

Along these LINES

JULY/AUGUST 2026



WORKING FOR OUR MEMBERS

Every Dollar Counts Page 18

ALSO INSIDE >>

Manager's Message Page 6

President's Report Page 9

Lineman Ty Shaffer cuts limbs to protect DEMCO's right-of-way. PHOTO BY ANNA FOURNET



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In This Issue

- 4** Cooperation Powers Louisiana
- 5** Co-ops Head to Capitol Hill
- 8** Co-ops Serve Up Louisiana Flavor
- 10** Sights & Sounds
- 14** America250 Anniversary Celebrations
- 22** A Paige of Success
- 24** Louisiana Planner

Your Co-op Local Pages
6-7, 9, 16, 18-19



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COOPERATION POWERS *Louisiana*

At the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives, our mission is centered on supporting the electric cooperatives that serve communities across Louisiana. As a nonprofit organization, ALEC represents the electric distribution cooperatives that provide reliable electric service to nearly 1 million residents in 50 of Louisiana's 64 parishes.

Through advocacy, education, communications, safety training and member support services, ALEC works alongside our member cooperatives to help strengthen the communities they serve each day. From governmental and regulatory affairs to employee and director education programs, our resources and support are designed to help keep cooperatives operating efficiently and effectively.

Our member cooperatives include Beauregard Electric Cooperative, Claiborne Electric Cooperative, DEMCO, Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative, South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association, Panola-Harrison Electric Cooperative and Washington-St. Tammany Electric Cooperative.

One of the most important roles cooperatives play is supporting one another during times of need. Through coordinated storm restoration and mutual-aid efforts, Louisiana's electric cooperatives work together, and alongside a nationwide network of more than 900 electric cooperatives, to restore power safely and as quickly as possible following severe weather events. This is why, during storm recovery, you may notice crews from unfamiliar cooperatives working in



Aaron Graham, CEO

your community. Those crews are part of the cooperative network answering the call to help neighbors in need.

Electric cooperatives across the country are guided by the same Seven Cooperative Principles, with a shared commitment to service, community and cooperation. At ALEC, we are proud to support the cooperative spirit that continues to power Louisiana communities every day. ■

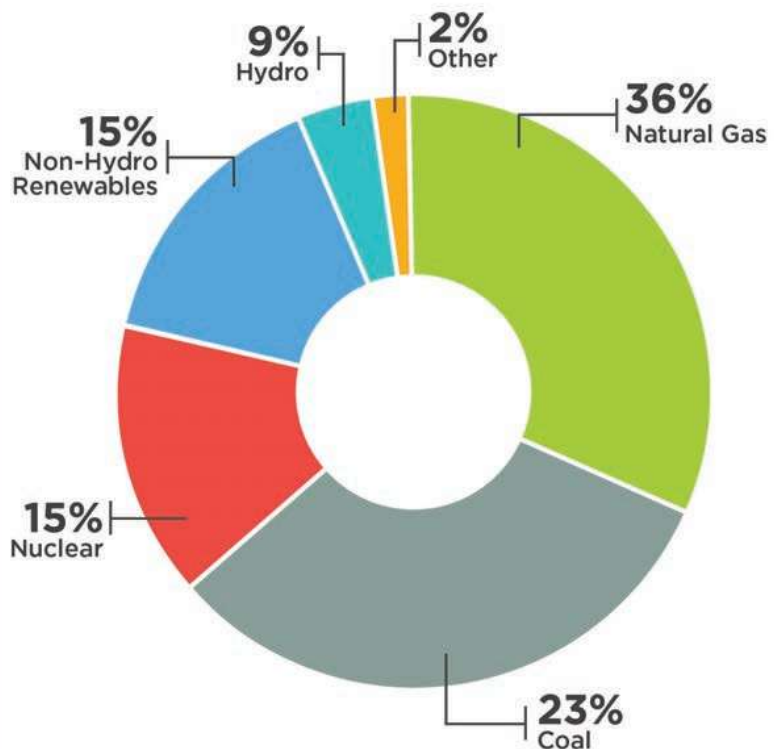


Co-op Energy Sources

Nationally, electric cooperatives use a variety of fuels to power consumer-members' homes and businesses.

This diverse fuel mix supplies co-op members with the safe, reliable and affordable power they depend on.

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (2024 data)





CO-OPS HEAD TO *Capitol Hill*

“You can’t start rebuilding a community until the power is restored,” says Matt Peters, general manager of South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association.

In April, electric cooperative board members and general managers traveled to Capitol Hill to advocate for resources and policy reforms needed to help communities recover after disasters. During meetings with Reps. Cleo Fields and Clay Higgins, cooperative leaders discussed key issues impacting their communities, including FEMA reform to expedite disaster reimbursements, permitting reform, Rural Utilities Service loan funding, and the need for additional resources to restore power and rebuild after major storms.

“When a storm hits, we bring normalcy and hope of rebuilding, but that comes at a cost,” Matt says.

Cooperative leaders continued their advocacy efforts throughout the week, representing the needs of Louisiana’s electric cooperatives and the communities they serve. ■

“You can’t start rebuilding a community until the power is restored.”

— MATT PETERS, SOUTH LOUISIANA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION GENERAL MANAGER

About 20 Louisiana co-op leaders attended the legislative conference organized by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, including representatives from DEMCO, South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association, Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative, Washington-St. Tammany Electric Cooperative, Beauregard Electric Cooperative and 1803 Electric Cooperative.





