

IT'S YOUR BUSINESS

A PUBLICATION OF THE RAPIDES AMERICAN JOB CENTER

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Executive Director's Corner



The Rapides Workforce Development Board is continuously working together collaboratively 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 also excited to team up with Rapides Parish Schools and Superintendent Jeff Powell to help launch their first Peabody Pilot Program for 2023-2024. The goal of this program is to help at-risk students team up with business and employer organizations involving a career or trade they take interest in. These businesses will mentor these students throughout their junior year of high school and then facilitate work experience during the summer between their junior and senior year. This helps to ensure those students have had exposure to the workforce prior to graduation and the hope is to increase the number of disconnected youths within our community. For more information, please contact LaRunda Pierce at larunda.pierce@rpsb.us.

We are excited about our new program, Youth Empowerment Services (YES), funded through The Rapides Foundation. This program is designed to assist youth and young adults ages 16-24, who are not working or in school. This program's main goal is to assist in connecting youth and young adults to further their education and/or gain meaningful employment. Our program is essential for advancing our youth and young adults in their educational endeavors, as well as helping them seek out opportunities to impact our community by joining the local workforce through employment.

Sharon Neal

Executive Director
Rapides American Job Center

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Rapides Workforce Development Board

Sharon Neal, Director
Rose Killion, Chairperson
Connie Baker, Vice-Chair
Cynthia Baker
Karyn Barrett
Cyndi Szczepanski
David Broussard
Chad Bynog
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Kashawna Jones
Jeff Johnson
Haywood Joiner
Twanda Hamilton
Steve Bryant
Donald LaCombe
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Kevin Hood
Lloyd Price
Jeff Ryan
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Deborah Randolph

Central Louisiana Port Facilities Receive \$1.2 Million For Expansion



On Thursday, Nov. 28, the Central Louisiana Regional Port (CLRP) announced its reception of \$1.2 million from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act through the Delta Regional Authority.



Photo credit: Crest Industries

The funding will be used for infrastructure expansion at the CLRP to support growing operations for DIS-TRAN Packaged Substations (DTPS), a Crest Industries company.

DTPS designs and builds electrical substations for projects across the United States, and the need to manufacture this type of transmission infrastructure for the national electric grid is at the highest point in decades. The growing demand for DTPS' Factory-Built Substations sparked conversations between company leaders and the port's management team about the need to further develop facilities at the CLRP.

Source: Crest Industries -
Emily Deville & Sarah Laborde

[full story here](#)

Weyerhaeuser Announces \$96.2 Million Modernization Project to Reduce Carbon Emissions at Dodson Lumber Mill

Weyerhaeuser, one of the world's largest private owners of timberland including 1.39 million acres in Louisiana, announced it is investing \$96.2 million to modernize and decarbonize its Winn Parish lumber mill. The upgraded technology is designed to increase overall safety, productivity and product reliability.

The investment will allow the company to retain 157 direct jobs and maintain an associated annual payroll of more than \$13 million, while reinforcing Louisiana's foothold in the residential construction supply chain.

Source: LED - Mark Lorando & Ron Thibodeaux

[full story here](#)

LSUA and LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry Unveil Pioneering Dental Hygiene Program in Central Louisiana

LSUA Louisiana State University of Alexandria (LSUA) and LSU Health New Orleans are thrilled to announce the launch of the first dental hygiene program in Central Louisiana. Working together, LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry expanded its Dental Hygiene program to an Off-Campus Instructional Site located in LSUA's downtown campus.



Photo credit: LSUA - Nathan Parish

The dental hygiene program is a two-year Bachelor of Science program that spans students' junior and senior years of college. The curriculum is designed to challenge and empower students, covering courses like Oral Diagnosis, Radiology, and Physiology. Six students are selected each year, ensuring a focused and personalized educational experience. Students graduate from LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry.

"Although we are in New Orleans, we serve all of Louisiana – North and South. East and West. Urban and Rural," notes Dr. Steve Nelson, Interim Chancellor of LSU Health New Orleans. "Because Alexandria is recognized as a Health Professional Shortage area and there is a great need for dental hygienists and improved access to care, we have been working with LSUA since 2019, along with a strong local contingent of dentists, association reps, the Louisiana Dental Association, and the Louisiana legislature to expand our dental hygiene program here. We owe special thanks to Senator Jimmy Harris for putting the funds in the budget and State Senator Glen Womack for helping to keep them in."

