

SLEMCO

# POWER

MAR/APR 2018



## RAISING MUDBUGS

Crawfish are fattening farm families' profits  
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3420 NE Evangeline Thruway  
P.O. Box 90866  
Lafayette, Louisiana 70509  
Phone 337-896-5384  
www.slemco.com

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Cover photo of Hanks family crawfish boil by P.C. Piazza



Photos by P.C. Piazza

**S**LEMCO's 81st Annual Membership Meeting will be held on Saturday, June 2, at Lafayette's Cajundome. Attendees have a chance to win great prizes. Drawings will also determine who will receive \$40,000 in college scholarships.

Our day begins early. Doors open at 6 a.m., with plenty of hot Community coffee as you visit with your friends and neighbors. Coffee is free and the Cajundome will have other refreshments available for purchase. No outside food or drink is allowed, per Cajundome rules.

Music will start at 6:30 a.m., so wear your dancing shoes. United Blood Services will hold its annual blood drive at our meeting. Your continued generosity in this annual drive is always appreciated because of the

continuing demand for blood in our communities (Lucky Account Number 2060850001).

Prize drawings begin at 8 a.m., and winning names will be drawn until our business meeting begins at 10 a.m. Brief

reports from the company's officers and legal counsel will inform members on operations.

When the business portion concludes, our scholarship drawing will award college funds of \$2,000 each to 20 lucky students. Then, to end our meeting on a high note, we'll draw for our grand prizes. ●



## COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS CAN ENTER PRIZE AND SCHOLARSHIP DRAWINGS

**S**LEMCO commercial customers wishing to participate in the prize drawings should drop off a letter naming their company's authorized representative to SLEMCO's main office by June 1 (Lucky Account Number 4500739201).

After presenting ID on the day of the meeting, that representative will receive a

card for the prize drawing.

Owners of commercial establishments who are SLEMCO customers may also sponsor their children, themselves or a spouse for the scholarship drawing, but only if they own more than 50 percent of the company, corporation or partnership.

Proof of ownership is required whenever a business sponsors an applicant. ●

# APPLY NOW FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A SCHOLARSHIP

A total of \$40,000 in college scholarships will be given away at our 81st annual meeting on Saturday, June 2. Twenty students will each win \$2,000 to help pay for college. The process is easy, but you must apply before the meeting.

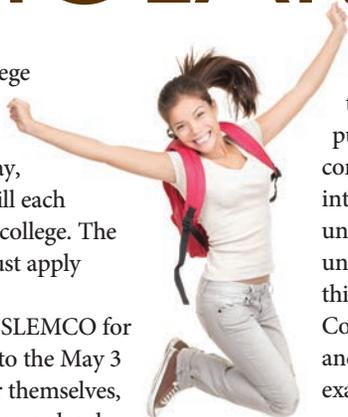
Members connected to SLEMCO for one contiguous year prior to the May 3 entry deadline can sponsor themselves, a spouse, dependent children or legal wards. Grandchildren are eligible only if they are the legal dependents or wards of members (Lucky Account Number 1120432000).

Applications for the 2018 SLEMCO scholarship program were included with all February SLEMCO bills.

You can also download the application from our website, [www.slemco.com](http://www.slemco.com). This electronic version is in PDF format. After filling it out, follow the directions on our website to e-mail it to SLEMCO or print a copy and submit it by mail.

Read the application carefully and follow all instructions.

Applications for the scholarships will be accepted until Thursday, May 3. Delivered entries and electronically submitted entries must be received by 4:30 p.m., May 3, and mailed entries must be postmarked by that day. Entries can be mailed to the SLEMCO Scholarship Program, P.O. Box 90866, Lafayette, LA 70509.



These funds can be used to attend any Louisiana public university—or community college that feeds into the Louisiana public university system—to pursue an undergraduate degree beginning this fall. South Louisiana Community College in Lafayette and LSUE in Eunice are two examples that are accepted.

Winners must have at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point average and plan to attend on a full-time basis (at least 12 hours) this fall. Technical colleges or private universities do not qualify and students must be at least high school seniors to enter.

