

# THE CURRENT SAUCE



OCTOBER



## FLAME KEEPS EDUCATION ABLAZED

BY NINA OVALLE

Northwestern State University of Louisiana has initiated the Faculty Led Assistance in My Education (FLAME) program with the hope of increasing student retention rates.

FLAME is a supplemental instruction program in which NSU faculty is available to provide additional assistance and instruction for various subjects, at any time, throughout the week.

Elizabeth Pursell, academic advisor and retention coordinator, played a large part in the initiation of FLAME. Pursell believes that the FLAME program will prove to be very effective because of its flexibility.

“Sometimes office hours just aren’t at a convenient time for students, and they need help,” Pursell said. “FLAME offers a variety of times and days that make it much more schedule-friendly for students and their schedules.”

Pursell explained that the FLAME program allows students the opportunity to gain more information than that of what was taught during class hours.

“FLAME is a resource that allows students to ask the questions they wish they had thought of before departing

that class meeting,” Pursell said.

Though the FLAME program is meant to act as an extension of class time, Pursell stressed that it must work in partnership with classes rather than as a replacement.

“FLAME is not meant to replace students being in and participating in classes but is meant to enhance what they learned in class and provide further support,” Pursell said.

Currently, 30 NSU faculty members have invested their time toward the FLAME program and assisted students from several class sections.

“It’s been exciting to see it go from just an idea at a committee meeting to watching students come in and sit with instructors to get the help they need,” Pursell said.

Francine Lemoine, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, worked with Pursell in the initiation of FLAME and said it is a wonderful example of how NSU systems work together to develop for the better.

“FLAME was born out of the desire to foster greater faculty/student engagement and improve student academic success and retention, made possible through a Student Government Association Grant to the College of Arts and Sciences,” Lemoine said. “I’m proud to be a part of it!”

To develop such a large project, Lemoine decided to begin with faculty who teach biology, chemistry, math and science. After this trial period, the FLAME program was extended to the majority of subjects offered at NSU.

As the program takes off, FLAME has begun to be compared to peer-tutoring.

“This program allows faculty to be available for student assistance in an environment where students may feel more comfortable seeking help, though traditionally tutoring is done by a peer or fellow student,” Lemoine said.

Peer-tutoring resources are still offered at the Eugene P. Watson Memorial Library Academic Success Center. Pursell wishes for FLAME to complement current programs by providing a different type of service to students.

“Student-led tutoring is still offered and is a valuable resource for students to use, however, FLAME provides the service of having faculty expertise in each subject where the professor is able to break down information in a more personal setting,” Pursell said.

Bobby Jordan, Academic Success Center director, explained the direct differences between FLAME and peer-tutoring programs.

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September is the national suicide prevention awareness month. Students who are unaware of resources may read this story to find out community and state services.

Photo by Nina Ovalle



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Meet Sheryl Hatcher. A news local artist in Natchitoches that captures the essence of Natchitoches life.

Photo by Kevin Thomas



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In this set of sports stories, NSU adds a new concentration for students in the Department of Health and Human Performance and read about the Lady Demons softball head coach Lacy Prejean.

Photo by Tyra Jones



### 06 VIEWPOINTS

Read Destin Lopez’s take on the first medical marijuana coming to Natchitoches.

Photo by Naomi Adams





# What resources do students have to aid with mental health?

BY NINA OVALLE

Northwestern State University of Louisiana takes action to provide resources for students in need during National Suicide Awareness month and throughout the year.

A study on the Louisian Department of Health website in an article titled “Suicide Prevention Services,” showed 48,183 Americans died by suicide in 2021. In Louisiana alone, 689 people died by suicide making it the 14th leading cause of death and third leading cause of death for ages ten to 34 in Louisiana.

For every death by suicide, it is predicted there are over 25 suicide attempts with predicted 100-200 attempts for 15 to 24 year olds.

Kevin Yaudes, the University of Louisiana System (ULS) mental health content expert and chair of the ULS Mental Health Advisory Council (MHAC), said the statistics have proved to be even higher in some cases.

“For every one adolescent who dies by suicide, approximately 100-200 attempt suicide,” Yaudes said. “Some research indicates that number is as high as 300.”

The main issue comes with identifying signs and creating an environment in which people can receive the help they need.

