

Along these LINES

MAY/JUNE 2026



CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

The Muse brothers return to their roots at Muse 3 Farm Page 18

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Muse family members, back from left, Chris, Mittie, Allen and Bernell; and front from left, Michelle, Mavis, Juanita and Wanda take pride in their generational farm, Muse 3 Farm.

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Power Life Safely

May is Electrical Safety Month

Every May, Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life, but if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

The Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives understands the risks associated with improper electricity use, which is why we're committed to reminding you to stay vigilant and practice electrical safety year-round.

By following key safety practices, you can reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected. Here are five essential tips for powering up safely at home:

1. Be vigilant. Regularly inspect your home's electrical system, including smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, for signs of damage or outdated components.

Electrical fires can start silently and out of sight, making functional smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors essential for early detection. Test alarms monthly, and replace batteries annually. Ensure you have alarms installed in key areas of your home, including inside and outside of bedrooms.

2. Use surge protectors. Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances with surge protectors. These handy devices help divert excess voltage away from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all power strips include

surge protection, so read the product label carefully. Surge protectors can lose effectiveness over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated.

3. Practice safe use of power strips. Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, such as heaters, microwaves and hair dryers,

should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with "busy" power strips can lead to overheating and create a fire hazard, so be sure to check the power strip's wattage rating before plugging in items.

4. Don't mix water and electricity. It may seem obvious, but accidents involving water contact with electrical items happen. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, such as sinks, bathtubs or swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical switches, devices or appliances. Ground fault circuit interrupters should be installed in areas where water and electricity are typically in proximity, including kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor outlets.

5. Educate family members. One of the best ways to ensure the safety of everyone in your household is to talk about electrical safety. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances, and ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions in the event of an emergency.

Practicing electrical safety at home is essential for protecting your family, property and peace of mind. Remember, electrical safety isn't just a one-time effort—it's a year-round responsibility. Taking these steps can help ensure a safer, more secure home for you and your loved ones. ■

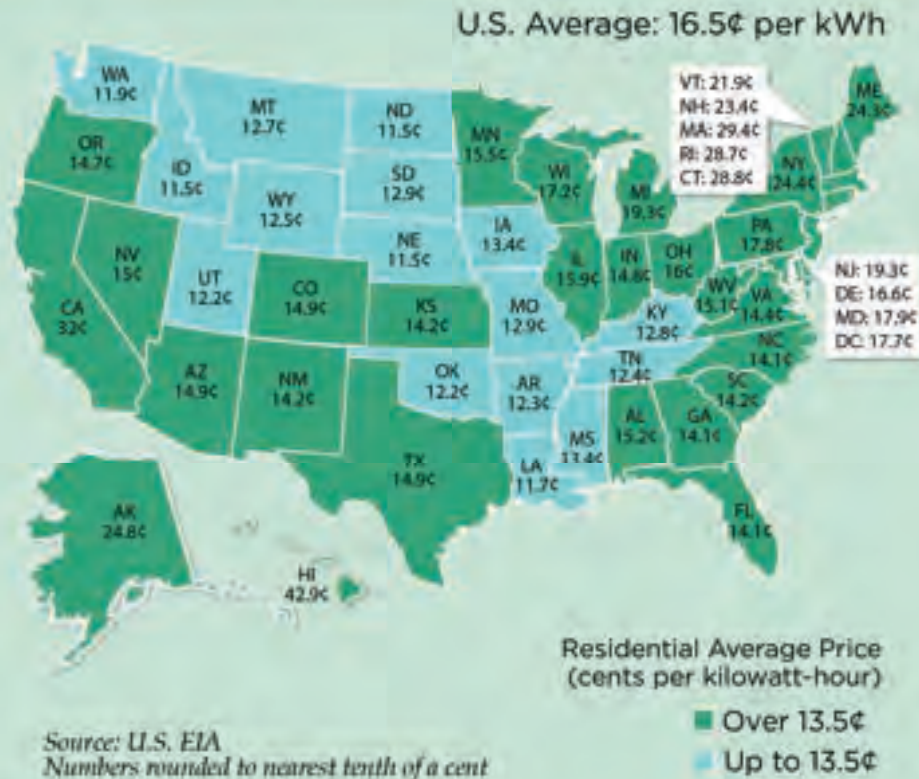


Aaron Graham, CEO

Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlets' capacity. PEXELS PHOTO BY ZION

Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2024 figures, in cents per kWh



Getting Ahead of Wildfires

As the threat of wildfires increases nationwide, electric cooperatives are working to mitigate the risk of fires and protect their local systems and communities. Co-ops are:

- Deploying advanced technologies, such as power line sensors and advanced imaging cameras, to help detect fires or conditions that lead to them.
- Proactively managing vegetation near power lines and other electrical equipment to decrease the volume of fuel and slow the spread.
- Advocating for smarter land management policies like the Fix Our Forests Act that would allow co-ops to better maintain power lines on public lands and reduce wildfire risk.



