

The Weekly Press

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THURSDAY, MARCH 16-22, 2023

A PEOPLE'S PUBLICATION

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Audit finds most food stamp cuts not for financial reasons



When a Louisiana family loses public food assistance, it's most often not because they don't qualify for it. A new report from the state Legislative Auditor found that more than half the time the reasons are procedural rather than financial.

The auditor conducted an efficiency review of the Supplemental

Out of more than 1.48 million SNAP, 81.1% were closed for non-financial reasons. Nearly 60% of those families who lose benefits have them restored, or churned, within three months.

Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) within the state Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), as requested through a legislative resolution approved last year. The review covered SNAP cases from 2018 through 2022, a period during which federal pandemic money allowed Louisiana to increase the number of families receiving food aid.

Out of more than 1.48 million SNAP cases over that time, 81.1% were closed for non-financial reasons. Nearly 60% of those families who lose benefits have them restored, or churned, within three months. SNAP recipients have to complete a form once they reach the midpoint of their benefits period and another at the end to determine if they are still eligible. If they don't finish them on time, they could lose benefits even though they might still qualify for assistance.

"Those who lose benefits for a non-financial procedural reason may need to re-apply, which creates more work for agency staff," the audit said.

The audit also found the DCFS system for tracking SNAP complaints doesn't allow department staff to identify trends or resolve problems in a timely manner. In a review of 2,146 complaints from 2018 through last year, a field for determining whether it was valid or not was left blank on more than one-third of the forms. Another

See **CUTS**, on page 2



"Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome highlights the importance of investing in public safety and infrastructure during the unveiling ceremony of Baton Rouge Fire Department's new fleet of fire-fighting vehicles."

New Engines and Equipment for Baton Rouge Fire Department



BATON ROUGE, La. — The Baton Rouge Fire Department (BRFD) proudly presented their five new, state-of-the-art fire trucks on Thursday, March 16. The trucks were custom-built and purchased at a cost of \$2.9 million, thanks to the approval of the Metropolitan Council and funds from the American Rescue Plan Act.

Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome and BRFD Chief Michael Kimble joined the unveiling ceremony, which was held to showcase the city's new firefighting fleet. The new engines have already replaced the old and less efficient models at Fire Stations 1, 2, 3, 12, and 13.

The Ferrara Inferno Custom Top Mount Pumper Engines have 1500-gallon per minute pumps, allowing the



BRFD Chief Michael Kimble expresses his gratitude to the Metropolitan Council for approving the purchase of new state-of-the-art fire trucks, which will allow the department to operate more efficiently and provide better service to the Baton Rouge community

firefighters to respond more effectively to emergency situations. These trucks will serve as the first responders to fires, accidents, and other disasters

across Baton Rouge.

Mayor Broome commented, "I dedicated funding

See **NEW ENGINES**, on page 3

4 tax renewals for EBR Schools to appear on March 25 election ballot

Early voting begins for March 25 election

BATON ROUGE, La. — Residents in East Baton Rouge Parish will have the chance to vote on the future of the largest public school district in the Baton Rouge area.

Four tax renewals designed for EBR Schools will appear on the ballot when voters head to the polls on Saturday, March 25.

Each renewal addresses a different topic like teacher pay or student-to-teacher ratio.

School leaders report they will also help the system continue to:

- Expand early childhood education
- Invest in teacher training and literacy coaching
- Offer paid internships for high school seniors
- Create new schools to include specialized fields unique to community needs



- Increase "on-track" to graduate rates for 9th graders
- Expand opportunities to gain college credit and save money on college costs later
- Expand Multi-Tiered Systems to support the mental health and social-emotional needs of students and staff

According to the Louisiana Secretary of State's Office, the early voting period began on Saturday, March 11, and will run through Saturday, March 18.

States to receive \$2.5B from feds for electric vehicle charging infrastructure



An electric car charges at a public charging station in Baton Rouge owned by Entergy Louisiana on Feb. 24, 2023. (Photo credit: Wes Muller/Louisiana Illuminator)

BY: JACOB FISCHLER
 Louisiana Illuminator

The federal government will send \$2.5 billion over the next five years to states, local governments and tribes to build electric vehicle charging infrastructure, Biden administration officials said Tuesday.

The new Charging and Fueling Infrastructure grant program, which was authorized by the 2021 bipartisan infrastructure law, will spend \$2.5 billion over five years to build electric vehicle charging stations and refueling infrastructure for hydrogen, propane or natural-gas vehicles.

Administration officials told reporters in a press call Monday the program would help President Joe Biden meet his goal of 500,000 public charging stations by the end of the decade. Officials briefed reporters on the condition they would not be named.

Biden has also set a goal of

reducing national greenhouse gas emissions by at least half by 2030. Gas-powered vehicles account for about one-quarter of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

The grant funding will be evenly split between designated alternative-fuel corridors and public facilities like parking lots, schools and parks.