“Many people who are considering suicide are struggling in silence, you might believe that you don’t have any personal connection to suicide, but you probably do,” Yaudes said.

Yaudes described the environment he wishes to create by sharing a personal experience he had with his grandmother. Yaudes’ grandmother had surgery for colon cancer and many of his family members were not aware of his grandmother’s struggles at all.

“Decades ago, people used to whisper the word cancer, but that is not true any longer,” Yaudes said. “It’s my hope that as the community conversation about suicide and mental health continues that we will get to the same place with these topics and sharing that you are struggling doesn’t provoke anxiety and feeling of shame.”

Yaudes serves as chair of MHAC in the hope to create this environment. MHAC is composed of two individuals from each of the nine member universities with a mission to identify existing programming, resources and support for mental health and wellness across ULS and promote and strengthen their efforts.

The MHAC collaborates with ULS through the Vice President for Student



Services, Safety and Resilience and the Vice Presidents for Student Affairs at ULS institutions regarding mental health and wellness. Yaudes stressed that if the focus is only on those in crisis, then the community will only ever be saving people from suicide rather than preventing suicide as a whole. He described mental health as a spectrum which everyone experiences with most being in between on most days.

“Rather than addressing only poor mental health, we wanted to provide resources that may help our community even on days when someone’s mental health is generally OK,” Yaudes said. “A better time to consider what you can do to improve and maintain good mental health is when things are generally going well.”

In an attempt to help all students, ULS created a group of Counseling Center Directors and developed a partnership with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). These programs offer no-cost virtual or in-person trainers on campus to provide suicide prevention training to faculty and staff within ULS.

“Our campuses have many amazing programs and resources for mental health, so we want to highlight those and also offer additional support,” Yaudes said.

While the ULS focuses on all nine member universities, resources within NSU are essential to continue the conversation of mental health.

“I feel that the accessibility to suicide awareness and prevention information at NSU is easily accessible to students,” Bailey Willis, Student Government Association president, said. “SGA constantly throws events with

counselors present where students can come and get informed, but also be supported.”

This month alone, SGA has had “Don’t Jump” a talk with Carlos Malave, Suicide Awareness Candlelight Vigil with Counselling Services, Suicide Prevention Training “Talk Saves Lives” with The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and a Suicide Prevention awareness Walk with Counselling Services.

“Last year our SGA Initiates were to put the National Suicide Hotline on the back of student IDs and resources in our University Syllabi. Having this new position as the Student Board Member for the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors, I am trying to implement this in our eight sister institutions,” Willis said.

Northwestern State University of Louisiana recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student’s academic success and overall well being. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by utilizing the resources and services available from the University’s counseling services

Rebecca Boone, executive director of Counseling and Career Services, is responsible for managing mental wellness efforts at NSU.

The NSU Counseling and Career Service Center provides a 24-hour call line and support to those experiencing mental health struggles, or those concerned about another student.

“We want to provide a safe space for students to talk about their mental health, find the mental health resources they need to live a happier life, and gain the support they need when going through challenging times,” Boone said.

Students can schedule appointments with the NSU Counseling and Career Services center to speak with a

counselor about any mental health issue they may be struggling with. The NSU Counseling and Career Services center has four graduate counseling interns and three official counselors.

“We would like the NSU community to be educated (on) signs of mental/emotional distress so that they will recognize it in themselves and others,” Boone said. “We would like students to be aware that they are not alone even in their darkest times.”

Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training is also offered to faculty and staff of NSU upon request. QPR training teaches about how to help a student, friend or family member who is struggling with suicidal thoughts and refer them for assistance.

Brandon Moore, graduate intern for NSU Counseling and Career Services, believes QPR training to be an effective resource for all NSU faculty and staff.

“We offer QPR training which is a really good source for explaining how to encounter and talk to someone who is suicidal,” Moore said.

Annually, the NSU Counseling Center sponsors a Candlelight Vigil at Chaplain’s Lake and the Suicide Awareness and Prevention 5K Walk/Run at Collins Pavilion. Boone described her mission with sponsoring these events.

“I would like students to know that it is important for them to educate themselves about mental health and suicide so that they can be support for those in distress and be comfortable with reaching out for support when they need it,” Boone said. “It takes courage to ask for help.”

Willis reiterates the importance of acknowledging one’s own struggles. “I want students to know that they are not alone, and they are supported by the university and students all over campus,” she said. “It is okay to not be okay, and you matter.”

