

SLEMCO

MAY/JUNE 2025

POWER



ANNUAL MEETING

JUNE 14



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SLEMCO.COM

The Official Publication of the Southwest
Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation

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88TH ANNUAL MEETING

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

The 88th Annual Meeting of the members of the Southwest Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation (SLEMCO) will be held in Lafayette's Cajundome on Saturday, June 14, 2025. The business meeting begins at 10 a.m.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Report of quorum of members present.
2. Reading of Notice of Annual Meeting mailed on May 30, 2025.
3. Presentation of Minutes of the previous Annual Meeting and action thereon.
4. Reports of Officers, CEO and Attorney and action thereon as needed.
5. Election of Directors. (Nominated by Committee.)
6. Unfinished business, if any.
7. Adjournment.

This notice was mailed to each SLEMCO member, postage prepaid, on May 30, 2025 in accordance with SLEMCO's bylaws.

John B. Meaux, *Secretary-Treasurer*



Photos by Kimberly Duric Photography

EXPERIENCE AN EXCITING DAY filled with activities, opportunities to win amazing prizes and a chance to connect with fellow SLEMCO members! Don't miss out on the fun at our 88th Annual Meeting on Saturday, June 14. Your participation makes it even more special!

The first grand-prize winner will choose between \$30,000 cash or a new car or truck provided by Courtesy Automotive. *Lucky Number: 4518884801.* The second grand-prize winner will go home with \$5,000 cash and \$2,500 will go to the lucky member whose name is drawn for the third grand prize.

Doors to the Lafayette Cajundome open at 6 a.m., and at 6:30, you can enjoy music by **Geno Delafosse & French Rockin' Boogie.** Plan on getting to the Cajundome before 8 a.m.,



because you'll want your prize stub in the barrel when we draw for the early bird prize of a \$3,000 SLEMCO Bill Credit! We will also be giving away other valuable prizes throughout the morning.

Vitalant will be conducting our annual blood drive if you would like to make a safe and fast donation. Participating in a blood drive is a wonderful way to give back to the community and potentially save lives.

At 10 a.m. the business portion of our meeting begins with the presentation of the minutes from the 2024 annual meeting, an introduction of directors and guests, plus reports on SLEMCO's operations. *Lucky Number: 2313455000.*



You will be asked to elect four (4) Directors to the SLEMCO board. The slate of officers nominated in April by the 2025 nominating committee is Acadia Parish – Bryan Leonards, 304 W. 17th, Crowley, LA 70526; Lafayette Parish – Carl Comeaux, 209 Burning Oaks Drive, Carencro, LA 70520; St. Landry Parish – Gary Smith, 1866 Hwy 356, Sunset, LA 70584; and St. Martin Parish – Jeremy Melancon, 1061 Camille Dr, St. Martinville, LA 70582.



YOU CAN'T WIN UNLESS YOU ATTEND

After the conclusion of our business meeting, we'll draw for 20 \$2,000 scholarships and the grand prizes. This could be your lucky Saturday so join us at the Cajundome, Saturday, June 14. 📍

THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL MEETING PRIZES*

Be a Winner!

FIRST GRAND PRIZE

CHOICE OF ONE VEHICLE OR CASH

Vehicles provided by **COURTESY**
BUICK GMC LAFAYETTE



2025 BUICK ENCORE GX



2025 GMC CANYON



2025 BUICK ENVISTA



2025 BUICK ENVISION



2025 GMC TERRAIN

*Actual models may vary depending on supply chain availability

*Members are eligible for all prizes but can only win one (1) of the top three prizes. The early bird winner is still eligible for one of the top three prizes.



\$30,000 CASH

SECOND GRAND PRIZE

\$5,000 CASH

THIRD GRAND PRIZE

\$2,500 CASH

8AM EARLY BIRD PRIZE

\$3,000 SLEMCO BILL CREDIT

ADDITIONAL PRIZES INCLUDE

5 WINNERS — **\$500 CASH**

4 WINNERS — **\$500 SLEMCO Bill Credit**

4 WINNERS — **\$1000 SLEMCO Bill Credit**

Don't miss your chance for one of these great prizes!