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Volume 41, Issue 4

Mission

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

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DEMCO is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Manager's Report

Randy Pierce
CEO & General Manager



At DEMCO, we understand costs are on everyone's minds right now. Whether it's groceries, fuel or everyday essentials, prices have increased across the board, and that creates concern for families and businesses. We know the cost of electricity is another part of that concern.

Here's something I want you to know: Since 1938, this co-op has been built on a strong commitment to managing costs responsibly. Today, we are one of the largest electric cooperatives in the nation, and we take seriously our responsibility to manage this business—its legacy and its future—on behalf of our members. That work is guided by a locally elected board of DEMCO members like you, with regulatory oversight from the Louisiana Public Service Commission, and more than 270 employees who take great pride in serving this co-op and the communities we call home.

Most importantly, as a not-for-profit cooperative, all members share in cost recovery. Every member pays a monthly charge to access the grid, which helps cover the fixed costs of maintaining poles, wires, substations and other infrastructure. Every member also pays use-based charges measured in kilowatt-hours. These factors are built into our rates to spread costs as equitably as possible among co-op members.

That's why finding innovative ways to offset essential system costs is so important.

Every dollar DEMCO secures through external funding opportunities helps support continued investment in reliability for our members.

A strong example of this is detailed in the feature story "Working for Our Members—Every Dollar Counts." Through this effort, DEMCO secured more than \$2.2 million in federal and state funding to support essential vegetation management work. By offsetting a significant portion of those costs, the funding allows us to direct more resources toward ongoing reliability and resiliency improvements across our system. (See Pages 18-19.)

Our goals, objectives and initiatives are not just internal planning tools. They guide the work we do every day to serve you. Whether it's improving reliability, managing system costs or planning for future needs, the focus remains the same: doing what is right for our members.

In times like these, we hope you find reassurance in knowing your co-op is working every day to manage costs, strengthen the system and serve the best interests of our membership.

Thank you for being a member of DEMCO.



Get to Know Your Board Members

In the rolling hills and close-knit communities of East Feliciana Parish, leadership is built on connection—neighbors helping neighbors and people taking care of the place they call home. As locals of the area, Mike Anderson and Glenn DeLee bring that same spirit to the DEMCO Board of Directors, offering valuable perspective and a deep commitment to service.

Mike Anderson is a tradesman and business owner with a practical understanding of the vital role reliable power plays in everyday life. A resident of Ethel, he spent decades in the air conditioning trade and owns and operates a local mechanical business. His experience brings a grounded, real-world perspective to board service, shaped by years of

hands-on work and a focus on serving others.

Glenn DeLee brings decades of experience in infrastructure and public service. A Clinton native, he built his career as a project engineer with the state Department of Transportation and Development, serving communities across East and West Feliciana. His involvement in church, youth sports, and the East Feliciana Little League reflects a strong connection to the community and its people.

Together, Mike and Glenn carry forward the spirit of East Feliciana, helping ensure the cooperative continues to serve its members with care, reliability and a strong sense of community. ■



Mike Anderson

- ▶ Favorite local spot: Sylvester Outdoor Supply in Clinton for all outdoor and hunting needs.
- ▶ Fun fact: Enjoys playing the guitar and metal-detecting at old homesites.
- ▶ Currently enjoying: Listening to the podcast “Co-op Conversations with DEMCO,” which offers another perspective on how DEMCO connects with members and the community.



Glenn DeLee

- ▶ Favorite local spot: At the ballfields, watching his grandchildren play baseball and softball.
- ▶ Fun fact: Lives by the motto “leave more in the pantry”—a reminder to give what you can, support your neighbors and help ensure others have what they need.
- ▶ Currently enjoying: The TV show “Yellowstone.”

CO-OPS SERVE UP LOUISIANA FLAVOR AT THE *Capitol*

The Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives and members hosted the Taste of Louisiana Cookout for elected officials in May. The afternoon was spent at the Capitol meeting with legislators, having meaningful conversations while sharing the cooperative story and ending with some Louisiana home cooking.



Ben Hetzel, of Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative, left, meets with state Rep. Reese "Skip" Broussard.



Louisiana co-op leaders discuss issues impacting the communities they serve with legislators in Baton Rouge. From left are state Rep. Brian Leonard Glorioso, WSTE CEO Dane Hocott, state Reps. John Wyble, Stephanie H. Berault and Kim Carver, WSTE Manager of Governmental Affairs Johnny Bruhl, ALEC CEO Aarron Graham, state Rep. Peter F. Egan Sr. and ALEC lobbyist Keli Williams.



ABOVE: From left are DEMCO Board Director Richard Sitman, state Rep. Daryl Adams, DEMCO Board President Danny Berthelot and DEMCO Board Director Steve Irving. LEFT: Louisiana electric cooperative general managers gather during the Taste of Louisiana Cookout. Pictured, from left, are, back row: Matt Peters, South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association; Randy Pierce, DEMCO; Mike Marcotte, Claiborne Electric; Aarron Graham, Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives; Mike Viator, Beauregard Electric Cooperative Inc.; and Gerald Huffman, Concordia Electric Cooperative. Front row, from left, are Craig Magruder, Pointe Coupee Electric; Ron Repsher, 1803 Electric Cooperative; Mike Heinen, Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative; and Dane Hocott, Washington-St. Tammany Electric Cooperative.