"With today's announcement, we are taking another big step forward in creating an EV future that is convenient, affordable, reliable, and accessible to all Americans," U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said in a written statement.

Applications for the first two years of funding, which will include \$700 million in grants, opened Tuesday and are due by May 30.

The grant program adds to other recent federal spending on

See **INFRASTRUCTURE**, on page 2

WEATHER



MON. 03/20
 Mostly Cloudy
 High 45°.



WED. 03/22
 Partly Cloudy
 High 84°.



TUE. 03/21
 Mostly Cloudy
 High 55°.



THUR. 03/23
 Mostly Cloudy
 High 82°.

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The Weekly Press

The eEdition TODAY

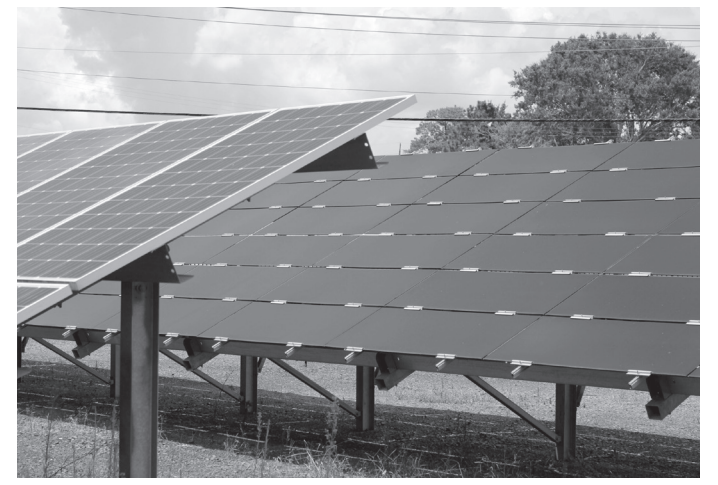
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LOCAL & STATE

Entergy Louisiana Seeks Solar Expansion to Promote Economic Development and Jobs



BATON ROUGE, La. - Entergy Louisiana is seeking to expand its solar energy capacity across the state. The company is looking to create more gigawatts of solar energy in an effort to promote economic development in Louisiana. The Louisiana Public Service Commission will need to approve the company's plans to move forward with this project. This proposal marks the largest renewable power expansion in the state's history.

Phillip May, the President and CEO of Entergy Louisiana, said that the company has seen a lot of interest from new industries looking to locate in Louisiana. These industries are searching for clean, no-carbon energy, and solar energy provides an ideal solution. May emphasized that this solar energy expansion would help create jobs associated with constructing and maintaining solar facilities. The project would also attract new businesses and millions of dollars in investments.

May noted that solar energy comes with no fuel costs, which means that this project could help mitigate the effect of high electricity prices during gas price spikes. However, it will take around a year or two to complete the project, and this means that

consumers may not see a relief in their energy bills as soon as anticipated. Entergy Louisiana plans to have around 15 to 17 gigawatts of renewable resources by the end of 2031.

Public Service Commissioner for District 3, Davante Lewis, expressed his support for the project but acknowledged that there are concerns about energy bills. Lewis believes that this project is a step in the right direction, but more efforts are necessary to ensure that consumers benefit from lower bills. The Commission is currently looking at other solutions to give customers more options.

Entergy Louisiana is working to expand solar energy capacity in the state, which could promote economic development and create new jobs. While the project is awaiting approval from the Louisiana Public Service Commission, Entergy Louisiana is optimistic about the potential benefits that could come with this expansion. Although there are concerns about the impact of the project on energy bills, the CEO of Entergy Louisiana emphasizes that solar energy comes with no fuel costs, which could help mitigate the effects of high electricity prices.

New grant available to help enhance school security

BATON ROUGE, La. -The Louisiana Department of Education is offering a \$21 million grant to help strengthen school security measures across the state. The grant will allow public schools to apply for funds to enhance campus security with options such as metal detectors, perimeter fencing, locks, and minor construction.

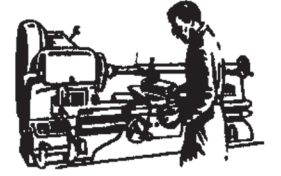
Assumption Parish School System Superintendent, John Barthelemy, acknowledges the need to upgrade security measures but emphasizes the cost associated with it. The school's facilities were built in the 50s, 60s, and 70s without safety in mind. Barthelemy is hopeful the grant will enable the school system to get closer to achieving single point entry into facilities to ensure the safety of staff and students.

The state's superintendent, Cade Brumley, affirms the grant's significance, stating that the awards will be substantive half-million-dollar grants, allowing schools to achieve more robust security measures. The grant can be applied to various enhancements such as security cameras, perimeter fencing, metal detectors, and minor construction.

