

SLEMCO

POWER

A LIL' BEAUTY WITH BIG IMPACT

IN IBERIA'S
LIL' BROOKLYN
NEIGHBORHOOD

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The Acadiana Advocate



TAKE NOTE



SAVE THE DATE

— OUR NEXT ANNUAL MEETING —

JUNE 11, 2022

WATCHING OUT FOR EACH OTHER IS SOMETHING WE'VE ALWAYS DONE HERE IN ACADIANA—THESE DAYS, MORE THAN EVER. WATCHING OUT FOR YOU IS PRIORITY NUMBER ONE AT SLEMCO.

Because of this, SLEMCO's 84th Annual Membership Meeting scheduled for Saturday, June 12, was unfortunately cancelled again due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The safety of our customers, community and our employees is always our biggest concern always.

Join us next year for our annual meeting scheduled Saturday, June 11, 2022 in Lafayette's Cajundome. Mark your calendar as we plan on making it our best yet.

Until then, be strong, be safe and thanks for being part of the pride behind the power, the people of SLEMCO. 🇺🇸

From our ARCHIVES



SLEMCO meter shop in 1938.

ON JUNE 11, 1937, THE DATE ON WHICH SLEMCO RECEIVED ITS CHARTER FROM THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, the rural areas of Southwest Louisiana were still dark. But that would change. Nine a.m., Friday, May 20, 1938, was a historic milestone for SLEMCO and rural Acadiana. With a flick of a switch at Lafayette Power Plant, on that day SLEMCO energized its first 120 miles of electric lines to begin serving 256 member-owners in Lafayette, Acadia, St. Landry and St. Martin parishes. *Lucky Number: 1419180403.* 🇺🇸

WHAT TO DO BEFORE BAD WEATHER

HURRICANES ARE STRONG STORMS THAT CAUSE LIFE-AND PROPERTY-THREATENING HAZARDS SUCH AS FLOODING, STORM SURGE, HIGH WINDS AND TORNADOES.

Preparation is the best protection against the dangers of a hurricane.

PROTECTING YOUR FAMILY

- Talk with your family about what to do if a hurricane strikes. Discussing hurricanes ahead of time helps reduce fear, particularly for younger children.
- Make sure you have access to NOAA radio broadcasts.
- Search for a NOAA radio app in the Apple Store or Google Play.
- Purchase a battery-powered or hand-crank NOAA radio in the Red Cross Store.
- Keep insurance policies, documents and other valuables in a safe-deposit box. You may need quick, easy access to these documents. Keep them in a safe place less likely to be damaged if a hurricane causes flooding. Take pictures on a phone and keep copies of important documents and files on a flashdrive that you can carry with you on your keys. *Lucky Number: 3017449005.*

PROTECTING YOUR HOME

- Protect windows with permanent storm shutters or invest in one-half inch marine plywood that is pre-cut to fit your doors and windows.
- Identify a place to store lawn furniture, toys, gardening tools and trash cans (away from stairs and exits) to prevent them from being moved by high winds and possibly hurting someone.
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts to prevent flooding and unnecessary pressure on the awnings.
- Remember that standard homeowners insurance doesn't cover flooding but flood insurance does. Get information at www.FloodSmart.gov.

PROTECTING YOUR PETS & ANIMALS

- Prepare a pet emergency kit for your companion animals.

These tips and more can be found at: RedCross.org 📍



WEB UPDATES FOR WEATHER EMERGENCIES

During severe weather, such as hurricanes, you can count on SLEMCO to keep you updated on the status of repairs in your service area.

SLEMCO customers who evacuate will be able to watch the home page of www.slemco.com for a special Emergency News link. Clicking this Emergency News link will take you to the latest news on SLEMCO power restoration. 📍

LUCKY NUMBER WINNERS!

