

Along these LINES

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024

A Servant Leader

After 45 years of service to DEMCO, Arthur Hurst retired at the beginning of November **Page 20**

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Louisiana Co-ops: Powering Progress Safely

Before writing this column, I took some time to reflect on what I said in my column this time last year. One thing is for sure: Our industry is constantly changing.

Last year, I talked about how far we have come and the changes we have seen in our 87-year history. We certainly don't provide power the same way we did all those years ago. However, one thing has not changed: We have always been committed to and will continue to be committed to providing safe, reliable, affordable electricity.

Your Louisiana electric cooperatives continue to adopt new and improved methods to obtain power supply, including renewable energy. Systems have become more automated. Mother Nature has taught us we must build back stronger and more resilient. Technology plays a more significant role in delivering electricity to you, the consumer-member, and how our employees manage their daily tasks.

Last year, our Youth Leadership Council Representative Jacob Mullican was asked, "What do you think about when you flick on the power switch?" His response was probably the same as you would give if asked the same question, "I don't think; I just expect." He was right. You expect the lights to come on when you flick the switch. You set high expectations for your

electric cooperative's directors, management and employees every minute of every day, and with exceptions to bad weather or mechanical failures, we deliver on those expectations.

But your electric cooperative delivers so much more than just reliable power. We constantly work to keep electricity affordable and safe. We focus on creative solutions to ensure reliability and resiliency. In addition, your electric cooperatives give back by supporting educational opportunities for our youth through Youth Tour, mini-grants and 4-H, to name a few. They support and volunteer at charitable and community events. Your electric cooperative hires local men and women from your communities. They provide employees with educational opportunities. We live and work in your communities. We know what it means to power lives.

We know you have high expectations for us, and you should. But we also want you to know that safety for our employees and community is always our priority. We have a genuine concern for our community. It's



Addie Armato

one of our operating principles.

Although I am not a futurist, I can confidently say this new year will bring numerous opportunities and challenges for our electric cooperatives. Whatever 2024 brings, our electric cooperatives will always put you, the member-consumer, first as they work daily to meet and, I hope, exceed your expectations.

From all of us at your Louisiana electric cooperatives, we wish you a happy, healthy and prosperous new year.



Born on the Bayou

Marc Broussard and Louisiana's musical melting pot **Page 12**

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Volume 39, Issue 1

Mission

DEMCO is focused on enhancing the quality of life for members by providing safe, reliable and competitively priced energy services.

Along These Lines (USPS 4089) is published bimonthly by the Association of Louisiana Electric Co-ops Inc., 10725 Airline Hwy., Baton Rouge, LA 70816, in partnership with Pioneer Utility Resources.

Annual Subscriptions: Members \$2.18.
Nonmembers \$5.

Postmaster: Send form 3579 to 10725 Airline Hwy., Baton Rouge, LA 70816.

Periodicals postage paid at Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821 and additional mailing offices.

DEMCO is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Manager's Report

Randy Pierce
CEO & General Manager

Playing the guitar has always been more than just a hobby for me. It's a passion, a mindset, a creative outlet that brings joy and connection. We are truly blessed to live in a state with such a rich culture; none richer than the music that was born here in Louisiana and continues to be such a rich part of our lifestyle today. You will see more in this edition of Along these Lines about the musical fabric of our state.

Interestingly, that same mindset drives DEMCO's community service initiatives. I refine my guitar skills through practice, just as our co-op fine-tunes and adjusts its approach to community service. Day to day and year to year, we learn and adapt our efforts to make meaningful impacts.

In a band, every musician has a role and each instrument contributes to the collective sound. Similarly, each department and every individual at DEMCO plays their part in our community service initiatives.

Employees voluntarily give to Dream Day Foundation and Capital Area United Way each year. Additionally, we participate in an annual holiday service project as well as many other community initiatives, and everyone contributes to our collective mission.

We adapt our strategies, ensuring they align with our community's needs. This is how we serve best.

Just as I find fulfillment in striking the right chords, our collective efforts as an organization demonstrate our powerful commitment to the community through acts of service that resonate deeply. For all the years past and many years to come, powering communities will continue to be one of our guiding principles.



**DEMCO BOARD ELECTION
DIXIE ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION
CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

2024 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
Saturday, May 11, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION OF MEETING
DEMCO Headquarters Facility
16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, LA 70739
(Elections in Districts 1, 2, 7 and 11)

**February 12, 2024 –
March 8, 2024**

Publish the Calendar of Events in the official journal of each parish, including the date, time, and place of the meeting of the Nominating Committee.

**March 12, 2024 –
March 14, 2024**

Pre-qualification period. Members interested in seeking a position on the board of directors are required pursuant to DEMCO bylaws to appear in person between these dates to determine eligibility as prescribed in the corporation's bylaws. Candidates not pre-qualified will not be eligible to seek a position on the board of directors.

March 21, 2024

DEMCO Governance Committee will meet at 3:30 p.m. on this date, if needed, to determine eligibility of director candidates who have pre-qualified. Only candidates who have pre-qualified will be considered.

March 21, 2024

DEMCO Board Meeting at 5 p.m., at DEMCO Headquarters. The Committee on Nominations will be appointed at this meeting.

March 21, 2024

The Nominating Committee meeting begins at 5:05 p.m. at DEMCO Headquarters, 16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, LA, with results of the meeting to be posted March 22, 2024.

