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STAFF PHOTOS BY LESLIE WESTBROOK

Monsignor Keith DeRouen stands Wednesday in front of part of his art collection, which includes an icon of St. John the Evangelist by artist Faye Drobnic, below.

WORKS of WONDER

Priest's art collection reflects spiritual nature, family and traditions

BY JOANNA BROWN
Staff writer

Religious art often brings to mind quiet, reflective places, meant to draw both the eye and heart to spiritual matters.

Gazing on art in churches and chapels can be an almost remote experience, meant to evoke an image of the divine that we can't actually see. The moment is profound, but it stands outside the bustle of everyday life.

That's not the case in Monsignor Keith DeRouen's Lafayette home, which is filled with religious art and icons he's collected over decades, creating an inviting, homey atmosphere where he loves to en-

ertain and where he plans to eventually retire.

DeRouen is the pastor at Our Lady Queen of Angels Catholic Church in Opelousas, where he lives the majority of the time, and was formerly the rector at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Lafayette. He also serves as the chaplain at the Academy of the Sacred Heart in Grand Coteau, and as a New Iberia native (DeRouen was born on Avery Island), the priest has spent over 40 years ministering in Acadiana.

Walking through his home and seeing the art he's gathered feels like an extension of that life's work.

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At least 18 injured at Lao New Year fest

Police: Driver crashed into Iberia Parish crowd

BY STEPHEN MARCANTEL
Staff writer

A driver was arrested Saturday afternoon after he drunkenly drove into paragoers at the Louisiana Lao New Year Festival, injuring more than a dozen attendees of the internationally recognized festival, according to Louisiana State Police.

Todd Landry, 57, of Jeanerette, was booked on counts of driving while impaired and first-degree negligent injuring, careless operation and open container, officials said.

Deputies responded to the corner of Savannakhet and Melancon roads in connection with a vehicle that struck multiple people attending the festival near Broussard, the Iberia Parish Sheriff's Office said.

During the investigation, Landry showed signs of impairment and submitted a breath sample indicating a blood alcohol level of 0.137%, according to state troopers.

In Louisiana, anyone with a blood-alcohol limit of or over 0.08% is considered intoxicated.

At least 18 people suffered injuries in the crash, according to State Police.

"We are profoundly saddened by the news of the incident near the festival grounds. We are awaiting additional

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Attacks ramp up over Letlow's DEI comments

BY TYLER BRIDGES
Staff writer

How does U.S. Rep. Julia Letlow square endorsing diversity, equity and inclusion policies as a college presidential applicant in 2020 and her subsequent anti-DEI voting record in Congress?

That's the question that confronted Letlow Friday in the face of continuing attacks from the man she is trying to unseat, U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy, for her calls to expand DEI to hire more women and racial minorities on the faculty when she was applying in 2020 to be the next president of the University of Louisiana-Monroe.

In news releases and a video on Thursday and Friday, Cassidy pointed to her comments to challenge her conservative credentials. "Julia is a liberal," he concluded.

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Study examines worsening salt intrusion

Crevasses slow current in main river channel, it reveals

BY MIKE SMITH
Staff writer

New modeling is deepening understanding of why saltwater intrusion up the Mississippi River has worsened in recent years, pointing to a previously underestimated factor as the primary cause and raising questions over how drinking water can be protected in the future.

The study of river dynamics by Tulane

University researchers shows that crevasses, or breaks in the lower Mississippi's banks, are the main factor in the recent worsening of saltwater intrusion, which can threaten drinking water for vast areas of southeast Louisiana, including New Orleans.

Sea level rise and the deepening of the river for shipping purposes have also contributed, but the crevasses located in Plaquemines Parish south of where the main levee system ends are by far the primary cause because of the way they slow the current in the main channel, the study shows.

The findings are in line with preliminary assessments from the U.S. Army Corps

of Engineers, which is engaged in its own three-year study of the phenomenon, but dealing with the problem poses a series of difficult questions related to coastal land loss, shipping and infrastructure.

The deepening of the lower river through large-scale dredging to accommodate bigger vessels has long been acknowledged as a factor in exacerbating saltwater intrusion, and that has spurred assumptions that those projects have been the main cause of the recent worsening. The new modeling disputes that.

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WEATHER

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