

POWER

Hills of History

Louisiana Has Oldest
Native American Mounds

ALL ABOUT
SCHOLARSHIP
APPLICATIONS

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Cover photo by Jenny Ellerbe Mound "F" at Poverty Point



TAKE NOTE

PLAN NOW TO APPLY

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

TO BE MAILED IN FEBRUARY BILLS

ENTRY DEADLINE
MAY 11
2023



TWENTY SCHOLARSHIPS VALUED AT \$2,000 EACH

will be awarded at our annual meeting on June 10. Applications for the 2023 scholarship drawing will be mailed with every SLEMCO bill in February. The entry deadline is Thursday, May 11, at 4:30 p.m. in the Lafayette SLEMCO office; mailed entries must be postmarked by May 11.

When you receive the form, fill out the application if you, your spouse, your dependent child or legal ward plan to attend an accredited university or trade school in Louisiana this fall.

Due to Internal Revenue Service rules, applicants who are dependent children must not turn 24 during 2023. The IRS prohibits parents from claiming children as dependents during the year they turn 24, even if they are full-time students.

Any applicants turning 24 during 2023 must have their own SLEMCO account. They can't be sponsored by a parent or guardian, but they may be sponsored by a spouse, since all SLEMCO accounts are considered community property under state law. *Lucky Number: 2103315501.*

If you need more than one application, photocopy both sides of the one you receive in your February bill or download one from www.slemco.com. Only one application per student will be accepted so everyone has the same chance to win. Duplicate entries will be voided. Make sure to fill out the application **completely** and sign the form where indicated.

Eligibility requirements are listed on each form, so please read them carefully. Here's a quick overview:

- ◆ Only SLEMCO customers, their spouses, children or legal wards are eligible to win a scholarship. A member cannot sponsor grandchildren, nephews, nieces or friends except as their legal guardian. Children cannot be considered a dependent if they will turn 24 years of age anytime during 2023. *Lucky Number: 2326890001.*

- ◆ The scholarship monies can be used by undergraduate students to attend, on a full-time basis, any public or private Louisiana university or trade school as accredited by the University of Louisiana System, Louisiana State University System, Southern University System, Louisiana Community and Technical College System, Louisiana Board of Regents Proprietary School System, Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities or the US Department of Education.

- ◆ All applicants must have graduated from high school with at least a "C" average. Continuing college or trade school students must have at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point average (on a 4.0 scale). Graduate or doctoral students do not qualify.

- ◆ The sponsoring SLEMCO member must have been a member for the past 12 consecutive months, as of May 11, 2023.

- ◆ The applicant is not required to attend the annual meeting on June 10, but the sponsoring member or member's spouse must attend to claim a scholarship. If a member or spouse is applying, either spouse may attend the meeting to claim the scholarship.

Questions about SLEMCO scholarships should be directed to Tonya Chenier at 896-5384. Completed applications should be mailed to the SLEMCO Scholarship Program, 2727 SE Evangeline Trwy, Lafayette, LA 70508.

Any entry received after the May 11 deadline will be ineligible. ☎



David Simon

A dedicated voice for the people

DAVID SIMON OF GUEYDAN represents SLEMCO customers in Vermilion Parish on our Board of Directors. He also serves as President of the SLEMCO Board.

As a boy growing up in rural Vermilion Parish, he remembers his father talking about life on the farm before electricity – the challenges and difficulties of living and working each day without electric power. His father made sure David knew what a blessing it was when SLEMCO brought power to their home and farm.



Photo by Mary Laurent

It modernized and made rural farm life easier, safer and much more productive. As a result, David learned to appreciate SLEMCO from a young age by how much life on the farm had improved since his father's years as a farmer and rancher.

"It was a big deal in my father's day, that SLEMCO workers would head out to restore power 24/7 even though our home and farm was in a very rural part of the parish," he explains. "Providing power to us was every bit as important as providing power to anyone else. That dedication continues today. Every customer, no matter where they are located – in the city or in the country – gets the same superior service and loyalty."

