

Along these **LINES**

JULY/AUGUST 2022



DEMCO Foundation Reaches \$6 Million in Member Assistance

Members Helping Members

DEMCO member Jessica Cunningham, left, with Rhowanda Vessel, DEMCO community relations coordinator and liaison for the DEMCO Foundation. *Story on page 21.*



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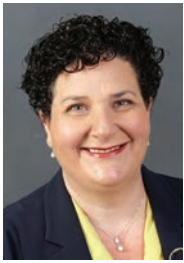


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We Really Can Do It!



Addie Armato

When we hear the phrase “We can do it,” many of us conjure up the image of Rosie the Riveter flexing her bicep.

The inspirational image was emblazoned on a World War II poster produced by J. Howard Miller in 1943 for Westinghouse Electric. It was intended to boost female worker morale. Since then, the concept has cycled through pop culture and advertising campaigns.

We will soon celebrate Independence Day.

Just like a good Norman Rockwell painting, this poster speaks to us. It is Americana. It’s apple pie, fireworks and Lady Liberty—American ideals and dreams people make sacrifices for every day.

This summer, our Louisiana electric cooperatives will celebrate what is great about the United States of America, but we are not blind to issues plaguing our members and the communities we love so much. Inflation is at an all-time high. There is potential for an energy crisis—especially if our country experiences several natural disasters in a short time. Supply chain issues continue to halt progress in our industry. The labor force is experiencing a major shift as many change careers and search for new opportunities. From Wall Street to Main Street, everyone is being hit hard. Sometimes it feels like we are standing on constantly shifting soil.

While no one can predict the future, your Louisiana electric cooperatives keep you, the member-consumers, a priority. We know it is vital for you to have safe, affordable and reliable electricity. To meet those challenges, the state’s electric cooperatives look at the power market to find the best pricing on wholesale power. They are in constant contact with vendors and material suppliers, discussing options for items in short supply. Your local electric

cooperative is available to answer any questions you have about your electric bill and provide you with energy-saving tips.

The past several months, representatives from Louisiana electric cooperatives met with elected officials, including our congressional delegation in Washington, D.C., state legislators, Louisiana Public Service commissioners and local elected officials. We have discussed numerous issues, including Federal Emergency Management Agency reimbursements, Rural Utilities Service loan repricing and broadband for rural communities.

As our country focuses on becoming more reliant on electricity through renewable energy, electric vehicles, battery storage and other technologies, we work with regulators and policymakers to make sure we can balance current and emerging needs. The energy transition must reflect the need for time and technology development, and include all energy sources to maintain reliability and affordability. A resilient and reliable electric grid that affordably keeps the lights on is the cornerstone of the American economy. Families and businesses rightfully expect the lights to stay on at a price they can afford. A diverse energy mix that includes adequate baseload supply is essential to meeting those expectations day in and day out. Electric cooperatives take this role seriously. We rely on diverse energy resources to power local communities.

As co-ops work together to meet today’s energy needs and plan for the future, they are keenly aware of threats to grid reliability. This underscores the need for policymakers to work together to ensure proposals improve rather than undermine reliability.

As we celebrate the great things we love about America, let’s remember electric cooperatives. The principles we are built on are as American as apple pie, a Norman Rockwell painting and Rosie the Riveter. We are owned by the people we serve. Our employees live, work and play in our communities. It is our priority to keep the lights on. We are all in this together. Just as the Rosie the Riveter poster says, “We can do it!” We can do it, together. ■

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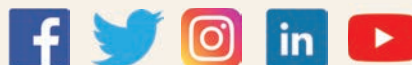
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An Ethnic Melting Pot

Louisiana’s gumbo of cultures gives the state a unique heritage
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Mission

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

Volume 37, Issue 4

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 \$1.79, 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.

The President's Report

The President's Report is offered to the membership each year to highlight milestones and report on DEMCO operations. In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact our members, the co-op and the world. DEMCO continued to pivot to provide the highest-possible service while keeping a safe environment for employees, members and the community.

In February, a polar outbreak named Winter Storm Uri caused historically low temperatures, ice, and snow to grip many regions of the country, stressing electric generating capacity and the ability of the transmission grid to move power from state to state and region to region. The freezing rain and temperatures affected DEMCO and other electric generation and distribution systems across the southern United States. Fortunately, DEMCO was not part of any curtailed supply or rolling blackouts. The extraordinary wholesale power cost was spread across 12 months in members' bills, May 2021 through April 2022.

In June, all DEMCO member accounts successfully converted to the new software system, MyDEMCO. Staff continues to calibrate systems and processes, which should be complete by the first quarter of 2023. The decision to transition was founded on audit outcomes of 2019, revealing the need to improve business operations transparency, software and processes.

Later in 2021, DEMCO service areas were struck by Hurricane Ida—the worst natural disaster in our co-op's history. More than 90% of DEMCO members were without power. It took 1,000-plus crew members, contractors and DEMCO staff to implement a well-coordinated and complex restoration plan. With more than 4,000 broken poles, 400 transformers damaged or destroyed, and thousands of miles of power lines damaged or down, the three-week power restoration cost about \$65 million and thousands of hours of employee/contractor time and effort. DEMCO is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness to recover expenses. Through all of this, the DEMCO Board of Directors joins me in thanking the dedicated family of DEMCO employees for their tireless work to restore power after Hurricane Ida.

