

POWER

The Prairie Land Project

Preserving our
Cajun Habitat

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The Official Publication of the Southwest Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation

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COVER: Photo by James Edmunds



TAKE NOTE



PLAN NOW TO APPLY

Scholarship Applications to be Mailed in February Bills

TWENTY SCHOLARSHIPS VALUED AT \$2,000 EACH will be awarded at our annual meeting on June 8. Applications for the 2024 scholarship drawing will be mailed with every SLEMCO bill in February. The entry deadline is Thursday, May 9, at 4:30 p.m. in the Lafayette SLEMCO office; mailed entries must be postmarked by May 9.

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. *Lucky Number: 4515659300.*

Due to Internal Revenue Service rules, applicants who are dependent children must not turn 24 during 2024. 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 2024 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.

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.

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. 📍

APPLICATION 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 2024. *Lucky Number: 4502738801.*

◆ 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 9, 2024. *Lucky Number: 2035416510.*

◆ The applicant is not required to attend the annual meeting on June 8, 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.

Entries received after the May 9 deadline will be ineligible. One entry per applicant will be accepted. Duplicates will be discarded.



Dedicated to Serving Our Communities

Jeff Daigle

ACADIA PARISH BOARD MEMBER

Jeff Daigle of Church Point has been a member of SLEMCO's board since 2022, when he was appointed to fulfill the unexpired term of deceased board member Merlin Young. Since then, he's hit the ground running, learning the in's and out's of the electric power business.

"I've been a SLEMCO member for 27 years but like most people, didn't really concern myself with what all it takes to actually provide the power that makes the lights come on when I flip the light switch," he says. "I've learned so much since my board journey began and I know there is still much more for me to learn."

Through director training provided by SLEMCO's national trade association and the recent hiring process for a new CEO to lead the company forward, he's rounding out a solid foundation for how to help steer the organization far into the future.

"Throughout the process of working with other SLEMCO board members, awarding grants to the needy through the Electric Foundation grants and getting to know the employees, I've been thoroughly impressed with the professionalism and pride that makes up our entire organization," says Daigle. "Every single person I've worked with sincerely believes in doing the hard work that it takes to provide excellent customer service to our customers."

Keeping rates low and the power on are Daigle's main priorities, but just as important in his book, is his board responsibility to be a conduit for SLEMCO customers to express a compliment or concern.

"Each time I get a call or message from a customer, I reach out to the appropriate person at the office," he explains. "Each time, I've gotten a prompt answer that makes logical sense. Sometimes it's



Photo by Mary Laurent

Rhonda and Jeff Daigle

what the customer wants to hear and sometimes it isn't. But it's always been the right answer."

Self-employed for 30 years, he and his wife Rhonda owned a convenience store and fueling center in Church Point before selling the business and retiring in February of 2023.

"Rhonda told me, 'You know that day we always talked about? Well, it's here,' so we sold the business and retired," he jokes. The couple still has some 200 acres of crawfish ponds that Daigle used to harvest himself, but leaves that now to the farmer who leases the land.

"Being asked to serve on the SLEMCO board came at the absolute perfect time in my life," Daigle explains. "Retirement was looming, which meant I would have the time to dedicate to Acadia Parish SLEMCO customers and the time to invest in learning all I need to know to be effective in my role as board member for a top-ten in-the-nation power provider. I am happy to be involved and enjoying every minute of it."

The Daigles have one son who is recently engaged, so they're empty nesters with their sites on traveling for awhile—no doubt before their next major role in life to enjoy — being grandparents. 🍀

Katherine Domingue

Named CEO & General Manager of SLEMCO

SLEMCO's Board of Directors has named Katherine Domingue of Lafayette as the new CEO & General Manager of the company. She replaces Glenn Tamporello, who retired in June.

Mrs. Domingue has been with SLEMCO for 25 years, working her way up through the ranks in the Accounting Department where she served as Chief Financial Officer before being named Assistant General Manager, then most recently Interim General Manager.

"I am honored the board has selected me to lead SLEMCO into the future," said Domingue. "The electric utility industry is constantly evolving and I am excited to lead our board, employees, and members into this new world. There will be many great opportunities for continued growth and innovation over the coming years. I have no doubt we will succeed, no matter what challenges are placed before us." 🍀



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: 4517438700.* 🍀

A Little Home for the Prairie

An ecosystem that once covered vast stretches of southwest Louisiana is being brought back, a few acres at a time

“Everything is 100 percent opposite of what you already know,” says Alex Guillory, who has come from a rice farming and crawfish aquaculture background to undertake a restored prairie project in Jefferson Davis Parish. “The agriculture model we use is turned on its head.”

