

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF SLIDELL

Slidell magazine

WE SAY KEEP IT FRESH
KEEP IT POSITIVE

Vol. 162 April 2024



JC

The background of the entire page is a low-angle, upward-looking photograph of several people on a golf course. In the center, a man in a white polo shirt and dark pants is captured mid-swing with a golf club. To his left, another man in a red polo shirt and dark pants is also in a golfing stance. Other people are visible in the background, some wearing golf attire. The sky is a clear, bright blue. Scattered throughout the image are numerous colorful ribbons in shades of orange, teal, purple, yellow, and blue, some forming loops and others straight lines, creating a festive and celebratory atmosphere.

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BRUSHSTROKES AND BEYOND

Abita Springs is excited to present at the **Town Hall** for the first time, The Lacombe Art Guild. The exhibit is open to the public with a meet the artist reception on **Saturday, April 27th** from 5pm till 8pm. And, will also be open on **Sunday, April 28th** from 11am till 4pm.

For further information, please click on to the QR code or the url: <http://lacombeartguild.com/2024-spring-art-show>



Thanks to all our sponsors: "Friends of LAG," Carr Adjusters, LLC.



COVER: "SISTERS"

ARTIST: JOANNE CHAMPAGNE



Joanne Champagne relocated to St. Tammany Parish from Seattle, WA. She attended high school, LSU and USL in Louisiana.

Joanne was a realtor for over 25 years before retiring and pursuing her other hobbies: fishing, scuba diving, and competitive cooking. She has been involved with the Junior League of Greater Covington for more than 40 years and the Children's Museum of St. Tammany.

Unbelievably, she only started art lessons after Hurricane Katrina. "Painting, for me, is therapeutic," she says. She has studied under Larry Casso at Baton Rouge Fine Arts Academy, and Gretchen Armbruster at Armbruster Artworks in Covington. She states, "My art education has, and continues to be, stellar. I have won many awards over the years and I owe them all to my instructors. I had not even held a paint brush until 2005!"

Joanne is a member of the Lacombe Art Guild and St. Tammany Art Association. Her art is often displayed at the Armbruster Gallery and the St. Tammany Art House on Columbia Street, Covington, LA. You can also find many of her paintings on her Facebook page.

Joanne is married to Mickey Champagne and they have two children, Joey and Andree.

"Sisters" represents Joanne's memory of she and her sister, Bobbie Creim Herrling, playing dress up.

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First United Methodist Church*

Slidell magazine

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Editor's Letter

Kendra Maness, Editor / Publisher

DAY 107, NO MICROWAVE.

That's all I have to say about that.

This is the last Editor's Letter I will write as Kendra Maness. On Saturday, March 30, 2024, Bill and I will be married! I will officially be Kendra Davis. Well, I may just keep my maiden name tucked in between. I wasn't given a middle name at birth so it'll be nice to finally have one. *Kendra Maness Davis*. I like the sound of that.

By the time many of you read this, it will have already happened. Although we've been engaged for years, the wedding will be a surprise for most. We're both pretty open people, but this one thing we wanted to be private, so we've kept it under wraps for the most part.

It will be a simple affair, just immediate family, gathering at our friends' house. We hope the weather will be nice enough to have the ceremony under the huge oak trees in their yard. We've always talked about being married under an oak. Strong, sturdy, and Southern...everything we want for our marriage.

We're excited to complete this circle in our relationship. And to finally make our dog Hannah legitimate.

"A wedding is a day; a marriage is a lifetime." It's an honor to spend that lifetime as Mrs. Davis.



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Extraordinary Slidell Neighbors



by Charlotte Collins

Phoenix Keene

“If something stands between you and your success, move it. Never be denied.”

—Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson

This month I bring you exciting news about the Keene family that I first introduced to you in January of 2023. In the previous article, we learned how Angelita Almodovar and Kyle Keene met, fell in love, and married. We also discovered how the family grew to become four, and how they made the move all the way from Utah to make Slidell where they now call home.

Visiting the family for the second time reminded me of how I felt during my first visit. I was transported back to days of yore, where families came first. No matter how committed to your job, you made it work around the needs of family. The motto of sportsmanship, kindness, and honor was as pervasive as it was last time. Though the kids, Phoenix and his big sister Grace, were older, there were still no cell phones on any of the family members throughout my visit. All of this may be hard for you to imagine, but if you long for days when conversations took precedence, I promise you will love this family.

Kyle had served as coach for both his son and daughter's athletic endeavors all their lives. Angelita had retired from the Navy Reserves and as an airline stewardess to become a full time mom. Both children thrived as a result, and the family is firmly entrenched in the Slidell community. Grace became a Junior Olympian in track and a member of the Girl's Academy soccer program. She has tried swim, dance, volleyball, and is an all around good athlete. Phoenix soon followed in her shoes, but soccer was his passion from the beginning.

Phoenix listened to his dad intently as he told me, “Phoenix is really good at soccer, he's just a natural. If you watch him, you will see that he is the real deal. He's very certain and very confident on the field. And he loves it, you can tell! He'd rather be playing soccer than any video game.”

We ended the first story about the Keene family just as Phoenix was invited to a highly prestigious training



Left: Phoenix at the 2022 Junior Olympics where he competed in the 1500-meter race, and Grace competed in the 800 and 1500-meter races. There were participants from across the entire U.S. and Puerto Rico. Only 28 were from Louisiana, and the Keene kids were two of them! Middle: The Keene family in 2022: Angelita, Grace, Phoenix, and Kyle. Right: Phoenix at one of his many competitions, with one of his MANY medals!

camp with an International soccer club called the Real Madrid Foundation (RMF). A very small number of elite athletes were selected from this camp to travel to Madrid to represent the U.S.A. in the World Challenge Tournament. They would join other youth elites from all over the globe. Because it is an expensive endeavor with lots of logistics for the family, Phoenix was unable to attend during the first invitation. They were all sorely disappointed, but all is not lost! This year he had the chance to go back to the identification camp and perhaps be selected again. The whole family is committed to making it happen should he be selected.

With a solemn look, Kyle explained, "Phoenix has worked really hard for years. He's been training almost every single day since he was four or five years old. This year, we paid for the RMF camp for his birthday. He didn't want a party or anything else, just the opportunity to go to the identification camp in New Orleans again. But as he was training for the camp, he broke his toe playing soccer. I was on a mission with the Merchant Marines while he and Mom

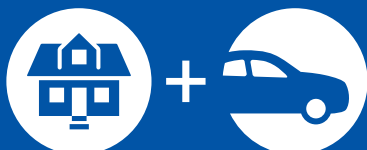
were at the hospital. We all thought he might have just jammed his toe. Then, I got a call that they were taking Phoenix to Children's Hospital in New Orleans for emergency surgery. The nail was pushed into his bone and the risk for infection was really high. They set pins and said he had to stay off his foot for three months." That meant Phoenix would have only a few weeks to start training again and build back up his muscles.

This time Phoenix spoke up, "I thought to myself that if it's meant to be, all I can do is work really hard, and do my best. I was nervous, but I still felt like I might have a chance."



After the camp, there would be a two week wait before the email announcement came. This was perhaps the hardest part of the whole endeavor. But, you guessed it! He did it! Slidell's own Phoenix Keene was selected for the RMF World Challenge. As I was interviewing him, the family was planning for the World Challenge Tournament which would start in less than a month. Kyle and Phoenix would travel, while Mom stayed home with Grace.

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As Angelita showed me his first passport, Phoenix admitted that he was not only excited, but also nervous. He has never been on an international flight before, and the flight is a long one. He is also nervous because every one of the players are considered to be the elites in soccer, which will be a challenge this eleven-year-old has yet to encounter.

