MARCH/APRIL 2023

SLEMCO

ANNUAL MEETING JUNE 10 Page 2

DAY TRIP: HILLIARD MUSEUM Page 6

> HOW TO WIN A SCHOLARSHIP Page 8

# A Sight for for More Eyes

**Birdwatching Interest Soars** 





#### The Official Publication of the Southwest Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation

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Cover photo by Gary Meyers Bird species - Prothonotary Warbler



### TAKE NOTE

MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND JUNE 10 FOR THE





# ANNUAL MEETING

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR** for SLEMCO's 86th Annual Membership Meeting to be held on Saturday, June 10, at Lafayette's Cajundome. Attendees have a chance to win 17 valuable prizes. Drawings will also determine who will receive \$40,000 in college scholarships.



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 policy.

Music will start at 6:30 a.m., so wear your dancing shoes and help keep the dance floor hopping. Vitalant 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 Number: 3206121001.* 

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 SLEMCO operations.

When the business portion of the meeting 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

You Can Enter Prize and Scholarship Drawings **SLEMCO COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS** wishing to participate in the prize drawings must drop off a letter to SLEMCO's main office by June 9 naming their company's authorized representative. 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 when a business sponsors a scholarship applicant. *Lucky Number: 1039440001.* 

### **Don Resweber**

A calling to serve others

### F YOU COULD PUT SEVERAL

ingredients - service to country, family, veterans, community and SLEMCO-into a sifter and squeeze the handle several times over a mixing bowl, you'd get just the right combination of each to describe the life of St. Martin Parish SLEMCO Board Member Don "Tuffy" Resweber.

Retirement from both the oilfield where he served for more than 20 years as a safety director, and as owner of two successful convenience stores in the area since 2011 has not slowed him down one bit, but rather has given him more time to devote to family, military veterans and what has become a big part of his life's work — SLEMCO.

"I love to find out what's going on at SLEMCO and then think about how to keep our rates as the lowest in the State without sacrificing service," explains Don. "I feel that is done by making sure employees are happy with their jobs. They are SLEMCO's ambassadors in the field who see and take care of our customers. They are out in weather that no one wants to go out in. They are the ones that make SLEMCO the best company around. I will always support and advocate for SLEMCO employees. They are the best of the best."

An eternal optimist, Don looks at recent industry challenges - inflation and higher cost of living, supply chain issues, increasing material costs, a new power contract-as opportunities to improve upon what we had before.

"SLEMCO's board must continually look for ways to carefully balance costs for customers (rates) with SLEMCO's responsibility to make sure our electric system is storm hardened and ready for natural disasters, our equipment is state of the art, we have plenty of needed materials to restore power and that we can retain the highly skilled personnel necessary to get the job done," he says.

It's a lot like maintaining a home. Continual maintenance and repairs are necessary if your home is going to remain a safe place for your family to live in. Homeowners must balance budget and necessary maintenance and repair, or eventually, a house will become uninhabitable and dangerous. "SLEMCO must do the same to make certain our customers have a reliable electric system

to power their homes and businesses," Don explains. "We cannot and will not let them down."

A United States Army Vietnam Veteran, Don puts as much energy into his volunteer work

for military veterans as he does everything else in his lifetime of community service. An active member of the American Legion, VFW, the Vietnam Veterans of America and several more military organizations, he rose through the ranks during his military service from a combat infantry soldier to become an army Sergeant (E5) in just 17 months. He received numerous recognitions and medals including the Bronze Star, the Army Commendation Medal and several more. Additionally, after a particularly courageous

the Month by his superiors. His deep calling to serve others likely played as much a part in his rapid rise in rank as it has in retirement working with veterans. As a volunteer advocate for veteran benefits, he has helped sign up more than 1,000 veterans to receive the benefits they have earned and deserve.

feat, he was chosen as Battalion Soldier of

An activist since childhood, Don became a community leader at a young age. He has served numerous agencies and organizations including St. Martin de Tours Catholic Church, youth organizations, civic organizations, political and environmental organizations and currently serves on the Pharmacy and Insurance Fraud Boards at the request of the governor.

Of all his civic volunteering, perhaps none is more special to him than the St. Martin ARC, where he has spent many years advocating and caring for the disabled and developmentally and mentally challenged. Under his leadership, two ARC thrift stores were opened and two HUD apartment complexes for the handicapped were built. He has built deep friendships with members of the ARC community.

