

SPRING 2023

# PORCH & PARISH



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decoding your finances



# MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

## BREC

### COMMUNITY WALK &

### RIBBON CUTTING

.66 MILE EASY-TO-WALK TRAIL

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BREC Zachary Community Park

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Hosted by the Downtown Live at the Gazebo Committee

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DOWNTOWN LIVE AT THE GAZEBO

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decoding financial literacy



### on the cover

Artist rendering of present & future  
Zachary with nods to AAPI Heritage  
Month & Autism Awareness Month.  
Illustration by Mike Gennaro  
Graphic Design by Linda Shi

see stories from AAPI neighbors on page 19



# a letter from the crew



Jen Gennaro  
*Editor*

Hey Zachary people—it's Spring so we thought we'd highlight our town in green on the cover with nods to Earth Day, AAPI heritage, Autism Awareness month, and more! The cover is brought to you by a little known podcast host and his watercolor illustration kit. You guessed it, but Mike could not have done it without the digital editing skills of the amazing Linda Shi. Since our kids enjoyed coloring the black and white copies so much, we're offering that to everyone as the first ever P&P downloadable for kids of all ages. We're so excited to see pics of your art work! Search "coloring sheet" on our website to download.

We had so much fun with Field & Garden, visiting the Bayou Sarah Farms water buffalos - you "herd" right. I wish you could have seen the look on our four year old's face when he stared eye to eye with Casique the mighty buffalo. Check that out on page 8.

In our continual effort to foster candid conversations, we're talking about maternal mental health this month. Lane RMC Ob/Gyn Dr. Joshua Best weighs in on the baby blues and postpartum depression. Local women share their own experiences at various phases of motherhood, from

those first 48 hours, to coping with motherhood's challenges in every season of life. Shortened versions of their stories start on page 11, and full stories are on our website.

And while the most recent Census for Zachary reports less than 1% of our population identifying as Asian American or Pacific Islander, we shine a light on those neighbors and their cultures for AAPI heritage month. There are some nuggets of wisdom in these interviews that apply to meeting newcomers in general. The key takeaway: start a conversation just like you would with any other person. Don't make "Where are you *frooom*?" your opening line because the answer just might be Slidell.

Finally, we spoke with experts in our community for a guide to the five pillars of financial literacy. Whether you're a teenager ready to open your first bank account, or looking toward retirement planning and beyond, these local experts have you covered.

We hope you enjoy the Spring issue of *Porch & Parish*. If you aren't already tuned into the podcast, dialed in to our digital stories, or receiving the weekly newsletter of Zachary stories, find us on Facebook or porchandparish.com. And if you're enjoying receiving all of this content for free, we'd love it if you could make a donation to support our work. You can do so by scanning the QR code, or clicking the "donate" button on our website.

Happy crawfish season!

*Jen and the crew*



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## BECOME A SUPPORTER





# Fun this Summer in Zachary



In addition to camps offered by the Americana YMCA, BREC and various Vacation Bible Schools, here are some fun summer camps around town!

### CrossFit Kids

CrossFit Kids and CrossFit Teens 75-minute sessions available Monday-Thursday throughout June and July. Email [info@crossfitzachary.com](mailto:info@crossfitzachary.com) for more information.

### Zachary Cheer Athletics

Theme camps every week all summer long! Tumbling, ninja, princess, obstacle course and much more. \$150/week or \$30/day. Email [zcac Cheer@gmail.com](mailto:zcac Cheer@gmail.com) for details.



### Bennett's Water Ski and Wake Board School

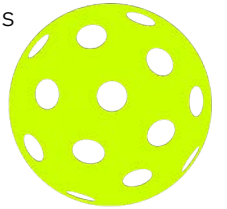
Sleepaway camps available every week of summer! Room and board included. Call 225-654-9306 or visit [skibennetts.com](http://skibennetts.com) for details.

### Molly Myers Dance Academy

Broadway Babes Dance Camp is July 17-21, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Visit [mollymyersdance.org](http://mollymyersdance.org) or call 504-715-5205 for more information.

### Pickleball and Tennis with Chase Rigdon

Learn from pickleball pro Chase Rigdon during one of his summer camps! Dates, deadlines and additional details are available on page 6.



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# TENNIS & PICKLEBALL PRO

## Chase Rigdon

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Time: 8am - 12pm Monday - Friday
- June 12-16
- June 19-23
- June 26-30 High School + Middle School Development: Ages 10-18 (*Intermediate*)  
Time: 2pm - 4:30pm Monday - Thursday
- July 3-7
- July 10-14 High Performance: Ages 10 - 18  
Times: 10am - 12:30pm Monday - Thursday
- July 17-21
- July 24-28

#### JUNIOR PICKLEBALL CAMP:

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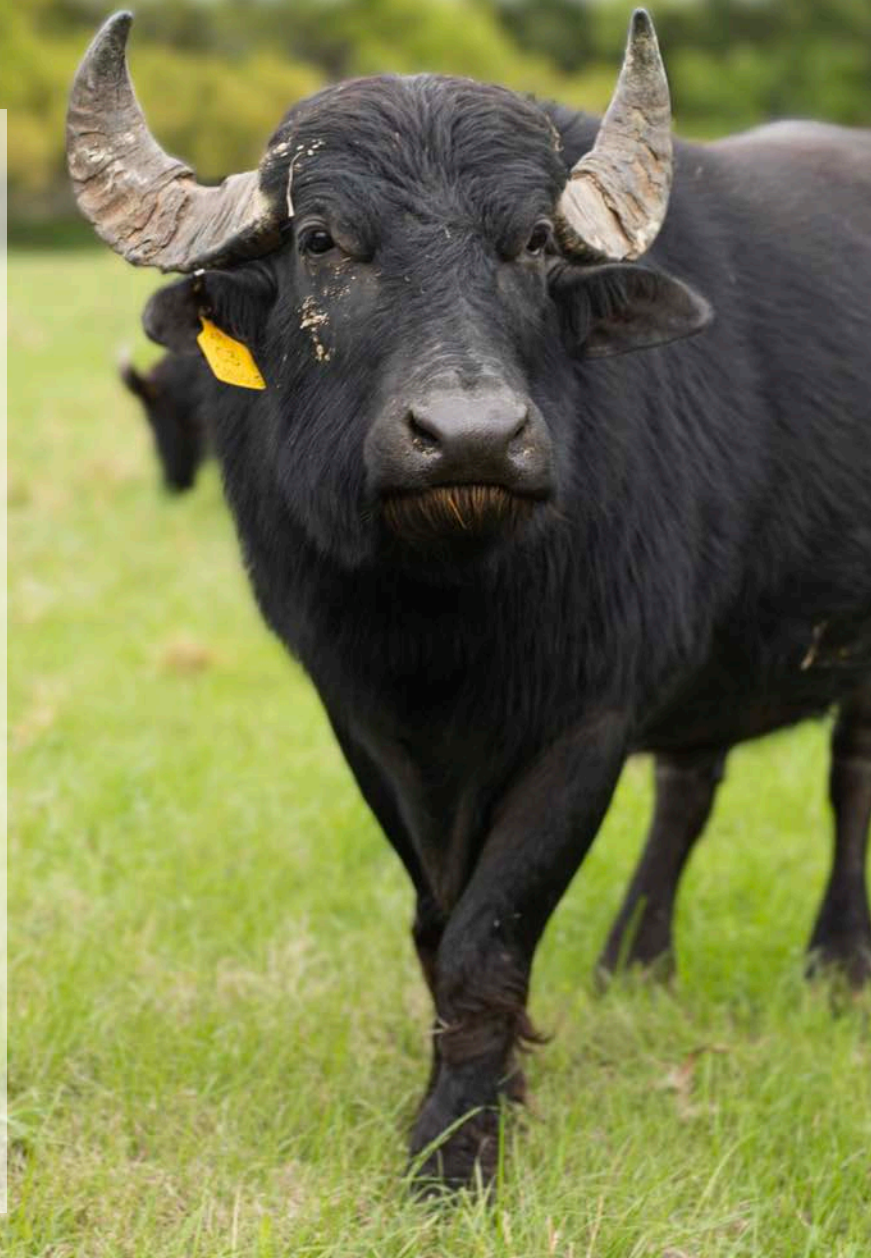
# Field & Garden

*with Mike*

**M**odern farming practice has become very scientific, and most of what we see making it to the market is brought to us by large industrial players. While small farmers might not be able to feed the world, they provide value in what they do for the community, and the ecosystems in which they co-exist.

