

APSD Students of Month- September

photo unavailable	photo unavailable		photo unavailable			photo unavailable		photo unavailable	
Paris May BELA	Harley Poret CES	Amelia Jeansonne LES	Madison Holmes MES	A'Niya Francisco PES	Janelle Carmouche RES	Braunson Wagner AHS	Isabella Harrell BMHS	Austin LeBlanc LaSAS	Abigail St. Romain MHS

APSD Teachers of Month- September

		photo unavailable	photo unavailable					photo unavailable	
Bianca Word BELA	Sarah Armand CES	Holly Bordelon LES	Judy Rivers MES	Bailey Lemoine PES	Shawnita Scott RES	KK Lemoine AHS	McKenzie Bienvenu BMHS	Angela Deville LaSAS	Tina Anderson MHS

Avoyelles School District Teachers, Students of Month- September

The Avoyelles Parish School Board recognized its Students and Teachers of the Month for September during its Oct. 3 meeting.

The 10 recognized students were: Paris May (Bunkie Elementary), Harley Poret (Cottonport Elementary), Amelia Jeansonne (Lafargue


Elementary), Madison Holmes (Marksville Elementary), A'Niya Francisco (Plaqueville Elementary), Jamelle Carmouche (Riverside Elementary), Braunson Wagner (Avoyelles High), Isabella Harrell (Bunkie Magnet), Austin Leblanc

(Marksville High), A'Niya Francisco (Plaqueville Elementary), Jamelle Carmouche (Riverside Elementary), Braunson Wagner (Avoyelles High), Isabella Harrell (Bunkie Magnet), Bailey Lemoine

(LaSAS) and Abigail St. Romain (Marksville High). The 10 recognized teachers were: Bianca Word (Bunkie Elementary), Sarah Armand (Cottonport Elementary), Holly Bordelon (Lafargue Elementary School), Judy Rivers (Marksville Elementary), Bailey Lemoine

(Plaqueville Elementary), Shawnita Scott (Riverside Elementary), KK Lemoine (Avoyelles High), McKenzie Bienvenu (Bunkie Magnet), Angela Deville (LaSAS) and Tina Anderson (Marksville High).

Teachers/Students of Month proudly sponsored by:



Simmesport State Bank
16495 Highway 1
Simmesport
318-941-2362

The last mission for David Lemoine

Editor's Note: The following submitted article will continue in a future edition.

By DAN HASER (FBI Special Agent 1987 – 2010)
“My brother was a courageous man. Throughout his life he moved from one cause to the next, often times imperiling his own safety and always speaking to causes that laid outside of himself,” said Peter Lemoine in his eulogy for his brother, David Lemoine, who died at 69 years of age on December 28, 2020 after a short but fierce battle with COVID 19. David served as an FBI Special Agent from 1987 – 2005. David and Peter grew up on the bayou in Cottonport, population about 2,000. After completing college, he farmed 1,000 acres



David Lemoine

in Cottonport for 10 years. As David approached his mid-30s, he came to an ambitious, albeit somewhat unlikely career decision – leave farming to pursue employment with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He soon learned that in order to even be considered for employment with the Bureau, he would have to secure a position at some level in the Justice Department by the age of 37. So he moved his family (wife and three small children) to California where he accepted a position as a prison guard at the Federal Correctional Institution in Lompoc, California. After less than one year on the job, David was hired as a Deputy US Marshal and served in that position for two years in Los Angeles. He then applied to and was accepted into the FBI in 1987. David arrived at the New Agents Class with a touch of gray in his hair and seemed to have already lived two lifetimes in comparison to his younger colleagues in Class 87 – 14. It was at Quantico, as a member of that training class, that I came to know, respect and truly admire this remarkable man. David's first FBI assignment was to the Houston Division, where he spent 11 years developing informants and making major drug cases alongside fellow Special Agent and great friend, Zack Shelton. Eventually, David, who had spent most of his life in the heat of Louisiana and Texas, accepted an office of preference transfer to the beautiful

mountains of Red Lodge, Montana, where he pursued his love of horseback riding, fishing, and hunting with his family. It was in Montana, while in the final years of a distinguished FBI career, that David took up another mission - rescuing women and girls from exploitation in the human sex trafficking trade. He was instrumental in the passage of the key sex trafficking legislation in two states.