"As a member of SLEMCO's board, it is important that our customers know they have a voice when issues come up on a day-to-day basis," he said. "I consider it my duty to be here for them when they have concerns. Making their voices and opinions heard is my most important responsibility as a board member."

In the longer term, keeping electric rates as low as possible while maintaining unequaled levels of customer service is David's main priority. Negotiating long-term power

contracts is key to meeting that objective.

"Our current contracts have served us well and kept our rates low for 22 years," he said. "With three more years to go on the contract, it was critical that we negotiate a new contract that would continue to protect our customer's interests once our current contract expires."

A new, 10-year contract was successfully negotiated in 2022 and is currently awaiting approval by the Louisiana Public Service Commission.

David farms rice and crawfish and raises cattle in and around Gueydan. As is the case with many farmers and ranchers who literally feed the world, service to others comes easy to him. He is a member of the Bank of Gueydan Board of Directors, a member of the Vermilion Parish Drainage Board and is a member of the Knights of Columbus. He and his wife Mona have six children, 13 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. ☎

EASY OPTIONS TO PAY YOUR SLEMCO BILL

GO PAPERLESS WITH SMART HUB

With SLEMCO's SmartHub account management tool, you can view and pay your electric bills anytime online. When you log on to SmartHub, click the "MyProfile" tab, then the "Update My Paperless Billing Settings." New user? Sign up at <https://slemco.smarthub.coop>

MAKE AUTOMATED CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS ANYTIME

SLEMCO residential customers can pay their bill with a credit or debit card through our automated system by calling 1-844-859-5978. Payments post within 15 minutes to your account, but any payment made after 4:30 p.m. will post the next business day. Phone payments by credit or debit card incur a \$4 fee.

PAY BY BANK DRAFT OR CREDIT/DEBIT CARD

Paying your bill by bank draft (available for all customers) or credit/debit card (for residential customers only) is fast, easy and convenient. SLEMCO's A.P.O. (Automatic Payment Options) Program saves you time by automatically paying your SLEMCO bill. Sign up anytime at <https://slemco.smarthub.coop>. Once you sign in to your SmartHub account, click on Billings and Payments, then Automatic Payment Options and fill out the required information. Once the authorized payment option begins, you will receive a regular bill. It will show "BANK DRAFT" for the automatic bank draft option and the date the bill will be drafted, or "CREDIT/DEBIT CARD CHG" for the automatic credit/debit card charge option and the date the bill will be charged. Your account won't be drafted or your credit/debit card charged until your due date.

DRIVE UP TO OUR KIOSK

Visit one of two 24-hour kiosks in our Lafayette office drive-thru to pay your bill with a credit card, cash or electronic checks. *Lucky Number: 2061396406.* ☎

LUCKY NUMBER

WINNERS!

FIND YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER AND WIN \$100 CREDITS!

WE'VE HIDDEN 10 SLEMCO ACCOUNT NUMBERS IN THIS ISSUE OF THE MAGAZINE.

Look to see if you find your SLEMCO account number. If you do, call Michelle Courvelle at (337) 896-2504. Once she verifies you as a winner, she'll credit \$100 to your SLEMCO account. *Lucky Number: 3074472200.* ☎

History Takes Shape

Native American Mounds, Reminders of Lost Civilization

LSU Campus Mound

THIS NOVEMBER MARKED TWO YEARS Louisiana recognized American Indian Heritage Month, a time to celebrate and preserve the rights, traditions and landmarks of our indigenous people. It prompted a reminder of some of the most significant—yet lesser known—symbols of Louisiana’s Native American history: mounds. Louisiana is recorded as having some of the oldest, tallest, largest and best-preserved earthen mounds, or raised embankments, in North America. We are second only to Mississippi in the number of mound sites in the Lower Mississippi Valley.

Carefully engineered and built by ancient indigenous people thousands of years ago, these once-dirt mounds are now overgrown with grass, shrubs – even small trees. Varying in shape, they are tall and cone shaped or flat-topped and, in some cases, barely noticeable and rounded. These ancient architectural wonders have been discovered standing alone or in groups. Some are arranged around broad plazas, while others are connected by earthen ridges. Often overlooked, they have been found in the woodlands, pastures and the middle of our cities. *Lucky Number: 4500682200.*

Because of a lack of knowledge about them, countless have been destroyed over the centuries by farming and urban development.

