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IT'S YOUR BUSINESS

A PUBLICATION OF THE RAPIDES AMERICAN JOB CENTER

Rapides Workforce Development Board

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A Message from the Director

Summer 2021 is here! The Summer Youth WIOA Work Experience Program is in full swing! Currently, we have 23 young adults in work experiences at various worksites in the parish and are still recruiting for Phase II of our summer program. We appreciate the employers who are currently participating and encourage others to take advantage of this opportunity to train our next workforce. If interested, please reach out to our youth workforce professional at (318) 955-0182.

Business Services activity is currently very high. For our area we have 116 different

employers who are recruiting for over 1,100 vacancies. We are hosting job fairs on our virtual platform and in person. We are also performing pre-employment assessments such as Work Keys and Sage to help employers identify the best candidates. If you need any assistance with business services, please reach out to our Business Services Representative, Eric Irby at (318) 487-5547.

Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) Distributes P-EBT Benefits



DCFS and the Louisiana Department of Education have received federal approval to distribute a second round of Pandemic-EBT benefits to eligible families.

P-EBT benefits will start rolling out in the summer to qualifying households with children in grades K-12 (including pre-K students in public and some private schools).

Students are eligible to receive P-EBT if they would normally receive free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, but haven't been receiving those meals during the 2020-21 school year because their school is closed or they are on a fully virtual or hybrid learning schedule due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parents do not need to apply for P-EBT. Schools will report to DCFS which students meet the criteria for eligibility and whether they are on a hybrid or fully virtual learning schedule. DCFS will then issue P-EBT benefits on a Louisiana Purchase EBT card to each eligible student at the mailing address provided by their school.

Eligible students in hybrid learning situations will receive \$48.23 per month, and eligible students in fully virtual learning situations will receive \$120.71 per month. Benefits will be retroactive to Aug. 1, 2020 to cover the full school year, and will be issued in installments over the next few months. If a student's learning schedule changes, their benefit level will change accordingly as reported by their school. Parents who received P-EBT in 2020 do not need to order new P-EBT cards.

Elaine Morace Workforce Development Board Director

RoyOMartin Market Update



Home building is a local industry, but with benefits and setbacks stemming from outside variables RoyOMartin across different parts of the country. The RoyOMartin Board Brief lays out the stats for their cus-

tomers in key areas, namely the southwest region, so they can better understand the many factors affecting the local market.

TRENDS NATIONWIDE INCLUDE:

 Housing starts reached 1.739 million, up +30.2% YOY.

• New homes sold reached 1,021,000 in March, up +66.8% YOY with a median sales price of \$330,800.

• The US housing market is short 3.8 million homes, according to data from Freddie Mac.

• The mortgage market is hot, but approval is difficult. In a tight lending environment, 70% of mortgages in 2020 went to borrowers with credit scores of 760+

• Small town USA has become the beneficiary of "Zoom towns" as workers move to find more space and lower rents.

• Supply crunch in homes available for sale means more building is on the horizon. Buyers continue to flood the market. Buyers outnumber sellers by extensive margins, causing homeowners to stay put as there is no place to go.

 February winter storms hampering construction fueled a strong building surge in March.

There are now more realtors than there are homes for sale in the U.S., with early Q1 having 1.04 million homes



Get all the details here or visit their website.

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U WORKFORCE

COVID-19 **Vaccine Locations**

Rapides Regional Medical Center 211 4th St. Alexandria, LA (318) 769 - 3000

> **Christus St. Francis** Cabrini Hospital 3330 Mansonic Dr., Alexandria, LA

Premier Urgent Care 3601 Jackson St., Alexandria, LA (318) 787 - 6877

> Walmart Inc. 2050 N Mall Dr., Alexandria, LA (318) 445 - 2300

Kroger Pharmacy 1422 Macarthur Dr., Alexandria, LA (318) 442 - 0511

CVS Pharmacy, Inc. 443 Jackson St., Alexandria, LA (318) 448 - 1683

Super 1 Pharmacy 604 Macarthur Dr., Alexandria, LA (318) 442 - 5710

Riverside Hospital of Louisiana 13 Heyman Ln., Alexandria, LA (318) 767 - 2900

Rapides Primary Health Care 1217 Willow Glen River Rd., Alexandria, LA (318) 487 - 4400

Vaccine availability is subject to change. Appointments are required at most locations.

