

Along these LINES

JULY/AUGUST 2023

Running in the Family

Family ties to vintage vehicles run deep at DEMCO
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Together, We Are Stronger

I have seen time and time again your Louisiana electric cooperatives face unimaginable challenges, but never have they met those challenges alone.



Addie Armato

When a storm strikes our coastline, thousands of utility workers from cooperatives nationwide come to our aid. When there are supply chain shortages, cooperative employees pick up the phone and dial a sister cooperative for help solving these low inventory issues. When call centers are inundated with high call volumes due to outages, sister cooperatives help answer consumer-member phone calls and inquiries. We never have to face those daunting challenges alone.

The same is true as your Louisiana electric cooperatives work to solve bigger issues. Hot-button topics such as affordability and reliability, Federal Emergency Management Association reimbursements, the Farm Bill/U.S. Department of Agriculture funding, increasing production to solve supply chain shortages, and streamlining permitting processes to make new

“Alone we are strong, together we are stronger.” – AUTHOR UNKNOWN

construction and resiliency projects more cost-effective have been at the forefront of electric cooperative representatives’ minds.

This spring, cooperative leaders traveled to Washington, D.C., to discuss national issues that affect you, the consumer-member. They spoke to Congress, urging them to prioritize reliability and affordability. These leaders met with our entire Congressional delegation and industry leaders because they understand how important it is to you that the lights stay on when you flip the switch.

Your electric cooperative leaders also spent the day at the Capitol in Baton Rouge talking to local legislators, public service commissioners and elected officials about the impacts cooperatives make in your local communities. We spent the entire day in the halls of the Capitol, educating policymakers on why electric cooperatives are different from investor-owned utilities and why we are essential to the communities we love and call home.

I want to thank all our elected officials who listened to our Louisiana electric cooperatives. Thank you for your hard work. Thank you for your letters of support. Thank you for fighting for our great state’s citizens.

I also want to thank our Louisiana electric cooperative leaders. Your voices were resounding. Your presence was influential. Your convictions were stouthearted. Thank you for caring about our consumer members.

Throughout the spring, I watched your cooperative leaders work together. They moved through the halls of Congress and our Capitol buildings as one. They spoke as one. They realized the issues affecting your cooperative back home are the same challenges all our Louisiana electric cooperatives face. But, most importantly, they learned even though your electric cooperative is strong, we are stronger together as a state. Your Louisiana electric cooperatives are one family, one voice... powering Louisiana!

Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives Inc.

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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 38, 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 \$2.02. 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.

As we strive to serve our members, we acknowledge the promising future that lies ahead—a future that will foster economic development, employment opportunities and investments in education for our children.

Our board of directors takes great pride in representing the membership of DEMCO, and we are committed to delivering safe, reliable, and competitively priced energy services to you. We express our gratitude to our members for your unwavering support, which inspires us to represent you to the best of our abilities.

At DEMCO, our focus on the members we serve will always remain paramount. From our dedicated employees to our executive management team and democratically elected board of directors, each member is valued and prioritized.

Welcoming new accounts and members and expanding our power delivery system not only helps us grow but also enables us to spread costs more efficiently, ultimately resulting in reduced expenses for all members.

A review of DEMCO's 2022 system statistics shows kilowatt-hour sales were 2,171,696,353. The number of members billed was 115,922. Total miles of line is 9,054, and system peak demand was 653 MW. The electric plant in service is valued at \$750,737,593, plus \$75,506,202 for construction work in progress. The majority of the CWIP amount will be reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency because it relates to storm restoration and therefore will not count as dollars invested in our plant.

In 2023's board election, four board members were reelected without opposition, each serving a three-year term: Dennis Lott, Livingston Parish, District 8; Mike Anderson, East Feliciana Parish, District 5; Richard "Dickie" Sitman, St. Helena Parish, District 10; and Steve Irving, East Baton Rouge Parish, District 4.

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.

In service,
Danny Berthelot, President
DEMCO Board of Directors



MyDEMCO Registered Member Accounts

Congratulations to DEMCO members **Wanda C., Roger B., Don G. and Clarence B.**, winners of the random drawing for a \$50 gift card. You will each receive a gift card in the mail!





Manager's Report

Randy Pierce
CEO & General Manager



I want to take a few minutes to update you on DEMCO rates and where they stand today compared to how they have fluctuated over the past year.

