

IT'S YOUR BUSINESS

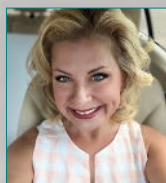
A PUBLICATION OF THE RAPIDES AMERICAN JOB CENTER

A proud partner of the **americanjobcenter** network

A Message from the Interim Director

Rapides Workforce Development Board

Sharon Neal,
WDB Interim Director
Rose Killion, Chairperson
Connie Baker, Vice-Chair



On behalf of all the staff and partners of the Rapides American Job Center, I want to wish every board member, valued employer, and community partner, a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I am excited about working with all of you on this new journey as Interim Director. We look forward to another year of providing a full array of employment and training related services for Adults, Youth, and those in our older workers' program.

The Rapides American Job Center and our partners are committed to serving the needs of our workforce in Rapides Parish. If you are a job seeker or an employer with questions, please contact the center at (318)767-6030.



**Sharon Neal, Interim Director
Rapides American Job Center**

Central Louisiana Economic Dashboard

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

"Online sales tax revenue surged in October due to an increase in the number of remote sellers," says Randall Dupont, Dean of the LSUA College of Business. Online sales tax revenue for Rapides increased 168% in October to \$1,314,574 from \$489,992 a month earlier, the highest for the parish since the new remote sellers' collection system was established. Among the 11 CENLA parishes, online tax revenues totaled \$3.5 million compared to \$1.6 million a month earlier. Year-to-date, revenues are up 30% in CENLA, and 36% in Rapides and Natchitoches parishes.

"The tax revenue increase is largely due to the increased number of retailers participating in the remote sales tax collection system," says Dupont. The remote seller collection system more accurately matches sales tax revenue with the parish as sales taxes are charged at the location of the sale. This differs from the old voluntary direct marketer's system in which the local portion of sales taxes was distributed based on population. The remote seller system collects the actual tax where the sale is made, and the state redistributes it accordingly.

According to the Louisiana Remote Sellers Commission, the agency processed 2,500 returns in the first quarter of FY 2021, when it started in July 2020. 8,800 returns were processed in the same period last year, and 17,000 in the first quarter FY 2023.

Continued on page 3

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Marianne Dore'
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Larry George
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Ginger Humbles
Paula Johnson
Kashawna Jones
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Toni Johnson
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Gary Nugent
Kevin Hood
Lloyd Price
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Jimmy Sawtelle
Nolan Spillers
Sara Stokes
Cindy Sayes
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Deborah Randolph
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LSUA Partners with LSUE to Bring Surgical Technology Degree to Central Louisiana



Photo credit: Nathan Parish

LSUA and LSUE commit to a Health Professions Collaborative Agreement to bring a Surgical Technology degree to central Louisiana.

A survey of the healthcare organizations in central Louisiana is conducted annually by the Department of Allied Health at Louisiana State University at Alexandria (LSUA) to determine the need for allied health professionals in the region. The most recent survey indicated a growing need for Surgical Technologists along with a host of other technical professions in Allied Health. Considering no local training program for Surgical Technologists is available, finding individuals with the training necessary to work in many of these professions is difficult for area healthcare providers.

In an effort to meet the need for trained health professionals in central Louisiana, LSUA and LSUE will work together to provide the necessary training to LSUA and LSUE students interested in pursuing a career in health professions not offered on their particular campus.

LSUA College of Allied Health Dean Haywood Joiner, Ph.D., said, "We are thankful for our healthcare partners in the region, and they have identified the need for Surgical Techs to bolster their workforce."

View the full story [here](#).

The Rapides Foundation Awards \$4.5 million in Future of HealthC.A.R.E. Grants

Image credit:
The Rapides Foundation

The Rapides Foundation has awarded five grants totaling \$4,450,025 to address shortages in the Central Louisiana healthcare workforce by developing an ongoing pool of K-12 students who are interested in pursuing healthcare careers and are academically prepared to succeed in postsecondary training programs.

Future of HealthC.A.R.E. (Career, Academic Readiness and Exploration for Students) Program grants have been awarded to the Catahoula Parish School Board, Central Louisiana Area Health Education Center, Louisiana State University of Alexandria, Northwestern State University and Louisiana Central.