RACCOON OAK FARM

Indigenous farmstead and native fruit and nut orchard provides sustenance for the local community.

story by **CHÉRÉ COEN**

IT'S DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE IN FEW WORDS Ida Aronson, a freelance cultural manager, Native American artist, theater lighting designer and soon-to-be certified doula. The Boston native with tribal roots in the United Houma Nation, Aronson operates with husband Brandon Keller the indigenous Raccoon Oak Farm and native orchard in Breaux Bridge on Ishak/Chitimacha lands, selling their wares at farmer's markets such as Fightingville Fresh Market on Lafayette's north side. Aronson is also an artist, part of the Stewards of Nanih Bvlbancha who created the Nanih Bvlbancha Native American monument at the Lafitte Greenway in New Orleans.

In addition, Aronson promotes Houma culture through community action and mutual support with several South Louisiana organizations—tree giveaways, free food pantry in front of the farm, cultural gatherings—and plans on creating an art installation at the farm featuring maps of Louisiana tribal lands and more.

Aronson's a founding member of Okla Hina Ikhish Holo network, a Gulf South Indigenous Gardeners Network; Lobelia Commons, a network for autonomous food production and neighborhood survival; a steering committee member of Louisiana Small-Scale Agriculture and a founding member of the Bvlbancha Collective and Bvlbancha Public Access, an indigenous media channel that promotes native culture.

"We do a lot of community work," Aronson says. "There's a resurgence of indigenous ways and I'm pleased to be a part of that. And the farm plays into that as well."

RACCOON OAK FARM

When the couple were searching for a place to put down roots and begin their farmstead and orchard that promotes both native plants and sustainable agriculture, Aronson was thrilled to discover a property with Native American heritage. The land on the outskirts

“I’m committed to growing everything here—what wants to be grown here. Everything I do is about regeneration of agricultural systems and sustainability.”



of Breaux Bridge’s city limits is located adjacent to the St. Martin Forest and about two miles from Lake Martin, which means it’s also home to a variety of wildlife and a host of migratory and resident birds. *Lucky Number: 1460152001.*

While gathering a dozen chicken, geese, three pet ducks, two dogs and cats, plus planting their garden, they discovered a raccoon living in the back yard oak tree. Aronson had been adopted into the raccoon clan of the Muskogee tribe so Raccoon Oak Farm seemed an appropriate name for their farming adventure.

The front yard contains native plants and trees, some with labels that explain the plant’s biological name, its uses in medicine and food and its name in the Houma language; naturally Aronson has worked helping to bring back the Houma language. In the back yard are the animals, with the property extending toward a coulee where tree seedlings are taking shape, trees that will be sold or given away to the community.

Aronson doesn’t till the soil or mow the lawn (a scythe is used to maintain grass), uses no pesticides that might leak into the water table and leaves portions of the yard wild to let wildflowers grow and encourage pollinators. The neighbors may question that decision but a wild yard helps the environment, Aronson says.

“I’m creating nature’s homes for the pollinators because we’re seeing so much die-off with pollinators nationwide. Plus, I love wildflowers and they all have herbal uses too.”

It’s all about what’s native, Aronson insists. “I’m committed to growing everything here — what wants to be grown here. Everything I do is about regeneration of agricultural systems and sustainability.”

The eggs the geese produce have become a major draw, enormous eggs the size of two to three regular chicken eggs that offer creamy yolks. *Lucky Number: 1204276002.*

“We’ve become famous for our goose eggs,” Keller says. “We bring a half dozen to the market and they’ll be gone in 10 minutes.”

At press time, the couple was planning on a tree giveaway, including red mulberry, elderberry, black cherry and pawpaw, among many others. They plan to install a food pantry and fridge where their property meets the street, allowing those in need to pick up produce and other food items from their garden.



