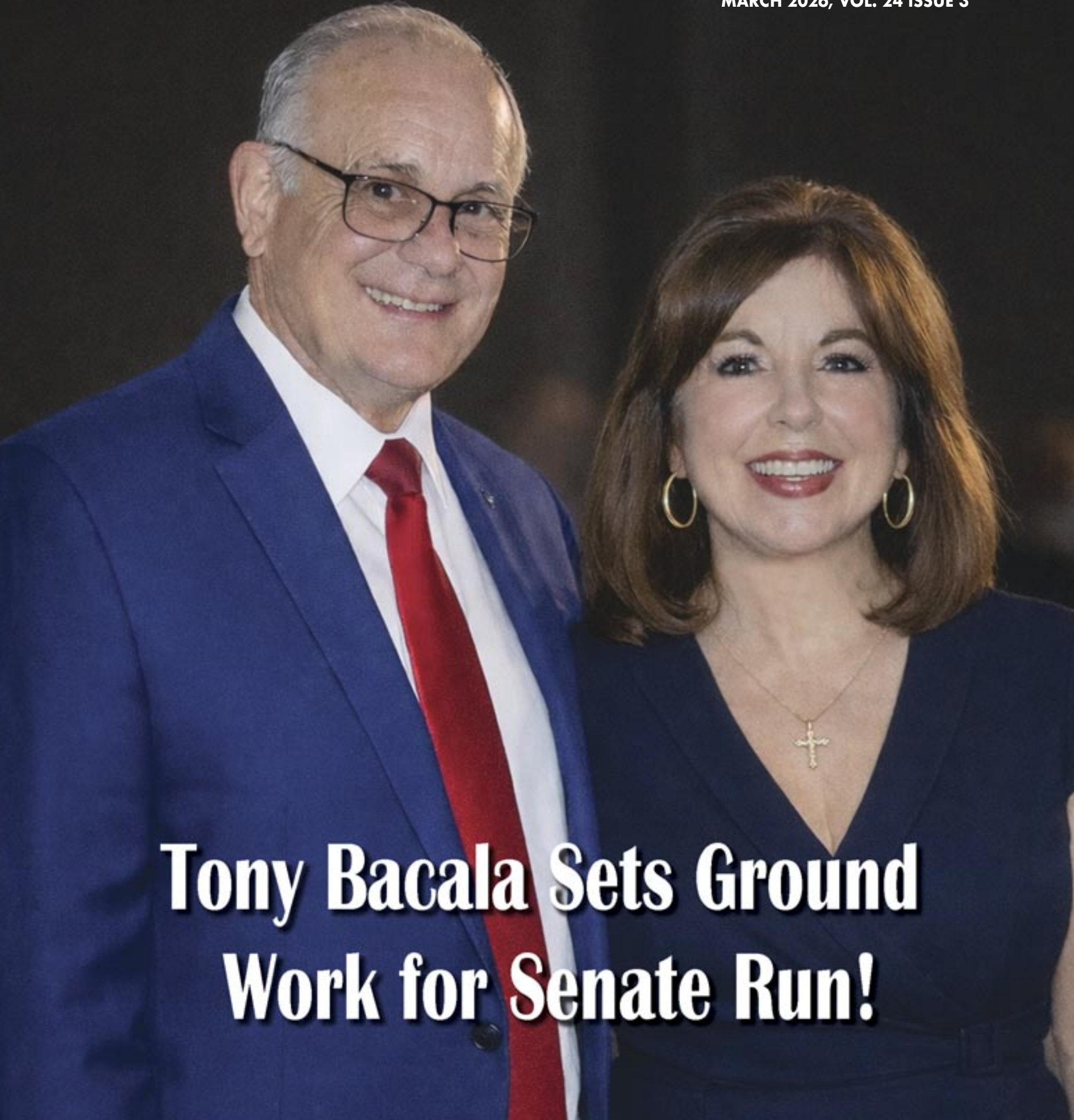


COMPLIMENTARY

# Ascension

## MAGAZINE

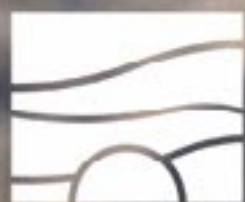
MARCH 2026, VOL. 24 ISSUE 3



**Tony Bacala Sets Ground  
Work for Senate Run!**



better goodbyes



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**ON THE COVER ... Tony Bacala with wife Lisa Runs for Senate .....**

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# Jambalaya Festival

The 59th Annual  
Gonzales Jambalaya Festival  
at Lamar Dixon Expo Center  
May 21st-24th, 2026

## Jambalaya Festival 2026 at Lamar Dixon

*A Special Thanks goes out to our Sponsors who make the event possible.*



We are getting ready for our 2nd year at Lamar Dixon and are looking forward to a great weekend. This is where we need to be. Parking is great and we also have places for VIP and Handicap parking close to the entry gate.

Having the cooking contest under the barns is really positive as we had a storm on Friday evening last year. Two cooking heats were in progress and we were able to keep cooking. If we had been in town we would have not been able to finish those heats. Also the folks that were there didn't have to leave, they were able to get under cover either in the outside barns or the inside of the REV building or Trademark building. Having the food vendors was also a positive change as we offered a different menu for everyone including the volunteers. We heard from folks about being to spread out so we are not going to rent the Trademark building to tighten things up. We also heard about the sound inside the building's and we will have only one stage this year and it will be outside under one of the barns. We will use the REV building for craft vendors and other events. The Car Show and 5K run are Saturday morning and the Carnival will start Thursday night.

I want to thank all the members and volunteers and sponsors that make the weekend happen and look forward to seeing y'all Memorial Day weekend.

*Mike Gonzales*

**GONZALES JAMBALAYA FESTIVAL**  
LAMAR DIXON EXPO CENTER  
**MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND**  
**MAY 21-24**

Jambalaya Cook-Off  
CRAFT VENDORS  
5K RUN  
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# 60 Years of East Ascension Baseball







The mayor, his staff, garden club members and EAHS Spartans studying agriculture celebrated a newly planted tree at City Hall.

## Arbor Day in Gonzales

The Gonzales Garden Club held its 58th Annual Arbor Day Ceremony on January 15 at City Hall. Mayor Tim Riley and garden club members were joined by Pastor Jarrod Lamberth of First Baptist Church of Gonzales, EAHS Agriscience Teacher Paidon Schexnaydre and five of her students. The students in attendance were Luke Johnson, Irene Morales, Kennedi Young, Matthew Keating and Lilah Womack.

GGC Arbor Day Chairman Janis Poche enlisted Administrative Secretary Terri Delatorre in managing the logistics of the tree planting. Assistant Supervisor Weston Barbour headed up the Grounds Technicians who actually installed the tree: David Russell, Matthew Keller

and Claston Bernard.