To stay updated with vaccine locations and availability, click the CDC logo.

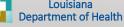
COVID-19 Relief Efforts



CENLA **Community Action**



Committee Louisiana



2021 National SBIR Week

The 2021 National SBIR (Small Busi-SBCC ness Innovation research) Week is a virtual event connecting entrepreneurs working on advanced technologies to the country's largest source of early-stage



funding - the SBIR/STTR programs. Also known as America's Seed Fund, the SBIR/STTR programs provide over \$4 billion in funding to small businesses each year in a wide variety of technology areas administering over 7,000 new awards annually.

If you're an innovator, entrepreneur, researcher, or small technology firm, don't miss this opportunity!

To sign up for this FREE event, to participate in live streaming sessions, and to meet virtually with program decision-makers, click the photo above.

Click the logo to visit SBDC website.



NSF NOYCE Teacher Scholarship - The Noyce program is an opportunity for STEM majors to finish STEM degree and obtain secondary teacher certification. Scholar receives \$17, 143 per year for 2 years.

NSF S-STEM Scholarship — The S-STEM is an opportunity for incoming STEM majors to finish STEM degree and enter STEM workforce or enter STEM graduate programs. A scholar will receive \$5.471 per year and is renewable for 4 years.

NSF LS-LAMP Scholarship — The Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation program is an opportunity for STEM minorities at LSUA to enhance their participation in STEM. Scholar receives \$2,100 per year.

For more details, click the scholarship name or Contact Dr. Gerard Dumancas, Principal Investigator and Director Email: gdumancas@lsua.edu Phone: (318) 427 - 4436

City of Alexandria Launches Emergency Prep Site Cenla Ready



The City of Alexandria is launching a new emergency preparedness site called Cenla Ready that includes emergency notifications for local residents.

W. Hall said, "We are very excited about the new Cenla Ready site, especially the ability we now have to send targeted alerts to local residents.



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Residents can sign up to get a variety of weather alerts. And while those are available from other sources, by registering their address, Cenla Ready users can also receive geo-targeted notifications, such as boil advisories, street closures, utility notices and other messages relevant to their specific location."

Cenla Ready will be the city's primary emergency website during hurricanes and other severe weather or emergency events. In addition to providing news and updates during local emergencies, the site is filled with content designed to help local residents plan and prepare for local emergencies including severe weather such as hurricanes and tornadoes, flooding, home fires and power outages. Tips are also provided for a variety of other emergency situations such as active shooters, cyber-attacks and incidents involving hazardous materials.

"We encourage everyone to sign up and register to receive alerts and bookmark the cenlready.com page. The ability for residents to subscribe to receive geo-targeted alerts is what really makes Cenla Ready so unique," explained Special Projects Coordinator Jim Smilie. "

Access CENLA READY!



Acadian Ambulance **Celebrates Its 50th Years** of Exceptional Service

Acadian Ambulance Service will celebrate 50 years of saving lives on September 1, 2021.

Take a look at some of its service highlights that started in 1971 on their Facebook page.



Click the logo to visit their website.

Happy 50th Acadian!



MJ Foster Promise Program



The Louisiana House of Representative approved the Senate Bill 148, also known as the MJ Foster Promise program. Named after the former Louisiana

Governor Mike J. Foster, the founding father of the state's community college system, the program will provide financial support for adults to earn credentials that align to high-demand jobs in growing industry sectors, such as construction, healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, and transportation and logistics.

"The approval of Senate Bill 148 is about educating and skilling more of our people to allow them to go to work and make a living. It's about investing in our adults, and it's about developing the best Louisiana we can be. The MJ Foster Promise Program sends a clear message to adults: wherever you are on life's path, education and workforce training beyond high school is absolutely necessary for your personal success and to the future success of Louisiana, "said LCTCS President Monty Sullivan.

The Program will be available to all Louisiana residents (21 years or older) with individual student awards available on a first-come, first-serve basis. To promote maximum accessibility, there will not be a merit-based barrier for the Program (such as a GPA requirement or an ACT score). Eligible participants must meet a family income threshold of 300% of the Federal Poverty Level or be unemployed or underemployed for six months.