As we have discussed, our wholesale rate from CLECO Power makes up about 65 to 70 percent of your electric bill. This part of your rate is called “wholesale power,” and includes the power cost adjustment. The other 30 to 35 percent is the “local distribution” part of the rate that pays for DEMCO employees, vehicles, buildings, poles, lines, substations, and all distribution equipment that delivers electricity to your homes and businesses every day.

That “local distribution” part of your rate has changed very little over the past six years or so, but the CLECO Power part of the rate has fluctuated significantly over the past year due to rising fuel costs and the closure of one of CLECO’s plants—Dolet Hills in Mansfield, Louisiana. That plant closure included accelerated costs to DEMCO, which caused our rates to rise. Fortunately, that plant has closed, and the costs related to its closure have been paid and settled.

Further good news is that fuel prices have stabilized over the past few months. All of this has led to the lowest wholesale electricity

prices we have seen from CLECO Power in the last two years. This, in turn, has resulted in the lowest rates DEMCO members have seen in two years.

While we do not know what fuel prices will be in the coming months, forecasts indicate that prices will be much lower and more stable than last year, which will lead to lower prices for electricity.

In 2022, electricity rates peaked at more than 16 cents per kilowatt-hour, the highest we have seen at DEMCO. Now that wholesale power rates have stabilized, DEMCO’s rate per kWh is about 11 cents, a decrease of about 31 percent compared to last year’s peak. All of this is good news for DEMCO members.

It is important to remember that two factors make up your electric bill: How many kilowatt-hours you use and the price for each kilowatt-hour.

The hot summer months are here, so most of us will use more electricity to keep our homes comfortable. So, electric bills will go up because of increased use. The good news is that the price per kWh you use will be significantly lower than it was this time last year.











Tips, tools and knowledge to help you

Conserve Energy & Save Money.



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- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| 
HVAC SYSTEMS & EQUIPMENT
Check and replace filters as needed. | 
WATER HEATER
Set temperature to 120°F. | 
WINDOWS AND DOORS
Seal for any gaps in closure. | 
AIR SEALING
Locate and seal any air leaks. |
| 
ELECTRONICS
Unplug inactive electronics. | 
APPLIANCES
Switch to energy-efficient models. | 
LIGHTING
Switch to LED or CFL light bulbs. | 
INSULATION
Seal gaps with expanding foam. |

Get Power Smart: Download Your 'DIY HOME ENERGY AUDIT CHECKLIST' at [DEMCO.org/power-smart](https://demco.org/power-smart)

Capitol Conversations

Louisiana electric cooperative leaders met in April with the state's congressional representatives in Washington, D.C., to discuss topics important to the member-consumers they serve. The visit coincided with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Legislative Conference, which welcomes co-op grassroots advocates from across the country to the nation's capital each year.



ABOVE: Representatives from DEMCO, South Louisiana, Washington-St. Tammany, Beauregard and Jeff Davis electric cooperatives, along with Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives, meet with Rep. Julia Letlow, third from right. TOP: Olander Smith, left, and Johnny Bruhl meet with Rep. Troy Carter, center.

ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY WEYO



LEFT: Representatives from DEMCO, SLECA, WSTE, BECi and Jeff Davis electric cooperatives meet with Sen. Bill Cassidy, fifth from left. **RIGHT:** The group confers with the senator's staff.



LEFT: Louisiana electric cooperative leaders meet with Rep. Steve Scalise's staff. **RIGHT:** Rep. Garret Graves gives the Louisiana electric cooperative representatives a private night tour of the Capitol.



Did you know . . .

The National Electrical Safety Code does not allow our lineworkers to restore electric service if your home cannot safely accept power.

If your home's weatherhead, service bracket, riser, meter socket or any related components are damaged, a qualified electrician must make repairs before your home can be reconnected.

Meter Tampering and Power Theft

Raising Awareness is a Cooperative Responsibility

At DEMCO, we firmly believe raising awareness about meter tampering and power theft is crucial in fostering a sense of responsibility among our members.

Power theft is an unlawful act that ranges from utility theft, power diversion and meter tampering. Utility theft is any attempt to interfere with the accurate measurement of electricity use by tampering with the meter or removing the disconnect device.

Power diversion involves redirecting electricity for unauthorized purposes.

Meter tampering entails actions that could lead to electricity theft, such as damaging the meter seal or other locking devices, breaking a meter seal, opening a meter base, removing a meter or altering the electric service in any manner.