The President's Report

Danny Berthelot
President, DEMCO Board of Directors



Each year, the President's Report offers an opportunity to look back on our cooperative's progress and provide updates on DEMCO's performance and operations.

As your locally elected board of directors, we are proud to represent our member-owners and remain focused on serving your best interests.

Our mission is clear: to enhance the quality of life for our members, employees, and communities by safely providing reliable and competitively priced energy services.

That responsibility goes well beyond regular board meetings. Directors actively pursue ongoing education and certification to stay current on industry developments and best practices in areas such as engineering, finance and governance. This commitment to continuous improvement helps to ensure informed decisions that

support the cooperative's long-term success.

In 2025, DEMCO delivered 2,298,290,300 kilowatt-hours of electricity to 120,168 meters across its system. With 9,460 miles of line and a peak demand of 694.57 megawatts, these figures highlight our continued focus on reliability and operational performance.

We are also pleased to announce the reelection—without opposition—of the following directors to three-year terms: Steve Irving, representing East Baton Rouge Parish; Mike Anderson, representing East Feliciana Parish; Dennis Lott, representing Livingston Parish; and Richard Sitman, representing St. Helena Parish.

On behalf of your board of directors, thank you for the trust you place in us. We are honored to serve and remain committed to powering our communities—today and into the future.



PREPARATION STARTS WITH CONNECTION.

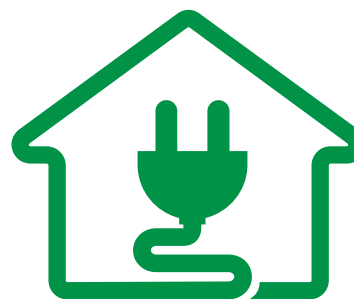


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Sights & Sounds

The living expression of America's most enduring symbols

By Drew Woolley

Every nation tells stories about itself. In the United States, those narratives are often woven into symbols we encounter every day just as much as they are spoken out loud. It might be a flag folded at a funeral, an eagle stamped onto an official seal or a song sung before a ballgame.

As we celebrate our country's 250th anniversary, historians, collectors and scholars are all taking a closer look at the symbols we adopted and the meanings they still carry today.

For the Love of Old Glory

The American flag has always had a special family connection for Chris Garza. Half of his family members can trace their lineage to Maryland's founders, and almost every

one of them has served in the military. But watching his grandfathers as a child had a particular impact on him.

"I kind of idolized them, and they both did their own daily routines of raising and lowering the flag," Chris says. "They were fun, outgoing guys. But every day, they became very serious when they handled the flag. That really showed me how important it was as a symbol."

When he was 8, Chris saw an old 13-star flag at a yard sale and had to have it. Looking back now, he suspects he was trying to impress his grandfathers. But it also proved to be the first step in a lifelong obsession. Now the executive director of Troutdale Historical Society in Oregon, Chris has overseen three museums and collected more than 300 American flags in the past 35 years.

The most precious to him is the flag with which one of his grandfathers was meant to be buried. At the last second, his grandmother pulled the flag from the casket and gave it to Chris, who has held it dear ever since. Another favorite is an early flag that represented the southern region of Texas, where much of Chris' Indigenous family comes from, before the state adopted the design it uses today.

While the American flag's design has evolved over time, Chris is particularly drawn to the idea that it has served as a unifying image throughout history.

"To me, it is the only thing capable of binding us all together," he says. "It's the one thing that is bigger than our differences of religion, politics or race."

As a historian, Chris also hopes the flag reminds everyone in the United



ADOBE STOCK ILLUSTRATIONS BY PEACEFY, PAULA, SEKHSADI, AZURE, BRUCE STANFIELD

States why the country formed and what it took to get there. It will always be a symbol of freedom. But, for him, it is also a call to earn that freedom.

“It’s a symbol of when oppression becomes so strong and rampant that it forces people to step back and reevaluate—to look at life, our government and our communities,” he says. “Sometimes, those things need to change. That’s what the flag means to me, working to change for the better.”

A Living Symbol

While the nation celebrates its 250th birthday, many Americans may be surprised to learn this is only the second year that one of its most recognizable symbols has been official. In researching his 2019 book, “American Eagle: A Visual History of Our National Emblem,” Preston Cook was shocked to learn the United States had never actually named a national bird.