IRS guidelines allow a parent to claim their college student child until the year he or she turns 24. We follow the same guidelines in awarding these scholarships. In order to sponsor a child, parents must still claim the applicant on their income tax return and the applicant must be under 24 years of age. Proof will be required.

Only one family member can win per year, but any eligible family member can

enter each year. Winners aren't eligible to receive the scholarship again.

We've already received several hundred entries. Even though the entry deadline is not until May, get your application in early so you don't forget. If you have any questions, call SLEMCO at 896-5384.

## YOU CAN STILL OPT-IN FOR PRINT VERSION OF SLEMCO POWER

We will continue to automatically mail *SLEMCO Power* to every member through our May/June issue. But beginning with our July/August issue, *SLEMCO Power* will only be mailed to members who specifically request a printed copy. As always, *SLEMCO Power* will also be available in its digital PDF version via [www.slemco.com](http://www.slemco.com).

If you wish to continue to receive a printed copy of *SLEMCO Power* after the May/June 2018 issue, but failed to send in the card from the January/February issue, call 337-896-5200 and we will code your account to continue receiving the mailed version of the magazine (Lucky Account Number 3126735000).

We will continue to post *SLEMCO Power* on our website and will even include a link on our Facebook page so the magazine can be read electronically.

## LUCKY NUMBER WINNERS

Two lucky SLEMCO members called in to claim a \$50 prize for finding their account numbers hidden in *SLEMCO Power* magazine. They were **Ellis Peyton** of Crowley and **Kennon Thibodeaux** of Arnaudville.

Eight other members missed out on \$50 prizes, including **Kenneth Lavergne** of Lafayette, **Alex Lopez** of Youngsville, **Kalen Lewis** of Leonville, **Lisa Hebert** of Jennings,

**Nellie Olivier** of Arnaudville, **Hoang Nguyen** of Broussard, **Dayna Theriot** of Breaux Bridge and **Michael Faulk** of Crowley (Lucky Account Number 4501106600).

Ten more numbers are hidden in this issue. Check to see if your account number is hidden in this issue. If it is, call Michelle Courvelle at 896-2504. Once she verifies you are a winner, she'll credit \$50 to your SLEMCO account. Good luck!



### SLEMCO 2018 NOMINATING COMMITTEE

**Acadia Parish**—Donald Higginbotham, P.O. Box 643, Church Point, LA 70525

**Lafayette Parish**—Dale Denais, 1209 Bourque Road, Duson, LA 70529

**St. Martin Parish**—Georgia Blanchard, 2486 Doyle Melancon Road, Breaux Bridge 70517

**St. Landry Parish**—Al Boudreaux, 365 Gentry Drive, Washington, LA 70589

**Vermilion Parish**—John T. Landry, 211 S. Hollingsworth Drive, Abbeville, LA 70510

The committee will meet April 3, 2018, at 9:30 a.m. at the SLEMCO office, 3420 NE Evangeline Thruway, Lafayette, LA.

(s) Bryan G. Leonards, Sr., *Board Secretary*

**WINNERS NOW RECEIVE \$50 CREDITS!**

# FARM FAMILIES FIND FRESH PROFITS IN CRAWFISH

BY MARY LAURENT  
PHOTOS BY P.C. PIAZZA

Social media posts from Michigan last summer described the crawfish, our much-loved crustacean, as a threat to the ecosystem and fishing industry of the Wolverine State. Seriously? Befuddled Louisianians were soon laughing about Michigan's "serious problem," offering advice on what to do with the little critters and the profitability of embracing the arrival of what was described as the "aggressive Louisiana crayfish."

Travel Lafayette, in true Cajun fashion, soon sent a delegation to Vicksburg, Mich., for a pop-up festival called Cray Day. The tourism and convention organization hoped to teach the Michigan Department of Natural Resources all about these tasty critters, a menu item guaranteed to create long waiting lines at Louisiana restaurants every January through June.