In 2008, shortly after his retirement from the Bureau in Billings, David found himself restless, and thought he could use his considerable skills at developing informants to help the US war effort in Operation Enduring Freedom. He became a contractor for the US State Department in Afghanistan, tasked with gathering intelligence. David's on the ground investigative efforts there have been credited with the saving lives of numerous soldiers. David was at times embedded with the US troops and accompanied the troops on patrols. He earned the admiration of his platoon of young soldiers through his willingness to share in the hardship of war in the harsh mountainous terrain of Afghanistan. With his boundless personal charm and Cajun accent, David regaled the troops with numerous stories of his Bureau career and childhood.

Ultimately, however, he was forced to return home. While on patrol in the mountains of Afghanistan, David developed a sudden onset of chest pain and had to be transported back down the mountainous terrain in order to receive immediate medical attention. “David talked about seeing the great concern for his well being in the eyes of young soldiers, as they literally formed a human conveyor belt, passing him down a mountain trail in Afghanistan,” said Peter Lemoine. He was then flown to a hospital in Germany where he underwent what would prove to be the first of many heart procedures and subsequently returned to his home in Red Lodge, Montana.

But David's service in Afghanistan would not prove to be his final mission. One of the things that impressed David from his time in Afghanistan was the great personal risk to which Afghan combat interpreters willingly exposed themselves and their families while serving with our troops. David credits one of the interpreters, a man named Fraidoon ("Fred") Akatari, with having saved the lives of literally hundreds of US troops. Upon returning home, David spent his retirement years advocating for Afghan and Iraq interpreters to be granted sanctuary in America as most, if not all, were targeted for assassination by the opposition. In 2014, David sought help from the International Refugee Assistance Project and he ultimately traveled to Washington DC to meet with senators and representatives seeking to cut the red tape that prevented emergency visas from being

issued to the Afghan interpreters. Three years later, on July 15, 2017, after overcoming numerous bureaucratic roadblocks and application denials, Fred and his family arrived at Dulles Airport in Virginia and others would soon follow. David's efforts to bring Fred and others to America are chronicled in the book entitled “In Search of Safety: Voices of Refugees,” by author and photographer Susan Kuklin. After watching the live stream of David's funeral mass in January 2021, I reflected on the impact that David had on my life, despite the relatively short time that we had spent together. In December 2022, I traveled from my home in Florida to meet Peter Lemoine in Cottonport for lunch and to see where David would swim his horse across Bayou Rouge, farm his property and raise

his family. It was there that I met Peter, his cousin Paul Lemoine, friend Steve Ducote, and son Pete Jr. Over lunch at Bernard's Cajun Sea Fry, I learned the story of David's last mission – helping an old friend in his quest for the truth regarding the death of his daughter. I was told that on June 28, 2014, Megan Ducote Parra was found by her parents lying in a pool of blood in the living room of the family home in Cottonport which she shared with her husband, Dustin Parra, and their two young children. She was taken to a hospital in Lafayette where she died the following day. Within a matter of days after her death, the Cottonport detective determined that suicide was the cause of death. *Story will continue in a future edition*

In Avoyelles Parish all of our towns have executive and legislative branches which are the mayor and council.

Does having an elected leader in these towns marginalize people? Are the mayors too powerful?

Of course not, the powers of the mayor and council balance out and the decision making process in a government becomes more transparent.

“We the People of Avoyelles Parish” want this balance of power for the future of our community.

WE ALSO WANT TERM LIMITS ON OUR LOCAL OFFICIALS

It's insane to think that if we have the same police jurors for 20, 30, or 40 years, that their continued efforts will produce a different result. We must write a charter to institute term limits.

Please vote for people who support these changes. Once a charter is written, we can read it and vote on it as a community. Do not let lifetime politicians decide what's right for you. You can decide at the ballot box.