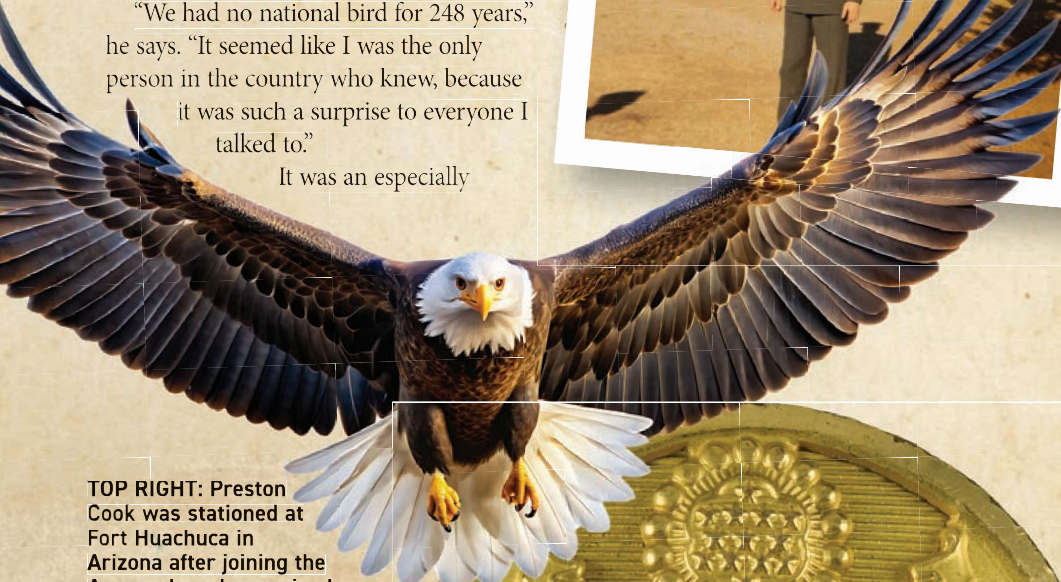
“We had no national bird for 248 years,” he says. “It seemed like I was the only person in the country who knew, because it was such a surprise to everyone I talked to.”

It was an especially

upsetting revelation for someone who had dedicated much of his life to collecting depictions of the American icon, going back to 1966 when he was drafted into the Army.

“I was issued a uniform that had buttons with the Great Seal on my dress uniform,” Preston says. “Two years later, when I exited the Army, I cut off those buttons with the eagles on them and wear them to this day on my blue blazers. I’ve been wearing them now for 60 years.”

His acquisitions expanded first with postcards and stamps, then later with the help of eBay and a team of pickers around the country who sent him items of interest. Today, Preston’s collection of more than



THE BETSY ROSS FLAG

While lore holds that Betsy Ross designed the first American flag, there is no hard evidence pointing to any single designer. But, as the first seamstress to stitch the flag together, Historian Chris Garza says she may have influenced some of its details.

One of Chris’ favorite stories is when George Washington, a Freemason, approached Ross about making the flag, he suggested the stars have six points, as is common in masonic symbolism. Ross quickly noted that if they wanted to mass-produce the flag, five-pointed stars were much more efficient.

To prove it, she pulled out a small square of fabric, made a few quick folds and one simple cut, and handed him a perfect star. Washington was convinced, and the stars on the flag have had five points ever since.

TOP RIGHT: Preston Cook was stationed at Fort Huachuca in Arizona after joining the Army, where he received his first eagle keepsake: the buttons on his uniform. PHOTOS COURTESY OF PRESTON COOK

RIGHT: Preston still sews his original uniform buttons onto his blazers today.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Chris Garza’s flag collection ranges from personal keepsakes to historical designs that fell out of fashion. PHOTO COURTESY OF LEGNA STUDIO



Raising and lowering the flag continues to be a cherished tradition for Chris Garza. PHOTO COURTESY OF LEGNA STUDIO

FLY YOUR FLAG

As a flag historian and restorer, Chris Garza, executive director of Troutdale Historical Society in Oregon, regularly encounters misconceptions about flag etiquette. A common one he shared as a child was that the flag must be destroyed if it touches the ground. He can still remember dropping the flag once while lowering it for his grandfather.

"I thought it was the end of my life," Chris says. "But he pulled me aside and explained that as long as it isn't tattered, it can always be cleaned and reflowed. That moment of relief really stuck with me."

Another common mistake is flying the flag at night. To maintain respect and visibility, the flag should either be illuminated at night or taken down at sunset and raised again in the morning.

40,000 eagle-themed items is on display at National Eagle Center in Wabasha, Minnesota. It includes historical artifacts, including buttons worn by George Washington and a Civil War knife, as well as pop culture objects, such as sports memorabilia and an Andy Warhol print.

The eagle's symbolic appeal in so many different settings has always been one of its most interesting features for Preston.

"It's a symbol people turn to in times of both peace and distress," he says. "The image of it on the Great Seal has changed from being kind of scrawny and chicken-legged to more of a full-fledged eagle. Around the 1820s, it was first used by political campaigns to show patriotism. So, it has changed over the years, but it's remained constant throughout our history."

For centuries, that presence has led many Americans to identify the bald eagle as the country's national bird. Once his book was complete, Preston turned his attention to putting a bill in front of Congress that would finally make official what everyone had always assumed.

He sent a draft to U.S. Rep. Brad Finstad, whose district includes Wabasha, as well as Sen. Amy Klobuchar. The two coordinated on the bill, which unanimously passed in both houses of Congress before President Joe Biden signed it into law in 2024.

Preston has no doubt the work was worth it. It permanently enshrines what many Americans have long felt about the bald eagle.

"For many years, it was our only living symbol," Preston says. "If you see one flying or fishing, it's such an amazing bird. It means so much to so many people. It means freedom and liberty and power and independence and family. People just don't get tired of seeing it, and I don't think there's any other symbol of America that has that kind of enthusiasm."

The Call to Citizenship

If the eagle is the American symbol that generates the most excitement, Mark Clague believes the national anthem is the most dynamic. As a musician and musical

historian teaching at the University of Michigan for the past 20 years, he has often led an introductory class on American music. His favorite way to kick it off is with Jimi Hendrix's 1969 performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" at Woodstock.

