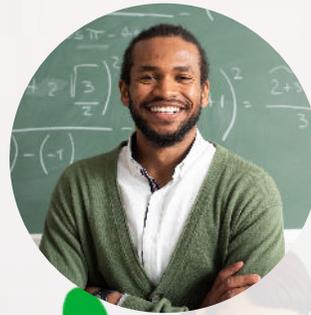


IT'S YOUR BUSINESS

A PUBLICATION OF THE
RAPIDES AMERICAN JOB CENTER

FALL 2023



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The Rapides Workforce Development Board is continuously working together collectively to meet the needs of job seekers and businesses. As Rapides Workforce Development Board 61, we are determined in our mission to help Rapides Parish residents get to work by providing funding and supportive services for classroom training and on-the-job-training, along with paying for supportive services and hosting frequent hiring events in collaboration with local businesses and community partners. If you are interested in learning more about any of our Business Services, please contact our Business Service Representative, Eric Irby at 318-487-5547.

Each year, we strive and continue to improve our outreach to residents in need. We are just concluding our Summer Youth Program where 19 students were introduced to work experience tailored to their interest levels. They all successfully completed the program.

We are also excited about our new \$300,000 grant awarded and funded through The Rapides Foundation called Youth Empowerment Services (YES). This grant is geared to recruit and help students ages 16-24, who are not working and not going to school. We are proud to say that we have built a strong rapport and partnership with several area businesses and community resources over a very short time span, and we are looking forward to making an even greater impact in the near future. If you know of a student in need of assistance, please reach out to our Service Navigator, Caitlinn Wolff, at 318-487-5638.

This newsletter continues to serve as an important collaboration tool within our community. If you have any news or information to share about your organization, please do send it to nhill@lsua.edu.

As always, thanks for your support and love for our community and your commitment to helping it thrive and continue to grow.

Sharon Neal
Executive Director
Rapides American Job Center

Rapides Workforce Development Board

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Paula Johnson
Kashawna Jones
Jeff Johnson
Haywood Joiner
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Gary Nugent
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Shanna Worth
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Deborah Randolph

Gov. Edwards Celebrates Record-Low July Unemployment, Appoints New Secretary of the Louisiana Workforce Commission

According to data released on August 18th by the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), Louisiana’s unemployment rate fell to 3.4% in July, the lowest rate ever for the month, beating out July 2022’s then-record 3.5%. Governor John Bel Edwards issued a statement celebrating this record and announcing James ‘Robert’ Wooley as the new secretary of the LWC. Wooley will replace Ava Dejoie Cates, who will resign as secretary on August 31, 2023.

“Our hard, bipartisan work to grow and diversify our economy and create jobs is paying off,” said Gov. Edwards. “I want to once again thank departing LWC Secretary Ava Cates, who has overseen regularly record-breaking employment figures as Louisiana comes back strong from devastating hurricanes and the COVID pandemic. I am confident that LWC is in good hands with new Secretary Robert Wooley. He has a long career in public service, including his recent role as LWC’s assistant secretary of the Unemployment Insurance Administration through the most difficult days of COVID.”

[full story here](#)

SunGas Renewables Chooses Rapides Parish for Proposed \$1.8 Billion Clean Fuel Facility

SunGas Renewables, an independent division of GTI Energy, announced it is considering an investment of approximately \$1.8 billion to establish a renewable low-carbon methanol production facility in Rapides Parish. The company projects its Pineville facility, Beaver Lake Renewable Energy (BLRE), would manufacture nearly 400,000 metric tons of green methanol per year for SunGas customers worldwide.

If the project moves forward as outlined, the company expects to create 109 new direct jobs with an average annual salary of more than \$78,000. SunGas also anticipates the creation of about 1,150 construction jobs at peak construction. Louisiana Economic Development estimates the project would result in an additional 390 new indirect jobs, for a total of 499 new jobs in central Louisiana.