Applications for the grant opened this week, and public schools across Louisiana are encouraged to apply for funding before the April 3, 2023, deadline. With schools throughout the state facing similar challenges, the Louisiana Department of Education hopes that the grant will help enhance campus security and ultimately provide a safer

See **GRANT**, on page 6

READER INFORMATION



How to Reach Us
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Email brweeklypress@yahoo.com

The office is open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday and located at 4910 Montecello Blvd. Baton Rouge, LA 70814

Correction Policy
The Baton Rouge Weekly Press strives to be fair and accurate. The newspaper corrects any significant errors of fact brought to the attention of the editor. If you think an error has been made, call 225-775-200

Baker Chief of Police Carl Dunn Announces After School Childhood Literacy & Tutoring Program in Partnership with Baker Workforce Development

Chief Carl Dunn announced to the public that the Baker Police Department, in partnership with the City of Baker Workforce Development, will be offering the Baker Police Achievement Academy Program.

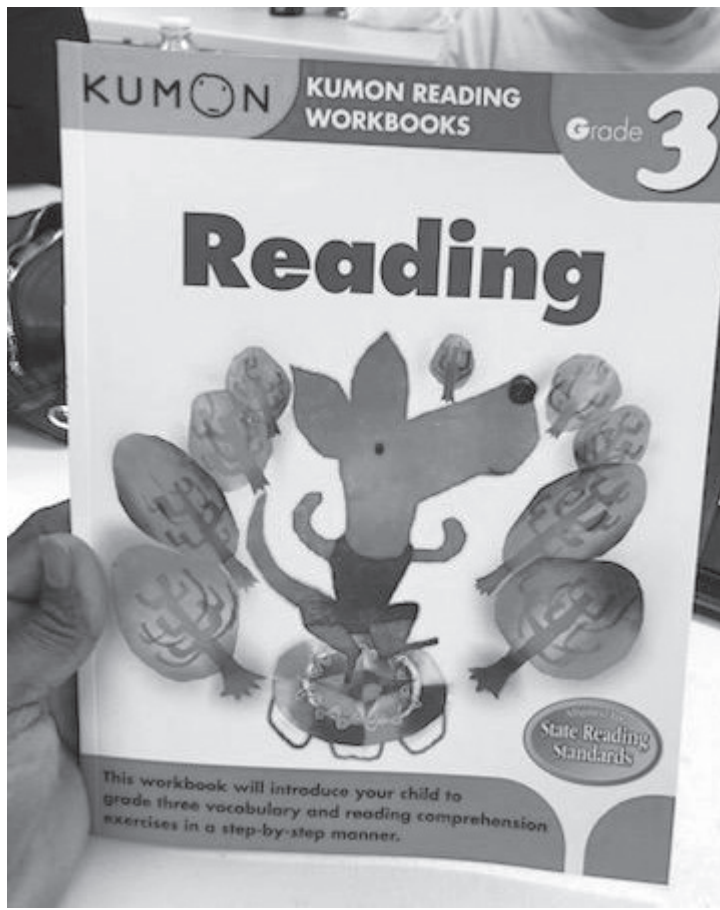


Chief Carl Dunn

The program, which will be available on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30 PM - 5:30 PM is designed to assist area students by offering tutoring and homework help. It will also provide children with a hot meal during the sessions.

The program will utilize teaching tools from well-known companies such as Kumon and Scholastic which are chosen by a certified reading teacher and will provide access to teachers and police officers who will assist students in reading, phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension. All teachers and police officers are volunteering their time for the program. During the sessions, students will receive a grade-level assessment to help volunteers determine the areas in which the students need aid so as to gain greater proficiency.

Chief Dunn said, "[The program's goals] are to assist parents in keeping their children engaged with learning and off the streets." He went on to further explain the philosophy of the program is community policing oriented saying "The police department should be active in all aspects of the community so relationships can be established. If at any point there is a stressful situation or crisis we want children and parents to be comfortable in reaching out to us. We want everyone to know that we care about our community, neighbors, and their



families." The program aims to establish interventional activities that promote educational excellence in Baker area students as well as provide a resource to busy parents who at the end of the day will be able to pick their children up from the session having been fed with homework completed. Chief Dunn notes that "...reading skills are key to children developing into successful, productive adults. Our number one goal is to have all kids participating in the program not just reading at grade level but exceeding that standard by one year. We aim to not only create excellent readers but excellent people."

This program is complemen-

tary to the already existing STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) program that is held monthly for children conducted by BR Stem. This program focuses on integrating STEM into classroom learning in alignment with college and career readiness standards. More information about monthly STEM activities can be found on the City of Baker's website and by signing up for City of Baker email and text messages publishing activities and events in and around the City of Baker.

Mayor Waites, who is a great proponent of education and extracurricular youth activities said "I am excited that we can support the community with these programs. We are investing in our youth with educational and team-building programs. I believe that it is our responsibility to do everything within our power to create positive outcomes for them and am thrilled that we are complementing our ongoing partnership with BR Stem by adding the Baker Police Achievement Academy program that will help kids now and throughout their lifetime. I would like to personally thank Chief Dunn and Reatha Wright for their efforts in putting this program together"

If you or anyone you know may be interested in volunteering to work with students or if you are a parent who would like to sign your children up for this program you can contact Chief Dunn's office at 225.706.0687. Stay tuned for more information and for the grand opening event coming soon!