Moore stressed the importance of suicide awareness and urges those struggling to reach out.

“Being suicidal is a natural response to stressful situations, but the more stigma around being suicidal than the less people get help, and more people will struggle,” Moore said. “We need to get it out there that if you are suicidal, please reach out.”

To schedule an appointment with NSU Counseling and Career Services, call **(318) 357-5621** or visit room 305 in the Friedman Student Union Building during business hours of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

To reach the 24-hour crisis line outside of business hours, call **(318) 357- 5431**.

To receive more information on QPR training, call **(318) 357- 5671**.



# LOCAL ARTIST SHERYL HATCHER REKINDLES HER LOVE FOR ART THROUGH NATCHITOCHES' SCENE

BY KEVIN THOMAS

For artists in Natchitoches, they may find inspiration from a town that can cater to so many of their artistic needs, such as getting ideas from the Christmas festival, the old historic building or even while watching a tourist get their first taste of the Natchitoches life on Front Street.

Sheryl Hatcher, a local artist here in Natchitoches, has been creating art for two years now and has become inspired by the city of Natchitoches to help further her ideas but also to help her with her rekindled passion.

A native of New Orleans and a resident of Natchitoches, Hatcher started painting in her junior and senior year in high school where she fell in love with the art of turning a blank canvas into her own masterpiece.

"I spent most of my senior year in the art studio because I only needed one credit to graduate," Hatcher said.

For her that journey only lasted two years before she stopped for her future, her marriage and her kids. Finally, after 52 years of being away from the paintbrush, it was time for her to come back.

"I had retired, and my husband was saying that I needed something to do, and I did. I had retired, I was at home and my kids were all grown

so I needed to find something to do," Hatcher said.

After marinating on the idea, she spoke to her friend at the Natchitoches Art Guild and Gallery, Joan Edwards, about stepping back into the world of art and there she was introduced to another lovely artist in Lafayette, Hazel Nowlin.

"She showed me this alcoholic ink art piece done by Hazel Nowlin, and I just fell in love with it, so I bought it right there on the spot, took it home and looked up on YouTube everything about alcoholic ink," Hatcher said.

That moment is when she finally decided to get back into painting. She began her new journey beginning with alcoholic ink, moving into acrylic ink, pastel, oils and cold wax. She has been testing all sorts of mediums, and through all her work and testing she has found her style, and her people.

"I love painting people, I love painting people doing things not just posing, just doing things they love to do," Hatcher said.

She gets most of her inspiration to

create art from people through her family, people close to her family and even people from all over town. She has worked with many local faces around the city of Natchitoches and captures them while they are just doing their everyday activities, it's something she finds beautiful.

"I have done Kenny, who works at Kaffie-Fredricks, he sits out at one of the benches early in the morning and I painted him. He was one of the very first people I painted around here," Hatcher said.

Hatcher has also created two characters, which are often paired together, that seem to be making recurring appearances in her artwork known as Maurice and Tick. Maurice being the boy in the blue overalls and Tick being the dog that has become the loyal companion to Maurice.

"There was a picture that was going around during the depression, I can't remember the artist, but the government sent photographers to go photograph life," she said. "She took a photo of a family down on Cane River, and it was a little boy who was in the picture with his dog, so I named them Maurice and Tick... and that's what I am starting to do in my local landscapes."

For Hatcher, she is very happy to be here in Natchitoches and to be given the opportunity to be able to paint again. Now working at the Natchitoches Art Guild and Gallery, she has been able to surround herself with some wonderful women who have inspired her and made her feel welcomed.

"Working here is kind of what I imagine a sorority would be like, we do have one man, but the rest are all women. I do feel like I have been able to find my voice and style being here," Hatcher said.

“Working here is kind of what I imagine a sorority would be like



Photo by Kevin Thomas

Sheryl Hatcher, a local Natchitoches artist, shares some of her art showcased at the Natchitoches Art Guild-Gallery.

## Current Sauce Staff

The Current Sauce is the official student-run newspaper for Northwestern State University. The content and stories within the paper may not necessarily reflect the views of administration, faculty and staff.

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## AUTOMATED MESSAGES

### Anonymus

The memory of a mouth that once talked or touched

... We're sorry ...

Became birds that betrayed; silence the sound of much.