[full story here](#)

LWDA 61 Allied Organizations/Agencies

- RoyOMartin
- Acadian Ambulance Service
- Boise Cascade
- Gilchrist Construction, Co.
- Christus St. Francis Cabrini
- Stella Jones
- Crest Industries
- Dousay Costum Homes
- Plastipak Packaging, LLC
- Procter and Gamble
- Southern Administrative Svcs
- AFCO
- CLECO
- Sayes Office Supply
- Union Tank Car Co.
- First Federal Bank
- Rapides Regional Medical Ctr.
- Courtyard by Marriot
- Cenla CAC
- Plumbers LU 247
- Rapides APrish School Board
- Dept. of Veterans Affairs
- LA Youth Challenge
- AFL -CIO
- CLTCC
- Rapides Federation of Teachers
- LSUA
- LRS
- England Economic & Industrial Development District
- LWC
- DCFS
- City of Pineville
- K&L, LLC
- Central LA Regional Chamber of Commerce

Louisiana Unemployment Rate Lowest in Series History

Data released yesterday by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that Louisiana continues to set unemployment records.

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for August 2023 is 3.3 percent, the lowest rate in series history. The rate shows a decrease of 0.1 percentage points from the July 2023 figure of 3.4 percent and decreased by 0.2 percentage points from the August 2022 figure of 3.5 percent.



Image credit: LWC

The number of seasonally adjusted unemployed individuals for August 2023 is estimated to be 68,814, also a new series record low. Since July 2023, the number of seasonally adjusted unemployed individuals has decreased by 2,014. Compared to August 2022, the number of seasonally adjusted unemployed individuals decreased by 4,653.

The number of seasonally adjusted employed individuals for August 2023 is 2,025,507. The number of employed saw a loss of 6,973 individuals from the July 2023 revised estimate of 2,032,480. When compared to August 2022, the number of seasonally adjusted employed individuals increased by 18,548. This is the 29 th consecutive month with an over-the-year gain in the number of employed.

[full story here](#)

Initial Unemployment Insurance Claims Drop for Week ending September 9

The initial unemployment insurance claims for the week ending September 9, 2023, dropped to 1,384 from the week ending September 2, 2023, a total of 1,423. For a comparison, during the week ending September 10, 2022, 1,489 initial claims were filed.

The four-week moving average of initial claims decreased to 1,629 from the previous week's average of 1,757. The unemployment insurance continued claims for the week ending September 9, 2023, decreased to 13,116 from the week ending September 2, 2023, a total of 13,657. The continued claims were above the comparable figure of 10,993 for the week ending September 10, 2022.

[full story here](#)

LSUA Smashes Ambitious Enrollment Goal Two Years Ahead of Schedule with 5,104 Students for Fall 2023

LSUA In a remarkable demonstration of growth and commitment to excellence, Louisiana State University of Alexandria (LSUA) is thrilled to announce that it has surpassed its ambitious goal of enrolling 5,000 undergraduate students by 2025, a full two years ahead of schedule. As of the Fall 2023 semester, the university proudly serves 5,104 students, further cementing its status as the fastest-growing public university in Louisiana.



Photo Credit: LSUA Strategic Communications

LSUA has bucked the trend of a nationwide downturn in undergraduate enrollments. The Fall 2023 enrollment figures reveal an unprecedented 24% increase compared to the previous year, translating to a net growth of 993 students. This surge includes a nearly 6% uptick in on-campus enrollments and a nearly 40% rise in students opting for 100% online programs. Students transferring to LSUA from other institutions increased by an incredible 49.2% over last year.

The enrollment of first-time freshmen, generally including recent high school graduates aged 18-21, increased by 17%. This year's freshmen class of 475 marks the 3rd largest since admission standards were increased in 2007 and is the largest in the last eight years. Moreover, the class of 2027 comes in with the highest average ACT composite and highest high school GPA of all time.

[full story here](#)

Become a part of LSUA Team!

Are you passionate about making a difference in higher education? Do you want to have a positive impact on the lives of students and the entire LSUA community? Then look no further than joining the LSUA team!

LSUA is looking for dedicated individuals who share their commitment to excellence and mission to provide a transformative educational experience. By joining LSUA team, you can help shape the future of higher education and make a lasting impact on the lives of countless students.

Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity to be part of something truly special. Apply now to join the LSUA team and make a difference in higher education! Discover various opportunities at LSU of Alexandria by visiting [here](#).