If his team wins, he will be part of a small group of kids who have ever been given this opportunity. Moreover, Phoenix adds, "If we win the World Challenge Tournament, we win the cup and everything for the U.S.A!"

Once again, I could hear the youthful optimism and determination in this soccer prodigy. Mom interjected that they had started home schooling him, just in case this worked out. They may not have foreseen the injury, but the decision was timely because it gave Phoenix more time to train once he was cleared to put weight on his left foot again. It is still working in his favor since they are now training harder, because participants are placed with more advanced teams as a challenge. Phoenix has been training three times a day!

Beyond all of this, there is also a chance that Phoenix could be offered a position at the Real Madrid Youth Academy, which is a professional tier team academy for young soccer elites. Now, that would mean some major changes in the lives of all four of the Keene's. Mom laughed, saying, "We will cross that bridge if we come to it. But it

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would be a huge honor just to be invited. Most kids don't get that opportunity, and that's a door any one would want to walk through!"

For now, the Keene's are focused on the RMF World Challenge, followed by the Junior Olympics track competition in early August. Both Grace and Phoenix hope to participate again this year in Greensboro, North Carolina. They did well last year, so I have no doubts. After all of this, they look forward to spending time at home in Slidell with their friends again. They have lived here eight years, and love the people, the food, the weather, the schools, and the sports opportunities. As they all agreed, it's not too big, not too small, and very family oriented.

Kyle spoke up, "All we can do as parents is to open doors for kids. They have to be the ones to walk through it. I have been reiterating three things that they have to do to succeed. That is to have fun, stay away from bad influences, and work hard at whatever they choose to do. They can apply that in every area of their lives. My kids seem to have a very different mindset. They know how to stick with something, even when it's hard. Sports have taught them a lot more about life and about themselves."

As you are reading about Phoenix's efforts, his future is being determined at the same time. What an honor for the Keene family and for Slidell! We are rooting for him!

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by: Mike Rich, CFP® | Pontchartrain Investment Management

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SCAN ME

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2020 The Big Split

written by: Linda Bloodworth-Thomason

APRIL 5 - 27



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21 - 30



JUNE
7 - 22



AUGUST
9 - 7



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APRIL 2024



SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

31 **MARCH**

HAPPY Easter

1 **APRIL**

APRIL FOOLS' DAY!

Salat Days Juried Exhibition of Student Art > 3/18 - 4/25
Slidell City Hall Gallery > Mon - Thurs / 10 AM - 4 PM

STP SCHOOLS EASTER BREAK > April 1st - 5th

2 **RIBBON CUTTING**
Urban Air
Covington > 11:30 AM

LOBBY LOUNGE
HARBOR CENTER
Paul Childers - 7 PM

3 **WINE TASTING DINNER**
Middendorf's • Slidell • 6:30 PM

4 **NOON NETWORKERS**
Business Networking Every Thurs.
Patty's Seafood in Slidell • 11:30 - 1 PM
NOONNETWORKERS.COM

RIBBON CUTTING
Eye Wares
Covington > 11:30 AM

5 **Bayou Jam**
Clifton Brown Rusty Bucket Band
Heritage Park
6 PM

DESIGNING WOMEN > Cutting Edge Theatre > 8 PM

6 **Camellia City Farmer's Market**
Every Saturday 8 AM - Noon

HERPS Reptile & Exotic Pet Show • 10 AM
HARBOR CENTER

A STORYBOOK KIND OF DAY
Heritage Park • Slidell • 11 AM

7 **HERPS Reptile & Exotic Pet Show • 10 AM**
HARBOR CENTER

8 **S LAR ECLIPSE**

GULF STATES QUILTING ASSOCIATION EVENT • April 8th - 13th • 10 AM
HARBOR CENTER

9 **RIBBON CUTTING**
Queyma Food Market
Mandeville > 11:30 AM

Slidell Council Meeting > 6:30 - 7:30 PM

10 **Food for Seniors Distribution Day**
St Luke's • 1 - 3 PM

11 **B2B Networking**
Slidell Chamber
8:30 - 9:30 AM

12 **Generations Legacy**
Once a Month Business Networking
40261 US Hwy 190 East • 11:45 AM

DESIGNING WOMEN > Cutting Edge Theatre > 8 PM
LEGALLY BLONDE > Slidell Little Theatre > 8 PM

13 **OLDE TOWNE SLIDELL ART MARKET**
Green Oaks Apothecary • NOON

ANTIQUE JEWELLERY
SIDEWALK SATURDAY
9AM - 1PM

14 *you are perfect just the way you are*

LEGALLY BLONDE
Slidell Little Theatre > 2 PM

15 **TAX DAY!**

\$

16 **RIBBON CUTTING**
Flo & Gio IV Wellness Lounge > Covington > 11:30 AM

BINGO! Every Tues & Thurs • 3 PM
Slidell Lions Club • 356 Cleveland Ave.

BINGO!
14 16 44 5 24 34 50 60
4 10 20 8 16 36

17 **KREWE of TITANS EVENT**
Wine Market • 6 PM

18 **Business After Hours**
Tchetchet's Restaurant
Madisonville > 4:30 PM

19 **Garden & Plant Sale**
4/19-4/20
STP Fairgrounds • 9am - 3pm

Bayou Jam
High School Choir & Band Showcase
Heritage Park • 6 PM

DESIGNING WOMEN > Cutting Edge Theatre > 8 PM
LEGALLY BLONDE > Slidell Little Theatre > 8 PM

20 **CARS & COFFEE**
Slidell Auditorium • 9 AM

HOSPICE HOUSE CRAWFISH FESTIVAL
Fritchie Park • Slidell • 11 AM

21 **Earth Fest**
Olde Towne
12 NOON

LEGALLY BLONDE
Slidell Little Theatre > 2 PM

22 **KREWE OF DIONYSUS WEEKLY BINGO!**
Mondays • 7:30 PM • KC Hall on West Hall

BINGO!
14 16 44 5 24 34 50 60
4 10 20 8 16 36

23 **RIBBON CUTTING**
Elite Etiquette School
Covington > 11:30 AM

Slidell Council Meeting > 6:30 - 7:30 PM

KREWE of POSEIDON
Membership Meeting • KC Hall • 7 PM

24 **"PEACE BEGINS WITH A SMILE."**
- MOTHER TERESA

25 **Smile**

26 **SMH Golf Tournament**
Pinewood

POETRY & OPEN MIC
Roots Plants + Coffee • 6 PM

Ozone Music Foundation Night
The Maple Room • 9 PM

DESIGNING WOMEN > Cutting Edge Theatre > 8 PM
LEGALLY BLONDE > Slidell Little Theatre > 8 PM

27 **SIDEWALK SATURDAY**
9AM - 1PM

Some Enchanted Evening
Northshore Community Orchestra
Heritage Park • 5 PM

28 **Lacombe Art Guild Show**
Abita Springs Town Hall
Sat 4/27 • Opening Reception 5-8pm
Sun 4/28 • 11am - 4pm

LEGALLY BLONDE
Slidell Little Theatre > 2 PM

29 **HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION SEASON STARTS!**

30 **SALMEN HIGH GRADUATION**
SLU Hammond > 7 PM

1 **MAY**

PLEASE LIKE OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

2 **NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER**
NORTHSHORE HIGH GRADUATION
SLU Hammond > 7 PM

3 **Live Music on the Porch**
Middendorf's Slidell
4 - 8 PM

4 **\$7 PANCAKE BREAKFAST**
SLIDELL LION'S CLUB • 8 AM

Camellia City Farmer's Market
Every Saturday 8 AM - Noon

PEARL RIVER HIGH GRADUATION
SLU Hammond > 10 AM



The Storyteller

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SOARING

The Girl and the Boy...