In October, DEMCO signed new wholesale power contracts with NextEra Energy to take effect in April 2024, if approved by the Louisiana Public Service Commission. These new contracts will mean lower and more stable rates for our members, with savings estimated around \$160 million over the 10-year life of the contracts.

Another significant milestone reached by DEMCO in 2021 is achieving one million hours worked without a lost-time accident. This is a tremendous accomplishment that requires daily effort and a safety mindset by each team member.

A review of DEMCO's 2021 system statistics shows kilowatt-hour sales of 2,111,490,757. The number of members billed was 114,314. Total miles of line was 8,954, and system peak demand was 612 megawatts. Electric plant in service is \$805,413,396, of which \$66,683,747 is related to Hurricane Ida work in progress—an increase from \$721,265,052 reported in 2020.

Five board members were reelected without opposition, each to a three-year term: Daniel Berthelot, Livingston Parish, District 9; Glenn DeLee, East Feliciana Parish, District 6; Kevin Beauchamp, West Feliciana Parish, District 13; Melissa Dufreche, Tangipahoa Parish, District 12; and Randy Lorio, East Baton Rouge Parish, District 3.

I speak for the entire board when I say it is an honor to represent you. Please reach out to any of us whenever we can be of assistance.



Danny Berthelot
President
Board of Directors

DEMCO
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

CLOSED FOR 4TH OF JULY

CLOSED MONDAY, JULY 4TH
OPENS TUESDAY, JULY 5TH



Manager's Report

Randy Pierce
CEO & General Manager



DEMCO Members Should Prepare for Higher Electricity Costs as Fuel Costs Soar

As I recently reviewed the electricity rates for electric utilities across the state for June, I saw rates that matched or exceeded the highest rates I have ever seen in Louisiana in my 38-year electric utility career. These high rates are a result of soaring prices of the fuel used to generate electricity at power plants. DEMCO buys wholesale electricity generated by these plants from CLECO Power under a contract that lasts until March 31, 2024.

About 65% to 70% of your DEMCO bill is the cost of wholesale electricity. The other 30% to 35% is the cost for DEMCO to distribute electricity to your home or business.

Last summer, CLECO Power contacted DEMCO to inform us of “extraordinarily high bills for the next three months due to costs associated with closing (their) Dolet Hills Power Station.” I communicated this information to DEMCO members—using our phone preamble message, this magazine, a bill insert and the important message section and ad section of your monthly bill. I stated the higher than normal costs at that time were due to power generation decisions made by our wholesale supplier, CLECO Power.

I asked CLECO again about these high charges last fall and was told, “Dolet Hills’ costs are extending longer than expected.” The initial three months of higher wholesale costs turned into six months.

In the meantime, the price of natural gas, which CLECO Power uses to operate many of its generation plants, has skyrocketed the past few months and driven wholesale power costs upward. Unfortunately, any price decreases that would have resulted from the Dolet Hills plant closing costs going down have been offset by significant increases in fuel costs to produce electricity.

Natural gas prices in April 2022 were more than double those in April 2021 and three times higher than April 2020.

Recently, CLECO Power informed DEMCO that they “do not expect to see this situation resolving in the near-term. Natural gas prices are projected to remain high into next year. Until natural gas prices moderate, billings will remain high.”

Because of higher natural gas prices anticipated throughout the summer, DEMCO members should budget for higher electricity costs in the coming months.

As your local electric cooperative, DEMCO is a not-for-profit company. We do not mark up or profit in any way from the increased price of natural gas. We do not reap profits to pay shareholders. We exist to provide you, our co-op members, with safe, reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost.

What can you do to keep your bill as low as possible?

Energy use is measured in kilowatt-hours. Each month, your bill is calculated by multiplying the rate per kilowatt-hour times the number of kilowatt-hours you use. The fewer kilowatt-hours of electricity you use, the lower your bill.

For resources, tips and tools to help lower your energy use and your bill, visit DEMCO.org/member-services/save-energy and Energy.gov/energysaver/energy-saver.

If you have lived at your current address for 12 months, you may qualify for DEMCO’s levelized billing program. This averages your previous 12 monthly bills and charges you that amount on your current bill. This rolling average helps you balance out seasonal costs and anticipate your bill amount each month, which allows you to better manage your budget. To enroll or learn more, visit DEMCO.org/payment-options/levelized-billing. DEMCO also offers a number of other types of bill payment assistance plans.

Learn about the DEMCO Foundation—a hallmark program explicitly for DEMCO members who need financial assistance in times of hardship—on pages 20-21.

DEMCO has worked to secure two new wholesale power contracts that are pending review and approval by the Louisiana Public Service Commission, for adoption in April 2024, when our existing contract expires. Our new contracts afford DEMCO access to a tremendous wholesale market, with a pool of generation resources, so we can buy power with more short-term certainty and better long-term flexibility. This approach will help lower your bill and provide more stability in DEMCO bills from month to month and year to year.

A bright future lies ahead for our electric cooperative. I will continue to keep you apprised as we navigate our way through these challenging times.

[View/Download at DEMCO.org/member-services/save-energy](http://DEMCO.org/member-services/save-energy).



State Acknowledges Lineworkers

Louisiana electric cooperative lineworkers visited Baton Rouge in April for Lineworker Appreciation Day. Rep. Paula Davis recognized their hard work and commitment to keeping the lights on with a resolution. Lineworkers were treated to a tour of the state capitol, the observation deck and lunch.