Apart from compromising the safety of our electrical system, meter tampering can result in multiple fees, delays in reconnection due to parish permitting requirements, and the unsafe operation of the meter. These repercussions underscore the importance of maintaining the integrity

and security of your meter.

To ensure proper installation and removal, only DEMCO-authorized technicians are permitted to handle meters. This measure ensures the process is carried out correctly, reducing the risk of complications or hazards.

By working together to prevent these unlawful actions, we collectively maintain the safety and reliability of our electrical system. For any meter installation or removal needs, or to report any suspicious metering activity, call 844-MyDEMCO. ■

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Brady Redwine and his wife, Melissa

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SOMETHING'S *Brewing*

DeRidder
business
serves
coffee with a
conscience

By Cheré Coen

Sean Bryan is a consummate athlete, having completed six triathlons.

The contests, consisting of miles of swimming, biking and running within a 17-hour stretch, require constant training. When hurricanes come through, triathletes in training can face numerous flat bike tires from the debris littering the streets. That particular training mishap inspired the name of Sean's latest business venture.

Sean got the idea to open Flat Tire Coffee Co. during the COVID-19 pandemic, when a local coffee shop went out of business and was selling its equipment. Opening

a coffee shop seemed like a far-fetched idea for a man running an electrical and HVAC company.

"It was a combination of one, something we would never do and didn't know how to do, and second, opportunity," Sean says.

The latter was the ready equipment, an empty retail space near the DeRidder Courthouse and the expertise of Debbie Rowell, who worked in Sean's office. Unbeknownst to her boss, Debbie previously owned a coffee shop in



California and is a certified barista. When Sean mentioned the coffee idea to her, she explained her background.

“He was stunned,” Debbie says. “He said, ‘Let’s do it!’”

Building a Business

Sean opened the coffee shop in August 2021 at 207 W. Second St. in DeRidder. The name referred, of course, to his bicycle’s frequent flat tires.

“I wanted something unique for a name,” Sean says. “Plus, we’re up and running early in the mornings, and coffee is part of that.”

Less than a year after opening his new business, Sean learned the owners of Lake Charles-based Acadian Coffee Roasters might be interested in selling. Thus, another opportunity presented itself, and he bought the company in July 2022. He maintains Acadian’s customer base but moved the roasting component to the DeRidder coffee shop. Customers who visit Flat Tire can watch coffee being roasted through a glass wall.

“It’s similar to a brewery,” Sean says.

“Customers can sit at the bar and see them roast the coffee.”

A Higher Purpose

Flat Tire’s mission statement is twofold: to provide high-quality products and customer service and serve the community. The business hosts special events, donates a portion of its profits to overseas missions and hires recovering addicts, working with their probation officers to help them build better lives.

“We have had a few success stories,” Sean says of his hires, whom he credits as some of the best employees he’s ever had. “It’s been a real community benefit.”

Events include the monthly Cars and Coffee featuring 100 cars displayed in the nearby courthouse parking lot and taking a coffee trailer to Iron Man Village in Waco, Texas. Naturally, Sean participated in the Waco triathlon, which attracted 10,000 people.

“It was his dream,” Debbie says. “And he did well.”

The company sells under both the Flat Tire and the Acadian Coffee Roaster brands. Coffee bags may be bought at Southern

Bicycle in Lake Charles, and several coffee shops and the Golden Nugget’s Vic & Anthony’s Steakhouse serve them.

“We’re on the crest of getting into grocery stores,” Sean says.

In addition to their regular roasts, such as Brazilian, Columbian and Guatemalan, the company sells seasonal flavors, such as pumpkin spice and creme brulee. It also serves flavored coffees, including hazelnut and French vanilla, throughout the year.

“We pride ourselves in organic coffee,” says Debbie, who loves educating folks about coffee consumption. “Once people are educated in good coffee, it’s more than a cup of coffee.”

Sean is not as particular.

“There are two ways to drink coffee—fresh roasted or however you like it,” he says. “It’s just an individual sport.”

