

Along these **LINES**

MARCH/APRIL 2021

A Family of Excellence

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Doughty family at a 2019 LSU football tailgate, from left, Braden, Gracie, Richard, Bryce, Jennifer, Wesleigh and Cade.

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Saluting Our Electric Cooperative Employees



CEO Jeff Arnold

On March 5, we will celebrate Employee Appreciation Day. On April 12, we will celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day.

Call me biased, but I think there is no more deserving group of people to be honored on those two days than our electric cooperative employees.

The past several months, I watched these individuals spring into action, working day and night to keep the power on! They are called to duty in inclement

weather, nights and weekends.

During the stay-at-home orders, employees worked from home, juggling their important job duties along with the needs of their children and pets. When storms came through their service territories, they left their families and damaged homes to restore power. Electric cooperative employees are dedicated to restoring energy to their communities as safely and quickly as possible on any day and at any time.

It means they miss out on a lot of family milestones: birthdays, first days of school, weddings, etc. Electric cooperative employees are also willing to pack their bags and head to neighboring states near and far to help restore power. They leave their loved ones behind—sometimes small children in tears because they do not understand why mommy or daddy must go to work.

Here at the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives, our own staff spent many days at our hardest-hit electric cooperatives during hurricane season. Employees slept in sleeping bags or on air mattresses in offices, tents and bunk pods. Days and weeks were spent away from their families. Despite being weary from the long



hours, our employees pushed forward. ALEC employees came to the aid of your communities and your electric cooperatives, working side by side with your electric cooperative's employees.

I am extremely proud of the work everyone has done this past year. With that, I say kudos on a job well done! ■

Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives Inc.

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Jeff Arnold



CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

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Aarron Graham

SAFETY COORDINATOR

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No Man's Land

Seven parishes band together to promote their uniqueness

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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 36, Issue 2

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Manager's Report

Randy Pierce
CEO & General Manager

As promised in my January/February Manager's Message, I will be sharing information with you throughout 2021 regarding our mission, vision and values.

But first, a look back at how and why DEMCO came into existence.

As late as the mid-1930s, nine out of 10 rural homes in America were without electric service. The farmer milked his cows by hand in the dim light of a kerosene lantern. The unavailability of electricity in rural areas kept their economies entirely and exclusively dependent on agriculture.

Factories and businesses preferred to locate in cities where electric power was easily acquired. For many years, power companies ignored the rural areas of the nation.

The idea of providing federal assistance to accomplish rural electrification gained ground rapidly when President Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933. On May 11, 1935, Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 7037 establishing the Rural Electrification Administration. It was not until a year later that the Rural Electrification Act was passed, and the lending program that became the REA got underway.

Within months, it became evident to REA officials that investor-owned utilities were not interested in using federal loan funds to serve sparsely populated rural areas. But loan applications from farmer-based cooperatives poured in. REA soon realized electric cooperatives would be the entities to make rural electrification a reality.

In 1937, the REA drafted the Electric Cooperative Corporation Act, a model law that states could adopt to enable the formation and operation of not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives.

DEMCO was established in 1938, when an initial 750 people decided to each pay a \$5 fee for membership and equity in the co-op. Now, DEMCO is the largest electric distribution co-op in Louisiana, powering more than 112,000 meters in a seven-parish service area: Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Livingston, St. Helena, Tangipahoa and West Feliciana.

Times continue to change and DEMCO continues to grow, but we have always been clear on the reason why we exist:

Our mission is to focus on enhancing the quality of life for members by providing safe, reliable and competitively priced energy services.

In this issue, you'll learn more about smart meter technology, the most advanced meter reading technology for enhanced member benefits and services. In February 2021 and continuing through 2022, DEMCO will change out more than 70,000 meters, adding to the 30,000 smart meters already installed. This systemwide interactive service solution brings improvement to cost, safety and efficiency (story on page 5).

It is very rewarding to deliver projects that demonstrate our mission so well.

I'm excited to welcome spring, with LSU baseball already in full swing. What a relief the players are able to play this year. Enjoy reading about the Doughty family and their five talented children. It'll be fun to see their two sons on the field (story on pages 20-21). Geaux Tigers!

**CLOSED FOR
GOOD FRIDAY**



CLOSED FRIDAY, APRIL 2ND OPENS MONDAY, APRIL 5TH





INTRODUCING SMART METER TECHNOLOGY

Your meter is smarter than ever

DEMCO is excited to bring its members the most advanced meter reading technology for enhanced member benefits and services.

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

Convenient - automatic energy usage reports, voltage and outage information means DEMCO can quickly detect an outage even if you're not home to report it.

Accurate - meters are read at predetermined times, helping to identify when you are using electricity to help with energy use and cost savings.

Enhanced Safety - self-detection of voltage issues means we can remotely monitor the safety and status of your meter.

Faster Restoration - faults can be isolated quickly and some circuits automatically switched to another feeder, so that members can be restored within minutes.

More Member Control - with more information about how much power you use and when, you can identify ways to conserve energy and save money.

Updated Technology - radio frequency technology is used to receive meter information.

Member Safety - remote encrypted data keeps your information safe, and tampering detection provides an added level of security.

Enhanced Member Service - with this digital link between DEMCO and our members, there is potential for new and expanded services, such as smart home energy management, load control, budget billing, usage alerts, outage notifications, and time-varying pricing.