Jen and I brought the family out to visit our friend Sarah Roland at Bayou Sarah Farms, where she does things a little differently, to say the least. She created Louisiana's first and only water buffalo dairy. She's moving the culinary needle, experimenting with buffalo gelato and blue cheese! I was most impressed with the sustainable ecosystem she's creating on her family land.

At the center of the hilly tract in St. Francisville, there rested a 16' "chicken tractor," a device used to house chickens and allow them to free range and fertilize the land under them. Her breed of choice is a stately mix of buff and black orpingtons and Easter eggers. They happily jumped in and out of the trailer to feed, water and lay. The subfloor of the trailer was cattle-panel, so the manure would drop right through to the ground. The field in the wake of the caravaning fowl was much greener. I once built my own modern looking chicken tractor, and enjoyed it for years before we moved to a subdivision.



Roland uses an electric fence to manage the location of the water buffalo in relation to the chickens. The buffalo enjoy much greener grass thanks to the symbiotic relationship. What do the chickens get out of the deal? Beefed up security from their buffalo friends. As we sat enjoying the view, a baby deer walked out of the woods and nestled into the herd like a distant cousin.

Roland continues to break the traditional mold, creating an amazingly unique lifestyle alongside the abundance of life surrounding the farm. She raises hogs, blueberries, chickens, buffalo, crops, and is

building a two story barndominium.

Recently, she built a "mobile milking parlor"™ to assist in her dairy farming efforts in the field, disturbing the buffalo as little as possible. Dairy is one of the most highly regulated industries. Roland laments that it costs half a million dollars in equipment and permits to break into the industry, but there are several grants available to small operations savvy enough to navigate the lengthy application processes.

While out in the field, learning how each animal plays a critical role in the overall operation, my





## Will It Grow?

I like to plant at least one wild area in my garden, a place where we can throw old tomatoes, basil seeds, and zinnias. I've always wondered whether the Black Oil Sunflower bird seed would grow into flowers, so this year I took the chance and paid \$13 at ACE Hardware for a giant bag. There were several YouTube videos that said they would grow about 4-6' sunflowers. So far, so good, as you can see!



*Top: Mike Gennaro and Sarah Roland stand in front of the 16' chicken tractor at Bayou Sarah Farms, which is used to house chickens and allow them to free range while fertilizing the ground under them.*



*Left: Mike's homemade chicken tractor.*

*Casique in the field at Bayou Sarah Farms*

Earth Day Challenge became clear: how can we use what we have at our disposal to make our own ecosystems flourish? If you are like me and live in a subdivision where yard size is not plentiful, try mini-farming with a victory garden and a pair of chickens or ducks. If you live in an apartment, grow a couple bush tomatoes. If you don't want to get out in the garden, the patio is a perfect place to grow things in Louisiana. Vertical agriculture is growing in popularity, as people find new ways to make the most of limited greenspace.

If plants still seem out of reach, I have yet another solution – invite nature to do what it does where you are. Six small birdhouses are my family's favorite new addition to our garden. The sparrows have made it a new hang out and help me fertilize my garden. Birdwatching is a fun activity for the family, especially the smaller kids, and we eagerly await the opportunity to watch baby birds pop their heads out of the nest this Spring.





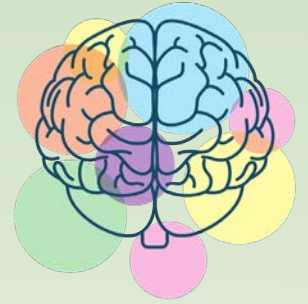
# WELLNESS

special section

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featuring stories from local moms



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## HELPING NEURODIVERGENT LOCALS RISE

by Board Certified Behavior Analyst Donyelle Clark Kennedy



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# Managing mental health & motherhood



For most, the “baby blues” fade away several weeks postpartum, if they appear at all; for many, though, hormonal and lifestyle changes can have a lasting effect. Here are stories of women in our community sharing their experiences at various phases of motherhood, from those first 48 hours, to an early and unexpected hysterectomy. In many of these stories, there are women who have experienced depression, guilt (“I should be grateful for my healthy child”) or shame (stigma of being diagnosed with a mental illness) that has prevented far too many moms from speaking up.

Thank you for sharing, thank you for reading, and if you are struggling with PPD, anxiety or depression, please take this as a sign to reach out to your healthcare practitioner.



Jen Gennaro

As a mom of four, I struggled with postpartum depression (PPD) and anxiety beginning with the birth of my first son 14 years ago. However, it wasn't until the birth of my third son in 2019 that I received an actual diagnosis and sought medical treatment. I thought for a decade that it was normal to live with crippling anxiety over my kids' safety and wellbeing, chalking it up to loving them too much. It wasn't until a conversation with a stranger at Mardi Gras last year, just after the birth of my fourth, that I learned there was a name for the uncontrollable feeling of despair, disgust and detachment I felt during breastfeeding: Dysphoric Milk Ejection Reflex (D-MER). The negative emotions were so powerful that I had to stop breastfeeding after just five weeks, despite being in a national formula shortage. D-MER is a condition that affects around 9% of lactating women and wasn't widely recognized until 2011 –so new and such a footnote in postpartum care that many Ob/Gyns have never heard of it even today.

Managing my mental health has looked like setting aside time for myself, exercising, and confiding in trusted friends and family. These things have been some of the more positive ways I've made it through my darkest of days as a mom and as a human. Unfortunately, there have been plenty of negative coping attempts at powering through those dark days as well. The thing about powering through is that it's mentally exhausting. It wasn't until I truly surrendered my life to Christ that I finally found rest for my soul. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus said, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” The rest God offers through His Son Jesus doesn't exempt me from dark days, but gives me the peace to face them without fear and anxiety.

“Not everyone has a blissful prenatal and postnatal experience. It's important to have discussions with moms about their mental health before, during and after pregnancy, and for moms to let someone know if they have concerns or heavy emotions. I specialize in counseling women who are experiencing anxiety or depression, and I'm certified in EMDR trauma therapy. I've seen miraculous results with clients.”

—Leslie de Graff, LPC, LMHC, CRC, is a Zachary resident and owner of Ever Thrive Counseling. Contact her at 833-473-3399 or [everthrivecounseling.com](http://everthrivecounseling.com). Online appointments available.





*Lanie Mayronne*

The two days in the hospital after my firstborn were filled with uncontrollable crying, sleep deprivation, and even snapping at the CNA trying to help me. I ended up with mastitis and fever 10 days after birth, which sent me running back to the assessment center SURE I was septic and dying. At that visit, the team let me know the uncontrollable crying wasn't baby blues and reached out to my provider to get ahead of the depression and anxiety. Looking back, I was extremely anxious and you couldn't talk sense into me. With medication, therapy, SLEEP, and validating what I was feeling, I was a better mom, wife, employee, and friend. Opening up to other moms who seem like they "have it all together" has been so helpful in feeling better as well. You realize you're not alone and also that no one really knows what's going on inside your head unless you ask for help! I am so thankful for the support of strangers, friends and medical professionals.



*Laura Goodwin*

"Can postpartum depression and anxiety last 10 years?" I asked, shortly before getting on the right dosage of antidepressants. No, I didn't ever think that it would be part of everyday life, but the mind of a mom comes with different pressures than ever before. Everything seems heavier, more important, time sensitive, and critical. Is it really? No, but it sure felt that way. Each pregnancy (or lack thereof), infertility and IVF, and eventual birth was different, and each transition to the new normal was different. I couldn't do it alone. The village it takes for me is a group of moms, church, acquaintances, a small coffee group, a therapist and a psychiatrist. The truth is that I can balance marriage, work, and motherhood, but I have to do it differently than before. You aren't alone. What you're feeling is likely being felt by each woman you pass at the grocery or in carpool. Few speak up, but I'm hoping that is changing. Everyone's version of hard is different, but we are all in this together.



*Heather O'Neal*

My oldest was 9 when my fifth child was born, and my second child has autism and requires above the standard of care. It's daunting to have so many little ones depending on you for almost everything, every day, 24/7. The early years are the hardest. Completely outnumbered and overwhelmed, I coped by learning to take care of myself so I could take care of them. I am a huge fan of the natural "doctors" God gives to us to support mental health and boost the mood: nutrition, exercise, water, sunshine, temperance, (fresh) air, rest, and trust in God. You can use the acronym NEW START to help you remember. The mind is a powerful machine and can be assisted to run at its best by taking advantage of these natural helps, especially when dealing with so many physical and hormonal changes. Finally, anxiety and worry can consume me when I don't take time to pray and trust God to help me. These eight natural "doctors" continue to be a simple formula to help me refocus when I'm feeling blue.