Weekly Press

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INFRASTRUCTURE

from page 1

electric vehicle charging stations.

Each state will also receive a share of a separate \$1.5 billion fund the federal government made available for charging stations last

year. Each state developed a plan for building an electric vehicle charging network. The Federal Highway Administration, the Transportation Department agency that administers federal highway funding to states, approved each state plan last year.

States will not have to apply for grants to receive funding under

that program, instead receiving funding based on a predetermined formula that factors in things like population and miles of road.

Last month, the administration finalized standards for charging stations, including a requirement that components will eventually have to be sourced in the United States. Most material needed for

CUTS from page 1

spot where DCFS staff can declare problems resolved was left blank on 26% of complaints.

In her response to the auditor's report, DCFS Secretary Terri Ricks concurred with the finding and said that corrective action is being taken to address the problem at the parish and state level.

Issues with the DCFS call center that handles SNAP benefits were also highlighted in the audit. The vendor's contract requires that all calls be answered in six minutes or less. Auditors found that the time limit was exceeded on average in seven of the 14 months reviewed.

The average call answer ranged from a high of nearly 51 minutes in September 2021 to a low of 9 seconds in October 2022.

Ricks told the auditor DCFS would take action if the call center operator does not meet its required call answer times.

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Black educators remember the early days of COVID-19

BY CANDACE J SEMIEN
Special to The Weekly Press

BATON ROUGE, La.—You may not remember March 9, 2020—the day Louisiana recorded the first COVID-19 infection.

However, engrained in the memories of many Louisiana teachers is Thursday, March 12, 2020, the day Governor John Bel Edwards declared a public health emergency, closed all K-12 public schools, and banned gatherings of more than 250 people.

“When you look back at it, COVID education was a nightmare,” said a fifth-grade teacher.

Louisiana educators frantically packed their personal items, prepared academic packets for students, and realigned their lessons to become virtual educators for the first time. Two days later, on March 14, the first COVID-19 death was reported.

At the onset of the pandemic, Black Louisianans’ had high COVID-19 mortality rates that accounted for 70% of all deaths. The infection and death rates in and throughout Louisiana were the worse in the country.

Since the start of the pandemic three years ago, Louisiana’s faced six surges of COVID-19 infections, unprecedented flooding, and catastrophic hurricanes which closed schools. And overall, Black Louisianans made up 50% of known COVID-19-related deaths. Earlier this year, Black K-12 educators in Louisiana completed an online

survey on the pandemic’s impact.*

Tia Mills, Ed.D.



Tia Mills, Ed.D.

“What teachers faced was unprecedented,” said Tia Mills, Ed.D., president of the Louisiana Association of Educators. According to the Louisiana Department of Education, during the 2021-2022 academic year, the state had 188,602 employees with “teacher” in their job title. Of them, 24% are Black.

Mills said members were concerned about how they could protect their jobs during sickness, how they could effectively do their jobs virtually, and whether they would return to sanitized schools. As a response, she said LAE provided additional technical training and support to educators statewide while lobbying for COVID-safety measures, mask and COVID testing policies, and funding to incentivize educators.

“(COVID) changed the way we served our students,” said Mills, who has also been an educator for more than 14 years. “Educators worked extremely hard from the cafeteria worker, teachers, support staff, and principals, to the bus driver.”

Mills had hosted virtual “We Rise Together” town halls, advocated for priority vaccinations, and even fired off against the early re-

opening of schools. Louisiana had become the epicenter of a COVID spike with alarming increases in the number and severity of COVID-19 cases among children. Chaos and concerns grew over restarting schools and mask mandates. Board of Elementary and Secondary Education declined to enact statewide COVID-19 requirements, then Edwards intervened and enacted an indoor statewide mask mandate for anyone in kindergarten and older.

“It was a chaotic process in the sense that nobody knew what was going on. It was all changing overnight just like that and we had to adjust for our students and our families,” wrote an East Baton Rouge teacher. She said teachers able to adjust better once expectations for virtual learning were clarified by the district and state.

Those adjustments and expectations varied across the state’s 72 school districts which have different academic calendars. For example, many schools in north Louisiana were heading into Spring Break while others had another week before the holiday.

Caddo Parish math interventionist Deandria Burris remembers teachers and staff receiving all COVID information from school administrators by email, initially, and through continuous virtual meetings. Their Spring Break became a preparation time for getting Chromebooks to students, gauging their access to the Internet, and

See EDUCATORS, on page 6

City-Parish to Hold Spring 2023 Household Hazardous Materials Collection Day on March 18

BATON ROUGE, La. — Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome announced that East Baton Rouge Parish residents can drop off their household hazardous materials for the City-Parish’s Spring 2023 Household Hazardous Materials Collection Day on Saturday, March 18, from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

The semi-annual collection day will be located at LSU’s Touchdown Village Parking Lot, located on South Quad Dr., across from Engineering Lane. Residents should remain in their vehicles while workers collect their materials.