Students will qualify for financial support for academic programs up to 60 credit hours or for several stackable short-term workforce credentials. In both cases, the award would only be available to the student for a period of three years.

The MJ Foster Promise Program will be administered by the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) at the Board of Regents and begin in July 2022.

For more details, log on here.

CENLA Economic Dashboard

The CENLA Economic Dashboard is a service of the LSUA College of Business to help business and community leaders monitor the economic pulse of central Louisiana.

Dr. Randall Dupont, Dean of the LSUA College of Business, said, "New business growth is particularly strong in central Louisiana." Through May, new businesses established in Rapides are up 50% over the first five months of 2020 with 227 new businesses established so far this year compared to 151 last year. Fifty-seven new businesses were created in May alone compared 49 in April and only 20 in May of last year.

"The low unemployment rate combined with an expanding economy has resulted in a tight local labor market for central LA," continued Dr. Dupont.

Employment in Cenla remained steady in April with a 5.4% unemployment rate compared to 6.6% for the state. Rapides reported a 4.4% unemployment rate, the same as the Alexandria MSA which includes Grant. For the twelfth straight month, the Alexandria MSA had the lowest unemployment rate in the state among metro areas with New Orleans reporting the highest at 8.1%.

Housing continues to show strength although there are some signs of easing. With active listing down 65% and pending listing up 44%, it is still a seller's market. Confirming this trend is the 20% drop in the number of days a house stays on the market which fell from 69 in April to 55 in May. For home buyers the good news is the average median listing price has come off its high, falling 6% this past month and 18% from a year ago. However, newer homes on the market are keeping the average listing price steady at \$238,000. Lumber prices have not helped homebuyers. Although prices have fallen somewhat in recent weeks, the Lumber Price Index rose 16.5% in May and is up 100% from May 2020.

To view the full June 2021 Cenla Economic Dashboard, <u>click here.</u>



On-the-Job Training (OJT)

OJT offers businesses a cost-effective way to deal with the substantial investment associated with training new employees. Administered by Workforce Development Boards and with the assistance of the American Job Centers, employers hire certified individuals who can be trained to fit the employer's needs, right on the job.

Training will be provided by the employer and up to 50% of the trainee's wages are reimbursed to the employer during the training period. The length of the OJT program varies depending on the complexity of the job and the qualifications of the new hire. The new hire needs to be employed in a regular, full-time position. (This program can be used for employee advancements.)

Reduce Personnel Costs and Save Time. Local businesses have found OJT to be a beneficial tool in reducing personnel and other costs associated with training new hires. OJT saves time through referrals from a pool of pre-screened, motivated applicants, while the employer maintains control over the hiring process.

An example of potential savings is provided.

Trainee Wage	50% Reimburse- ment	Length of OJT	Savings
\$11	\$5.50	2 months	\$1,914
\$11	\$5.50	4 months	\$3,828
\$11	\$5.50	6 months	\$5,742

Eric Irby Workforce Development Specialist

CENLA CAC Community Needs Assessments

Centa Community Action Committee is soliciting help in completing their Community Needs Assessment (CNA).

These assessments will be used to evaluate their existing services to ensure that their programs are geared toward meeting the needs of the citizens of Rapides Parish. They also want to be able to identify any gaps in services or unmet needs and incorporate them in their planning process to determine the best course of action in meeting these needs.

To access the survey, Click here.

www.laworks.net

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RRMC Offers a Free Phlebotomy School



Rapides Regional Rapides Regional Medical Center offers a FREE phlebotomy school that

prepares you for the national certification exam of the American College of Clinical Pathology and includes clinical hours.



The deadline for applications to the next class (which begins in August) is July 15. For more information, visit Here.

RPSB Technology Hotline for Virtual Students



The Rapides Parish School Board have created, a technology hotline to help virtual students with problems such as Google logins, Clever problems, and hotspot issues.

RPSB will ask the parents for the child's username and password to keep their child's information safe. Parents can get it from their child's school before they call. When they are ready, they can call 318-528-1098. The technology hotline will take calls from 7:30am until 4pm Monday through Friday.

Student Loan Relief Provided by United Way



United Way is teaming up with Savi and 211 to help people freely and easily tackle student

loan debt. Why?

Because they know loan forgiveness and affordable repayment plans can be tricky, but access is essential to ensuring all communities achieve economic mobility.