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Volume 41, Issue 3

Mission

To enhance the quality of life for our members, employees, and communities by safely providing reliable and competitively priced energy services.

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

Annual Subscriptions: Members \$2.57. Nonmembers \$5.

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

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

DEMCO is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Manager's Report

Randy Pierce
CEO & General Manager



At DEMCO, providing reliable power is what we do. What makes us different is that we are owned by the co-op members we serve. So, while we deliver the service you rely on, we also focus on doing it in a way that meets your needs. We want to make sure your experience with DEMCO is a good one.

That's why we're continuing to explore new ways to serve you, such as offering a Residential Time-of-Use rate.

Residential TOU is designed for members who consistently shift electricity use to off-peak and super-off-peak hours. When demand for electricity is lower, the cost of power is lower for the cooperative. Through the TOU rate, those lower costs can be passed on to members who enroll in the rate and consistently shift their energy use to these times.

However, it's not for everyone. Electricity used during peak hours costs more than the standard residential rate, and a 12-month opt-in is required. Because of this, enrolling in TOU requires a commitment to changing when electricity is used.

If you're curious whether TOU is right for you, visit DEMCO.org/Rates/TOU. An online calculator is available to help you evaluate potential savings.

We're also focused on how we communicate with you, especially during outages.

DEMCO members are notified by text once an outage has been confirmed, typically after 15 minutes. This allows time for the system to validate the outage, determine the extent of the issue and allow automated systems to respond—such as rerouting power where possible—before sending a notification.

We want to know if this is working for you.

We've put together a short survey to get your feedback on how often you want to be notified, what kind of updates you prefer and what would improve your experience. To participate, scan the QR code below.

As a cooperative, we exist to serve you. Whether it's the new TOU rate or how we communicate about outages, our focus is on meeting your needs and providing a good experience with DEMCO.

OUTAGE TEXT NOTIFICATIONS



DEMCO sends text notifications to keep members informed during power outages.



Please take this **QUICK SURVEY** by scanning the code to help us serve you better.



Get to Know Your Board Members

East Baton Rouge Parish is one of DEMCO's most dynamic and rapidly growing regions. It's home to expanding neighborhoods, thriving businesses and vibrant communities. Guiding that growth requires experience, collaboration and a clear understanding of member needs. Board members Randy Lorio and Steve Irving bring those strengths and more to their roles, helping shape the cooperative's future in this important area.

Board Vice President Randy Lorio is known for his practical insight and steady leadership. Through his work on the purchasing and governance committees, Randy helps guide key operational decisions that support DEMCO's continued growth while maintaining reliable and affordable service for members. His thoughtful approach and strong understanding

of cooperative operations make him a trusted voice in long-term planning and strategic direction.

Steve brings a combination of legal expertise and deep community involvement to his role on the board. His service on a wide range of committees, along with volunteer work—including many years with the Red Cross—reflects a lifelong commitment to helping others. Steve's ability to navigate complex issues with clarity and perspective has made him a valued leader in cooperative governance.

Together, Randy and Steve help ensure that as East Baton Rouge Parish continues to grow, and DEMCO remains focused on delivering dependable service, responsible planning and member-centered leadership. ■



Randy Lorio

- ▶ Favorite local spot: David's Mobile Station in the mornings. It's a great place to catch up on local news and conversations.
- ▶ Hidden talent or fun fact: Enjoys working on old cars.
- ▶ Current favorite show or hobby: A big fan of "Jeopardy!" and spending time with family, especially fishing with his grandson and cheering on his grandchildren at baseball and softball games.



Steve Irving

- ▶ Favorite local spot: Poor Boy Lloyd's and Pastime Restaurant—both longtime favorites he's been visiting for more than 50 years.
- ▶ Hidden talent or fun fact: Licensed ham radio operator since 13 years old and has decades of volunteer service supporting disaster communications through the Red Cross, including major hurricanes and floods.
- ▶ Current favorite show or hobby: Competes in historical European martial arts, and he is the oldest saber and broadsword competitor in the country. He spends his time studying techniques and training.

TIPS TO AVOID

ENERGY SCAMS

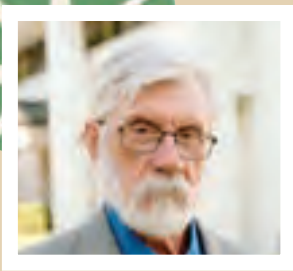


If you receive a call from someone stating you have overpaid your energy bill and that you should provide your banking information or a credit card number to receive a refund, hang up because it's likely a scam.