The Future of HealthC.A.R.E. grant is offered under the Foundation's Healthcare Access Initiative and complements the Foundation's Healthcare Occupations Program, which was created in 2016 and funds projects at the post-secondary level.

The Foundation launched the Future of HealthC.A.R.E. grant in 2022 to target students in grades K-12 within the Foundation's nine-parish service area. Grants were awarded in September. Grantees started a planning period on November 1 with implementation beginning in June 2023.

View the full story [here](#).

Community Partners



**Rapides Parish
Police Jury**
(318) 473-6660



**Louisiana Workforce
Commission**
(318) 487-5532



**Louisiana Technical
& Community
College System**
(318) 487-5443



**Louisiana
Rehabilitation
Services (on site)**
(318) 487-5335



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



**Alexandria
Housing Authority**
(318) 442-8843

Helpful Organizations for Employers



**US Department
of Labor**



**Louisiana Workforce
Commission**



**Cenla Regional
Chamber of
Commerce**



**Louisiana
Small Business
Development Center**



Secretary of State



**Rapides Sales & Use
Tax Department**



Employer.gov

Click the logos to access
the organization's website.





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Louisiana Central awarded \$600,000 grant from The Rapides Foundation to create Healthcare Career Central



Louisiana Central was awarded a three-year \$600,000 grant to create Healthcare Career Central, the first regional healthcare career highway initiative in Central Louisiana.

The Healthcare Career Central initiative is funded by a Future of HealthC.A.R.E. Program Grant from The Rapides Foundation. Through its Future of HealthC.A.R.E. (Career, Academic Readiness and Exploration for Students) Program Grant, the Foundation seeks to increase the number of qualified Central Louisiana Students enrolling in healthcare training programs or entering into the healthcare workforce. The Foundation awarded a total of \$4.5 million in grants under the program.

Healthcare Career Central will collaboratively link employers, training providers and other partners to students, teachers, counselors and parents through a central website, social media campaign, and ongoing communication and networking events.

"The goal is to expose more students to the diverse local careers in healthcare, the pathways to those careers, and the resources available along the way," Lafe Jones, Vice President and Executive Director of Industry Relations at Louisiana Central said. "We appreciate The Rapides Foundation's focus on the future healthcare workforce. Louisiana Central is excited to be part of the solution, and we look forward to working collaboratively with other grant recipients on our common goal."

Louisiana Central has been working the past few months with a group of healthcare leaders to understand the sector's current and future workforce challenges. Based on provider input and guidance, Healthcare Career Central was developed. This planning group, the Louisiana Central Healthcare Alliance, will continue to grow to allow for provider participation in the development of this innovative healthcare career pathway.

View the full story [here](#).

US Department of Labor Announces \$90M Funding Opportunity to Support Delivery of Academic, Skills, Training, Employment Services for Young People



To help remove academic and training barriers faced by young people, the U.S. Department of Labor today announced a \$90 million funding opportunity in [YouthBuild Program](#) grants to support pre-apprenticeships in high-demand industries including construction, healthcare, information technology and hospitality. Grants will support occupational skills training, employment services and educational guidance to disadvantaged young people, from ages 16 to 24, in communities where barriers to basic academic and career skills development exist.

Administered by the department's [Employment and Training Administration](#), and supported by the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#), the grants will fund approximately 75 projects nationwide with individual grants ranging from \$700,000 to \$1.5 million. The funding opportunity follows the department's 2021 guidance that prioritizes quality jobs, green building and community violence intervention.

In August 2022, the department [added the YouthBuild program to the Biden-Harris administration's Justice40 initiative](#), which aims to ensure that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities that are overburdened by pollution.

View the full story [here](#).

Learn more about the grant opportunity and apply [here](#).

Economic Dashboard - *Continued from page 1*

Dupont says the Commission does not see any impact on brick-and-mortar stores as much of the increase is the result of retailers switching from the direct marketer's system. Nevertheless, he says the remote seller system will provide a more equitable distribution of tax revenue to central Louisiana parishes.