Born in the forties and raised with the values of the fifties, she was not unlike most fourteen year olds. Lost in a hormonal storm of dwindling desires to run barefooted, climb trees, and play with the boys that lived down the road, she now spent more time in front of the mirror. Interests like pretending to be Sandra Dee now claimed as least part of her time.

A daddy's girl, she and her father spent a lot of time together. That is the blessing a daughter has if there are no sons in the family. Dad was still her confidant and her mentor. When they were together, outdoors is where they preferred to be.

She liked where she lived. She liked the wide-open space and she liked the freedom to explore the nearby woods, fish the stream that flowed through it, roam the pasture

in front of the house; all this without supervision. Her friends in town did not have this luxury or independence. Independence was important to her.

Her mother was also very much a part of her life. Her mother made sure that she maintained a balance so that she "fit in." She knew that her daughter would one day most likely become urban. Mother made sure that she at least had the social skills needed to live there.

Her mother taught her to change from being just short of a tom boy to a young lady with a pony tail. On more formal occasions, she had taught her that just a little makeup was appropriate, but not much; and the pony tail could be transformed into long hair that cascaded to her shoulders. Both were pleased with the results.



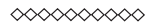
***In Our Community
In Our World***

Rotary Club of Slidell North Shore
meets every Tuesday at 7:30AM
Pinewood Country Club

Rotary Club of Slidell North Shore welcomes quality speakers every Tuesday morning to keep its members informed and engaged in issues that affect our community and world.



Rear Admiral Ron Piret, Commander of the Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command at Stennis Space Center



Born with a natural air of confidence, he walked to a different drummer. If given his choice, he would rather be alone, deeply involved with a project or a hobby, or in deep thought. He was not a loner, however. He had a personality that attracted people. They listened to him, they wanted to cultivate his friendship, and he was welcome in any circle. Even the adults enjoyed his presence.

At sixteen, he also enjoyed the freedom of a rural environment; but he, too, could cross over. He was at ease wherever he was and whomever he was with.

Of all the things he enjoyed, springtime and the hillside of a pasture near his home were his favorites. He watched the birds for hours and imagined what they could see from their vantage point of flight. He wondered if they were frightened by his presence below; or if, from their lofty point of view, he was no more of a novelty than the trees. He was obsessed with flight, theirs and his.

The Kite...

Each one he built was identical, or at least they were now. After many prototypes, he developed the perfect shape and size. Constructed with a frame of light weight reeds, bound together by string, covered with newspaper and glued with paste made from water and flour, it was the boys vicarious sight from above. It would see from above what he could not, but he could imagine. It was the boy's creation and he painted it with blue tempera paint and added a simple face with a smile. The face was yellow. It was the same on every kite he made.

To the boy, the kite had a personality that he could sense by the way it danced in the sky. He could feel its emotions as transmitted through the string he held in his hand. The kite was an extension of himself and he was an extension of the kite.

Always in early April, when the sun was warm and the winds of March were no longer gusty but still breezy and constant, this was the kite and the boy's favorite time to fly. Usually on a Sunday afternoon after church, the two would go to the pasture.

Once aloft, seldom was a kite retrieved, as the boy's skill sent it off, far off; so far

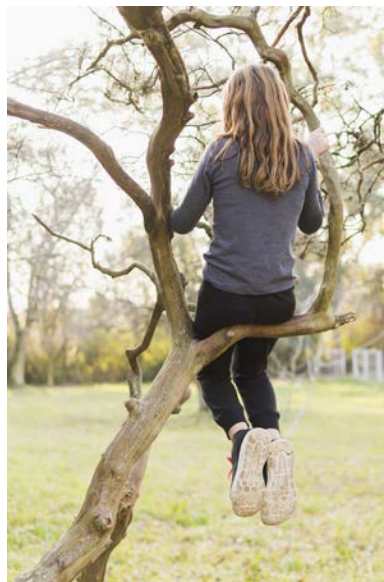
that there was no practical way to recover it. As each kite vanished, the boy felt as if he had lost a friend.

The boy knew the kite would respond to the way it was dressed. He could change its mood and personality by the color and configuration of the tail. The wardrobe was made of old sheets the boy tore into strips about three inches wide and two feet long. He soaked them in Rite dye. He colored the strips of cloth blue, red, yellow, orange and green. He left some their natural linen white. This was the kite's clothing. Today he would let it wear solid red. He liked the red as it contrasted to the blue of the kite.

The wind was light and steady so he fashioned the tail as one long segment, no bows of tied together pieces. Both he and the kite felt good. They felt confident.

As the boy ran across the field, he transferred life to the kite. The kite leaped, zigzagged for a moment, and then reached a strata of wind that quickly lifted it and carried it southward. Only he and the kite knew how good they were. Only he and the kite knew how far they could fly. Only he and the kite had learned precisely that there was a ratio between height and distance. They could achieve either, but they both preferred distance.

Distance? Distance allows adventure, things unseen. The kite transmitted to him what it was seeing by the vibration of the string. He could interpret every shimmer and tug. Height was important, too. Like the hawk that soars, seeing all and concentrating on little, height has its advantage. That is, concentrating on little until something noteworthy comes into view.



She was sitting in a high fork of a china berry tree. She too liked to look down on things. She too dreamed of soaring. It approached from the north, actually from the north, northwest. At first, it did not attract her attention and, if noticed at all, was dismissed as a large bird in the distance.

Slowly, it drifted closer and she could tell that it was a kite. It was traveling toward her and all she could see was the back side, the unpainted side, the ugly side. She thought, *how ugly you are*. Even having first seen its ugly side, she was drawn to it and watched as it moved almost directly over head.

The City of Slidell presents



Some Enchanted Evening

with the
Northshore Community Orchestra



Commission
on the
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Saturday, April 27, 2024
Slidell's Heritage Park
Concert starts at 5 PM
Free Admission!
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Then it was behind her. She turned and saw the deep blue color, the hue that only tempera can yield. She saw the yellow face with a smile. She smiled.

She was transfixed to the gentle swaying of the kite, much as a cobra is mesmerized by the charmer. Only when the screen door opened did she let her attention drift. It was her dad.

"Where do you suppose it came from Dad?"

"Sweetheart, by the angle of the string and the height of the kite, I would say it came from a long way off."

"How far Dad?"

"Maybe a mile, maybe two. Whoever is flying it knows what they are doing. It's a homemade kite, too. The best kind. They did a good job. I used to make kites."

Soon, the wind shifted slightly and it was no longer in the path of her house and then it was gone from site.

That night, she wrote in her diary. "It came to me. I know it was looking for me and it smiled." She noted it was the first Sunday in April.

The girl never dismissed the sighting of the kite. Like the large birds that drift on the currents, she wondered where it came from and where it went. Spring turned into summer and summer to fall and winter preceded the return of the next April. She was now fifteen.

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A year produces a lot of changes in a teenage girl. She was more mature, her thoughts were deeper and more analytical. She had thought often about the kite.

She was aware that it was now again the first Sunday in April. She was aware that it had been a year since she had first seen the kite.

On this day, the boy dressed the kite with a tail of red and blue swatches fastened together with knots that resembled large Christmas bows. With the right twitch of the string, he could make the kite dance with a tail like that. He lifted it off. He felt good and the kite did, too.

The wind was puffy but at times slow today. The boy had to work to keep the kite in the air. As the distance and the height increased between the two, the better the kite responded. It danced in the sky with the vigor that a dog displays when first being let out of its cage. It was a happy kite.

She saw it. This time, she would pay attention to it as

long as it was in her sight. It came closer and just over head, it stopped. It was home, and it danced. It flirted. The boy pulled the string and the top tipped to reveal the smile. It spoke to her as it stayed over her head.