According to the Louisiana Crawfish Promotion and Research Board, the combined annual yield of pond-raised and wetland crawfish ranges from 120 to 150 million pounds, contributing a spicy \$300 million each year to Louisiana's economy.

Here in Cajun Country, many of our farmers, seafood processors and restaurants have been able to expand operations and secure their profitability through diversifying to include crawfish.

Acadiana farmers and, often, their entire families have embraced the tasty mudbug as a way to help their farms survive and thrive. For these farm families, raising crawfish teaches the benefits of hard work, the value of cooperation and better business principles.

Laura Hebert of Maurice is a fourth-generation rice farmer. Like many rice farmers, she also farms crawfish. Laura began working with her dad Dane Hebert during her last three semesters in college. Under her father's guidance, at 25, she's leasing her own acreage.

"I don't see myself doing anything else," Laura said. "For me, farming is a way of life. I've learned how to service equipment, make cage repairs, be self-disciplined, work hard and stay motivated."

Her dad is extremely proud of her hard work and determination: she is the only one of her siblings to embrace farming as a way of life.

Dane explained that it's hard to encourage your kids to farm when you know its difficulties. "There are no guarantees and you aren't going to get rich," he said.

"Success is paying your bills and raising a family."

Laura recently went to a rice outlook conference and watched as a woman farmer got an award.

"Seeing her succeed was very encouraging; I'd like to be like her someday and show women they can do anything they want."

Though many crawfish farmers start out as rice farmers, the Durand family in St. Martinville actually started with crawfish as their main crop (Lucky Account Number 2126042500).

"The land we farm was originally part of the Atchafalaya Basin before the levees were built," explained Jeff Durand, one of nine siblings who now own Durand Farms and Teche Valley Seafood. "The lower elevation and heavy clay soil wasn't good for cane."

The family began by building crawfish ponds for others in the 1960s. The Durands began farming their own crawfish in the early 1970s and the majority of their business now is live crawfish for the wholesale and retail markets. In 1983, they expanded with the establishment of Teche Valley Seafood.

They processed tail meat until the arrival of imported crawfish



Crawfish farmer Laura Hebert of St. Martinville



St. Martinville's Durand family (from left) Connie Durand, Greg Durand, Jo-Anna Durand, Jeff Durand, Margo Babin, C.J. Durand

tails severely undercut the price of Louisiana crawfish.

The Durand clan also sells to peeling plants, produces a crawfish purée that can be blended into any crawfish recipe and provides whole, boiled frozen crawfish that is sold and shipped out of state. Diversifying into multiple niche markets has helped them to survive and prosper.

The Durands, like so many of the crawfish families we visited, take quality control seriously (Lucky Account Number 2054161002).

“We are best known for our high quality crawfish,” explains sister and partner Margot Durand Babin. “We make sure they are clean so they stay alive longer.”

**B**ut not everyone in the crawfish business is a farmer. Adam Johnson, one of the owners of Bayou Land Seafood in Cecilia, was a finance major in college and a buyer for a food service company in 2000 when the opportunity arose to buy the family business.

“We are very proud of our Cajun ancestry and culture,” Adam said. “When the opportunity



Adam Johnson of Bayou Land Seafood in Cecilia

came up to buy the business, my wife and I decided to take the chance.”

“We purchase and process crawfish,” he continued. “We sell live crawfish, tails and whole boiled crawfish that are shipped out of state.”

Bayou Land sells packaged tails both wholesale and retail. Once the season gets underway, they process the smaller tails, saving the larger live crawfish for buyers to boil.

“We put our best quality on the road and process the rest,” Adam said.

“When the season is going, we have roughly 50 employees processing tails for market.”

**S**ome crawfish farmers are committed to farming only crawfish: any rice they plant in their ponds is for stubble to feed their mudbugs.

Farming in the Justice community, Troy Hanks and his brother Chad each raise crawfish, and Troy handles marketing. They’ve been selling to both the public and wholesalers for over 30 years.

“We got into crawfish to sustain the family farm,” Troy explained. “Our dad started in the early 1970s. This will be my way of life until God stops me from being able to do it anymore.”