If you overpay your bill, your cooperative will apply the overpayment credit to your account balance or mail a check. They will not call and request your banking information to issue the refund.

Source: Utilities United Against Scams





Annual Meeting

Official Notice

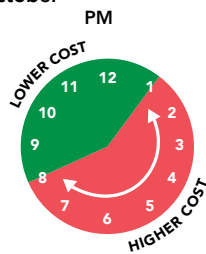
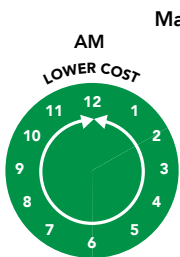
In accordance with the provisions of Article III, section 3.03 of the Bylaws of DEMCO, notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of the members of the corporation will be Saturday, May 9, 2026, at DEMCO's Headquarters, 16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, Louisiana. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. In accordance with Article IV, section 4.05 of the corporation's Bylaws, notice is hereby given that the following persons have been nominated by the official nominating committee to fill the four positions on the board of directors in which vacancies occur this year.

More information, visit DEMCO.org/Annual-Meeting. ■

By Nomination, pictured above from left:

- ▶ Steve Irving, District 4
- ▶ Mike Anderson, District 5
- ▶ Dennis Lott, District 8
- ▶ Richard Sitman, District 10

Introducing Time-of-Use, A New Residential Rate Option for members who can shift energy use to lower-cost hours.*



Comparing Standard Residential Rate to Residential Time-of-Use Rate: Common Appliances & Estimated Cost for 1 Hour Usage

CLOTHES DRYER
Standard Rate: \$0.20



TOU Rate
Off-Peak: \$0.17
Super-Off Peak: \$0.03

AIR CONDITIONING
Standard Rate: \$0.14



TOU Rate
Off Peak: \$0.12
Super-Off Peak: \$0.02

DISHWASHER
Standard Rate: \$0.06



TOU Rate
Off Peak: \$0.05
Super-Off Peak: \$0.01

WASHING MACHINE
Standard Rate: \$0.02



TOU Rate
Off Peak: \$0.02
Super-Off Peak: <\$0.01

MICROWAVE
Standard Rate: \$0.05



TOU Rate
Off Peak: \$0.04
Super-Off Peak: \$0.01

ELECTRIC OVEN
Standard Rate: \$0.12



TOU Rate
Off Peak: \$0.10
Super-Off Peak: \$0.02

Rates calculated using the DEMCO delivery charge <=1,000 kWh, and not including the wholesale power charge. All estimated costs of energy end-use appliances typically found in residential homes are approximations based on average wattage. Actual wattage of products varies depending on product age and features, such as ENERGY STAR® rating. Check your manufacturer's booklet, the nameplate on the appliance or the Energy Guide Label for exact wattage.

Learn More & Evaluate your potential savings using the online calculator at DEMCO.org/Time-Of-Use.
*12-month TOU rate opt-in required.

Spinning Tails, Not Tales

Harness the best of spinnerbaits and worm fishing

By John N. Felsner

Since the dawn of fishing, anglers have been spinning tales, even an occasional true one. But now they can tell stories of spinning tails that catch more bass.

One hot Louisiana day many years ago, Dad wanted to make a quick fishing trip in the morning before the scorching heat became too oppressive. Of course, I wanted to fish from dawn to dusk, but Dad had the driver's license. We headed to a pond that everyone called the Ol' Swimming Hole, but it held big bass.

On hot summer days, swimmers jumped off the bank about 3 feet above water at one corner of the rectangular pond. Next to the bank, a sandbar came up to the shoreline. That's where Dad and I launched our pirogue into the pond.

We fished for several hours that morning with nothing to show for it. As the morning heat began to rise, swimmers came to cool off. Then, my dad uttered those dreadful words I never wanted to hear.

"We haven't caught anything all morning," he said. "Let's go."

My immediate standard response was always, "One more cast, pleeeeeeaaaaasssse!"

Without waiting for Dad's approval, I

tossed a bright red worm equipped with three exposed hooks and tipped with a propeller on the nose. The worm landed beyond a submerged sandbar that ran parallel to the shoreline. The bait slowly sank to the bottom in the trough between the bar and the bank. Then, I reeled steadily to slowly turn the propeller.

As the lure slipped up the back side of the sandbar, something grabbed it. After quite a fight, I finally lipped a bass weighing nearly 6 pounds. Instantly, red harness worms became my new favorite bait. That fish remained my personal best largemouth for another 30 years.