To get started, visit here.

Rapides Adult Education Classes at CLTCC



For more information, call (318) 487-5443 Ext. 1127

Professional Aviation Program was Launched

The England Airpark in partnership with LSU Alexandria and the Central Louisiana Technical Community College announced the Aviation Career and Education (ACE) Initiative.

The program includes the establishment of Bachelor Degrees in Aviation at LSUA with an option to obtain a commercial pilot license; an FAA-approved A&P Mechanics School at CLTCC; and the conversion of a former hangar at England Airpark into a 37,000 square foot training and classroom facility.



The collective goal of ACE Aviation Center is to take advantage of the Airpark's assets and grow the economy by training the workforce into skills and jobs that will benefit both the aviation industry and the region.

To speak with someone regarding the Professional Aviation program, contact Dr. Halpin at ehalpin@lsua.edu or call 318.767.2603, or visit here.



Energy Smart Program Available to Elderly



Cleco is partnering with Councils on Aging and other agencies across their service territory to help elderly customers manage their home energy usage year round through the Energy Smart program.

From July 12 through August 6, elderly Cleco customers can visit a participating agency in their area with a copy of their Cleco bill and receive free LED light bulbs. The customer also may register for a free On-Site Residential Weatherization Audit, offered through our energy efficiency program, Power Wise, to identify energyefficient improvements to help them save



energy year round. After August 6, a Cleco Power Wise contractor will contact qualifying customers to schedule their On-Site Residential Weatherization Audit.

Below is a list of participating agencies across Louisiana.

- Beauregard Council on Aging
- Calcasieu Council on Aging; Evangeline Council on Aging •
- St. Landry Council on Aging; Allen Council on Aging
- Campti Seniors Group; Natchitoches Council on Aging
- Red River Council on Aging; DeSoto Council on Aging •
- Sabine Council on Aging; Avoyelles Council on Aging
- Grant Council on Aging; Rapides Council on Aging •
- Rapides Senior Citizens Services; St. Tammany Council on Aging
- Washington Council on Aging; Acadia Council on Aging
- Iberia Council on Aging; St. Martin Council on Aging
- St. Mary Council on Aging; Eunice Food Bank

For more information on the On-Site Residential Weatherization Audit, click here.

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WORKFORCE COMMISSION

COVID-19 Community Testing Sites

Premier Urgent Care 3601 Jackson St., Extension, Alexandria, LA Open 7 Days/Week 8am-8pm Rapid testing available (318) 740 - 4770 Option 8

Premier Urgent Care 2705 Hwy 28 E Pineville, LA Open 7 Days/Week 8am-8pm Rapid testing available (318) 740 - 4770 option 8

Rapides Urgent Care 2389 La Hwy. 28 East, Pineville, LA (318) 487 - 1925

Rapides Urgent Care 6515 Coliseum Blvd., Alexandria, LA Mon—Sat., 8am-8pm (318) 442 - 9634

Rapides Urgent Care 3800 Jackson St., Ext., Alexandria, LA Mon—Sat., 8am-8pm 318-767-9015

Woodworth Community Health Center 9372 Hwy 165 S, Woodworth ,LA 7am-11am Tues. 7am-10:30am Fri Antibody testing ONLY Call for screening at 318-484-9588

Walgreens Testing Sites To make an appointment, click <u>here</u>

Bring personal I.D. and/or health insurance information.



Phone: **318-767-6019 or 318-955-0182** Email: <u>Youth@cenlaworks.org</u>.

This WIOA Title 1 Financially Assisted Program or Equal Opportunity Employer/Program Auxiliary Aids and Services are available Upon Request to Individuals with Disabilities LRS # 1-800-846-5277 (TDD) LRS # 1-800-947-5277 (Voice)

Click the logos to access the links.

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Employer.gov

Tax Department



www.laworks.net

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities • TDD# 800-259-5154

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Benefits to Employers

Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC)

WOTC is one tool in a diverse toolbox of flexible strategies designed to help move people into gainful employment and obtain on -the-job experience. It joins other tax credits, education, and workforce training and development programs that help American workers with barriers to employment prepare for good jobs; case their transition from job to job; benefit from the creation of effective regional economic

development strategies; and create high performance workplaces.

For more information, click here.