*Elizabeth Ryskoski*

Polite exchanges often involve asking how many kids each person has. For moms with four or more, the answer is usually met with "How do you do it?" My response is always the same: every number is amazing, and every number is HARD. Going from one child to two hit me hard. PPD was unknowingly in full force. Life felt upside down with a new little one to care for while grieving that my firstborn grew up overnight. I was unmotivated, fearful, resentful and lonely. My family and I didn't recognize PPD, and I didn't talk with my doctor for a year. My doctor's most helpful advice was to return to work part time. Working was a lifesaver for me. When numbers three and four came, I asked for help when needed, worked outside the home when I knew my mind needed it, and sought medical help when I decided to start anti-anxiety meds. Exercise, Bible study, medicine and working part-time help me be the best version of myself for my family, and I am learning to adapt as my needs change through seasons of life.





*Angelle Fontenot*

For maternal mental health, most people think of PPD but what about after an unplanned total hysterectomy? The emotional roller coaster coupled with immediately being thrust into menopause in my 30s was far bumpier than the PPD I

experienced. The loss of the ability to create new life was a tremendous blow. It seemed like everyone I knew suddenly had unexpected blessings I could no longer have. Was it rational? No. Was I thankful for my children? Absolutely. Was I happy for all of my friends? Yes. But that didn't stop the tears late at night. I suffered with dark and overwhelming grief. But even when you think you're on your own, you aren't. The people who know you recognize it, and they'll be there when you're ready. Honest conversations with my doctor, and being open to trying new things like therapy and/or medication are key. My journey didn't stop with my hysterectomy. It just started the next chapter at an unexpected time...but isn't that how life works?



*Senna Chapman*

I found out I was pregnant just before my baby turned 1. I knew something was wrong from the start. The ultrasound revealed the pregnancy had implanted in my c-section scar - a rare ectopic pregnancy expected to end in miscarriage. It was a weird place to be mentally and emotionally, hoping that would happen on its own to avoid surgery, while being devastated at the loss. Even after the pregnancy terminated, the placenta continued to grow. I felt like a ticking timebomb, depressed but finding solace in my family, a support group for moms with the same condition, and therapy. The day I was diagnosed with PPD, I began to hemorrhage. The pregnancy had grown through my c-section scar, into my bladder, and was about to rupture my uterus. An emergency hysterectomy saved my life. Staying on top of my medication and beginning EMDR (trauma) therapy has been really helpful, in addition to doting on my 1-year-old.



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# Baby Blues vs. Postpartum Depression



By Joshua Best, MD

*Lane OB/GYN*

**A**fter the long, arduous journey of growing a tiny human followed by the gauntlet of bringing them into the world, many mothers are shocked to learn that the hard part is just beginning. The hormone fluctuations, coupled with recovery from even a routine delivery can be overwhelming. Add to that mix a screaming baby who seems intent on never letting you sleep again, and getting through the day can seem an insurmountable challenge.

Clinically, “postpartum blues” refers to a short-term condition characterized by several mild depressive symptoms including sadness, crying, irritability, anxiety, insomnia, exhaustion, decreased concentration, and mood swings.

Baby blues are normal, so much so that many experts agree that more new mothers have baby blues than do not. These symptoms typically resolve without treatment within two weeks of delivery. When symptoms worsen or persist for longer than this two-week period, postpartum depression must be considered.

Postpartum depression is less

common than postpartum blues, but still very common. Diagnosis of postpartum depression requires an increasing severity of the symptoms, that cause “clinically significant distress or impairment.” Postpartum Depression may lead to impaired bonding with the newborn, abnormal infant development, cognitive impairment of the child, marital discord and even suicide or infanticide.

Postpartum depression treatment options include talk therapy or medications. Your doctor will help you decide if medication may be right for you.

After delivery of your baby, it is important to:

- Follow up with your OB/GYN and pediatrician
- Be honest with yourself and your healthcare provider so that your needs can be fully addressed
- Remember that your feelings are valid and temporary

Feeling overwhelmed is normal,



but it can also be a red flag.

Screening for postpartum depression is one of the most important parts of your postpartum checkups. In my practice, I like to see my patients back in the office within two weeks of delivery and again at six weeks. Our pediatricians also play a large part in helping identify patients in need.

Hang in there, new moms. There is a light at the end of the tunnel!

## Maternal Mental Health Support in Zachary

If you feel you are suffering from postpartum depression or the baby blues, you need the support of a knowledgeable and understanding physician. At Lane OB/GYN, Dr. Joshua Best provides experienced, compassionate, and comprehensive care. Please call 225-658-1303 to make an appointment.





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# The 3 Levels of Autism Explained

Sponsored by:  Lane Regional Medical Center



By Shola Tijani, MD

*Lane Pediatrics*

Those unfamiliar with the nuances of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may assume that all children on the spectrum participate in repetitive behaviors, don't make eye contact, and are largely non-verbal. While these signs may be present, there are many children whose symptoms are far milder, and those whose symptoms are more severe.

ASD is a wide and diverse range of possible complications, and children within the spectrum do not all fall into neat categories. For that reason, the classifications of ASD have changed significantly.

## Previous Autism Spectrum Disorder Terminology

Many of the misconceptions surrounding ASD are rooted in outdated terminology. Before 2013, a diagnosis fell into one of three categories: Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome, or Pervasive Development Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS). While this system was more cut-and-dried, it did not account for subtle differences and left much open to interpretation.

## Current Classifications of Autism Spectrum Disorder

ASD is now categorized into three different levels based on the level of required support.

### ASD Level 1

*Lowest classification*

Individuals require minimal support with issues like inhibited social interaction and lack of organization and planning skills.

### ASD Level 2

*Mid-range classification*

Individuals require substantial support and have problems that are more obvious to others, including trouble with verbal communication, having restricted interests, and exhibiting frequent, repetitive behaviors.

### ASD Level 3

*Most severe classification*

Signs associated with both Level 1 and Level 2 are present but more severe and accompanied by other complications. Individuals have limited ability to communicate and interact socially.

## Is My Child "On Track"?

As parents, we are invested in our children's progress, which makes it tempting to make comparisons with other children for reassurance that our kids are "on track." This is called "competitive parenting," and shifts perspective from a child's

unique strengths and weaknesses, interests and aversions.

If you worry your child isn't expressing a range of emotions, communicating thoughts, or reflecting an understanding of language, visual cues, and behavior, talk with your Pediatrician.

## Coping with an Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis

A diagnosis of Autism can drastically change your perception of day-to-day life. It might require you to learn new coping skills and restructure priorities, which can affect plans and create more structure than desired. But in that space, you will learn how to advocate for your child, and discover new ideas, goals and priorities. Adaptability is key in finding what suits your family's unique circumstances.

I advise parents of ASD children to find strength in the delight of seeing your child meet goals, and let that inspire you to continue learning more about ASD. In doing so, you will gain tools to benefit your unique circumstances, and equip you to be the best advocate for your child!

## Autism Support in Zachary

Parents of a child with suspected or diagnosed ASD need the support of a knowledgeable and understanding pediatrician. Dr. Shola Tijani provides experienced, compassionate, and comprehensive care at Lane Pediatrics. Please call 225-658-4070 to make an appointment.



# Helping neuro-divergent locals **RISE**

Sponsored by: **RISE** BEHAVIORAL SERVICES

RISE Behavioral Services is the premier locally owned and operated facility in Zachary providing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services for children ages 2 to 16 who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Owner Donyelle Clark-Kennedy is a licensed and Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) who opened the clinic in 2019 to serve autistic individuals in an area with limited resources for neurodiverse individuals. Patients work with their team of therapists on their individual plans of care under the supervision of a BCBA. RISE limits the number of families served at one time to maintain manageable caseloads for Clinical Supervisors. Service intensity is based on medical necessity, and that determines how long per day and how many hours per week a child attends therapy.

Research suggests 30-40 hours a week for early intensive behavior intervention, or EIBI.

The 3,000-square-foot facility has one large group room and nine smaller, themed learning centers to address treatment goals through fun activities like reading, arts and crafts, and sensory activities. RISE offers an After-School ABA program and social groups to work on skills such as making friends, improving executive functioning, conversational skills, and resolving conflicts in an appropriate way.