Some were leveled in the Civil War by soldiers making rifle pits. Many were wiped out by erosion. When the historical value of mounds became known, many were looted by amateurs looking for archeological finds. Many landholders destroyed them to prevent agencies from trying to take their land for the cause of preservation.

It’s only in the early part of the 20th Century that a greater focus was put on these Native American mounds and their significance. Today, they are considered important monuments and many are protected by the government.

Several plausible theories make it impossible to narrow down why the mounds were constructed. Evidence points to some being burial mounds or sites of religious rituals. Those with flat tops and steep steps were thought to be temples or platforms for the chief’s home. Some could have been places to hold public activities, or watch towers to observe the approach of unexpected guests. It would make sense that the mounds were used as barriers for flood protection. Some archeologists have thought them to be monuments of social status representing a community’s capabilities.

With more than 800 Native American mounds in Louisiana, three are considered by archeologists to be among the most significant. *Lucky Number: 3069842004.*

story by **PATRICE DOUCET**

WATSON BRAKE MOUNDS

Hidden in the thick piney woods of south Monroe, near the Watson Bayou, lies the Watson Brake Mounds. It was constructed 5,400 years ago, making it older than Stonehenge and The Great Pyramid of Giza, and is said to be the oldest large-scale mound site in America. The site consists of 11 mounds ranging from 3 to 25 feet tall and connected by ridges that form an oval formation nearly 900 feet across. Interestingly, it wasn't until 1981 that the age of the mounds was confirmed, thanks to several core samplings and radiocarbon dating initiated by local resident Recca Jones. Stewart Gentry, one of the property owners says, "We've known the mounds existed for years. I remember picking buckets of arrowheads when I was a kid. We just had no idea how old they were." The Gentry family owns most of the property where the mounds are located, and to protect them they do not allow public access.

Photos by Jenny Ellerbe



Gentry Mound at Watson Brake Mounds

POVERTY POINT NATIONAL MONUMENT

About 60 miles from Watson Brake Mounds, in Northeast Louisiana, is the Poverty Point National Monument, an earthen complex like no other and one of the most important archaeological sites in North America. The large prehistoric community is on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, putting it in the same classification as The Great Wall of China and the Taj Mahal. Constructed

approximately 3,400 years ago, it is believed that the complex was once a major trade hub. While not as old as Watson Brake Mounds, Poverty Point is three times larger. First excavated in the 1950s, the site has six mounds, six semi-circular ridges, sectioned by aisles, and a plaza, all covering more than one square mile and can be viewed by tram or a walking tour. The largest mound is about 70 feet tall and more than 700 by 640 feet at the base, making it the nation's second largest. Archeologists estimate that it could have taken just over 662,000 pounds of dirt for the preparation and construction of the site. *Lucky Number: 4500832600.*

Imagine for a minute: hundreds of natives filling baskets with dirt, passing

them down from person to person, then dumping the dirt into an area they cleared and stomping it with their feet until an earthen mound took a uniformed shape. After years of use, several layers of earthen materials were presumably added, gradually heightening the mound.

LSU CAMPUS MOUNDS

In the heart of LSU's campus, along Dalrymple Drive in Baton Rouge, are two large, cone-shaped grassy mounds that are the oldest known man-made structures in the Americas. The LSU Campus Mounds (the official name) date back 11,000 years, placing them on the National Register of Historic Places. Standing about 20 feet tall, the mounds are composed of many thin layers of ashes from burned reed, sugarcane plants and fragments of mammal bones. It is thought that the mounds may have been used for ceremonial or cremation purposes. Also noteworthy, according to an LSU astronomer, the mounds were constructed so that their crests would have aligned with one of the brightest stars seen from Earth, Arcturus. This positioning falls in line with what most researchers believe—that Native American mounds were built for some higher purpose.