Long before many people even heard the term Texas-rigged worm, anglers used prerigged harness or propeller worms. They came with two or three hooks protruding from the belly of a straight worm linked together with fishing line. On the nose, a straight wire held several colored metal, glass or plastic beads and what looked like a miniature aircraft propeller.

Few bass anglers still fish with prerigged worms, if they can even find one. Anglers might find some on dusty shelves in the back of old tackle shops, at country general stores or maybe a flea market. However, these worms began to make a comeback of sorts. Now called a tail-spinner worm, it's a straight worm or similar soft-plastic enticement with a propeller screwed into the tail rather than the nose.

"I started using tail-spinner worms in tournaments and caught a lot of good fish on them," says Keith Poche, a professional bass angler born and raised in Natchitoches. "I take a simple straight plastic worm or stickbait with a little weight to it. To the back of the worm, I attach a No. 1 or 2 spinner blade with a swivel and a split ring."

In the old days, most harness worms came prerigged with wire weed guards that snapped over the hooks. Today, most people insert their hook points barely into the plastic worm body. When rigged weedless, a tail-spinner worm can go through most types of entangling cover to get down where lunkers lurk. Some people attach a small split-shot to the line about 12 inches in front of the nose to add casting heft or to fish it deeper.

"I typically throw it weightless with a 5/0 extra-wide gap hook," Keith says. "I insert the hook into the plastic to make it weedless. I can throw a tail-spinner worm into grass, wood, fallen trees, brush piles or anything else, and it won't hang up."

A tail-spinner worm somewhat combines the attributes of spinnerbaits, crankbaits, wacky worms, soft jerkbaits and Texas rigs. The propeller creates vibrations and flash like traditional spinnerbaits, but with a more lifelike silhouette.

When big bass feel the vibrations or see the flash, they investigate. They see something that looks like helpless natural forage, so they attack. Since the worm feels lifelike, a bass might hold onto it longer than a spinnerbait.

"It's a very versatile but subtle bait," Keith says. "It's a finesse technique that combines a spinnerbait with the look of a worm. The blade is just big enough to give off some flash, but not too bulky to chase fish away. The spinner draws attention to the bait and allows a person to fish it a lot faster than a Texas rig. With it, I can cover a lot more water than just working a standard soft-plastic stickbait."



Keith Poche, a professional bass angler, shows off two bass he caught using a tail-spinner worm, which looks like natural prey to a bass. A tail-spinner worm can move through the water naturally, creating fish-attracting vibrations. PHOTOS BY JOHN N. FELSHER

Because they sink slowly when rigged weightless, tail-spinner worms work best in shallow water with abundant cover like stumps, fallen trees and weed beds. They also work around flooded brush, dock or bridge pilings, riprap or similar places where bass feed in the shallows or near the surface.

Toss it into a sweet spot and let it sink. Steadily reel it just over the bottom or higher in the water so the propeller turns. Occasionally pause the retrieve to let the bait sink a few feet. When passing a stump, log or other object, let the worm sink to the bottom before renewing the retrieve. Bass commonly hit worms as they fall with the propeller still spinning. Some people hop it off the bottom.

“I usually fish the worm in water 5 feet deep or less,” Keith says. “I look for little ditches with slightly deeper water in the back of pockets. Bass use these ditches to migrate into and out of the shallows. I also look for dark spots that could indicate submerged stumps. Let the bait fall, and then slowly start retrieving it to make the blade spin. I’ll bump it forward a little and then let it fall again. Bass hit it aggressively.”

Unlike the old prerigged worms, anglers can easily change colors or propeller sizes on a tail-spinner rig. Experiment with different colors, configurations and retrieves to see what bass want that day. ■



Community Connections

Tammany Trace trailheads are vital to Northshore culture

Story and photos by Colette Boehm

Tammany Trace includes scenic bayou overlooks and long stretches of piney woods and moss-draped oaks. Since its inception in 1992, this 31-mile trail has served as a ribbon, tying together communities across St. Tammany Parish.

Today, the rails-to-trails path is popular with cyclists, runners and walkers, offering a combination of easy accessibility, remote beauty and scenic views. But beyond its popularity for outdoor recreation, the trace's trailheads combine outdoor recreation, art and local culture in Abita Springs, Covington and Mandeville.

The trailheads are favorite spots for many locals, offering a variety of opportunities for community connections

and outdoor fun. These spots are central to the culture and hubs of activity for these towns. They host weekly farmers markets, local art installations, entertainment venues, special events and more.

Culture in Covington

In Covington, a converted depot serves as a trailhead and visitor center. The center features rotating art exhibits, and the site includes a campanile, bandstand and amphitheater. Here, residents enjoy free concerts, arts and crafts markets, festivals and a lunchtime farmers market on Wednesdays. On Saturdays, a market is held just down the trail on the nearby grounds of the Covington Police Department.