March 22, 2024

Beginning on this date, pre-qualified director candidates may obtain a petition to run for a seat on the board of directors. DEMCO bylaws require 50 valid signatures for the petition to be validated.

March 22, 2024

This is the Record Date for the 2024 Annual Membership Meeting. A final list of those

members eligible to vote in DEMCO's 2024 Annual Membership Meeting will be prepared.

April 8, 2024

Petitions must be returned to DEMCO headquarters office by 4:30 p.m. and received by the CEO and General Manager's office.

April 18, 2024

The Governance Committee will meet at 3:30 p.m. on this date, if needed, to validate each petition and post the results as required by the corporation's bylaws on this date.

**April 22, 2024 –
April 26, 2024**

The Official Notice of the 2024 Annual Meeting will be mailed to all members of the cooperative during this time.

April 22, 2024

Ballots for the 2024 Annual Meeting will be mailed to members of the cooperative on this date. Members should receive their ballots by Saturday, April 27, 2024 — VOTE and mail your ballot immediately.

May 3, 2024

The deadline for receiving ballots for the 2024 Annual Membership Meeting is 4:30 p.m. on this date — DO NOT DELAY — VOTE

May 6, 2024 – May 7, 2024

Ballots will be counted during this period by the certified public accountants selected by DEMCO to conduct the annual meeting. Candidates will be advised as to the time and place that the ballots will be counted.

May 11, 2024

Annual meeting and election results announced at 10 a.m., at 16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, LA 70739.



Inspiring YOUTH

CALLING HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS!
Enter the DEMCO Essay contest and you could win an all-expenses paid trip to attend the Rural Electric Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. **Entries due by January 19.**

For eligibility requirements and to enter, visit DEMCO.org/essay-contest

 /DEMCOLouisiana



Building BRIGHTER COMMUNITIES

Member-students can apply for one-year scholarships of \$1,250 for each of two consecutive semesters awarded in a random drawing at the DEMCO annual membership meeting. **The DEADLINE is May 6, 2024.**

For eligibility requirements and to enter, visit DEMCO.org/scholarships

STATEWIDE NEWS



NRECA Regional Meetings 8 and 10

Louisiana Electric Cooperative general managers and board members attended the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Regional Meetings 8 and 10 in New Orleans October 18-20. From left are Danny Berthelot, DEMCO; Addie Armato, Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives; Roger Dale DeHart, South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association; Austin Haynes, Panola-Harrison Electric Cooperative; Anya Killmer, Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative; Trevor Benoit, SLECA; Jill McGraw, Kevin Beauchamp and Leslie Falks, DEMCO; Matt Peters, SLECA; Dane Hocott, Washington-St. Tammany Electric Cooperative; Mike Heinen, JDEC; and Eric Gautreaux, JDEC.



ABOVE: ALEC staff attends the Louisiana Superintendent and Foremen's Association Banquet in December. From left are Addie Armato, Ricky Melancon, Conley Bourgeois, Rhianna Garon and Aarron Graham. LEFT: ALEC Staff gets into the holiday spirit with their annual tacky sweater day. From left are Rhianna, Addie, Robin Plunket, Aarron, Jody Overhultz, Ricky and Conley.



Practicing Techniques Used in the Field

Training to improve skills and stress the importance of working safely is an ongoing task for the line crews at all electric cooperatives. Live line and bucket truck training sessions, hosted by the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives, were recently held at DEMCO headquarters in Greenwell Springs.

PHOTOS BY RICKY MELANCON



CFC Independent Borrowers Executive Summit

FAR LEFT: Mike Heinen, Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative general manager and National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation board member, speaks at the recent CFC Independent Borrowers Executive Summit in Savannah, Georgia. LEFT: Pictured at the event are, from left, Trevor Barnett, CFC; Kathy Tanner, Claiborne Electric; Addie Armato, Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives CEO; Mike Heinen, JDEC general manager; Anya Killmer, JDEC executive assistant and Eric Gautreaux, JDEC chief operating officer.



STOP, LOOK, THINK

DEMCO safety magic show: making accidents disappear



ABOVE: Kaitlyn Breaux, 5, participates in a previous show.

TOP: Charlie Rabalais, left, accepts a wand from magician Scott Davis during a magic show. PHOTOS COURTESY OF DEMCO

DEMCO has sponsored a magic show promoting electrical safety in schools across its seven-parish service area for 15 years.

“Teaching students to stop, look and think around electric poles and wires and encouraging them to share their knowledge with parents has been a great way to deliver a key electricity safety message to students and parents alike,” says David Latona, DEMCO’s vice president of governmental affairs and communications.

The idea of using a magic show to reach children was sparked after seeing magician Scott Davis perform at an Arkansas Electric Cooperatives statewide event.

Amid the awe and laughter prompted by magic tricks, the primary message remains clear—a powerful lesson on electrical safety.

Scott introduces the concept of electricity as a tool, comparing it to everyday items like a hammer or wrench.

“Tools are helpful, but if we’re not careful, we can get hurt using a tool,” he says. “Unlike most tools we use now and then, we use electricity daily. It’s around us at home and school and when playing outside.”

During each show, three students take the stage as magician assistants. Through a

sequence of tricks, these students eventually pull magic safety words—stop, look, think, and safety—from the magician’s hat.