Source: LSUA - Adam Lord & LSU Health New Orleans - Leslie Capo

[full story here](#)

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As we help remove barriers to youth and young adults seeking education and employment, we can also assist in finding resources needed for success. These resources can include housing, mental health and substance abuse counseling, life skills guidance, and even help with necessities such as finding insurance benefits. In the last six months, the YES program has been able to assist over 85 youth and young adults in finding the resources they need for success. If you have any questions or know of any youth and young adults who could utilize these services, please reach out to our Service Navigator, Caitlin Wolff, at 318-449-0448 or CWolff@cenlaworks.org.

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 Asstc. for Needy Families (TANF)
(318) 362-3471

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

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 goes to SECO



Louisiana Central's team enjoyed the opportunity to share their workforce initiatives with thousands of students attending SECO (Students Exploring Career Opportunities) in November! Their team was able to engage with students and expose them to the Louisiana Manufacturing Central initiatives, the new **Healthcare Career Central** website, and the Cenla Work Ready Network!



SECO Expo is an interactive, student-focused event presented by The Orchard Foundation, The Rapides Foundation and the nine public school districts in Central Louisiana served by both foundations designed for students to experience simulations and demonstrations from industries such as information technology, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, construction, finance, and others. It is specifically designed to provide tangible hands-on activities aimed at fostering student engagement and ultimately sparking an interest in future careers.

Get plugged in:

- Explore careers in the local manufacturing industry at https://hubs.li/Q029flx_0
- Discover obtainable and impactful healthcare career paths at www.healthcarecareer-central.com
- Learn more about the Cenla Work Ready Network at <https://hubs.li/Q029fkz-0>
- Learn more about Louisiana Central at www.louisiana-central.com

Source: Britni Lilley - Louisiana Central

Initial Unemployment Insurance Claims Rise for Week ending December 2

The initial unemployment insurance claims for the week ending December 2, 2023, rose to 1,950 from the week ending November 25, 2023, a total of 1,202. For a comparison, during the week ending December 3, 2022, 2,205 initial claims were filed.

The four-week moving average of initial claims increased to 1,741 from the previous week's average of 1,699.

The unemployment insurance continued claims for the week ending December 2, 2023, increased to 12,918 from the week ending November 25, 2023, a total of 12,749. The continued claims were above the comparable figure of 11,238 for the week ending December 3, 2022.

Source: Regine Williams - LWC

[full story here](#)

Empowering Change: Louisiana Prisoner Reentry Initiative's New Chapter in Alexandria

The Louisiana Prisoner Reentry Initiative, Alexandria Region, is embarking on a renewed mission to facilitate successful reintegration for returning citizens. Central to this mission is the provision of comprehensive support in areas like housing, food security, education, employment, and transportation, all through strong community partnerships.



The initiative's approach is to offer holistic support, addressing essential needs:

- **Housing:** Collaborating with housing authorities to provide stable accommodations.
- **Food Security:** Partnering with food banks for access to nutritious meals.
- **Education and Employment:** Connecting with institutions and employers for learning and job opportunities.
- **Transportation:** Recognizing the current limitations in transportation resources, the initiative is actively seeking to work with community partners to enhance transportation options. This effort is crucial in enabling returning citizens to access employment, education, and essential services effectively.

The success of the Louisiana Prisoner Reentry Initiative hinges on robust community partnerships. Local businesses, non-profits, and government agencies are invaluable in creating a supportive network for sustainable reintegration.

The initiative encourages community involvement, emphasizing that a collective effort is vital for effective reintegration. Contributions can range from volunteering and providing resources to advocacy work, each playing a significant role in the initiative's success.

With a focus on these key areas, the Louisiana Prisoner Reentry Initiative, Alexandria Region, is committed to making a meaningful impact in the lives of returning citizens and the broader community.

For more information or to get involved, please contact Anthony Thomas, Community Coordinator at 318-321-0033 or email tony@uwcl.org.