“Our semi-annual Household Hazardous Materials Collection Day provides our residents the opportunity to safely and properly dispose of waste that poses a threat to our community’s health, safety, and environment,” said Mayor Broome. “I encourage our residents to learn about household hazardous materials, how to identify them in their homes, and how to properly dispose of them. Every resident of East Baton Rouge Parish plays a crucial role in protecting our environment.”

Only East Baton Rouge Parish residents presenting valid identification are eligible to participate. Commercial waste will not be accepted.

For more information, including a complete list of items accepted at the event, visit brla.gov/recycle or contact the City-Parish Department of Environmental Services at (225) 389-4865.

NEW ENGINES from page 1

from the American Rescue Plan to address pressing needs in public safety and infrastructure in East Baton Rouge Parish. The purchase of this critical equipment will help our Class 1 Baton Rouge Fire Department serve the citizens of our city at a moment’s notice.”

With the new fire trucks, the BFRD will operate more efficiently and provide better service to the residents of Baton Rouge. The department’s commitment to public safety and excellence has earned them the Class 1 rating, which is the highest level of recognition in the industry.

These trucks were strategically deployed across Baton Rouge to ensure the quickest response to an emergency situation. Here are the addresses of the fire stations where the new trucks have been deployed:

- Fire Station 1: 3024 Florida Boulevard
- Fire Station 2: 3333 Choc-taw Drive
- Fire Station 3: 3142 Evangeline Street
- Fire Station 12: 555 Government Street
- Fire Station 13: 835 Sharp Road

Thanks to the city’s commitment to investing in public safety, the Baton Rouge community can rest assured that they have some of the best firefighting equipment in the region.



Household Hazardous Materials Collection Day on Saturday, March 18, from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

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Speak It Into Existence



by Creflo Dollar

We all want to see good things happen in our lives, but many of us have no idea how to make those things come to pass. Some people think that the ability to attract anything good to themselves is out of their control, and that good luck randomly descends on only a few chosen individuals. However, luck has nothing to do with it. When we exercise our faith, we can actually bring something into existence merely by speaking the Word.

In the beginning, God brought creation into existence by the power of His spoken Word (Genesis 1:3-29). He confidently commanded, and literally created, something out of nothing. This is awesome, but many people don't realize they have the same power. God the Father gave this power to His Son (Matthew 28:18), who in turn transferred it to us when we became born again. "Behold! I have given

you authority and power to trample upon serpents and scorpions, and [physical and mental strength and ability] over all the power that the enemy [possesses]; and nothing shall in any way harm you" (Luke 10:19, AMPC).

Believers have the same ability to get results as God. When Jesus walked the earth, He commanded healing and brought the dead back to life. We have been given the same authority. "...Even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Romans 4:17).

The ability to speak things into existence is actually a spiritual law that comes into play by faith. Jesus demonstrated this power with the centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant. The man simply asked for verbal confirmation of that healing, and believed it before he saw it. The result was supernatural.

And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The cen-

turion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed... When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel... And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour (Matthew 8:7, 8, 10, 13).

The power of our speech applies to all areas of our life, whether it's concerning our families, our relationships, our finances, or our jobs. We have the right to command into existence peace in our marriages, happiness in our children, tranquility in our households, and stability in our finances. With this in mind, we must be careful, be-

See **SPEAK**, on page 5

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LDH's Office of Women's Health, Community Health to hold town hall in Baton Rouge on March 21

This will be the first of nine town halls to gather women's health needs

Baton Rouge, La. (March 16, 2023) — This Women's History Month, the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH)'s Office of Women's Health and Community Health (OWHCH) will launch its "Listen to H.E.R.: Hearing, Empowering, Responding" town hall series, starting in Baton Rouge.

This town hall, to be held on Tuesday, March 21, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at 6201 Florida Blvd., will be the first of nine town halls charged with raising awareness of the new OWHCH, promoting the many health services and programs available to residents, and gathering women's health needs to inform the office's priorities and future programming.

The town hall on March 21 in Baton Rouge will feature discussions facilitated by subject matter experts on health issues impacting women across the lifespan, opportunities for networking, activities like yoga and meditation, and exhibitions by community and healthcare provider partners.

Members of the public can

register online for the event on March 21 here.

"This Women's History Month, it's important to recognize not just how far we've come but also how much further we have to go to advance equity in Louisiana. OWHCH is committed to advancing women's and community health across the lifespan in our state, and that commitment starts with centering community voice," said OWHCH Assistant Secretary Torrie Harris, DrPH, MPH. "That's why we are organizing the Listen to H.E.R. town halls across Louisiana — so that we can better understand and meet the needs of the communities we serve."