Police Jury candidates that support term limits and voter choice are:

- **Police Jury District 2**
Clint Daigrepoint or Travis Franks
- **Police Jury District 7**
Allen Thomas
- **Police Jury District 8**
Sam Pearce

Paid for by: “We the People of Avoyelles Parish”

Drive-thru flu shots to be administered Oct. 18 & 24

The flu shot is still a very important vaccination that everyone who is eligible should receive. Do not neglect getting a flu shot this year. Flu shots have been administered annually for many years in the US with adjustments to protect people against the strain of flu that is thought to be dominant each year. Influenza kills. It is highly contagious and can be a very dangerous viral infection for many people. As weather cools and drives more of the population indoors, flu spreads more rapidly and with more certainty. The Avoyelles Parish Public Health Unit will be providing two opportunities for residents to receive a flu shot. Anyone older than six months can receive the flu shot. This flu shot is free and there is no out-of-pocket expense. The first drive-thru event will be at the Bunkie Health Unit on Wednesday, October 18 at 657 Government Street from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The second drive-thru event will also be at the Bunkie Health Unit on October 24 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Those insured through Medicaid or Medicare or any insurance are asked to bring their insurance cards on the day attended. Shots will be administered in the vehicles and participants are asked to remain in the vehicle. Eligible participants are encouraged to get the flu shot and protect their family members and the community.

State Audit Reports

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (statewide):

An audit of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs examined service delivery and administration, spending, and the number of participants enrolled compared to the eligible population, program success, and potential improvements. The audit focused on Title I and Title III programs.

Auditors found the administration of the programs involved many layers with funds flowing through several entities, but services were provided primarily through 60 One-Stop Centers. During fiscal years 2018 through 2022, Louisiana spent \$274.6 million on the programs.

In addition, in fiscal years 2019 and 2022, the Title I and III programs enrolled only a small percentage of the individuals potentially eligible for them. Auditors also found that Louisiana participants gained credentials and skills at a higher rate than participants in other states, but obtained jobs at a lower rate.

Additionally, while the majority of participants who exited the programs in fiscal years 2019 and 2021 found employment afterward, their earnings were often lower than before they participated in the programs.

Homeland Security/Emergency Preparedness – Hazard Mitigation Grant program (statewide):

Of \$19.9 million in Hazard Mitigation expense reimbursement requests analyzed, 10.3 percent (approximately \$2 million) were not supported by sufficient documentation at the time of the review.

The problems cited fell into four categories: lack of supporting documentation, out-of-scope expenses, missing procurement documentation, and errors.

GOHSEP has resolved some of the documentation questions and is working to resolve the others before it issues final payments for these requests.

LDWF (statewide):

Auditors evaluated how the department ensures accurate financial reporting, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and accountability over public funds. Among the things auditors looked at were controls and transactions related to fuel card access, internal audit, LaGov user access, payroll and personnel, purchasing card expenses, and Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards financial reporting.

No problems were found. Prior-report findings related to inadequate controls over fuel cards and inadequate controls over reporting on the Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards were resolved.

Complaint process for students with Disabilities Receiving Special Education services (statewide):

Auditors examined the Louisiana Department of Education's (LDOE) process to address complaints related to students with disabilities. As of October 2022, 89,681 (13.1%) of 685,606 kindergarten through 12th grade public-school students in Louisiana had a disability and were receiving special education services. Auditors found LDOE investigated and rendered decisions on 61 formal complaints in academic year 2021-2022. However, it did not address allegations in 42 additional emails it received through its dispute resolution email. Auditors also found LDOE could increase trust in its complaint process by making it more accessible, user friendly, and transparent. In addition, auditors found LDOE should increase its outreach to parents of students with disabilities, help them navigate the system, and answer questions about the dispute resolution process.

According to the parent survey, inter-

views with parents and other stakeholders conducted by the office, and interviews described in LDOE's consultant's report on the dispute resolution process, many parents have a lack of trust in this process. For example, of the 17 complaints LDOE dismissed during academic year 2021-2022, eight (47.1%) were dismissed for insufficient or incomplete information. LDOE could give parents the opportunity to submit missing information before dismissing the complaint. LDOE also does not always reach out to parents during a complaint investigation, but it does reach out to the school systems, which may contribute to the parents' perception that the process is unfair and complaints are not thoroughly investigated.