Several people spoke at the ceremony. GGC President Flo Hernandez welcomed guests. Pastor Lamberth gave an invocation. Mayor Riley greeted the group and presented the garden club with a framed Arbor Day Proclamation. He pledged to work with the club each year to commemorate a tree. GGC Member Gwen Heck spoke about the purpose of the Live Oak Society. Member Dale Bowman read a poem about an oak tree. Chairman Janis Poché presented the Little Gem Magnolia to the city as “an emblem of Southern grace and beauty”. It is a 2018 Super Plant.

In conclusion, the group gathered on the City Hall lawn

around the newly planted tree at the entrance of the parking lot. The magnolia is the fifth tree donated by the club to City Hall. Member Marilyn Rice thanked all who were a part of

the ceremony celebrating Arbor Day, especially the men who did the work and the students who supported the cause.

*The Gonzales Garden Club is federated by National Garden Clubs, Inc.*



Mayor Tim Riley presented the Gonzales Garden Club with a framed Arbor Day Proclamation.

# Get Growing, Ascension!

By **Schyler Thibodeaux**  
LSU AgCenter  
Horticulture Agent,

## Pollinator-friendly landscape plants

Spring is here! When planning your landscape, consider adding a few pollinator-friendly plants. Incorporation not only benefits your other plants, but it also creates a diverse ecosystem. Here is a list of recommended pollinator plants suitable for Louisiana and USDA hardiness zones 8 and 9:

**Butterfly bush** (*Buddleja spp.*). These flowering shrubs known for their vibrant blooms attract butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds and come in an array of colors.

**Milkweed** (*Asclepias spp.*). As the primary food source for monarch butterfly larvae, milkweed is essential for supporting monarch populations. It also attracts a variety of other pollinators. Look for the native species available in many retail garden centers.

**Salvia** (*Salvia spp.*): Try *Salvia nemorosa* and *Salvia leucantha*, which both produce beautiful spikes of flowers that are highly attractive to bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. *Lantana* (*Lantana spp.*). This heat-tolerant plant comes in a wide variety of colors. Plants bloom throughout the summer and fall with nectar-rich flowers.



Schyler Thibodeaux

**Coneflowers** (*Echinacea spp.*). These are not only visually stunning but also provide a valuable food source for bees and butterflies. Look for varieties such as *Echinacea purpurea* and *Echinacea pallida*.



**Bee balm** (*Monarda spp.*). These plants produce vibrant, showy flowers that attract bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. They also release a delightful fragrance in the garden.



**Agastache** (*Agastache spp.*). Also known as hyssop or hummingbird mint, Agastache plants produce long-lasting blooms that are irresistible to hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees.



Gardens must be located in Ascension Parish and contain at least four different types of vegetables. Judging will take place in May on sight by Ascension Master Gardener Volunteers.

Deadline to enter is April 30!  
To enter, please email [MLaiche@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:MLaiche@agcenter.lsu.edu) with your name, garden address, and phone number.



**Verbena** (*Verbena spp.*). This is a low-growing perennial with clusters of tiny, colorful flowers that attract a wide range of pollinators, including butterflies and bees.

**Coreopsis** (*Coreopsis spp.*). Plants feature daisy-like flowers in shades of yellow, orange, and red. They are highly attractive to bees, butterflies, and other pollinators.

**Penstemon** (*Penstemon spp.*): With tubular flowers, penstemon is particularly favored by hummingbirds. Bees and butterflies also visit these plants.

Schyler Thibodeaux is the Horticulture Extension Agent serving Ascension Parish. For more information visit [www.LSUAgCenter.com](http://www.LSUAgCenter.com) or contact Schyler at [SThibodeaux@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:SThibodeaux@agcenter.lsu.edu).

Photos courtesy of H. Kirk-Ballard, LSU AgCenter

<p><b>WHAT'S THE BUZZ?</b> <b>EXPLORING POLLINATOR HEALTH</b> with Dr. Morgan Christman March 30 6:30 PM Gonzales</p> <p>The next time you stop to smell the roses, take a closer look. You might spot a bee, butterfly, or beetle helping that bloom along. The populations of pollinators are under threat, and by making small changes in our gardens we can make a big difference. Dr. Morgan Christman, assistant professor of Pollinator Ecology at LSU, will lead the conversation about what we can do to help them thrive.</p> <p>To register call (225) 647-3955.</p>	<p><b>AQUAPONIC GARDENING FOR BEGINNERS</b> with Mr. Kenneth Rust March 24 6:30 PM Galvez</p> <p>Mr. Kenneth Rust, CEO of Enterprise Aquatics, is passionate about innovative and sustainable agriculture. Join us to learn more about aquaponics, hydroponics, and recirculating aquaculture. Learning to grow food smartly, efficiently, and locally has tremendous benefits and doesn't require a lot of space.</p> <p>To register call (225) 647-3339.</p>
<p><b>LOUISIANA LANDSCAPE PLANTS</b> with Dr. Allen Owings April 14 6:30 PM Ditchtown</p> <p>Looking to brighten up your spring garden? Horticulturist Dr. Allen Owings will share his recommendations for the best ornamental plants for our Louisiana landscapes. See plants in person and hear from the expert to learn exactly what each plant needs to thrive in our climate.</p> <p>To register call (225) 673-8699.</p>	<p><b>GARDENING Q &amp; A and PLANT SWAP</b> April 28 6:00 PM Gonzales</p> <p>Have a gardening question? Ask the experts! We'll have a panel of Ascension Master Gardeners ready to answer all your gardening questions. After the panel, you'll also have time to participate in our annual plant swap. Bring your labeled plants, cuttings, bulbs, or seeds to exchange with other local gardeners. Leave with lots of information and something new to plant in your garden.</p> <p>To register call (225) 647-3955.</p>

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- Louisiana Food Booths
- Professional Kite Flying Teams
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# 2026 Kite Fest

# Louisiane



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**April 25th**



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Saturday 11am till  
fireworks at dark

West Baton Rouge  
Soccer Complex  
3383 Rosedale Road  
in Port Allen



# YOUR ESTATE MATTERS



By Linda Melancon

## Why a DIY Will Might Cost Your Family More in the Long Run

When Helen was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, she made sure that her three children knew that her will was in a fireproof box in her closet like her attorney instructed. She and her husband hand wrote their wills years earlier after a friend told them that handwritten wills are legally enforceable in Louisiana and offer a way to save time and money. Her husband's will worked perfectly when he passed away five years before.