Much of the inspiration and information for Guillory’s project has come from the Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society, which is the steward of restored prairie patches in St. Landry and Evangeline Parishes and elsewhere, and which provides educational opportunities for anyone hoping to preserve or develop prairie environments, or simply has an interest in the historical natural environment of the area.

“The part of the prairie you see is above ground,” Society Vice-President Colby LeJeune explains to Guillory and others in a lecture session preceding the group’s recent semi-annual meeting, at the Eunice Prairie, the organization’s showpiece ten-acre demonstration project. “You can burn it, cut it, or just watch it change with the seasons, but the real life of the prairie is underground.”

The composition of the soil, and the submerged, intricate root systems, are key components of a sustainable prairie environment, LeJeune says. *Lucky Number: 4517587701.*

In the grasslands between the coastal marshes and the inland pine savannah, between the Sabine and Atchafalaya Rivers, there was once a robust prairie that covered millions of acres. By the late twentieth century, much of it was converted to rice fields or otherwise developed, and perhaps as few as a hundred of acres of the original prairie remained, mostly neglected scraps here and there along railroad rights of way.

In 1988, a group of prairie enthusiasts, led by legendary South Louisiana naturalists Drs. Charles Allen and Malcolm Vidrine, organized the Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society, which has served as an educational resource and has undertaken a variety of restoration and preservation projects. The group’s website is cajunprairie.org, and the organization also has a presence on social media.



Educator and film Producer Phyllis Baudoin Griffard and Director of Photography Rush Jagoe confer on footage at Eunice Prairie.

story and photos by **JAMES EDMUNDS**



For Heather Brown and her five-year-old daughter June, the Eunice Prairie is a cherished destination.

“Biology shapes the culture and history,” says Phyllis Baudoin Griffard, a long-time biology educator, who with Director Jillian Godshall, has received a state grant to produce a film about the Cajun prairie. “The prairie shaped what people came here and what they did there.” The film project will encompass both the botanical and societal history of the prairie, and will be utilized in educational settings or by anyone seeking knowledge of the prairie, its nature and its history. *Lucky Number:* 4516276701.

“You can have all the facts, but if it doesn’t change your experience of your world, nothing is going to happen,” Griffard says. The Society’s workshops, activities and demonstration projects, including a recently inaugurated patch in Lafayette’s Moncus Park, are important, she says, not only for giving information, but the opportunity to stroll around in the kind of prairie environment that was a dominant south Louisiana ecosystem for centuries.

The Eunice Prairie, with its paved walks and interpretive signage, easily accessible at the corner of Martin Luther King Road and East Magnolia Avenue, is a great starting point. What at first glance you might be tempted to dismiss as a “overgrown field” or “empty pasture” richly rewards a closer look, whether you visit in the warm months when you’ll share the vibrant blooms with birds and bees and butterflies, or in the cooler half of the year when you can saunter along and take the time to appreciate the delicate, lacy, spindly seed structures waiting for the just-right puff of wind. And then, once you are really seeing the beauty of the prairie, close your eyes, and imagine it stretching for miles and miles and miles in every direction, the prairie that once was. 🌱



Cardinal at Eunice Prairie



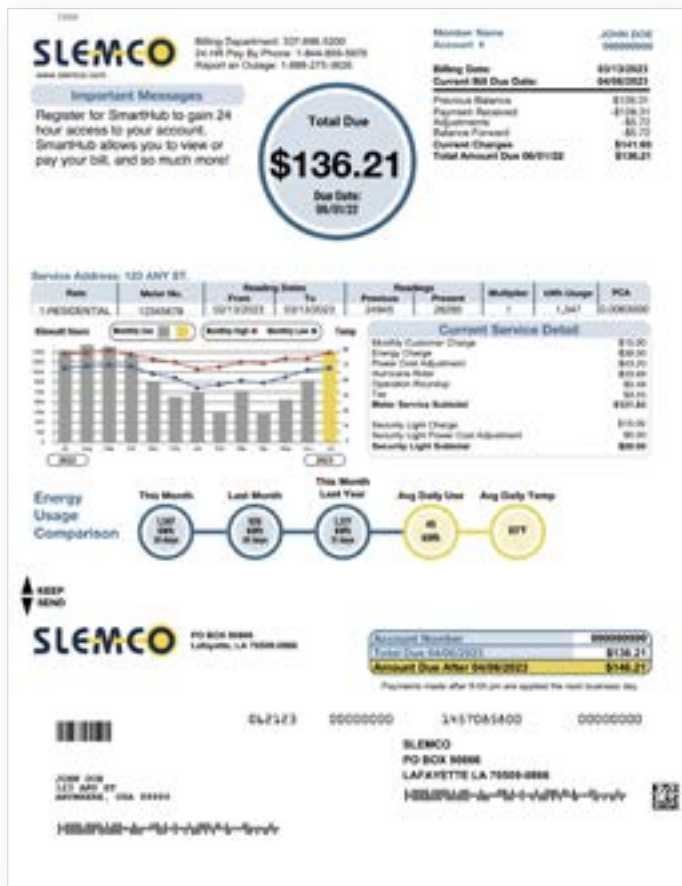
For someone like Alex Guillory who is creating a prairie patch in rural Jefferson Davis Parish, the Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society is a source of not only information but inspiration.