ABOVE: Standing on the steps of the state Capitol are, front row from left, Brad Ladner, Washington-St. Tammany Electric; Braden Owens, DEMCO; and Shawn Little, DEMCO. Middle row from left, are Addie Armato, CEO of the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives; Lee Aucoin, SLECA; Andrew Jenkins, WSTE; Luke Patterson, DEMCO; Kelvin Haymon, DEMCO; and Corey Davis, SLECA. Back row from left, are Willie Chauvin, WSTE; Ashton Stokes, DEMCO; Trent Bigner, DEMCO; and Nick Carruth, DEMCO.

RIGHT: Braden views the Capitol campus from the observation deck.





Lineworkers get a guided tour of the state Capitol as part of their day being saluted by state legislators in Baton Rouge.



The contingent of electric cooperative lineworkers meets with Reps. Foy Gadberry and Paula Davis.

Dig Into Summer, But Call 811 First

Each year, August 11 (8/11) is Dig Safely Day.

It's the law to call 811 at least two business days before you dig—whether you are installing a garden, fence, deck or swimming pool; planting a tree; or beginning any excavation project at home or on your property.

It's important, it's easy and it's free. Call 811 and know what's below before you dig.

In Louisiana, thousands of miles of utility lines and gas pipelines are buried just beneath the surface. Don't think your project is too shallow to require a call. You run the risk of hitting an underground line even by digging only a few inches.

Maybe you only knock the power out for your neighborhood, but there is danger in taking that chance. Every year, it happens—an explosion with injuries and even death.

Calling 811 is a simple way to avoid it.

When you call, utilities respond and mark the approximate location of underground utilities and pipelines. Dial 811—Louisiana One Call—two business days before you dig. Wait for the site to be marked, and always dig with care—especially near the marks.

It's simple, it's free and it's the law. ■

Louisiana

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IT'S FREE. IT'S THE LAW.

- **CALL 811 BEFORE YOU DIG**
- **WAIT 2 FULL BUSINESS DAYS FOR THE SITE TO BE MARKED**
- **RESPECT THE MARKS**
- **DIG WITH CARE**

WARNING:

Civil penalties may apply for violations of the Louisiana Underground Utilities and Facilities Damages Prevention Law.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THESE COLORS REPRESENT?



RED	Electric Power Lines, Cables, Conduit and Lighting Cables
YELLOW	Gas, Oil, Stream, Petroleum or Gaseous Materials
ORANGE	Communication, Alarm or Signal Lines, Cables or Conduit
PURPLE	Reclaimed Water, Irrigation and Slurry Lines
GREEN	Sewers and Drain Lines
BLUE	Potable Water
PINK	Temporary Survey Markings
WHITE	Proposed Excavation

Mark-by time is 2 full business days from the time you notify 811.

Most dig tickets are valid for 20 calendar days as long as marks are visible.

Make a note of the mark-by time:

List of 811 member utilities to be notified are available upon request. After ticket request completed, you will receive a locate request number.

Make a note of the locate request number:

Keep this number available as this is proof of the dig ticket.

Thank you for digging safely.



All excavators and demolishers are required to notify Louisiana One Call before they begin work. The law applies to individuals as well as contractors, municipalities and others. Failure to call can subject the excavator to fines and liability for damages to buried infrastructure.

Auto Pay Winners

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! Andrea C., Suoi T., Ronald B. and Sharon W.

“I haven’t been this excited since I got my first bicycle!”

Introducing **ZOOMER!**

The portable, folding, battery-powered chair that offers easy one-handed operation

Remember when you were a child and got your first bicycle? I do. It gave me a sense of independence . . . I felt like I could go anywhere, and it was so much easier and more enjoyable than walking. Well, at my age, that bike wouldn’t do me much good. Fortunately, there’s a new invention that gives me the freedom and independence to go wherever I want . . . safely and easily. It’s called the Zoomer, and it’s changed my life.

***My Zoomer is a delight to ride!** It has increased my mobility in my apartment, my opportunities to enjoy the out-of-doors, and enabled me to visit the homes of my children for longer periods of time. The various speeds of it match my need for safety, it is easy to turn, and I am most pleased with the freedom of movement it gives me.*

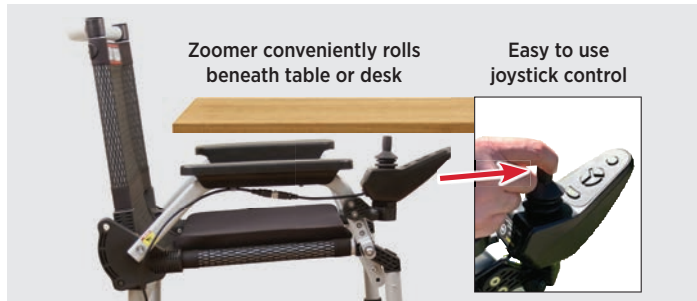
Sincerely, A. Macon, Williamsburg, VA

After just one trip around your home in the Zoomer, you’ll marvel at how easy it is to navigate. It is designed to maneuver in tight spaces like doorways, between furniture, and around corners. It can go over thresholds and works great on any kind of floor or carpet. It’s not bulky or cumbersome, so it can roll right up to a table or desk- there’s no need to transfer to a chair. Its sturdy yet lightweight aluminum frame makes it durable and comfortable. Its dual motors power it at up to 3.7 miles per hour and its automatic electromagnetic brakes stop on a



dime. The rechargeable battery powers it for up to 8 miles on a single charge. Plus, its exclusive foldable design enables you to transport it easily and even store it in a closet or under a bed when it’s not in use.