One might think family would take a backseat to so much dedication to service but you'd be wrong - very wrong. Don and his wife Becky, who will celebrate their 50th anniversary this July, are all about family. There is carpool and car line duty for both of them on school days. As an extended family,



they eat together just about every day and vacation together, too. They have a reward system for good grades for the grandkids that encourages them to save money for college and then there is the camp at Grand Isle where no doubt there

have been many family-filled weekends and cookouts with stories about the big one that did or didn't get away.

Each night the Resweber home in St. Martinville is filled with grown children, grandkids, and their boyfriends and girlfriends, as they come together for dinner after work, school, activities or whatever else kept them busy that day.

"We have seven freezers or refrigerators," Don says as he thoughtfully counted each one on his fingers.

He and Becky cook and clean together each evening, serving at least one and usually more, entrée choices for the entire clan and occasionally taking them out to dinner on the weekends, too. The afternoon we visited, pork roast and turkey roll were the stars of the dinner buffet along with several sides including rice dressing and macaroni and cheese. And two grandchildren had each wiped out after school bowls of gumbo as we arrived.

"We love it," Don gushes. "We're all about family."

### **SLEMCO 2023** NOMINATING COMMITTEE

- ACADIA PARISH—Glenn Thibodeaux, 184 Highway 357 Opelousas, LA 70570
- LAFAYETTE PARISH—Dale Denais, 1215 Bourque Road Duson, LA 70529
- ST. LANDRY PARISH- Cindy Stelly, 646 Latanier Street Krotz Springs, LA 70750
- ST. MARTIN PARISH-Toby Ike Doucet, 1414 Burton Plantation Highway St. Martinville, LA 70582

VERMILION PARISH—Boyd Landry, 7375 US Highway 167 Maurice, LA 70555

The committee will meet April 4, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. at the SLEMCO office, 2727 SE Evangeline Thruway, Lafayette, LA 70508.

(s) John B. Meaux, Board Secretary

# Within a Sportsman's Paradise

**HE FIRST CONCERTS OF SPRING HAVE BEGUN** and the temperatures are just right to spend time outdoors hearing the songs of Carolina wrens, warblers, thrashers and cardinals. Male birds are chirping to other males "This is my territory!" and whistling to females "Come and check me out!" Their songs are music to the ears and, according to several studies, the more we expose ourselves to the different sounds and species of these colorful, intelligent, happy little souls, the happier we'll be. Maybe that's why a growing

number of people took to birdwatching while isolating at home during the pandemic. There's something about birds — other than their beauty. The way they communicate and seemingly live so effortlessly demands a second glance. We are fortunate in Louisiana

that our rivers, bayous, swamps, marshes, woodlands and prairie lands attract a diversity of bird species that brings birdwatchers from all over the world. The state provides a much-needed respite for over 250 species of birds traveling throughout spring and fall and some of the most beautiful backdrops for photography.

As we head into April - one of the prime birding months in Louisiana along with May, September, October and December - the show bird roseate spoonbills are mating. Twelve of the 17 species of herons in North America, including the little blue heron and tricolored heron, will be spotted in Louisiana. While common to us, the great egret will be on the checklist of many birders

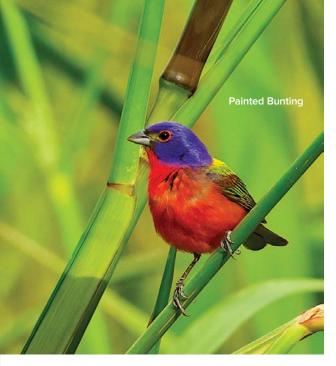


from around the country. Mid-April also brings the less common sightings of the colorful painted buntings and the scissor-tailed flycatchers. Then there are the hummingbirds, the tiny gifts beloved by Acadiana residents, including the Rufous and ruby-throat. "Some don't know that in any given year we'll have nine winter hummingbird species," points out local bird expert Bill Fontenot, who has authored over 1,000 articles and booklets on birding including Birds of the Gulf Coast. Also in winter, Louisiana hosts a variety of migratory birds, including 30 species of ducks. Lucky Number: 4516891809.