This program is based on 100% acceptance rate; however, requests to opt-out of the Smart Meter upgrade program will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

LEARN MORE AT DEMCO.org

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Sign Up for Bank Draft

DEMCO members who pay their bill by bank draft are eligible to win a \$50 gift card. Winning account numbers are published in each issue of Along these LINES. It's easy to sign up and be eligible to win. Sign up for bank draft at DEMCO.org or call 1-844-MyDEMCO (1-844-693-3626).

Congratulations to these winners: Accounts #80281918001, #9009256002, #80125285001 and #80218893001.

Lucky Account Contest

Four lucky co-op members have a chance to win \$25! Your account number is listed on your mailing label, but to win you must also find it in the pages of the magazine.

If you find it, call 225-262-2160 to claim your prize.

Co-ops Celebrate Safety Achievements

Each year, the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives recognizes the state's electric cooperatives for safety achievements. ALEC provides many services to its member cooperatives. Among the most touted are safety and training programs.

Cooperative employees work in a dangerous environment daily, sometimes in extreme weather conditions. ALEC's goal is to train them to do their jobs safely.

"These procedures we teach affect each cooperative's bottom line and, ultimately, each member's rate," said ALEC Director of Loss Control Aarron Graham. "Most importantly, it guarantees our employees will go home to their families at the end of each day."

Safety is paramount for all electric cooperative employees.

Awards usually are presented during the ALEC annual meeting each July.

"These awards recognize everyone's commitment to safety," ALEC CEO Jeff Arnold said. "We wanted to have an awards ceremony like in years past, but after the pandemic and multiple hurricanes, we realized it was not going to happen in 2020."

Instead, ALEC made a virtual presentation during December's board meeting.

ALEC member cooperatives can participate in the Rural Electric Safety

Achievement Program. Participation requires a rigorous safety inspection every three years by a certified team of loss control professionals, with inspections of everything from plant and equipment to employee procedures. Cooperatives that complete the inspection are scored and given a list of areas to work to improve.

"We consider these inspections a great opportunity," said Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative General Manager Mike Heinen. "The inspection team provides us with a review of what we are doing really well, as well as the areas we need to improve. That's important when the real achievement is keeping everyone safe every day."

Cooperatives that complete RESAP receive a flag to display at their headquarters. Flag recipients for 2020 are JDEC and Beauregard Electric Cooperative.

Cooperatives that have worked without a lost-time accident are given a plaque recognizing the achievement.

This year's recipients were:

- JDEC—307,816 hours without lost time since January 2017.
- Washington-St. Tammany Electric Cooperative—466,360 hours without lost time since May 2018.
- BECi—1,015,648 hours without lost time since August 2016.
- South Louisiana Electric Cooperative

Association—3,900,348 hours without lost time since December 1996.

"It takes a lot of safety training and a little bit of good luck to have this record," said SLECA General Manager Joe Ticheli.

In a fast-paced world where time is money, electric cooperatives must constantly emphasize slowing down, taking your time and not taking shortcuts.

"Shortcuts can be a life-or-death decision," said Charles Hill, general manager/CEO at WSTE. "Cutting corners is never worth someone's life or well-being."

The safety award ceremony culminates with the presentation of the traveling statewide safety trophy. A formula is used to determine the winner of the trophy using the incidence plus severity rate, which incorporates employees' incidents, incident severity, man-hours worked and vehicle accidents.

BECi earned the prestigious statewide safety award for 2020.

"This award is a testament to our employees and directors," said BECi General Manager Kevin Turner. "It takes a commitment from the top down, starting with the cooperative's board of directors to the employees looking out for one another daily."

ALEC commends all Louisiana electric cooperatives on their achievements and continued commitment to safety. ■



Washington-St. Tammany Electric employees accept the safety achievement plaque. Front row, from left, Jimmy Jenkins, Brad Ladner, Brian Miller, Chad Angelo, Reginald Green, Wyatt Branch, Hunter Watts and Willie Chauvin. Back row, from left, Seneca Conerly, Braxton Womack, Ricky Simpson, Byron Spears, Treavor Cooper and Kelton Breland.



Beauregard Electric Cooperative employees accept the statewide safety award for 2020 and a flag recognizing completion of the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program. From left, Aarron Graham, Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives' director of loss control, with BECI's Eddie Hanks, Bobby Brown, Mark James, Rick Hendricks, Mike Ashworth, Ritchie Cook, Scott Deshotel and Kevin Turner.



Accepting the safety achievement plaque on behalf of SLECA, from left, Brett Ledet, Matt Peters, Joseph Ticheli, Danny LeBlanc, Marc Caldwell and Ben Adams.

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

**2021 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
Saturday, May 15, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.**

**LOCATION OF MEETING
DEMCO Headquarters Facility, 16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, LA 70739**

February 15, 2021 – March 8, 2021

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

March 16, 2021 – March 18, 2021

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

March 18, 2021

DEMCO Board Meeting at 6:00 p.m., at DEMCO Headquarters. The Committee on Nominations will be appointed at this meeting.

March 18, 2021

The Nominating Committee meeting begins at 6:05 p.m. at DEMCO Headquarters, 16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, LA, with results of the meeting to be posted March 19, 2021.

March 25, 2021

DEMCO Governance Committee will meet at 4:30 p.m. on this date, if needed, to determine eligibility of director candidates who have pre-qualified. Only candidates who have pre-qualified will be considered.