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Keeping up the family tradition packaging and selling kidney and other beans are, from left, Connelly, Ken and Vince Hayward. PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAMELLIA

Red Beans and Ricely Yours

Red beans and rice is a staple dish in the South, and Camellia Brand aims to continue filling that culinary tradition

By Cheré Coen

Sunday dinners in Louisiana—like most tables in the South—bring out the spread: slices of ham, sweet potatoes, pecan pie and sometimes more exotic dishes such as shrimp stuffed mirlitons, seafood or chicken and sausage gumbo, and stewed okra.

But don't let that ham bone go to waste, for Monday is washing day and the perfect opportunity to set a pot of cooking beans on the stove while going about chores.

It's what South Louisiana residents have been doing for years, which is why visitors find red beans and rice dishes scratched on restaurant chalkboards as Monday specials—even though laundry has moved past Mondays these days.

It's a tradition rivaling Mardi Gras—its taste a nostalgic nod to childhood.

Ask any resident who makes the best red beans and rice and there usually is a one-word answer: "Mom."

"It speaks to a familiar experience of enjoying something that's hardy and designed to feed a lot of people," says Vince

Hayward, CEO of Camellia Brand. "The dish is part of our history and our culture."

Vince is the fourth generation to run the business packaging and selling kidney beans. Sawyer Hayward arrived in New Orleans from the West Indies in 1850 to work in the cotton business, which evolved into produce and dry goods. His great grandfather, Lucius Hamilton Hayward, sold red beans to French Market vendors.

"We've been here a long time, always in the food business," Vince explains. "For some reason, the business gravitated towards beans. As time went on, we began to specialize more and more in beans."

As supermarkets gained ground in the mid-20th century, William Gordon Hayward decided to package beans to sell with the name Camellia, after the favorite flower of a family member.

The idea took hold in a city known for its love of red beans. By 1984, 95% of all packaged dry beans sold in New Orleans were Camellia Brand.



LilyB's Red Beans and Rice

- 1 package Camellia kidney beans
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1 pound andouille sausage, sliced into ½-inch thick rounds
- 1 yellow onion, finely diced
- 1 bell pepper, finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 ham hock
- 64 ounces water or chicken or vegetable stock
- Cajun/Creole seasoning to taste
- Bay leaves, optional
- 1 cup rice, cooked
- ½ cup chopped green onions
- Fresh chopped parsley

Soak the entire package of kidney beans in a soup pot full of water; let stand overnight, or at least four hours. In the morning, drain the water.

In a skillet, lightly brown the sausage in cooking oil; remove and drain on a paper towel. Add onion and pepper to the skillet; sauté until limp. Add sausage, vegetable mixture, garlic, ham hock, and water or stock to the soup pot; cook on medium heat for 40 minutes, or until the beans turn creamy and tender. Add Cajun/Creole seasoning to taste and bay leaves, if desired.

When beans are cooked, remove ham hock to a cutting board and carefully remove the meat from the bone, discarding the rest. Place ham hock meat back into the pot and stir.

Boil rice. Serve the beans over cooked rice and top with chopped green onions and/or fresh parsley. Serve with hot French bread.

A Perfect Bean

Camellia Brand—which has expanded beyond red kidneys—acquires its beans, peas and lentils from farmers across the country. The company works toward consistency, which can be difficult when Mother Nature interferes.

“As with most things, it’s a lot of things that add up to a good result,” Vince says. “It’s an agricultural product, so you can have lots of variances over the years. But a lot of it is making sure the beans are from the same regions over and over again. All of those things add up to what is the best product to put in a bag.”

To ensure freshness, only beans grown that year are packaged, he notes.

Camellia has pockets of distribution across the country, but products are sold mostly in the southern United States and the Caribbean, “where the country eats the most beans,” Vince says.

Camellia Brand also sells dinner and soup mixes and a seasoning blend. Instead of soaking beans overnight and stewing them on the stove, time-sensitive diners can add them to a slow cooker, with or without meat, for an easy meal.

“It makes for a great pot of beans without a lot of effort,” Vince says.

An Honored Place

The brand is such a part of New Orleans and the Gulf South tradition that a package of Camellia beans is part of a permanent

exhibit in the Foodways gallery at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture. It joins chef profiles, cookware, tools and a cookbook, “Red Beans & Ricely Yours—Recipes from New Orleans that Louis Armstrong Loved,” by Christopher Blake.

“In the Foodways gallery, there’s a story about red beans and rice,” museum curator Joanne T. Hyppolite says, “and we talk about the fact that red beans and rice itself is a diasporic food or foodway because it’s made from all of these confluences of different cultures that landed in Louisiana: the French, the Spanish and the Caribbean. We know the beans themselves probably arrived from Haiti, we know the spices had a lot of Spanish influence, the sauces have a lot of French influence and then, of course, you have the African hand cooking all of that and mixing it all together and creating this entirely new cuisine we now know as Creole cuisine.”

Despite the accolades, Vince remains humble about his company’s success and its place in American history.

“Being in the business of beans may not be the most exciting, but we really enjoy what we do,” he says. “I feel good about what I do, and that’s a huge privilege. It’s something we can be proud of.” ■

Cheré Coen makes red beans and rice with Camellia Brand because she is from Louisiana and, well, it’s a thing. She says her mom made the best. See the recipe at right.