**A**nother farmer who has made the decision to stick solely with crawfish is David Savoy, owner of Savoy Farms in Richard.

He, too, plants rice only for the stubble and follows a very detailed calendar to ensure a quality crop of crawfish each year. He quit rice production due to increasing costs. Now he sells both live and processed tails to the wholesale and retail markets.

“We end the season each June, somewhere between the 7th

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Justice crawfish farmer Troy Hanks



Employees process tail meet at Savoy Farms in Richard.

of a challenge?

“It’s all about family,” Katherine explains. “My mom—who is 88—all of our kids and my sister take part in the restaurant. We wanted to find another way to market our crawfish. Our six boys knew we’d have to get more crawfish into the market and urged us to open the restaurant.”

“The kids have learned a lot about life, work and determination,” Michael said. “Each one of us is personally invested in the restaurant, whether it’s serving as a hostess, bartender or boiler. This is a *family* restaurant.”

At Mo’ Crawfish-N-Mowata, customers find a true farm-to-table restaurant nestled in the prairie near Eunice. And every item on the menu is named after one of the Hundley children (Lucky Account Number 4500829404).

“We know people can eat anywhere,” Katherine said. “We are so thankful that people choose to come here, we don’t turn off our pots until everyone has eaten and don’t turn the lock at 9 p.m. And, as I always say about our service and quality food, it’s a whole lot Mo!”

Continued from page 5 and 15th,” he said. “Then we drain the ponds, plant rice, fix levees, make repairs to roads, traps and equipment and get ready to fill the ponds in September.”

Usually in December, but sometimes as early as November, David starts harvesting crawfish. Processing begins at Easter (Lucky Account Number 4515978701).

He was leaving 20 percent of his product in the field before adding processing to his business about four-and-a-half years ago. Now his employees process excess product or any not meeting his standards for the live market.

“I insist on a clean, fresh, high-quality product,” he explained. “The crawfish I fish for processing are no more than one day old: I want to make sure you can pour our tails straight from the bag to the pot.”

If you think the theme of quality, diversification and sustaining a farm for future generations seems to run through the minds of every crawfish farmer we’ve visited, you’re correct. Then there’s the work ethic, determination and will to survive that harkens back to our Cajun ancestors, exiled here over 200 years ago.

Family was the single most important topic in our visit with the Michael Hundley family of Eunice, from mom Katherine to each of their eight children.

The Hundley family farms rice, soybeans and crawfish. They also operate Mo’ Crawfish-N-Mowata, a seasonal restaurant located in the old Mowata Store, open each year when the quality and quantity of crawfish are most abundant. The farm’s largest crawfish are purged and sent to the restaurant, the remainder to two buyers, one of whom processes tail meat.

Why dedicate time and effort to a restaurant when farming is already enough

Crawfish have become much more than a seasonal delicacy to many farm families in southwest Louisiana, more a means to an end to their survival, growth and diversification.

We think folks from Michigan ought to come down here during crawfish season and order a few pounds to sample.

Who knows? They may return home to start a whole new farming industry!



A seasonal restaurant, Mo’ Crawfish-N-Mowata, is part of the Hundley Farm’s operations near Eunice.

These recipes come from New Orleans' School of Cooking's **Across the Table**, featuring recipes and stories by Anne Leonhard and Harriet Robin, available from <http://store.nosoc.com/across-the-table>, for \$24.95 plus applicable tax and shipping.

## Death on a Toothpick

1/2 lb. bacon, slice bacon strips in half  
24 large dates, seeds removed  
24 pecan halves, plain or honey roasted

Preheat oven to 350°. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, cook bacon until limp. Remove from heat and drain. Stuff each date with a pecan half. Wrap each date with a strip of bacon and secure with a toothpick. Repeat until all dates are wrapped. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper and arrange wrapped dates on the pan. Bake until bacon is crispy and dates are heated through, about 10 to 12 minutes. Remove and drain on a paper towel. Serve warm.