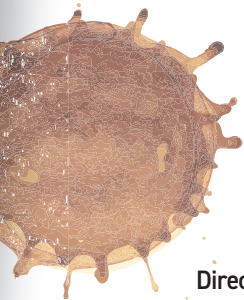
Debbie shares a recipe on how to create the perfect latte. It requires shots of espresso and texturized milk—in layperson’s terms, foamy milk—that gives the coffee a smooth texture and a creamy taste. ■

Café Latte

- 2 shots of Acadian Coffee Roasters Espresso Twenty 3
- Texturized milk of choice (Debbie prefers goat milk)
- Caramel in liquid form
- Dash brown sugar
- Whipped cream

Directions: To texturize milk, place it in a frothing pitcher and use a milk frother to foam it until it reaches the desired texture. Pour the frothed milk into the espresso. Top with whipped cream, a caramel drizzle and a brown sugar sprinkle.

For more information about the businesses, visit flattirecoffeeco.com.



FROM RUST TO GLORY

Celebrating the cars of yesteryear
while building new relationships today



ADOBE STOCK ILLUSTRATION BY ARTMARSA

By Pam Windsor

Steve Robichaux's passion for muscle cars runs deep. He restores them, appraises them, insures them and spends time organizing car shows and cruise nights to celebrate them. He's also the proud owner of a red 1972 Oldsmobile 442.

"I love the muscle cars from the '60s and '70s," he says. "And I like different cars from different manufacturers because they all have the favorites they designed and built. So, I like the 1969 Mustang back in the day from Ford. I like the Dodge product, the Challenger, and the '68 Barracudas."

Steve's interest in cars started as a young boy growing up in Houma.

"I've been a car guy since I was 10 years old," he says. "I lived next door to a guy who was into cars, and when I got off the school bus, I'd go straight to his house and help him work on stuff. And then I had friends that were into drag racing, so I used to ride my bicycle to the drag strip and hang out there."

Homegrown History

Steve credits Louisiana's drag racing legacy as one of the many reasons he and many others have such an appreciation for cars.

"There's a huge car following in Louisiana because, believe it or not, there's a lot of talent for drag racing here," Steve says. "We had some famous drag strips, like LaPlace Dragway, just west of New Orleans. A lot of famous drag racers from all over the country raced there, like Don Prudhomme, Don Garlits, Tommy Ivo, Connie Kalitta and others. Then, in 1969, Southland Dragway opened right here in Houma."

Southland was patterned after Orange County International Raceway in California.

"It was built with the latest technology around electronics and had an octagonal-shaped tower and covered seats for spectators," Steve says. "We didn't know it at the time, because we were just from little ol' Houma and had nothing else to compare it to, but it was one of the best tracks in the country."

Steve put on a combined car show and drag race reunion at Southland for three consecutive years before the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing in about 15,000 people.

"At my event, we weren't actually drag racing," he says. "It was just a nostalgia deal for dragsters and cars that raced in the '60s and '70s. These old Top Fuel dragsters and funny cars from that era, people are starting to find those cars and restore them because they're worth a lot of money."

Steve is planning a drag reunion later this year that will coincide with another big event.

"I'm helping a buddy with a Hemi shootout," he says. "It's all 1960s Barracudas and Darts, all Dodge Hemi cars. We did sort of a warmup event in February, and 10 or 12 cars came. We think we're going to have 15 or more in November. Those cars are very rare and worth a lot of money."

Steve also stays busy with a monthly cruise night he organizes. He says there's something special about cars from the 1960s and '70s.

"Back then, muscle cars were plain and simple," he says. "There was no sophistication, They weren't computerized cars



FROM TOP: Steve Robichaux loves his 1972 Oldsmobile 442. Mike Collier has a '60s Rolls Royce Silver Cloud II in his collection. Jim Fox, with his grandson and 1970 El Camino SS, considers every car a piece of art. PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEVE ROBICHAUX, MIKE COLLIER AND JIM FOX



ABOVE: Jim Fox, with his 1955 Chevrolet Cameo, has met many friends while attending car shows. **LEFT:** A car show in Eunice is the perfect stage to view several classics. PHOTOS COURTESY OF JIM FOX



with fuel injection and software systems like you've got today. Back then, you had to be innovative and do a lot of different things to gain horsepower. Today, your horsepower is bought on a software system, a microchip. You see the difference?"

Jim Fox, of Plaquemine, is also a big fan of cars from that era.

"All my life, I wanted a blue Corvette," he says. "So, about 15 years or so ago, I finally got one.

That started this passion, and I began going to car shows and making friends with people who share the same interest."

He's been pleasantly surprised by the bonds he's developed with those he's met and continues to see at car shows.