“Getting the students in on the act captivates the audience and helps the message stick,” Scott says.

Since DEMCO began touring the show in 2009, DEMCO Community Relations Manager Chanon Martin has experienced the joy it brings.

“Even amidst the loud laughter and shouts of excitement, the messages of electricity safety take the spotlight,” Chanon says.

Chanon’s daughter, Kaitlyn—now in college—was a magician’s assistant while at Forest Heights Elementary when she was 5 years old.

“You know you’ve been doing this a long time when the students are now the teachers,” Scott says.

As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, DEMCO upholds the principle of Concern for Community. DEMCO offers several youth programs for students 18 and younger. ■

For more information, visit DEMCO.org/Community.

Feeling Rejuvenated With CBD

Everyone feels the hurt as you age, but CBD can help you deal with it



By Beth Giles

Life really does fly by. Before I knew it, my 60s had arrived, and with them came some new gifts from dear ol' Mother Nature—frequent knee pain, stress, low energy and sleeplessness. Now, I'm a realist about these things, I knew I wasn't going to be young and springy forever. But still, with "golden years" nearly on my doorstep, I couldn't help but feel a little cheated. That is until I found my own secret weapon. Another gift from Mother Nature.

It began a few months back when I was complaining about my aches and pains to my marathon-running granddaughter, Jen. She casually mentioned how she uses CBD oil to help with her joint pain. She said that CBD gave her more focus and clarity throughout the day and that her lingering muscle and joint discomfort no longer bothered her. She even felt comfortable signing up for back-to-back marathons two weekends in a row this year. That made even this self-proclaimed skeptic take notice.

But I still had some concerns. According to one study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 70% of CBD products didn't contain the amount of CBD stated on their labels. And, as a consumer, that's terrifying!

If I was going to try CBD, I needed to trust the source through and through. My two-fold research process naturally led me to Zebra CBD.

First, I started calling my family and friends. Call me old fashioned but I wanted to know if there were people whom I trusted (more than anonymous testimonials) who've had success using CBD besides my granddaughter.

Secondly, I wanted cold hard facts. Diving deep into the world of CBD research and clinical studies, I came across Emily Gray M.D., a physician at the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) Medical School and medical advisor to Zebra CBD who is researching the effects of CBD. Dr. Gray wrote "early results with CBD have been promising and we have a lot of research underway now. I've had several patients using CBD with good success. It's important that you know your source of CBD and how to use it properly."

After hearing it from the doctor's mouth, I returned to my research, asking more people and was amazed by the number of close friends and family who were already on the CBD train. Apparently, I was the only one without a clue! And funny enough, a couple of friends who commented were using the same brand as my granddaughter—Zebra CBD. There was no consensus as to why they were using CBD, but the top reasons given were for muscle & joint discomfort, mood support, sleep support, stress and headaches, as well as supporting overall health & wellness.

Eventually, even the most skeptical of the bunch can be won over. With a trusted CBD source in mind, I decided to give it a go.

When I viewed Zebra CBD's selection online, I was impressed by its array of products, including CBD oils called tinctures, topicals, chewable tablets, mints and gummies. After reading on their website that all their products are made with organically-grown hemp, I ordered... and it arrived within 2 days!

The first product I tried was the Rub. Now this stuff was strong. Immediately after rubbing it on my knee, the soothing effects kicked in. It had that familiar menthol cooling effect, which I personally find very relieving. And the best part is, after two weeks of using it, my knee pain no longer affected my daily mobility.

The Zebra Mint Oil, on the other hand, had a different but equally positive effect on my body. To take it, the instructions suggest holding the oil in your mouth for about 30 seconds. This was simple enough, and the mint taste was, well, minty. After about 15 minutes, a sense of calm came over my body. It's hard to describe exactly. It's more like an overall sense of relaxation—as if I just walked out of a spa, and now I'm ready to seize the day. Needless to say, I've really enjoyed the oil.

While it hasn't been a catch-all fix to every one of my health issues, it has eased the level and frequency of my aches. And it sure doesn't seem like a coincidence how much calmer and more focused I am.

All-in-all, CBD is one of those things that you have to try for yourself. Although I was skeptical at first, I can safely say that I'm now a Zebra CBD fan and that I highly recommend their products.

Also, I managed to speak with a Zebra CBD spokesperson willing to provide an exclusive offer. If you order this month, you'll receive \$10 off your first order by using promo code "LL10" at checkout. Plus, the company offers a 100% No-Hassle, Money-Back Guarantee. You can try it yourself and order Zebra CBD at ZebraCBD.com/Louisiana or at 1-888-762-2699.

GET OUTSIDE

Chester Thompson, right, a world champion dog trainer from DeRidder, helps two young hunters spot a squirrel. PHOTOS BY JOHN N. FELSHER

Ghosts of the Forest

Try these tips to bag more of the elusive bushytails

Many Louisiana sportsmen start hunting by pursuing squirrels at the side of their father, other relative or a family friend, but the tree-climbers can provide exciting sport for hunters of all ages.

To bag squirrels, hunters must spot them. The ghosts of the forest can instantly vanish when danger approaches. Masters of concealment, squirrels find countless places to disappear among the branches and foliage of big trees. Fox squirrels prefer to hide, but gray squirrels typically run as danger approaches.