After being stationary almost an hour, a strong puff of wind came up. The string snapped and the kite tumbled onward and downward. Her first instinct was to find it. She then realized her real interest was knowing where it came from.

She grabbed the fallen string and started following it; first across the gravel road, then through the cleared pasture and on into the woods. After about a half-mile, she came to a small creek. She could not or would not cross the creek. The origin of the kite would remain a mystery, at least for now.

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The April morning had started out rainy and windy. "Too windy, not a good day for a kite," he thought.

By early afternoon, the rain had abated but the wind was still blustery. Flying it next Sunday was out of the question. That was the day for his senior class pictures. He could not miss that.

He had been doing some planning concerning what he would do after he graduated. He had just last week talked to an army recruiter. He had learned that, if he joined and committed for four years, he may be able to fly helicopters. The lure of flying was stronger than his apprehension about the dangers of Viet Nam. This may be his last time to fly his kite for a long time. He decided to take a chance anyway.

There is nothing like a lot of colors to lift the spirits of a kite on a nasty day, so he made a tail of all the colors: red, yellow, orange, blue and the tip was adorned with white. Soon it was in the air.

She looked for it. On the first Sunday in April for the past two years she had watched it. It had appeared on the same day about the same time. That time was past and there was no kite in sight. Maybe it had just been a coincidence. She started indoors and then it appeared far to the northeast. As she watched, the wind blew it in her direction until it was almost above her. Just like last year, a puff of wind pushed the kite skyward and she could see it become lifeless as the string snapped. As it died, it wobbled its way to the earth, but not too far away.



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Unlike last year, she would try to find the kite. It could not be far away. Through a small patch of woods, she came to a shooting lane cut by some deer hunter. She looked up and down the shooting lane and, in the distance, she could see a tumbled wreck of colors but mostly blue. She retrieved the kite.

Reunion...

The next day, she decided to take the kite to school. She had a premonition that someone would recognize it and claim it. She was correct. As she walked up the steps in front of the flagpole, he saw her and started immediately in her direction.

"Hey, where did you find my kite?"

"Behind my house."

"Where is that?"

"About a mile and a half east on Beaver Creek Road. Where do you live?"

"About two miles south on Dummy Line Road."

"Whoa, it flew a long way didn't it?"

"I usually let out two miles of string. That is why I use thread, number eight, to keep it light."

He looked like the kite, with a happy, smiling face. She had seen him and knew who he was. The school was not that large. She doubted that he knew her; him being a senior and she being just a sophomore. If he did know her, he did not let on and, after a moment of awkward silence, she said, "Well, I guess you would like to have your kite back?"

"No, not really, I have never retrieved one before. You can keep it. Better still, it is kind of late in the year but would you like to fly it with me next weekend?"

"Sure, I will ask my mother but I think it will be ok."

He was like the kite, handsome, kind, and self assured. When he lofted the kite, he handed her the string. He stood behind her and guided her hand with his, teaching her to pull on the string to make the kite rise higher and higher.

It happened that day. No words were spoken, but a commitment was made somewhere in the hearts of the two that stood on the hillside on a warm April day. For the next three months they were inseparable.

His desire to fly loomed large. He made the decision to join the army and would report for basic training in August. She was heartbroken. Viet Nam held no interest for her.

With the wisdom of someone much older, he explained his ambition and that she had to finish high school. Some college would even be better. He promised her that his feelings for her would not change over the four years, and she believed him. She knew hers would not.

The day before he left, they made four kites, one for each April he would be gone. On each, they painted two smiling faces. She would fly these faithfully for the next four years on the first Sunday in April.

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As if scripted in a story, he did return. Within weeks they were married and, in a few years, an additional smiling face was added. Unfortunately, it only flew for two Aprils. No one is immune from the tragedies of life. Soon however, an additional smiling face was added to the kites they made. Every April, the family of three would spend the day on the same hillside from which he had launched his kites as a boy. This they did for 47 years.

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One day, the phone call came. The one you do not want to get. Maybe a residual of Agent Orange from Viet Nam or maybe just a coincidence, but the prognosis of his illness was terminal.

It was not easy. He first lost weight, and then the pain and suffering began. It worsened. She prayed for healing and the discomfort became more consuming. Finally, she prayed for mercy. It came.

On the first Sunday of the following April, her son manipulated the string as he lifted the kite high above the trees. There were four smiling faces on the kite and, as the sun went down, the kite disappeared in the distance and fading light.

Even though she could not see it, she could feel that it was still there. She knew by the tug on the string. Just as she knew he was still there, soaring, but just out of site.

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Leadership Northshore (LNS) was established in 1990 (originally called Leadership Slidell) to identify and select highly motivated, emerging or existing leaders in business, government, and the community to participate in the program. Through monthly classes and team projects, LNS strives to groom future community leaders with an issue oriented

leadership development program that informs, motivates, and increases the awareness of selected participants through seminars and interaction with community decision makers.

Each year, Leadership Northshore students are given a task to create a program or event for the betterment of the community.

“Unleash Your Reading Superpower” is a dynamic literacy initiative uniting Superheroes and Community Heroes (such as Police Officers, Firefighters and Sheriff Deputies) to ignite a passion for reading within the most vulnerable communities in St. Tammany Parish.

The program aims to raise awareness and exposure to the importance of reading and provide reading resources while fostering excitement for books among children and families.

Through free book distribution, the initiative will measure success through family participation, book donations, community partnerships, and sponsorships.

The “Unleash Your Reading Superpower” event will be held at Living the Word International Church, 2528 Old Spanish Trail, Slidell, LA. on Saturday, April 27, 2024 from 12 - 2 p.m.

The event will have an informative resource fair, demonstrations of easy literacy activities for families, book giveaways, live book readings with local children’s authors and other special guests.

Kids will also be entertained with visits from the police department vehicles and fire department trucks.

Class members are still in need of resource fair participants, grants, gift cards, monetary donations, swag for the children, volunteers & new books for the children. It is their hope to work in collaboration with the public to develop a community with the joy and power of literacy.

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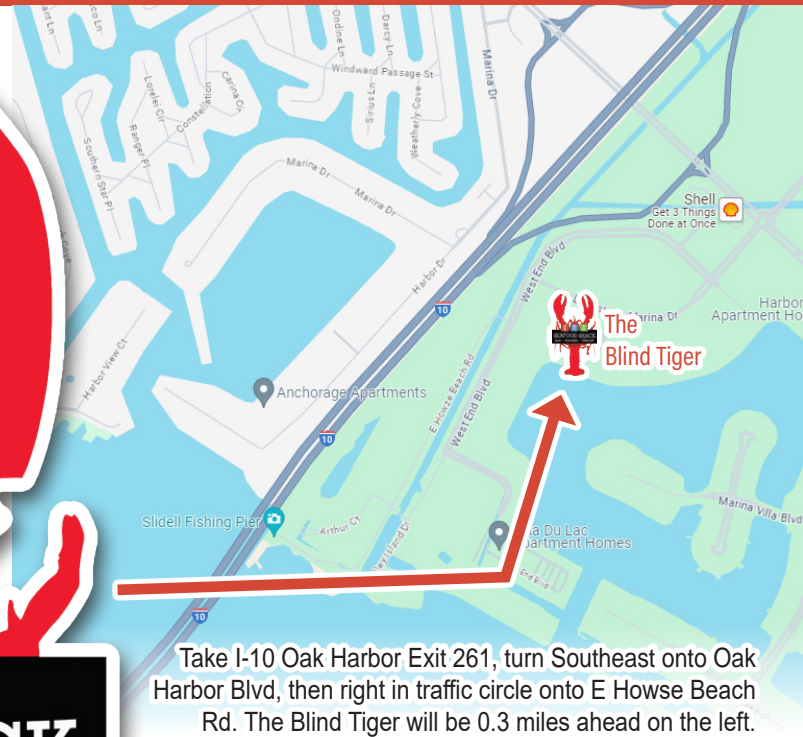
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"Your Estate Matters" Legal-ease

By Ronda M. Gabb, NP, JD, RFC



Medicaid & Planning for Long Term Care

In my opinion, there is no topic of Elder Law more misunderstood than Medicaid planning. Unfortunately, we often see dangerously bad advice given to clients by their other trusted advisors. Mind you, this is not done purposefully, it is just that Medicaid rules work far differently than ordinary "everyday" estate planning.