"I tell people I worked at Exxon

Refinery for 24 years, and I had friends, but I have friends from the car shows who would die for me, and I would die for them," he says.

He laughs at the exaggeration, then adds, "They break down on the road, and I'm heading out at 6 in the morning to help. And I know they'd do the same for me."

Thrill Rides

Jim has since sold his Corvette. Now he owns a 1955 Chevrolet Cameo truck and a 1970 El Camino SS.

"That's the way it is with the cars," he says. "You're always getting one, fixing it up, selling it, then getting another one you've always wanted. You fix that one up for a few years, then sell it, too. I've had 10 or 12 cars over the years, and I miss every one of them, but it's always the thrill and

adventure of the next one that allows you to let go of the previous one.”

Jim considers every car a piece of art and says having one sitting in the garage means something.

“It’s the design—it is the fins on the back or the grill on the front,” he says. “Or the sound of the V-8 engine or the chrome or what somebody did to their car or truck that you haven’t seen but want to do on yours. It’s all those things.”

Jim’s appreciation extends to every car at every car show he attends or organizes. All car enthusiasts are welcome, no matter the age or make of the car.

“No one is excluded,” he says. “At any car show you go to, there might be a \$3,000 or \$4,000 car or something worth up to \$200,000, and everybody appreciates everybody else. I might not want a certain car, but I respect and admire it.”

History on Wheels

Mike Collier, of Benton, has a unique collection of more than two dozen classic cars. The owner of Collier Racing—his family owns nine National Hot Rod Association race cars—his interest in building a collection of older cars began when he bought the first one.

“A long time ago, I got a 1969 Oldsmobile convertible,” he recalls. “I bought it for my brother, and then he passed away. I went and got it back, fixed it up, and it started from there.”

Today, Mike owns many cars, some rarer than others.

“I’ve got a ’65 Mustang convertible, a ’60s Rolls Royce Silver Cloud II, a ’33 hot rod, a ’35 Chevrolet red truck, a 1929 Model A Ford, a 1956 Packard, a 1960 Studebaker Hawk, a 1950 Studebaker pickup truck and others,” he says.

Mike enjoys owning cars for their history as well as their value.

“Every car has its own beginning and story, as far as it relates to me,” he says. “And they’re investments for sure. I bought a car for \$6,000 20 years ago, and today it’s worth \$19,000. I bought a ’66 Chevelle for \$11,000, and today it’s probably worth nearly \$100,000, but I’ve got a lot of money in it, too. Most of my cars have appreciated in value a good bit.”



ABOVE: Steve spends time organizing car shows and cruise nights to celebrate classic cars. RIGHT: Mike drives a convertible from his collection. PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEVE ROBICHAUX AND MIKE COLLIER



Mike doesn’t display his cars in shows but loans them out on rare occasions for weddings or Christmas parades. Last year, he made some of his cars available to the cast and crew filming a movie in Louisiana.

“It’s a story on the life of Phil Robertson, the Duck Commander,” he says. “They came and got the white Cadillac convertible, a yellow ’66 Ford pickup truck, the ’56 Packard and some others. They filmed last year up through Christmas, and I guess they’re still editing. It’ll come out later this year.”

The movie, “The Blind,” is scheduled for release in September. Mike says he’s looking forward to seeing how his cars were used in the film.

He admits maintaining so many older cars isn’t easy. It can get expensive and requires a certain expertise.

“You have to drive them because if you don’t drive them, they’re going to go to waste,” he says. “And no matter what,

they’re going to leak. You’re going to have dry rot. You’re going to have things that go wrong because of age, so you’ve got to keep up with them. I’ve got a guy that’s in his early 80s who knows these cars and was a lifetime professional mechanic who takes care of them. I don’t know what I’m going to do when he goes away.”

For many, owning older cars is a way to remember and celebrate a special time in America’s history.

“It’s an era that will never be repeated,” Steve says. “And the guys who know that era and know the product of that era are slowly fading away. So, when you go to these car shows and cruise nights and meet people with a common interest and similar stories, you become friends quickly.” ■

STATEWIDE NEWS



LEFT: ALEC and your co-op leaders attended Sen. Bill Cassidy's meeting recently in Lake Charles to discuss infrastructure funding. **RIGHT:** From left, Henry Clay McKoy Jr. with the U.S. Department of Energy speaks to Brett Ledet, SLECA; Kristie Lancon, Royal Engineers and Consultants; Matt Peters, SLECA; and Mark Phillips, DEMCO; about infrastructure and the aftermath of Hurricane Ida.

