we master time. Our calendars, filled with multi-colored circles, checks, and X's, confirm it. Days, weeks, and months swoosh by. One morning, we proclaim, "It's our last Friday on the job. We're retired!" We flip the page to a new heading, "Golden Years." Where did time go? Some lament, "They lied, these golden years aren't golden!" Some say otherwise. Who do we want to show up on "Thank Goodness It's Friday" morning?

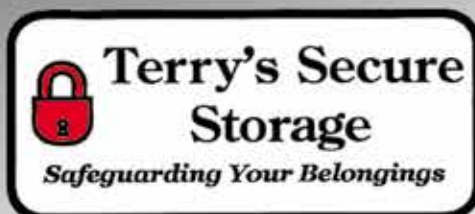
Each day is a fresh start. We have two choices: will we focus on the good or the glitches or "gnats", those year around pest that spoil our tailgate spread? How about we examine those teensy-weensy pesky bugs, buzzing around our head, overshadowing our joy by exaggerating common-to-man concerns. Everyone experiences the top three: waxing and waning health, income, and daily trials caused by silly, messy humans. Our tired hearts ponder what to do. Here's a suggestion: buy a fly swatter and shoo away the negativity as soon as it shows up. Take charge and talk back, which trains our hearts to face what's common-to-man in an uncommon way. It's difficult but doable! So, keep it simple, such as striving to do what's right with no expectations attached, or, showing up like promised, or, willing to hit a home run or sacrifice fly, whatever the team needs. We're thankful to do our part, 'nuff said.

What does it look like? It's Monday morning, we're armed and ready. Our gnat buzzes "it's going to rain," splat!, we're happy it holds off until the kids board the bus. She whines about our knee, bam!, we're thankful for the brace. She winces



as we crank our old vehicle, whack!, we're grateful the check engine light isn't flashing as we drive to work, run an errand for a friend, or make the road trip to see the grands. She bemoans the awful economy, zap!, we pray thank you that our needs are met, and we can help others meet theirs. She taunts "your group isn't ready for the upcoming presentation," ka-pow!, we confidently respond, "God shows up on Friday," and He does. By the end of the week, our generous, "it is what it is," warm heart is content.

So, blessings on our take charge, subdue the gnats, enjoy our life, hearts. TGIF!



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When Hope Feels Out of Reach: A Reflection for Suicide Awareness Month

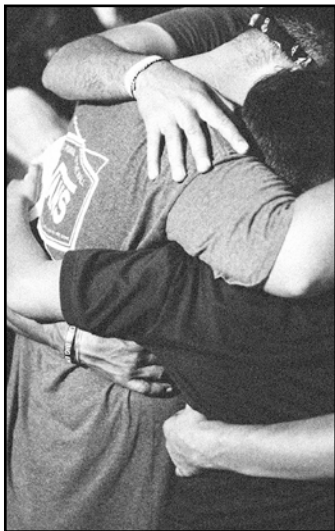
By Christy Pennison, LPC



September is Suicide Awareness Month, and it calls us to pause and acknowledge a difficult reality—suicide touches more lives than we often realize. Whether through the loss of someone we love, the struggles of a friend, or even our own silent battles, this issue is not far away—it affects our communities, our families, and often touches lives more closely than we realize.

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the United States, and it does not discriminate. It affects people of every background, at every age, and in every corner of the country. Behind each number is a story of someone who carried pain so deep that hope felt out of reach. Most often, it is not death itself that a person is seeking, but an end to suffering that feels unbearable. Depression, trauma, grief, financial strain, or health challenges can weigh so heavily that life feels unmanageable. When those layers of pain build, despair and isolation often grow stronger than the ability to reach for help.

That is why it matters that we learn to notice when someone may be struggling. Warning signs are not always obvious, but they may include withdrawing from relationships or activities, expressing hopelessness or feeling like a burden, talking about death—even in subtle ways—changes in sleep, appetite, or mood, or an increase in risky behaviors and substance use. Sometimes, there is a sudden sense of calm after a period of distress, which can also be a signal. Even small comments like, “I just can’t do this anymore,” or “You’d be better off without me,” should not be brushed aside. Asking someone directly if they are thinking about suicide does not plant the idea in their mind—it communicates that you care enough to see their pain and that their life matters.



If you have lost someone you love to suicide, I want to pause here and acknowledge the depth of that loss. Grief after suicide can feel heavy and complicated, and it often brings questions that may never have clear answers. What remains true is that your loved one’s life mattered, and your love for them still matters. As you move through the journey of grief, I hope you can also offer yourself gentleness and care.