In good squirrel habitat, walk through the forest slowly. Cover ground more thoroughly rather than cover more ground. Without making quick movements, advance a few steps. Then, stop to look and listen. Scan the trees for shaking branches, odd movements or anything that seems out of place, such as an oddly

shaped “knot” on a tree trunk or lumps on branches.

Smart hunters use their ears as much or more than their eyes to locate bushytails. Squirrels can be heard long before they can be seen. Listen for the distinctive sound of claws scratching on rough bark, shaking branches or objects dropping to the ground. Listen for barking squirrels proclaiming their territory, which usually happens a little later in the morning or late afternoon.

Periodically, find a stump, fallen log or a comfortable tree trunk and sit down for a while. Some people carry light, camouflaged folding chairs so they can sit anywhere. Remain as still and quiet as possible while scanning the trees. A good pair of binoculars helps detect well-concealed bushytails.

If you spot a squirrel just out of range,

watch it. Determine where it might want to go. Sometimes, a squirrel foraging for food might wander into the gun range of an undetected hunter. If the squirrel doesn't get closer, plan a good stalking route that takes advantage of any available concealment.

Hunting squirrels in pairs or teams can put more weight in a gamebag. Alerted bushytails habitually put tree trunks, large branches or other cover between themselves and hunters. Take advantage of a squirrel's innate curiosity. One person can walk around the tree, making noise to grab the squirrel's attention, while another remains still and silent.

Keying on that moving person, the squirrel might shift its position. That could give someone else a shot at it. When hunting alone, toss a limb, pinecone or another object to the other side of the tree. That might make a squirrel jump and reveal its position.

Bushytails love to gnaw on green pinecones. They tear apart the cone chips



ABOVE LEFT: Daniel Felsher holds squirrels he shot while hunting from a small boat. In a place with as much water as Louisiana, a light human-powered boat allows hunters to sneak up on squirrels much easier than trudging through the thick underbrush of the swamp. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Steven Felsher retrieves a squirrel he shot while hunting in a swamp. Gray squirrels prefer thick canopy and swamps, hardwood bottomlands and mixed forests.

to reach succulent seeds. Cones from various pine species ripen at different times. In addition, cones can stay edible much longer than acorns or other mast and can provide squirrels food for weeks.

“Squirrels seldom go into longleaf pines, but they frequently go into loblolly pines because they have more limbs all the way up the tree,” says Chester Thompson, a champion squirrel dog breeder and hunter from DeRidder. “In late season, many trees will still have cones. As the season goes on, squirrels move to different types of trees to feed upon whatever ripens at that time.”

A monoculture pine forest normally doesn't offer enough nutrition throughout the year to hold many squirrels, but a mixed pine and hardwood forest provides abundant and varied food sources. At times, a single pine tree growing in an oak grove could attract squirrels like children to a candy store.

“Squirrels are usually in forests with mixed pines and hardwoods,” Chester says. “I like to hunt the edges where a pine forest transitions to a hardwood bottom. Squirrels go back and forth from the pines to the hardwoods.”

When feeding on cones, squirrels leave mounds of discarded husks, chips and other debris piled up around tree trunks. Look for green or freshly gnawed cone husks still sticky with sap to confirm recent

squirrel activity. After locating a good tree, find a comfortable spot to sit and wait. Listen for falling chips that sound like light rain hitting the forest floor

Sneaking up on squirrels in thick underbrush, palmettos and sucking mud seems almost impossible. However, in a place with an abundance of water like Louisiana, a small human-powered craft like a pirogue, canoe or kayak glides along silently. Along a promising shoreline, ease the paddle into the water and move forward slowly. Watch for movement. Periodically, stop to listen for activity. Use any available cover, and hug the inside shorelines on curves to keep the boat as hidden as possible.

Sportsmen can hunt solo by positioning a gun in a convenient, safe place when paddling, but many boaters prefer to work in teams. Designate one shooter who sits in the bow, ready for action, with the gun pointing in a safe direction. The other person controls the boat and helps spot game. After locating a squirrel, the paddler positions the craft so the shooter can make a safe shot.

Hunting from a boat is a good way for children to participate without slogging through soft mud or impenetrable thickets where walking isn't easy. Children quickly grow bored sitting on cold ground and rarely remain still or quiet. In a boat,

at least the scenery constantly changes. Boaters can carry additional supplies, snacks and refreshments to take occasional breaks.

When hunting squirrels from boats, sportsmen might see other game, such as feral hogs. Hunters may spot an occasional rabbit on patches of slightly higher ground. During waterfowl season, hunters with the proper licenses, weapons and ammunition could jump wood ducks or other legal birds while quietly paddling along any Louisiana bayou.

It's also possible to fish while looking for squirrels. Bushytails routinely see anglers in boats and largely ignore them

The Louisiana squirrel season runs through February 29, 2024, with a limit of eight per day. Season dates and regulations on some public lands might differ from the statewide dates and laws, so always check the regulations before hunting. ■



Born in New Orleans, John N. Felsher grew up in Slidell and attended the University of Southwestern Louisiana, now the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. He worked as the outdoors editor for four Louisiana newspapers and served in the Air Force. An avid sportsman, Felsher now works as a full-time professional freelance writer, broadcaster and photographer. Contact him at jfelsher@hotmail.com or through Facebook.