Photo by Cheré Coen



Photo by Cheré Coen

CONNECTION BEGAN WITH MOM

Aronson grew up in Boston to a Jewish father and a mother with Houma heritage “adopted away” as a baby from South Louisiana. When Aronson’s mother discovered her biological family when Aronson was seven, it began a lifelong exploration of Houma culture for the two. Aronson would head south during the summers to visit Houma family. *Lucky Number: 4517891601.*

As an adult, Aronson works to develop and promote the Houma culture, including helping to reinvigorate the native language. In 2023, Aronson was part of the Steward of Nanih Bvlbancha, a group of Louisiana indigenous artists who built a monument in the shape of an earthen mound on the Lafitte Greenway in New Orleans. The artwork exemplifies the historical significance of mounds to the Houma people but also how they represent a sacred place for gathering.

“Nanih means mound or flat-top pyramid and Bvlbancha means a place of many languages, which is New Orleans,” Aronson says.

Keller performs grant work for an organization working to combat human trafficking while Aronson uses an art background for odd jobs, in addition to the farm and cultural work.

“I have eight to 10 jobs, some of them pay,” Aronson says with a laugh. “We do a lot of things piecemeal.

When we get some extra money, for instance, we’ll use some of the wood in the wood pile to add on to the chicken coop.”

And so the farm grows, with plans for expansion and additional community outreach.

In the meantime, find Raccoon Oak Farm produce and goose eggs at special events in South Louisiana or on Tuesdays and Saturdays at Fightingville Fresh Market. Or visit the farm to learn about Houma culture, view how native plants are grown and meet a farmer wearing a variety of philanthropic and educational hats at <https://raccoonokfarm.carrd.co>. ☎



Fresh eggs, rainbow dozen, free range \$5/dozen
Goose eggs \$1.50/each (seasonal) for sale at Fightingville Fresh Market
Tuesdays 3-5pm and Saturdays 1-4pm
315 W Simcoe St. Lafayette, 70501

Available trees include red mulberry, elderberry, black cherry, chokeberry, American persimmon and pawpaw

A Story of Salvation

The Chauvin Sculpture Garden is a hidden gem in Terrebonne Parish

story by ERIN Z. BASS



NESTLED BETWEEN BAYOUSIDE DRIVE AND BAYOU PETIT CAILLOU, Chauvin Sculpture Garden is an outdoor fantasyland of folk art. Created by artist Kenny Hill more than two decades ago, the site is now managed by Nicholls State University and open to the public seven days a week. 📍



The Backstory

A brick layer, Hill arrived in Chauvin, La., in 1988 and camped on the bayou side property before persuading the landlord to allow him to build a small house. He began making sculptures on the land in 1990, including a lighthouse constructed of more than 7,000 bricks. He was a recluse, but neighbors left him their leftover paint and other building materials for his sculpture garden. In 2000, Hill stopped cutting the grass on the property and was evicted. He is said to have walked away from his creation on foot and hitchhiked to Missouri to live with his brother. He hasn't been seen since.

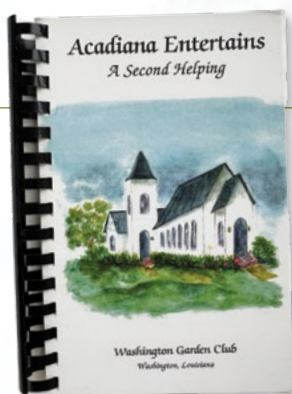
What Remains

There are more than 100 colorful sculptures in the garden, many of them religious in nature. A 45-foot-tall lighthouse is the focal point, covered with sculptures of soldiers, angels, cowboys and God. It also has one of many self-portraits of Hill, depicted as climbing up the side. "Most figures—black, white, male, female, child, or soldier—are guided, supported, or lifted by seemingly weightless angels," according to Nicholls State. Hill also carries Christ's cross, rides a horse and is depicted with a bleeding heart. His only explanation for the garden is that it was a "story of salvation" for local residents.