The goal of each treatment plan is to increase socially significant behaviors, Clark-Kennedy says, and these skills increase quality of life, independence, and ability to self-advocate.

“It’s not about teaching scripts,” she explains. “The goal is not to change who they are. It’s to increase opportunities for social engagement and relationship-building.”

Success is individualized, and so is each treatment plan at RISE.

“I want to make sure that your quality of life as a person is maximized,” Clark-Kennedy says. “Success is not, ‘I can’t even tell he has autism!’ Our



“The goal is not to change who they are. It’s to increase opportunities for social engagement and relationship-building.”  
— Donyelle Clark-Kennedy | Owner, RISE Behavioral Services

goal of success is not to make your child look less autistic, or to appear to be typically developing,” Clark-Kennedy says. At RISE, the goal is to support families, and foster independence based on unique abilities. For instance, progressing a child from nonverbal to a public speaker; or a 7-year-old who is not potty-trained learning to change himself, which protects his dignity as he gets older.

The goal of the RISE program is to transition children to school in the setting most appropriate for them. Some children may transition into a general educational setting, while others may require more support and receive special education services. When children transition to school, RISE still meets with parents at least monthly to provide support and caregiver collaboration—helping to incorporate strategies learned in therapy in the home. Clark-Kennedy says the sigh of relief from parents when they feel like they have a partner is one of the most rewarding parts of the job.

“When God allowed me to open an ABA Therapy center in my hometown, I wanted to make sure each family felt heard and supported. I cannot express how much I appreciate our team for ensuring that every child is treated with compassion, while receiving quality services,” Clark-Kennedy says.

Not all states’ Medicaid plans include ABA coverage, but Louisiana’s does. The other great news is that the state Families Opportunity Act increased income limits, offsetting costs for families that would otherwise not qualify for Medicaid services due to a higher household income. For more information on FOA, visit [ldh.la.gov](http://ldh.la.gov).

RISE Behavioral Services is located at 9305 Main Street, Ste. E, and can be reached at 225-278-1020, or online at [rise-aba.com](http://rise-aba.com).

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# MANY CULTURES, ONE VOICE

ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

*stories by Jen Gennaro & Lauren Pope*

## Coach Cheri Perry

At Zachary High School graduation, volleyball players wear colorful leis. Those are courtesy of Coach Cheri Perry, who was raised in Hawaii and is of American Samoan, Tokelauan and Black heritage. She brought the lei tradition with her to Louisiana, and it is one of the main ways she shares her Pacific Islander culture with her students.

Perry says Hawaii is the most diverse state in the country, and her mixed race was never an issue growing up among many vibrant cultures. But when she moved to the mainland to play volleyball for the University of Rhode Island, she felt too dark for white people, and too light-skinned for Black people. With the small Samoan and Tokelauan population in Rhode Island, Perry no longer felt biracial in representing her heritages – it became black and white.

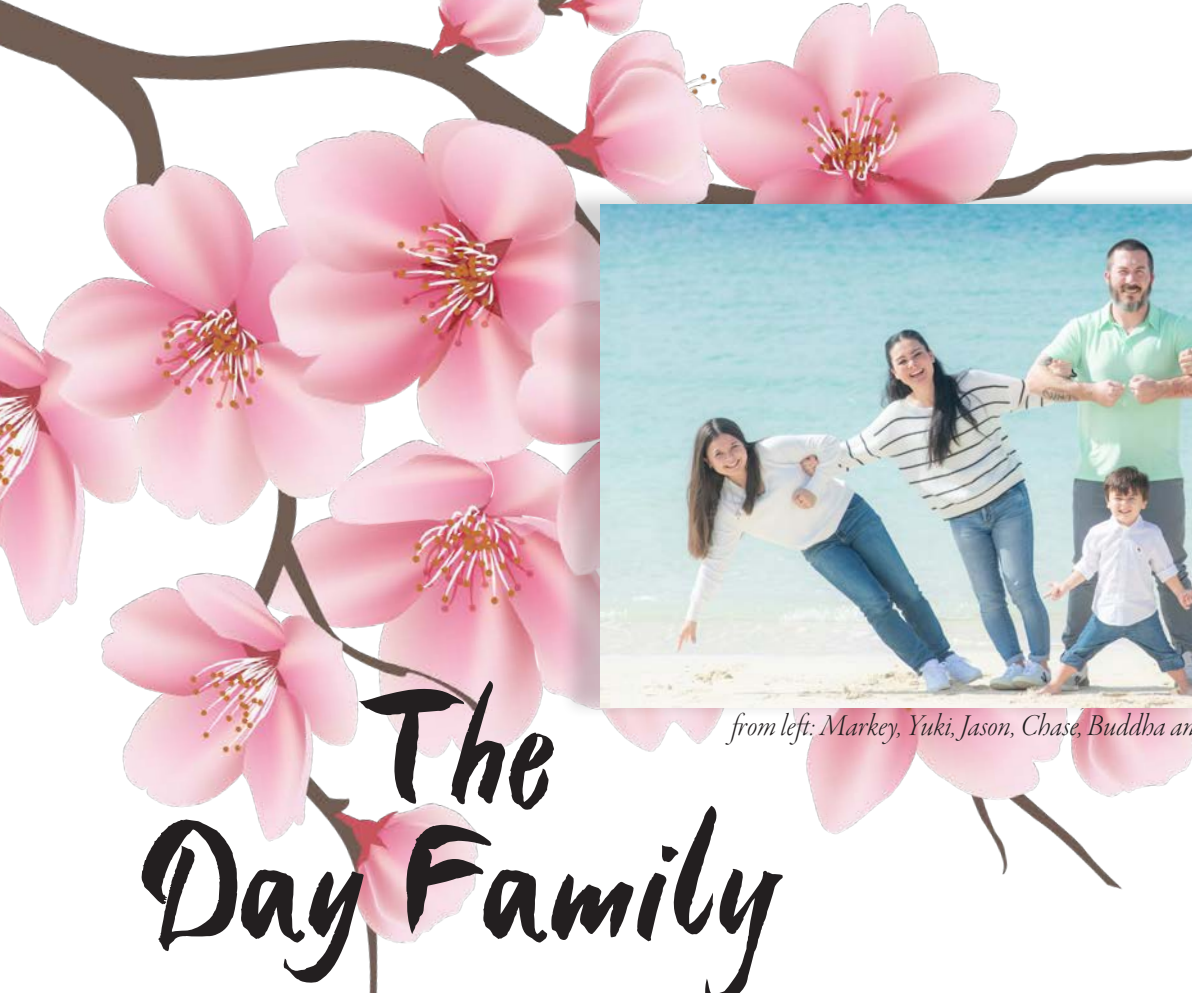
Following her move to Louisiana with her best friend after graduation, Perry met her husband and moved to Zachary for his work. After leaving a corporate position at Cox Communications, Coach Perry started working in the school district at the front desk. Word soon got out about her volleyball background, and when the head volleyball coach position opened up, she was a natural fit.

Now, it's hard to imagine her doing anything else. "Growing up, we are taught Fa'a Samoa which means "The Samoan Way," she explains. "Our culture, like others, focuses on family, church, respecting our elders, and helping our community." The communal nature of Pacific culture requires that you strive to give to others: give company, give food, give spirit.



photo by @hawaiicrush





*from left: Markey, Yuki, Jason, Chase, Buddha and Cody during a recent trip to Japan.*

# The Day Family

Louisiana native and retired U.S. Marine Veteran Jason Day, his Japanese wife Yuki, and their four kids, Chase (19), Markey (16), Matty “Buddha” (13) and Cody (4), have been back in the U.S. for three years, following 20 years spent living and raising their older children in Japan.

“We chose Zachary because it’s a melting pot. There’s more progressiveness here, and it seems the city is embracing forward-moving change,” Jason says. But still, there’s a long way to go when it comes to fostering diversity.

The lack of representation for those who speak English as a second language in the school district was a significant barrier for their middle son, who could not read or write in English when they got here a couple of years ago. You’d never guess that now when talking to Buddha, an outgoing teenager and star baseball player. (The school district has since hired a dedicated ESL teacher.)

While he has had no trouble making friends, Buddha, who has more distinct Japanese features than his siblings, has faced racism that is unfortunately typical of the Asian-American experience – like kids making slant eyes at him.