Let's take gifting for example. While under ordinary rules you are free to gift anyone with a beating heart up to \$18,000 a year with nothing to file, nor any adverse consequences – not so with Medicaid! Having more than \$2,000 can cause someone to immediately lose their Medicaid benefits. How about renouncing or disclaiming an inheritance? Nope—that, too, is considered a gift under Medicaid rules. Can Mom and Dad gift (donate) their house (or any other assets) directly to the kids? Well maybe, but you better do this five years before applying for Medicaid. Other factors to consider: you must file a gift tax return; your kids lose the benefit of step-up in basis upon your death (and the 121 exclusion from capital gains during life); and if not done properly,

you will lose the homestead exemption and senior freeze (and at best you can only retain that for 5 years). In a worst-case scenario, be careful not to lose your homeowner's insurance because of the ownership change!

Don't despair, however, there are still many planning opportunities available when done properly with the assistance of an attorney who specializes (not "dabbles") in Medicaid and long-term care planning. They can adequately counsel you on all the ramifications, both good and bad, of any avenues you choose.

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See other articles and issues of interest!



Ronald "Chip" Morrison Jr. and Ronda M. Gabb are Board Certified Estate Planning and Administration Specialists, certified by the Louisiana Board of Legal Specialization. Combined, they have devoted 45 years of law practice solely to estate planning, and are Members of the American Academy of Estate Planning Attorneys, National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, and the Governor's Elder Law Task Force. Ronda is also a Registered Financial Consultant.



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Linda Auld "NOLA Bug Lady"
- 11:15 AM** Hurricane Katrina Rose - *Peggy Martin*
- 12:30 PM** Building Better Soil - *Dan Gill*
- 1:45 PM** The SE Louisiana Home Orchard
Andre Brock

Saturday, April 20 | Seminars

- 10 AM** Preventing Deer Damage - *Jessie Hoover*
- 11:15 AM** Growing Blueberries in Louisiana
Mary Helen Ferguson
- 12:30 PM** Doug Tallamy's Homegrown
National Park Program - *Patty Zebrick*
- 1:45 PM** Louisiana Super Plants 2024 - *Will Afton*



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Story and photos by Donna Bush

When March and April roll around, my mind turns to spring. After all, it is my favorite time of the year. The dull browns of winter fade away as spring takes the lead, decorating our landscapes with the vibrant greens of trees leafing out and the colorful blooms of flowers emerging. Azaleas are one of my favorites, along with Japanese magnolias, which are the harbinger of spring. I've always been fascinated by the fact that the flowers emerge on barren branches long before the leaves appear! No matter why they exhibit this behavior, the large, showy, lavender flowers on the leafless tree make for a welcome sight. Regardless of how cold the temps are, I know that spring is on its way.

These beautiful, vivacious panoramas are not the only indications of spring, which leads me to another favorite subject of mine - bird migration! As we

welcome the warmer temperatures, longer days, and stunning shades of Mother Nature painting her palette, our feathered friends instinctively begin their trip north in search of their mate and their favorite mating grounds.

This northbound trip is most prominent from March to May as trans-Gulf migrants make the long, arduous journey from their wintering grounds in Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. There are roughly two million of our feathered friends flapping their wings for several hundred miles to make landfall along the western and northern coasts of the Gulf of Mexico. They are ultimately headed to their breeding grounds, which may be here or further north.

Their numbers are so great, they can be tracked on weather radar! There's even a website (birdcast.info) devoted to providing real-time predictions! As

an example, approximately 134,100 birds crossed Louisiana on the night of March 4, starting at 6:10 pm and ending March 5th at 6:30 am. This is astounding to me as I was landing at the New Orleans International Airport, supposedly at 4:50 pm. Due to the horrible weather, I finally landed around 6 pm after one missed approach due to weather and a second missed approach due to traffic on the runway. If a 194,000 pound fully loaded commercial plane had trouble landing at a sophisticated airport with the latest radar and instrument technology, just imagine what our flying friends are experiencing! How do you think a tiny bird feels as it is pummeled about the skies? To put it in perspective, a ruby-throated hummingbird weighs .11 ounces; a scarlet tanager weighs about an ounce; and a swallow-tailed kite weighs about a pound.

Often, with a south wind or tailwind to speed up their crossing over the Gulf, the bird's flight is quite efficient. However, when the opposite happens, as often does, with a fast-moving cold front barreling south, bringing strong north winds and severe thunderstorms, the birds are placed in jeopardy as they exert all their energy just to make it to the first tiny spit of land they see. I've heard stories of them landing, completely exhausted, on oil rig platforms, where they receive assistance with their remaining travels as they hitch a ride to shore with a rig helicopter ferrying crew.

We are fortunate to be located on the Mississippi Flyway, a bird migration route that follows the Mississippi, Missouri, and Lower Ohio Rivers in the United States across the western Great Lakes into Canada. This flyway consists of the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin, and the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. This means that numerous migrants will fly through our area on their routes north and south.

Per the National Audubon Society, almost half of the bird species and nearly forty percent of waterfowl of North America spend a portion of their lives in the Mississippi Flyway. This route provides excellent sources of food and water, along with zero mountainous areas to impede their travel. This, alone, offers wonderful birding opportunities along our coast.

According to Loyola University New Orleans, spring migration has morphed from March through May, to January through June. Purple martins arrive in January from their wintering area of southern South America. However, the first white-rumped sandpipers that nest in the Arctic don't arrive until mid-to-late-April through June.

Per eBird.org, 189 spring migrants have been recorded within Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge on the Northshore.

This refuge offers an important stop over location for hundreds of migrants making their way northward. By offering a variety of habitats and food choices, this sanctuary provides a significant benefit to our feathered friends.

While all this data is extremely interesting, this does not mean that you will be able to see every migrant as they pass through. Your best option is to visit early in the day, late in the day, and often. More migrants are likely to be seen from late March into April. Check birdcast.info for real-time data.

Time and space do not allow me to showcase each and every migrant that could be seen, but I will highlight a few for you.



American goldfinches will often be seen in your backyard as well as local Northshore birding hotspots. These beautiful birds can be considered winter and spring migrants as they usually pass through twice. In the winter, their coloring is a bit drabber, but in the spring, they have on their Sunday-best, looking to attract a mate when they arrive at their breeding ground.

American goldfinches are often mistaken for pine siskins and vice versa. In fact, the two species will often travel and feed together. Both are in the finch family. An easy way to tell them apart is to look at their chest. Pine siskins have coarse brown streaks on their breasts and backs, while the American goldfinch is streak-less.

Cedar waxwings are another colorful migrant, with their sleek and distinguished appearance. Both male and female look alike, with pale brown on their head and chest, fading to a soft gray on their wings. They have a crest on the top of their head that often lies flat, making it difficult to see. They sport a pale-yellow belly and a short gray tail with a bright yellow square tip. Their

face has a narrow black mask outlined in white. Wing feathers have waxy red tips, but these are not always easily seen. The waxy red wing tips give them their name. These very social birds are often seen in flocks swooping from tree to tree. They love fruit. Beware: If found eating overripened fruit that has started to ferment, you might find a flock of drunken cedar waxwings. And they love holly berries!