"Despite progress made we have significant work to do to support women in this state, including reducing gender disparities in health," said State Senator Regina Barrow. "Louisiana has one of the worst maternal mortality rates in the nation, and women are disproportionately impacted by chronic diseases like heart disease. The situation is even worse for Black, low-

income and rural women. This is why I advocated for the creation of and am passionate about LDH's new Office of Women's Health and Community Health. LDH has long been committed to advancing women's health issues and concerns; this new hub within the Department will help shine a light on these issues and pull together resources across the agency to advance even greater progress."

"To make meaningful progress in reducing health disparities and improving health outcomes for all women in Baton Rouge and throughout Louisiana, we must first meet women where they are and listen," said State Representative Denise Marcelle. "I am glad to see this is exactly what the Louisiana Department of Health is doing in holding this town hall for our region — listening and gathering women's and our communities' health needs and concerns to shape the priorities of its new Office of Women's Health and Community Health."

The primary goal of OWHCH, created during the

2022 Legislative Session, is to provide an agency-wide focus on women's health outcomes through policy, education, evidence-based practices, programs and services. The office aims to be a clearinghouse, coordinating agency and resource center for women's health data and strategies, focusing on issues such as needs throughout a woman's life; chronic or acute conditions; access to healthcare; how poverty impacts women's health; leading causes of morbidity and mortality and health disparities.

Over the course of FY23, OWHCH will also develop its first annual report for submission to LDH leadership, legislators and Governor John Bel Edwards.

Operationalizing the Office of Women's Health and Community Health is one of 17 key initiatives outlined in LDH's FY23 business plan titled "Invest: Teaming Up for a Stronger LDH and a Healthier Louisiana."

Visit ldh.la.gov/women-health to learn more about the OWHCH.

Ochsner Eat Fit Celebrates 10 Years

Nonprofit initiative collaborates with restaurants and community to make the healthy choice the easy choice

New Orleans — This year, Ochsner Eat Fit celebrates its 10th anniversary as a leader in nutrition and wellness across the state. March is the perfect time to highlight the program's decade of success as it is National Nutrition Month, a month dedicated to nutrition education and information.

In 2013, Ochsner Health registered dietitian Molly Kimball founded Eat Fit NOLA, collaborating with local chefs to identify and develop nutritious menu options for those looking to eat clean, watch their weight, and manage conditions like diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease. Dishes and products that meet the nutritional standards are denoted on menus and marquee with the Eat Fit Seal of Approval.

"Our mission is to empower the community to live their strongest, healthiest lives possible by providing real-world education, inspiration and resources for wellness and nutrition," says Eat Fit founder, registered dietitian and author Kimball. "With the creation of Eat Fit, we've helped to bridge the gap between getting out there and living our life, enjoying all that our restaurants and festivals have to offer, while also sustaining and supporting our own personal wellness journeys."

In the decade since its inception, Eat Fit has grown through past partnerships with Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Louisiana into a statewide initiative that includes Eat Fit NOLA, Eat Fit Northshore, Eat Fit BR, Eat Fit Acadiana, Eat Fit Shreveport



and Eat Fit Monroe. The program supports nutrition education for culinary teaching programs, junior chef cooking challenges, development of Eat Fit opportunities in under-served areas and nutrition-related events in schools, churches and grocery stores. The Eat Fit team has published two books: The Eat Fit Cookbook: Chef Inspired Recipes for the Home, and Craft: The Eat Fit Guide to Zero Proof Cocktails.

The Eat Fit team also hosts the annual Alcohol Free For 40 Challenge, encouraging participants to take on a self-experiment to see how going alcohol-free influences their health, inside and out. In February, nearly 500 people participated in the kickoff event to assess pre-challenge labs and physical metrics, with another 1.9K participating virtually via the #AlcoholFreeFor40 Facebook group.

Nearly 600 partners feature

the Eat Fit seal on their menus. Last year alone, more than 1.4 million Eat Fit meals were served in restaurants across the state and nine schools now feature Eat Fit approved items in their school cafeterias. Peer-reviewed research has validated the success of the Eat Fit

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cause this works for evil as well as for good. "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit" (Proverbs 15:4). Whatever we experience in the physical realm is first born in the spiritual realm.

The tongue can either be a blessing or a curse, and what we repeatedly declare can manifest in us as well as in others. We should be mindful of what we speak into our—and others'—

program, as well as the Alcohol Free For 40 Challenge.

"Food and drink are essential elements of our culture and Eat Fit makes it easier than ever to celebrate our rich and delicious traditions while making progress toward our wellness goals," said Kimball. "I'm so proud of Eat Fit, our staff and partners, and I hope to continue our work for decades more."

For individuals interested in living a healthier lifestyle, Eat Fit offers easy, digital access through its Eat Fit App, which provides a wealth of information from Eat Fit approved restaurants, fine dining and festivals, hundreds of Eat Fit recipes, downloadable shopping guides to help navigate grocery stores and much more.