“I do hear racial slurs, but not towards me,” Markey says. “We’re studying WWII in history, and kids will say ‘japs’ a lot – they think the word is funny,” she says, noting that her teacher Nathan Munsell is

thoughtful and respectful toward her culture.

As for culture shock, there’s been plenty of it. Markey chimes in that the food is what she misses the most. The school lunches in Japan are meticulously balanced, carefully assembled with carbs, fats, protein, and veggies – and the students take turns serving one another. Not only are there no cafeteria workers; there are also no janitors! Each day after lunch, teachers put on 15 minutes of “cleaning music,” and the students sweep, mop, clean the class pet’s cage, etc.

Buddha says everything is bigger here – the roads, cars, food portions, and houses. A two-story, 3,000 square-foot home like the Day family has here would be filled with multiple families in Japan, Markey says.

All differences aside, the family has enjoyed watching their children flourish, especially in athletics. Fitness is integral to the Days. While living in Okinawa, they owned a CrossFit gym. Chase has made a name for himself on the wrestling mat and is also one of the only male cheerleaders in town. He plans to continue cheerleading in college at Northwestern State University starting this Fall. Markey spends her time on the soccer field, and Buddha on the baseball diamond. He also has gotten into fishing, hunting and four-wheeling, which wasn’t available in Japan.





# Christine Merritt

was born in Korea, where her parents met while her dad was stationed in the military. When she was four, the family relocated to Fort Polk in Leesville, LA. Her mother dreamed of opening a Korean restaurant, and for one year, Christine and her sister made that dream come true. The secret was their mother's famous Korean egg rolls, which were so popular the family considered selling them in grocery stores.

Then Covid hit, and like many other restaurants, Little Korean Kitchen was forced to close its doors. Christine and her family then relocated to Zachary. With teenage twins and a toddler son, Christine stays busy, but thoughts of reopening the restaurant are never far from her mind. She hopes that one day in the not so distant future, she can rectify the culinary gap of Korean food in Greater Baton Rouge.

Meanwhile, she and her family are planning a trip to Korea in 2024 for her grandmother's 100th birthday celebration. Food will, of course, be a huge part of that party, along with a special ceremony honoring the Matriarch. Christine and her daughters, Calli and Taylor, will don Hanboks, colorful dresses that are traditional to Korea.



*Traditional hanboks are an important part of Korean culture, worn to celebrate special occasions and holidays. Twins Taylor (blue) and Calli (pink) Merritt.*

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# Leena Doiron

grew up in Mangalore, India, a coastal community near the Arabian Sea. She met her husband, Louisiana native Kevin Doiron, while serving as a civilian contractor in Bahrain. Soon, they married and settled in Louisiana.



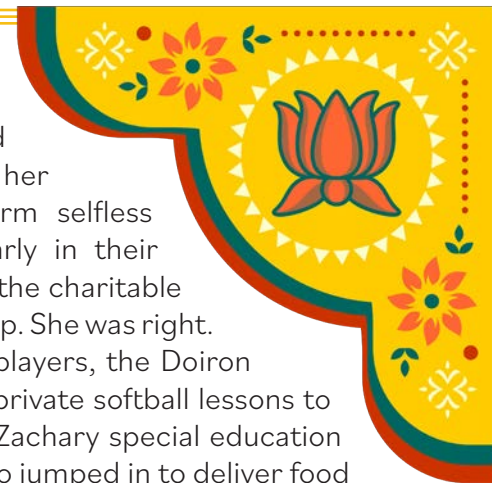
*Michaela and Nyla Doiron*

When their daughters, Michaela and Nyla, began school, Leena worked in various positions within Zachary Community schools to understand what made the local district tick and be a supportive

presence for the girls. Leena believed that encouraging her daughters to perform selfless acts of kindness early in their lives would result in the charitable habits as they grew up. She was right.

Both star softball players, the Doiron sisters have hosted private softball lessons to help raise funds for Zachary special education classrooms. They also jumped in to deliver food to flood victims following the 2016 flood and even raised money for a complete stranger to buy a much needed washer and dryer.

Now, Leena hopes that her message of selfless giving expands beyond her family. She would love to see more opportunities for elementary aged students to give back to the Zachary community so that the culture of giving might become just as natural to all students as it is for her girls.







# Pui Yu Esther Au

has always named Lunar New Year as her favorite Chinese holiday. “I have fond memories of visiting different relatives’ homes for Lai See, my grandmother cooking elaborate foods, and hosting everyone for dinner,” she says. Since moving to the U.S., the Lunar New Year has been harder to celebrate. Her very first Lunar New Year away from home, while she attended college at CU Boulder, her mother brought Pui a beautiful, traditional Chinese silk padded jacket to celebrate. “I remember proudly wearing it on Lunar New Year’s Day,” she recalls. “And when I got off the bus to my morning classes, a few students were openly laughing at me. I was mortified. And for many years, I rarely celebrated Lai See.” Then, she became a mother.

“I want to show my girls that I am proud of my heritage, help them understand how beautiful our holiday is, and let them know that it is nothing to be ashamed of,” she says. Pui started sharing Asian snacks and giving out Lai See to friends and co-workers in Houston a few years back. When the family moved to Zachary, she wanted to do the same. “This is actually the first year my older daughter participated in giving out Asian snacks, and I am so glad that many of our neighbors in Americana were interested in celebrating Lunar New Year with us. It really meant a lot to me and my family.”

Pui was born and raised in Hong Kong. She immigrated to the US to attend CU Boulder “many moons ago and never looked back!” She lives in Zachary with her husband Ivan and their daughters Lucia, 4, and Azelie, 4 mos.

Red envelopes, or **Lai See** in Cantonese, are gifts presented at celebrations like weddings or Lunar New Year.



*Lucia in a traditional Chinese silk padded jacket in front of her family’s home decorated for the Lunar New Year*







*Shawn Gee stands in his band classroom at Northwestern Middle School.*

# Shawn Gee

Growing up in New Orleans East with a Cuban mother and Chinese father, Shawn Gee learned early on to let rude comments roll off his back.

“People would say, ‘Get Ling-Ling,’ or something like that when we would play basketball, and you just brush it off. You clique up a lot [in grade school] because...we were kind of expecting to be made fun of,” he reflects. “You think nothing of it until you’re older and realize, hey, that was pretty rough.”

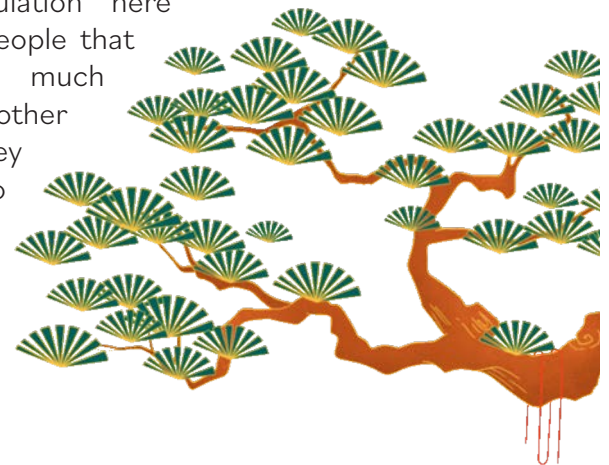
The gregarious Mr. Gee, band director at Northwestern Middle School, says that questions like “Where are you from,” get tiring after a while—especially since his answer is Slidell, Louisiana. “When approaching anything about race or ethnicity, there’s nothing wrong with being curious – just try not to make someone feel like an exhibit at a museum or a petting zoo,” he said with a laugh. “Be respectful and try to build a relationship before jumping in. Approach them like you would any other person and ask normal conversation starters.”

Gee grew up feeling more in touch with his Cuban side than his Chinese side, and his parents had completely different ways of showing their love. While his mom and her side of the family is very outwardly affectionate with kissing on both cheeks and big hugs, his dad was “uncomfortable

with affection,” mostly showing his love for his family through his elaborate cooking. Gee’s parents met at his dad’s Chinese restaurant in New Orleans, and many of his earliest memories are set there.

While Gee, who is often mistaken for being Filipino, says he’s “so American it hurts!” he can’t help but laugh at all of the examples in his childhood that played into stereotypes of Asian Americans, including helping clean at the restaurant at an early age. “My dad tried for a long time to get me into karate, and used to give me Rosetta Stone when I was little to make me learn Cantonese,” he laughs. “And they were big on good grades and studying. They were new to the country and they knew that school was the ticket to become something,” he says.