There were no SLEMCO members who called in to claim their \$100 prize after reading the November/December issue of *SLEMCO Power*. Those missing out on a \$100 SLEMCO credit include **Alice Pannell** of Breaux Bridge, **Kristen Shoalmire** of Carencro, **Debra Nall** of Krotz Springs, **Athur Marullo** of Lafayette, **John Hansen** of Carencro, **Kyle Fontenot** of Opelousas, **Frank Thibodeaux** of Egan, **Floyd Savoie** of Breaux Bridge, **Jared Hebert** of Lafayette and **Holly Cormier** of Abbeville. *Lucky Number: 1007356811.*

We've hidden 10 more 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 896-2504. Once she verifies you as a winner, she'll credit \$50 to your SLEMCO account. 📍

New
**WINNERS RECEIVE
\$100 CREDITS!**



A BRIGHT IDEA

Unleashing the Potential of Neighborhood Beautification

STORY BY PATRICE DOUCET

LOUISIANA CITY AND TOWN OFFICIALS INTERESTED IN THE IMPACT OF NEIGHBORHOOD BEAUTIFICATION ON BUILDING A COMMUNITY SHOULD SET THEIR SIGHTS ON NEW IBERIA WHERE ONE WOMAN LOOKED BEYOND HER FRONT YARD AND THOUGHT AT NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL.

After retiring in 2019, New Iberia native Anne Darrah searched for something meaningful to do in her community. Remembering many more trees in the neighborhoods than there are now, (many of them destroyed by weather or development) she was inspired to find a way to plant more.

Last winter, Darrah acquired 40 trees, 2 to 5 feet tall, from the Iberia Soil & Water Conservation District, through a grant from Apache Corporation's Tree Grant Program.

With pen and pad, she knocked on doors of neighborhoods and offered residents their choices of a variety of indigenous trees. Scout troops came out to help plant where the focus turned to the oldest African-American residential neighborhood in New Iberia, centered around Henry Street, known as Lil' Brooklyn.

Developed in the early 1920s and once home to artists and legendary jazz musicians, Lil' Brooklyn was nicknamed years ago by a resident who returned from a trip to New York saying the bridge across Bayou Teche reminded him of the Brooklyn Bridge in the way it separates the city.

During "porch conversations," Darrah says she and Tammy DeBiasi, a third-generation Lil' Brooklyn resident, asked neighbors what they wanted for the future of their neighborhood. Among the answers:



Photos by Anne Darrah

They wanted more home ownership; to improve their little neighborhood park; and, mostly, to revitalize their homes. *Lucky Number: 2129434003.*

A few months later, the two women developed the Lil' Brooklyn Neighborhood Initiative to revitalize the homes, many of them nearly 100 years old, in the six-block area around Henry Street.

AN IDEA TAKES ROOT

While Darrah, a former graphic designer, knows aesthetics and connecting people, she credits DeBiasi's effective grant writing skills that have brought in funds, along with her vast knowledge from having worked in affordable housing.

Thanks to the sponsorship of The Iberia African American Historical Society, the Lil' Brooklyn



Photos by Anne Darrah

Initiative was able to receive donations immediately, as they worked towards their own nonprofit status.

In the first phase of the project, the cofounders chose a small, manageable area of Henry Street, a cross-through street traveled —and seen — by many. Seven homes stood out as distressed and in most need of repainting, along with basic exterior repairs and landscape cleanup.

Lafayette Residential Designer Lisa Bourque helped choose a palette of Caribbean colors that has evolved into some 17 cheerful hues, approved by home occupants or

owners before painting begins. Last year, over 35 gallons of paint were initially provided by authorized Benjamin Moore dealer Bayou Paints, and later more from a grant acquired by real estate agency Latter & Blum. Now, much of the paint is acquired from monetary donations and purchased at contractor discounts.

RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

The potential for the Lil’ Brooklyn Neighborhood Initiative was fueled by genuine involvement of like-minded people with deep commitments to neighborhoods — and not just theirs. Other New Iberia residents, including retirees, professionals, students, Boy and Girl Scouts and church groups, have all come with open hearts and capable hands. *Lucky Number: 1216210001.*

Long-time Lil’ Brooklyn homeowners Paula and Ray Bennett shared Darrah’s and DiBiasi’s vision for their neighborhood early on. Ray, the designated paint crew chief, rallied the neighborhood teens and taught them to paint. As the project slowly gained enthusiasm, residents helped paint not only their homes but those of their neighbors who are elderly or handicapped.