### WHERE TO LOOK

A good day of birding in Acadiana, during a busy season, can mean seeing as many as 100 different species, according to Paul Conover, a member of Louisiana

story by PATRICE DOUCET photos by GARY MEYERS



Ornithological Society's Bird Record Committee. The more resources an area provides to birds, the more you'll see. For that reason, birders flock to these hot spots: Acadiana Park Nature Station, Palmetto Island State Park, Lake Martin and Trails, the South Farm Unit of the Sherburne Wildlife Management Area, Lake Fausse Point State Park, Indian Bayou, the Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge, Peveto Woods Sanctuary, Percy J. Fontenot Farm and Thistlethwaite Wildlife Management Area.

The Louisiana Office of Tourism is currently working on updating the Louisiana Birding Trail to include every approved birding location and making it available on the web.

If you're looking for ornithological entertainment, be sure to take in the annual Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration, happening on April 14 and 15. The island is considered one of the best places in the world to see the variety of migratory birds that flock there to rest after their difficult, long flight across the Gulf. *Lucky Number: 3045827010.* 

### **ANNUAL BIRD COUNT**

Another great way to birdwatch while contributing useful data is participating in the Christmas bird count, a tradition that goes back to the early 1900s.

Fontenot explains, "Before the 1900s, there was a tradition in New England at Christmas time where men would shoot every bird they could to see how many different species they could find. They would pile their birds and compare them. Ornithologist Frank Chapman suggested, instead, a Christmas bird census to count the birds as a way of identifying them." The data has since been used to understand what bird life looks like in the winter in each state.

Each year from December 19 through January 5, volunteers from each parish of Louisiana walk over 20 "count circles," tallying birds. During the 2020-2021 count, Louisiana birders counted a total of 1,625,599 of 250 species.

### **BIRD-FRIENDLY YARDS**

A good place to start birdwatching is in your own backyard. Planting native shrubs, perennials and trees,

like oaks, attract feathered friends for resting, nesting and food. Native plants host as many as 20 times the number of insects as non-indigenous plants, and also provide seeds and nectar from their flowers. *Lucky Number*: 3224105005.

Persimmon trees are loved by the Rufous hummingbird, among others. Northern mockingbirds, cardinals, painted buntings and Baltimore orioles swarm to the trumpet honeysuckle. Elderberry bushes attracts a plethora of birds as does the mulberry tree. Some 20 different species have been seen feeding on the American beauty berry.

Another sure-fire way of attracting birds is with a feeder and a dish of water for those hot summer days. Conover uses black oil sunflower seeds for birds in his backyard. He adds that his cornmeal cakes with bacon grease and peanut butter are a favorite year-round.

### **GETTING STARTED**

Birdwatching is one of the most enjoyable, accessible and inexpensive hobbies. Conover says since before the pandemic he has seen an uptick in younger people — teens to college age - getting into birdwatching. "Technology has made it easier for them with the help of mobile bird identification and tracking apps," he notes.

As for equipment, the naked eye can spot a lot, but binoculars do make it easier to zero in on birds at a distance. A bird guide booklet is a handy reference to accurately identify a species on the spot. It's always a good idea to have your camera (aka phone), in case of rare sightings and a pad and pen to record your findings. No doubt this contagious pastime will lead you to many different areas, so it's advised to keep a pair of rubber boots in your trunk, and don't forget a hat and sunscreen.

Before long, you'll not only be able to identify a surprising number of birds, but become familiar with their unique personalities and behaviors and understand why Fontenot says, "to birdwatch is to be in touch with something sacred it does something to you. God flows through the bird like he wants to flow through humans."



66
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to you ...
22

## 

### A Mind-Opening Experience

### When's the last time you've been to an art museum?

Five years? Never? They've come a long way in making education fun and engaging. Art is about beauty, new discovery – and healing. For less than the price of a movie ticket you can gain education, insight and inspiration. This summer, let your thoughts get lost or open a child's mind to new things at the Hilliard Art Museum in Lafayette.