Asian Americans are still targets of hate, dealing with discrimination and racism on a daily basis, particularly after Covid, Gee says, though thankfully he hasn’t experienced it personally in his adult life. “AAPI is a smaller population here in Zachary. People that don’t know much about other cultures... they don’t have to understand it, but they should be respectful of it,” Gee says.





# Dr. Froilan Tolentino



known as Dr. T here in Zachary, was married to Jelly Tolentino for 36 years before his passing from pancreatic cancer in 2011. Together, they had three children and three grandchildren. Dr. T graduated with a degree in medicine from the Catholic University of Santo Thomas School of Medicine in the

Philippines in 1972, and finished his residency and medical fellowship at Tulane University and LSU in 1981. A specialist in Pediatric and Pediatric Pulmonary Diseases, he was American Board Certified in 1982. After practicing in California for years, he relocated back to Zachary in 1994, where he became the beloved pediatrician for hundreds of families in Zachary.



# Sister Norma Nunez

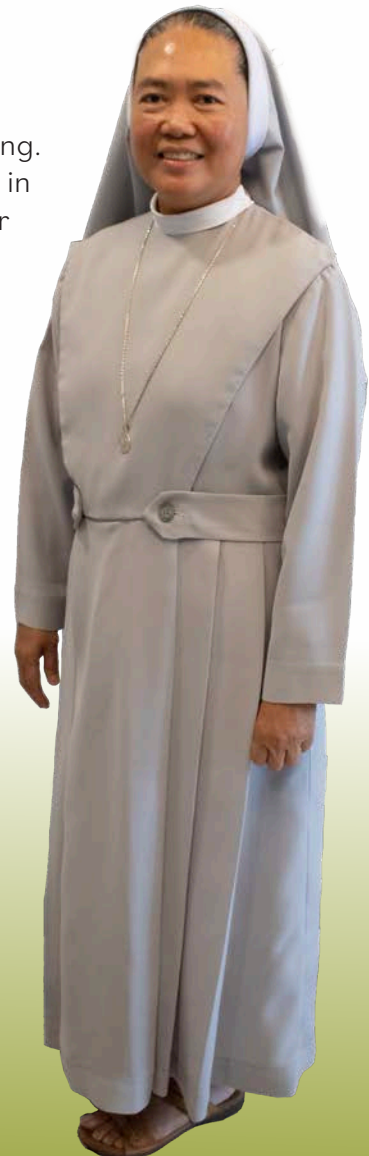
was born in the Philippines into a life of service. As the oldest of eight children in a deeply Catholic family, it seems her vocation was official long before she took the formal vow.

She was 18 years old, enrolled in a Catholic college near home, when she knew without a doubt she was called to a life of service. “There was a hole in my heart that wasn’t filled with my church and my home responsibilities,” Sister Norma explains. “I was yearning to serve the Lord fully and wholeheartedly, not fractionally,” she says.

Sister Norma is one of the Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy who live among the girls at Metanoia Manor in Zachary and serve as “surrogate mothers” to the

young victims of human trafficking. The safe haven was established in 2018, and Sister Norma and four others from her congregation relocated from New Jersey to serve in this mission.

Over the past five years, Sister Norma and the other nuns have nurtured more than 77 girls, all victims of sex trafficking, on their journey of restoration. Metanoia is now recognized globally and by the Vatican as a gold standard for operating a successful shelter.



**“Diversity makes you rich.  
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ways you do things where you’re  
from. Have fun with each other.  
Celebrate your uniqueness.  
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—Sister Norma Nunez



# AEKO

Tall tales swirl around the dynamic figure known locally as AEKO, (an abbreviation of his real name, and pronounced “echo”) everyone’s favorite—and only—server at Asian Pearl. And some of them are true.

No, Indonesian-born Asep Komar doesn’t own the popular Chinese joint on Main Street. He’s not really the manager, and he’s definitely not the cook. But if you heard a story some 10 years back about a Zachary couple honeymooning in Bali, dancing at a club, and they looked over and saw AEKO partying too-well, that one is mostly true. He says he wasn’t really “partying,” but anyone who knows and loves him for the role he plays in daily life in Zachary would agree, the story’s much funnier if you picture him dancing in a club on a tropical island 10,000 miles from home and seeing an Asian Pearl regular.

AEKO has a knack for remembering customers’ favorite dishes, asking them as soon as they’re seated if they’d like, say, the Mandarin Chicken again, with Hot & Sour soup and a Sprite to start. Remembering someone, making them feel important and appreciated in a basic transactional relationship – what a simple gesture that makes a world of difference.



*AEKO sits in a booth at Asian Pearl, where he has worked as a server for 18 years.*

Like restaurant servers everywhere, AEKO has dealt with rude customers. “I never respond in a combative way. I never respond in ignorance,” he says. “I like to show that you’re being served, you’re being loved, you’re being respected. If you don’t respect or love me, it’s not my problem,” he says.

AEKO came to the U.S. at age 20. One day, while working in a Chinese restaurant in Virginia, customers came in dressed in costume, and the personable waiter asked why. “They’d just come back from Mardi Gras,” he recalls. He’d never heard of it, but loved the way it sounded. As luck would have it, he got a call a few years later to help start a restaurant in Zachary. Here we are, 18 years later.

AEKO lives alone in Zachary, with no family anywhere around. “My customers are my family,” he says. “I feel included here. I’m so welcome, so loved. That’s why it’s my comfort zone. I’m stuck here!” he says, happily.



*AEKO’s big dream is to open his own Asian-fusion restaurant in Zachary, serving his favorite dishes from around the world, like sesame chicken from China and beef rendang from Indonesia—bringing the community together through a mutual love of food.*



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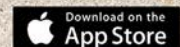
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As a financial professional who now specializes in accounting for small businesses, it's my job to help individuals and small business owners get their books in shape. If you're just starting out, the most important thing to start off with is organization. You need to have a method to keep your financial information organized and accurate to remain confident in your financial status. Quickbooks, Freshbooks, Excel and other budgeting tools can help you to organize your data to help you make wise business decisions moving forward.

When I started Cypress Financial Solutions in August 2019, one of my first clients was a business who "used" Quickbooks but had no idea how to actually use the software. They requested my help to get the books cleaned up and up to date. To put it nicely, the books were a mess. It took some work, but we got them cleaned up. Then, I set up Quickbooks to work with the tools they already had and trained the client on where to go to see and understand their financial picture within the system. They remain a client to this day, and Cypress Financial has been a key part to setting them up for success to continue to grow and succeed as a small business. The following pages detail the basics of financial literacy, as explained by financial professionals in Zachary we know and trust.

Contact Cypress Financial Solutions at 225.921.3314 or [abby@cypressfs.com](mailto:abby@cypressfs.com).



*Abby Hebert*  
Owner, Cypress Financial Solutions





# EARN FOR RETIREMENT



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For most retirees, two risks loom large on the retirement landscape — tax rate risk and longevity risk.

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To further complicate the issue, we are living longer than ever before, and many folks are likely to outlive their money or watch it get taxed into oblivion. But when traditional retirement distribution strategies won't provide sufficient income in the face of higher taxes, what can you do?

The message is urgent and the time to act is now. I work with my clients as their trusted advisor to help them shift course to unique strategies and prevent their retirement nest egg from being exposed to significantly higher taxes in retirement. The combination of guaranteed, inflation-adjusted lifetime income and a proactive, asset shifting strategy can shield you from longevity risk and the cascade of unintended consequences that result from higher taxes. It's an innovative and proven strategy that maximizes returns while

effectively neutralizing the biggest risks to retirement savings.

I don't have a crystal ball, but I can see the future consequences of unfunded obligations for programs like Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and government pensions, as well as the 6 trillion dollars in stimulus packages that increased our nation's debt to a staggering 31.6 trillion dollars. How is all this spending going to be financed? More DEBT! The tax freight train that is bearing down on your retirement just picked up

spend in retirement.

While this risk of higher taxes has loomed for quite some time, a second risk that very few Americans have thought about lingers as well: longevity risk. When it comes to sound retirement planning, you can't just think about market returns—that was critical during your accumulation phase. During your retirement years, it's all about covering basic expenses with guaranteed, inflation-adjusted income designed to last for the rest of your life. In retirement, it's not about assets, it's about income! Contact Brian at 225-572-6426.

