

SLEMCO

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026

POWER



FURRY FRIENDS

**SCHOLARSHIP
APPLICATIONS**

PAGE 2

JD POWER AWARD

PAGE 3

THE AZALEA TRAIL

PAGE 6

SLEMCO.COM

The Official Publication of the Southwest
Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation

2727 SE Evangeline Thruway
P.O. Box 90866
Lafayette, Louisiana 70509
Phone 337-896-5384
www.slemco.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ACADIA PARISH

Jeff Daigle
Bryan G. Leonards, Sr.

ST. MARTIN PARISH

Jeremy Melancon
Don Resweber

LAFAYETTE PARISH

Carl Comeaux, *Second Vice President*
Johnny Meaux, *Secretary-Treasurer*

ST. LANDRY PARISH

Gary G. Soileau, *First Vice President*
Gary J. Smith

VERMILION PARISH

Joseph David Simon, Jr., *President*
Joanna Sonnier

ATTORNEY

James J. Davidson, III

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Katherine Domingue
CEO & General Manager

David Moore
Director of Operations

Wayne Philips
Director of Marketing and Governmental Affairs

Nicole Clements
Chief Financial Officer

SLEMCO POWER STAFF

Mary Laurent, CCC, CKAE, MIP
Editor

SLEMCO POWER (USPS 498-720, ISSN 0274-7685) is published bimonthly by Southwest Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation, 2727 SE Evangeline Thruway, Lafayette, LA 70508. Periodicals postage paid at Lafayette, LA 70509.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to SLEMCO, P.O. Box 90866, Lafayette, LA 70509-0866.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

COVER: photo courtesy Lafayette Animal Aid



TAKE NOTE



**TWENTY SCHOLARSHIPS
VALUED AT \$2,000 EACH
WILL BE AWARDED AT
OUR ANNUAL MEETING
ON JUNE 13**

Scholarship Applications

APPLICATIONS FOR THE 2026 scholarship drawing will be mailed with every SLEMCO bill in February. The entry deadline is Thursday, May 14, at 4:30 p.m. in the Lafayette SLEMCO office; mailed entries must be postmarked by May 14.

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: 4501786300.*

Due to Internal Revenue Service rules, applicants who are dependent children must not turn 24 during 2026. 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 2026 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. *Lucky Number: 2209047001.* ☎

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 2026.

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. *Scholarship winners can only win once.*

The sponsoring SLEMCO member must have been a member for the past 12 consecutive months, as of May 14, 2026.

The applicant is not required to attend the annual meeting on June 14, 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 14 deadline will be ineligible. One entry per applicant will be accepted. Duplicates will be discarded.

SLEMCO Ranked Fifth in the Nation

by JD Power Customer Service Satisfaction Survey

Residential customers in over 109 million households scored 152 of the largest electric utilities in the nation in key categories—cost, trust, safety & reliability, employee workforce, problem resolution, communication and more. SLEMCO's overall score of 601 outpaced the national cooperative average of 566 for electric cooperatives.

The 2025 study also noted that nationwide, across all types of power providers, satisfaction scores were down overall—due primarily to increased costs for generated power. With huge data centers gobbling up existing generation capacity, the law of supply and demand is affecting virtually every power provider and therefore every customer, in the nation.

According to the US Energy Information Administration, Louisiana electric rates are among the lowest in the nation, averaging 12.3 cents per kWh, while the national average is 18.07 cents per kWh. That's a 32% difference, which is great news for Louisiana families.

But with higher temperatures and heat factored into the equation, folks living in Louisiana, and the South in general, tend to use more kWh each month to stay cool regardless of who provides their power. That can mean higher overall electric bills for families and businesses. Attention to things like thermostat settings on HVAC systems or reducing usage of other major equipment like hot tubs, pool pumps and electric water heaters can help lower consumption. *Lucky Number 1206250010.*



We know that the monthly electric utility bill accounts for a significant part of every family budget. Until power supply issues settle down and new generation plants can be built, conservation will be the name of the game for anyone wanting to keep their electric bills as low as possible. ⚡

*Thank you to our customers who responded to the survey.
Your feedback gives us direction and guidance for the future, knowing
how we can best meet the needs of the communities we serve!*

Know Your Payment Options Flexible Ways to Settle Your Utility Bill

No matter if you prefer to pay your bill in person, through the mail, or set up automatic monthly payments, SLEMCO ensures a quick and convenient experience with SmartHub.