When Helen passed away, her children sat down to read her will, and they discovered that it only said "I leave my house to Dan, my oldest child." Helen wanted Dan to have her house because he was her only child that still lived in the area and expressed an interest in keeping the house. She thought that her will would leave other property to her two other children, even though it was not expressly written that way.

Helen's will did not mention her bank accounts, her husband's hunting camp that she inherited upon his death, or rural property she inherited from her parents. Dan's two other siblings were hurt, assuming their

mother meant to leave them nothing, and Dan was confused. What happens to all of Helen's property that is not mentioned in her will?

Louisiana law does allow handwritten wills, known as olographic wills. However, handwritten wills often do not comply with Louisiana laws about how pages should be dated and how the testator (the person making the will) should sign. These wills can forget to include the proper language to revoke a person's prior wills, which can cause the court to find the handwritten will invalid. The person creating a handwritten will often forgets to list some of their assets, which creates confusion between the heirs.

Dan tried to probate Helen's handwritten will, but his siblings, feeling angry and upset, both fought to prove it was invalid. After a long court process, the judge declared that Helen's will had no legal effect because she did not sign or date the will anywhere on the document. Helen never had will in the eyes of the court, and the rules of intestacy (dying without a will) now applied to her estate.

Intestacy rules divide property between descendants equally. The wishes of the person that passed away are ignored when intestacy applies.

Eventually, all of Helen's property was divided between her three children. The siblings sold Helen's house because they could not reach an agreement over who should live in it. The court battle between the siblings destroyed the loving relationship they once shared. Litigation over a parent's estate often divides siblings and families over petty arguments. Creating an estate plan with an attorney is one of the best ways that

a parent can prevent fights between their children later.

Many of people find themselves in Helen's situation. A trusted person tells you that handwritten wills are always enforceable in Louisiana and much easier and cheaper to complete than visiting an attorney. However, in addition to issues of improper execution like in Helen's case, olographic wills often ignore forced heirship, mislabel community property, or fail to provide for long-term care or incapacity concerns. Any of these issues are likely to result in the will being challenged or not working as intended. It's only after you are gone that the cracks beneath the surface become visible and your family has to deal with the problems left behind.

Estate planning attorneys ensure your will is legally binding, accurately reflects your wishes, and works for your and your family's futures. It

is more than a document that distributes your assets at your death. It protects your family relationships, provides clarity and direction to your loved ones, and – written correctly – prevents avoidable legal issues. Consulting a Louisiana estate planning attorney may cost more upfront, but it can save your family significant money, time, and heartache in the long run.

The information provided is not intended to be legal or tax advice and does not constitute any attorney/client relationship. You should consult with an attorney for individual advice regarding your own situation.

*The information provided is not intended to be legal or tax advice and does not constitute any attorney/client relationship. You should consult with an attorney for individual advice regarding your own situation.*

*Ms. Melancon is an attorney with Legacy Estate & Elder Law of Louisiana, LLC with offices in Baton Rouge, New Orleans and Lake Charles, LA. The primary focus of her practice is estate planning, probate, special needs planning, and elder law. For more information or to attend an upcoming estate planning seminar, call her office at (225) 744-0027.*

**Joie de Vie**  
**SALON**

Angie Decoteau

The owner of Joie De Vie Salon who has been a stylist for 39 years and started on her adventure as a business owner 19 years ago. Angie is from a small town near Lake Charles and eventually moved to Ascension Parish where her career flourished.

Angie is very passionate about her work, clients and employee's. She specializes in coloring and unique cuts.

When Angie is not at work you can find her hanging out with family and friends, laughing and living her best life!

"You must be true to your own heart or you will never really be happy"

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IT'S A PARTY ON THE RIVER

## March

- 20th – Northbound 55
- 21st – Adam Ledger Band
- 22nd – Brad Sapia Band
- 27th – Chris Leblanc Band
- 28th – Louisiana Landfall Band  
(Easter Egg scavenger Hunt)
- 29th – Enuf Band

## April

- 3rd – Petty Betty Band
- 4th – Spank the Monkey
- 5th - DownSouth Band
- 10th – La Southbound Band
- 11th – **SPRING BASH CRAWFISH BOIL**  
W/Chase Tyler Band
- 12th – The mojos
- 17th – Drunk Uncles Band
- 18th – Werewolf Band  
(6th Annual Boat Extravaganza)
- 19th – Rick Price
- 24th – Cover 6
- 25th – Kendall Shaffer  
(Amite 100 Poker Run)
- 26th – Justin Cornett

**EASTER EGG  
SCAVENGER HUNT**

SA<sup>T</sup>URDAY  
MARCH 28<sup>TH</sup>

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“Skin Boss”



Thank You!!  
Ascension  
**Bama's**  
**Feed the Needy**  
OF ASCENSION



It's been a great 20 years. We have supported thousands of families and we did it because we care.

With that said it is time for me to hang up my Bear Bryant hat and dissolve, 'Bama's Feed the Needy of Ascension'.

Bama ask his Uncle Perry and Aunt Susan how Christmas was going 20 years ago. Bama learned there were 3 families really down on their luck and needed help. That's when Feed the Needy of Ascension was started. Friends and members at the old Gonzales Country Club helped fund the cost of the pot of food cooked and they purchased plates. A total \$785 was raised and split between those 3 families for food and toys. Everyone who pitched in felt the spirit of giving and gathered each year to help more families. The annual event eventually left the Gonzales Country Club and moved to the KC Hall on Irma Blvd. Many thanks goes out to both of these organizations.



Here 20 years later a total of \$441,000.00 raised and distributed.

I am very thankful for so many friends who made this happen. Some have passed and others are available if I ever need anything. All are loved and not forgotten.



Thank You

*Bama*





# Louisiana Fair and Festival Queen Attends LAFF Convention.

*Ava Savoy, Makes Her Mark!*

As a Louisiana Fair and Festival Queen, I had the honor of attending the 2026 Louisiana Association of Fairs and Festivals (LAFF) Convention, held February 5-8 in Baton Rouge, as the 42nd Miss Boucherie & Balloon Queen. This convention allows board and association members from fairs and festivals across the state to gain knowledge on how to improve through workshops, resources, and networking opportunities. There are also showcases of bands that may be booked for future events, and fairs and festivals compete in categories such as merchandise, posters, scrapbooks, food, and more. Lastly, a queen's competition is held, where fair and festival queens compete for the title of the LAFF Queen.