“...and protect your nest egg from significantly higher taxes in retirement.”

a little more speed. Who is going to pay this tax bill when it arrives? Americans like you and me.

You may think you know how much is in your 401(K) or IRA, but unless you can predict what tax rates will be when you take that money out, you don't really know how much money you will have. Let's face it, if you have a tax deferred retirement account, you're in a partnership with the federal government, and they get to determine how much you get to



*Brian East*  
Financial Advisor  
The East Financial Group

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with *Mark W. Blair*



*Mark Blair*  
Dave Ramsey Certified Master  
Financial Coach

If you're anything like me, you probably get credit card offers in the mailbox every day. No Annual Fee! No Interest on Purchases and Balance Transfers for 15 months! It sounds great...but let's look at the fine print. After your intro APR ends, you're on the hook for a 19.24% interest rate. And with interest rates going up, that number is only

getting higher.

Credit card and loan companies spend millions of dollars each year on advertising for one reason: to get you in debt. Luckily, Debt Busters is here to give you the tools you need to break free once and for all. Dave Ramsey Affiliate Mark Blair gives out simple, but not necessarily easy, advice to walk you through the baby steps to financial freedom.

The first step is getting on the same page as your partner (romantic or business, as the case may be!) and making a budget that you will stick to every single month. You can't be walking down one path while they're running down the other - this has to be a team project. Next, you're working on building up your emergency savings and paying off that debt! Finally, you'll walk the very narrow path towards financial success, armed with those muscles you grew along the way.

If that sounds like something your family needs, contact Mark Blair at Debt Busters Financial Coaching on Facebook or call 337-945-0454.



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# PROTECT WITH PREPARATION



*Ricky McDavid*  
Title & Estate Planning Attorney

The majority of Americans lack the documents necessary for a well-planned estate to ensure that everything you own goes to who you want it to go to and your medical wishes are carried out in the event you're incapacitated.

There are two types of Power of Attorney (POA) necessary for estate planning – POA for Health Care and for Finances. The appointee should be someone you have the utmost trust in, as they generally have the same powers you would have acting on your own behalf.

## POA for Health Care

The POA for Health Care is a legal document that gives someone else the authority to make healthcare decisions for you in the event you are incapacitated, and is supposed to consider what you would want, so be sure to talk with them about it.

## POA for Finances

The POA for Finances lets you name the person who will make financial decisions on your behalf – paying your bills, handling insurance claims, even making the decision to sell your home. The ideal candidate for these positions is your spouse and/or a close relative who lives nearby.

## Living Will

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that every individual has a right to direct their own medical care, even if loved ones disagree with those directions. A living will is a legal document that makes known a person's wishes regarding life prolonging medical treatments. It is also known as an advance directive, health care directive, or

a physician's directive. A living will informs health care providers and your family of your desires for medical treatment in the event you are not able to speak for yourself.

## Last Will and Testament

A last will and testament, commonly referred to simply as a "will," is a legal document outlining how a person's assets will be distributed after their death, as well as the care of any dependents or pets. The executor of the will may be a family member, friend, or even a professional such as an attorney or accountant, responsible for carrying out the terms of the will. A will may also include instructions for the payment of debts and taxes, as

“No matter the assets, it's important to consult with a qualified attorney when creating an estate plan.”

well as any specific funeral or burial wishes. Without a valid will, the distribution of the deceased's assets will be determined by state law, which may not reflect the wishes of the deceased or the needs of their loved ones.

For some, it may be appropriate to use other estate planning measures, such as trusts. No matter the assets, it's important to consult with a qualified attorney when creating an estate plan.

David "Ricky" McDavid, Jr. is a native of Zachary with 14 years of experience in Estate Planning. He is a managing attorney at Cypress Title – Zachary and the owner of the McDavid Law Firm. Contact Ricky at 225-490-8780 or at [ricky@themcdavidlawfirm.com](mailto:ricky@themcdavidlawfirm.com). His office is located at 4470 Main Street, Zachary.

# PROTECT

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*Kyle & Kristi Watson*  
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As an Independent Insurance Agency, Ozark offers clients the flexibility to find the appropriate insurance products to meet their needs. They help find coverage for every aspect of a business, from the

physical building that it occupies, to employer liability protections. And to all those sole proprietors out there who are thinking that they don’t need insurance because they work for themselves from home, I have two words for you: Cyber Liability. If you’re hacked and your client’s data is leaked to the dark web, you’ll definitely wish you had bought a policy that protected you. Fortunately, Ozark can cover that too with a cyber liability policy.

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But Ozark does more than just business insurance. They’re also available to get you a variety of personal insurance products, from auto to boating to homeowners coverage. You probably know that Louisiana has the highest auto

insurance rates in the country. Having an agency that can shop for the best price and products across multiple carriers, while making sure you’re aware if you’re underinsured for our state’s particularly litigious culture, goes a long way.

If you or someone on your policy is involved in an accident, even a relatively minor one, the resulting medical and property damage bills can often be enough to bankrupt a family that’s underinsured. Ozark agents will work with you to figure out exactly how much insurance you need to protect your family’s drivers and vehicles, should the unexpected occur.

Insurance exists to make you whole after disaster strikes. Whether you’re a business owner looking to protect your company or an individual looking to protect your home, or maybe a parent of a teenager looking to put a new driver on your policy, today’s the day to get those protections in place. Contact Ozark Insurance Agency at 225-775-7614 or at [ozarkagency.com](http://ozarkagency.com).



*From back: Felecia McGrew, Kyle Watson, Ashley Brown, Launa Smith and Sara Koenig  
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Sales Agent

## YOUR HEALTH.

Picture it. It's a great day on the lake. You've caught a lot of fish and got a great tan. Life is good. You decide to take one final run on the wave runner. You try to impress your friends with a trick you really have no business doing and...disaster strikes. Your leg ends up mangled and it's emergency surgery and three days in the hospital. Worse still, you're not cleared to work for weeks! But, aside from the leg pain and the bruised ego, you're not worried. Why?

Because you have short term disability and supplemental insurance from your local Cecil Graves State Farm Insurance Company. You're covered for up to \$3000/ month to pay for your everyday expenses through the short term disability policy, and you got paid \$250 every day you were hospitalized thanks to your hospitalization rider.

Your local agents know you and helped you craft an insurance plan for just this kind of disaster. You're covered.

But maybe extreme sports aren't your thing. You'd never be

caught dead on a jet ski. Well, that same hospitalization and disability coverage can help with any other unfortunate thing life throws at you. If you get seriously ill and spend time in the ICU, you can rest and recover knowing that your bills are being paid for. And if recovery takes more than a few months, a Long Term Disability policy can keep your bills paid for years.

Health insurance is critical, but it doesn't cover everything you need if you get seriously ill or injured. To fully protect your family, supplemental insurance and disability coverage is essential. As they say in the insurance business: You don't need insurance until you need it, but then you REALLY need it.

To talk health insurance with a licensed agent, contact John Fabre or Hudson Hornsby at 225-681-5680



*cecilinsures.com*

225-681-5680

## YOUR LIFE.

"Life insurance is the most economical and efficient way to transfer wealth to the next generation and to create a legacy for your successors," says Cecil Graves, insurance agent and owner of State Farm in Zachary.

At Cecil Graves State Farm, we understand that life insurance and death is a scary topic, which is why some people avoid it altogether. Unfortunately, we've all seen family members have to set up GoFundMe accounts to cover burial costs of a loved one.

Life insurance can be confusing because it's not a shelf-type product that you spend money on to enjoy, like a house or car. But without it, the house, the car, the lifestyle can all go away in the event of an untimely death.

A life insurance policy can start with insuring burial costs of up to \$25,000, then move up to include liabilities, like the mortgage and a couple of cars. The most beneficial amount we look at is paying off everything except taxes, and including future income for 10 years for a spouse that makes \$50,000 a year. This allows the surviving spouse to continue to live off that income without having to change schools, church or neighborhood, or to invest and live off the interest.

The loss of a loved one is difficult enough. A life insurance policy can shoulder the financial burden and make sure your family is taken care of financially long after you're gone.

# PLAN PROFIT & PRESERVE



*Dennis Maciasz*  
CPA

Pop Quiz: Do you know the difference between a sole proprietor and a Sub-S corporation? There are a few minor differences and a few major differences. A potential entrepreneur should spend time with a CPA to help make the best decision. There are functions of running a business that the CPA proves to be invaluable, such as the function of sales tax reporting and responsibilities or establishing a retirement plan that best fits your business size and budget. How about the inventory controls

But maybe you don't have a business. You're just a guy or gal working a job and who has to pay your taxes every April 15th. A good CPA is still a worthy place to spend your money. Trying to DIY your taxes means potentially leaving thousands of dollars on the table. The peace of mind of knowing that your taxes were done correctly and professionally means you can spend your time thinking about more important things...like what to do with that big refund!