Pharmacy Benefit Costs (statewide):

This report provides information on the costs associated with pharmacy benefits provided by the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), the Office of Group Benefits (OGB), and Louisiana State University (LSU) in fiscal years 2018 through 2022. Auditors found the cost to provide pharmacy benefits varied among the plan sponsors (LDH, OGB, and LSU) because of rebates, plan participants' demographics and use, and the design of the benefit plan.

Due to these factors, the average annual cost per participant to provide pharmacy benefits ranged from \$649 for LDH to \$1,622 for OGB. In addition, auditors found the price plan sponsors pay for medications varies depending on the terms in the Pharmacy Benefits Manager (PBM) contract or Medicaid requirements.

As a result, the average ingredient price for a commonly-dispensed generic medication ranged from \$29.01 for OGB to \$43.79 for LSU. For a commonly-dispensed brand-name medication, the price ranged from \$877.09 for OGB to \$910.52 for LSU. Auditors also found the administrative costs plan sponsors pay vary based on the specific services and compensation negotiated between the PBMs, other vendors, and the plan sponsor.

Specifically, the administrative costs to manage the pharmacy benefit plans ranged from an average of \$23.39 for OGB to \$28.54 for LDH per plan participant per year. Additionally, auditors found plan sponsors monitor PBMs and other vendors that provide pharmacy benefit services in various ways. For instance, OGB plans to implement near real-time monitoring based on an emerging practice in contract monitoring. Real-time monitoring uses computer software to electronically review 100% of prescription drug claims in real time to identify deviations from the PBM contract.

Louisiana Supreme Court (statewide):

Auditors found the court's Office of the Judicial Administrator is paying administrative expenses for the Judges' Supplemental Compensation Fund (JSCF) with state general funds appropriated for the office's operations. Under state law, the administrative expenses are required to be paid with the proceeds of the JSCF.

In addition, auditors found civil filing fees collected by the clerks of court are being sent to the judicial administrator's office instead of the State Treasurer for deposit into the JSCF, as required by state law. The auditors also found two judges were overpaid a total of \$1,828 for lodging expenses.

Prior-report findings related to lack of controls over movable property and weaknesses in controls over payroll taxes were resolved.

State Civil Service (statewide):

For the fourth consecutive report, the Louisiana Board of Ethics (BOE) did not submit delinquent debts to the Attorney General's office in a timely manner. As of April 19, 2023, the BOE website noted 2,476 outstanding late fees totaling \$3.6 million from campaign finance disclosure reports, lobbying expenditure reports, and personal financial disclosure statements.

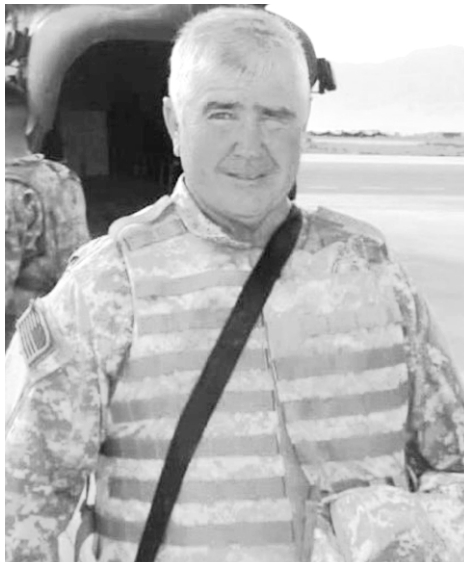
The last mission for David Lemoine..continued

Editor's Note: The following is the final of a two part series submitted about a case in Avoyelles Parish which will soon be featured on the "48 Hours" investigative television show on CBS.

By DAN HASER
(FBI Special Agent 1987 – 2010)

Megan was 29 years of age and the daughter of Steve Ducote, who was David Lemoine's childhood friend and teammate on the Cottonport High football team. She died shortly before graduating with a master's degree from Louisiana Christian University in nearby Pineville. Steve was not at all convinced that his daughter committed suicide and during the four-year period following Megan's death, he hired a private investigator as well as an attorney in New Orleans to perform investigative work, but they failed to make much headway in the case.