Photo Credit: LSUA Strategic Communications

Partner Organizations

On-site

LCTCS - Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
(318) 487-5443

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services
(318) 487-5335

National Association for Hispanic Elderly
(318) 221-7611

Institute for Indian Devt., Inc.
(985) 851-5408

Job Corps Center Alexandria
(318) 487-6773 x102

LWC- Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)
(225) 342-7679

LWC - Wagner-Peyser
(318) 487-5532

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

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

Off-site

LTCCS - Career & Technical Education Programs
(225) 922-2809

LWC - Trade Adjustment Asstc. (TAA)
(318) 487-5539

Alexandria Housing Authority
(318) 442-8843

Rapides Housing Authority
(318) 793-4751

LWC - Unemployment Insurance
(225) 342-2905

Native American Programs
(985) 851-5408

DCFS - Temporary Assstc. for Needy Families (TANF)
(318) 362-3471

National Farm Worker Program
318-362-3024; 318-435-8885
1-844-385-1919 ext: 7020

RoyOMartin WoodWorks Program Provides Pathway to Career Success



Students from 10 high schools across Central Louisiana recently attended the WoodWorks program orientation session at RoyOMartin corporate office in Alexandria. They were given an overview of the industry-based training program, as well as information on RoyOMartin's history, products, and career opportunities.

Now in its 17th year, WoodWorks is currently offered in 17 central Louisiana and 4 east Texas high schools. The program offers a custom-designed curriculum that covers topics such as applied mathematics, industrial safety, and employability skills. Throughout the year, they receive classroom instruction from their teachers and guidance from RoyOMartin WoodWorks mentors. Additionally, they tour the manufacturing plants, interview with company representatives, and earn a certification upon successful completion of the course.

With the WoodWorks certification and high-school diploma, these students have the opportunity to sign on to RoyOMartin's apprenticeship program. This next step provides them with training courses they will need as they transition into their full-time employment roles at the three RoyOMartin manufacturing facilities.

RoyOMartin look forward to working with these students and teacher sponsors throughout the upcoming school year!



Glenmora High School



Peabody Magnet High School

Photo credit: RoyOMartin

Make a Great Start with RoyOMartin

When your strengths meet RoyOMartin opportunities, great things can happen. Work and learn from the best in the industry, in a fulfilling career with exceptional benefits.

Check out RoyOMartin career opportunities [here](#).

Source: Amanda Guillot



Photo credit: RoyOMartin

Community Partners



Louisiana Workforce Commission
(318) 487-5532



Rapides Parish Police Jury
(318) 473-6660



LSU of Alexandria
(318) 473-6417



Central Louisiana Community College
(318) 487-5443



The Rapides Foundation
(318) 443-3394



Central Louisiana Regional Chamber of Commerce
(318) 442-6671



Rapides Parish School Board
(318) 487-0888



Dept. of Veterans Affairs
(318) 466-2429



LA Youth Challenge
(318) 290-5487



Rapides Federation of Teachers
(318) 442-2727

Helpful Organizations for Employers



US Department of Labor



Louisiana Workforce Commission



Central LA Regional Chamber of Commerce



Louisiana Small Business Development Center



Secretary of State



Rapides Sales & Use Tax Department



Employer.gov

Click the logo to access the organization's website

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, [click here](#).

Louisiana Central's Progress in Workforce Development



Healthcare Career Central's social media pages are now live! Louisiana Central is dedicated to supporting the next generation in our region, providing them with the tools and knowledge to become successful healthcare professionals in our region through this innovative initiative. Healthcare Career Central's goal is to connect middle school and high school students with educational resources, exploratory programs, and opportunities in the healthcare field. Through the website, social media campaigns, and community events, Healthcare Career Central links students, parents, guardians, teachers, and counselors with local employers, training providers, and other partners. Follow Healthcare Career Central on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#) for tips, tools, and updates on the upcoming website launch. This project is funded by a Future of HealthC.A.R.E. Program Grant from The Rapides Foundation.



Throughout the month of October, Louisiana Central will be celebrating Manufacturing Month by showcasing events happening at our regional manufacturing companies, discussing educational and career opportunities, and highlighting the impact of this industry on our region, including new jobs and new investments entering our area. Stay informed by following Louisiana Central's social media pages. ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#)).



Learn more about Louisiana Central at www.louisiana-central.com.

Source: Britni Lilley, Louisiana Central

Louisiana Adult Learning Summit 2023

In conjunction with Adult Education and Family Literacy Month, Louisiana's Adult Education Network - *WorkReady U* - is hosting its inaugural Louisiana Adult Learning Summit on September 27, 2023, at Hilton New Orleans Riverside.

Louisiana's Adult Learning Summit is for leaders and decision-makers makers in business and industry, economic development, government, and education. Sessions will highlight how coordinated action can improve educational and economic outcomes for Louisiana's adults. This is a crucial opportunity for industry leaders and policymakers to create and enhance programming that strengthens our communities by addressing the skills needs of Louisiana's current workforce - our adults!