PAY IN PERSON

Drive up to our 24-hour kiosk or walk-in to pay at the SLEMCO Business Office, open Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., to pay your bill with a credit card, cash, or electronic check. *Lucky Number: 1206250010.*

PAY BY PHONE

Make automated credit card payments (residential customers only) and check payments anytime by calling 1-844-859-5978. Residential payments post within 15 minutes; payments after 8 p.m. post the next business day. A \$4 fee applies for phone payments.

PAY ONLINE

Go paperless by signing up for **SmartHub**. Manage and pay your electric bills anytime, safely and conveniently. Log into SmartHub, navigate to "MyProfile," and update your paperless billing settings. New users can sign up at <https://slemco.smarthub.coop>

PAY AUTOMATICALLY

Enroll in SLEMCO's Automatic Payment Options for hassle-free payments via bank draft or credit/debit card (residential customers only). Sign up at <https://slemco.smarthub.coop>, and receive a regular bill with zero balance. Your account won't be charged until your due date.



**BE A LUCKY NUMBER
WINNER!**

FIND YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER AND WIN \$100 IN CREDITS!

CONGRATULATIONS to Adele Zeno of Crowley, 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. Good Luck! ⚡

POWER PETS

ACADIANA ANIMAL
AID'S SHELTER
ANIMALS BECOME
SOCIAL MEDIA
STARS IN AN
EFFORT
TO BOOST
ADOPTIONS

Photos courtesy Lafayette Animal Aid

story by ERIN Z. BASS

ACADIANA ANIMAL AID BROKE RECORDS for animal adoptions in 2025—reaching the 2,000 mark—but that doesn't mean their work is done. Local animal shelters are always struggling with overcrowding, so community support in the form of adoption and fostering is needed now more than ever. That's where SLEMCO comes in. The first-ever Power Pets program is pairing SLEMCO employees with loveable canines and felines up for adoption at Acadiana Animal Aid in Carencro.

Acadiana Animal Aid assists other area shelters by taking in animals from more crowded shelters to fill vacancies at their Carencro facility. This helps save lives in our entire region.



In October, employees like Allison from Accounting were pictured on Facebook with pets like Horseshoe, an 18-month-old male dog described as “sweet and loving.” Linemen Jesse and Jonathan posed with Topanga and Coraline, two-month-old female kittens known for being cuddly and playful. *Lucky Number: 4520156600.*

“SLEMCO reached out with the idea of being able to reach so many people and to help with the adoption process,” says Krista DeGuelle, fundraising and development director with Acadiana Animal Aid. “Adoptions right now primarily happen because of social media and word of mouth, so their access to this many people is exactly what we need. The majority of our adopters are here locally—they are SLEMCO users—so it was just a good partnership.”

SLEMCO plans to share “Power Pets” each quarter and encourages customers to share the posts on their own Facebook pages. “We hope to give lots of potential furry family members a quicker path to a home and family of their very own,” says SLEMCO Communications Coordinator Mary Laurent.

DeGuelle explains that some pets up for adoption go on transports to other states, but that number is less than 100 of their total animals. The largest portion are animals that come to them from other area shelters in need of a new home.

For people considering pet adoption but may be on the fence, DeGuelle says “look at your lifestyle. Look at what you do and how you want an animal to become a family member. Animals provide so many amazing benefits to a human being, just through unconditional love and kindness. They’re your workout buddies, your walking buddies, but they’re also a responsibility.”

She suggests evaluating where you are in your life and how much time you have to devote to an animal. Animal Aid has matchmakers on staff ready to link potential families with an animal that can blend seamlessly into their life. *Lucky Number: 4518797701.*

“Don’t go into it knowing what you already want, let us try to find you what will be a perfect fit,” she says. “Whether it’s a cat or dog, young or old, they will link you with an animal that will fit the lifestyle that you’re in.”