Getting There

The Chauvin Sculpture Garden is located near Chauvin in Terrebonne Parish on the left descending bank of Bayou Petit Caillou. It is located about 19 miles south of Houma and roughly two hours and 15 minutes from Lafayette. From Hwy. 90 west, take exit 202 to Houma and continue heading southeast on LA 56 toward Chauvin. Cross Bayou Petit Caillou on LA 58, then turn right at the first street to 5337 Bayouside Dr. The Sculpture Garden will be on your right and the Nicholls State University Art Studio, a folk art museum, on your left. The studio is always free and open to the public on weekends from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. The garden is open seven days a week from 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

FOR MORE INFO VISIT <https://www.nicholls.edu/folkartcenter/park.html> or (985) 594-2546



Pay homage to the season's fresh shrimp, vegetables, and fruit

with recipes from the Washington [Louisiana] Garden Club's cookbook *Acadiana Entertains: A Second Helping*. Discover this little gem through Washington Louisiana Garden Club's Facebook page.

Slow-Roasted Tomatoes

- 2 pts. red and/or yellow cherry tomatoes
- 4-5 springs fresh basil
- 2-3 tsp. finely chopped garlic (jarred garlic if fine)
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Wash and pat tomatoes dry. Place tomatoes, basil, garlic and olive oil in cast iron skillet (10-12 inches). Heat briefly on cook top just to start things heating up. Place in oven and roast for about 40-50 minutes, until skins have popped and they are soft and melted. May required additional time depending on tomatoes. May be refrigerated for several days, but best at room temperature. Serve with thin, toasted baguette rounds and Boursin cheese.

Shrimp-Stuffed Mirliton

Serves 8

Mirlitons (Mer-lee-tawns) or prickly pears, are very inexpensive this time of year.

- (4) 8-oz. mirliton squash
- ½ lb. uncooked shrimp, peeled
- ½ lb. coarsely chopped (cooked) smoked ham
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ tsp. ground thyme
- ¼ tsp. ground hot red pepper
- ¼ tsp. Cajun seasoning
- 11 tbs. butter, cut into ½-inch bits
- 1 cup soft fresh crumbs made from French bread

Drop the mirlitons into enough boiling water to immerse them completely. Cook briskly, uncovered, for about 45 minutes, or until they show no resistance when

let's get COOKING

pierced with the point of a knife. Drain the mirlitons, and when they are cool, cut them lengthwise into halves. Remove the seeds and hollow out each with a spoon to make boat-like shells about ¼ inch thick. Invert the shells on paper towels to drain. Puree the pulp. Transfer the pulp to a heavy ungreased skillet and, stirring constantly, cook over moderate heat until all of the liquid in the pan evaporates. Add 8 tablespoons of the butter bits to the puree, and when it melts, stir in the shrimp, ham, onion and garlic and continue cooking until shrimp are pink and onion is soft. Add parsley, thyme, red paper, seasoning and salt. Taste for seasoning. Spoon the shrimp and squash stuffing into the reserved mirliton shells, dividing it equally among them and mounding the tops slightly. Sprinkle the bread crumbs and the remaining 3 tablespoons of butter bits over the mirlitons. Arrange the shells in the buttered dish and bake in the middle of the oven for 30 minutes or until the tops are brown. Serve at once.

Fried Eggplant

Great with grilled or roasted oysters.

- 3 large eggplants, peeled and cut into rounds
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- ½ tsp. red pepper
- 3 large eggs, beaten
- 2 cups flour
- Oil, for frying

Season eggplant rounds to taste. Dip eggplant in egg and then in flour. Heat oil in pan or electric fryer. Fry eggplants in oil until golden brown. Do not crowd the pan.

Veronique Sauce

A great sauce on top of baked or grilled fish.

- 3 shallots, finely chopped
- Butter for sauteing
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 16 seedless green grapes

Saute the shallot in butter and then add wine. Once the wine is reduced by half, add chicken stock and reduce that by half. Warm the cream and add the warm cream

to the mixture and reduce that by half. (If it needs to be thickened a little bit more, use Tony Chachere White Gray Mix.) Just before serving—the last 5 minutes of heating the sauce—throw in the grapes. Don't put them in too soon because they will explode.