Chipping sparrows have an estimated population of 230 million in the United States, but we only see them during their migration. They take their name from their "chip" call and have a brownish-red crown that becomes more rust-colored with their breeding plumage. Their distinctive black eye-line and unstreaked gray belly make them easy to identify.

Some of our more colorful migrants are the grosbeaks. Male rose-breasted are small black and white birds with a vibrant red patch extending from the bottom of their jet-black neck to mid-chest. Females and immatures are brown and heavily streaked with a bold white stripe above their eye.

Male blue grosbeaks sport a deep, rich blue with a hint of a black mask in front of their eyes, a black and silver beak, with chestnut wingbars. This subtle female songbird is a more subdued rust and tawny brown, with brown wingbars.

Not to be confused with blue grosbeaks are the indigo buntings. About the size of a sparrow, the male indigo bunting is smurf- blue with a vaguely richer blue on his head and a shiny silverish bill. Females are a rather non-descript brown with some light streaking on their breast and darker brown wingbars. Occasionally, you might spot a bit of blue on the wings, tail, or rump. These beautiful songbirds migrate at night, using the stars as guidance.

One of the most attractive migrants I have photographed was the scarlet tanager, a small, striking songbird only passing through. The breeding male is a vivid red with black wings and tail, while the female is an olive-yellow with darker olive wings and tail. Interestingly, the males molt to female coloration but maintain their black wings and tail.



Similar in color and size is the migrating summer tanager. However, the breeding males are entirely fire-engine red. Females sport a bright yellow green, with yellower head and underparts, contrasting with slightly greener back and wings. I have observed the fancy females in our backyard.

I've always found migrant warblers challenging to photograph! These small, insect-ingesting creatures never stop moving! I've spent hours trying unsuccessfully to snag a sharp photo. Finally, my patience paid off with two sharp images of a tiny black and white warbler who worked over an oak tree, gobbling insects as it stayed in constant motion. As you might imagine from their names, these birds are boldly striped in black and white.

Another black and white migrant is the Eastern kingbird, a member of the flycatcher family. He looked quite debonaire, as if he were wearing a business suit with his black and white plumage and a white tip on his black tail.

Eastern kingbirds spend their summers in the U.S. perched in open areas with good visibility where they can swoop in to dine on flying insects. They fiercely defend their habitat against other kingbirds. At their wintering grounds along the Amazon River of South America, they exhibit a completely different lifestyle where they travel in flocks and feed mostly on fruit.

One of the easiest migrants to identify is the swallow-tailed kite, a beautiful raptor that often returns to our area to nest each spring and summer. They return from their wintering grounds in South and Central America in mid to late March. Their deeply forked tail and stunningly, bold black and white plumage make them easy to spot as they soar overhead in an effortless, lilting display. These most aerodynamic of birds feed on the wing, enjoying frogs, snakes, lizards, dragonflies, and their favorite food – wasps.

While our National Bird, bald eagles, do nest here, they are still considered a spring migrant as many pass through our area on their way to their northern breeding grounds.

White pelicans migrate to the Gulf States, Mexico, and Central America for the winter. In the spring, they can be observed heading north to their breeding locations. While the white pelicans have the same distinctive bill as our state bird, the brown pelican, their coloring is much different. When floating on the water, they appear all white. However, in flight, they exhibit black flight feathers with their wings spread.

Dunlin, similar to sandpipers, are one of the most plentiful North American shorebirds found in coastal areas. They love to feed as the tide falls and exposes mudflats. They breed much farther north in arctic Alaska and Canada.





Each spring, hundreds of ruby-throated hummingbirds make their way back to Louisiana and neighboring southern states to mate and nest after overwintering in Mexico and Central America. They exhibit a bright emerald or golden-green on their backs and crown, with gray-white underparts. You can tell a male by the brilliant, iridescent red throat. However, if lighting is poor, the throat can appear dark, almost black. Females have a mostly white throat. Agile flyers with a wing beat of 50 - 70 times per second, they can fly approximately 25 miles per hour! During intense exertion, their heart rate is around 1200 beats per minute, with a resting heart rate of 600 beats per minute. At night, they

enter a hibernation-like state, known as torpor, to conserve energy. During this period, their heart rate slows to around 50-250 beats per minute. A human's resting heart rate is typically 65-72! As I've already stated, they only weigh .1 to .2 ounces, which is less than a nickel. As small as they are, it is not surprising that their nests are only about 1-1/2 – 2 inches wide and 1 inch deep; and very tough to spot!

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the need for darkness at night when birds are migrating. Billions of birds fly twice each year between wintering and breeding grounds using the night sky to navigate their path. Bright artificial lights around buildings and

homes can cause confusion and collisions with windows and walls, leading to numerous deaths. Lights Out is a nationwide campaign by the National Audubon Society to partner with business owners and residents to reduce the number of birds impacted by turning off or dimming lights during periods when they would most likely affect migrating or nocturnal birds. Not only is this good for birds, but this also saves energy.

I hope you enjoyed this insight into some of the migrants you might observe. Grab your binoculars and your cameras and go enjoy these beautiful birds while you can.

Orleans Audubon Society Guided Trips

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Bayou Sauvage Urban National Wildlife Refuge – half-day trip Saturday, April 20, 8:00 am

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, Barataria Unit – half-day trip Saturday, May 25, 8:00 am

JAudubon.net/events

LIGHTS OUT FOR BIRDS

- Turn off non-essential lights from 11 PM to 6 AM during migration season.
- Don't use landscape lighting to light up trees or gardens where birds may be resting.
- Close blinds at night to reduce the amount of light being emitted.

For essential lights (like security lighting) use the following dark skies friendly lighting practices:

- Aim lights down.
- Use lighting shields to direct light downwards and to avoid light shining into the sky or trees.
- Use motion detectors and sensors so lights are only on when you need them.
- Share your support for the cause via social media and with local media, your commitment to go lights out to save birds is newsworthy!

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Slidell History

Brought to you by the City of Slidell Museum, Gregory D. Scott, Director

First United Methodist Church 433 Erlanger Avenue



The First United Methodist Church of Slidell began on September 26, 1887, when Reverend James Tucker traveled to the Slidell area and held an outdoor revival under a brush arbor. Twelve members joined the Church that first day, forming the "Slidell Methodist Church."

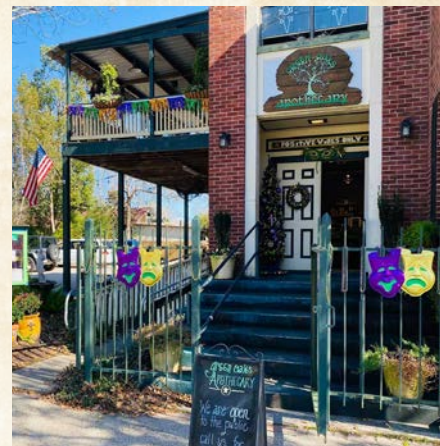
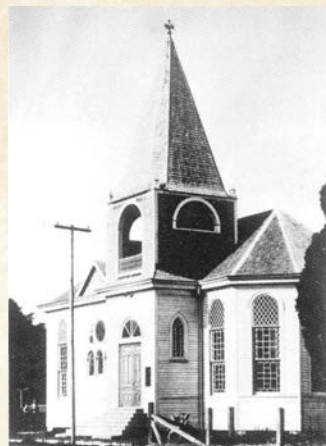
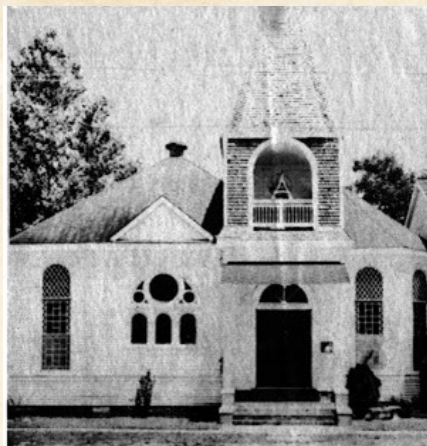
By 1888, the fledgling church met in a community building erected by the Salmen Brick & Lumber Company for community use. The building functioned as a school and a Union Assembly Hall, in addition to hosting combined services for multiple denominations. The original Methodist Church and a parsonage were built at Second and Guzman Streets.