The convention began with one of my favorite events, "Taste of Louisiana." During this evening, fairs and festivals

set up booths to serve a beverage, entrée, and dessert. The Boucherie & Balloon Festival served "Balloon Glow Punch," a strawberry lemon punch with a sugared rim. Our entrée was the "Bou-shi Roll," made with boudin, hog head cheese, and pepper jack cheese wrapped in bacon and topped with our homemade bacon jam and a jalapeño. To finish, our dessert was chocolate-covered bacon, which we call "Muddy Pigs." At the end of the night, everyone in attendance voted for their favorites. Last year marked our festival's first time participating in LAFF, and we were thrilled to win 2nd place for our entrée. This year, I am proud to share that we won 3rd place for both our beverage and dessert!

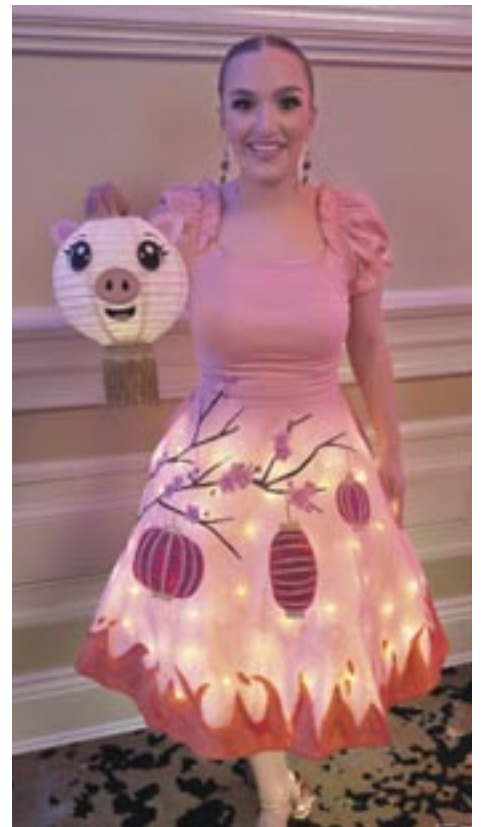
Each LAFF convention also has a theme. This year's theme, "LAFF For All Seasons," celebrated holidays and seasons. On the second



night, each fair and festival wore costumes demonstrating their interpretation of the theme, with the queens also modeling custom-made costumes. Since the theme revolved around holidays and seasons, the Boucherie & Balloon Festival represented the Lunar New Year's Year of the Pig.

The final day of the convention focused on the queen's competition. My morning began with interviews in front of five judges, followed by the evening pageant portion, where all queens, including myself, took the stage in our gowns. During this event, the top 10 finalists were announced, and each finalist answered an on-stage question. There were about





60 contestants in total. But before crowning the new LAFF Queen, Ascension Parish's very own jewel, Gracie Guillot, gave her final farewell as the 2025 LAFF Queen. Gracie, who also served as the 2022 Miss Boucherie Queen, has brought immense pride to our parish and represented Louisiana with grace and dedication. On behalf of the Boucherie & Balloon Festival, we are deeply

grateful for all she has accomplished, and we know her bright future will be filled with continued success. Gracie then passed down the crown to the new 2026 LAFF Queen, Emily Chiasson, who attended as the Rayne Frog Festival Queen. She will go down in history as the first-ever Rayne Frog Festival Queen to win the title of LAFF Queen. Additional awards were presented throughout the evening, and

the Boucherie & Balloon Festival was honored to receive the award for Best Pin/Button.

Our association gained a wealth of knowledge throughout the weekend, and we are excited to put these ideas into action as we prepare for our next festival in October. As the 42nd Miss Boucherie & Balloon Queen, I could not be prouder of my festival and

association. I am incredibly thankful for their support, encouragement, and all they have done for me throughout this unforgettable experience. Now, the preparation for this year's festival and next year's LAFF Convention begins!



## RETRACTION

We regret that the article on the Alzheimer's Ball in the last issue noted the event would benefit the Alzheimer's Association of the Capital Area that should have been reported as benefitting Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area, a local nonprofit serving the ten-parish

capital area. The organization provides education and support of the affected community and has a day respite program at Charlie's Place Respite Center in Gonzales.

**Barbara W. Auten, CFRE, CAP**  
**Executive Director**

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# FINANCIAL FOCUS

## **Four stages of raising confident, money-smart kids**

Good financial habits are a little like brushing your teeth. When you learn them early, they become second nature, and you carry them with you for life. And while money can feel complicated, especially today, the foundation starts simply.

Parents can begin the conversation with very young children, and young adults can build on those basics as they take on more responsibility. Step by step, these habits create confidence that helps

build longterm financial security and a more fulfilling life.

The following are the four key stages of financial growth.

**Stage 1:** For very young children, the goal is to make money feel simple and manageable. A great place to start is with three jars labeled “Spend,” “Save” and “Share.” When kids can actually see their money grow or shrink, the idea starts to make sense. Saving also introduces them to goalsetting, and working toward paying for a small toy or outing teaches patience. Most important, you’re helping your children see money as a tool they can understand easily and use with confidence.

**Stage 2:** If you have tweens (children roughly 9 to 12 years old), they’re usually ready for slightly bigger financial ideas. This is a great time for them to earn money through chores or small jobs, helping them see the connection between effort and reward and building a sense of ownership. Conversations about needs versus wants also become more meaningful, because kids are now making real choices with money they earned themselves. Your tween may be ready for a simple savings account to watch their savings grow, or a reloadable cash card for spending.

**Stage 3:** By the time teens reach high school or young adulthood, budgeting becomes essential. This doesn’t need to be overly strict or complicated. A simple system that helps them track deposits and withdrawals can make all the difference. Whether they use an app, a paper notebook or a spreadsheet, the real goal is awareness. Teenagers also benefit from learning how credit works. Understanding how to build a healthy credit score and how to use credit wisely protects them from costly mistakes in later life.

**Stage 4:** Then come the early working years, when habits shift from learning to building. One of the smartest steps at this stage is paying yourself first. Automatic transfers to savings or retirement accounts help establish stability without extra effort. Even small retirement contributions matter more than most people realize, because time allows compounding to do the heavy lifting. This is also when young adults can start organizing their money into different buckets for rent, automobile payments, emergencies, retirement and everyday spending. These habits help lay the groundwork for financial freedom down the road.

Throughout every stage, the theme is confidence. Each small success creates a sense of control and each good habit makes the next one easier. Over time, these habits turn into a lifetime of financial security and fulfillment. When you start strong and stay consistent, money becomes a tool that helps your children support the lives they want.

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## East Ascension Sportsmans League

Letter from president -  
*Greg Cedotal*

The first signs of spring have started to appear. New leaves on the oak trees with pollen in the air, on my car and in my sinuses. It's time to get ready for spring fishing, if you have not already started. And to that

point, EASL is working on having a Catfish and Bream Rodeo in May or June. Details will be coming soon. If you have a preference of a date, please let us know soon.