"It brings you immediately into some of the complexities around the anthem," Mark says. "Is there a single, appropriate way to play it? Is it a protest or burning the flag through music? Hendrix was also a member of the 101st Airborne, and aspects of the performance are quite patriotic, so is it saying something more textured?"

Those questions led him down a rabbit hole that culminated in his 2022 book, "O Say Can You Hear?: A Cultural Biography of 'The Star-Spangled Banner.'" Francis Scott Key's lyrics, written after the bombardment of Baltimore's Fort McHenry during the War of 1812, go on for four verses. Only the first is typically sung for the anthem, building to the final line, "O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave/O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?"

While it is often performed with an exclamation point at the end, Mark considers the question it asks to be crucial. At the time the anthem was penned, the country had faced some of its worst defeats. Key's vision of a bold and proud nation wasn't something he was seeing but a hope for the future.

"Today, I think that question asks us if we are brave enough to live up to that vision," Mark says. "Do we have the courage to be a country that celebrates liberty and justice for all? I think it has the potential to make the anthem something urgent and contemporary. It's a verb, rather than a noun."

When President Herbert Hoover officially signed an act of Congress making "The Star-Spangled Banner" the U.S. national anthem in 1931, it—much like the eagle—was a recognition of something that had already been true for many Americans. The song was used as a recruiting tune for the Union Army in the Civil War and was often treated as a de facto national anthem during the

In some ways, the song is sort of democracy in action. We made the anthem by using it.

— Mark Clague

Spanish-American War and World War I.

“I think that makes it powerful,” Mark says. “In some ways, the song is sort of democracy in action. We made the anthem by using it. And for the same reason, changing it would be really hard. You could change the law, but it wouldn’t change how people feel.”

The music itself requires the performer to sing the anthem to life with dramatic highs and lows that take the same commitment the lyrics demand. Mark’s hope is that when people hear it, the

anthem won’t just serve as a celebration but also a call to action.

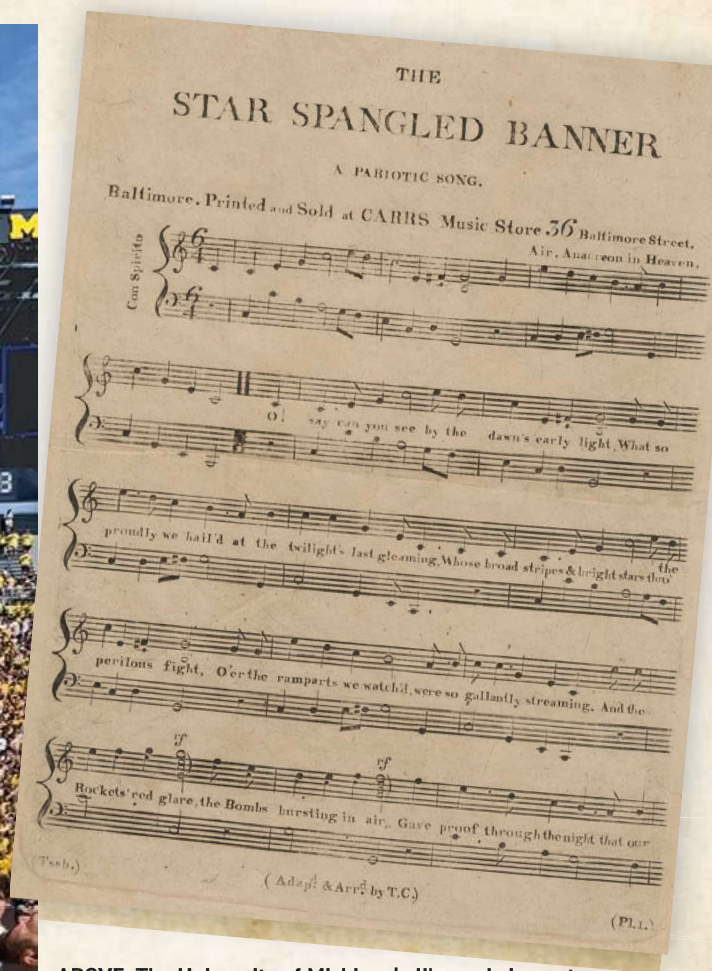
“It feels like the anthem is especially urgent right now,” he says. “U.S. democracy has really been built on people getting involved. Voting, sure, but also being informed, volunteering and lifting a hand to help your neighbor. Being patriotic is something you have to do and earn, rather than just something you have. And I think that call to citizenship is one of the coolest things about the anthem.” ■

STAR-SPANGLED SPINOFFS

While the roots of the national anthem’s lyrics are decidedly American, the music originated with Anacreontic Society, a musicians’ club in London.

Since the tune struck a chord in the United States, Mark Clague, a music historian teaching at the University of Michigan, estimates there have been more than 600 sets of lyrics applied to that melody, on subjects as varied as farm work, unionization and women’s suffrage.

“It’s interesting to see how many different words fit the melody,” he says. “It really supports the notion that ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’ is not just one iconic thing but kind of a conversation about American life.”



ABOVE: The University of Michigan’s library is home to the first sheet music edition of the song to use the “The Star-Spangled Banner” title. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WILLIAM L. CLEMENTS LIBRARY LEFT: Mark Clague conducts the anthem at a University of Michigan home football game. PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK CLAGUE

AMERICA Anniversary Celebrations

States showcase their unique contributions

By Dianna Troyer

In honor of the United States Semiquincentennial—a fancy name for the nation's 250th anniversary—each state is contributing to the legacy and future of the country through national and statewide initiatives.