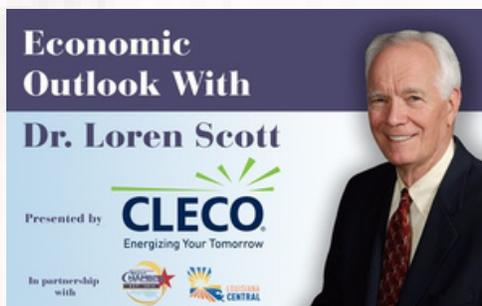
For additional information, email angeladay@lctcs.edu.

Source: Jennifer Freeman, LCTCS



Central Louisiana Economic Outlook with Dr. Loren Scott

The Central Louisiana Economic Outlook for 2023-24 by Dr. Loren Scott, presented by Cleco in partnership with the Central Louisiana Regional Chamber of Commerce and Louisiana Central will be held on October 5, 2023, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Country Inn and Suites in Pineville, LA.



Dr. Scott's much anticipated annual report will include a regional perspective on trends and events affecting the central Louisiana economy, providing valuable information for business leaders planning for 2023-24 and beyond.

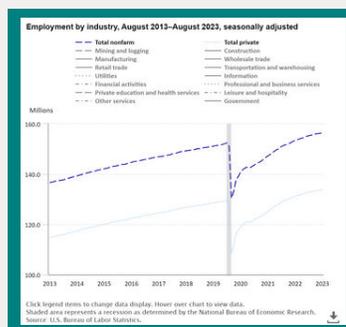
Dr. Scott is the president and founder of Loren C. Scott and Associates, Inc. He is a Professor Emeritus of Economics at LSU and is the co-founder of the Louisiana econometric model used for providing annual forecasts of the Louisiana economy.

For more information, you may call the Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce at 318-442-6671 or reserve your table or tickets [here](#).

Payroll employment up by 187,000 in August 2023



Total U.S. nonfarm payroll employment was 156.4 million in August 2023, reflecting an increase of 187,000 compared with the previous month, as employment in health care, leisure and hospitality, social assistance, and construction continued to trend up. The total nonfarm payroll employment increase is less than the average monthly increase of 271,000 over the prior 12 months.



Employment in private education and health services increased by 102,000 in August, repeating similar July gains. Ambulatory health care services, nursing and residential care facilities, and hospitals added jobs over the month.

Leisure and hospitality employment continued to trend up in August by 40,000 jobs, totaling 16.7 million, below the average 61,000 jobs per month gain over the prior 12 months. Employment in leisure and hospitality continues to remain below its pre-pandemic February 2020 level by 290,000 jobs, or 1.7 percent.

[full report here](#)

Community Resources

Food Assistance

Cenla Community Action Committee
(318) 314-3480

The Food Bank of Central Louisiana
(318) 445-2773

First Baptist Church Pineville
(318) 448-8221

Louisiana Housing Assistance Corporation

The Child and Adult Care Food Program
(318) 623-0795; (337) 298-5666

Rapides Parish Food Stamp Office
(318) 487-5111; 1-888-524-3578

The Salvation Army Alexandria
(318) 442-0445

Housing Services

Alexandria Housing Authority
(318) 442-8843 Ext 214

Central Louisiana Homeless Coalition
(318) 443-0500

Pineville Housing Authority
(318) 473-9729

Rapides Parish Housing Authority
(318) 793-4751

Utility Assistance

Cenla Community Action Committee
(318) 314-3480

Philadelphia Baptist Church
(318) 443-3692

Employment Training Services

Rapides American Job Center
(318) 767-6030

The Orchard Foundation – Cenla Work Ready
(318) 767-6560

[Click here](#)
to view more list of
community resources

Labor Market Information

Unemployment Data By Parish

Allen Parish - 4.0%
Avoyelles Parish - 4.1%
Catahoula Parish - 4.3%
Concordia Parish - 4.5%
Grant Parish - 3.4 %
La Salle Parish - 2.9%
Natchitoches Parish- 4.2%
Rapides Parish - 3.0%
Vernon Parish - 4.2%
Winn Parish - 3.7%