If you find yourself in that place where hope feels far away, I want you to know that you are not alone. Thoughts of suicide do not mean you are weak; they are a sign of just how heavy your pain has become. Reaching out is not a burden to others—it is an act of courage. Call a friend. Talk to a counselor, a pastor, or someone you trust. And remember, there

is help available every moment of the day. You can dial 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, to connect immediately with someone who understands and is ready to listen.

The truth is, creating a community where suicide is less likely happens when we all decide to show up with compassion and presence. Sometimes it is as simple as checking in with someone, listening without judgment, or reminding them that help is available. Talking openly about mental health helps reduce stigma and reminds us all that asking for help is human. Offering support is one of the most powerful ways we show love.



Though the weight of suicide is heavy and the pain of loss can feel immeasurable, hope is still possible. For those who are grieving, hope may look like finding moments of comfort and healing as time goes on. For those who are struggling, hope may look like discovering that tomorrow can hold something different than today.

This month—and every month—I encourage you to pay attention, to be willing to ask hard questions, and to be brave enough to share your own struggles, when needed. If you or someone you love is hurting, please reach out. Hope is never out of reach.

If you are in crisis, call or text 988 to connect with the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

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Funky, Flavorful, and Fermented: Why Your Gut Wants You to Eat These Foods

By Breanna Staab



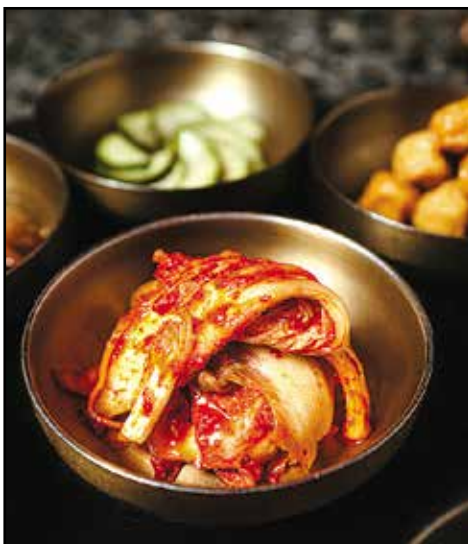
Fermented foods have been rocking taste buds and boosting health for centuries. From the zing of sauerkraut to the fiery kick of kimchi, these funky favorites are making a delicious comeback—and your gut is throwing a party in their honor.

So, what's the deal with fermentation? It's basically food science magic. Natural bacteria, yeast, or other microorganisms break down sugars and carbs in food, transforming them into tangy, tasty, and nutrient-packed bites. Bonus: they come loaded with probiotics—those friendly little bugs that keep your gut happy and humming.

Let's take a tasty tour of some fermented superstars you might want to invite to your next meal.

The Creamy Crew includes yogurt—the classic probiotic powerhouse that is great for your gut, rich in calcium, and perfect with fruit or granola; and kefir—yogurt's zippier cousin—which is drinkable, tangy, and teeming with even more probiotics.

Cath the veggie vibes! Sauerkraut is fermented cabbage with a tangy twist. Just a heads-up: if it's shelf-stable and canned, the probiotics have packed their bags. Look for the refrigerated kind near the pickles or produce. Kimchi is Korea's spicy, garlicky gift to the world, made with cabbage, radishes, and a whole lot of flavor. And, pickles! Not all pickles are created equal. The probiotic-rich ones live in the fridge and proudly say "contains live probiotics" on the label. Shelf-stable ones? Just crunchy cucumbers with attitude.



Kombucha is the sippable star of the show. Kombucha is a fizzy fermented tea with a hint of sweetness and a whole lot of gut-loving goodness. Just watch the sugar if you're managing diabetes.

The Soy Squad features a trio of options packed with flavor. Miso is salty, savory, and perfect in soup made from fermented soybeans and packed with umami. Tempeh is a firm, nutty meat alternative that's great in stir-fries or sandwiches. Natto is sticky, strong-flavored, and definitely an acquired taste—but a nutritional powerhouse in Japan.

Try the bread that bites back!

Sourdough bread is tangy, chewy, and easier to digest than regular bread. While the baking process does zap the probiotics, sourdough still feeds your gut bacteria like a good prebiotic should.

So, why our guts love fermented foods? These funky foods aren't just tasty—they're total health heroes. Here's what they bring to the table:

- **Gut Health Goals:** Probiotics help balance your gut microbiome, easing digestion and calming IBS symptoms.