Born on the Bayou

Marc Broussard and Louisiana's musical melting pot

By Drew Woolley

Marc Broussard was 5 years old when his father first realized the boy could sing. By that time, Ted Broussard, famed Boogie Kings guitarist, had given up on fostering a love for music in Marc's two older brothers, and he eagerly set out to teach his youngest son to play.

Marc remembers the first four songs his father taught him were an eclectic mix: "The Greatest Love of All," originally recorded by George Benson but popularized by Whitney Houston, Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode," The Beatles' "Maxwell's Silver Hammer" and Sammy Davis Jr.'s "The Candy Man."

Armed with those standards, Marc ventured into the bustling Lafayette music scene where vocalists like G.G. Shine, Jerry LaCroix, Tommy McLain and Duane Yates captured his imagination. Marc was more than happy to tag along or haul equipment as long as he could be around the music.

"Any time it was an all-ages show, or my dad might be playing a high school reunion or something, I'd go help carry amps and guitars," Marc says. "I'd get up and sing one or two songs at the most. That was a real treat for me. But it also gave me a little inside baseball as to what that life looked like. And frankly, I was enamored. I wanted everything to do with it. It seemed like the best gig in the world."

That diverse musical background was a fitting entry point to Louisiana

music, which has always drawn on a vibrant mix of cultural traditions. Mike Shepherd, founder and chief executive of the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame, traces those origins back to the 1600s and one spot where everyone gathered.

"A place called Congo Square in New Orleans was really where the melting pot came together," he says. "There were slaves from Africa, the Caribbean and the Canary Islands, but we also had French and Spanish influences. Europeans brought violins, accordions and horns. The African people tended to bring more percussion instruments. To say it simply, music is who we are. Always has been."

Like Going to Church

While New Orleans jazz and blues have defined Louisiana music and influenced artists all over the world, it's only one part of the rich musical history of the Bayou State. Marc himself identifies more with the blue-eyed soul movement of the '60s and '70s, with influences from the swamp pop that grew out of Southern Louisiana.

"For someone like me who, as a young man, was really into guys like Brian McKnight, Boyz II Men and Michael Bolton, these really freak singers, to all of a sudden hear a Lil' Band of Gold record



SPOTLIGHT



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Once a vocalist who valued technical prowess, Marc Broussard has grown to appreciate passionate singing just as much. Performing his first songs as young as 5, Marc has grown up in the music business. Marc gathers with his band while on tour. PHOTOS COURTESY OF JESS FASANO



where Warren Storm is singing like a freak of nature and then to hear him do 'Mathilda' at Jazz Fest. It was like going to church, man," Marc says. "All of a sudden, the thing got real."

Despite his musical heritage, Marc never thought his songs could take him to a career with a major label. At best, he expected to join his father and the host of other musicians he had grown up around who played as a side gig to supplement their income. Then his debut album "Carencro," named for his hometown, hit it big in 2004.

"I recognized that Michael Jackson wasn't the same thing as the Cajun and zydeco boys," Marc says. "But I also never associated myself with the Michael Jacksons of the world. I definitely always saw myself as part of this place. So, I was really surprised when I started opening for groups like Maroon 5."

It wasn't until later in his career, when he got to know Cajun-punk fiddler Louis

Michot and Zyde-Cajun artists like Wayne Toups and Roddy Romero, that Marc started to gain a new appreciation for Louisiana music rooted in a different style than the blues, soul and pop he was raised on.

"Essentially, my whole young life was defined by snobbery with regard to singing," he says. "The more technical a singer, the better I thought they were. And that's just no longer the case. Louis Michot is not a technical vocalist, but he's one of my favorite singers of all time because the passion—the force—he puts into some of these vocals is unrivaled. It's a visceral thing when you see it."

All the Music in the World

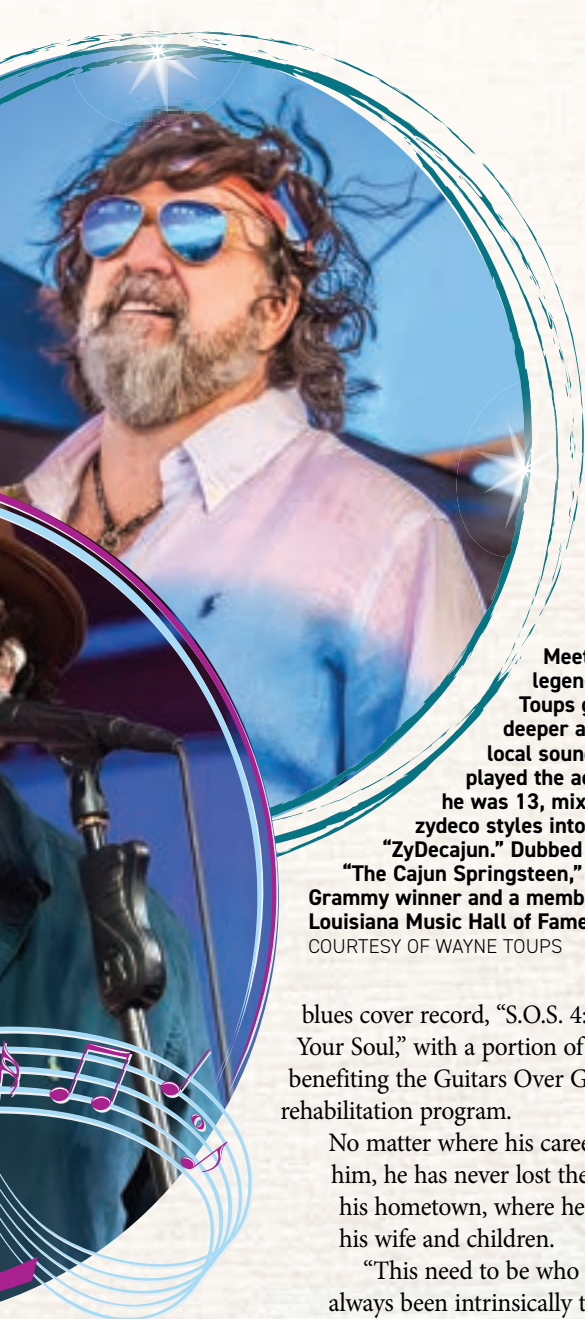
Today, Marc tries to channel that same passion and energy into his own music. At live performances, his goal is less