An Ethnic Melting Pot

Louisiana's gumbo of cultures gives the state a unique heritage



Chief Rufus Davis of the Adais/Caddo Nation talks about the El Camino Real, starting with the trail's origins thousands of years ago as wild bison migrated from the Northern Plains to its becoming a cornerstone of trade between French and Spanish settlers and local tribes. PHOTO BY CHERÉ COEN



St. Augustine Church in Natchitoches is the country's first Catholic church founded, independently financed and built by African Americans for their use in the mid-1800s. SUBMITTED PHOTO

By Cheré Coen

Many people consider New York to be the quintessential American city for its amalgamation of cultures brought together through immigration.

The United States is a nation of nations, and New York exemplifies that with its diverse population.

But Louisiana can easily claim that title. “Louisiana was America’s first melting pot,” Oliver Evans writes in *American Heritage* magazine. “Here, the mixing of races and nationalities from the four corners of the globe—which began early in the 18th century and continued well into the beginning of the present one—has resulted in a region that is absolutely unique in the United States. Nowhere, perhaps, has the triumph of the Great American Experiment been demonstrated more vividly.”

Louisiana’s gumbo of cultures includes the Native Americans who were here before European arrival, the French and Spanish colonists, enslaved African and free people of color, and 19th-century immigrants from Sicily, Germany and Ireland—to name a few.

These nationalities intermingled, resulting in a blurring of attributes and, sometimes, a new culture.

Take, for instance, gumbo. The Louisiana soup was born of the New World with ingredients from individual cultures: filé or sassafras from Native Americans, okra from Africa, rice and peppers from Spain and a French roux to thicken it to perfection. In New Orleans, Sicilians may be credited for the addition of tomatoes.

It’s no wonder that when asked about her favorite heritage site in Louisiana, Dr. Elista Istre, author of “Creoles of South Louisiana,” immediately thought of the Creole Lunch House in Lafayette, noting, “Her stuffed bread is amazing!”

But there’s more to Louisiana heritage than food—although that is an essential part of the equation.

Native Americans

The state is home to numerous tribes—many nationally recognized—that offer museums and historical sites to visit.

The Chitimacha Museum in Charenton displays historic artifacts, including trademark baskets from the tribe that inhabited Atchafalaya Basin areas.

The Tunica-Biloxi Tribe hosts the largest land casino in Louisiana—the Paragon Resort in Marksville—and has a Cultural and Education Resources Center that houses a museum and library.

Other Native American sites in Louisiana include the Marksville State Prehistoric Park and Museum—a 39-acre park with prehistoric mounds and a village dating from 1400—and Los Adaes State Historic Site near Natchitoches—once the capital of New Spain in Louisiana and named for the tribe that exists there today.

Poverty Point in the northeast corner encompasses several earthen mounds that once made up a city beginning around the time Stonehenge was built. A state historic site, it was deemed a World Heritage Site in 2014 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The Spanish

The French colonized Louisiana in 1699, but relayed the colony to Spain after the French and Indian War. Spain ruled Louisiana for four decades—a longer stretch than the French—but French culture and language remained.

In 1802, Spain relinquished Louisiana back to France for a few months before France sold the colony to the United States.

It’s easy to spot French culture in Louisiana today, but much of the Spanish era remains. Despite its name, the French Quarter of New Orleans consists mainly of Spanish architecture. The French buildings burned in a 1788 fire. Look for Spanish signage on French Quarter streets to see that country’s influence.



Mark and Ann Savoy host their weekly jam session in Eunice. PHOTO BY SOMERSET GREER FOR UL PRESS

During the reign of Spanish Gov. Bernardo de Galvez, the English fought the colonists in the American Revolution. Fearing the British might take the opportunity to invade Louisiana, Galvez recruited Spanish citizens to protect Louisiana.

A group of Canary Islanders, known as Los Isleños, arrived to settle in St. Bernard and Ascension parishes. In New Iberia, a group from Málaga, Spain, came in 1779. When the British arrived, these new colonists fought alongside Acadians, and French and Spanish citizens, at battles at Manchac and Baton Rouge.

The Los Isleños Heritage and Cultural Society of St. Bernard keeps Canary Island traditions alive with a museum and annual festival. Remnants of those who settled in Ascension Parish—and later moved to Baton Rouge—are in the city’s Spanish Town.

Acadians-Cajuns

Visit the Savoy Music Center in Eunice any Saturday morning and discover a long Cajun tradition. Marc Savoy builds and sells accordions here, and provides a space

for coffee and boudin, socializing and jamming—much the same as the farming stores of his youth, where residents of the Cajun Prairie gathered.

“When I opened the doors to my business, I set out to create the same spirit I had so much enjoyed as a child,” Marc writes in “Made in Louisiana: The Story of Acadian Accordion.” “Since I didn’t sell tractor fuel or chicken feed, the only other thing I had to offer was music.”

Marc’s store is one of many throughout Acadiana where folks bring instruments and jam. At tables in several cities, folks socialize in Louisiana French.

Displaced from their homes in the Canadian Maritimes by the British, the Acadians arrived in Louisiana in the mid-1700s. They settled in South Louisiana’s countryside, moving west with the railroad toward the settlement of Opelousas. Today, “Cajun Country” encompasses 22 parishes.

In addition to Marc’s jam sessions, Acadian-Cajun history abounds at the historic villages of Vermilionville and Acadian Village in Lafayette—and the Acadian

Memorial and Museum in St. Martinville, which features a wall of names, an eternal flame, a mural and family crests.