A Cajun prairie patch in Moncus Park bursts with color in the spring.

HOW TO READ YOUR NEW BILL

SIMPLER TO READ. EASIER TO UNDERSTAND.



At SLEMCO we believe that a bill shouldn't be something that confuses you. A bill shouldn't leave you scratching your head. In fact every bill should be just like our new bill.

In October, SLEMCO customers received their new bill that's simpler to read and easier to understand.

At the top of the bill is how much you owe and when it's due. Your name and account number are also here, in the upper right corner. Be sure to use this number if you call us to make a payment, have questions or need help. Below that is a quick and easy summary of your personal energy activity since your last bill. On the left, you'll find important messages from SLEMCO.

Everything you want to know about your meter is summarized on one simple line.

Under that is an easy-to-read graph that shows you how your power usage has been trending month to month. Use this to plan ahead and adjust your energy use. Next to the graph you'll find a more detailed summary of the charges. We've also added another simple graph showing your energy use this month compared to last month and the same month last year. This will help you find ways to adjust your energy usage and save money.

Now you're ready to pay online, at the SLEMCO business office or by tearing off the bottom third of your bill and sending it in with your payment.

On top of offering one of the lowest rates in the state our new bill format is an example of one more way SLEMCO makes your life easier, better and more affordable. ☺

Whether you choose to pay your bill in person, by mail or automatically every month, SLEMCO makes payment quick and convenient with SmartHub.

PAY ONLINE GO PAPERLESS

If paperless is your preference, saying goodbye to paper is easy once you've signed up for SmartHub. With SLEMCO's SmartHub account management tool, view and pay your electric bills anytime, safely and conveniently. When you log on to SmartHub, click the "MyProfile" tab, then the "Update My Paperless Billing Settings." New user? Sign up for SmartHub now at <https://slemco.smarthub.coop>.

Register your SLEMCO accounts, select your password and begin paying online.



PAY BY PHONE MAKE AUTOMATED CREDIT CARD AND CHECK PAYMENTS ANYTIME

SLEMCO residential customers can pay their bill by credit card or check through our automated system by calling 1-844-859-5978. Commercial customers can pay by phone using a check only. Payments post within 15 minutes to your account. Any payment made after 8 p.m. will post the next business day. The fee for phone payments is \$4.

PAY AUTOMATICALLY BANK DRAFT, CREDIT OR DEBIT CARD

Paying your bill by bank draft or credit/debit card (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 any time at <https://slemco.smarthub.coop>. 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 as before that shows the net bill but will have a zero balance. 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, giving you ample time to call us with any questions regarding your bill.

PAY IN PERSON DRIVE UP TO OUR KIOSK OR THE SLEMCO BUSINESS OFFICE

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.

let's get COOKING



As we start the new year with the best of intentions of being

healthier, Adeline Waugh shows us that healthy food can be very creative and tasty, with her cookbook *Vibrant & Pure*. You can find it at local bookstores for \$24 or on Amazon starting at \$11.

Crunchy Chickpeas

Makes about 2 cups

Great with cocktails or on a salad.

- (1) 15-oz. can chickpeas
- 1 tsp. avocado oil
- ¼ tsp. sea salt
- ½ tsp. sweet paprika
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- ¼ tsp. cayenne

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Strain and rinse the chickpeas, then pat dry. On the baking sheet, toss the chickpeas with the avocado oil, salt, paprika, garlic powder and cayenne. Roast the chickpeas for 20 minutes or until golden brown and crispy. Store in an airtight jar at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.