*Note: Soak toothpicks in water to keep them from burning in the oven.*

## Crawfish & Cheese in Puff Pastry

6 puff pastry shells  
4 tbsp. butter  
1 bunch green onions, finely chopped  
1 bunch parsley, finely chopped  
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
2 cups heavy cream  
3/4 cups smoked Gouda cheese, shredded  
2 tsp. creole seasoning, or more to taste  
1/4 tsp. cayenne  
1 lb. Louisiana crawfish tails  
1/2 cup cream sherry

Preheat oven to 350°. Bake pastry shells according to directions. Discard center portion after baked. Keep warm. In a large skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the green onions, parsley and garlic. Sauté three minutes. Slowly blend in the cream, cheese and seasonings. Stir continuously until the cheese melts. Add the remaining ingredients except the crawfish. Continue cooking until the sauce thickens enough to coat the back of the spoon. Add the crawfish and sherry.

Cook for 5 minutes. Adjust seasonings if necessary. Ladle hot crawfish mixture directly into the pastry shells and serve. It's okay if some dribbles out and over—it's picturesque!

*Note: This recipe also works well with shrimp and both versions work well over pasta.*

## Daube & Spaghetti

4 tbsp. vegetable oil  
3 lb. chuck roast  
6 cloves garlic, divided  
3 tbsp. creole seasoning  
1/4 cup all-purpose flour  
2 cups onions, finely chopped  
1 cup celery, finely chopped  
1/2 cup green, red, orange or yellow bell pepper, finely chopped  
1 cup parsley, finely chopped and divided in half  
1 cup green onions, finely chopped and divided in half  
1 (15 oz.) can tomato sauce  
3 cups chicken stock  
1 lb. spaghetti  
Butter and olive oil to toss in cooked spaghetti

Heat a Dutch oven over medium-high heat for 3 to 5 minutes. Add vegetable oil to heated pot. Stuff chuck roast with 3 cloves of garlic (which have been halved) by cutting slits in the meat then pushing the garlic in. Season meat with creole seasoning. Put roast in hot pot and brown on all sides. When the pot releases the meat on one side (about 3 to 4 minutes), turn over and brown the opposite side. When brown on both sides, remove from pot and put aside.

Keeping the pot on medium heat, sprinkle flour over the oil and stir to make a roux. You may have to add a little more oil to make a smooth roux. Stir constantly, scraping up all the brown bits. When the roux is the color of dark peanut butter add onions, celery and bell pepper. Cook until onions are soft, about 5 to 7 minutes. Add garlic, green onion and parsley and 1 tbsp. creole seasoning. Continue to cook for about 2 minutes. Add tomato sauce and 2 cups of chicken stock. Stir to blend. If too thick, add more chicken stock. Return

meat to the pot, cover and simmer for 2 to 3 hours until meat is tender. Cook spaghetti according to package directions. Drain and add a little olive oil and butter to keep spaghetti separated.

*Note: Daube is a real Creole dish and can also be served over rice or mashed potatoes.*

## Forbidden Fruit Punch

1 large pineapple, peeled and cut into bite-sized pieces  
2 (16 oz.) containers strawberries (fresh or frozen)  
1 fifth brandy  
1 fifth good bourbon, chilled  
2 bottles champagne (750ml each) to get started, chilled

Put pineapple and strawberries in a large container. Cover with brandy, seal container with lid and place in refrigerator. Refrigerate for two days.

To serve, in a large punch bowl, combine chilled bourbon and chilled champagne. Add fruit and brandy. Stir to mix. Serve over ice and garnish with fruit.

As liquid dwindles, keep adding champagne. Be cautious of the fruit, it is full of liquor and can be a big surprise!

## Praline Mini Muffins

1 cup brown sugar (dark or light), packed  
1 cup pecans, finely chopped  
1/2 cup all-purpose flour  
1 1/2 sticks butter, melted  
2 eggs, beaten  
1/4 tsp. salt

Preheat oven to 350°. Mix all ingredients together and spoon into well-greased mini muffin tins. Bake 15 to 20 minutes until golden brown. Remove from oven, turn over tin and ease muffins onto a wire rack to cool. Yield: 24 muffins

*Note: Do not use muffin paper liners.*

For extra copies of these recipes or to e-mail a copy to a friend, visit *SLEMCO Power* magazine online at [www.slemco.com](http://www.slemco.com).