For more information about Ochsner Eat Fit, please visit OchsnerEatFit.com.

lives. Ignorance of the authority of the spoken word can bring pain and suffering. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof" (Proverbs 18:21). It's our choice whether we bring to life something evil or something good; we must speak life.

For more on using our speech to agree with God's Word and speak good things into existence, click on the link below for the DVD, Commanding the Power of God.

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Reps. Carter, Mace Introduce Bill to Require Milk Alternatives in Schools

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Representatives Troy A. Carter and Nancy Mace have introduced the ADD SOY Act, which requires schools to provide soy milk to lactose intolerant students upon request.

The bill addresses the issue of lactose intolerance among students, particularly minority children who are disproportionately affected.

The current milk substitute system in schools is causing adverse health effects and impeding classroom learning for millions of lactose-intolerant school kids.

The ADD SOY Act will provide students with a healthy soy milk alternative, ensuring that their nutritional needs are met.

The bill has received bipartisan support, and animal welfare advocates have praised it as a way to reduce the use of dairy products in schools.

Overall, the ADD SOY Act has the potential to improve the health and well-being of students across the United States by providing them with a healthy milk alternative.

GRANT from page 2

environment for students and faculty. Barthelemy wants to use the money to create a front entrance office, as the only access entry point for visitors, that means all other doors are locked.

"In addition to the single point entries, we also talked about like a keyless entry, where you can use a card to kind of scan to get in and out of building," adds Barthelemy.

EDUCATORS from page 3

learning to move lessons onto the Google platform. "We had to get the students acclimated. We had virtual office hours. We sent daily affirmations and encouragement to the families using DoJo... And we kept them engaged in learning."

Of the 40 Black K-12 educators surveyed, 71% said it was difficult to conduct class virtually and 17% said it was extremely difficult to impossible to engage parents in virtual learning. They said they faced more challenges with incomplete assignments (94.9%), absenteeism (89%), and lack of supplies for students to use virtually (71.4%). "Our students were already performing low, the pandemic just made matters worse," wrote one educator.

"It was just an uncertain time. And it just kind of all happened so suddenly...and teachers, parents, and administrators, we just all tried to make it as smooth of a transition as possible for our students and to embrace our new normal, whatever that would be," Burris said.

"In the face of immense adversity, students, teachers, administrators, and parents showed unwavering resiliency, demonstrating a deep commitment to both safety and learning," said Cade Brumley, Ph.D., state superintendent of education.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT



Different and superior to other like products

BY A. ALFONZO, SR. special to The BRWeekly Press

Maybe you have heard of JD Glow Cosmetics. If not, my advice is to watch out for this company. Based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, JD Glow Cosmetics has a stunning presence. A huge warehouse: grey and trimmed in pink, which suits the co-owners: Jennifer Sadler and Deandra Craig. These two cooperators are the brilliance behind an array of awesome products.

Co-owner, Jennifer toured me through the warehouse, although the outside sign actually said it's better "JD Glow Cosmetics Laboratory". The enormous, windowed entrance and golden glow logo didn't prepare me for the following rooms. Each room was filled with amazing products

either in production or outfitted for shipment. Scented soaps, eyeshadows, lip gloss and labeled boxes stack ready for pickup.

Entering another area, Jennifer demonstrated the process to press products into containers. Showing me why JD Glow Cosmetics is different and superior to other like products. She applied the product to her finger and it came alive. Not only did it provide an actual glow and shimmer, the more she rubbed the single application, the more it smoothly transferred across her finger. That's the "butter smoothness" our customer attributes to our product.

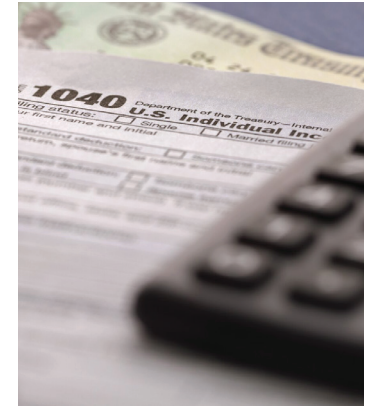
Deandra, busy completing a new product and readying it for the awaiting containers, allowed me to watch the product, bagging and container filling process. As Jennifer teamed up with Deandra, in minutes the empty containers were filled

with this stunning-colored product. They both showed more amazing product coloring after filling each container and completing it with a swirl-top design; adding another level of beauty to the already amazing product.

To think, the two ladies run the complete operation is simply unbelievable. There are so many things still unmentioned that it's hard to see how the two are able to pull it off. This is probably why they've already been featured in two magazines including 225 Magazine of Louisiana.

If you hadn't heard of JD Glow Cosmetics, do yourself a favor and visit them online: jdglowcosmetics.com. It will be worth your time to see and try their product line which includes something for both men and women.

Some things taxpayers getting ready to file should know



With the 2023 tax filing season in full swing, taxpayers should be sure to visit IRS.gov for updated resources and tools to help with their 2022 tax return.