Whatever their reason for being, the mounds are more than the small hills they resemble. They keep the history of Louisiana's Native Americans alive. Explore a bit of Louisiana's ancient history by visiting some close to home. Then make the drive to Northeast Louisiana along the Ancient Mounds Driving Trail where you can view 39 mounds from the highways. The landscape is your history classroom. 📍

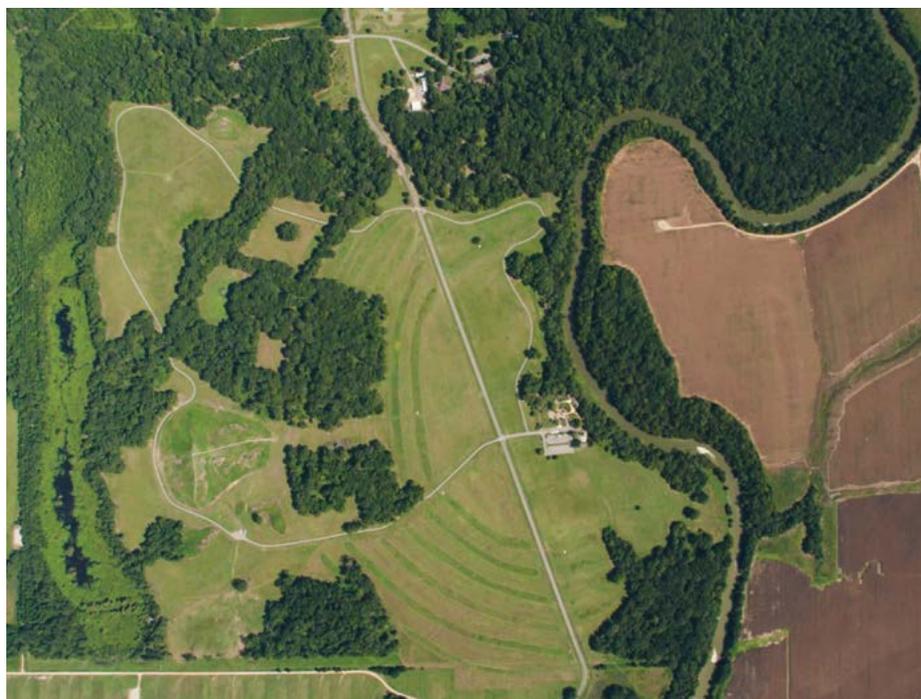


Photo by Susan Guice

Aerial photo of Poverty Point thought to have been a major trade hub and is a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior. Its outer ridges measure three quarters of a mile.

Photo by Jim Zietz



Five Facts about Mardi Gras in Louisiana

Everyone knows that Mardi Gras, French for “Fat Tuesday,” is the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent. It is part of the bigger Carnival or Carnaval season, which begins on Epiphany, a Christian holiday celebrated on January 6 that is otherwise known as Three Kings Day or the Twelfth Day of Christmas.

Pre-Lenten festivities of feasting and excess are thought to date back thousands of years. In fact, the word carnival itself is derived from Medieval Latin carnelevium, which means to take away or remove meat, and from the Latin carnem for meat.

The beginnings of Mardi Gras in the Boot come mainly from lore, but there’s no doubt that the festivities have shaped our state’s culture. 🍷

1 On March 3, 1699, French explorer Jean Baptiste Le Moyne Sieur de Bienville arrived on American shores about 60 miles south of New Orleans, and named his landing spot “**Pointe du Mardi Gras**” when his men realized it was the eve of the festive holiday.

2 The Mardi Gras colors of purple, green and gold were chosen in 1872 by the newly founded Krewe of Rex in honor of the visiting Russian Grand Duke Alexis Romanoff. Those were the colors of the duke’s royal house, and later they assigned meaning to each color: purple for justice, green for faith and gold for power.

3 The first Mardi Gras krewe in Louisiana was established in 1856 by six businessmen originally from Mobile. They formed the **Mistick Krewe of Comus**, choosing John Milton’s hero Comus to represent their organization. Tradition has it that they formed the krewe as a way to control the drunken and increasingly violent celebrations in New Orleans — replacing chaos with an organized parade.