As for me, I am going to find an easy hiking trail to walk, a bench in the woods to sit on, watch wildlife and think about what I want to write about. Then go pull something out of the water, like sac-a-lait, bream, bass or catfish. Or go south and catch some saltwater species, too many to name in south Louisiana. My goal is to weigh in some specs and bass for the monthly Big Spec and Big Bass contest. Who will my competition be?

We are coming up on turkey season in April with the

Youth & Physically Challenged Hunt March 28-29, 2026, and spring squirrel season May 2-24, 2026.

Now for a little bit about EASL events. You must be a member to participate in these events. The EASL Bass Club will fish a two-day tournament on March 13th & 14th, then a tournament on April 4th.. If you are interested in fishing with the bass club in 2026 contact Jim Hebert at 225-717-6037. The 22 Rifle Silhouette Match will be held on the fourth Saturday of the month, March 28th, at the Sheriff Shooting Range starting at 8:30 AM. Don't forget to weigh your bass for the Monthly Big Bass contest and weigh your specs for the Monthly Big

Speckled Trout contest.

If you decide you would like to serve on the board of directors and help move the organization forward, let us know. You do not have to wait until December to become a board member.

Time to go outdoors with family and or friends and enjoy nature. Remember to be safe and conserve our resources for future use. Questions or comments you can email me at [gdced1@gmail.com](mailto:gdced1@gmail.com).

***EASL's next regular meeting is March 16th at the VFW Hall on Churchpoint Road, starting at 7:00 PM.***

# EASL Bass Club News

The East Ascension Sportsman's League Bass Club fished their first Tournament of the year on January 17th with the weigh in at 3:00 PM. There were 15 boats entering this event. The Tournament was held out of Doiron's on the Verrett side only. The

weather was overcast with enough wind to make for a chilly day. The fishing was good for the 7 boats that brought in a limit and the rest of the teams fell short of a limit. There were only two boats that did not weigh a fish in.

The winners of the Tournament were Dirk

Anderson & Corey Guitreau with a limit weighing 11.92 lbs.

Second place went to Tim Braud & Tony Arceneaux with their limit weighing 11.5 lbs.

Third place was Daryl Gautreau & his guest with a limit weighing 10.86 lbs.

The Big Bass winner was Dirk Anderson with a lunker weighing 3.52 lbs.

Congratulations to the winners of the January

Tournament. The next event will be on February 21st. The location will be determined at the meeting on Thursday the 12th at Dirk Anderson's home on Babin Road.

For more information about the EASL Bass Club, or to join the Club, you can contact Gary Christian at 225-315-6607.



L-R Dirk Anderson & Corey Guitreau



L-R Tim Braud & Tony Arceneaux



L-R Daryl Gautreau & his guest with a limit weighing 10.86 lbs.

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# Tony Bacala Sets Ground Work for Senate Run!

## “Louisiana’s Best Catch Fish Fry”

State Representative Tony Bacala held his annual “Louisiana’s Best Catch Fish Fry” fundraiser on February 20th, with a record crowd of several hundred in attendance.

Bacala, who plans to run for State Senate next year said that, “the fish fry is a great time

for people to get together for fellowship, with just enough political conversation to keep everyone updated on progress being made in the state.”

“It is certainly very humbling to have so many supporters joining us, and it is great reminder of the trust that our

community has placed in me to represent them in the legislature,” Bacala added

“As I continue my service to our community, I’m proud that our family’s commitment to public service is growing. Lisa has decided to extend that calling by running for

Ascension Parish School Board, District 4 Seat B, continuing her four decades of dedication to our local schools.

Together, our family remains deeply committed to serving the people of Ascension Parish.”









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## **JUNE**

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Saturday 6/13...10 AM  
Tuesday 6/16 ...10 AM  
Saturday 6/20...7 PM  
Tuesday 6/23...7 PM  
Thursday 6/25...10 AM  
Tuesday 6/30...7 PM*

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Tuesday 7/14 8 PM  
Thursday 7/16 8 PM  
Saturday 7/18 8 PM  
Tuesday 7/21 8 PM*

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# 12th Annual Swamp Chicken Cook-Off 2026

The 12th Annual Swamp Chicken Cook-Off was a huge success, and it would not have been possible without the incredible support from our community.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of our customers who came out to enjoy the event and show their support. Your presence, enthusiasm, and love for great food are what make this cook-off such a special tradition each year.

A special thank you goes out to all of the talented cooks. Your hard work, creativity, and dedication are the heart and soul of the Swamp

Chicken Cook-Off, and we appreciate the time and effort each of you put into making this event unforgettable.

We would also like to thank the sponsors who supported the cooks in this year's competition. Your support helps make it possible for the teams to participate and keeps this great tradition alive.

To everyone who attended, cooked, and sponsored a team in the 12th Annual Swamp Chicken Cook-Off—thank you for helping make it a memorable event. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year!



**1st Place ... Toby Luquette**



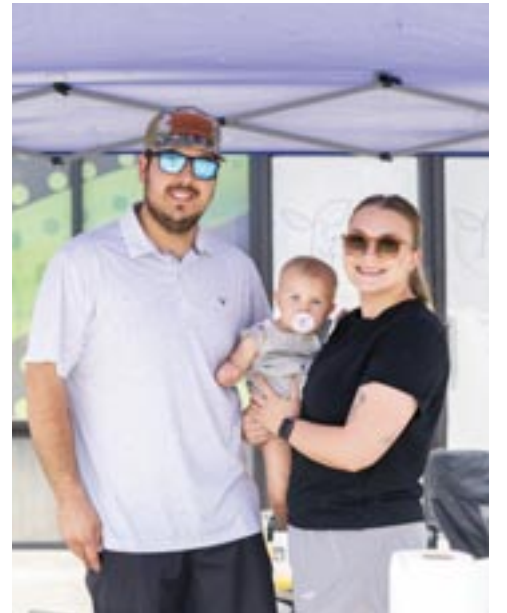
**2nd Place ... Damon Blue**



**3rd Place ... Jay Lambert**








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# Birthdays, Basketball and Brackets Or 77 Trips Around the Sun

by Bill Delaune

*"You say it's your birthday-  
it's my birthday too..."*

**The Beatles.**

"A little madness in the  
spring is wholesome even for  
the king..."

**Emily Dickinson**

I'm with you on that "little  
madness" idea, Emily. As my  
old friend Waylon Jennings  
used to sing-"I've always been  
crazy but it kept me from going  
insane..."

But the insanity that  
surrounds us this spring would  
drive even the Hatter from  
"Alice in Wonderland" to a new  
level of madness.