DeGuelle also wants to combat the perceptions surrounding shelter animals. “Shelter animals are healthy, they’re happy, they’re adjusted, and they make amazing and wonderful pets,” she says.

Through the 150 foster families in Acadiana Animal Aid’s network, many of the animals have lived in a home before being adopted. Fostering is free and can last for as short as a few hours with Animal Aid’s Doggy Day Out program to as long as keeping an animal until they are adopted permanently.

For those families that already have pets or don’t feel adoption is right for them, there are plenty of other ways to support Animal Aid. You can volunteer, foster, donate or just be kind to animals.

“It’s our moral responsibility to help solve the pet overpopulation crisis that has created homeless and unwanted pets,” adds DeGuelle. “Without our community, we do not function. It is everybody’s responsibility to be an advocate for an animal.”

It is SLEMCO’s hope that “Power Pets” will reach their nearly 120,000 customers and 35,000 Facebook followers to make an impact. “At the end of each day, we go home to our families, most of which include furry family members who give us unquestionable loyalty and affection after a long day,” says Laurent. “Our employees wanted to give shelter animals an extra chance at giving that same love and affection to our customers.” *Lucky Number: 3047365503.*

To find out about any of the furry friends you see on SLEMCO’s Facebook page, call Acadiana Animal Aid directly at 337-896-1553. To view all the pets available for adoption at their facility, go to acadianaanimalaid.org. 📍



Ways to Support Acadiana Animal Aid

AT HOME: Volunteer to wash laundry from the shelter; participate in sewing projects; donate; sponsor; or shop their Amazon Wishlist

ON SITE: Walk dogs; socialize cats; clean out kennels; help in the vet clinic; transport animals; assist with admin; work in the pet garden

Lafayette's Azalea Trail Has Come Back Strong



Mouton Gardens, recently revived to its prior-century beauty, shows best during azalea season

WHEN FASHION MAGNATE HENRI BENDEL bought an old plantation in his hometown in 1927 to site a retirement haven away from his New York empire, he set about planting thousands of azalea and camellia shrubs throughout the 180-acre Vermilion Riverside property. He was in great company in Lafayette amongst builders and developers who those days were thinking about flowers, and thinking big.



Bendel joined other Twentieth Century families whose names have been, quite literally, cemented into Lafayette history via street and neighborhood names, like Girard, Mouton, Heymann and Whittington. They all lavished resources on beautiful plantings, so strongly emphasizing the lushly beautiful Southern Indica “Lavender Formosa” that it was designated “Marquis de Lafayette” by mayoral decree in 1938, celebrating the Historic Azalea Trail that had been organized by the then-nascent Lafayette Garden Club.

“Azaleas and camellias are the royalties of the garden,” notes Denise Lanclos, current Azalea Trail chairperson. “They are the first to bloom in the spring.”

Lanclos has been deeply involved in a revival of interest in Lafayette’s Azalea Trail, which was jump-started by a 2016 initiative of Scenic Lafayette, a local post of Scenic America, to bring back the Azalea Trail. Other local organizations and gardeners enthusiastically took up the charge.

“We did door-to-door campaigns, plant giveaways, workshops,” she reports. “Fifteen hundred azaleas were planted.” Bright new signage leads flower lovers through the many neighborhoods where plantings are massed.

The Azalea Trail’s second century has also benefitted from Twenty-first Century technology. A detailed

website at azaleatrail.org has maps, photos, information and even a Bloom Watch that cranks up in late February.

“Social media has been phenomenal,” Lanclos adds. “It helps us share information with all the neighborhoods. The mission here is to share—it’s culturally rich and it’s not political. It’s about people feeling nice about their neighborhoods. Everybody loves it.”



St. Mary Blvd. during the peak of azalea bloom



As the song goes, "Baby it's cold outside," and among the many treats in the over 400-page

cookbook *Pirate's Pantry*, from The Junior League of Lake Charles, is a selection of unique and delicious soups and gumbos. The book can be purchased through Walmart, Target or Amazon for less than \$20.