4 The throwing of trinkets to the crowds was started in the early 1870s by the Twelfth Night Revelers, New Orleans’ second krewe. Beads in Mardi Gras colors were said to be tossed to those in the crowd who exhibited the traits of justice, faith and power, and people who caught them were granted good luck for the coming year.

5 The tradition of eating an oval or wreath-shaped king cake can be traced to Old World Europe. It commemorates the Epiphany, the day the Magi (also known as “kings”) presented gifts to baby Jesus, and yet another connection to the Mardi Gras season. In England, it was known as a Twelfth Night cake, the **Rosca de Reyes** could be found in Spain and in France it is known as the **Galette Des Rois**.





let's get COOKING

It's so much easier to master a recipe cooking a small quantity. Whether

you're single or married and want to impress someone this Valentine's Day — or on any date night—**Dinner Just for Two** is a great resource. Author Christina Lane has scaled down classic recipes using the least likely pans, like Key Lime Pie in a loaf pan and Quiche Lorraine in muffin tins. You can find the cookbook at local book stores for \$30-\$35 or on Amazon for \$20.

Creamy Mushroom Chicken Skillet

- 1 ½ tbs. unsalted butter
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ tsp. salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- (2) thin-cut chicken breasts
- Half an 8-oz. box of sliced cremini mushrooms (or 7 whole mushrooms, sliced)
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ½ cup dry white wine
- ⅓ cup heavy cream
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan
- ¼ cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, drained

In an 8-inch skillet, melt the butter and olive oil over medium heat.

In a small plate, sprinkle the flour and add a generous pinch of salt and pepper. Stir gently with a fork to combine. Dredge each chicken cutlet in the flour, evenly, coating both sides, and then place them in the skillet. Cook until it's golden brown on the first side (4-5 minutes), then flip and cook the other side until golden brown. Remove the chicken from the skillet (don't worry if it's not cooked all the way through at this point.)

Add the mushrooms to the skillet and sauté until they soften and release their juices, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic to the skillet and cook for 30 seconds. Pour the wine, heavy cream, Parmesan and sun-dried tomatoes over the mushrooms and nestle the chicken breasts back into the skillet. Let the mixture simmer and cook the chicken breasts all the way through, about 5 minutes longer. Sprinkle the Parmesan on top. Can be served over egg noodles or mashed potatoes.

Steak For Two

- (2) filet mignon steaks, about 6 oz. each
- Salt and ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tbs. neutral oil
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary

Bring the steaks to room temperature 30 minutes before cooking. (Flip after 15 minutes)

Place the oven rack in the middle and preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Press a generous amount of salt and pepper into all sides of the steaks.

In a medium skillet with an oven-safe handle (Don't use a nonstick pan) heat the oil over high heat. It's ready when it's too hot to hold your hand 3 inches over the pan for 3 seconds. Place the steaks in the pan. Don't touch or move them while they sear, for 5 minutes. Use tongs to gently turn them over. Add the rosemary sprig to the pan, pushing it around in the juices, and then immediately move the skillet to the preheated oven. Cook 5 minutes for rare and up to 9 minutes for medium to well done. When the steaks come out of the oven, move them to a plate, tent the plate with foil and let them rest for 5 minutes. Drizzle some of the juices over the steaks before serving.

Scalloped Potatoes

- Olive oil cooking spray
- 10 ozs. baby Yukon gold potatoes (about 4 small ones)
- 1 tbs. unsalted butter
- 2 tbs. flour
- 1 cup half-and-half
- ¾ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup sharp cheddar, plus extra for topping
- ¼ onion, diced
- 2 tbs. fried onions (such as French's)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly spray two mini cast-iron dishes that measure about 5 inches in diameter with cooking spray. Thinly slice the potatoes in ½- to 1/4-inch slices. (No need to peel the potatoes.)

In a small saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Whisk in the flour, followed by the half-and-half. Whisk until the mixture thickens and coats the back of a spoon. Stir in the salt, pepper and Cheddar. Turn off the heat and stir until the cheddar completely melts into the cheese sauce. It will be a thick sauce.