A NEIGHBORHOOD BLOSSOMS

More than the renovations, something else has come from the Initiative: new friendships are being struck up; proud residents are sitting on their porches waving hello or tending to their new gardens. *Lucky Number: 4040756401.*

Seeing it firsthand, Lil’ Brooklyn lifetimer Dot Antoine says, “We, as a community, don’t mingle because we are older people. The whole neighborhood working together gives us more opportunity for interaction and restores life back to the neighborhood.”

While Darrah says renovating houses was the reason the project started, “uplifting people is what they want to do.” Last month, as she caulked a new handrail on the steps of the home where Daisy August was born, August shared with her, “The things y’all did for me really touched my heart. I could say ‘thank you’ a million times, but it won’t be what’s all in my heart.”

Even though work was slowed during COVID, volunteers have painted parts or all of 11 homes in all. Two of the homes sat empty for years and now have long-term tenants. Three others, just com-

pleted in July during Phase II of the project, have brought new homeowners, which is another intent of the project.

DeBiasi and Darrah feel if the Initiative is to maintain steam, they have to empower the people of the Lil’ Brooklyn to “take it into the future,” and they are counting on people like Alison Henry, who was born in Lil’ Brooklyn but has lived in California since she was a young teen. When she saw the Lil’ Brooklyn Initiative on Facebook and the efforts to bring the area back to life, she returned home to be part of the movement and bought a home across the street from where she grew up, built by her uncle.

In a different example of ownership, the granddaughter of a Lil’ Brooklyn resident is tending to the neighborhood’s newly planted citrus orchard of satsuma, orange, grapefruit and lemon trees.

The most recent — and largest — project in the works is the creation of an urban park on the site of a run-down grocery store. Speaking from her car on the way home, Darrah says, “Tammy (DeBiasi) has written a grant for the funds to tear the structure down and begin work to build a much-needed school bus stop; and there would be an open-air pavilion... and painted games on the concrete. We worked with the mayor to accept ownership and maintenance of the area as a park.”

A fierce advocate for keeping New Iberia thriving, Mayor Freddie DeCourt says, “By coming together and renovating their community as a neighborhood organization, Lil’ Brooklyn has become a shining example of the people who make up New Iberia. Other neighborhoods are beginning to move in the same direction. We are — and will — continue improving our city one block at a time.”

URBAN INSPIRATION

The success of the Lil’ Brooklyn project has compelled residents from three other New Iberia neighborhoods to reach out to Darrah. One resident reportedly sent information through Facebook about the project to friends in Opelousas.

As for the trees that started all of this? A second grant was received this year acquiring 75 more that were dispersed in three areas around the city, including Lil’ Brooklyn.

If you are interested in beautifying a neighborhood but don’t know where to begin, the Lil’ Brooklyn Neighborhood Initiative provides a “toolkit” on their Facebook page. “We want to encourage other cities and towns that they can do this too,” declares Darrah, who was recently named by Acadiana Lifestyle one of “Eight Women Making a Difference” in their communities. ☺



Photo by James Edmunds



CAREFUL TREE PLANTING AND PRUNING HELP PROTECT YOUR ELECTRICAL SERVICE



No one wants to be without power after a storm. But when trees are planted too close to power lines, major problems can arise in the wake of high winds and severe weather.

Some thoughtful planning before you grab your shovel will protect your investment in your trees while ensuring uninterrupted electrical service for you and your neighbors.

Keep two things in mind when planting and maintaining the trees on your property: allow for full growth and eliminate potential problem branches before severe weather.

ALLOW FOR FULL GROWTH

Before planting, make sure that the height of your tree at maturity won't interfere with nearby power lines. Looking at a skinny sapling, it's easy to underestimate how much space it will claim in 20 or 30 years as a majestic live oak.

According to Jim Foret, a local licensed consulting arborist, the key to avoiding problems is knowing the characteristics of the tree you're planting and understanding how trees grow.

Before purchasing a tree, know what to expect, he said. It's easy to find the width and height each species of tree is capable of reaching.

"The International Society of Arboriculture has great information on everything from tree selection and planting, to care and pruning, at the website www.treesaregood.com," Foret noted.

ELIMINATE PROBLEM BRANCHES

It's easiest to avoid planting a new tree in the wrong spot. But over the years, many pre-existing trees may have grown close to power lines.