Longfellow-Evangeline State Historic Site also contains historic Acadian settlement buildings.

African Americans

Like all Southern states, Louisiana imported enslaved Africans to work plantations and as domestic servants.

Many bought or were given their freedom to become “free people of color.” Some fought for the Union during the Civil War or obtained public office during the Reconstruction era. Others protested Jim Crow and created social change during the civil rights movement.

Louisiana tourism has instituted an African American Heritage Trail spotlighting sites of interest.

At Congo Square in New Orleans, Africans congregated and danced. At Port Hudson State Historic Site near Baton Rouge, Black soldiers fought for the Union.

Whitney Plantation—along the River



Tours at Laura Plantation keep the Creole story alive. PHOTO BY CHERÉ COEN

Road between both cities—tells the story of enslaved people working the sugar, rice and indigo plantations. In Donaldsonville, the River Road African American Museum offers displays and genealogical research.

For a complete list of the trail's sites, visit www.louisianatravel.com/african-american-heritage-trail.

Creoles

Elista, an historian and museum consultant at BelleHeritage.com, gives presentations on Louisiana history and culture. She says participants generally understand who Cajuns are, but Creoles are another story.

"People are totally confused about what a Creole is," she says.

She decided to write a book—and it is a big one because Creole isn't easy to define.

"Anthropologist James Deetz defines creolization as the interaction between two or more cultures to produce an integrated mix which is different from its antecedents," Elista writes in her book, "Creoles of South Louisiana: Three Centuries Strong."

But that doesn't mean it applies to Creole today, she says.

"It's a contested term," Elista explains. "The original definition was those born in New Orleans of European heritage. New Orleans Creole can be white, but in Opelousas, Creole is Black. It's contested even within the Black community because Creole may mean light skin."

Elista defines Louisiana Creole based on three things: who you talk to, the time period and the geographic location.

Celebrating the State's Culture and Heritage

Los Isleños Fiesta, Los Isleños Heritage and Cultural Society, St. Bernard

The annual festival in March includes food, living history, crafts, Isleños music and more. www.losislenos.org

Independence Sicilian Heritage Festival, Independence

Sicilians landed in the town of Independence as early as the 19th century and today celebrate the event the second weekend of March with music, food and a pageant. www.indysicilianfest.com

El Festival Español de Nueva Iberia (New Iberia Spanish Festival), New Iberia

New Iberia was founded in 1779 by a group from Málaga, Spain. The April festival honors its roots. www.newiberiaspanishfestival.com

Choctaw-Apache Tribe Powwow, Noble

This event in April marks the 29th annual powwow with traditional dancing, crafts, jewelry and food. All dancers and guest drums are welcome. www.facebook.com/ChoctawApacheofEbarb

Festival International de Louisiane, Lafayette

The multicultural festival celebrated its 36th year in 2022. The five-day event the last weekend in April brings in performers from French-speaking countries around the globe. www.festivalinternational.org

Union Parish Folk Life Day, Farmerville

Folk music, crafts, art and food are offered at the Union Museum of History and Art in April. www.unionmuseumofhistoryandart.org

New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, New Orleans

Always the last weekend in April and the first weekend in May, headliners are both local and international artists. www.nojazzfest.com



Annual Creole Culture Day, Vermilionville

The day each June includes sharing circles, cooking demonstrations, children's activities, live music, jam sessions, exhibits, Creole language studies and boat tours. bayouvermiliondistrict.org/vermilionville

Essence Festival of Culture, New Orleans

This is the largest African American culture and music event in the nation. It is June and July. www.essence.com/essence-festival-2022

Natchitoches-NSU Folklife Festival, Natchitoches

The annual event in July includes the Louisiana State Fiddle Championship. www.nsula.edu/folklife/folkfest

Festivals Acadiens et Créoles, Lafayette

The festival was canceled in 2021, so this year offered two: a spring version in March and one October 14-16. www.festivalsacadiens.com

Roberts Cove Germanfest, Roberts Cove

Live music, German food, beer and more are featured October 1-2. www.robertscovegermanfest.com

Heritage and Harvest Tour, along Louisiana Hwy. 3049 and U.S. Hwy. 71, Caddo Parish

The self-guided tour in October spotlights historic gems nestled in the rural areas of Caddo Parish, including museums, restaurants, a historic home and unique sites. www.redrivercrossroadshistorical.org/heritage-harvest

Tour guides at Laura: A Creole Plantation focus on owners and enslaved individuals, including how white folklorist Alcée Fortier recorded West African stories here—tales that became Br'er Rabbit stories.

Many cultures combined to form the Creole society—namely French, African and Native American—of the Cane River region outside Natchitoches.

Cane River Creole National Park gives

an overview of this unique mixture.

Visitors to Saint Augustine Church may view the country's first Catholic church founded, financed and built by African-Americans for their use.

Overall, the definitions of Creole may differ, but Louisiana's Creoles remain unique in their culture.

"It's a very complex issue, but I find it fascinating because you can't put it in a box," Elista says. ■

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2022 China Silver Panda: Since its first issue, the China Panda coin series has been one of the most widely collected series ever, highlighted by one-year-only designs. This 2022 Panda features its first-ever privy mark honoring the coin's 40th anniversary. Struck in 99.9% fine silver at the China Mint.