All you have to do is pick up  
a paper or turn on the news-if  
you dare-and watch the  
craziest show on earth-  
besides, of course, "The  
Masked Singer" which seems  
almost sane compared to  
current events. I mean-who do  
you believe? President Trump?  
Ghislaine Maxwell? Hillary  
Clinton? Vlad Putin? Stormy  
Daniels? I could go on and on  
but you know the drill.

Which is part of the reason  
my mornings are not spent  
with Fox or MSNBC but with the  
"Three Stooges" on AMC. If  
I want to see brainless  
comedy, I'm opting for Moe,  
Larry and Curly over this  
cosmic joke we have created  
on this third rock from the sun.

It was also the reason I found  
myself traipsing through an  
area formerly known as the  
Bluff Swamp to the steps of an  
establishment formerly known  
as the Alligator Hilton to seek  
peace with the all-seeing,  
all-knowing Sports Ninja.  
I found him on the porch  
wearing a "Country Joe

McDonald" tee shirt and  
listening to John Lennon plead  
to "Give Peace a Chance".

"This used to be a damn  
good country, Fishwrap,"  
he acknowledged me. "People  
even read magazines back  
then-like that antiquated  
production you and Bully put  
out. But I've been expecting  
you. That springtime  
depression usually kicks in  
around your March birthday  
and you've got a biggie  
this year."

"Don't remind me," I  
groaned.

"On top of that, your beloved  
LSU baseball team is playing  
like the Bad News Bengals,  
your short game in golf has  
more yips than an enraged  
terrier and you've had more  
losers at the track than a  
300-pound jockey. Add to that,  
your March Madness bracket  
is coming up and you haven't  
had a winner since the game  
was played with James Nai-  
smith's peach baskets,"  
he accurately surmised.

"You've been reading my  
mail," I admitted.

"Well, cheer up, Wild Bill, 77

is just another number and  
sometimes it can be good luck.  
Remember Red Grange-the  
"Gallop Ghost" who became  
the first great NFL running  
back for the Chicago Bears?  
What number did he wear?

"I believe it was 77,"

I replied wearily.

"Right you are," the Great  
One smiled. "So 77 might turn  
out to be pretty good number  
for you. And besides, I have  
some friends who are also  
turning 77 this year who have  
sent you some birthday  
wishes."

"That sounds great," I  
feigned enthusiasm, "but what  
about my basketball pool?"

"Still smarting over your hot  
pick Virginia getting knocked  
out a few years ago in the first  
round by a pickup team from  
Baltimore who had lost by  
44 points to Albany? Well,  
don't worry, I've taken care of  
that too." He was positively  
giddy now.

"Come on inside," he  
beckoned, "I have something  
for you."

I entered the one-time bar  
which had hosted cowboys,  
bikers, frat kids and everything  
in between in its day and  
almost tripped over a large  
U.S. Post Office basket full of  
cards and letters.

"Some of my acquaintances  
who were also born in 1949  
wanted to share birthday  
greetings with you-and, as a  
special present-give you his or  
her pick in the tournament."  
Ninja was quite proud of  
himself for his coordinating  
efforts. "Go on-read one."

The first one was from  
"The Boss" himself, Bruce  
Springsteen-"Your birthday  
pick was going to be  
Nebraska-after my 80's album



by that name-but that was too depressing. So I chose the University of South Alabama since I was 'Born in the USA'."

"But how did...?" I was stunned to say the least but Ninja was already handing me a handful of cards to read.

"I know people who know people," he explained simply. "Just read."

From former boxing champ George Foreman-"You don't have to grill me on this one. Put up your dukes and take the true heavyweight in the field-the Duke Blue Devils."

"But I thought George died last year," I said.

"Don't ask questions," Ninja scolded. "Didn't you watch 'Stranger Things'?"

From actress Sissy Spacek-"Being a 'Coal Miner's Daughter', I say take Kentucky and if they don't win, I'll do a 'Carrie' job on the gym."

Even politicians like Elizabeth Warren-"Happy birthday! I know you are old enough to vote because we're the same age. Please consider...oh, sorry, I was campaigning there for a moment. Being a Native American, I feel obliged to cast my ballot for the Florida State Seminoles."

From Olympic gold medalist Bruce/Caitlyn Jenner-"Happy birthday from both of us. Is this men's or women's basketball-I can't make up my mind."

Even drug lord Pablo Escobar sent regards (but no present, DEA)-"I can sniff out a winner from here to Columbia. So from the District of Columbia, I pick Georgetown to win by a nose."

From the star of one of my favorite bowling movies "The Big Lebowski" Jeff Bridges-"This birthday picking stuff is right up the Dude's alley. If you have time to spare, pick up Bowling Green and split. You won't strike out."

From smooth-singing Lionel Richie-"I'm going to tell you this not once, twice, but three times, Lady. Pick anybody but the Commodores-the group

went to hell after I left and apparently Vandy did too-and you'll be dancing on the ceiling all night long."

From slide guitar expert Bonnie Raitt-"Happy birthday to a fellow musician. Hope our hands hold out at 77. I can't make you love my pick, but take my namesake St. Bonnie (officially St. Bonaventure) and we'll give them something to talk about."

From former lead singer Steve Perry-"Good luck on your bracket Journey and don't stop believing no matter what happens. I really love my city by the bay so I'm selecting the Golden State Warriors to win it all."

And from a man of few words, San Antonio Coach Greg Popovich-"Spurs."

Sports Ninja was reaching for another batch when I grabbed his arm. "Ninja-I really appreciate this-I really do. And I know it's the thought that counts. But some of these teams are not even in the tournament and Steve Perry and Pop are picking NBA teams. Don't you have anything more solid more me?"

The Great One thought for a moment and said, "Do you know the guy on this shirt?" "Of course," I answered. "That's Country Joe McDonald-a rocker from the 60's. He just died last week. His band was called The Fish and all of their concerts began with the "Fish Cheer". You know- "Gimme an F..." and so on." "Correct," said Ninja, "except at Woodstock when protesting some government free speech regulations, they spelled out another four letter word that began with F."

"Easy, Partner," I interrupted, "this is a family magazine."

"Relax, Grasshopper," he laughed, "we're just letting Joe's band pick one last Final Four for us. Now when I start the cheer, you give me a team that starts with that letter, Ready, gimme an F..."

"Florida," I shouted suddenly into the spirit of the game.

"Gimme an I..."

"Illinois!"

"Gimme an S..."

"St. Louis!"

"Gimme an H..."

"Houston!"