ALEC on the Move



The Elephant Stomp Golf Tournament in Baton Rouge is a networking event connecting Louisiana electric cooperative representatives with Louisiana legislators.



National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Director Danny Berthelot, left, and National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation Director Mike Heinen hosted an appreciation event for Louisiana electric cooperatives. Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives CEO Addie Armato was one of many who attended.



DEMCO's F150 Ford Lightning electric vehicle data will be included in DEMCO's analysis of electric fleet vehicles.

PHOTO BY JAMES MACIAS

DEMCO

ELECTRIC VEHICLE SPACE
8

DEMCO.org/EV

DEMCO EV

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Exploring feasibility, charging infrastructure, and the road ahead

DEMCO has assembled an internal task force to assess electric vehicles and their potential impacts in line with the co-op's commitment to innovation.

Key areas of assessment include:

- Commercial charging station feasibility.
- The possible use of electric fleet vehicles.
- Future load determinations of residential charging.

DEMCO plans to install a charging station at its member service centers, available for public use. This data and data gathered from a small pilot program of some participating members who own electric vehicles will help the task force.

Collecting this data will inform load/demand analysis, cost considerations and strategic locations for EV charging stations.

DEMCO is also evaluating the

feasibility of using electric fleet vehicles. The task force will analyze the expenses and maintenance associated with electric vehicles.

While commercial charging infrastructure has received significant attention, DEMCO recognizes the vital role of residential charging throughout its service territories. DEMCO aims to identify the infrastructure requirements and incentives necessary to support residential charging by assessing future load determinations.

To fully comprehend the practicality of electric vehicles, it is crucial to understand the charging time frames and capabilities associated with different charging levels.

Level 1 equipment uses a standard 120-volt alternating current outlet and can take approximately 40 to 50 hours to charge a battery electric vehicle (EV/BEV) to 80% from empty. Alternatively, a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) can charge in five

The Power of Electricity

Electric vehicles include battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, which operate solely on electric motors.

Unlike traditional internal-combustion engines that require fuel, EVs harness the power of electricity.

to six hours.

Level 2 equipment employs a higher-rate AC charging—240V (residential) and 208V (commercial) electrical service—to provide faster charging times. An EV/BEV can typically charge to 80% in four to 10 hours, while a PHEV requires approximately one to two hours.

Level 3 equipment operates through a 280V direct current plug and is the fastest-charging option. Known as direct current fast charging, this charging equipment can charge an EV/BEV to 80% capacity within 20 minutes to one hour. ■

Are you a DEMCO member and own an EV? Please visit DEMCO.org/EV to participate in a brief survey. Source: U.S. DOTD, tinyurl.com/4x4uzy45.



Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative's Brennon LaBouve, left, and Kain Miller fry up some Louisiana frog legs for legislators.

Breaking Bread, Building Bridges

Louisiana electric co-ops express appreciation to legislators and elected officials

Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives and its Louisiana electric cooperative members hosted the Taste of Louisiana Cookout for elected officials earlier this year.

The all-day event started at a

breakfast meeting with Public Service Commissioner Davante Lewis. Co-op representatives spent the afternoon at the capitol meeting with legislators and ended the day with some Louisiana home cooking.



Sen. Beth Mizell, center back row, meets with cooperative representatives.



ABOVE: From left, Washington-St. Tammany Electric Cooperative's Johnny Bruhl, Dennis Glass, Dane Hocott, Joe Jarrell and Coylean Schloegel speak with Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry Mike Strain, far right, at the ALEC Legislative Cookout. BELOW: From left, WSTE's Nickey Smith, ALEC's Addie Armato, Rep. Jeremy Lacombe and WSTE's Joe Jarrell visited during the event.



ABOVE: Beauregard Electric Cooperative Inc.'s Daniel Pruitt, left, and Eric Tucker serve crawfish etouffee. TOP: District 3 Louisiana Public Service Commissioner Davante Lewis spoke at the legislative breakfast.



Father and daughter Cecil and Lauren Garaudy smile big while showing off their 1984 Chevrolet C10 and 1986 GMC trucks. PHOTO BY ANNE HAWES

Running in the Family

Family ties to vintage vehicles run deep at DEMCO

By Erin Bass

Name: Cecil and Lauren Garaudy

Relationship: Father and daughter

Vehicles: 1986 GMC and 1984 Chevy C10

One of Cecil Garaudy's fondest memories of his daughter, Lauren, is of her sitting on top of the radiator, pouring oil into his old truck. She was 3 years old at the time, and she still enjoys spending time with her dad—in and out of the garage.