The Wednesday and Saturday markets feature locally grown fresh produce,



A local family bikes the Tammany Trace to the Mandeville Community Market on Saturdays.

prepared food and live music. Patrons may also find free samples from a participating local chef.

Jennifer Loos, proprietor of Bear Creek Road, has been operating her home-based bakery in Covington for 11 years. She transitioned from working in commercial kitchens to better balance her family life, and she finds the Covington Saturday Farmers Market to be not only an excellent retail venue but also a community gathering place. She is a vendor each weekend and, like many other regulars, her business is a favorite among local patrons.

Kristen Clinton, who grew up in Mandeville, now lives in Covington and visits the Covington market every weekend with her daughters. In addition to stopping at the Bear Creek booth for waffle mix, they have many other favorite vendors, as well.

Artist Nicole Gillies displays her art in Mandeville.





“We love the cheese man, Mr. Jesse,” Kristen says. “And then we get waffle mix and a muffin. The waffle mix, we get it every single week. We love it. And the red bean lady over there and the mushroom man. And we always get a balloon, too,” she adds with a smile.

Balloons are a common sight throughout the grounds, as children play while parents shop or stop to enjoy the live music performed under the gazebo.

“They also have all of the fundraiser walks and other events at the trailhead,” Kristen says. “Last weekend, there was a music festival there. There’s always stuff going on here.”

Mandeville Meetups

Saturdays in Mandeville bring the weekly Trailhead Community Market at the town’s park and renovated train depot, with more than 80 vendors participating. The Mandeville Trailhead and Cultural Interpretive Center are adjacent to the trace and host the Saturday markets as well as free Friday evening concerts and other

special events. The market spaces here offer more than local produce and food. Vendors include craftspeople, entrepreneurs and artists. There are jams and juices, salsas and tamales, plants and paintings.

Nicole Gillies, local artist and owner of Serendipitous Designs in Mandeville, has been exhibiting at the market for 16 years. She sees both loyal customers and longtime friends there.

“This is a really tight-knit little community, and I see a lot of the same people,” she says. “I’ve had repeat customers for years. We have some people that I see who come out every Saturday. This is a staple for them. My son grew up out here. He’s in college now. At 3 years old, he was out here sitting underneath the table. Now, every time he comes home from college, he comes back out and helps.”

Nicole also welcomes visitors who stop by her booth while they’re out enjoying the Tammany Trace.

“We get a lot of bikers,” she says. “We get a whole lot of people from Fontainebleau State Park too, because we’re the first stop.

Obviously, some of them will ride all the way to Covington, because you can do the whole thing, but we get a lot here.”

The depot site also includes cultural exhibits, a tower and an amphitheater, where live music is enjoyed by patrons relaxing and viewing from a shaded, grassy area next to the trace. The amphitheater also hosts the Mandeville Live! spring and fall concert series.

Check Out Abita Springs

The Abita Springs Sunday-morning market adds to the variety of activities at this unique trailhead. The one-room Abita Springs Trailhead Museum celebrates the history and culture of Abita Springs with exhibits and photographs. It is open Friday through Sunday, and volunteers are quick to brag about their town and the park that is home to the trailhead.

The park features a historic two-story pavilion, under which rests Princess Abita, a statue commemorating the healing waters the town is known for. There is a water fountain for collecting



RIGHT: Jennifer Loos, left, and Kristen Clinton visit during the Covington Farmers Market each week.

BELOW: The Covington Trailhead includes a visitors center and art exhibits and is the site of a weekly farmers market.

BELOW RIGHT: Dan Rinderle grows vegetables and herbs on his farm and brings them, both fresh and preserved, to the weekly market in Abita Springs.



that fresh Abita water and a Spirit Stick totem on the site, honoring the town's history and Choctaw symbology. The trailhead park boasts a playground, splash pad and picnic area.

During the Sunday markets, Gallo D'Oro Farm's Dan Rinderle, who along with his wife owns a local restaurant, sells his sauces, dressings and vegetable preserves. Garlic, green beans, okra and more fill his table at the market.

"We are a farm—a little 5-acre farm in Abita Springs," he says. "We grow just enough crops to do what we do here and





ABOVE: The Saturday market in Covington includes music and children's activities.



then supply what we can for the restaurant. In season, for instance, like if you come and get eggplant, it's fresh off the farm. My wife and daughter make the jellies. Everything else on this table, I make."

Dan, too, sees local folks each week who have become dedicated customers. He even fills special requests for them.

"Somebody asked me to make honey mustard this week, so I brought it," he says. "Somebody asked me to make a big jar of carrots."

These requests come from neighbors and locals who consider markets like these an

important part of what makes the trace's trailheads so central to life here.