In 2018, Steve called David and asked if he would take a look at the binder of evidence that he had accumulated. David's initial reaction was that Steve was simply having difficulty accepting his daughter's untimely death; but upon reviewing the binder, David became convinced that Megan did not die by way of suicide. Traveling from his home in Nebraska, David initially did a couple of interviews



David Lemoine

by himself and then called on an old friend and colleague, retired Houston FBI Special Agent Zack Shelton, who agreed to come to Avoyelles Parish to assist David.

Zack and David were appointed as auxiliary deputies for the town of Cottonport and on January 17, 2019, conducted a videotaped interrogation of Megan's husband, Dustin Parra, at the Cottonport PD.

Over the next two years, David made numerous trips to Cottonport where he and Zack performed approximately a dozen interviews together. Steve recalled, "Once David agreed to work on the case, he was like a tiger and got things rolling. David and Zack took some witness statements and they were very compelling evidence. David recommended that I hire a blood spatter expert whose opinion of the death scene proved to be very valuable to the case."

Unfortunately, David did not live to see the outcome of his investigative efforts.

Zack, however, continued to travel from Texas to Cottonport on multiple occasions. On October 13, 2021, seven years after Megan's death, an Avoyelles Parish grand jury returned a true bill of indictment against Dustin Parra, charging him with one count of second-degree murder and one count of obstruction of justice in the death of his wife, Megan.

On March 27, Parra entered a plea of no contest to a charge of negligent homicide and was sentenced to five years in prison. Reflecting upon the plea agreement, Peter Lemoine who is an attorney and represents the Ducote family stated: "The plea was something the family wanted, and I respect that. But in my judgment, having spent

hundreds of hours studying this case, the facts established beyond a reasonable doubt that this man intentionally shot his wife, and so a plea of manslaughter would've been more appropriate."

In reviewing the history of the case, Peter added, "My brother's continued involvement in the Parra murder investigation, as well as that of retired Special Agent Zack Shelton, were critical in view of the fact that newly elected sheriff, David Dauzat, despite promises to the contrary, did not undertake any serious investigation of the matter, and in fact failed to cooperate with or assist David or Zack Shelton."

Remarkably, upon taking office, Dauzat hired the same Cottonport detective who would have handled the murder investigation from its onset, despite being advised of his failures by Steve Ducote." (See Sheriff Dauzat rebuttal below.)

Zack Shelton remarked, "It is unfortunate that the Sheriff's Office would not cooperate with our investigative efforts. But as I look back, I am so honored to have had a part in David's last unselfish venture to help his longtime friend Steve Ducote. David had the true spirit of fidelity, bravery, and integrity, the three ingredients that describe the character of a great FBI Special Agent."

Sheriff responds to Parra murder case claims

Editor's Note: Sheriff David Dauzat responded to the claims in the case of Megan Parra:

The death of Megan Parra occurred on June 28, 2014, long before I took office as Sheriff. I did not know any details of the case.

In April 2019, I began to campaign, in an attempt, to become the next Avoyelles Parish Sheriff. During the middle or end of my campaign, I met Steve Ducote. Steve Ducote is the father of Megan Parra.

I met with Steve approximately 3 to 4 times during my campaign. Steve had explained to me about some of the details of the case. He stated he felt Dustin Parra was responsible for the death of his daughter. I told Steve, if elected Sheriff, I would look into the case.

On November 16, 2019, I was elected Sheriff, however, would not take office until July 1, 2020. Twelve days before I took office, I was asked by Steve Ducote to meet with him. He stated he had some information about the case that he would like to give to me. My future Chief of Detectives Timothy Ryan, my future Chief Deputy Ryan Quebedeaux, and I met with Steve Ducote. At that time, Steve presented to me a binder that included several items of the case. I explained to Steve that we were not allowed to transition into the office and were going to be very busy when we took office. I stated to him that Timothy Ryan, Ryan

Quebedeaux, and I would review the case as we had time available to do so.

We departed and I sent the binder home with Timothy Ryan. We took office on July 1, 2020, and were very busy as expected. As time allowed, I kept my word and began to investigate the death of Megan Parra. I discovered things about the case by reviewing the case file that was at the sheriff's office.