Cecil has had a vintage pickup truck since he started driving in high school. He currently owns a black and gold 1986 GMC

four-wheel drive truck.

Now 28 years old, Lauren has followed in her dad's footsteps and bought a tan and white two-tone 1984 Chevrolet C10 square-body truck about three years ago.

"I'd always kind of thought about it but never really thought I could do it until I realized I could financially afford it," she says.

Lauren's memories of working on vehicles with her dad are just as fond as his.

"When it came time for me to get my first vehicle—a 1988 Toyota pickup—we worked on that and then got my next one and up to the one I have now," Lauren says. "I learned a lot

Scenic Drives

Louisiana has 19 designated scenic byways, from Houma through Shreveport.

Running through Tangipahoa, Ascension and Livingston parishes, the Southern Swamp Byway begins at Sorrento up Highway 22 to Springfield and over to Hammond and Ponchatoula, then turns south on Interstate 51 to Manchac and LaPlace.

The Tunica Trace Scenic Byway stretches for 20 miles from Angola to St. Francisville through the Tunica Hills, while Zachary Taylor Parkway also goes through St. Francisville and over to Bogalusa on Highway 19.

Find maps and details on the 19 byways at byways.explorelouisiana.com.

from him.”

She can change the oil, brakes and headlights on her car, and is often asked to change out batteries and tires for friends and family.

Cecil says classic vehicles are easier to work on because they're not run with computers.

“If you have a general knowledge of mechanics, anybody can work on it,” he says. “There are no diagnostics to run, you just change the parts to make it better.”

Cecil and Lauren get together with other vintage car enthusiasts at area car shows on weekends.

“I enjoy just hanging out with everybody and getting to have those memories with my dad,” Lauren says.

If there isn't a car show going on, father and daughter will take a drive on LA Hwy. 16 in Denham Springs.

“We both get in our trucks and just ride,” says Cecil says. “We might go down Cane Market Road just to get out. We have family in Ponchatoula and go there sometimes.”

Cecil has had his current truck for about five years, and it's still a work in progress. He plans to enhance its 1980s retro look by adding a CB radio, an overhead console, fog lights and a wench for the front bumper.

“I always have plans,” he says. “It's just about what I can get done and what I can afford.”

His next step is to find a truck for his son—who is planning on moving back home from Arizona—that they can all work on together.

Name: Haley and Brian Merritt

Relationship: Husband and wife

Vehicle: 1959 Ford F100

Brian Merritt's first vehicle as a teenager was a 1966 Ford F100 truck. He and his wife, Haley, used to own a 1951 Chevrolet Classic, and their current vehicle is a 1959 Ford F100.

Named “Mater Merritt,” the red truck has a mint green patina, coyote drivetrain and “restomod” build, which means restored and modified in classic car lingo.

Brian says the best part about a vintage truck is “owning a vehicle that is like no other because no restomod is ever built the same.”

Mater Merritt was built with the help of friends Stick, Tanner and Trent Borskey, Billy McDonald, and Ronnie Thibodeaux. Maintenance on the truck is minimal, since everything is new, but the Merritts are not in it for the money.

“We do not look at it as an investment,” Brian says. “It's the challenge of the build.”

The Merritts use their vehicle as a grocery getter and shop truck. They also enjoy taking scenic drives through the hills of St. Francisville. People of the older generations often stop them to reminisce about their own past cars and ask questions about the truck.

From Haley's perspective, she sometimes feels like the “other woman” when it comes to Mater, but “all of our boys admire the truck and want a vintage ride,” she says.

As their oldest son prepares to get his license, the family tradition will continue with the next generation. ■



Haley and Brian Merritt restored a 1951 Chevrolet Classic, at right, and they now have a 1959 Ford F100, at left. The Merritts named their truck Mater Merritt. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MERRITTS

Powering Through an



Sort the many choices for home generators

By Paul Wesslund

If you're wondering whether to buy a home generator in case of a power outage, you're not alone. Backup power sources have become so popular that manufacturers now offer a wide range of choices.

Options run from pull-start gasoline models costing a few hundred dollars to permanent outdoor installations for several thousand dollars. That variety makes it easier to get exactly what you want, but

harder to choose.