Flossie's Bean Soup

Serves 40-50

This recipe can be halved.

- 4 lbs. dried great northern beans
- 2 gals. cold water
- 6 qts. warm water
- 1½ lbs. salt pork, cubed (remove rind)
- 1 cup bell pepper, chopped
- 10 cups onions, chopped
- 5 cups celery, chopped
- 2 cups carrots, chopped
- 1 tbs. garlic, finely chopped
- 8 cups canned tomatoes with juice
- Pepper to taste
- 2-3 lbs. cooked ham, cut in ¾-inch cubes
- 2 lbs. wieners, sliced 1/8 inch thick
- 2 cups green onions, finely copped
- 2 cups parsley, finely chopped

Wash beans and cull to remove any bad ones; then place in 5-gallon pot and cover with 2 gallons cold water. Soak overnight. Next morning, drain off water; then add 6 quarts warm water. Bring to a full boil and cover over medium heat until beans are very tender but not mushy. This takes 1½ -2 hours. Remove half the cooked beans, drain well and set aside. Add remaining ingredients, except ham, wieners, green onions and parsley. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium to prevent beans from sticking and scorching. Cook covered, stirring frequently. When vegetables and beans have become quite soft and slightly mushy (usually after 2 hours or more), add reserved beans, ham, wieners, green onions and parsley. Let simmer for 30 minutes. If soup is to be refrigerated or frozen, let it cool to room temperature first. When reheating soup, never cover the pot until the soup has reached the boiling point, or it will sour. Do not add salt, as cured meats are salty enough.

let's get COOKING

Vegetable Beef Soup

Makes 3 gallons

This recipe can be halved.

- 5-6 lbs. heavy beef shanks
- 4 lbs. chuck roast
- 2½ gallons cold water
- 3 tbs. salt
- 4 cups celery, coarsely chopped
- 6 cups onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 tsp. garlic, finely chopped
- 1½ tsp. black pepper
- 2 cans, (8-ounce size) tomato sauce
- 2 cups turnips, diced
- 8 cups canned tomatoes, chopped small, plus juice
- 1 bell pepper, finely chopped
- 2½ lbs. frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 package (9 ounces) frozen baby lima beans
- 1 package (9 ounce) frozen cut corn
- 3 packages (9 ounce) frozen cut green beans
- 4 cups okra (fresh or frozen) sliced
- 2 cups cabbage, chopped
- 4 cups fresh greens (mustard, spinach, or Swiss chard), chopped
- 1 cup parsley, chopped
- 1 cup medium-width noodles, broken in inch-long pieces
- Tabasco (optional)

Place meat in a 4 to 5-gallon soup pot with cover. Add water and salt. Bring to full boil, reduce to medium boil, and cook for 30 minutes. Skim off scum as it surfaces. Add half the celery, half the onions, garlic, pepper, and tomato sauce. Cook covered on medium heat, until the meat is very tender, probably 2-3 hours. Remove meat from broth; set aside until cool enough to handle; then remove all fat, gristle, and bones. Cut meat into bite-sized pieces or larger if desired. The meat will be returned to soup later. As soon as meat is removed, add rest of onions, celery, turnips, and tomatoes. Cook for about 30 minutes, then add rest of vegetables except greens, parsley and noodles. When vegetables are tender, but not mushy, add greens, parsley and noodles. Boil for 10 minutes; add reserved meat. Turn off heat and adjust seasoning, if necessary. Add Tabasco, if desired.

NOTE: This soup can be made a day in advance and refrigerated with broth completing the soup later.

Avocado Bisque

Serves 5-6

- 2 ripe avocados, peeled
- 1 can Campbell's cream of chicken soup (reserve can)
- 1 green onion, white part only
- 1 soup can of milk
- Salt, black and red pepper to taste



Reserve half of 1 avocado for garnish, Mix remaining ingredients in a blender. Better if made a day in advance and refrigerated no less than 2 hours before serving. Place a small slice of avocado on top of bisque for garnish. (This soup does not freeze.)