Some states are contributing to a stainless steel time capsule that will be buried July 4 at Independence National

Historical Park in Philadelphia, between the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall.

Others will have booths at the Great American State Fair, scheduled for June 25 to July 10 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Within each state, an America250 Commission has organized events to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

According to the America250 Commission's website, "The journey toward this historic milestone is an opportunity to pause and reflect on our nation's past, honor the contributions of all Americans, and look ahead toward the future."

For the time capsule, state commissions feature their residents' artistry and ideals with the constraint that the objects have to fit into an archival box measuring 6-by-5-by-2 inches.

Here's a preview of how some states are highlighting their unique contributions to our nation:



Benny Benson's drawing of a flag won a territorial flag contest in 1927. PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMERICA250 STATE COMMISSIONS

ALASKA

A print of a flag designed by a member of the Indigenous people of the Aleutian Islands represents Alaska. In 1927, Benny Benson, a 14-year-old Unangaŋ orphan, won a contest to design the flag for the then-territory of Alaska.

"The blue field is for the Alaskan sky and the forget-me-not, an Alaskan flower," he wrote. "The

North Star is for the future state of Alaska, the most northerly state in the union. The dipper is for the great bear, symbolizing strength."

A copy of an 1875 map of New Archangel is also included. After Russia sold the Alaska territory to the United States, the town was renamed Sitka.

and a saguaro cactus. A steel America250 commemorative coin features symbolic imagery reflecting freedom, time and civic responsibility.

An archival letter lists the names of the members of the Arizona America250 Commission. Arizona Secretary of State Adrian Fontes also wrote a letter reflecting on Arizona's civic values, democratic institutions and responsibilities.

CALIFORNIA

On July 4, a family-friendly concert is planned in Los Angeles with major artists and a livestream audience. America250 planners encourage residents to build community by participating in America's Potluck on July 5, an opportunity for neighbors to join one another to share a communal meal.

FLORIDA

At the Great American State Fair, the Florida250 Commission plans to create an old Spanish Fort with coquina brick walls, authentic sounds and cannon fire.

Within the state, the Florida Freedom Tour is traveling in two 18-wheeler trucks hauling the America250FL exhibits from the Museum of Florida History. One exhibit covers the state's biggest battle during the Revolutionary War, the Siege of Pensacola, a two-month battle in 1781 when the Spanish prevented the British from gaining control of Western Florida.



Arizona contributed three coins and a copper ingot.

ARIZONA

Arizonans provided three coins, two letters and a commemorative copper ingot featuring a stamped Arizona America250 logo for the time capsule.

With laser nano-etching, a stainless steel coin preserves the full text and signatures of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, including all amendments.

"It represents both America's foundational democratic principles and modern efforts to preserve them for future generations," according to America250 Arizona Commission.

An Arizona quarter, minted in 2008, depicts the Grand Canyon

IDAHO

Idaho's state gemstone, the star garnet, "represents Idaho's natural richness and geological heritage. Its distinctive star-like reflection makes it a fitting and



Idaho's state gem is its contribution to the time capsule.

enduring symbol of the state's rugged landscape and connection to the land," according to America250 in Idaho planners.

Along with the gemstone, Gov. Brad Little wrote a letter to future generations, reflecting on Idaho's history and values.

LOUISIANA

The Historic New Orleans Collection, at 520 Royal St., will have interactive 3D reconstructions of the defining moments of the American Revolution. Events include the Boston Tea Party, the signing of the Declaration of Independence, victory at Yorktown and treaty signing in Versailles.



Artist Karis Jackson created Montana's contribution to the time capsule.

MONTANA

Karis Jackson depicted Montana's unique traits in beaded artwork shaped like the state.

The Browning artist incorporated the colors of the state flag, the mountains and prairies that define the state's landscapes, the state flower—the bitterroot—and the state bird—the western meadowlark.

In the center of the design, Karis, an Apsáalooke/Arikara/Hidatsa artist, beaded a bison. She says it's "an animal of enduring significance to the Indigenous peoples who have called this land home since time immemorial!"

NEVADA

In Nevada, residents and tribal members are recording oral histories for a podcast and public archive, according to Nevada250 planners.

NEW MEXICO

New Mexico's pavilion at the Great American State Fair, "will present New Mexico as an intersection of cultures, history, landscape and creativity," says Daniel Zillman, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs communications director.



OREGON

Lillian Pitt, a Warm Springs/Wasco/Yakama artist, made a ceramic pin depicting a tribal petroglyph and pictograph, a well-known

LEFT: Lillian Pitt made a ceramic representation of a petroglyph along the Columbia River called She Who Watches or Tsagaglalal.

image high on a mountain along the Columbia River.

"Under the oral traditions of tribes along the river, She Who Watches represents Tsagaglalal, a wise and powerful chief who was transformed to stone and continues to keep vigil over her people and the river," according to the America 250 Oregon Commission.

SOUTH CAROLINA



Among The Charleston Museum artifacts are a .75-caliber "Brown Bess" musket used during the revolution.

Several special exhibits celebrate South Carolina's role in the American Revolution.