March 26, 2021

This is the Record Date for the 2021 Annual Membership Meeting. A final list of those members eligible to vote in DEMCO's 2021 Annual Membership Meeting will be prepared.

March 29, 2021

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

April 8, 2021

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

April 15, 2021

The Governance Committee, will meet at 4:30 p.m. on this date if needed, to validate each petition and post the results as required by the corporation's bylaws on this date.

April 20, 2021 – April 30, 2021

The Official Notice of the 2021 Annual Meeting will be mailed to all members of the cooperative during this time.

April 21, 2021

Ballots for the 2021 Annual Meeting will be mailed to members of the cooperative on this date. Members should receive their ballots by Saturday, April 26, 2021 — VOTE and mail your ballot immediately.

May 7, 2021

The deadline for receiving ballots for the 2021 Annual Membership Meeting is 4:30 p.m. on this date — **DO NOT DELAY — VOTE**

May 10, 2021 – May 12, 2021

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

May 15, 2021

Annual meeting and election results announced at 10:00 a.m., at 16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, LA 70739.



 What is the DEMCO Scholarship Program? | →

One-year scholarships of \$1,250 for each of two consecutive semesters awarded to member-students in a random drawing at the DEMCO annual membership meeting each May.

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

DEADLINE is May 10, 2021



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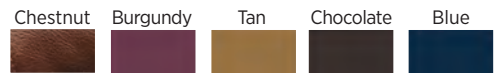
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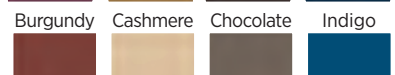
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A PERFECT PAIR: *Eggs and Ham*

Hard-Boiled Eggs Benedict

4 hard-boiled eggs
2 English muffins, split in half
4 slices ham
Chopped parsley
4 large egg yolks

1 tablespoon lemon juice
½ cup butter, slightly softened
and cut into five pieces
Pinch of salt
Dash of cayenne pepper

Prepare hollandaise sauce by placing a heat-proof bowl over a pan of about 1½ inches of gently simmering water. The bottom of the bowl should not touch the water. Alternatively, use a double boiler.

Add egg yolks and lemon juice to the bowl. Whisk vigorously, until the mixture becomes shiny and thickens. Whisk one piece of butter into mixture until fully incorporated. Repeat with remaining pieces, one at a time. Whisk in salt and cayenne. If mixture is too thick, whisk in a bit of warm water, a tablespoon at a time. Remove from heat and use immediately.

In a hot skillet, heat the ham over medium heat. Toast the English muffins until lightly browned. Slice each hard-boiled egg into fourths.

Assemble by placing an English muffin half on a plate, cut side up. Top with one slice of ham and four pieces of egg. Drizzle with ¼ of the hollandaise sauce. Top with parsley and serve warm.

Make this dish a little easier by using an envelope of Knorr's hollandaise sauce mix.

By Anne P. Braly

PHOTO COURTESY OF
MILLER PHOTOGRAPHY

Ham and eggs go together like cookies and cream, peanut butter and jelly, or burgers and fries

This time of year, you can barely think of eggs without thinking of ham. They are often seen together on an Easter menu. But what do you do once Easter dinner is over, and you're faced with leftover ham and lots of eggs?

For starters, make sure you've handled all the food safely. With multiple cooks in the kitchen and a lot of food being prepped, sometimes safe food-handling practices fly out the window. Make sure you are preparing—and storing—food properly:

- As long as you're boiling eggs to dye for Easter eggs, boil some extras. Keep them in the refrigerator until you're ready to use them.
- Don't serve or eat any eggs that have been at room temperature for more than two hours.
- If your ham is ready to eat, just warm it up. If you must roast it, make sure the internal temperature reaches 145 F.

Ham and Egg Casserole

2 medium cooked potatoes, peeled and sliced
¼ teaspoon pepper
1 large egg
4 large hard-boiled eggs, chopped
1½ cups sour cream
¼ cup dry breadcrumbs
1 cup cooked ham, diced
1 tablespoon butter, melted
½ teaspoon salt

Heat oven to 350 F.

In a large bowl, combine potatoes, cooked eggs, ham, salt and pepper. In another bowl, combine the raw egg and sour cream. Add to potato mixture and gently toss to coat. Transfer to a greased 7-by-11-inch baking dish.

Toss breadcrumbs and butter; sprinkle over casserole. Bake, uncovered, for 20 minutes or until bubbly and cooked through.

Hot Ham Sandwiches

1 cup finely chopped cooked ham
2 hard-boiled large eggs, chopped
2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
½ cup chili sauce
3 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 small onion, chopped
8 hot dog buns
⅓ cup sliced pimiento-stuffed olives

Heat oven to 400 F.

In a bowl, combine ham, cheese, onion, olives and eggs. Stir in chili sauce and mayonnaise. Place about ⅓ cup in each bun and wrap individually in foil. Place on a baking sheet. Bake for 10 minutes or until heated through.

Creamed Ham and Eggs

3 tablespoons butter
2¼ cups milk
3 tablespoons flour
1 cup diced cooked ham
½ teaspoon dry mustard
4 hard-cooked eggs, chopped
¼ teaspoon salt
4 biscuits
⅛ teaspoon ground black pepper

Melt butter in a large saucepan over low heat. Stir flour, mustard, salt and pepper into butter until mixture is smooth and bubbly. Remove from heat and add milk. Return to heat and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil until mixture thickens, about 1 minute.