Things to know before filing

- Taxpayers should wait to file until they receive all their proper tax documents, or they risk making a mistake that could cause delays.

- They should also review their income documents carefully. If any of the information is inaccurate or missing, taxpayers should contact the payer right away for a correction or to ensure the issuer has their current mailing or email address.

- Creating an IRS Online Account can help taxpayers securely access information about their federal tax account, including payments, tax records and more.

- Organized tax records make preparing a complete and accurate tax return easier and may help taxpayers find overlooked deductions or credits.

- Taxpayers with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number or ITIN may need to renew it if it's expired and is needed on a U.S. federal tax return. If they don't renew an expiring or expired ITIN, the IRS can still accept their return, but it may delay processing or credits owed.

Taxpayers should visit IRS.gov for information and answers to common tax questions

- The IRS Interactive Tax Assistant helps taxpayers find answers tax questions based on their specific circumstances. Taxpayers can use it to determine if they must file a tax return, their filing status, if they can claim a dependent, if the type of income they have is taxable, if they're eligible to claim a credit or if they can deduct expenses.

- IRS Tax Topics contain general individual and business tax information. If taxpayers don't find the answers to their question, they can check Frequently Asked Questions.

- The Let Us Help You page lists many other online resources.

- Taxpayers can find IRS forms, instructions and publications they need to file tax return at Forms, Instructions & Publications.

- Once a taxpayer has filed their return, they can track the status of their return with the Where's My Refund? tool at IRS.gov/wheresmyrefund.

SCOTUS Poised to Rule Against Student Loan Forgiveness as Protestors Rally to Save Biden's Plan

Millions of student loan borrowers, particularly those of color, risk losing out on relief if the Supreme Court strikes down President Joe Biden's student loan debt forgiveness plan.

The plan, which aims to forgive or reduce the student loan debt held by the millions of eligible Americans that qualify for the program, has faced opposition from Republican-appointed judges on lower courts and now faces an uncertain future as it is being challenged before the land's highest court.

In a three-hour-long argument on Tuesday, Chief Justice John Roberts led his conservative colleagues in questioning the administration's authority to cancel federal student loans due to the COVID-19 emergency broadly.

It remains unclear whether any of the six justices appointed by Republican presidents will approve the debt relief program. However, Justices Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett appeared most open to the administration's arguments.

As the Supreme Court heard oral arguments, demonstrators converged on the nation's capital to showcase their support for debt relief.

The People's Rally for Student Debt Cancellation was the largest-ever mass

demonstration by people with student debt in front of the Supreme Court, bringing together individuals from across party lines, industries, faith communities, socioeconomic statuses, and cities and states throughout the country.

Speakers at the rally emphasized the legality and urgency of President Biden's relief action, citing the ongoing economic distress caused by COVID-19 on borrowers and the history of abuse and mismanagement throughout the student loan system.

Organizations representing millions of borrowers and supporters co-sponsored the rally to show the broad and growing support for debt relief.

If the Supreme Court strikes down President Biden's plan, it will negatively impact millions of borrowers, particularly those of color. The administration says that 26 million people have each applied for up to \$20,000 in federal student loans forgiven under the plan.

If the plan isn't allowed to take effect before a three-year pandemic-inspired pause on loan repayments ends no later than this summer, "defaults and delinquencies will surge above pre-pandemic levels," according to U.S. Solicitor General, Elizabeth Prelogar.

The debt relief program has faced op-



Photos for the NNPA by Mark Mahoney / Dream In Color Photography

position from Republican-led states and lawmakers in Congress, as well as conservative legal interests, who argue that it is a clear violation of Biden's executive authority.

They claim that the plan is not necessary now to keep defaults roughly where they were before the pandemic and that the 20 million borrowers who would have their entire loans erased would get a "wind-

fall," leaving them better off than before the pandemic.

The administration argues that a 2003 law, commonly known as the HEROES Act, allows the Secretary of Education to waive or modify the terms of federal student loans in connection with a national emergency.

The law was primarily intended to keep service members from becoming worse off financially while fighting in Afghanistan

and Iraq wars.

The Supreme Court's conservative majority has questioned the administration's authority to implement the debt relief program, with Chief Justice John Roberts pointing to the vast impact and expense of the program, estimating that it would cost "a half-trillion dollars." Kavanaugh suggested that the administration was using an "old law" to implement a debt relief program that Congress had rejected unilaterally.

However, some speakers at the rally argue that the student loan system has a history of abuse and mismanagement that disproportionately negatively impacts people of color. Advocates point out that Black and Latinx borrowers, for example, are more likely to take on debt to attend college and that they are also more likely to struggle to repay those loans.

The issue of student loan debt relief has also become a political issue, with Democrats predominantly supporting President Biden's plan and Republicans opposing it.

Debt relief advocates say it is necessary to address the financial burden that student loan debt places on individuals and the broader economy, particularly during the ongoing pandemic.