These are also the spots for many popular annual events. From the Not Your Mama's Gumbo Cook-off in Abita Springs to the Shamrock Sprint and the Rockin' the Rails Concert in Covington, spring events are only the beginning of a yearlong calendar filled with activities that bring out residents and attract visitors.

Many of those visitors find the outdoor community centers when traveling the trace during a stay at Fontainebleau State Park. This 2,800-acre treasure in Mandeville is Louisiana's most visited park and, via the trace, is connected to each of these Northshore communities.

The trace's headquarters in Mandeville is at the Koop Drive Trailhead, which is also a popular local spot for recreation and relaxation. This is home to the Kids Konnection Playground, which is built with inclusion in mind. It includes special features that allow children of all abilities to play together. A green caboose, which serves as the trail's headquarters, sits on a preserved piece of railroad track and is surrounded by the playground.

In nearby Lacombe, the trailhead is not so much a town center as it is a meditation center. Located in a remote area, this spot is considered one of the trail's most scenic locations.

A converted railroad trestle, complete with drawbridge to accommodate boat traffic below, spans Lacombe Bayou. The trailhead, with its covered picnic areas on the bayou and a comfort station, provides a picturesque spot for a relaxing break.

Where Community Meets Economy

While the trailheads serve as community hubs, the trace itself has become an important part of St. Tammany Parish's economy. Bike shops are located near both the Mandeville and Covington trailheads and offer repairs and deliveries for cyclists in other areas. The local restaurants and shops within walking distance of the trail see traffic from cyclists year-round.

It is clear to see the abandoned railroad corridor from 1992 has become an integral part and a recreational centerpiece of the Northshore communities of St. Tammany Parish. The miles of asphalt, remodeled railroad trestles and repurposed depots now connect communities, residents and visitors in new ways.

Those out for fitness, a scenic ride, a family outing or immersion in local food and culture, find Tammany Trace offers the perfect locations for connecting outdoor enjoyment with community charm across St. Tammany Parish. ■

ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY PAGE LIGHT STUDIOS



More Than an Essay Contest

For nearly five decades, hundreds of 11th-grade students have competed in the annual DEMCO essay contest for a chance to win a trip to Washington, D.C.

This year, 11 students advanced as finalists and were recognized during a banquet held in their honor, with family members, educators and cooperative leaders gathered to celebrate.

While the banquet marks an important milestone in the contest, the program's impact extends far beyond a single evening. By researching, writing and presenting their ideas, students gain confidence in their voice and the potential impact of each voice.

The contest also connects students to a larger national tradition. Each June, more than 1,500 students from electric cooperatives across the country travel to Washington, D.C., for the National Rural

Electric Cooperative Association Youth Tour. Students visit historic landmarks, learn about American history and government, and meet with elected officials.

As DEMCO approaches the 50th anniversary of the program next year, the essay contest continues to reflect a core cooperative principle: investing in the next generation of leaders.

The program began in 1978, when DEMCO sent its first group of Louisiana students to Washington, D.C., as part of the Youth Tour. What started as a small initiative has grown into a long-standing tradition that continues to connect local students with leadership opportunities and civic engagement. ■

For more information about DEMCO's youth programs, visit DEMCO.org/Community.



The 2026 Essay Contest finalists are, back from left, Kendyl Carpenter, Brooke Green, Brock Rispono, Lee McMillan and Anya Riley; and, front from left, Aubrey Troullier, Peyton Lewis, Anna Bordelon, Lilitiana Aguilera, Charisma Jones and Lida Stallone. PHOTO COURTESY OF DEMCO

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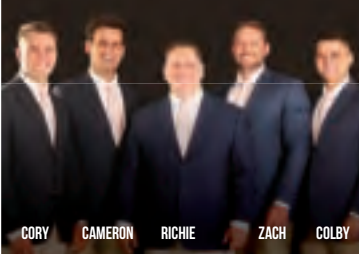
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CULTIVATING COMMUNITY AT MUSE 3 FARM



By Colette Boehm

In rural Greensburg, Muse 3 Farm is more than a working farm. It's a place where agriculture, education and community come together.

For the Muse brothers, it's even more personal. Farming here is a return to their roots.

"The four of us grew up on the farm," Chris Muse says. "We left, moved away, and worked in corporate or government jobs. Later in life, we decided it was time to come back home to Greensburg and start farming again."

That idea took shape in 2015. By 2018, the Muse brothers—Chris, Mittie and Allen—were back on the land adjacent to their childhood home, building what

is now Muse 3 Farm. The name honors a brand their father once used when he farmed the same land.