Stir ham and eggs into milk mixture and cook until heated through. Spoon creamed ham and eggs onto biscuits.

Puffy Ham and Egg Quiche

17½-ounce box frozen puff pastry
¼ cup evaporated milk, warm
8 ounces ham, chopped
1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
4 hard-boiled eggs, sliced
2 eggs, beaten
8 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded
4 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, grated
1 beef bouillon cube

Heat oven to 375 F.

Roll one sheet of puff pastry into a pie dish. Sprinkle ham on the bottom of the pie. Add a layer of sliced hard-boiled eggs and a layer of mozzarella cheese.

Dissolve the beef bouillon in the warm milk. Mix with parsley, beaten eggs and Parmesan cheese. Pour over ham, eggs and cheese. Cover the pie with the second puff pastry.

Bake for 45 minutes or until golden brown. Let sit for 5 to 10 minutes before cutting and serving.

Calling All Louisiana Home Cooks and Chefs!

We know there are some really good cooks in Louisiana, and we want to showcase them in our magazine. The Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives will select recipes to feature in our magazine each issue. Your recipe must be an original. Please do not submit copyrighted recipes. You are encouraged to also submit a photo of your finished dish or recipe preparations. Please be sure your photo is taken at a high resolution (a minimum of 1MB). If you are using a smartphone to take the photo, go to settings and select the highest resolution. Email the photo at its original resolution (not compressed). To submit your recipe, please email aarmato@alec.coop. In the subject line, type "Louisiana Recipes." We can't wait to see what you are cooking!



Despite a historic independent attitude, seven parishes come together to market the region for the benefit of all

By Cheré Coen

When President Thomas Jefferson had the novel idea to purchase Louisiana from the French in 1803, Spain owned the territory to Louisiana's immediate west, a land called *Tejas* or Texas.

Jefferson insisted Louisiana's western sliver along the Sabine River belonged to the United States. Spain argued otherwise—and with good reason. The first capital of Spanish *Tejas* was at Los

Adaes, a fortification near Natchitoches.

In the early 1700s, Spain governed the Texas territory from well inside what is now Louisiana, traveling the rustic trail *El Camino Real de Los Tejas* from Natchitoches south-southwest through Texas all the way to Mexico.

It took years for both governments to work out distinct boundaries between Louisiana and Texas. The region became lawless until either government finalized map lines.

"There was no law, no flags, no tax man, no militia," says Adley Cormier, a Lake Charles historian and author. "It was an unknown, ungovernable part of the state. It was essentially a land that had to fend for itself."

This "Neutral Ground"—what became "No Man's Land"—from the Louisiana coast up to DeSoto Parish attracted outlaws, renegades and runaway slaves until 1819, when the Adams-Onís Treaty established the Sabine River as the boundary between Spain and the United States.

After Louisiana statehood, No Man's Land continued the independent attitude that remains today, Adley says.

In celebration of the region's unusual history, a grassroots coalition of seven parishes banded together to market the area collectively. No Man's Land—Becoming Louisiana Bicentennial Celebration launched in 2019, marking the 200th anniversary of the Adams-Onís Treaty that established the territory's boundaries. The bicentennial event continues through 2021.

"The treaty was signed in 1819, but it wasn't ratified until 1821," says Linda Curtis-Sparks, director of the Sabine Parish Tourist Commission. "That gave us a chance to celebrate in a three-year period."

A Different Louisiana

The history of Southwest Louisiana differs from the rest of the state, Adley says, noting most residents along the state's western boundary did not participate in a plantation



The sun sets on the open water in Sabine Parish. PHOTO COURTESY OF SABINE PARISH TOURIST AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Upcoming Events

Battle of Pleasant Hill April 9-11, Pleasant Hill

Reenactment of the 157th anniversary of the Civil War battle is on the actual field where Union and Confederate forces met April 9, 1864.



Choctaw-Apache Tribe of Ebarb Annual Powwow April 23-24, Ebarb

The Choctaw-Apache Tribal Powwow celebrates the 2,500-plus member tribe's roots, and features traditional dancing, unique craft items, jewelry, and fellowship. All dancer and guest drum groups are welcome to participate. The public is invited to attend.

13th Annual Sale on the Trail May 7-8

Shop for garage sale bargains and treasures along 100 miles of Louisiana Highway 6 and Texas Highway 21. Buy food and other goods from vendors, and enjoy exciting special events in Natchitoches, Many, Toledo Town, Milam, San Augustine and Nacogdoches.



Zwolle Tamale Fiesta October 7-9, Zwolle

More than 15,000 people gather to celebrate the town's Spanish and Native American heritage, consuming tens of thousands of tamales. The fun-filled weekend features tamale-making demonstrations, a tamale-eating contest, live entertainment, arts and crafts, street dancing, parades, a fun run, carnival rides and a mud bog.

39th Annual Sabine Freestate Festival November 5-7

This event—which celebrates the region's time without law enforcement—is held annually in the southern Sabine Parish village of Florien, and features arts and crafts, games, a parade, Western shoot-outs, live music and more. Admission is free.

For more information on the region and its events, visit <https://visitnomansland.com>.