The 5,000 square-foot, modernist glass gallery is a cathedral of space that Museum Director LouAnne Greenwald says "offers a diverse range of exhibits to give people access to role models and to inspire." *Lucky Number: 4501191901.* 

Most recently, the Hilliard Art Museum earned accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums, the only organization that represents the entire museum industry. The accreditation is a mark of excellence shared by fewer than 2,000 (6%) of the estimated 33,000 museums in the U.S. and an advantage in bringing larger, national exhibitions and loaned artwork from personal collections to the Hilliard. Nearly 10,000 visited the museum during the 2021-2022 fiscal year, compared to 6,000 in 2014. "It's coming back; we're seeing more tour groups," says Greenwald.

### Things to Do

**Special Exhibition** Now through Aug. 20 - *Envisioning the South: The Roger Houston Ogden Collection* - An in-depth look at the art collections of Roger Houston Ogden, from representational art works to non-objective abstracts and photography.

**"Let's Make Art!"** Held on the third Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. -12 p.m. Visitors to the museum can participate in an artist-guided tour and art-making activity.

### Yoga in the Galleries

Classes are offered the second Saturday of each month at 11 a.m.

### **Creative Conversations**

A public lecture series held on the third Wednesday of each month. (Makes a good date night.)

**Art Making Activities** Tours and hands-on classes for kindergarten to 12-graders led by a teaching artist.



HILLIARD

**Summer Exhibitions Kickoff** The Hilliard Art Museum celebrates its summer exhibitions with a free public reception on Friday, June 9, 6-8 p.m.

For more information, call (337) 482-2278. •



# let's get COOKING

Caterer and cookbook author Elizabeth Heiskell believes every day should be celebrated with at least one satisfying meal. In her third book, *Come on Over: Southern Delicious for Every Day & Every Occasion*, the recipes prove that it doesn't take a lot of effort to whip up something special whether for an ordinary Monday night or a dinner party. After making any one of these dishes, you'll be giving yourself a high five. The cookbook is available on Amazon for \$16 or at local bookstores.

### **Smoked Salmon Spread**

An addictive appetizer (Serves 15)

- 1 lb. hot-smoked salmon filet (not the thin slices you put on a bagel)
- (1) 8-oz. package cream cheese, room temperature
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 11/2 tbs. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tbs. drained capers

1 tbs. chopped fresh dill

- 1/3 cup finely chopped red onion
- 1/4 cup finely chopped green onions (white and green parts)
- 1 tsp. Creole/Cajun seasoning

Flake the smoked salmon filets with a fork and set aside.

Mix cream cheese with mayonnaise in a large bowl until smooth. Add lemon juice, capers, dill, red onion, green onion and seasoning and mix well. Gently fold in smoked salmon, trying to keep as many flakes intact as possible. Cover and chill for at least 2 hours before serving. (Can be made up to 3 days in advance.)

### **Cornbread Salad**

A glass bowl displays the beautiful layers of this salad. (Serves 10)

- (1) 1-oz. package ranch dressing mix
- 1½ cups sour cream
- 1½ cups mayonnaise
- 1 batch of cornbread, crumbled
- 10 slices bacon, cooked and chopped
- 8oz. cheddar cheese, shredded by hand using box grater

3 fresh medium tomatoes, chopped

- (2) 15-oz. cans whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 1 cup chopped green onions (white and green parts)
- 1/2 head iceberg lettuce, thinly sliced

In a medium bowl, whisk together the ranch dressing mix, sour cream and mayonnaise. Set aside.

Place half the crumbled cornbread on the bottom of a glass serving dish followed by half each of the bacon, cheese, tomatoes, corn, bell pepper, green onions and lettuce. Drizzle with half of the ranch dressing mixture. Repeat these layers, reserving a little of everything for the top. For the last layer, toss the reserved ingredients together and scatter on top, then drizzle with more dressing. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.

### **Fried Chicken Pasta**

(Serves 6)

- 1 lb. penne pasta
- 2 tbs. olive oil
- 1 lb. large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 tbs. plus 1 tsp. Cajun seasoning
- 3 lbs. andouille sausage, cut into
- 1/2-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup chopped yellow onion
- $\frac{1}{2}$  chopped cup green bell pepper
- 1 tbs. minced garlic
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- (1) 14.5 can diced tomatoes, with their juice
- 1 tbs. fresh thyme leaves
- 1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
- 6 cups chopped fried chicken pieces
- 2 tbs. chopped fresh basil
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese

Cook the pasta in boiling salted water (use at least 1 tsp. salt in the water) until it's al dente. Reserve 1 cup of the pasta water before draining the pasta. In a large skillet, over medium heat, heat 1 tbs. of the olive oil, swirling the pan to coat evenly.