Roasted Garlic Chicken

Serves 4

- (1) Whole chicken (about 6 lbs., preferably organic and pasture-raised)
- 2 tsp. salt
- 6 garlic cloves minced
- 1 shallot, minced
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, minced
- Grated zest of 1 lemon (about 1 tbs.)
- 1 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. red wine vinegar
- ½ tsp. dried thyme
- ½ tsp. dried rosemary
- ½ tsp. sweet paprika
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

Place chicken in a roasting pan. In a small bowl, whisk together 1 tsp. of the salt, the garlic, shallot, parsley, lemon zest, olive oil, vinegar, thyme, rosemary, paprika and pepper. Rub the mixture onto chicken, making sure to get some seasoning underneath the skin. Cover with plastic wrap and let the chicken marinate for at

least 1 hour in the refrigerator.

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Roast the chicken for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until the skin is crispy and browned and the temperature reaches 165 degrees on a meat thermometer. Remove from oven. Let cool.

Everything Sweet Potato Fries

Serves 2

- 2 Large sweet potatoes, halved lengthwise and sliced vertically into fries
- 2 tsp. avocado oil
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- ¼ tsp. sea salt
- 2 tsp. Everything Bagel Seasoning
- 2 to 3 tbs. dairy-free Ranch dressing

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. In a medium bowl, combine sweet potato wedges, 1 tsp. avocado oil, the garlic powder and salt. Using your hands, toss until well coated. Transfer to the baking sheet, evenly distribute sweet potato fries and bake for 15 minutes. Flip the fries over and cook for 15 minutes more, or until browned and crispy. Let cool slightly. Return the sweet potato wedges to the bowl and toss with the remaining tsp. avocado oil until well coated. Sprinkle with the seasoning and serve with a side of Ranch dressing.

Caramelized Banana Toast

This will be your new favorite snack or breakfast

- 1 slice of bread (of your choice)
- 1 tsp. coconut oil
- 1 tsp. maple syrup
- 1 banana, thickly sliced
- 2 tbs. thick yogurt (try coconut flavor)
- 1 tsp. sliced almonds (or other nuts of choice)
- ¼ tsp. grated lemon zest
- 1 tsp. hemp seeds
- Pinch of ground cinnamon
- Pinch of sea salt
- 1 tsp. honey (optional)

In a toaster or toaster oven, toast the bread to your preference. In a small pan, heat the coconut oil and maple syrup over medium-high heat until the coconut oil is melted. Add the banana slices and cook for 5 minutes, flipping halfway through or until golden brown and caramelized on both sides.

Spread the yogurt thickly on the toast and top with the caramelized banana,

almonds, lemon zest, hemp seeds, cinnamon, salt and a drizzle of honey.

Grapefruit Jalapeño Margarita

Serves 1

Trimming the glass with pink Himalayan Sea salt adds a boost of essential minerals.

- 3 tbs. silver tequila, preferably 100% agave
- Juice of ½ grapefruit (about 4 tbs.)
- 2 tbs. lime juice
- 1 tsp. maple syrup (optional)
- 1 small jalapeño pepper, sliced into thin rounds
- 1 to 2 tsp. pink Himalayan Sea salt, for garnish
- 1 lime, quartered, for garnish
- 1 grapefruit, halved and sliced, for garnish

Fill a cocktail shaker with ice. Add tequila, grapefruit and lime juices, maple syrup (if using) and 2 to 4 thin jalapeño slices. Shake vigorously for about 10 seconds.

Place the pink salt on a small plate. Use a lime wedge to wet the rim of your glass. Coat the rim with the pink salt. Fill glass with ice cubes and pour in the drink. Garnish with a lime wedge, a half-moon grapefruit slice and the remaining jalapeño slices.

Granola Crack Clusters

Serves 1

An addictive, grain-free snack or breakfast

- 2 cups sliced almonds
- 1 cup crushed walnut pieces
- ½ cup raw pumpkin seeds
- ¼ cup chia seeds
- ¼ cup sunflower seeds
- ¼ cup coconut oil
- ½ cup plus 1 tbs. maple syrup
- ¼ tsp. sea salt

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, combine the almonds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, chia seeds and sunflower seeds until evenly mixed.

Heat the coconut oil and maple syrup in a medium saucepan over low heat until the oil is melted. Then stir to combine. Pour the mixture evenly over the nut mixture and toss well to evenly coat. Spread the granola in an even layer on the baking sheet.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown and sticky. Let the granola cool until it is room temperature, then break it up. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 months.



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). *Lucky Number: 4516879800.*

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: 3045379609.*

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: 3031203002.* 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: 4516651202.*

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. ☎