... you have placed your call from a telephone which has calling restrictions.

And while sneaking away from its two favorite strangers

.... or you have dialed a number which cannot be reached.

A lingering nostalgia laughed at its all too often familiar impasse.





# NSU offers new degree concentration in Sport and Recreation Management

BY KALLIE BOURGEOIS

Northwestern State University of Louisiana’s Department of Health and Human Performance offers a new bachelor of science degree in sport and recreation management.

This new degree teaches students to develop skills in leadership, marketing, management and finance in the sports and recreation industry. This allows students to have the opportunities to be the administration of local parks or even the management of major professional sports teams.

Haley Blount, the program director of sport and recreation management, added that this new program is one of the fastest-growing occupations.

“With the new degree program, students will be given the opportunity to work with the big organizations like the National Collegiate Athletic Association to travel with baseball and softball teams here in Natchitoches,” Blount said. “You will also obtain a minor in Business Administration with this degree.”

According to the 2021 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the sport and recreation management degree offers internship opportunities in collegiate and professional sports. It also states that it has a median salary of \$75,420.

With this degree, students have a wide variety of career options including Accounts Manager, Athletic Director, Gameday Coordinator, Media Relations, Ticket Sales, Marketing Director, Facility and Events Manager, Sports Content Producer, Recreation and Sports Director, Director of Operations and Sports Camp Director.

Tara Tietjen-Smith, health and human performance department head, explained that sport and recreation management allow students to work in the multibillion dollar sports industry.

“Students enrolled in this program will have the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills during several fieldwork experiences,” Tietjen-Smith said. “If a student is interested in working with NCAA sports teams,

professional teams, parks and recreation, camps, the Olympics, sport consulting companies, sport sales organizations, nonprofits, campus recreation, sports analytics, global sports organizations (e.g., ESPN, FIFA) or any other area of sport, this is the degree for them!”

The curriculum for this degree requires 39 hours of university core courses including: six hours of English, six hours of mathematics, nine hours of natural science, nine hours of humanities, three hours of fine arts, three hours of social science and three hours of behavioral science. Students will need 81 hours for the degree itself including 30 hours of sports and recreational management core classes, 18 hours of business minor courses, nine hours of health-related courses, six hours of advisor-approved electives and eight hours of internship courses.

Jason Pugh, assistant athletic director for media relations, added that the new program could also relate to not just student athletes, but for anyone who has a passion for sports.

Pugh explained that when relating to student athletes a lot of times when you check rosters or see a student athlete on TV, the majors you see are majority sport administration or management.

“If they happen to be student athletes it’s great because at some point your athletic career will end but you can continue your passion with becoming an administrator or coordinator,” Pugh said.

He said that this new degree isn’t just athlete based. Pugh obtained his graduate degree in sports administration even though he didn’t play sports. This is a great way to promote the love for sports, he added.

“Not only does it give the athletes something they are familiar with, but it can open doors and bring people in as not just a student-athlete major,” Pugh said. “It’s something I believe will attract more students, not only as an undergraduate, but will also attract students to NSU.”

Photo by Tyra Jones



Haley Blount, the program director of sport and recreation management, is excited to see this new program take off.



Photo by Chris Reich

## Lacy Prejean: The new head coach for the Lady Demons softball team

BY CHRISTIAN ROBINSON

Three weeks before the start of the year, the athletics department welcomed a new head coach for the Lady Demons softball team. After a swift head coach search, Lacy Prejean joined the Demon family.

Prejean was named the 12th head coach for the Lady Demons softball team on Aug. 2, 2023. This announcement is coming off her path as the assistant coach of University of Louisiana at Lafayette for five seasons, having led them to four Sun Belt Champions, four NCAA Regionals and Seattle Super regional. She looks to accomplish the same or even more for the Lady Demons on her first head coaching job.

“Obviously there is a lot more responsibility as being the leader of this program and changing the culture of this program,” Prejean said. “Changing the expectations for our players and changing the play of this team and continuing to build on what Coach Pickett built upon the last 15 years.”

Prejean looks to change the mindset of not only the players but the entire school looking to bring a new chapter into the Lady Demons softball team book. Bringing a new level of intensity and mental fortitude to the team, and for the Lady Demons softball team to show results on the field with their play and discipline.