Today, the farm spans 250 acres. About 100 acres are dedicated to the reforestation of longleaf pine trees, while the remaining land supports cattle, goats, sheep and chickens. The farm also produces vegetables for the family and that are sold at local farmers markets.

"When we came back, we wanted to build something that could be profitable and sustainable," Chris says. "Something our children might want to come back to one day."

To achieve that goal, the brothers diversified their farming activities. As they became more involved in the local agricultural community, they also saw an

opportunity to help others.

"We noticed a lot of farmers in the area were struggling with conservation practices and navigating USDA programs," Chris explains. "So, we decided to use our farm as a teaching farm. We host field days and invite farmers and anyone interested in agriculture to come learn with us."

That spirit of sharing extends beyond farmers.

The Muses soon realized many young people, even in rural St. Helena Parish, had never experienced a working farm.

"That was surprising to us," Chris says. "When I was growing up, agriculture was a big part of school activities through programs like Future Farmers of America and 4-H. Today, a lot of students simply



LEFT: Michelle Muse tends to mustard greens on Muse 3 Farm.

OPPOSITE: Three Muse brothers—from left, Mittie, Chris and Allen—spend time on their farm. PHOTOS COURTESY OF DEMCO

“What stood out to us was the significant impact they are making within the Greensburg community,” says Chanon Martin, DEMCO’s member and community engagement manager. “They are teaching students about agriculture, working with local schools and helping other farmers learn conservation practices. Their impact reaches far beyond the farm itself.”

The grant will help the Muses improve facilities used for school tours and public programs, including adding structures that provide shade and shelter for visiting students.

“In Louisiana, the heat can be intense,” Chris says. “Having a more permanent setup will help us host students more comfortably and continue growing these programs.”

With the added support, the brothers hope to welcome more visitors in the years ahead.

“Our goal is to get more kids out here,” Chris says. “If we can spark an interest in agriculture or help someone understand where their food comes from, that’s a success for us.”

At Muse 3 Farm, the harvest goes beyond crops and livestock. It includes knowledge, opportunity and a deeper connection to the land. For the Muse brothers, the roots that brought them back home are now helping grow something that can continue for generations to come. ■

farm’s Grow a Row to Share program, participants learn how to plant and harvest vegetables, and whatever grows in that row is shared with those who helped grow it.

Those efforts are already making an impact. Last year, approximately 11,000 young people visited the farm.

“When the kids leave, they’re always asking if they can come back,” Chris says. “Seeing that excitement is what keeps us going.”

The work happening at Muse 3 Farm reflects the kind of community impact DEMCO values across its service area. By helping students connect with agriculture and strengthening the roots of the rural community, the farm is creating new opportunities for learning and engagement. Inspired by those efforts, DEMCO partnered with CoBank to present a \$10,000 Sharing Success grant to help expand the farm’s educational programs.

don’t have that exposure.”

Muse 3 Farm is helping to fill that gap.

Throughout the year, the farm hosts tours, educational programs and hands-on learning experiences for students. The Muses also partner with local 4-H programs by allowing students who do not have access to land or animals to use the farm.

“We let them use our land and animals and teach them proper animal care,” Chris says. “Then they can raise those animals and show them at livestock events.”

The farm also hosts gardening classes for visiting students. Through the

Learn more about Muse 3 Farm at muse3farm.com or on their Facebook page, Muse 3 Farm.

Smooth Streaming



Tips for seamless entertainment

Whether it's music, movies or games, streaming and interactive online content is a part of daily life for many. With a little care and planning, you can have the smoothest experience possible.

Also, keep in mind the professionals with your service provider are always ready to support you, answering questions and offering information needed to make the right choices. Here are a few items to consider:

- 1. Anticipate how you will use your streaming services.** When assessing internet needs for streaming, consider the number of people in your household and their activities. Will there be remote work, gaming or multiple streaming services involved? Once your internet use patterns are understood, make sure your internet plan matches your needs.
- 2. Take into account the amount of devices.** Don't overlook the number of devices connected to the Wi-Fi network. It's common for households to have various smartphones, tablets and smart appliances online simultaneously. Remember, each connected device consumes bandwidth, which can affect the performance of all your devices.

- 3. Assess your Wi-Fi coverage.** Slow streaming can sometimes be attributed to Wi-Fi issues rather than insufficient bandwidth. Evaluate the placement of your router, and consider investing in a mesh Wi-Fi system to ensure comprehensive coverage throughout your home. This can significantly improve streaming performance, especially in larger homes or areas with signal dead zones.
- 4. Understand streaming.** Streaming involves the continuous transmission of media content from an online server to a digital device. It can include a wide range of content, from livestreams to recorded movies and TV shows. At times, it can seem like an endless stream of content possibilities. However, there are potential bottlenecks, so consider cataloging all the streaming services in use—including online gaming—to make sure you have the internet connection and Wi-Fi setup that's right for you.
- 5. Stay informed about advancements in technology.** Streaming technology has rapidly evolved, revolutionizing how we consume media. Stay informed about advancements in streaming services and internet technology to make informed decisions about your streaming setup. For example, image resolution for some movies is now much higher than just a few years ago and requires a faster connection to enjoy. ■

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Use Caution With Cash Apps

While mobile payment apps like PayPal or Venmo make it easy to send and receive money online or through an app on a phone, scammers are also waiting to take advantage.