Members of the Choctaw-Apache Tribe, which traces its heritage in the area to the 1600s, perform at the launch of the No Man's Land—Becoming Louisiana Bicentennial Celebration in 2019. PHOTO BY CHERE COEN

economy, nor were they close enough to cities to enjoy that type of culture. Settlers were isolated, unable to use waterways due to log jams and other impediments.

“It was not your typical South and certainly not your typical Louisiana,” he adds.

Until the lumber industry emerged in the 18th century, early settlers herded cattle on unclaimed land with no fences, Adley says.

The region remained remote, since there was no easy connection to the Mississippi and Red rivers. It's one reason privateer Jean Lafitte worked the area. In 1840, only 400 voters were registered in Calcasieu Parish. Those settlers needed supplies that Lafitte was only happy to provide.

“Lake Charles was sort of the Amazon fulfillment center here,” Adley says.

The railroad spurred growth through the 20th century, and Fort Polk brought in a steady stream of military. Lake Charles grew its economy with the oil and gas industries and casinos. But the region north along the Sabine still lacked cohesive tourism.

“Louisiana is very New Orleans-centric,” Adley says. “Western Louisiana is sometimes left out of the picture.”

The bicentennial celebration involving all seven parishes seemed the answer, launching with a ceremony at Fort Jessup near Many in the spring of 2019. There were historical demonstrations, regional cuisine, period music and an honoring of descendants of the original settlers.

Although the event concludes this year, “No Man’s Land” will remain the brand for the Neutral Ground of Louisiana.

“It has expanded into a life of its own,” says Rebecca Blankenbaker, executive director of the Cane River National Heritage Area and chair of the No Man’s Land Committee. “It will continue to be a regional experience. It will not go away.”

In addition to the No Man’s Land website that provides tourist itineraries and attractions information, there will be an app and the launch of the Gas Station Eats Trail.

Emmy Award-winning journalist and filmmaker Bill Rodman is working on a documentary on No Man’s Land, telling the stories of the outlaws, land development and the resiliency of the region’s people and culture. Organizers hope to debut the film at the 2021 Louisiana Folklife Festival this summer. ■



Pirates inhabited No Man’s Land for a time, bringing needed supplies to remote areas. These reenactors were part of the bicentennial celebration launch. PHOTO BY CHERE COEN



Founded in 1716, Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site in Natchitoches was the first European settlement in the Louisiana Territory. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LOUISIANA OFFICE OF TOURISM

Fortifications Celebrate Major Milestones, Too

Several attractions inside No Man’s Land are celebrating anniversaries as well.

This year marks the tricentennial of Los Adaes—once capital of Texas during the Spanish period and now the Los Adaes State Historic Site. Visitors may enjoy the museum, archaeological finds and swales or remnants of the El Camino Real. Plans are in the works for a fall event.

Fort Jessup, also a state historic site, will celebrate its 200th anniversary in February 2022. After the boundaries were established between Spain and the United States, Fort Jessup was created in 1822 to tame the region’s lawlessness. Lt. Col. Zachary Taylor, who later became president, established and commanded the garrison for a time.



Recreational opportunities are abundant at Toledo Bend Lake—from fly-fishing to tubing. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE LOUISIANA OFFICE OF TOURISM

Road Trip Eating Showcases Unique Culinary Delights

By Cheré Coen

No Man's Land encompasses seven parishes in Southwest Louisiana, stretching from the Gulf Coast almost to Shreveport. Throughout this region lies some really good eating, which is why tourism has established the No Man's Land Gas Station Eats Trail.

"Each parish has a signature dish, and we will highlight them," says Rebecca Blankenbaker, executive director of the Cane River National Heritage Area and chair of the No Man's Land Committee.

The trail—expected to launch this month with information and links on the No Man's Land website (visitnomansland.com)—will

highlight at least three spots per parish where visitors can enjoy a quick meal. Because some eateries closed due to hurricanes Laura and Delta, the website will update the list as establishments return.

Fun places to explore include Allen Parish for its cracklins and boudin, "served in a brown paper bag," Rebecca says. "It's truly road food."

Natchitoches is known for its meat pies, made famous when James Lasyone opened his Meat Pie Kitchen more than 50 years ago. Rebecca says not to overlook the sweet potato cakes.

Sabine Parish's tamales date back to the Native Americans who inhabited the area, intermarrying with French and Spanish settlers.

The combination of indigenous and introduced culinary traditions are enormously popular, which is why the town hosts the Zwolle Tamale Festival every October.

A spot in Vernon Parish makes the best handmade burgers—a classic take on the great American fast food, Rebecca says.

"It's cultural food but also road trip food that harkens back to the good old days," she says. ■

For more information, visit <https://visitnomansland.com/gas-station-eats>.



Famous meat-filled handpies from Lasyone's in Natchitoches.



Tamales are the draw in Zwolle.



Glenda Etheridge makes Zwolle tamales. PHOTOS BY CHERE COEN

"Anyone who travels to Louisiana knows our cookin' is a big attraction. Our state has its mainstays-off-the-freeways like everybody else. If you're looking for authentic Louisiana flavor—the eats and treats you hear gossip about—you've got to explore the byways-and-highways of the No Man's Land food trails! Day-trippin' the gas station eats of No Man's Land offers a slice of Southern hospitality, tasty scenic landscapes and several big bites of what you came here for!"