To view the November 2022 CENLA Economic Dashboard, click [here](#).



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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; ease 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-to-place 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 (ex-offenders). Fidelity Bonding covers theft, forgery, larceny and embezzlement. 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](#).

Jobs for America's Graduates

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) is a state-based national non-profit organization dedicated to supporting young people of great promise. JAG is delivering the best results in its 40-year history, while serving youth who face significant challenges, to help them reach economic and academic success. JAG helps young people of truly great promise succeed both in school and on the job, leading to a productive and rewarding career.

Employer engagement has been a cornerstone activity of the JAG program since its inception. In leveraging employer engagement as an instructional strategy, JAG elevates the practice by developing meaningful connections between our students and professionals, ideas and skills, and the classroom and real-life situations. Employers invest their resources, talent, and knowledge to customize individual learning experiences for JAG students. Work-based activities and learning advance effective employer partnerships to provide students with the inspiration, motivation, knowledge, and skills needed to be successful in post-secondary education and career pathways.

JAG program equips students with no less than 37 employability skills competencies plus career exploration and development.

JAG Specialists provide advice and support as students make significant career and life decisions and serve as a "one-stop" connection for participants to access personal, behavioral, and other youth services in the community. Support services are provided during the school year as well as in the summer months.

Workforce Operations Department housed in the Rapides American Job Center is proud to partner with the Rapides Parish School Board's JAG Program.

Continued on page 5

Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP)



Are you an aspiring nurse who's interested in caring for America's veterans? If so, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) invites you to apply for the Health Professionals Scholarship Program (HPSP).



Image credit:
U.S. Department of VA

Through the HPSP, the VA is offering educational assistance in the form of tuition, and a monthly stipend of \$1,184 a month to students pursuing a Licensed Vocational/Practical Nursing Degree (LVN/LPN), an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) or a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN). After graduation, they will be employed at one of the VA facilities in the Alexandria, Lafayette, and Lake Charles LA region.

Key Requirements:

- U.S. citizenship (U.S. Veterans will be considered first among all equally qualified candidates).
- Enrollment in a qualified degree program (LVN/LPN/ADN).
- The applicant must be willing to be employed full-time within the Alexandria, Lafayette, and Lake Charles LA regions.
- Selection criteria includes academic performance, work experience, faculty and employer recommendations, and career goals.
- All candidates will be subject to a background/suitability investigation.
- To officially accept the scholarship, selected applicants must sign a mobility agreement as well as an agreement to complete a service obligation of at least 2 years at a VA health care facility after graduating and obtaining necessary licensure/certification.

Interested applicants may apply [here](#).

For more information about HPSP, contact Kimberly Sepulvado at (318) 466-2684 or Kimberly.Sepulvado@va.gov

RoyOMartin Receives APA Awards



Photo credit: RoyOMartin



The APA – The Engineered Wood Association visited RoyOMartin-Plywood and Oakdale-OSB on November 29, 2022 and honored both manufacturing facilities with its 2021 awards.

RoyOMartin-Plywood received the 2021 3-Year Safety Award in the Division I Plywood category. The award recognizes the truly world-class safety culture at the mill. Of the 14 mills in the category, Chopin's work incident rate was 6.72 times lower than the other mills in the category. In addition, the Total Incident Rate (TIR) at the mill was 4.35 times lower than the average of all 14 plywood mills evaluated over the last three years.

"We are fortunate to have a team at Chopin that not only understands the importance of working safely but believes that all accidents can be prevented," stated Vice President of Plywood Jeremy Burford. "We have earned the title of the Safest Plywood Mill in North America because of the focus of these great employees."

Plywood received a second honor from the APA, first place for the 2021 Annual Safety & Health Award in the Division I Plywood category.

RoyOMartin Oakdale-OSB received second place for the 2021 Annual Safety & Health Award in the Division II OSB category. There were 35 mills evaluated in the category, and Oakdale was one of only ten with a work incident rate of 0.00 in 2021. Along with only 13 other mills, Oakdale is a part of the association's Incident Free Honor Society for 2021.