"Good job,"

Ninja praised as I caught my breath. "You ended up with the defending champion, the runner-up, a probable 7-seed for your birthday number and a nickname that mirrors your own-the St. Louis Billikins for Wild Bill. Not too shabby at all." Suddenly he remembered another spelling system from years gone by. "Hey, remember the year we tried to spell out 'LUCK' with Louisville, UCLA, Connecticut and Kansas. Three of the four made it but Florida replaced Louisville and we got..." "Ninja!!" I cautioned again. "We got screwed," he snickered. His selection job done, he returned to the porch

with another handful of my birthday cards. "Hey, here's one from Meryl Streep-born June 22, 1949. She picks Michigan State because of their many role players. She should know-she's played every role there is to play. She's also smart enough to move a Tom Izzo team up one round higher than you think they will go.

Ninja was still amusing himself with celebrity cards as I started on Delaune and winding road back to reality. In fact, I could hear him laughing-even in my deaf ear.

"Hey, Wild Bill, Billy Joel-born May 9, 1949-picks your Cavaliers who doomed you in years past... He says, 'Come out, Virginia, don't make them wait...'"

Good luck on your brackets. I have a lot of options to ponder.

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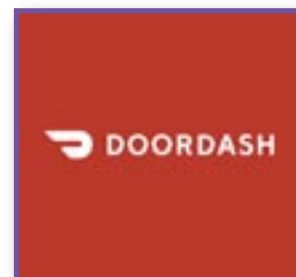
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# Jammin' with Goosie

## Set Netting

As I laid my second turkey of the 2025 hunting season on the tailgate of my old 1993 Chevy Cheyenne for a photo my mind wandered off into "Alright that was fantastic. What's next". Celebrating my success for a couple of days was in order for sure.

Managing my newly planted spring garden was inspiring. A



little bream and catfishing was something to look forward to but my main interest of the time was when would I be able to get out and do a little old style crawfish set netting. A week or so before that moment I had given a friend of mine, who wanted to take his young son out on one of those outings, the where's, how's, and when's to carry out such an adventure. He had since sent me a photo of his catch of a sack of mudbugs that his son and he had harvested on their trip out.

Plans were then soon made for my grandson and myself to head out to Sherburne WMA South Farm in search of the tasty crustaceans. I decided to hire a cameraman to film the event for an episode of Ascension Outdoors. A short time after the plan was set I purchased 10 lbs of beef melt from one of Ascension Parish's famous old grocery stores known as Lamandolas. Mother nature would not cooperate very well on the chosen day. As I viewed the weather on

television that morning I was greeted with the pleasure of going to attempt the event with a five or six inch rain that was taking place at our desired destination. I had other plans coming up in the following couple of days so after a lengthy discussion with the cameraman (who said he could make it work) and my grandson the decision was made to carry out our original plan.

The rain was still falling as we arrived at the designated parking area. Being that we were going to get wet anyway, my grandson and I made some of the preparations such as baiting the nets, loading the ATV and small trailer while the cameraman filmed from his open truck window. With the rain still falling moderately we headed out to complete our mission.

The person running the camera and the seventeen year old boy had never been on such an outing before. This process of catching crawfish involves wading out into the mud, vegetation, and knee deep or higher water to set and in a short time later raise the nets. It can be challenging to some degree but to be honest with you, the task can also be a blast to do. My two first timer companions did a wonderful job given the mission at hand. This method of crawfishing is the way that most of us older folks used to catch our mudbug dinners. A smile followed by stories of past experiences always accommodate the conversation when the subject of set netting comes about by those who have had the pleasure of doing so in their lifetime.

The precipitation made the filming a little difficult, causing delays now and then but after a couple passing hours our wishful catch of a sack and a half of bugs was complete. Just right. It was then time to head home and finish this wonderful day with a crawfish boil of our catch. In the process of using set nets you will find a variety of sizes of creatures from large to small and everything in between to deal with. From our harvest



I ate boiled bugs for a couple of days and with help from my wife we sat down and peeled four one pound bags of tails for future meals. Now I must say that's a big cash savings when you consider what the price of crawdads are usually at that time of the year. My total cost for that outing including bait and gas was only about twenty dollars.

The South Farm Unit is located on the east side of the Sherburne WMA. From I-10 west of Baton Rouge you would take the 135 Ramah

love these kinds of adventures that allow them to get wet and muddy and not get in trouble doing so. If you decide to make a trip out that way you will need an ATV or golf cart along with a small wagon to haul supplies such as bait, nets, picnic lunch, sacks of crawfish, etc. down the gravel roads that lead to the ponds. I've even seen someone use a riding lawnmower to reach the site. Also be sure to bring some bug spray, dry clothes and things of that nature. Always check out all specific



exit. These crawfish ponds are used for winter time duck hunts and youth lottery deer hunts. While I was sloshing through the mud and the muck I was constantly viewing flocks of woodies, teal and gray ducks that were using the area for a rest stop on their way back to their breeding grounds. Many different wading bird species are also common sights at location. The ponds, large in size, are drained and flooded in a timely manner for recreational crawfishing. The crawfish season begins on April 1st and closes on July 31st.

This is a great location to get out and enjoy some time outdoors with family and friends as you catch your supper. Young children often

rules and regulations in regards to the WMA's guidelines and please pick up and haul out your trash. Public access to places of this nature that allow you to enjoy this type of adventure are not as common as they once were.

There's not many things in the realm of hunting and fishing in which the outcome of your catch outweighs the cost of what it takes to do. For myself this is one instance where I can with a little effort come out on the good side of cost by a large margin. Give it a try in the future and see for yourself.

Till next time  
Hope to see ya there

James "Goosie" Guice

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***Useless Random Facts  
with Kellie***

•  
Kangaroos can pause their pregnancy during dry times until conditions improve.

•  
Termite queens can grow up to six inches long and lay 30,000 eggs a day.

•  
McDonald's serves spaghetti in the Philippines

•  
Oreo has made enough cookies to span five back and forth trips to the moon.

•  
In 10 minutes, a hurricane releases more energy than all the world's nuclear weapons combined.

•  
Barbie and Ken broke up in 2004. (They got back together in 2011.)

•  
Cap'n Crunch's full name is Captain Horatio Magellan Crunch.

•  
One man set a world record by putting on 260 T-shirts at once

•  
Mulan has the highest kill-count of any Disney character.

•  
The U.S. Air Force introduced Bob Ross to painting.

•  
The only real person to be a Pez head was Betsy Ross.

# Thoughts from Bully

## EA Jr. Varsity 1972 Team Wins Championship

In 1972 EA Jr. Varsity Baseball did a magical thing. We made it through the entire year with some basic skills and a little luck.

Here are a few stories that I can remember that happened to us.

We started the season with a few home games and did well. However as we made our first road trip to play Tara a powerful team. We were all a little nervous. Then all of a sudden from the front of the bus I heard Tommy say, "Look at Mike Strong sitting on a log, trying to get some booty from a old bullfrog!" The bus exploded with laughter. I had to send a come back. "Listen to Tommy he makes no sense but he could eat an apple through a picket fence!" When we arrived to the game. We were loose and played well winning the game.