to show off his technical prowess as a vocalist and more to make sure everyone is having a good time.

"I just like having a party," Marc says. "You see a show like Trombone Shorty or Big Sam or Prince, and it's like, 'That's the way to do it!' That's the phase I'm in these days, and who knows if I'll live there forever. Maybe one of these days, I'll start trying to make people cry all night, every night."

Marc hopes he's changed as much as a person since "Carencro" was first released as he has as a musician. But he's excited to revisit those early days of his career with an anniversary show of his breakout album this year.

Marc also recently released a new



Meeting Louisiana legends like Wayne Toups gave Marc a deeper appreciation for local sounds. Wayne has played the accordion since he was 13, mixing Cajun and zydeco styles into what he calls “ZyDecajun.” Dubbed “Le Boss” and “The Cajun Springsteen,” Wayne is a Grammy winner and a member of the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame. PHOTOS COURTESY OF WAYNE TOUPS

blues cover record, “S.O.S. 4: Blues for Your Soul,” with a portion of the proceeds benefiting the Guitars Over Guns youth rehabilitation program.

No matter where his career has taken him, he has never lost the connection to his hometown, where he still lives with his wife and children.

“This need to be who I am has always been intrinsically tied to this place,” Marc says. “It was never a thought that I had to move away from that. I was inextricably tied to the bayou.”

He’s far from the only musician who felt the pull of Louisiana’s rich musical history. Mike has inducted several artists into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame who may not have been from the state but felt that same tug at formative moments in their careers.

Many found their way to Shreveport for the famous “Louisiana Hayride,” a music radio show from KWKH that was broadcast nationwide and was second only to the “Grand Ole Opry” broadcast for much of its run in the ’40s and ’50s. The show helped launch the career of a young Elvis Presley and offered a home to Hank Williams after his rejection from the Opry, giving Mike plenty of reason to enshrine them in the Hall of Fame. In 2024, he hopes to add Ray Charles and Dolly Parton, who also started their careers at “Hayride.”

“It’s just amazing the people who come to Louisiana and seek it out because it’s got the music,” Mike says. “It’s got all the music in the world.” ■

Exploring the Diverse Sounds of Louisiana’s Bayou Beats

Jazz

No music is more synonymous with Louisiana than New Orleans jazz. Born in the early 1910s from a combination of Baton Rouge blues, brass band marches and a spirit of improvisation, jazz draws on influences from all over the state’s cultural melting pot. While the genre isn’t unique to Louisiana, the New Orleans variety will always be the real thing for Mike Shepherd, founder of the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame. “It can tend to be more raw and not fall within the lines necessarily,” he says. “Jazz players have a lot of lines they hold to. But in New Orleans jazz not so much.”

Zydeco

Driven by lively rhythms, accordion melodies and a mix of English and Creole-French lyrics, zydeco has its roots in the state’s rural communities. While it originated in the house parties and small social gatherings of Louisiana’s African American communities, zydeco was popularized by Clifton Chenier. He mixed it with elements of blues and R&B, earning him the title King of Zydeco.

Swamp Pop

Popular in South Louisiana and Southeast Texas, swamp pop saw Cajun and Creole musicians shift away from French traditions toward the rock ‘n’ roll sounds that were becoming popular in the 1950s. Typified by slow ballads with emotional lyrics over honky-tonk piano and a rhythm and blues backbeat, several swamp pop hits made the national charts throughout the decade. But many more are regarded as classics in the region they call home.

Cajun Music

If swamp pop was a rebellion, Cajun music is what it was rebelling against. Like zydeco, Cajun music is upbeat and relies primarily on accordion, fiddle and vocals featuring “Cajun talk,” as Mike refers to the lyrics. “They weave it into the songs, and they weave in instruments,” he says. “It was the stuff French people in south Louisiana played with. They couldn’t go out and buy expensive instruments. Most Cajun musicians have their stuff made by another Cajun because you have to know the music to know the instruments.”

A Personal Vow

Designs on glove bags give a simple reminder of commitment to safety

“It is more than just a drawing; it’s a snapshot of life in the field, a reminder that safety isn’t just about rules and regulations but about the real people behind the gear,” DEMCO crew leader Cade Felps says.

Earlier this year, the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives initiated the Color for Safety competition. Linemen were invited to adorn their glove bags with designs that held personal significance—a reminder to reach for their glove bag before embarking on any task.