There was an enormous amount of information that was in the APSO case file that Steve's binder did not contain. I learned that not only did the Cottonport Police Department investigate this case, but the previous administration at APSO investigated it in 2014.

Their investigation concluded that Megan Parra died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound and they noted the lack of cooperation from Steve Ducote in the investigation.

The Louisiana State Police reviewed the case in 2016 and did not find any information, facts, or circumstances sufficient to further investigate the matter and declined to re-open the investigation.

In 2018-2019 an active FBI agent/agents reviewed the entire case and found no sufficient cause to charge anyone for the death of Megan Parra.

During our investigation, we discovered that not one law enforcement agency had downloaded Megan's phone. We con-

tacted Steve Ducote in an attempt to obtain Megan's phone, so we could download it. Steve's wife provided us with the phone. We had the phone downloaded and saw that it had been downloaded before. This was consistent with what was noted in the 2014 APSO investigative report. The Ducote family reportedly had purchased a program and downloaded the phone.

On October 7, 2021, we made contact with Avoyelles District Attorney Charles Riddle at the Avoyelles Parish District Attorney's Office. We notified him that we had received information about an Avoyelles Parish Grand Jury Investigation into the death of Megan Parra scheduled for October 13, 2021. He confirmed that the information was correct. We notified him of an active investigation we were conducting into the death of Megan Parra. We notified him that no other police investigators had ever been allowed to examine the cell phone.

We notified him that a forensic download of the device had been done and that we were in the process of examining the downloaded files.

We wanted to prevent a premature decision by the jury, or conflicting conclusions between the Jury's findings (without our current investigative findings) and our subsequent investigation report and findings. Mr. Riddle stated to continue with the investigation, but they were going

through with the scheduled Grand Jury.

The grand jurors found Bills of Indictment and issued True Bills charging Dustin Parra with the offenses of Second-Degree Murder and Obstruction of Justice. A trial begins and adjourns on a Friday afternoon to resume Monday morning. The next thing I know, I'm contacted over the weekend, so my staff would be available for a Sunday plea deal.

As far as CBS's "48 Hours," there's nothing that I could say or do that will change the case. Part of the plea deal was that this case could never be appealed. I did offer to have my Chief of Detectives, which was my lead investigator, to speak to CBS. They said they didn't want to speak to him about the case. They were only interested in why I hired Chris Knight.

I hired Chris Knight after an extensive interview. He is titled as a detective; however, he is currently a U.S. Marshals Task Force Member and has been hand-selected by the Louisiana State Police and FBI to assist on some major cases. Training and 9 more years of experience have made Chris Knight a better investigator than he was in 2014. To be on these Task Force details one has to pass a thorough background check. Chris was detailed on an operation that the FBI conducted that was in addition to his regular duty, work hours. The FBI operation was from April 25, 2022, to

September 30, 2022.

The FBI paid for these hours worked. Also, in 2018, Chris took a CVSA (Computer Voice Stress Analyzer) lie detector test about the Parra case and passed. At the time, Chief Scotty Ferguson did this before hiring him at the Bunkie Police Department.

This case was a very unusual case. There are numerous questions that are puzzling to investigators.

If the Ducote family thought there was foul play involved in Megan's death, why would they let a suspected murderer live with them for 9 months after Megan's death?

If the Ducote family thought there was foul play involved in Megan's death, why would they obtain the firearm (a suspected murder weapon) from Dustin Parra and throw it into Toledo Bend Lake? This was told to me by the District Attorney's investigator.

If the Ducote family thought Dustin Parra was involved in Megan's death, why would they not want him to be questioned by investigators? There are many more questions, but I think one could see where this was an unusual case that would take a lot of time to investigate to get both sides of the story. All I wanted was to keep my word and be fair and impartial, no matter what the outcome of the investigation would be.

Due to space and editorial considerations the following photos that were submitted for publication did not appear in the article as published by Avoyelles Journal:



(David Lemoine in retirement)



(David in Afghanistan in 2008)



(David and Fred in Afghanistan)



(David, Fred, and Dave Shiner at Dulles Airport)



(Dan Haser, Paul Lemoine, Steve Ducote, and Peter Lemoine)