Unemployment Data by Parishes for August 2023. Preliminary (not seasonally adjusted) Source: LWC - LMS, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program)

| Latest Unemployment Rates | | | |
|--|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| | August 2023 | July 2023 | June 2023 |
| Rapides Parish (not seasonally adjusted) | 3.0% | 3.5% | 4.0% |
| Louisiana (seasonally adjusted) | 3.3% | 3.6% | 3.6% |
| United States (seasonally adjusted) | 3.8% | 3.7% | 3.6% |

Source: BLS & LWC Louisiana Occupational Information System

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

Registered Nurses -284
Physicians, All Other -119
LPN & LVN - 75
Critical Care Nurses - 55
Retail Salespersons - 44
Manager, All Other - 30
First Line Spv. of Food Prep. & Serving Workers - 29
Fastfood&Counter Workers - 26
Costumer Service Rep. - 24
Respiratory Therapists - 24

Source: LWC Online advertised jobs data: Sept. 18, 2023

Job Openings Advertised online in Cenla by Parishes

Allen Parish - 137
Avoyelles Parish - 205
Catahoula Parish - 28
Concordia - 157
Grant Parish - 43
La Salle Parish - 61
Natchitoches Parish - 307
Rapides Parish - 2,896
Vernon Parish - 410
Winn Parish - 63

This data above shows the distribution number of job openings advertised online in Central Louisiana by parishes on Sept. 18, 2023

Source: LWC- Online advertised jobs data

| Industries with Highest Job Openings Advertised Online in Alexandria, LA MSA | | |
|--|--|--------------|
| Rank | Industry | Job Openings |
| 1 | Health Care and Social Assistance | 600 |
| 2 | Educational Services | 536 |
| 3 | Retail Trade | 240 |
| 4 | Public Administration | 208 |
| 5 | Management of Companies & Enterprises | 195 |
| 6 | Accommodation and Food Services | 158 |
| 7 | Administrative and Support & Waste Management and Remediation Services | 112 |
| 8 | Manufacturing | 77 |
| 9 | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | 44 |
| 10 | Unclassified | 548 |

The table above shows the top ten job openings advertised online for the industries selected in Alexandria, LA Metropolitan Statistical Area on Sept. 18, 2023.

Source: LWC Online advertised jobs data.

Top 15 Largest Employers in Alexandria LA, MSA

Pinecrest Developmental Ctr
Rapides Women's-Children Hsp
Rapides Regional Medical Ctr
CHRISTUS St Frances Cabrini
Chief of Staff
Crest Operations LLC
Alexandria VA Hospital Med. Ctr
Sheriff's Department
Walmart Supcntr - Monroe Hwy
Walmart Supercenter - N Mall Dr.
Sheriff's Dept. - Jail
Crest Industries
Cleoco Corp Holdings LLC
Boise Cascade Co
Walmart Supercenter - C.Blvd.

Source: Louisiana Workforce Commission



About the Rapides American Job Center

The Rapides American Job Center (RAJC) brings "those who need jobs" and "those who need employees" together.

The Rapides Parish American Job Center is a comprehensive AJC that includes the mandatory WIOA partners on-site offering an integrated array of quality services so that job seekers and businesses can conveniently find the help they need under one roof such as scholarship training, training referrals, career counseling, job listings, and other employment-related services for both jobseekers and employers.

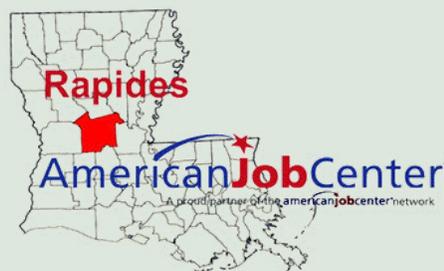
Established under the Workforce Investment Act and reauthorized in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act of 2014 (WIOA), American Job Centers (AJCs) are at the heart of the workforce investment system.

The Rapides Workforce Development Board 61 is charged by the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to certify the Rapides American Job Center, as a comprehensive One-Stop Center.

We thank and acknowledge our Contributors!

Rapides AJC - Sharon Neal
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LWC - Regine Williams
LED - Mark Lorando
Louisiana Central - Britni Lilley
LSUA - Adam Lord, Lynette Burlew
RoyOMartin - Amanda Guillot
Louisiana Workforce Commission
Central LA Regional Chamber of Commerce -
Deborah Randolph
LCTCS - Jennifer Freeman
Bureau of Labor Statistics,
U.S. Department of Labor, *The Economics Daily*

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Mon - Fri 8:00am - 4:30 pm



Joseph Bishop, President



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