If you see a potential problem with a tree near power lines on your property, call SLEMCO. It's better to remove a stray limb interfering with power lines now, before it causes an outage during a major storm. Trimming now is safer for the

tree and for your neighborhood's electric service. *Lucky Number: 4515829500.*

"Our trees evolved in woodlands," Foret explained. "When we try to grow trees in the open, with light on all sides, instead of growing up they tend to grow unnaturally to the side—either too wide or with double trunks—and therefore tend to fall apart when older.

"You should lightly trim your tree for the first time as soon as you plant it," Foret said, "because it came from the nursery with flaws and defects. This 'training' should continue for the life of the tree. As they grow, continue trimming to avoid growth of excessively wide side branches—the tree's structure can't handle the weight—so don't wait until they break, keep pruning as the tree continues to grow."

No one, including SLEMCO, wants to see a tree trimmed in an unattractive manner. Plant a proper distance from lines and keep stray limbs near lines carefully trimmed. If you see a potential problem with a tree near power lines on your property, call SLEMCO.

SOURCE OF POWER BLINKS

Stray branches that might touch power lines can cause other problems. Special devices are built into the electrical distribution system that cause power to temporarily go out whenever a power line comes into contact with a foreign object, such as a tree limb brushing against the line.

These devices offer increased safety in the event of accidents and help minimize damage to electric lines, reducing repair time. **[Caution: always assume any downed power line is dangerous! Report the problem to SLEMCO and keep well clear until it has been repaired.]**

When a power line contacts a foreign object, these safety devices cause power to go off momentarily and then come back on. If the foreign object is still in contact with the line, power will briefly go off again. When the power comes back on, if the fault (the foreign object coming into contact with the line) has cleared, the power will stay on. If not, the power will go off again and stay off. This can cause power "blinks" you may notice occasionally at your home or business.

These blinks may be a minor nuisance because you might have to reset clocks or digital equipment. Normally the culprit is a tree limb brushing the line. *Lucky Number: 1454186001.*

No one, including SLEMCO, wants to see a tree trimmed in an unattractive manner. So the best alternative is to plant at a proper distance from lines and keep stray limbs near lines carefully trimmed. *Lucky Number: 2131550000.*

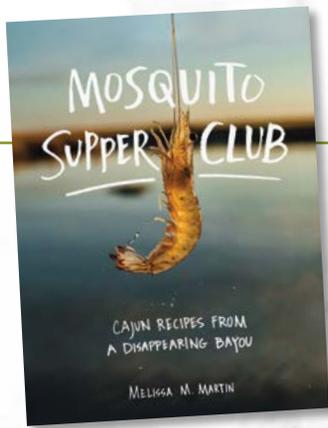
To keep your trees healthy, never remove more than 15 to 20 percent of a tree's leaves at one pruning, Foret explained. And bumps from mowers and weed eaters are major causes of damage. Mulching an area around the tree avoids that problem, he said.

The result of your careful efforts will be a beautiful, healthy tree that will better withstand storms and be less likely to pose problems for your house or nearby power lines.

If you have any questions concerning proper locations for new trees and need assistance from SLEMCO, call Gentry Laper at 886-3371. ☎



Photo by Kimberly Ann Photography



let's get COOKING

Two words to describe this cookbook: beautifully authentic. In *Mosquito Supper Club*, author Melissa Martin serves us tried-and-true recipes from the women who grew up along the bayous—as she did—with a few tweaks. Owner of the New Orleans restaurant by the same name, Martin also shares Cajun history and traditions and gives great insight to the ways of life and fishing along the bayous. There's a helpful glossary of foods that are staples in her pantry and refrigerator. Beautifully photographed, the book goes so far as to include pictorial illustrations of how to peel (or open) crabs, oysters, crawfish and shrimp. *Mosquito Supper Club* can be found at local bookstores or on Amazon.

Crab Butter

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

This is a brilliant use of the remnants from boiled crabs. It takes a lot of butter, but can be frozen for up to a year. Use it in roux, stews, pastas- even on crackers. Gift idea?

- 8 sticks butter
- 1 lb. leftover crab claw pieces, cartilage, and fat (top shell not necessary)

In a wide, shallow, heavy-bottomed pot or flameproof roasting pan, melt the butter over low heat. Add the crab shells, cartilage and fat, using a wooden or stainless-steel spoon to crush the shell and cartilage. With the heat set as low as possible, let the crab pieces and the butter marinate together for 1 hour. The crab parts will release all their flavor and infuse the butter. When the butter has a full crab flavor, it has steeped long enough and is done.