Shrimp Bisque

- 1 package Knorr cream of leek soup mix
- 3 cups water
- 1 cup fresh shrimp, peeled and sauteed in 1 tbs. butter
- 1 tsp, Worcestershire sauce
- Tabasco to taste
- 1 cup heavy or light cream
- Parsley
- Paprika

Cook soup according to package directions using only 3 cups of water instead of 4½ cups. Add shrimp, Worcestershire, and Tabasco. Remove from heat. Add cream. Season to taste. Garnish with parsley flakes and paprika.

Bachelor's Mousse

- 1 cup light whipping cream
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 box instant chocolate pudding
- 1 cup instant whipped cream (like Dream Whip)
- Semi-sweet chocolate bar

Pour light and heavy cream into mixing bowl. Add pudding mix and beat with mixer or stir until it thickens. With slotted spoon or rubber spatula, fold instant whipped cream by cutting through cream into pudding, then up and over until cream and pudding are almost, but not completely, mixed. Do not stir. Cover with Saran wrap touching the mousse and refrigerate for at least 4 hours.

Before serving, shave chocolate bar, using a vegetable peeler, sprinkling shavings over each mousse.



For extra copies of these recipes or to email a copy to a friend, visit SLEMCOPower magazine at SLEMCO.com.

Need Help with your Utility Bill?

Discover How to Apply for Assistance Today!

You may be eligible for SLEMCO's deferred billing program, available for pre-qualified customers in the event of an "energy emergency," as declared by the Louisiana Public Service Commission (LPSC). And under such an emergency, a prequalified customer would be able to defer partial payment of their utility bill over a three-month period.

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."

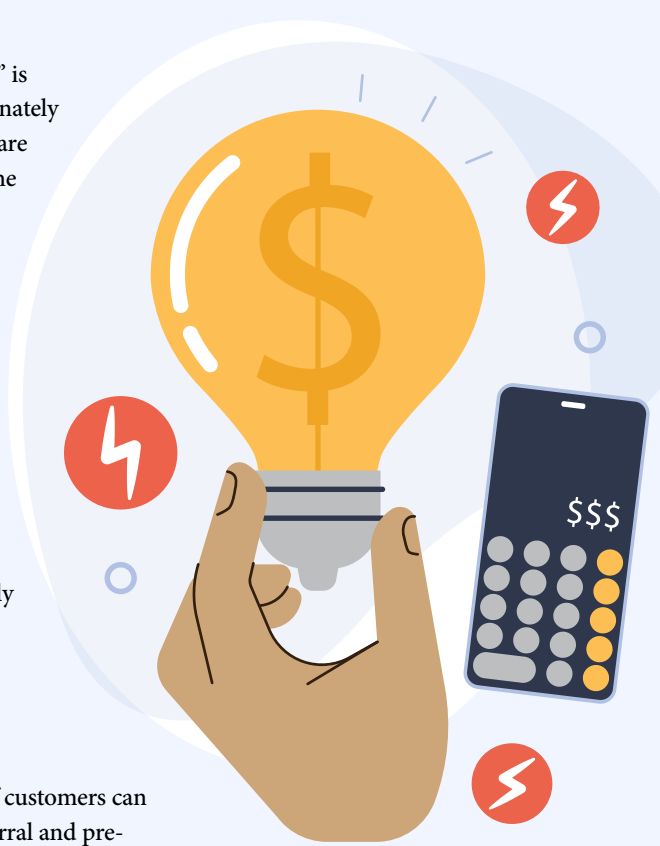
WHO IS ELIGIBLE

Only specific groups of customers can pre-qualify for the deferral and pre-qualification is mandatory. Once an "energy emergency" has been declared, new applicants will not be eligible for bill deferral until the next energy emergency. *Lucky Number: 1313372001.*

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. *Lucky Number: 1204442001.* ☎



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. *Lucky Number: 4501555009.*

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: *Lucky Number: 3012672508.* 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."