—NO MAN'S LAND WEBSITE

ALEC Rallies to Assemble All-Star Team

When hurricane after hurricane slammed Louisiana, the statewide association stepped up to fill a critical need for crisis communications

WHEN HURRICANE LAURA made landfall August 27, 2020, the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives sprang into action, providing much-needed aid to its member Louisiana electric cooperatives.

Staff was divided into task forces, coordinating mutual-aid efforts and contractors, running much-needed supplies to devastated areas, managing the hurricane relief fund and handling crisis communications.

“We knew our cooperatives were in great need, and we had to act quickly to supply them with some relief,” said ALEC CEO Jeff Arnold. “There were so many people willing to help it was overwhelming at first.”

When it came to crisis communications, ALEC assessed the needs of its cooperatives for communication assistance. Some cooperatives have full-time communication staff, while others do not.

“Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative made the request to have an ALEC communicator with boots on the ground in their service territory during recovery efforts,” said Addie Armato, ALEC’s director of member engagement.

Given that request, Addie knew she would have to rely on a team of people to help ALEC effectively assist all the Louisiana member electric cooperatives.

Stephen Bell from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association was the first to reach out to help. Working under



Providing onsite communications support to Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative during hurricane recovery in the fall were, from left, Addie Armato, director of member engagement for the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives; Nell McCauley from Kentucky and Chad Simon from Texas. Among the team, but not pictured, was Natalie Smith.

the guidance of NRECA Vice President of Communications Scott Peterson, Stephen and the NRECA communications team provided ALEC and its cooperatives with template press releases, media guidance and support.

At the beginning of 2020, ALEC partnered with Pioneer Utility Resources to produce Louisiana Country and Along These Lines statewide magazines. Following the storm, PUR also came to Louisiana’s assistance, offering press release templates and freelance writers. PUR brought in its ARC Media team to assist with social media messaging.

Addie worked closely with all affected electric cooperatives on crisis communications.

“After 17 days of working in Lake Charles alongside restoration crews, it became apparent to ALEC that Addie was needed back in Baton Rouge to continue to assist all of our Louisiana cooperatives that were continuing to be hit by multiple hurricanes and tropical storms,” Jeff said.

That is when a cavalry of communicators were lined up to provide relief in Lake

Charles. To assist with communications amid the crisis, Addie recruited Chad Simon with Sam Houston Electric in Texas; Nell McCauley, a communications professional from Kentucky; and Natalie Smith with NextEra Energy in Florida.

“Everyone did a phenomenal job,” Addie said. “I am proud I had the opportunity to work alongside these communicators and partners through some of the toughest challenges Louisiana has ever faced.

We will never be able to show our true appreciation for what they did for us.”

Every Louisiana electric cooperative was affected by a tropical storm or hurricane this past season. In 2020, Louisiana electric cooperatives faced tropical storms Cristobal and Zeta, and hurricanes Marco, Laura, Sally, Beta and Delta.

ALEC thanks everyone who came to the aid of Louisiana’s electric cooperatives. ■



Should I Get Vaccinated Against COVID-19?

By Robin Howard

None of us started 2020 intending to become armchair virologists, but it's become necessary in the face of a global pandemic. It can be challenging to sort out the detailed information required to decide about getting vaccinated against COVID-19, but the stakes are high and it's essential to make your decision based on facts.

How Traditional Vaccines Work

When bacteria and viruses invade the body, they multiply, causing infection. The immune system spots the invader, then goes to work, eliminating it over days or weeks. When the virus is gone, the immune system stores details about fighting it in memory cells called T-lymphocytes, or T-cells. If the immune system detects the virus again, it can respond faster than before—sometimes so quickly you won't even know you had a virus.

Traditional vaccines contain a weakened or dead virus. When injected, it causes the immune system to produce T-cells and antibodies to fight the pathogen. The process of building immunity can take several weeks and may require more than one dose. Sometimes people develop low fever, tiredness or a sore arm as the body makes antibodies, but vaccines cannot cause the illness itself when inactive virus or bacteria are used.

How mRNA Vaccines Work

A new type of vaccine doesn't use a weakened or dead virus to train the immune system. This technology relies on a piece of genetic material called mRNA, or messenger RNA. When injected, the messenger teaches cells to build replicas of the spike on the coronavirus. The spike is a small piece of protein that can do no harm. mRNA genetic material never interacts with DNA.

As cells build spikes, the immune system responds by eliminating them and creating immunity. If later exposed to the coronavirus, the body quickly recognizes the spike and kills the virus.

mRNA vaccines are promising because

they are faster and easier to make. Unlike dead or weakened virus vaccinations, it's believed the vaccines are effective even if the virus mutates.

mRNA vaccine technology may be new to you, but it isn't experimental. It has been used successfully for several years to treat some types of cancer.

How Vaccines Are Tested for Safety

To be approved by the Federal Drug Administration, vaccines must pass three phases of rigorous clinical trials. In phase 1, scientists analyze the safety, dosage, side effects and effectiveness in a small group of volunteers. In phase 2, the dosage may be adjusted, and side effects and effectiveness monitored in a larger group. In phase 3, the vaccine is given to a much larger and more diverse group of people who are monitored for side effects and effectiveness.

To progress from phase 2 to 3, a vaccine cannot cause severe side effects in more than 10% of participants. Once a vaccine is in phase 3, it is unlikely it will yield anything more than brief, mild side effects, such as headache or low fever.