Prejean wants to work on the fundamentals as their role will help when the Lady Demons need to respond to adversity. More importantly for her is making everyone feel valued in the program and not feel left out.

“Everyone will have value in our program and be a good teammate and to know their role on this team,” Prejean said.

She said that finding their identity early on into training camp and practices and finding the style that this new Lady Demons team will operate with is imperative.

“If we have to play for speed we’ll play for speed, if we have to play with power we’ll play with power,” Prejean said.

Prejean highlights how impressed she is of the upperclassmen on the team and how the leadership is in full effect on the team. She also discussed the passion and joy the players are showing on the field and how easy it is for her as a coach to be able to establish a culture with the players so enthusiastically.

“At the end of the day I am going to make mistakes as a coach. But that’s part of it, but if I can be right more than I can be wrong, we can have a great thing going. It’s not about being right or wrong, it is about the players,” Prejean said. “Building a relationship with them and letting them know how important they are to you not only as a player but as a person. That is what I will base my success off of, not just wins and loses, but the players.”

The one thing Prejean wants from not only the players but the fans of the NSU Women’s softball team is that they believe in the program and the culture of the new lady softball demons.

“Students enrolled in this program will have the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills during several fieldwork experiences”



Hopefully, the people that are excited to use their medical marijuana card at the new pharmacy when it opens are also willing to advocate for further bills supporting the expulsion of marijuana possession crimes on records.

# First Medical Marijuana Pharmacy in Natchitoches sparks gentrification discussion

BY DESTIN LOPEZ

The option to buy marijuana is coming to a store near you soon. But do not get your hopes up, marijuana has not been legalized in Louisiana. Only medical marijuana, which means that all the residents who are currently incarcerated based on marijuana related charges, will have to stay there.

Meanwhile, residents of Natchitoches can buy their lab grown marijuana with a sense of safety. Can you support medical marijuana and the profit it brings into town while also not advocating against the thousands of marijuana charges incarcerating people across the state?

As you may have heard, a medical marijuana pharmacy is coming to the city of Natchitoches. This is the first of its kind in the city; previously, anyone with a medical marijuana prescription had to get it shipped or travel outside the city to purchase - usually to Alexandria or Shreveport.

While the majority's response to this announcement was good, there is a collection of people who are always against marijuana as a whole because of its label as a drug.

No matter how people feel about it, it's coming to Natchitoches. This will give easier access to medical marijuana users, who use it for many reasons. Marijuana is known to help with chronic pain, and since it is a plant that is grown locally, it can be more enticing to people than prescription opioids, which can be addicting. Marijuana is typically believed by people not to be addictive and does not have as many possible side effects, as compared to medical pain pills. In some instances, it can also be cheaper to have a medical marijuana prescription, some people can continue to work under the influence of marijuana but cannot after taking pain pills.

Southern University and A&M College and Louisiana State University are the

only places with licenses in Louisiana that can grow medical marijuana. They have private partners who own the farms where the marijuana is grown. While I am unsure about the Southern's agriculture center, I know that the LSU's agriculture center receives payment for the work that they do.

Being able to own and grow marijuana medical farms creates jobs for these universities, and in turn creates profit. I am glad that it is being grown in the state, and I know that plans are being made to more than double the size of the medical marijuana fields to keep up with the demand that is coming in. The state of Louisiana is making profit from the sales of medical marijuana, yet we are still spending so much money to keep people in jail for marijuana charges.

In 2021, Gov. John Bel Edwards decriminalized the possession of marijuana under 14 grams, but this is only the first step. Previously, you had to wait at least five years to petition to

expunge something off of your criminal record. However, Edwards signed a bill three months ago to allow people that got a charge for first possession of less than 14 grams of marijuana to petition to expunge their record after only 90 days.

Hopefully, the people that are excited to use their medical marijuana card at the new pharmacy when it opens are also willing to advocate for further bills supporting the expulsion of marijuana possession crimes on records. Of course, there will be some people who take advantage of the pharmacy, who still think people who recreationally use marijuana should be charged.

Gentrification is spreading everywhere, and the Natchitoches police will most likely still be arresting people for possession of recreational marijuana while others are driving around with their fresh bag of medical marijuana from the pharmacy.

Illustration by Naomi Adams





# OUR GALLERY



NSU'S national Pan-Hellenic Council showed off their history and performed at their mixer