Source: Anthony Thomas - UWCL LaPRI

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

RoyOMartin Celebrates 100th Anniversary



On November 10, 2023, RoyOMartin celebrated the founding of Roy O. Martin Lumber Company, which was legally organized and incorporated in Alexandria, Louisiana, in 1923. Led by Indiana native Roy O. Martin, Sr., the company was borne after the entrepreneur's purchase of an older sawmill and began without a single acre of land.

Today, the trade name RoyOMartin represents a group of vertically integrated companies owned by the Martin family, focused on sustainable land and timber management and wood-product manufacturing businesses.



Photo credit: RoyOMartin

"For 100 years, the Martin family has built a business model demonstrating corporate responsibility benefiting its shareholders, stakeholders, team members, and our families," states Roy O. Martin III, grandson of Martin Sr., who oversees the company's operations as Chairman, Chief Executive Officer, and Chief Financial Officer.

Source: Amanda Guillot

[full story here](#)

CLTCC Commercial Driver's License Training



Central Louisiana Technical Community College (CLTCC) is offering a commercial driver's license training. Classes starts on January 29, 2024, Monday - Friday from 8am to 4:30pm at the Alexandria Campus.

Tuition is \$6,200 with a \$250 deposit required to hold your spot. Scholarships are available for those who qualify. Click the link to apply.
<https://shorturl.at/uGKQX>

For more information, contact Joseph Mansfield at (318) 487-5443 ext. 1168 or josephmansfield@CLTCC.edu

COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSE
CLASS A: LIMITED SPOTS AVAILABLE

Start Date: January 29, 2024
Tuition: \$6,200
\$250 deposit to hold your spot in class.
Scholarships available for those who qualify.

For Info:
josephmansfield@CLTCC.edu
318.487.5443 x1168

CLTCC
CENTRAL LOUISIANA
TECHNICAL COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

WWW.CLTCC.EDU 800.278.8855 INFO@CLTCC.EDU

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

LWDA 61 Partner 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

DoD SkillBridge Program

In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), the CHRISTUS Health SkillBridge Internship Program provides military service members who are within 180 days of separation from military service, with opportunities in a variety of different roles.

The goal is to provide service members with opportunities to learn and train at CHRISTUS Health's facilities as they prepare the transition from the military to the civilian sector.

To learn more about the Skillbridge Internship program, contact Luis Sepulveda at chskillbridge@christushealth.org or call 210-452-4114.

Source: Luis Sepulveda, CHRISTUS Health



DoD SkillBridge Program

"My expectations for employment after the military were unknown but CHRISTUS Health has made the transition very smooth with their SkillBridge program. I now feel taken care of from the recruitment process and understanding to finally training in daily operations in Human Resources!"
—Daisy Lopez, SkillBridge Associate, Christus Health

In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Defense, the CHRISTUS Health SkillBridge Program provides military Service members who are within 180 days of separation from military service, with civilian work experience in a variety of different roles. The goal is to provide Service members with opportunities to learn and train at CHRISTUS Health facilities as they prepare to transition from the military to the civilian sector.

- For Service members: SkillBridge provides an invaluable chance to work and learn in civilian career areas.
- For industry partners: SkillBridge is an opportunity to access and leverage the world's most highly trained and motivated workforce at no cost.

For additional program information, contact Luis Sepulveda at chskillbridge@christushealth.org or call 210.452.8114.

Apply today at <https://careers.christushealth.org/working-here/skillbridge/>

CHRISTUS Health

Cleco Power of a Promise Scholarship Program



Cleco announced applications are being accepted for its Power of a Promise Scholarship which includes full tuition, books, a stipend for incidentals and a paid internship at the company's Brame Energy Center near Boyce, La.

The Power of a Promise Scholarship is part of Cleco's \$1.0 million corporate contribution to Central Louisiana Technical Community College (CLTCC) to help fund training, curriculum development and scholarships.

More information on eligibility, requirements and how to apply can be found [here](#).

Source: Samantha Stanley, CLECO



CLECO
Energizing Your Tomorrow

POWER OF A PROMISE
Diversity Scholarship

In conjunction with Central Louisiana Technical Community College

Scholarship Highlights

- An Associates Degree in Industrial Manufacturing Technology
- All Tuition & Books
- Stipend Included
- Paid Apprenticeship at a Cleco Energy Center
- Prospective Job after Graduation with Competitive Pay!