Three Promising Vaccines

Three vaccines in the United States have completed phase 3 of clinical trials, with more than a million volunteers participating. Starting in early summer 2020, half of the phase 3 volunteers received a placebo, while half received an actual vaccine. (Account No. 70006176006)

Addressing Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt

Scientific and medical evidence prove the benefits of vaccines far outweigh the risks. However, people have been nervous about vaccines since they were invented in 1796.

Some may remember the Cutter Incident of 1955. At the time, polio had killed more than 50 million people in the first half of the 20th century. The polio vaccine eventually eradicated the virus in the United States, but not before the Cutter Incident undermined public confidence in vaccines.

In 1955, Cutter Laboratories accidentally



Modern vaccines go through a rigorous process, including research, progressively larger trials that are closely monitored and, finally, widespread use. ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY MOODBOARD

produced a batch of vaccines with live poliovirus, resulting in 250 cases. This incident was the turning point for government regulation and is why the approval process is so stringent today.

More importantly, polio had been killing and disabling humans for more than 12,000 years. Without a vaccine and most people taking it, we would still be living with deadly polio outbreaks today.

The same goes for prevalent diseases such as tetanus, rubella, diphtheria and measles. Like polio, COVID-19 is the kind of virus that will never go away.

To return to some state of normalcy, at least 60% of the population must choose to be vaccinated. If most people choose not to be vaccinated, COVID-19 will only be under control after it infects 80% to 90% of the population. As of late 2020, less than 10% of the U.S. population had been infected. (Account No. 8006413800)

It may feel risky to get a vaccine, but achieving herd immunity without it will take many more years and claim hundreds of thousands more lives in the process. ■

Alexa: Can You Help Me Save Energy?

Put those smart devices to work to improve your home's energy efficiency and potentially reduce your electric bill

By Paul Wesslund

Before this year's COVID-19 stay-at-home measures turned business meetings and family gatherings into smartphone conference calls and video conferences, your electric appliances were on the bandwagon of internet-connected energy.

If that makes your gadgets and gizmos sound almost human, well, in some ways, that's exactly what's happening.

Talking to a computer isn't just for Captain Kirk on "Star Trek" anymore. Surveys show about one in four American adults owns a smart speaker or technology such as Amazon Echo, Google Home or Apple HomePod.

We can ask Alexa or Siri to tell us the weather or how to save money on our electric bill.

Appliances you control from your phone aren't just luxury items anymore, says Brian Sloboda, director of consumer solutions with

the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

"Two years ago, when you would buy a smart appliance, you were really buying a high-end product," Brian says. "Now, they're in the middle. More and more appliances are smart, and they have come down in price. It's everything from lightbulbs you screw into your table lamps, to your microwave, to your washing machine, to your thermostat that you can control through a voice assistant or apps on the phone."

Brian says those internet-connected devices not only can make you more energy efficient, they can help you take advantage of your electric service in ways you never dreamed possible.

If your machines are acting more like people, you also should take precautions to protect your security and privacy. Smart speakers are on and listening in all the time.

Brian advises you to get in the habit of reading the fine print that comes with instructions and app downloads so you know how your personal information is being used.

As part of his full-time job at NRECA, Brian keeps up with appliance developments. He recently brought a high-tech device into his home.

"My washing machine sends me an email every month

telling me how much electricity it has used," Brian says. "It gives me tips on how to save energy. It suggests I could wash the clothes in cold water to save energy. It will gently tell you that rather than washing a small load, it's more efficient to let the clothes accumulate."

If all that sounds a little creepy, smart speaker manufacturers and marketers understand. They try to encourage customers to get more familiar with their devices. They want you to ask your smart speaker to tell you a joke or play music.

Brian says studies of how people might use voice-activated devices to manage their energy use show owners like to make those personalized connections.

"Consumers in these focus groups refer to Alexa as their friend," he says. "They start to give them human attributes. They really do refer to Alexa as 'she' rather than 'it.'"

While apps and speakers can help you use energy more efficiently by alerting you to lights on in rooms you're not using or suggesting you clean the filter in your washing machine, Brian says smart thermostats offer some of the biggest potential energy savings.

Heating and cooling are among a home's top energy users. High-tech thermostats



are becoming easier to use and more innovative. These days, they not only can change temperatures for daytime or nighttime, but can track your phone as you leave the house or move from room to room, figuring out your habits and making adjustments based on your lifestyle.

Before buying a smart thermostat, Brian suggests learning about it to make sure it is compatible with your heating and cooling system. Check with



About one in four American adults owns a smart speaker or internet-connected device such as Amazon Echo, Google Home or Apple HomePod. We can ask Alexa or Siri to tell us today's forecast and how to save on our monthly energy bills. Be sure to protect your security and privacy. PHOTO BY PAOLESE

A smart speaker is listening to everything that goes on in your home all the time. Reading those tiny-type agreements before you click “accept” might seem like an unrealistic pain, but they generally will tell you what kind of protections are in place to keep your personal information private.

Brian also recommends getting involved in online communities about your internet devices so you can know more about privacy, security and how to get the most out of your smart technology.

“All of these devices generally have some sort of online community for people to engage in and learn from each other,” Brian says. “Folks love talking about their devices—whether it’s a car or a doorbell. People love talking about technology, and they love showing off the things they’ve figured out.”