We played our ballgames at the old park on burnside. It



was a little rustic with some low spots by the cypress trees in right field.

One day we got out of school early to play at McKinley High field. After seeing that field Gonzales Park was like Yankee Stadium. The diamond was out of whack. Our catcher needed a relay to get the ball to second base. There was a pile of broken bricks in right field. The bell rang so we had to stop the game as students walked a beaten path through the in field.

Once on the road to Central a batter hit a line drive deep to center field. David center throws to Tommy at second. The speedy runner was stretching the hit in to a double. Tommy caught the ball

but didn't have time to turn around so he put the ball in glove between his legs. The runner slides in to the glove for a out.

One Saturday we had a make up game but it was prom night. The game dragged on until it was 2 outs in the bottom of the last inning. Facing extra innings Paul Mayon was the last batter. He popped up to right field in the bright sun. The ball was lost in the sun and landed over the fielders head. Paul proceeded to get an in the park home run for the win 1 to 0. The ball had stuck deep in the soft right field mud and he couldn't find it. We Win!!! Let's go to the prom.

Lee High had a track star that batted 1st. He'd bunt or walk and in a blink he'd be standing on second. Paul, short stop and Tommy, second base had something for his Speedy Gonzales ass. A fist signal triggered the play. Paul gave the fist. Tommy approached second bringing Speedy back. Then he would return to his position. Paul would circle around while Speedy left the base again. I would, as pitcher count to 3, turn and throw. Boom. He was out. A couple of innings later he was back on second. Tommy gave the fist this time and he circled around and Boom, Out Again!

## Championship Game Goldsby Field Against Glen Oaks.

Saturday game day and everyones on the bus except my dumb ass. Tommy had to come get me out of bed. I say asleep, he says passed out. We grabbed the uniform and dressed on the bus.

Randy Hill was a hard throwing pitcher that pitched varsity all year. They brought him down for the championship and was eligible.

It was a hard fought game. Mike Rambin hit a triple and then a sacrifice fly gave us the 1 - 0 lead.

One out, bottom of the last inning, they have runners on first and third. The runner on first walked toward second to get in a rundown. I stepped off the mound and walked toward him. A rundown happened between Paul and Tommy. The runner on third tries to steal home. Tommy turns and throws a perfect strike to catcher, Mike Rambin. He stuffed the runner 3ft in front of the plate for out number 2. Then 3 curveballs later we won the championship.

Back then we didn't know what a dog pile was but we celebrated big time. I actually saw Coach Braud jump out of the dugout and run. Who knew.

We all have baseball stories and these are a few of mine.



**Standing L-R** Blaine Bourgeois, Daryl Fortenberry  
**Middle L-R** Steve Bentley, Juno Guedry  
**Front L-R** Rick Willis, David Vilemarette



**Standing L-R** Mike Rambin, Roy Williams, Paul Delaune  
**Middle L-R** Paul Mayon, Keith Arceneaux  
**Front L-R** Tommy Aldridge, Mike Strong



# Silas STRONG

Saturday, February 28, 2026, the Jambalaya Festival Association was proud to participate in the Silas Strong benefit held at the VFW on Churchpoint Road judging the jambalaya cooking contest. The judging team consisted of Layne Gautreau, Freddie Hurst, Mike Gonzales, Jr., Jason Braud, Clint Broussard, Drew Malina, Nick Prado and Julie Hurst. Many of our JFA festival members and cooks participated in the contest for this very worthy cause. Many thanks to Off the Grid Photography for documenting this event.

**Cooking contest winners were:**

- 1 st - Lane Blue
- 2nd - Greg Stone
- 3rd - Micah Carville

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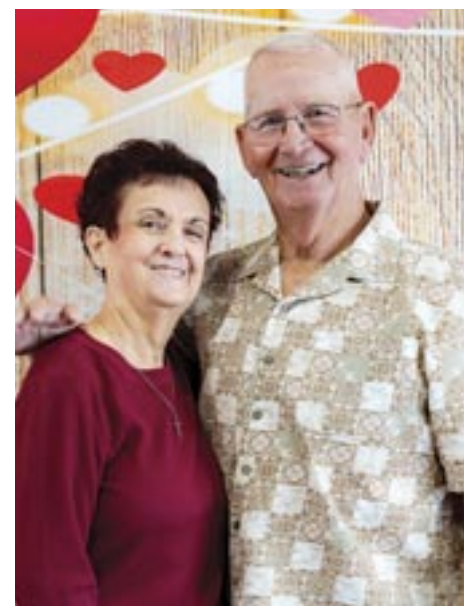
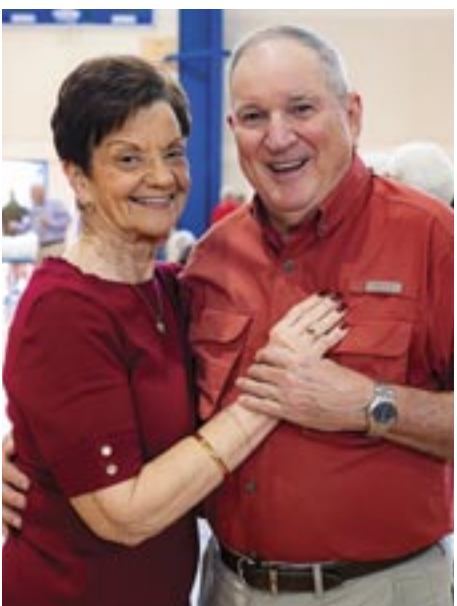
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### “After the Boil” Deviled Eggs



Executive Chef, John Donaldson

Yield: 12

Prep: 15 minutes

Cook: 20 minutes

Serving: 6

#### Ingredients:

6 eggs (hard boiled)

¼ cup mayonnaise

¼ to ½ lb peeled boiled crawfish tails

¼ cup green onions (thinly sliced)

2 boiled red potatoes (mashed)

1 tablespoon Creole mustard

1 teaspoon dry crab boil mix

Salt & Pepper to taste

1 or 2 corn cobs (cut corn off of the cob)

#### Method:

Peel all of your boiled eggs. Cut them in half length ways and carefully remove the yolks. Place all the yolks in a mixing bowl and add your mayo, mustard and green onions. Be sure that before adding your corn and potatoes that you chop and mash them as much as possible to ensure proper mixture. Finally, rough chop your crawfish tails and add to mixture. Salt and pepper the mixture to taste. Using a piping bag or spoon add the mixture back into the boiled egg halves. Sprinkle with dry crab boil and serve.

ENJOY!!!!!!

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