2022 Australia Wedge Tailed Eagle: Introduced in 2014, the Wedge-Tailed Eagle is the first-ever collaboration between U.S. Mint designer John Mercanti and a foreign mint. With a new design for 2022, it's struck in 99.9% fine silver at the Perth Mint.

2022 Canada Maple Leaf: Since 1988, the Silver Maple Leaf's elegant design has made it a highly sought-after bullion coin. The 2022 coin features anti-counterfeit security technology—radial lines and a microengraved maple leaf with the number "22". Struck in 99.99% fine silver at the Royal Canadian Mint.

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ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY PAOLESE

Keep Your Cool This Summer

Follow these five tips to stay safe during extreme heat

By Abby Berry

The dog days of summer typically bring the warmest, sultriest temperatures of the year.

Even if you're a summertime enthusiast, it's important to stay cool during extreme heat. According to the Centers for Disease Control Prevention, more than 700 people die from extreme heat every year in the United States.

Obesity, age and alcohol intake can impact how a person reacts to extreme heat. High humidity also contributes to heat-related illness because we don't sweat as quickly—meaning our bodies can't release heat as fast—when humidity levels are high.

Take extra steps to cool off, and stay hydrated and informed. Here are five tips recommended by the CDC to help you stay cool during extremely warm weather:

- Stay in an air-conditioned home or building as much as possible. Limit outdoor activity, especially midday when the sun is hottest. If your home is not air conditioned, call your health department to locate public facilities or shelters.
- If you must be outdoors, wear loose, light-colored clothing. Apply sunscreen often.
- Drink more water than usual. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink more.
- Take cold showers or baths to cool down.
- Avoid using the oven or stove. These appliances add heat to your home. Try

using the microwave or a slow cooker instead.

Remember to look after those who may need extra help. People 65 years or older are at greater risk of heat-related illness, so check on your senior neighbors and friends. Children younger than 2 and pets are also more susceptible to heat stroke. Never leave a child or pet in a vehicle, even if only for a minute.

If you work outdoors, use the buddy system to monitor your co-workers—and have someone do the same for you.

Heat-induced illness can happen to anyone, even those who are perfectly healthy. If you're outdoors during extremely warm weather, monitor how you're feeling, stay hydrated and keep an eye on those around you. ■

5 Tips for Growing Your Own SUNFLOWER SEEDS

By Angela Judd

Sunflowers are a beautiful addition to a summer flower garden and helpful for attracting pollinators. As a bonus, if you choose the right variety, you get the benefit of also harvesting delicious sunflower seeds.

1. LEARN HOW TO GROW SUNFLOWERS

Plant sunflower seeds after the danger of spring frost has passed and the soil temperature is at least 60 F.

Sunflowers are not picky about the soil. They tolerate rocky and sandy soils. However, sunflowers grown in rich soil will grow taller and fuller. Sunflowers are best grown from seed. Space large sunflower plants 2 to 3 feet apart. If the plants are too close to each other, the heads will be smaller.

2. CHOOSE A VARIETY SUITED TO EATING

Confection varieties are grown for edible seeds. Edible types include:

- Mammoth Gray Stripe
- Mammoth Russian
- Snack Seed
- Super Snack Mix

3. HARVEST SUNFLOWERS AT THE RIGHT TIME

Here are some things to look for when determining when to harvest:

- The seeds are plump and developed
- The flower petals begin to dry out and fall off
- The back of the flower turns from green to yellow, if you are cutting the stem off to dry
- The back of the flower is brown, if you are letting seeds dry with the stem intact

4. LEARN HOW TO COLLECT THE SEEDS

Method 1: Let seeds develop on the stem, harvesting them when they begin to loosen. This usually requires you to cover the heads with netting or paper bags to protect the seeds from being eaten by birds. Loosen seeds by hand to remove them from the head. Let seeds dry out before storing.

Method 2: Harvest the head when outer seeds are mature and the inner seeds begin to ripen. Cut off the stalk about 4 inches below the head and hang upside down in a warm area covered in a paper sack until seeds mature and dry. Remove the seeds by rubbing seed heads together or across hardware cloth with openings larger than the seeds.

5. STORE AND ENJOY THE HARVESTED SEEDS

Once you collect the seeds, you can eat them right away, roast them with a little salt or save some to plant for next season. Once the seeds are dry, you can store sunflower seeds two to three months in a sealed container, or up to a year if kept in the freezer.

Looking for more garden tips? Check out Angela's blog, growinginthegarden.com or find her on Instagram @growing.in.the.garden, Facebook @growinginthegardenaz for daily gardening tips and inspiration or on her YouTube channel www.youtube.com/GrowingInTheGarden.



Altec, Altec Capital, and Osmose will award **THREE \$500** scholarships at the ALEC annual meeting for fall 2022.

The following rules apply:



- Applicant must be the child of an ALEC cooperative member from BECi, Claiborne, DEMCO, JDEC, Panola-Harrison, SLECA, or WSTE
- Recipient must be a 2022 high school graduate
- Recipient must provide verification of a minimum 2.5 GPA before scholarship is awarded
- This is a one time reward
- The award can be used for any college or university
- Deadline for application is **July 15, 2022**
- Mail application to Ed Amdee, 1443 City Place, Gonzales, LA 70737

Name of Applicant: _____
Name of parent or guardian: _____
Member Co-op: _____
Address: _____
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Name of high school: _____

- Application must be postmarked by July 15, 2022. Altec is not responsible for mail delivery



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Jessica Cunningham, a DEMCO member of 22 years, came home to find her house on fire. Unfortunately, the home could not be saved. The DEMCO Foundation helped with funding to replace household items, clothing and food. Mrs. Cunningham, left, is pictured with Rhowanda Vessel, right, DEMCO community relations coordinator and DEMCO Foundation liaison.