The idea is simple yet profound.

The personalized designs on the glove bags aim to make the act of gearing up more than a mechanical task. They serve as a reminder that a commitment to safety is not just a workplace requirement but a personal vow to themselves, their colleagues and their loved ones.

Capturing the essence of the linemen’s dedication and familial bonds, the winning entry came from Cade, a 10-year journeyman lineman and crew leader at DEMCO.

Cade’s illustration portrayed crew member Edward DeLee holding his newborn child, cradled safely at his waist—all depicted on the glove bag.

Cade’s design celebrated the



Cade Felps with crew member Edward DeLee and the winning glove bag design.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DEMCO

responsibility linemen carry not only for their team but for their families waiting for them at home.

“These glove bags are a reminder every time that I have a dangerous job and a commitment to protect myself, so I can then protect and provide for my loved ones,” Edward says. ■



MyDEMCO Registered Member Accounts

Congratulations to these DEMCO members, winners of the random drawing for a \$50 gift card. You will each receive a gift card in the mail! [Robert S.](#), [Maderis T.](#), [Belinda C.](#), [Ned S.](#)



New Year's Energy Resolutions

Resolve to take on a major household efficiency project this year and save big on your energy bills

By David Herder

We can all think of improvements we would like to make in the new year, whether it is eating healthier, volunteering more or lowering our expenses. One way to spend less in the new year and for many more to come is to make household energy efficiency a goal.

Making small changes to your routine can add up to significant savings. But do you know what adds up faster than small things?

Big things.

If you're willing to make the initial investment, resolve to go big by taking on one of these projects.

Insulate and Air Seal

For most houses, heating and cooling air makes up the largest chunk of energy use. If you're paying to heat or cool the air, you want to keep it inside your house.

Common spots to insulate are attics, walls, floors and anywhere your house contacts the outside. Just like you want a jacket between you and a snowstorm, you want insulation between your home and the outdoors.

Insulation is rated in R-values. Suggested insulation R-values are between R-30 and R-60, depending on your region and climate. In many cases, it is a good idea to get professional insulation help.

Air sealing is another step to prevent drafts by physically closing gaps and cracks. In some cases, this can be as simple as adding caulking or weatherstripping to places where you notice drafts. Contractors and some utilities can do a home blower test to find and seal leaks.

If you're considering doing some air sealing on your own, the Department of Energy offers tips at www.energy.gov/energysaver/air-sealing-your-home.

Windows

What are windows but walls you can see through? Like outer walls, they touch the outdoors, and unlike many walls, they aren't filled with thick insulation. Heat gain and loss through windows account for 25% to 30% of residential heating and cooling costs, according to the Department of Energy.



ions

Energy Star windows typically have high U-factors, a measurement of how well they insulate. Get multiple quotes for any home improvement project, including windows, and be on the lookout for rebates from utilities, state programs and the federal government.

If you aren't buying new windows right away, consider steppingstones such as adding weatherstripping, caulking gaps and using thermal drapes.

Seal Ducts

Just like you don't want your heated and cooled air to leak outdoors, you don't want your air leaking into parts of the house where you never go.

If you have ductwork in an attic, crawlspace or other unairconditioned or heated area, the ducts could have leaks that increase your energy bill. According to the Department of Energy, 20% to 30% of the air moved through ducts is lost to leakage.

Hire a professional to seal your ducts, or seal them yourself with metal tape or duct mastic specifically designed for the job. Do not use duct tape, which will dry out and lose adhesion.

Heat Pump

So far, we've covered three ways to keep your heated and cooled air where you want it. It turns out, how you heat or cool the air is also important.

If you're willing to replace your furnace, or the unit is 10-plus years old, a heat pump is an efficient home heating and cooling upgrade. It can reduce heating costs by as much as 50% compared to electric resistance heating, according to the Department of Energy.

A heat pump works similarly to an air conditioner in reverse. It uses a refrigerant to pull heat energy out of the air outdoors, then moves it indoors and blows the heat into your living areas.

Also consider a heat pump water heater, which has all the same advantages but heats water rather than air.

Programmable Thermostat

If a heater turns on, but nobody is there to hear it, does it make a noise? One thing we know is that it would impact your energy bill.



Not sure where to start?

Schedule a home energy assessment

Before starting a project, it is important to take a step back and consider, "What will make the biggest impact?" This means knowing how efficient your house is and where the energy use is going.

A home energy assessment looks for air leaks, insufficient insulation, energy-hog appliances or other issues, and evaluates your total energy use. Conducting a home energy assessment lets you know where any inefficiencies in your house are, giving you a blueprint for fixing them.

Many utilities offer assessment programs, and the Department of Energy offers guides on assessments—including tips for a do-it-yourself assessment—at www.energy.gov/energysaver/home-energy-assessments.

Both programmable and smart thermostats help people save energy by changing the temperature throughout the day. You can save 10% on energy bills by turning back the thermostat 10% to 15% for eight hours a day, according to the Department of Energy.

Whether that means heating or cooling less during the day while you're at work or turning things down while you're sleeping, a programmable thermostat ensures you're only heating and cooling the air you feel. ■



A Servant Leader

Arthur Hurst spends decades sharing his knowledge with those around him

After 45 years of service to DEMCO, Arthur Hurst retired at the beginning of November.