Peach Crumb Bars

- 2 cups sliced ripe peaches (5 large)
- 2 tsp. cinnamon sugar
- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups powdered sugar
- ½ lb. butter
- (1) 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- (1) 14-oz. can sweeten condensed milk
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp. pure vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Peel and pit peaches, slice thinly and toss with cinnamon sugar and set-aside. In a large bowl, combine flour and powdered sugar. Cut in the butter until the mixture is crumbly and rather dry. Reserve 2 cups of the mixture for the topping. Line the bottom of a 9 x 13" pan with parchment paper, allowing for extra paper on the 13-inch sides to use after baking for lifting the cheesecake out easily. You can use a little cooking spray in a pan to help the parchment stick. Press remaining mixture into bottom of the pan. Bake the crust for 15 minutes. While crust is baking, beat the cream cheese until fluffy. Gradually beat in the condensed milk until smooth. Add the egg and vanilla. Mix well. After the crust has baked for 15 minutes, remove from oven and carefully smooth the peaches over the crust in an even layer. Drizzle any peach juice that is in the bowl. Pour cream cheese mixture over the peaches. Sprinkle the reserved crust mixture of the top of the cream cheese filling. Bake for 30-35 minutes until bubbly and starting to brown on the

top. It is easiest to cut bars if they have been chilled for a while, but they're incredibly delicious warm. Store leftovers—if any—in refrigerator.

⚡
For extra copies of these recipes or to email a copy to a friend, visit SLEMC POWER magazine at SLEMC.com.

Don't Miss Your Opportunity to Win!

BE A PART OF OUR 88th ANNUAL MEETING
**ON SATURDAY, JUNE 14, TWENTY STUDENTS
WILL EACH WIN \$2,000 TO HELP PAY FOR
COLLEGE OR TRADE SCHOOL**

SCHOLARSHIP You can win a scholarship if you applied before the deadline of May 15. Scholarships will be awarded by random drawing immediately after the business portion of our meeting, which begins at 10 a.m. Once the barrel is brought to the stage, no more entry cards will be allowed, so please don't be late. *Lucky Number: 4519102600.*

The SLEMCO member who sponsored each applicant must attend the annual meeting and be prepared to claim the scholarship with his or her driver's license. We do not need the student's driver's license. The student isn't required to attend the

meeting, but is encouraged to attend and join in the excitement.

In cases where SLEMCO members sponsor themselves or a spouse, either can attend to claim a scholarship, but one must be present to win. *Lucky Number: 4514578302.*

Winners will need to provide SLEMCO with an official transcript from either their university or high school, whichever is applicable, within 30 days of the June 14 Annual Meeting.

PRIZES You or your spouse must be present to claim your prize. No one else can claim a prize for you—not a neighbor, relative or by power of attorney. If you have a commercial account and wish to participate in the drawings, bring a letter to SLEMCO's office by

Friday, June 13 stating that you will be your company's authorized representative.

If you misplace your invitation card, come to the meeting anyway. We'll be happy to make you a new one. ☺

**YOU MUST BE
PRESENT TO WIN**

Winners of any grand prize will not be eligible to win another grand prize at this meeting.

**Drive Away in
a New Vehicle
or Walk with
other Prizes**



**WHEN YOU ARRIVE, PLACE
YOUR STUB IN THE PRIZE
BARREL AND LISTEN FOR
YOUR NAME WHEN THE PRIZE
DRAWINGS ARE ANNOUNCED.**



Between 8 and 10 a.m., we'll give away every prize except the scholarships and grand prizes.

Lucky Number: 4518595500.

You should receive your invitation card in the mail during the first week of June. Bring that card with you to the Cajundome on June 14 where half of the card will go in the prize barrel. You keep the remaining half to claim your prize if your name is drawn. *Lucky Number: 2118109000.* ☺

**Have questions?
call SLEMCO at (337) 896-5384**



**LUCKY NUMBER
WINNERS!**

FIND YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER AND WIN \$100 CREDITS!

CONGRATULATIONS to Malcolm Bearb of Carencro LA, winner from our last publication. We've hidden 10 more SLEMCO account numbers in this issue of the magazine. If you find your SLEMCO account number, call Michelle Courville at (337) 896-2504. Once she verifies you as a winner, she'll credit \$100 to your SLEMCO account. *Lucky Number: 4503961800.* ☺