A graveyard, now Greenwood Cemetery, was situated directly behind the church. By 1905, continued growth constituted the need for a church of their own. The Methodist Church was built on First Street, between Cousin and Robert streets, with the later addition of an education building and new parsonage. This site is now the Old Town Soda Shop and Green Oaks Apothecary. Today, little evidence of the church can

be seen here, with the exception of the front steps of Green Oaks Apothecary, which are thought to be the original steps to the education building.

In 1957, an entire city block across from Griffith Park was purchased and is the location of the present church complex. The first structure, now known as Fellowship Hall, included classrooms and a large assembly area and was begun in 1960, followed





Left & middle: First UMC, 1905-1956. Right: The front steps of Green Oaks Apothecary are believed to be the original steps leading to the education center on First Street.

by a 500-seat sanctuary which was dedicated in 1969. The Mears Building that once stood behind the sanctuary was constructed by a group of adult and youth volunteers and dedicated in 1974. In the 1980s, a \$130,000 pipe organ was incorporated into the church (the building's original design planned for later placement of an organ). Construction of the Family Life Center was completed in 1982 and a new parking lot was constructed on Fourth Street in 2002.

Hurricane Katrina brought close to 5 feet of water to the church campus which destroyed 95% of all contents. Former classrooms have been converted into administrative office space along with a refurbished Fellowship Hall that was once the original Sanctuary in the late 1950's.

"With hands-on help from faith-based work teams, gifts of supplies and equipment, financial donations from other sister United Methodist Churches, organizations

and individuals and the mighty power of prayer, we celebrate our recovery and restoration that enabled us to be the church we are today."

Visiting First United Methodist Church is an annual tradition for most Slidellians. The extremely popular Pumpkin Patch and Olde Towne Pumpkin Fest are hosted on the beautiful First UMC grounds each fall and attract thousands of visitors from Slidell, Mississippi and beyond!



This story and many more can be found on the Slidell Museum's online map which highlights some of Slidell's most interesting historical places and people. The website features more than 30 items of interest, and new information is continually being added.

Visit www.myslidell.com

or use the QR code here:



The Slidell Museum is located at 2020 First Street in Olde Towne. Hours are Tues & Wed: 12-4pm, Friday: 10am-4pm, Sat: 10am-2pm. Admission is free. For more information, please call (985) 646-4380.



First United Methodist Church of Slidell, present day



Dr Jason Chawla,
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VETERINARY MEDICAL CENTER



As summer quickly approaches, I want to focus this month on what most veterinarians in these parts would probably agree is the single biggest health concern, in any season, for dogs: heartworms.

How do dogs contract heartworms? Mosquitoes carry heartworms from dog to dog, so more mosquitoes in the hot, humid summer months mean more potential for your dog to become infected. Baby worms in the blood stream of an infected dog can't just grow into adults in the original host dog where they were born. They must be sucked up by a mosquito while it's taking a blood meal, remain in the mosquito for about 2 weeks, then be injected back into a dog host. They then migrate through their new host's tissues, finding the blood stream and eventually the right side of the heart, and reaching adulthood 6 – 9 months later. Male and female adults in the heart then breed and produce new babies, completing the life cycle.

How do they make dogs sick? Adult worms inhabit the right side of the dog's heart, and the large vessels leading to and from it, especially the arteries supplying the lungs. They can interfere with blood flow, cause blood clots to form, cause inflammation, bruising, and hemorrhage in the lung tissue around the arteries, and damage the lining of the heart and blood vessels where they live. The dog's activity level is a major factor in determining how much damage occurs in the lungs. A canine couch potato with relatively few worms, say less than 15 – 20, may show practically no symptoms at all, while a hyperactive Black Lab, especially one with a heavy burden of 50 – 100 worms or more, is likely to get quite sick.

What are the signs? Most heartworm-infected dogs eventually show at least some symptoms. They can include a mild cough, lethargy, labored breathing, exercise intolerance, worsening cough (including coughing up blood), lack of appetite, weight loss, weakness, collapse and sudden death. Read that last word

again. Death. Dogs die of heartworms all the time, especially if their cardiovascular systems are challenged or stressed. When sustained exercise causes the heart rate to go up, blood pressure in the lungs increases and disaster can follow quickly. Once a diagnosis of heartworms is made by your veterinarian, lifestyle changes must be implemented to minimize the chance of a life-threatening episode.

Can anything be done? After all this talk of gloom and doom, here's the good news. Heartworms can be treated. It's potentially dangerous (though safer than it was 25 years ago) and can be fairly expensive, but modern medications, along with careful diagnostics and monitoring, give veterinarians a good chance to save most mild to moderate heartworm cases. Severely affected dogs are more challenging. And here's even better news: **heartworms are pretty much 100% preventable**. Affordable medication can kill heartworm larvae before they reach adulthood. Many types are available, and your veterinarian can recommend the best one for your dog. These preventatives are so reliable that most of the manufacturers offer a guarantee to treat your dog for free if he gets heartworms while on their product. **GIVE YOUR DOGS HEARTWORM PREVENTATIVE ALL YEAR, FOR LIFE**. Puppies can be started on heartworm preventative at 3 - 4 months old. Adult dogs should be tested before starting or resuming preventative. A simple blood test, usually run right in the vet's office in 10 minutes, is all it takes.

Heartworm preventative for your dog is a no-brainer. Every dog is at risk, even indoor, long-haired dogs. Here on the Gulf Coast, they all get bitten by mosquitoes eventually. Don't get caught napping on this one. Mark your calendars and give the preventative religiously. Your dog will thank you.

This column dedicated to "Marquesas", just one of the many millions of canine heartworm victims.

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COOL, FUNNY, BIZARRE, OR INTERESTING THINGS I LEARNED THIS MONTH

Story by Suzie Hunt



IN THE WORLD...

Ocean Front Borders Keep Growing Bigger

How does a country grow bigger? There's just so much land, right? For nations that lie along the shores of the world's oceans, a country's boundary does not necessarily line up with where the surf meets the beach. Countries actually have many "borders", depending on what the area is used for.

Back in the day...way, way back...a nation's border was considered to extend out to sea about three nautical miles. Why that distance? Because that's how far a cannon ball could fly when trying to defend against invaders. A very practical distance.

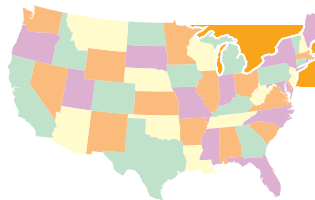
In 1982, the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention changed territorial borders to extend to twelve nautical miles out to sea. Where does the land line start to measure this distance? The baseline is the low tide point on the farthest landmass under that government's jurisdiction. Either the coastal shoreline or the seaside of the country's furthest barrier island. This border includes the sky above all the way down to the seabed. This border mainly pertains to shipping and defense issues.

In 1999, twelve more miles were added under the new term Contiguous Zone for a total of 24 nautical miles from land. This extended buffer zone concerns the infringement of the country's territory involving issues of customs, immigration and sanitary laws and regulations.