This service becomes an intermediary between your money and whoever is on the other end of a transaction, which can create an added layer of security.

But if a scammer tricks you into sending money, it's hard to get it back. The Federal Trade Commission notes the risks and offers tips for staying safe.

- ▶ Don't send a payment to claim a prize or collect sweepstakes winnings.
- ▶ Never give your account credentials to anyone who contacts you.
- ▶ Protect your account with multifactor authentication or a personal identification number.
- ▶ Before paying, double-check the recipient's information to make sure you're sending money to the right person.
- ▶ If you get an unexpected request for money from someone you recognize, speak with them directly to make sure the request is valid—and not a hacker who got access to their account.

If you find unauthorized payments or think you paid a scammer, immediately report the transaction to the service providing the payment app. Instructions should be available on the service's website. Also, report the scam to reportfraud.ftc.gov.

Spring Clean

YOUR DIGITAL LIFE

Your inbox shouldn't feel like a junk drawer

By Sable Riley

Spring cleaning isn't just for your home—your digital spaces need attention, too.

Much like cluttered closets or messy garages, disorganized digital environments can be overwhelming. Searching through digital clutter for an important email or document can be incredibly frustrating. But tidying and streamlining your digital environment can improve productivity and give you more peace of mind. With more of our lives happening online, a little spring cleaning goes a long way.

Begin with your inboxes. Emails pile up quickly. A study by Campaign Monitor shows the average person receives more than 120 emails daily, many of which go unopened. Cut down on clutter by unsubscribing from newsletters you never read and organizing important emails into labeled folders like “Bills,” “Work” and “Family.”

“Your mind is for having ideas, not holding them,” says productivity expert David Allen, author of “Getting Things Done.” “Digital clutter is just as distracting as physical clutter.”

Next, focus on decluttering files on devices and cloud storage.

Deleting outdated documents, apps

you never use, and old photos and files frees space and helps you access important information quickly. An organized digital space is easier to manage and reduces frustration.

Boosting cybersecurity is equally important. Just as homeowners lock their doors and windows, enabling automatic updates on devices guards against cyberthreats.

“Regularly updating software is one of the simplest, yet most powerful, steps you can take to prevent cyberattacks,” says Brian Krebs, cybersecurity expert and founder of KrebsOnSecurity.

Passwords should be strong, unique and managed securely. Password managers provide a convenient way to store complex passwords, eliminating the need to remember multiple login details. Enable two-factor authentication wherever possible for an extra, critical layer of security.

Home Wi-Fi networks also benefit from regular maintenance. A reliable internet connection should run smoothly and efficiently, like a well-tuned engine. Position your router in a central location away from electronics or metal objects that may disrupt signals. In larger spaces, you can add range extenders or mesh network systems to eliminate dead zones. In your router settings, prioritize bandwidth for high-demand activities like gaming or streaming to reduce buffering and lag.

Finally, consider integrating smart home technology. Smart home devices offer more



than convenience. Devices such as smart thermostats, voice-controlled lighting and automated vacuums can simplify daily chores and also reduce energy costs, enhance comfort and improve home security. Stacey Higginbotham, technology journalist and creator of the “Internet of Things Podcast,” says consumers spend the most money on smart solutions focused on safety.

“People want to know what is happening at their home when they’re away,” Stacey says. “Products ranging from security cameras and video doorbells to sensors that can alert a homeowner if their gun safe is open or their kid is in their liquor cabinet fit under safety.”

This season, give your digital spaces the attention they deserve. After all, a little spring cleaning—both online and off—lets you move through your days with a lighter step and perhaps most importantly, peace of mind. ■



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ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

As temperatures start to rise, many homeowners focus on staying cool. Don't forget about the small gaps around windows and doors. While air sealing is often associated with keeping cold air out during winter, it's just as important during summer. Tiny cracks and worn weatherstripping allow cool, conditioned air to escape and hot, humid air to seep indoors. This forces your air conditioner to work harder than necessary and increases energy costs. Take a few minutes to check for drafts, replace weatherstripping and seal leaks. A tighter home keeps you more comfortable and helps manage energy use.

Source: energy.gov