A new exhibit, "Ringleaders of Rebellion," is at The Charleston Museum, the first museum in the Colonies founded Jan. 12, 1773. Among the artifacts are a .75-caliber Brown Bess musket used during the Revolutionary War.

An immersive Revolutionary War exhibition at the state fair will remain up for several years. A display emphasizes that South Carolina was the first colony to protest tea taxation on Dec. 3, 1773, 13 days before the infamous Boston Tea Party.



TENNESSEE

Knoxville-based designer Justin Helton created a poster entitled "Original Frontier"

"From Tennessee's rich agricultural history to its iconic musical contributions to its role in westward expansion, the Civil Rights Movement and women's suffrage, the poster

represents Tennessee's part in shaping American culture, economy, and democracy," according to Tennessee America 250 planners.

ABOVE: The poster "Original Frontier" showcases Tennessee's music, agriculture and westward expansion.

WASHINGTON

Gov. Bob Ferguson's proclamation and Lt. Gov. Denny Heck's letter will be put in the capsule. The governor wrote about the mission of the Washington State Historical Society. Heck wrote about democracy and finding common ground between Washingtonians. ■

For more information about national, state and local celebrations, visit america250.org.



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Simple habits and smart scheduling can help you stay cool while keeping energy costs under control

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WORKING FOR OUR MEMBERS

— Every Dollar Counts —



With an electric system spanning seven parishes and more than 9,000 miles of power lines, vegetation management and right-of-way maintenance are among DEMCO's largest and most important ongoing responsibilities.

Keeping trees and vegetation away from power lines helps reduce outages, improves access to poles and equipment, and allows crews to respond more safely and efficiently when maintenance or restoration work is needed.

"It takes six years to complete a full mechanical maintenance cycle on DEMCO's system," says Sam Rosso, DEMCO right-of-way manager. "It's a continuous effort and significant investment year after year."

Due to the size of DEMCO's system and the continuous nature of the work, vegetation management is one of DEMCO's largest operating expenses, second only to the purchase of wholesale power.

"The farther we can stretch every dollar, the more work we can accomplish for our members," DEMCO Chief Financial Officer Peggy Maranan says.

This is where innovative funding opportunities can make a meaningful impact.

"DEMCO actively pursues funding opportunities that align with projects already identified as priorities for the cooperative," Peggy says.

That mindset led DEMCO to the U.S. Department of Energy's Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships Program. In November 2024, DEMCO applied for funding under the vegetation management and hazard tree removal category, recognizing the important role this work plays in maintaining reliability.

Through the program, DEMCO secured approximately \$2.2 million in federal and state funding to support \$3.3 million in scheduled vegetation management projects.

Funding like this helps DEMCO stretch available resources further, creating opportunities to accomplish additional reliability and resiliency improvements across the system.



ABOVE: Tree limbs are loaded into a chipper after right-of-way tree trimming.

OPPOSITE: A crewman cuts limbs to protect power lines in the right-of-way.

PHOTOS BY ANNA FOURNET

"For our members, the benefit is straightforward: Every funding opportunity helps DEMCO maximize investments, strengthen infrastructure

and deliver reliable electric service," Peggy says.

That's the cooperative difference in action. ■

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A Paige of Success

Denham Springs baker built a business in her 20s

By Cheré Coen

Most bakers know that what goes into the oven may not emerge the way they expect. Life sometimes works that way, too. Bakery owner Paige Ma, of Denham Springs, knows that lesson well—although her baked goods were not the surprise.

It all started in 2020 during the pandemic. When the University of Louisiana at Lafayette shut down, Paige had time on her hands from studying microbiology and chemistry.

“I was really bored, and I loved to bake,” she says.

She used her mother’s kitchen to make cakes for her friends, who couldn’t source them from their local bakeries and grocery stores, for special events such as birthdays. Word quickly spread, and Paige suddenly had a side business.

When ULL reopened, she drove to Lafayette for her week of studies, then came home to Denham Springs on the weekends to fill a growing list of baking orders. The orders grew to include macarons and occasional cupcakes, but custom cakes still took center stage.

“I was pretty much known as Cakes From Home,” she says.

A Social Media Sensation

Paige began posting her baking prowess on TikTok, including how-to videos for specific recipes and videos about a day in the life and behind-the-scenes with a home baker. Her videos became popular and her social media numbers blew up along with her business.

After a few years of juggling school and a home side hustle, the opportunity to open a storefront presented itself. A friend found an established bakery for sale after the owner retired, and Paige took the leap to create Paige’s Pantry. Paige believes that much of her early success stemmed from her 200,000-plus TikTok followers.

Paige Ma found a new calling creating sweet treats at her Denham Springs bakery, Paige’s Pantry. PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAIGE MA

"I'd like to say TikTok made my first storefront," she says with a laugh. "It was the perfect opportunity to step into and open the door."

Paige missed graduating with a microbiology degree by one class because her "storefront took over," but she hopes to return to ULL to finish her degree, even though she now knows she no longer wants to pursue that career.

"There's actually a scientific reasoning behind cooking, so it's good to know microbiology, but I won't be doing it," she says.

Opportunity Abounds

Not even a year after opening her first store, another opportunity surfaced. Paige's accountant saw a place for rent in the Antique Village, an area of Denham Springs that receives good foot traffic and offers a variety of complements to Paige's Pantry, including a coffee shop across the street.