PAGE 56 www.cenlafocus.com

- **Immune System Boost:** A happy gut equals a stronger immune system. It's like giving your body a superhero cape.
- **Weight Management:** Fermented foods help regulate appetite and may support a healthy weight.
- **Inflammation Reduction:** Chronic inflammation is no joke. Probiotics can help cool things down internally.
- **Better Nutrient Absorption:** Fermentation makes nutrients more bioavailable—so your body gets more bang for its bite.
- **Blood Sugar Buddy:** Foods like yogurt may help keep blood sugar levels steady, which is great news for diabetics and pre-diabetics.



Fermented foods are like the cool kids of the nutrition world—bold, flavorful, and full of benefits.

Whether you're spooning up creamy yogurt, crunching on probiotic pickles, or sipping fizzy kombucha, there's a fermented friend out there for every taste bud.

So, go ahead—embrace the funk, feed your gut, and enjoy the tasty perks of these nutritional powerhouses. Your microbiome will thank you. And if you've got questions or want to dive deeper, your local LSU AgCenter is just a call away.





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Sweet Potato Bread Pudding & Creamy Sweet Potato Soup

By Wilbert Carmouche

Yeah! The wait is over, the “Avoyelles” variety of sweet potato is available for purchase with local farmers right now. The sweet potato is a new, early maturing variety developed by the LSU AgCenter and named after the Louisiana parish where it was first identified. It offers several advantages, including quicker harvest time (maturing about 30 days earlier than other varieties) and resistance to root-knot nematodes. Selected are Avoyelles favorites using the “Avoyelles” from the “LSU 4-H Central Region Commodity Cookery Cookbook, 2017.”

Sweet Potato Bread Pudding with Praline Sauce

by Sarah Moore, Pointe Coupee Parish

Bread Pudding:

1 1/2 Cups Cooked Sweet Potatoes, Mashed

5 Eggs
3 Cups Milk
1 Cup Sugar
1 Stick Butter, Melted
2 Tablespoons Pumpkin Pie Spice
2 Tablespoons Vanilla Extract
1 Loaf Brioche Bread, Cut into Small Pieces
1 Cup Miniature Marshmallows
1 Cup Pecans, Finely Chopped
Praline Sauce:
1 Stick Butter
1/2 Cup Brown Sugar
1 Egg, Beaten
2 Teaspoons Vanilla Extract
Bread Pudding: Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. In large mixing bowl, beat sweet potatoes and eggs. Add milk, sugar, butter, pumpkin pie spice, and vanilla. Pour over bread and stir in marshmallows. Gently mix to coat all the bread. Pour into lightly buttered 9 x 13 baking dish. Sprinkle pecans over top. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes.
Praline Sauce: In a large saucepan on

medium-low heat, melt butter and brown sugar. Slowly add egg and stir constantly until smooth. Remove from heat and add vanilla. Pour over warm bread pudding.

Creamy Sweet Potato Soup

by Ava LaFargue, Allen Parish

6 Small Sweet Potatoes
64 Ounces Chicken Broth
1/2 Link Sausage
2 Tablespoons Brown Sugar
1 Teaspoon Red Pepper
1 Teaspoon Black Pepper
1 Cup Half and Half
Boil sweet potatoes in chicken broth. Remove casing from sausage. Chop sausage and sauté. When potatoes are tender, remove from broth and mash or blend until smooth with blender. Combine sausage, sweet potatoes, brown sugar, red pepper, and black pepper with broth. Cook for 10 minutes and add half and half. Stir and cook for another 10 minutes.

Note: La Petite Café Boulanger, a true farm to table restaurant, in Marksville across from the Avoyelles Parish Courthouse, serves a version of both these dishes. Follow them on Facebook to see when available! Open Tuesday through Friday for breakfast and lunch, Wednesday and Friday for dinner.

Avoyelles Sweet Potatoes are available for purchase from local Avoyelles sweet potato growers, call (318) 964-2245 or (318) 964-2025 for farmer contact information.

The LSU 4-H Central Region Commodity Cookery Cookbook, 2017, is available for \$10.00 at the Avoyelles Tourism Office, located at 8592 Highway 1, Mansura, LA 71350 (additional \$6.00 for mailing). Call us at (318) 964-2025 or email: tourism@krocket.net for more information.



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Flipping Out for a Good Cause!

Come enjoy a stack of hot, fresh, fluffy pancakes for breakfast while helping deserving elementary school children in Rapides Parish! A Perfect Fit Foundation will host its annual Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser on Thursday, September 18th from 6:30am to 11:00am (or until they're all gone!) in the Parish Hall of St. James Episcopal Church, located at 1620 Murray Street in Alexandria (across Bolton Avenue from the Alexandria Police Department). Each stack of pancakes comes with breakfast sausage, fresh fruit, and a beverage. 100% of each \$7.00 donation will go directly toward the mission of the Foundation. Breakfast plates will be available to enjoy at St. James on the morning of the event, packaged to go, or orders of 10+ delivered to your place of business in Alexandria/Pineville free of charge. For patrons dining in, the pancakes are all you care to eat! You won't find a better breakfast deal in town!