Mix shrimp with 2 tbs. of the Cajun seasoning. Add shrimp to hot oil and cook for 1 minute per side, turning once, until opaque and slightly firm. Remove shrimp from pan and set aside.

Add the remaining tbs. of olive oil to pan, then add sausage, onion and bell pepper. Sauté until sausage is caramelized and onion is translucent. Add garlic. Sauté for a few seconds, then add chicken broth. Scrape bottom of the pan to bring up the flavorful brown bits. Add tomatoes, thyme and remaining tsp. of Cajun seasoning. Cook for 2 minutes.

Stir in heavy cream. Add shrimp, pasta and reserved pasta water. Continue to cook until sauce thickens a bit, about 15 minutes.

Remove from heat. Add fried chicken pieces, basil and parmesan. Toss to combine and warm up chicken before serving.

### **Dessert No. 4**

A simple dessert with wow factor (Serves 10)

Cooking spray

- 1/2 cup slivered almonds
- (12) vanilla ice cream sandwiches (chocolate sandwiches can be substituted)
- <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup amaretto (chocolate syrup can be used instead)
- (1) 12-oz. container Cool Whip
- (1) 8-oz. package toffee bits

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Grease a 9 x 13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.

Spread almonds on a baking sheet and bake until lightly toasted, about 5 minutes. (Careful not to burn them.) Set aside.

Line baking dish with the ice cream sandwiches in a single layer. (May have to cut smaller pieces to fill in the gaps) Drizzle half the amaretto over sandwiches. Mix remaining amaretto into the Cool Whip. Sprinkle half of the toffee bits over sandwiches. Spread with the Cool Whip mixture. Sprinkle the rest of the toffee bits and almonds on top. Cover and freeze at least 3 hours and up to 4 months.

### **Bing Cherries and Wine Syrup**

A gamechanger on vanilla ice cream (Serves 4)

- 1 lb. frozen dark, sweet cherries, thawed, pitted and drained (juices reserved)
- 1/4 cup Kirsch or clear brandy
- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup dry red wine
- 3 tbs. sugar
- 1 tbs. cornstarch

1/8 tsp. almond extract (optional)

1 ½ pints vanilla bean ice cream

Pour juices from the cherries into a measuring cup. Add the Kirsch and red wine. Stir together the sugar and cornstarch in a small saucepan until no lumps remain. Gradually whisk in the wine mixture. Add the cherries. Cook over medium

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

heat until sauce boils and thickens, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Add almond extract. Let cook slightly. Serve the warm sauce over ice cream.

## SLEMCO SCHOLARSHIP You could win \$2,000

A TOTAL OF \$40,000 in college scholarships will be given away at our 86th annual meeting on Saturday, June 10. Twenty students will each win \$2,000 to help pay for college or trade school. The process is easy, but you must apply before the May 11th deadline. *Lucky Number: 4518435700*.

Members connected to SLEMCO for one contiguous year prior to the deadline of May 11 can sponsor themselves, a spouse, dependent children or legal wards. Grandchildren are eligible only if they are the legal dependents or wards of members.

### HOW TO APPLY

Applications for the 2023 SLEMCO scholarship program were included with all February SLEMCO bills. And you can also apply online at our website www.slemco. com. Submit your application online and receive a confirmation notice by email. It's quick and easy.

Read the application carefully and follow all instructions. Applications for the scholarships will be accepted until Thursday, May 11. Delivered entries and electronically submitted entries must be received by 4:30 p.m., May 11, and mailed entries must be postmarked by that day. Entries can be mailed to the SLEMCO Scholarship Program, 2727 SE Evangeline Thruway, Lafayette, LA 70508.

### WHERE TO USE

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. Lucky Number: 4516586301.

### QUALIFICATIONS

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. Students must be at least high school seniors to enter. *Lucky Number: 4518356201.* 

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.

Any eligible family member can enter each year. Past winners aren't eligible to receive a scholarship.

### START TODAY

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 about applying or qualifications, call SLEMCO at (337) 896-5384. **(** 

### AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU'RE A SLEMCO MEMBER!



### 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: 2028187504.*