"I had no intention of moving," Paige says of the second location. "Opening the first store was so stressful. But it was my dream to have a store in the Antique Village."

And so, Paige's Pantry moved into town, allowing customers more square footage plus a larger kitchen and double oven for Paige's creations. For this incarnation of Paige's Pantry, she called the shots on store decor and furnishings.

"I was able to make my own decisions," she says. "It's so much better."

Now 27, Paige has expanded her business to include a variety of cookies, cupcakes, cake pops, lemon bars, Oreo bars and, on the weekends, cinnamon rolls, among other sweet creations. She branched out into serving breakfast and lunch items such as biscuits and croissants, both plain and as breakfast sandwiches, along with lunch classics such as a chicken salad croissant and pimento grilled cheese. The savory items use stock from the bakery.

"I didn't want to be a lunch place but more a bakery selling baked goods," she says.

Sharing Skills

Paige's Pantry also offers a two-hour cake baking class called Piping with Paige when

she has time. In the summer, she hosts a children's camp where kids decorate cookies, create a cookie recipe, make cakes and help customers. Many times, they just love following Paige around the store, she adds.

With studies, baking and opening a store, Paige still had time to marry her best friend, Brandon, and be a dog mom to Ammo and Kato. Paige's TikTok videos show just how much time goes into running a bakery business with a staff of seven and a manager.

"People don't realize how much work goes into it and how hard it really is," she says.

For those considering doing the same, she recommends learning every aspect of a business, not just what goes into an oven, because you'll never know what might come out.

"Make sure you love more than just baking," she says. ■

ADOBE STOCK PHOTOS BY HCAST, GRUNGE DESIGNS



LEFT: Paige at work creating a unique cake.

BELOW: Paige, with her husband Brandon, when she won "Business of the Year" from the Livingston Parish Chamber of Commerce.



FAR LEFT: Paige's Pantry Head Baker Lauren Pelas, Owner Paige Ma and Business Manager Hayli.





Louisiana PLANNER

All ages can find something new and exciting around every corner of the state. Filled with rich history, abundant natural beauty and diverse events all year, Louisiana has fun options for everyone.

FRANKLINTON

July 10-11

Washington Parish Watermelon Festival

Celebrate local agriculture and the parish's rich watermelon-growing heritage. Activities take place at the Washington Parish Fairgrounds from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. This year's festival features stage acts, the traditional watermelon auction and tasting, a car show, a watermelon-eating and seed-spitting contest and live music from Bag of Donuts Friday night and Magnolia Rising on Saturday night. Admission to the festival is free.

wpwatermelonfestival.org

GRAND CANE

July 12

Balloons Over DeSoto

This free-to-enter community event features tethered hot air balloon rides, a spectacular balloon glow and a fireworks display, held at C.E. "Rusty" Williams Airport in DeSoto Parish. Attendees can enjoy children's activities, food vendors, live music and a virtual reality gaming truck. Gates open at 4 p.m., and festivities run until 10 p.m. Free parking and a free shuttle service are available.

discoverdesoto.com

LAKE CHARLES

July 24-25

Marshland Festival

This festival, originating more than 30 years ago in the coastal community of Hackberry, has grown into one of Southwest Louisiana's most beloved celebrations of Cajun and Zydeco music. Held indoors and air-conditioned at Lake Charles Event Center, the two-day festival features local Southwest Louisiana artists alongside nationally recognized performers, delicious food booths, and arts and crafts shopping. Enjoy a cool, festive refuge in the summer heat.

visittlakecharles.org

MORGAN CITY

July 24-25

Bayou BBQ Bash

This Barbecue Competitors Alliance-sanctioned State Championship BBQ competition is held at Second Street and Federal Avenue in downtown Morgan City, hosted by the St. Mary Detachment of the Marine Corps League. Teams from across the state and beyond compete in categories including brisket, ribs and chicken, while the public enjoys live music, arts and crafts vendors, food, and a Kids Q competition. All proceeds benefit Marine Corps League charitable programs in the community.

cajuncoast.com

SPRINGFIELD

Aug. 8

"I Found the Rougarou!" at Tickfaw State Park

On the second Saturday of every month, Tickfaw State Park invites children ages 6-14 to hunt for the legendary Rougarou lurking somewhere along the park's trails and common areas. Kids and their families have from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. to find the creature, snap a photo as proof and return to the entrance station. The fastest finder is crowned that month's Legendary Hunter of the Rougarou. Day use fees of \$3 per person apply; children 3 and younger and seniors 62 and older are free.

lastateparks.com/parks-preserves/tickfaw-state-park

GUEYDAN

Aug. 27-30

50th Annual Gueydan Duck Festival

Four days of festivities in downtown Gueydan celebrate this event's golden anniversary. Families travel from across the state to enjoy live entertainment, duck- and goose-calling contests, dog trials, skeet shooting, outdoor cooking contests, and a large carnival. This year's headliners are country legend Tracy Byrd on Friday, Aug. 28, and Louisiana icon Wayne Toups on Saturday, Aug. 29.

duckfestival.org

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HOW TO INCLUDE UPCOMING EVENTS

Want to share a family-friendly event with Louisiana readers? Enter details at tinyurl.com/LouisianaPlanner or scan the QR code with your smartphone camera for easy access. Make sure to submit September/October events by July 31 (due to press deadline). Events are published as space allows.