Fidelity Bonding

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) offers bonding services for hard-toplace job seekers under the Fidelity Bonding Program. The federal bonding program provides insurance to employers that protects against employee dishonesty and acts as an incentive to hire at -risk applicants, including Returning Citizens (exoffenders). Fidelity Bonding covers theft, forgery, larceny and embez-

zlement. Bond insurance issued ranges from \$5,000 \$25,000 for a 6-month period with no deductible. The bond can be issued to employers once the applicant has received a job offer with a scheduled start date. For more information,

visit here.

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(RivOMartin on the market with 1.45 million realtors to sell them, according to the National Association of Realtors.

• Mortgage rates bounced higher in March, with the 30-year fix jumping from 2.75% to 3.45% creating the biggest jump in mortgage rates over a 6-week period on record. 3.45% rates existed this time in 2020.

• According to Redfin data, over 1/3 homes sold in February went for more than their original asking price. It's the strongest seller's market since 2006.

• The age of the average U.S home is 45 years old. Demand for wood for repairs and remodeling has been around, it simply took stay-at-home orders to get homeowners to finally move on upgrades.

To view the full Board Brief issue, Click here.

KNOW THE FACTS

The Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) is a list of provider training programs and/or services that have been approved, by the Local Workforce Development Boards and Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), by meeting the criteria outlined by the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity (WIOA), the state, and LWC.

The purpose of the ETPL is to present comprehensive and varied customer-focused employment training. Training providers who are eligible to receive Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) through WIOA Title I funds are listed on the Louisiana's ETPL. Training Service Providers may apply to have new training courses added to the list and may edit existing training courses to support employment goals of the region . Below are the steps of the initial application process.

- Registered as a new Account for a new institution by logging into HiRE.
- Completed, Signed and Submitted Hire Access Form (Appendix 1, Form B) 2. for each individual who will have access to the account. This form is located here.
- 3. Submitted a copy of a letter from the Louisiana Board of Regents documenting the training programs that are licensed or exempt from licensure or Submitted a copy of the appropriate license in Lieu of a Board of Regent's License.
- 4 Complete, sign, and submit a Student Data Security Awareness Form (Appendix 1, Form F) with the Student Data. Access the this form here. Submitted Student Data (applicable to providers that the Board of Regents does not submit Student Data to LWC), as outlined located in Chapter 7. This information is located at this link or My HiRE Account > Training Provider Information (Under the General Resources and Services Tab)
- 5. Submit a completed and signed copy of the Student Data Certification Statement (Appendix 1, Form C) with the Student Data for each program the provider is applying for WIOA approval (applicable to providers that the Board of Regents does not submit Student Data to LWC). This form is accessible here.
- Added the institution's programs and/or services that the provider wants to 6. submit for WIOA ETPL approval in the HiRE System
- 7. Submitted each program for WIOA approval through HiRE.

More information can be found on www.laworks.net

ETPL Basic Overview is accessible here and HiRE Navigation Assistance/FAQs can be found on this link.

For more questions and concerns on ETPL, contact Morgan Allain: Phone: (225) 342-7693 Primary Email: crs@lwc.la.gov

Rapides American Job Center

5610 - B Coliseum Blvd.

Alexandria, LA 71303

(318) 487-5532

Mon -Thurs - 7:00 am - 5:30 pm • Friday - 8:00 am - 4:30 pm



Louisiana Workforce Commission Ava Dejoie, Secretary

Facebook.com/rapidesamericanjobcenter

318.487.5532

WIOA Mandated Partners (on-site)

Cenla Community Action Committee, Inc. 318-314-3480

> CLTCC 318-487-5443

Job Corps Center Alexandria 318-487-6773 x102

> Louisiana Workforce Commission-**Employment Services** 318-487-5532

National Farm Worker Program 318-435-8885

Native American Programs 985-851-5408

Trade Adjustment Assistance 318-487-5539

Unemployment Insurance 1-866-783-5567

> Wagner-Peyser 318-487-5532

WIOA Adult/Dislocated Worker & Youth 318-767-6030

WIOA Mandated Partners (off-site)

AYUDA & Institute for Indian Development 318-767-6040

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services 318-487-5335

Louisiana State University Alexandria 318-427-4441

National Association for **Hispanic Elderly** 318-221-7611





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