DID YOU know?

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a U.S. government program run by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program to help low-income households pay for internet service and connected devices like a laptop or tablet.

You are likely eligible if your household's income is below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line, or if you or someone you live with currently receives a government benefit like SNAP, Medicaid, SSI, WIC, Pell Grant, or Free and Reduced-Price Lunch.

If your household is eligible, you could receive:

- Up to a \$30/month discount on your internet service
- Up to a \$75/month discount if your household is on qualifying Tribal lands
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer (with a co-payment of more than \$10 but less than \$50)
- A low cost service plan that may be fully covered through the ACP

Only one monthly service discount and one device discount is allowed per household. To receive the connected device discount, consumers need to enroll in the ACP with a [participating provider that offers connected devices](#) (Note: not all internet company offer device discounts.) The internet company will provide the discount to the consumer.

Apply [here](#).

JAG continued

The WIOA Youth Program provides funds that provide opportunities in education and career pathways to high school seniors.

We congratulate Alicia Monroe, JAG "Teacher of the Year" at Rapides High School for a job well done!

We thank you for preparing our young adults for the workforce.



Photo credit:
Rapides High School



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Unemployment Data By Parish

Allen Parish - 3.2%
Avoyelles Parish - 3.4%
Catahoula Parish - 3.2%
Concordia Parish - 3.7%
Grant Parish - 2.6 %
La Salle Parish - 2.2%
Natchitoches Parish - 3.1%
Rapides Parish - 2.5%
Vernon Parish - 3.9%
Winn Parish - 3.2%

*Unemployment Data by Parishes
for October 2022. (not seasonally
adjusted) Source: LWC - Labor Force
Employment and Unemployment
(LAUS)*

Job Openings Advertised online in Cenla by Parishes

Allen Parish - 139
Avoyelles Parish - 279
Catahoula Parish - 34
Concordia - 109
Grant Parish - 51
La Salle Parish - 128
Natchitoches Parish - 357
Rapides Parish - 2,932
Vernon Parish - 456
Winn Parish - 80

*This data above shows the distribu-
tion number of job openings adver-
tised online in Central Louisiana by
parishes on Dec. 12, 2022 -
Source: LWC-Online advertised jobs data*

Occupations with the Highest Number of Job Openings Advertised in Alexandria, MSA

Registered Nurses - 421
Physicians, All Other - 108
Critical Care Nurses - 86
LPN & LVN - 77
Respiratory Therapists - 58
Physical Therapists - 37
Retail Salespersons - 37
First Line Spv. of Food Prep. &
Serving Workers—34
Fast Food & Counter Workers - 29
Customer Service Rep - 2

*Source: Online advertised jobs data.
Dec. 12, 2022*

Labor Market Information

Latest Unemployment Rates

	October 2022	September 2022	August 2022
Rapides Parish (not seasonally adjusted)	2.5%	2.9%	3.0%
Louisiana (seasonally adjusted)	3.3%	3.4%	3.5%
United States (seasonally adjusted)	3.7%	3.5%	3.7%

Source: BLS & LWC-Louisiana Occupational Information System

Industries with Highest Job Openings Advertised Online in Alexandria, LA MSA		
Rank	Industry	Job Openings
1	Health Care and Social Assistance	721
2	Retail Trade	212
3	Public Administration	159
4	Accommodation and Food Services	141
5	Mngt. of Companies & Enterprises	133
6	Educational Services	122
7	Admin. & Support & Waste Mgmt. & Remediation Services	112
8	Manufacturing	85
9	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Svcs	84
10	Unclassified	969

*The table above shows the top ten job openings advertised online for
the industries selected in Alexandria, LA Metropolitan Statistical Area on
Dec. 12, 2022. Source: LWC Online advertised jobs data.*

We thank and acknowledge the Contributors:

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U.S. Department of Labor - Monica Vereen & Arjun Singh
Jobs for America's Graduates - Donna Smith
Louisiana Central - Britni Lilley
RoyOMartin - Amanda Guillot
Louisiana Workforce Commission

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



Ava Cates, Secretary

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