# CAREFUL TREE PLANTING AND PRUNING HELP PROTECT YOUR ELECTRICAL SERVICE

**N**o one wants to be without power after a storm. But when trees are planted too close to power lines, major problems can arise in the wake of high winds and severe weather.

Some thoughtful planning before you grab your shovel will protect your investment in your trees while ensuring uninterrupted electrical service for you and your neighbors.

Keep two things in mind when planting and maintaining the trees on your property: allow for full growth and eliminate potential problem branches before arrival of severe weather.

## ALLOW FOR FULL GROWTH

Before planting, make sure that the height of your tree at maturity won't interfere with nearby power lines. Looking at a sapling, it's easy to underestimate how much space it will claim in 20 or 30 years as a majestic live oak.

According to Jim Foret, a local licensed consulting arborist, the key to avoiding such problems is understanding the characteristics of the tree you're planting and how trees grow.

Before purchasing a tree, know what to expect, he said. It's easy to find the width and height each species of tree is capable of reaching.

"The International Society of Arboriculture has great information on everything from tree selection and planting, to care and pruning, at the website [www.treesaregood.com](http://www.treesaregood.com)," Foret noted.

## ELIMINATE PROBLEM BRANCHES

It's easiest to avoid planting a new tree in the wrong spot. But over the years, many pre-existing trees may have grown close to power lines.

If you see a potential problem with a tree near power lines on your property, call SLEMCO. It's better to remove a stray limb interfering with power lines now, before it causes an outage during a major storm. Trimming now is safer for the tree and for your neighborhood's electric service.

"Our trees evolved in woodlands," Foret explained. "When we try to grow trees in the open, with light on all sides, instead of growing up they tend to grow unnaturally to the side—either too wide or with double trunks—and therefore tend to fall apart when older.

"You should lightly trim your tree for the first time as soon as you plant it," Foret said, "because it came from the nursery with flaws and defects. This 'training' should continue for the life of the tree. As they grow, continue trimming to avoid growth of excessively-wide side branches. The tree's structure can't handle the weight, so don't wait until they break, keep pruning as the tree continues to grow."

## SOURCE OF POWER BLINKS

Stray branches that might touch power lines can cause other problems. Special devices are built into the electrical distribution system that cause power to temporarily go out whenever a power line comes into contact with a foreign object, such as a tree limb brushing against the line.

These devices offer increased safety in the event of accidents and help minimize damage to electric lines, reducing repair time. [Caution: always assume any downed power line is dangerous! Report

the problem to SLEMCO and keep well clear until it has been repaired.]

When a power line contacts a foreign object, these safety devices cause power to go off momentarily and then come back on. If the foreign object is still in contact with the line, power will again go off briefly. When the power comes back on, if the fault (the foreign object coming into contact with the line) has cleared, the power will stay on. If not, the power will go off again and stay off. This can cause power "blinks"

you may notice occasionally at your home or business.

These blinks may be a minor nuisance because you might have to reset clocks or digital equipment. Normally the culprit is a tree limb brushing the line.

No one, including SLEMCO, wants to see a tree trimmed in an unattractive manner. So the best alternative is to plant at a proper distance from lines and keep stray limbs near lines carefully trimmed (Lucky Account Number 1413942500).

To keep your trees healthy, never remove more than 15 to 20 percent of a tree's leaves at one pruning, Foret explained. And bumps from mowers and weed eaters are major causes of damage. Mulching an area around the tree avoids that problem, he said.

The result of your careful efforts will be a beautiful, healthy tree that will better withstand storms and be less likely to pose problems for your house or nearby power lines.

If you have any questions concerning proper locations for new trees and need assistance from SLEMCO, call Gentry Laper at 886-3371.