Arthur's most recent position was with the lineman training program, but he started with the company in 1978. He remembers a friend encouraging him to work for DEMCO after high school. Two years later, he went to the district office in Zachary, interviewed and was hired.

"I remember digging an anchor hole," he says about his first assignment. "That was the beginning of it."

His next assignment involved working until midnight after a thunderstorm in St. Francisville. He quickly recognized the ups and downs involved with the job and the importance of continued learning to stay safe and informed while in the field.

Arthur progressed rapidly over a three-year period—from third-class helper to first-class helper, and from lineman to first-class lineman.

"I was willing to do whatever was asked of me, which included the hard work and the easy work," he says. "I never turned anything down."

Arthur carried this mentality with him throughout the rest of his DEMCO career. He prioritized learning and understanding the craft, so he could quickly assess problems and correct them. During downtime on the job, he always had a book with him and would drive around to study and investigate the things he was reading about.

"I would ride around our system to help me identify important feeds, switching points, anything I could learn," Arthur says.

By the time he became a crew leader in 1995, Arthur was already respected for his knowledge and problem-solving capabilities.

The leadership position allowed him to share his knowledge and make changes to the power line system that would improve efficiency for DEMCO and its members.

If there's one thing Arthur will be remembered for, it's his leadership style and the loyal, highly skilled employees he leaves behind.

Rickey Cummings first worked with Arthur as a lineman in 1988. Although Rickey moved to other districts, he says he was always trying to get back to Zachary to work with him again.

"He has a way of teaching; a way to make you understand," Rickey says. "He can make a job simple for you."

He saw Arthur as a mentor who had the most influence on his life and career, aside from his parents.

"I've been up and down the road with this guy, and once I got with him, I never feared my job again," Rickey says. "I respected it."

Arthur became district line supervisor in 1998 and stayed in management until he retired the first time in 2008. He agreed to come back part time to develop the DEMCO lineman training program that's still in place today.

Arthur helped train all newly hired linemen, including Field Training Specialist Chad LaCost and Safety and Loss Control Supervisor Jacob Overhultz.

"He's just a special person and a shining example of a servant leadership style," Chad says. "He's always engaged, always cheerful. It's been a blessing to be able to reach out to him and pick his brain for the past three years to get that knowledge from him."

Arthur was Jacob's first crew leader.

"I was just a young kid, 19 years old, and I had a group of men I started working with, and they kind of finished raising me," he recalls. "I love him like a

father. He gave me direction in life and on the job."

Jacob also learned the importance of making a personal connection with your employees and treating others how you want to be treated.

"It's walking by example and having a faith-based compassion," he says. "A person like Arthur only comes around maybe a couple times in your lifetime."

Arthur is proud of the professional, knowledgeable employees he has shaped over the years.

"I wanted them to represent their company well, be there to look out for the customer and for their fellow employees," he says. "If other opportunities of growth in the company presented themselves, I didn't get in their way."

Arthur was the first boss that Chief Engineering and Operations Officer Mark Phillips had more than 22 years ago.

"He expected so much out of you, he really wanted to see you succeed. He opened up so many doors and opportunities for me, even in the infancy of my career. Arthur was a big advocate no matter what job title you held. Be a professional. Serve the people that you either work for or that work for you. When they succeed, you succeed," Mark says.

"I've carried that mentality through every promotion that I've held while I've been here. I continue to use those same directives because that's the way he led."

Even in retirement, Arthur plans to continue to be of service through his volunteer work in the community. He's also just a phone call away if his former employees need anything.

"He said he'll always be there, even if he's not working for DEMCO," Chad adds. "He'll always answer the phone for anybody." ■



Be Strategic in Using Portable Space Heaters

Small space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat small spaces. Unfortunately, many people use portable space heaters to heat their entire homes, which can take a toll on their energy bills.

The truth is, whether you should use a space heater really depends on your home's efficiency and energy needs.

If you are using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home—such as inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or an inefficient heating system—space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home.

If you're on a tight budget, caulking and weatherstripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy. Although more expensive, adding insulation can be a great next step.

Taking these proactive energy-saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

If your home is energy efficient but you are cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier than the rest, a space heater may work for your needs.

A good comparison is ceiling fans. We use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during winter.

Only use a space heater in a small space you are occupying. If possible, try to shut off other rooms to contain the warmth provided by the space heater.

If you decide to use a space heater, make sure it is properly sized for the space. Most heaters include a general sizing table.

A word about safety: The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than 25,000 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 300 deaths. If you must use a space heater, buy a newer model that includes current safety features and carries the Underwriter's Laboratory label.

TIPS TO DITCH SPACE HEATERS

Space heaters are energy hogs, and older models can be extremely dangerous. This winter, ditch the space heater and try these alternative solutions to stay cozy.

- ▶ Use an electric blanket to keep warm during the night.
- ▶ Caulk and weatherstrip around all windows and doors to prevent heat loss.
- ▶ Consider adding insulation to your attic and around ductwork.



Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating. Place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from a heater.

Before opting to use a space heater, consider alternative ways to stay warm, such as extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, put down area rugs to provide additional insulation and maintain warmth.

We know it's cold out there, but remember this: In addition to safety concerns, space heaters can greatly increase your energy bills if used improperly.

For ways to reduce energy use and save money, visit energy.gov. ■



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