Brian says new technology is a way to bring people closer as they make better use of their electricity.

“We sometimes look at smart technology and we think it is meant to isolate us, but you can really turn it around and go to in-person meetups or engage online to share tips and tricks,” he says. “I am a real big believer that technology can actually bring us together.” ■

your electric utility, which may have an energy management program with a recommended model or even rebates.

Brian expects smart technology to get even smarter. Utility groups are involved in studies where people describe their values—what is important to them—to their apps and speakers, which respond accordingly.

If saving money is the most important thing to you, your lights might dim in a part of the room you’re not using. If

comfort is your priority, the temperature will stay within a certain range. For those especially concerned about the environment, the dishwasher might delay its start until renewable power is available because the sun is shining or the wind is blowing.

Along with all those benefits comes the need for precautions: Anything connected to the internet can be hacked. That could be a home security system, a baby monitor or a TV.

The first safety step Brian suggests is to change the password on your devices, which come with easy-to-crack passwords such as “1234” or “password.”

He says to check regularly for software updates and install them. They often add protections from the latest cyberthreats.

In addition to security, pay attention to privacy. Many interactions with the internet will collect information on you.

A Family of Excellence

Doughtys share love of baseball and a heart for adoption

By Cheré Coen

Cade Doughty excelled at baseball. After his graduation from Denham Springs High School, the pros came calling, drafting the second baseman in a late round. But Cade wanted to attend Louisiana State University to follow his

brother Braden playing for the Tigers' award-winning baseball team.

When Cade put on the LSU Tigers uniform last spring as a freshman and walked up to home plate, he hit a home run.

"It was the most fabulous thing in the whole wide world," says his proud mother, Jennifer.

Eighteen games later—just before the first Southeastern Conference weekend, the COVID-19 pandemic put an end to the 2020 spring LSU baseball season.

Cade, 19, and his 22-year-old brother

Braden, a senior who's a catcher on the team, had to call it quits for the year.

"The boys handled it better than me," Jennifer says. "I sobbed and sobbed. It's our favorite thing, to watch them play. Everyone had things that were disappointing (when lockdown happened). That was ours."

The boys are back with the team, hoping this spring the pandemic won't shut them down. Both are majoring in sports administration and sharing an apartment as well as their love of Tigers baseball.

They're both perfect athletes in her eyes, but "Cade is more in the spotlight," Jennifer says.

"Braden has more of a supporting role on the team," she says. "He knows that God has a plan for his life. His goal is to help the team. He will do whatever he needs to do to help the team win."

LSU sports run in the family. The boys' father, Richard, was on the LSU baseball team from 1988-1989. His great-grandfather played Tigers basketball, and his grandfather was slated to play before he contracted mononucleosis. Oldest son, Bryce, performed in the LSU band for two years.

"Baseball has been a really big part of our lives," Jennifer says. "What your parents love, you know, you pass along."

The Doughty men aren't the only ones excelling. (Account No. 8008636100)

Before Cade was born, Jennifer heard Grammy-winning musician Steven Curtis Chapman on the radio discussing adopting overseas orphaned children through his Show Hope foundation.

"I thought, 'One day we're going to do this,'" Jennifer says.

Years went by while she raised three boys, but Jennifer never forgot her resolve. She vowed she would not turn 50 and be forced to admit she lost the opportunity to adopt out of convenience.



LEFT: Braden, Jennifer and Cade Doughty before one of the only games of the 2020 season. PHOTOS BY SHINE IMAGES

“We had boys, we were busy, but the Lord called us to do that,” she says.

The Doughtys arranged for an adoption and the entire family traveled to China to meet Wesleigh—“this little girl who had no one,” Jennifer says. “It opened up this whole other world to my boys they would have never known.”

Once the adoption was finalized, “We were one and done,” she says.

Then Jennifer began working for a group that helped place children from orphanages overseas into foster homes. Her job, as a photographer, was to organize photos.

“Gracie was one of them,” she says of a photograph that came across her desk. “It was immediate. I just knew. She was meant to be ours.” (Account No. 80309817001)

Jennifer shared the photo with Richard. She conceded it was crazy to think of adopting another child, but “I think she’s supposed to be a Doughty,” she said.

She asked Richard to think about it—and Gracie became the seventh member of the Doughty clan.

“I don’t think it’s ever a wrong decision to bring home a child who doesn’t have a home,” Richard says. “Now, we can’t imagine not having her. She and Wesleigh are two halves of a whole. They absolutely love each other.”

While at Runnels School in Baton Rouge, the girls took harp lessons every day in the school’s music program. Runnels eventually closed, but the girls continued their lessons and are now acclaimed harpists.

“It’s not convenient, not an easy instrument,” Jennifer says. “But it’s a beautiful instrument and they’re both very good at it.”

Richard and Jennifer attend all LSU baseball games and have sitters lined up for the night games and away trips. Since Wesleigh and Gracie, both age 12, are still young and in school, they join their parents at weekend games.

Bryce, who lives in Mobile with his wife, Caitlin, also pops in for baseball on occasion. It’s a family affair.

“I love that we have a lot of kids,” Jennifer says with a laugh. “I love that there’s always something going on. It’s been fun.” ■



ABOVE: Bryce Doughty, LSU Tigerband, 2015-2016.

TOP: Wesleigh, left, and Gracie Doughty pictured with their harp.

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