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



A Jerry Harp Memorial Foundation



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



Tickets for the breakfast are available the day of the event or in advance by calling the Cenla Focus Offices at (318) 442-8277. Orders of 10 or more plates (or equivalent donation) qualify for free delivery in the Alexandria/Pineville area. Can't make it to the event but still want to support this great cause? Make your secure donation to support A Perfect Fit Foundation online at <https://shorturl.at/Tt6bE> or by scanning the QR code on this page.

Save the Date!

A PERFECT FOUNDATION PANCAKE BREAKFAST 2025

Thursday, September 18th

6:30 am to 11:00 am

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St. James Episcopal Church
1620 Murray Street
Alexandria, LA 71301



For advance tickets or
event information,
please call (318) 442-8277.



Sponsored by





Welcome! Brittney Meynard

BOM Bank is pleased to welcome Brittney Meynard to the BOM family!

Brittney will be joining our Mac Lee branch. Her hobbies include spending time with her fiancé, family, kids, and her Frenchie named Kreed. She is the mother of two children and has one on the way! She stays busy with her kids' school and sports activities, and her favorite summer activity is going to the beach. Brittney stated, "I'm so excited to be joining BOM and look forward to growing with this bank."

Welcome, Brittney!



BOM

ABOUT

TOWN



Liz Vercher, Mollie Sandoval



Elizabeth Spinks, Kayla Beebe



Amie Clark



Sharon Lasiter



Dana Snoddy



Billy Tingle



Jackie Auerbach, Dan Cohn



Jennifer & Jarrod Marchand



Mayor Jacques & Wendy Roy



Michael Upton



Gary & Connie Clark



Peggy Sue Linzay



Jeff Marion, Dalton Crutchfield



Scott Laliberte, Kim Jones



John & Leta Fletcher



Senator Bill Cassidy



Lee Rubin



Randy Ponthe, Patrick Cunningham



Micah Walker, Marci Walston



Billy O'Neal, JB Stroud



Dustin Matthews



Sherry Reech



Judy Matthews, Jan Clark



Heather Darby, Kacy Saylor



June Johnson Davis



Taylor Clark



Al Matthews



Ed Caplan



Paul Coreil



Ariene Duos, Wayne Denley



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EVENT VENUE SPACES ARE AVAILABLE THAT RANGE FROM 10 TO AS MANY AS 300 GUESTS.
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SEPTEMBER AT PARAGON PROMOTIONS & EVENTS

CHUBBY CHECKER

"C'mon Baby Let's do the Twist!"

SAT, SEPT 6

DOORS: 7PM

SHOWTIME: 8PM

TICKETS START AT \$30

ROCK SHOW NOLA

SAT, SEPT 13

DOORS: 7PM

SHOWTIME: 8PM

TICKETS START AT \$15

CAST IRON COOKWARE

SUN - TUES, SEPT 7-30 • 12-10PM

GREY GOOSE FRIDAYS

FRIDAYS IN SEPT • 5-9PM

\$400,000 FOOTBALL FURY

FRIDAYS IN SEPT • 6-10PM

100 GUESTS WILL WIN \$100 - 400

SATURDAYS IN SEPT

12:30 - 10PM | EVERY 30 MIN

AIR FRYER GIVEAWAY

SATURDAY, SEPT 20, 5-9PM

DEEP FRYER GIVEAWAY

SATURDAY, SEPT 27, 5-9PM

BIG BAD BINGO

SATURDAY, SEPT 27, 7PM

VISIT PARAGONCASINORESORT.COM TO PURCHASE TICKETS.

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Select restaurants, not on specials. 1/person/day.

MON-THURS • 11AM - 2PM

FREE VIP VALET PARKING!

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2-FOR-1 ASIAN LUNCH!



CHICKEN FRIED STEAK

TUESDAYS
11:30AM-10PM

Dine-in only. No take-outs.
*\$9.99 without card.



LABOR DAY BUFFET MONDAY, SEPT 1

BREAKFAST 8-10:30AM \$20.99 +TAX LUNCH 11AM - 3PM \$24.99 +TAX

WEDNESDAYS • 5-10PM



PRIME RIB \$9.99*

Dine-In Only
Includes Baked Potato & Vegetable

*\$12.99 no players card; 14oz available \$13.99 w/ card,
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- WEDNESDAYS • Bingo 6PM
- THURSDAYS • Bingo 6PM, Senior Days
- FRIDAYS • 2-for-1 Seafood Buffet
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