Learn more. Apply today!
Applying for the scholarship is free! For eligibility requirements and program details, visit cleco.com or louisiana.edu click on APPLICABLE STUDENTS

CLECO
Energizing Your Tomorrow

CLTCC
Louisiana Technical Community College

Labor Market Information

Unemployment Data By Parish

Allen Parish - 4.1%
 Avoyelles Parish - 4.0%
 Catahoula Parish - 4.0%
 Concordia Parish - 4.5%
 Grant Parish - 3.5 %
 La Salle Parish - 2.8%
 Natchitoches Parish- 3.9%
 Rapides Parish - 3.5%
 Vernon Parish - 4.1%
 Winn Parish - 4.0%

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

Job Openings Advertised online in Cenla by Parishes

Allen Parish - 139
 Avoyelles Parish - 245
 Catahoula Parish - 30
 Concordia - 113
 Grant Parish - 29
 La Salle Parish - 109
 Natchitoches Parish - 288
 Rapides Parish - 2,938
 Vernon Parish - 333
 Winn Parish - 55

*This data above shows the
 distribution number of job
 openings advertised online in
 Central Louisiana by parishes on
 Dec. 10, 2023*

*Source: LWC-
 Online advertised jobs data*



Latest Unemployment Rates

	October 2023	September 2023	August 2023
Rapides Parish (seasonally adjusted)	3.5%	3.4%	3.1%
Louisiana (not seasonally adjusted)	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%
United States (seasonally adjusted)	3.9%	3.8%	3.8%

Source: LWC - Labor Market Information Bulletin

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

Registered Nurses -397
 Physicians, All Other -82
 Critical Care Nurses - 72
 Retail Salespersons - 56
 LPN & LVN - 54
 Managers, All Other -35
 Postsecondary Teachers, All
 Other- 29
 Teachers, & Instructors, All
 Other- 28
 Cashier - 27
 First Line Spv. of Food Prep. &
 Serving Workers - 26

*Source: LWC Online Advertised
 Jobs Data: Dec. 11, 2023*

Industries with Highest Job Openings Advertised Online in Alexandria, LA MSA

Rank	Industry	Job Openings
1	Educational Services	565
2	Health Care and Social Assistance	463
3	Retail Trade	262
4	Management of Companies & Enterprises	195
5	Accommodation and Food Services	143
6	Public Administration	132
7	Administrative and Support & Waste Management and Remediation Services	128
8	Manufacturing	67
9	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	52
10	Unclassified	643

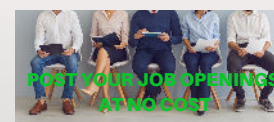
The table above shows the top ten job openings advertised online for
 the industries selected in Alexandria, LA MSA on Dec. 11, 2023.

Source: LWC Online advertised jobs data.

Occupations with the Highest Advertised Median (annual) Wages based on Job Openings Advertised Online in Rapides Parish LWIA, LA

Registered Nurses
 Critical Nurses
 Elementary School Teachers,
 except Special Education
 Operating Engineers & Other
 Construction Equipment Op
 Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop,
 Nursery, and Greenhouse
 Framworkers, Farm, Ranch, &
 Aquacultural Animals
 Cashiers
 Cooks, Instituion & Cafeteria
 Animal Caretakers
 Amusement & Recreation
 Attendants

Source: LWC - Dec. 11, 2023




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!

LSUA - Adam Lord
LWC - Regine Williams
LaPRI - Anthony Thomas
Rapides AJC - Sharon Neal
CLECO - Samantha Stanley
CLTCC - Jimmy Sawtelle
RoyOMartin - Amanda Guillot
Louisiana Central - Britni Lilley
Crest Industries - Marianne Dore,
Emily Deville & Sarah Laborde
Louisiana Central - Britni Lilley
Louisiana Workforce Commission
CHRISTUS Health - Luis Sepulveda
LED - Mark Lorando, Ron Thibodeaux
LSU Health New Orleans - Leslie Capo



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Media Contact
Nannette Hill - nhill@lsua.edu
LSUA - SBDC Coordinator
Rapides American Job Center
One-Stop Operator



James Wooley, Secretary

Rapides American Job Center

5610-B Coliseum Blvd.
Alexandria, LA 71303
318-767-6030
info@cenlaworks.org
Mon - Fri 8:00am - 4:30 pm



Joseph Bishop, President



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