Set a sieve over a bowl and pour the content of the pot into the sieve until all the butter has dripped into the bowl (it will take a while). Discard the solids.

Pour the strained butter into small airtight containers and label them. The butter can also keep in the refrigerator for up to a month.

Smothered Chicken

SERVES 8

In a cookbook of great seafood dishes, this recipe is not to be overlooked.

- (1) 5-lb. whole chicken cut into 8 pieces and skinned removed
- 1 tbs. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. cracked black pepper
- 1 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 2 tbs. hot sauce
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 3 lbs. yellow onions, finely diced
- 1 tbs. water or chicken stock
- 1 ¼ cups finely diced celery
- ½ cup diced green bell pepper
- Cooked rice for serving
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, for garnish
- ¼ cup finely chopped green onions, for garnish

Put the chicken in a large bowl and season with the salt, black pepper, cayenne and hot sauce, to your taste. Set aside to marinate at room temperature for 15 minutes.

Warm a heavy-bottomed, large pot, that will fit a chicken, over medium heat for 2 minutes. Then add the oil and heat for 30 seconds. Add the chicken and cook until browned on both sides, about 5 minutes on each side. Add the onions and the water (or stock) and stir vigorously to scrape up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot.

Reduce the heat to its lowest setting, cover the pot and smother the chicken for 20 minutes. Add the celery and bell pepper and stir to combine. Cover and smother together until chicken is falling off the bone, 1 hr. 40 min., stirring every 20 minutes. If it looks dry, add a bit of stock or water. (Usually, the chicken and vegetables will release enough liquid that you don't need to add any, but adding a cup or two of stock won't hurt anything.)

Season the finished product according to your liking. Serve the chicken over rice, garnish with the parsley and onions.



Smothered Chicken

Bread Custard

MAKES 12 LARGE OR 24 SMALL SQUARES

This recipe uses stale sliced bread (or dinner rolls) instead of heavy crust or French bread.

- 3 large eggs
- ¾ cup sugar
- (2) 12-oz. cans evaporated milk
- 1 tbs. pure vanilla extract
- ½ loaf stale two-day old white bread (broken into 1- to 2-inch pieces)
- 2 tbs. unsalted butter

In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs and sugar until well combined, then mix in the evaporated milk and vanilla. Add the bread pieces and press under the liquid. Let the egg mixtures soak into the bread for at least 30 minutes. Put the butter in a 9-inch square glass or ceramic casserole dish and set in the preheated oven. Once the butter has melted, carefully remove the dish from the oven and use a pastry brush to coat the sides of the dish with the melted butter.

Pour the bread mixture into the prepared dish and bake for about 45 minutes, until the pudding is set and a sharp knife inserted into the center comes out clean. The top will puff up like a souffle before it's done. Remove from the oven and let cool, then cut into squares.

"Excerpted from *Mosquito Supper Club* by Melissa Martin (Artisan Books). Copyright © 2020. Photographs by Denny Culbert."