Last year, after years of research and exploration, a new designation called the Extended Continental Shelf, or ECS, was adopted by 76 countries. This newest development involved expanding a nation's land possession by annexing the undersea land that makes up the continental shelf. The shelf is the natural extension of a country's land mass until it meets a steep drop off into the ocean depths.

After three years of seabed exploration and mapping, the U.S. has identified ECS areas off both the west and east coasts, in the Gulf of Mexico and under the Bering Sea. The official expansion involves one million square kilometers of shelf, an area equivalent to adding on the state of California twice.

These new boundary lines give countries sovereign rights to enforce environmental regulations and safeguard marine ecosystems, as well as explore economic development of oil, gas and mineral resources.



IN THE U.S...

The Atlanta Magnet Man

This is a case of a man seeing a problem and building a solution.

Alex Benigno would ride his bicycle down the streets of Atlanta and marvel at the amount of metal debris on the streets. Most distressing were the nails, screws and bolts that presented a danger to bicycle and automobile tires. He'd been the victim on both fronts during his time transversing the city. Benigno's interest in this problem came to a

head during the pandemic. With fewer cars to dodge on the nearly deserted streets, he had time to think on the issue.

Knowing there would come a time that traffic would be back, Benigno started work on a contraption that he could attach to his bicycle that would pick up hazardous pieces of metal from Atlanta's streets.

His solution is not a thing of beauty but highly functional. He secured a large number of magnets to a simple metal frame. Connected to the back of his bicycle, the frame rides low to the ground and grabs nails, bolts and shards of metal as it passes over the hazards found on the street. On an average day, the improvised scrap metal collector takes about six pounds of metal trash off the street while peddling about ten miles. There's a cool YouTube video that shows his work in action (click the QR below to watch it).

On an Instagram post, Benigno wrote, "We can lift these nails and screws from our streets and prevent them from taking that which we hold most dear, our time, our money and our precious tires."

Known as the Atlanta Magnet Man, he has picked up some interesting finds with his invention, including the occasional bullet. De-metaling the streets in his spare time, Benigno donates the collected metal pieces to local artists. He has picked up as much as 400 pounds over a two-month period.





IN LOUISIANA...

A "Grave" Situation

Were you aware that there are protocols for positioning graves in a cemetery? Tradition holds that bodies are buried facing east (feet pointing east, head to the west) in most Christian cemeteries. The biblical reference for this practice is that Jesus Christ will come from the east at the second coming.

Rayne, Louisiana has the distinction of hosting one of the rare, if not the only, cemetery in the United States where the graves are laid out north to south. St. Joseph's Cemetery is known as the "Wrong Way Cemetery" and is listed as such in the "Ripley's Believe It or Not" catalog.

In 1880, the people of Pouppeville, Louisiana found themselves situated more than five miles from the new tracks of the Louisiana Western Railroad. Recognizing the need to be closer to the important rail line, the entire town pulled up stakes and moved next to the tracks. The town of Pouppeville became Rayne, Louisiana when it was renamed by railroad employee B.W.L. Rayne. Obviously, railroads and their employees had a lot of pull back then.

It is unknown why the graves in St. Joseph's Cemetery are positioned so uniquely. When the people of Pouppeville moved, not only did they relocate their live families, but they also brought their deceased relatives with them as well. The common thought for the unusual reinternment is that the gravedigger made a 90-degree error when marking the new cemetery's layout. By the time the mistake was noticed, it was too late to redo. The prevalence of above ground crypts in Louisiana graveyards makes the misorientation more noticeable.



IN SLIDELL...

The Mosquito vs. NASA



According to local history, the 1960s heralded a population boom in the Slidell area. More than 10,000 NASA employees and their families moved to the area as part of the work done at Stennis Space Center just over the border in Mississippi in the race to space. These individuals came from across the United States and almost fled back home due to a tiny insect causing a gigantic problem.

Mosquitoes have been the bane of Louisiana residents since time immemorial. With swamps surrounding the city, the insects were everywhere. The families moving here to work for NASA and other associated companies were not pleased, to say the least. They did not appreciate being attacked as they went about their daily errands or tried to hold family events outside. Local residents were accustomed to dealing with the little buggers as part of living in this piece of paradise. People moving here from areas where the biting insects were a minor problem, or no problem at all, were so unhappy that word spread and recruiting new hires to Stennis Space Center became a major problem.

Enter the cavalry. Officials from St. Tammany Parish joined forces with people from the Stennis Space Center, the NASA Michoud Assembly facility and the newly formed New Orleans Mosquito Control Board to find a solution. The first Mosquito Abatement District in St. Tammany Parish was established in April 1968 to serve the greater Slidell and Pearl River areas. Voters approved a millage tax by a whopping 90% majority to fund the district's work to control the mosquito problem in East St. Tammany Parish.

In essence, the race to put a man on the moon made it possible for residents of Slidell to enjoy a crawfish boil in the backyard in comfort (as much as a 90° day allows at least).

How to Safely Dispose of Medications

Are your medicine cabinets overflowing with old or expired medications that you no longer use? Disposing of prescription drugs in a timely and safe manner lessens the potential for drug-related injuries. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration recommends the best way to dispose of prescription drugs is through a take-back program.

What is a Take Back program?

A take-back program is a drug disposal site typically housed in pharmacies and hospitals, where you can bring your old or expired medications. Take-back programs are the safest way to dispose of medications. When you bring your medicine to a take-back site, make sure to remove your personal information from the bottles. At these locations, your old medications will be destroyed and disposed of by medical professionals.

Take-back facilities register with the U.S. DEA as permanent collection sites. The DEA also hosts “[National Take Back Drugs Day](#)” on [April 27th](#) every year. This event provides temporary collection sites across the country where individuals can bring unused or expired medication for disposal. [You can find information about National Take Back Drugs Day at https://www.dea.gov/takebackday.](https://www.dea.gov/takebackday)

Disposing of Medication at Home

Home disposal is an option if you do not have take-back sites available to you. There are options for home disposal depending on the type of drug you have.

Before you do anything, read the label on your medication for specific disposal instructions you should follow. If there are no special instructions, almost all medicines, except those on an FDA flush list, can be disposed of in the trash. To safely dispose of prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs in pills, liquids, drops, patches, and creams in the household trash, you will want to follow these steps:

1. Take the drugs out of their original container and mix them with used coffee grounds or cat litter to make them seem less appealing to small children or animals.
2. Put the mixture in a sealable bag or container to prevent any spills or leaks.
3. Throw the bag in the household trash.
4. Make sure to scratch out any personal or identifiable information on the original medication packaging and then dispose of it in the trash.

National Take Back Drugs Day

April 27th



Some medications can be harmful to others, so you will see instructions to flush them down the toilet if a take-back option is not available. You should not flush a medication unless it is specifically instructed on the medication packaging, or is listed on the FDA's approved flush list. You can find this information on the Food and Drug Administration's website.

Safe Storage of Medication

Safe and secure storage of prescription medication is essential to prevent accidental injuries. Store your medications in a cool, dry location that is out of reach of children and pets. Always follow instructions given by your healthcare provider and pharmacist to ensure the safe use of medications. Make sure your prescription medicine is stored in the original packaging with the safety lock tightened and secured. If you have any specific inquiries or concerns regarding medication storage or safety, please do not hesitate to ask your provider or pharmacist for further assistance.

Safe storage and proper disposal of medication are crucial for maintaining safety and preventing accidental drug-related injuries. Utilizing a take-back program is the safest method to ensure that your prescription drugs are disposed of correctly and responsibly. If you have any further questions or need assistance regarding medication storage or disposal, ask your provider or pharmacist for guidance.

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