A good first step is to think about what you want a home generator to do. Do you want to keep your phone charged? Do you want to make sure your refrigerated food doesn't spoil? Do you want to make sure you have heat and air conditioning through an extended outage? Answering those questions will require you to know the wattage of the appliances you want to run so you know the capacity of the generator you need.

You might also ask if you really need a generator. The average home in the United States is without power about seven hours a year. Is that enough to justify the expense and attention?

Another part of your planning should

be contacting your electric utility to get its expert advice on the best and safest fit for your home.

Here's what to know about the four basic choices in home generators:

Portable generators are small enough you might take them on camping trips. The cost for these can vary from as low as \$400 to more than \$2,000. Most portable generators should be able to run a refrigerator or a window air conditioner.

Special attention to safety is required. These generators should never be used indoors, not even in a garage. The carbon monoxide they produce can be deadly in minutes. The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports 85 people die each year from carbon monoxide poisoning

caused by gasoline-powered portable generators. Portable generators should be operated more than 20 feet from the house and be connected only with outdoor extension cords matched to the wattage being used. Look for models with a carbon monoxide detector and automatic shutoff.

Appliances should be plugged in to the generator—the generator should never be plugged into an outlet or your home's electrical system.

Inverter generators are higher tech versions of standard portable generators. The power they produce changes to match what the appliances use, so although they are a little more expensive, they use fuel more efficiently and make less noise. The same safety guidelines apply to both inverter and standard portable generators.

Standby generators can cost \$7,000, plus installation, but they have the benefit of turning on automatically during a power outage and running your entire house. Typically, a permanently mounted outdoor unit is connected to your home electrical system and runs on propane or natural gas. It must be installed by a professional electrician.

You should also spend the money to have an electrician install a transfer switch. That acts as a mini-circuit breaker to protect your appliances and can be an easier way to connect the house to the generator.

Power stations, also known as batteries, charge themselves while the power is on. They're not as powerful as some of the other options—and can be more expensive—but they're quiet, easy to operate and some are designed to look good hanging on the wall. They can cost between \$400 and \$6,000. One common use of power stations is to pair them with rooftop solar panels so electricity from the sun is available even at night.

With the increased intensity of storms and our reliance on electronic devices, power outages can be a bigger concern these days. Technology gives you many choices for how to react, whether you want to make sure you're never without power, or you're willing to just light a candle and wait for the lights to come back on. ■

Most portable generators are powerful enough to run a refrigerator or a window air conditioner. Special attention to safety is required, and they should never be used indoors, not even in a garage. PHOTO COURTESY OF CANVA



ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY AS PHOTO FAMILY



Standby generators are permanently mounted outside the home, then connected to the home's electrical system. Standby generators run on propane or natural gas and must be installed by a professional electrician. ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY SPHRANER

Keep Water Safety in Mind

Energy Education Council shares tips

Electricity and water are a dangerous—potentially fatal—combination.

Swimmers and boat owners need to take precautions to make sure their time in and on the water is safe. While this might seem like common sense, boats and docks are often powered by electricity. One mistake could lead to tragedy.

Please consider the following points:

- **There is no visible warning to electrified water.** Electric current in water causes a paralysis of muscles, which can result in drowning. As little as 10 milliamps— $\frac{1}{50}$ of the amount used by a 60-watt lightbulb—can cause paralysis.
- **If you have contact with water and feel a tingling, the water might be electrified.** Immediately get out of the water. Avoid using metal objects, such as a ladder. Alert others who are in the water to try to stay upright, tuck legs to be smaller and swim away from anything that could be energized.
- **If you believe an electric shock drowning is occurring, turn off all power, throw a life ring to the person and call 911.** Do not enter the water. It could still be electrified.
- **If you own a dock or pier, install ground-fault circuit interrupters and test them monthly.** Use portable UL-Marine List GFCIs when using electricity near water.
- **If you own a boat that uses electricity, install equipment leakage circuit interrupters to protect swimmers from electric shock in the water around the boat.**

The Energy Education Council recommends all electrical installations be performed by a professional electrical contractor familiar with marine codes and standards.

The organization also recommends individuals not swim around docks with electrical equipment or boats plugged into shore power. Many electrical shock drowning deaths have occurred around private docks and boats plugged into shore power while docked. ■

ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY JAG_CZ