Preserving your financial security, wellness, and wealth is a big job. A professional relationship with a CPA takes some of that weight off your shoulders and gives you the tools you need to thrive, professionally and personally. If you're interested in getting started, contact Dennis at 225-658-0262 or email him at [dennis@dennismacy.com](mailto:dennis@dennismacy.com).

“Trying to DIY your taxes means potentially leaving thousands of dollars on the table.”

features of the company's software and payroll tax reporting? You don't want to get behind on payroll tax payments! If the answer to any of these questions is "no" then your business could definitely benefit from you spending a bit of time (and yes, OK, also a bit of money) with a CPA. Dennis M. Maciasz, CPA offers clients the assistance and guidance they need to plan a foundation that will help their business turn a profit. With services ranging from Quickbook Training and Tax Preparation to larger partnerships like Contract Controllershops and Monthly Bookkeeping, you can do what you do best knowing that your finances are being guarded by someone who does THAT best.



*Dennis Maciasz and his daughter Anna Tannehill, both CPAs at Dennis M. Maciasz, CPA located at 1215 Independence Blvd. Building 2, Suite B in Zachary.*



# BORROW

## TO BUILD YOUR BUSINESS



*Amanda Moran*  
Assistant Vice President &  
Loan Officer, Bank of Zachary

For most people, borrowing money at some point in life is inevitable. Whether it's to buy your first home, a used car for your teenager, or to fund your business, Bank of Zachary has been helping the community with all of their banking and borrowing needs since 1904.

Assistant Vice President and loan officer Amanda

Moran is the point person and expert when it comes to loan types and availability. Because she works on all loan files across personal and business products, she's had the unique opportunity to finance some families through their biggest moments. Like one Zachary couple, who financed construction of their dream home through Moran, who then went on to help their three children with their individual borrowing needs over the next few years. Mom Brandi R. saw a framed poster of the 1989 Sausage Festival hanging in the bank and commented that she'd been looking for a copy for years, since that was her and her husband's first date.

"We were able to find a copy of the poster, frame it and give it to her," Moran says.

Moran says one of the most heartwarming experiences recently was to help an elderly lady get preapproved to buy her first home. "I was able to get her an answer same day," she says. "She couldn't believe that she didn't have to wait to hear from us. It was so touching to see the joy on her face, to know she was about to purchase her first home ever, and she was in her 80s," Moran says.

It's the down-home feel coupled with the solutions-oriented, accessible bankers that creates lifelong customers at Bank of Zachary. "When you call, you don't get an automated system—you get a person," Moran says.

Amid Covid, she and a handful of others worked

their day jobs at the bank, then went home to process PPP applications through the early morning hours. "We didn't know when the money would run out, so we just kept working," she says. The phone rang off the hook with frustrated people on the other end, terrified of losing their business and unable to get through to a real person at their bigger bank. Bank of Zachary processed more than 550 PPP loans for more than \$40 million in funding to small businesses during Covid.



### TESTIMONIAL



Not that I haven't said many times  
how much I love the Bank of Zachary.  
But, I truly have the best and most  
personal banker in Amanda Moran!

— BRANDI R. VIA FACEBOOK

Most experts agree that taking out debt responsibly and paying it back over time is the best way to build credit. Unless you're planning to pay cash for everything in life, a solid credit score and credit history is necessary. At Bank of Zachary, high school students can open their first bank account, and speak to universal bankers or lenders about how to establish credit. While they do need to be 18 to borrow money, they can have a couple years' experience beforehand on learning to manage their money and checking account.

From a small personal loan to a hefty business or land acquisition, and everything in between, Bank of Zachary customers know they can count on professional, friendly service for all of their borrowing needs. Contact Amanda at 225.364.7898.



# THE LATEST IN ZACRE

Zachary Commercial Real Estate



*Mike Gennaro, CCIM*

Increasing interest rates caused the viability of many commercial development deals to evaporate, leaving only the national businesses undeterred. Not to worry – high interest rate environments spur leasing increases and more amenities. It’s no surprise that we are seeing TJ Maxx, Beall’s

Outlet, and Harbor Freight leasing at our most popular Community Center at the high traffic point of town. Starbucks is also entering the market on an outparcel.

Here’s a bit of unsolicited commercial leasing advice for landlords: Get your buildings in top notch condition to attract new tenants. Parking lots should



**Bird  
is the  
word.**

The tract owned by Engquist Developments, LLC., along the East Border of Americana may be the future home of a grocery store and a Chick-fil-a. Retail development contracts typically feature many contingencies – so **don’t count your chickens before they hatch.**

be clean, well striped, brightly lit and pothole-free. Tenant suite signage should match in make and quality. Exteriors should be pressure washed and well landscaped. One caveat is that improvements should be in line with post renovation net operating incomes. With net fees on the rise due to insurance costs, landlords need to approach occupancy in a cost conscious way.

## General Updates

Top tier office parks are at 100% occupancy or under contract to be sold as Zachary still struggles with minimal office/warehouse space. The Thurston Watts 8,100SF facility is for lease at \$5,000/mo. and is the largest warehouse available in city limits. The Sullivan Medical Office Phase II just unseated \$25/sf. triple net Americana for the highest price lease per square foot at \$29/sf triple net.

Mayor David McDavid is forming a new Economic Development committee, and national tenant brokers will be watching what strategic steps the new administration rolls out to compete for businesses.



*Scan to see Commercial  
Properties in Zachary!*

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-Chris D.



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*Founding Owners*

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# THIS MONTH

[ APRIL ]



@

# BREC

**ZIPPITY ZOO FEST** [Baton Rouge Zoo](#)  
April 1-2 | 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

**COMITE CLASSIC** [Comite River Park](#)  
April 1 | 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

**FLOWER FEST VOLUNTEER PROJECT**  
[Howell Community Park](#) April 1 | 9 a.m.-noon

**LET'S GEAUX TIE DYE** [North Street Park](#)  
April 1 | noon-2 p.m.

**CONTINUOUS EGG HUNT** [Independence Community Park](#) April 1 | 1-3 p.m.

**CAMP-IN** [Lovett Road Park](#)  
April 7 | 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

**ADULT GAME NIGHT** [Jefferson Highway Park](#)  
April 8 | 6-8 p.m.

**GLOW IN THE PARK: VOLLEYBALL** [Anna T. Jordan Community Park](#) April 13 | 6-7:30 p.m.

**PARTY FOR THE PLANET** [Baton Rouge Zoo](#)  
April 15 | 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

**ARTIST'S STUDIO: SKETCHING** [Baringer Art Center](#)  
April 21 | 9:30 a.m.-noon

**WILD WINE WALK** [Baton Rouge Zoo](#)  
April 21 | 5-7:30 p.m.

**SUNSHINE SOCIAL: DANCING IN THE RAIN**  
[Milton J. Womack Park](#) April 21 | 6-9 p.m.

**FAMILY GAME NIGHT** [Cedar Ridge Drive Park + North Street Park](#) April 21 | 6-7:30 p.m.

**ART UNWINED: APRIL SHOWERS** [Baringer Art Center](#)  
April 21 | 6:30-8:30 p.m.

## NOW HIRING FOR SUMMER JOBS!

[brec.org/careers](https://brec.org/careers)

**BR BIKE FEST** [Perkins Road Community Park](#)  
April 22 | 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

**FAMILY KARAOKE NIGHT**  
[Independence Community Park Theatre Lawn](#)  
April 28 | 6-7:30 p.m.

**HOMAGE TO A HERO: SEEDS OF CHANGE – WANGARI MAATHAI** [Baringer Art Center](#)  
April 29 | 10:30 a.m.-noon

**INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMY DAY**  
[Highland Road Park Observatory](#)  
April 29 | 3-11 p.m.



[BREC.ORG/THISMONTH](https://brec.org/thismonth)    

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Since 1983, we've brought the world to people, and people to the world. To every client who has traveled with us on a group tour, or booked through us for a vacation getaway, we say *thank you*.



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BATON ROUGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP WEEK

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**MARKETING STRATEGIES**

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