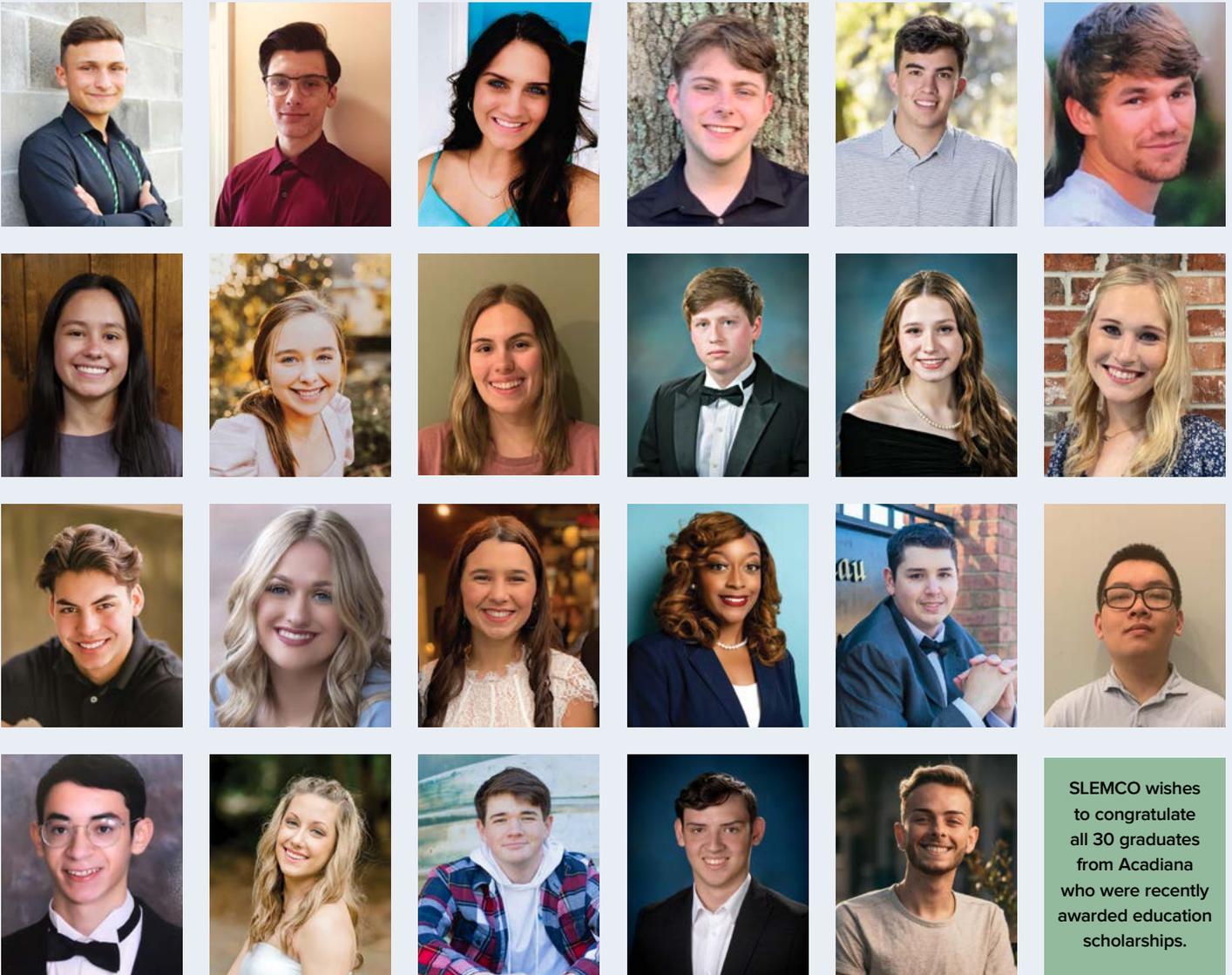


⚡

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

— CONGRATULATIONS —

OUR 2021 SLEMCO SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Winning \$2,000 each for college or trade school this fall are (pictured from top left) **Aaron Blackmer** of Kaplan, **Andre Painter** of Lafayette, **Anna Anderson** of Youngsville, **Brenden Leedom** of Basile, **Brett LeBlanc II** of Breaux Bridge, **Cade Foret** of Ville Platte, **Emily Fuselier** of Eunice, **Grace Broussard** of Abbeville, **Hannah Boudreaux** of Eunice, **Jacob Southall** of Church Point, **Jessi Southall** of Church Point, **Krysten Theunissen** of Rayne, **Kyle Guidry** of Basile, **Lillie Barker** of Breaux Bridge, **Lilly Fontenet** of Ville Platte, **Lindsey Lee** of Lafayette, **Logan Landry** of Broussard, **Mickey Vo** of Abbeville, **Norman Rene II** of Lawtell, **Rebecca Renard** of St. Martinville, **Samuel Hollier** of Ville Platte, **Thomas Tiemann** of Youngsville and **Trevor Cormier** of Scott.

Winners not pictured include **Diamond Ledet** of Scott, **Erin Robinson** of Broussard, **Glenna LeBouef** of Broussard, **Hanz Louviere** of St. Martinville, **MacKenzie Olinger** of Rayne, **Olivia Harrington** of Erath and **Sadie Cain** of Lafayette. 🌐