Spread 1 tbs. of the cheese sauce in the bottom of each cast-iron dishes. Then layer ¼ of the sliced potatoes followed by ¼ of the cheese sauce (using a little less than half of the cheese sauce.) Sprinkle 1 tbs. of diced onions. Repeat: Use the last of the sliced potatoes, all but a few tbs. of the cheese sauce and the last of the diced onions. Scrape the last few tbs. of the cheese sauce on top, and finally top with fried onions and extra grated Cheddar over everything. Bake for 30 minutes.

Cookies and Cream Cupcakes

FOR CUPCAKES:

- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tbs. (slightly heaped) unsweetened cocoa powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. instant espresso powder (optional)
- ⅓ cup buttermilk
- 4 tsp. canola oil
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- ¼ cup packed dark brown sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line four large muffin tins (or six regular size) with paper liners.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cocoa, baking soda, baking powder and espresso powder.

In a small measuring cup, thoroughly whisk together the buttermilk, oil, vanilla and brown sugar. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir just until they're mixed.

Divide the batter between the cupcake liners and bake for 16 to 17 minutes. They're done when the tops spring back when touched (if they're underbaked, they'll sink). Let the cupcakes cool completely.

FOR THE FROSTING:

- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 tbs. heavy cream
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- 4 chocolate sandwich cookies (like Oreos)

In a small bowl, beat together the butter, powdered sugar, heavy cream and vanilla using an electric mixer on high. Beat the mixture for 1 minute, until it's very fluffy and light. Finely crush the cookies and stir them in. Frost the cooled cupcakes and serve.



 For extra copies of these recipes or to e-mail a copy to a friend, visit SLEMCO POWER magazine at www.slemco.com.

DO YOU NEED UTILITY ASSISTANCE?

DEFERRED BILLING DURING ENERGY EMERGENCIES IS AVAILABLE

WHAT IT IS

SLEMCO has a deferred billing program for pre-qualified customers in the event of an “energy emergency,” as declared by the Louisiana Public Service Commission (LPSC).

Under such an emergency, a prequalified customer would be able to defer partial payment of their utility bill over a three-month period. *Lucky Number: 1211677500.*

WHEN IT APPLIES

An “energy emergency” is characterized by inordinately high utility bills which are the product of one of the following factors: high gas or other fuel costs, unusually inclement weather necessitating extensive use of utilities, or any other circumstances as determined by the LPSC. The LPSC has the authority to determine what constitutes “inordinately high bills,” “high fuel costs” and “unusually inclement weather.”

WHO IS ELIGIBLE

Only specific groups of customers can pre-qualify for the deferral and pre-qualification is mandatory. *Lucky Number: 2317392000.* Once an “energy emergency” has been declared, new applicants will not be eligible for bill deferral until the next energy emergency.

ELIGIBLE GROUPS (PLUS REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION):

- Customers who are at least 65 years old and whose incomes do not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level established by the federal government. A copy of your tax returns from the previous year will be required.
- Customers of any age who receive food stamps or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). You must show a copy of government documents including, but not limited to, a Letter of Certification issued by the Parish Office of Family Support or some other proof that you are receiving Food Stamps or TANF.
- Customers whose sole income consists of Social Security benefits. Provide a copy of your previous year’s tax returns and governmental documents including, but not limited to, a letter from the Social Security Administration office stating the benefits that are being received.
- Governmental entities as identified by the LPSC who provide vital services, the absence of which could result in “imminent peril” to public health, safety and/or welfare. Documents that confirm that the customer is a governmental entity and identifying the services it provides must be shown.
- Those customers who need life-sustaining, electrically operated equipment or life-sustaining medical treatment that requires electricity. You must provide a letter signed by a licensed physician which states the diagnosis and prognosis of the patient and also states that “electricity is necessary in sustaining the life of his/her patient.” *Lucky Number: 2120185003.*

HOW TO APPLY

Enrollment in the program is simple. If you qualify, call SLEMCO’s Customer Services department at (337) 896-5200 weekdays (except holidays) from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and an application will be mailed to you. The application must be filed in the name of the person who is listed on the SLEMCO account; a copy of your current driver’s license or valid, pictured identification card is required for residential customers in addition to the requirements detailed above. ☎