DEMCO Foundation Reaches \$6 Million in Member Assistance

Members Helping Members

By Erin Bass

In 1997, the DEMCO Foundation was established as a nonprofit charitable subsidiary of DEMCO to assist DEMCO members in times of need.

Through a voluntary program called Operation Roundup, DEMCO members “round up” their monthly bills to the nearest dollar. That extra change is donated to the DEMCO Foundation. About 50% of DEMCO members participate. The average contribution by each is 50 cents a month, or \$6 a year.

“Reaching this pinnacle milestone of \$6 million is an exceptional achievement,” says DEMCO CEO

and General Manager Randy Pierce.

“Members who participate in Operation Roundup are the reason for the success of the DEMCO Foundation, and they are at the heart of what it means to belong to DEMCO—a local community co-op.”

“The amount each participating member contributes monthly may seem small, but collectively the dollars add up and have made a great impact on the DEMCO membership,” says Chanon Martin, community relations specialist. “The foundation has helped members remain in their homes, purchase necessary medications and medical equipment, receive accommodations for handicapped-accessibility, make energy-efficiency improvements and minor home repairs, and cover tuition gaps at state colleges and universities.”

Through the years, hundreds of

DEMCO members have received assistance. Members in need are eligible to apply for funding of up to \$2,500 a year.

“The DEMCO Foundation is one of the best services that we provide here at the co-op,” says Rhowanda Vessel, community relations coordinator. “Only individuals who are DEMCO members can apply. It is members helping members. That’s the cooperative spirit.”

The DEMCO Foundation has helped families remain in their homes by providing more than \$2 million in rent and mortgage assistance. It awards annual scholarships to members planning to attend an accredited university, trade school, vocational or technical school, community college, or educational program in Louisiana.

Each DEMCO member-student and their immediate family are eligible to

apply for a \$1,250 scholarship for up to four semesters totaling \$5,000. To date, the DEMCO Foundation has awarded 844 scholarships totaling \$968,916.

“Our goal is to help members who are temporarily facing a hardship,” Vessel says. “They may have medical costs or can’t meet their mortgage payment, or they may have lost their job. The DEMCO Foundation is not an ongoing assistance program. It’s there to help members who need a helping hand but who otherwise have the means to support themselves in the long-term.”

The DEMCO Foundation is governed by a nine-person board of directors composed of area civic and community leaders.

In applying for assistance from the DEMCO Foundation, interested individuals must complete a thorough application form and return it with all required information. Once the application is reviewed and verified by foundation staff, a home visit is scheduled.

Each month, the DEMCO Foundation Board of Directors meets and reviews all

applications and votes to approve or deny funding.

“While our purpose is to provide safe and reliable energy, DEMCO operates by seven key cooperative principles,” Pierce says. “These principles focus on effectively serving our member-owners and continuously demonstrating our concern for and commitment to the community. We always aim to be a catalyst for good. We take this mission and responsibility to heart.”

Members not yet participating in Operation Roundup are invited to consider giving.

If you are a member who participates in this program, your monthly billing statement lists the donation in the Current Service Detail section on the right side of your bill, “ROUNDUP AMT.” If you do not see this listed on your bill, please consider enrolling and round up your bill to the nearest dollar each month. ■

If you are a DEMCO member facing a hardship, apply for assistance by visiting DEMCO.org/Community/DEMCO-Foundation.

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- ▶ \$453,641 for minor home repairs and handicapped-accessible home improvements
- ▶ \$238,340 to families impacted by house fires and tornadoes
- ▶ \$205,568 for school uniforms

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Louisiana Co-ops Work for Members

Addie Armato, CEO of the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives, left, discusses mutual aid and storm recovery during the Lafayette Utility Services and city of Lafayette Electric Utility Storm Response and Recovery Summit. Also serving on the panel were Chris Eisenbrey, center, from Edison Electric Institute, and Alex Hofmann from the American Public Power Association.



Beauregard Electric employees Mark James, left, and Eric Carroll practice lifesaving skills during a CPR training class.



Louisiana electric cooperative employees attend Stepping Into Your Supervisory Role training at ALEC's office.



Following a conference in New Orleans, directors and managers from cooperatives in Chile stopped by the Washington-St. Tammany Electric office to meet with employees and gather ideas about operations they can take home and possibly implement.



Louisiana electric cooperative leaders met with the state's congressional representatives in Washington, D.C., to discuss topics important to the member-consumers they serve. They were led by Addie Armato, CEO of the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives. Front row from left are Olander Smith, Washington-St. Tammany Electric; Danny Berthelot, DEMCO; Leroy Perritt, Claiborne Electric; and Johnny Bruhl, WSTE. Back row from left are Richard Sitman, DEMCO; Joe Jarrell, WSTE; Mike Heinen, Jeff Davis Electric; and Randy Pierce, DEMCO.



Bud Branham with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and Corey Parr with Federated Rural Electric Insurance recap the Commitment to Zero Contacts worker safety program during a gathering at DEMCO.



Craig Greene, right, commissioner of the Louisiana Public Service Commission, speaks with SLECA General Manager Joe Ticheli before the co-op's annual meeting.



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