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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12, 2026

\$2.00



STAFF PHOTOS BY LESLIE WESTBROOK

Faculty members sign the beam Tuesday during a topping-out ceremony for the L.J. Alleman Fine Arts Magnet Academy expansion and improvement project in Lafayette.

TO TOP IT OFF

L.J. Alleman celebrates construction milestone at one of Lafayette's largest middle schools

BY JOANNA BROWN
Staff writer

As Lafayette's school buildings have aged and the population has grown, portable buildings have become a prominent feature on many campuses.

These portable classrooms, often referred to as "butler buildings," were designed to increase capacity and ease pressure on outdated facilities — but the butler buildings themselves were meant to be temporary solutions.

In a wave of construction that includes the new facility at Lafayette High School, Lafayette Parish school system representatives say that they are making progress on a long-held goal — removing all portable buildings from campuses. On Tuesday, a ceremony was held at L.J. Alleman Fine Arts Magnet Academy to celebrate progress on a new administrative building that will be the face of campus, with a library and enough new classrooms to eliminate the need for butler buildings.

A "topping out" ceremony is an old builders' tradition that marks the placement of the final beam on the highest point of the structure. It typically includes an American flag and evergreen tree that rides on the beam to its final destination, for good luck.

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ABOVE: The signed beam is lifted into place atop the L.J. Alleman Fine Arts Magnet Academy. **LEFT:** Former Principal Kathy Aloisio, right, and her daughter and current principal, Allison Champagne, sign the beam.

\$3 million requested for parks, recreation centers

Golf courses, tennis courts may get maintenance

BY CLAIRE TAYLOR
Staff writer

Lafayette recreation centers, golf courses and tennis courts may get needed maintenance and improvements if the City Council agrees to set aside \$1 million for each in the 2026-27 budget.

The council on Tuesday reviewed the budget proposed by Mayor-President Monique Boulet for the fiscal year that runs from Nov. 1 through Oct. 31, 2027.

Council member Kenneth Boudreaux said deferred maintenance on parks and recreation centers because of cuts by a prior mayor-president is showing.



Boudreaux

At a recent visit to the Domingue Center on Mudd Avenue, Boudreaux said he saw broken floor tiles, the building's sign was missing and the sidewalk in front of the center has been wrapped in orange caution tape for several years.

O.J. Mouton Pool on Mudd Avenue, the only public Olympic-size swimming pool in the city, has been closed several years. At one time, Boudreaux said, it would have cost several hundred thousand dollars to repair the pool. The cost today is over \$1 million because of deferred repairs.

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Lafayette High senior competes in Patriot Games

BY MATTHEW ALBRIGHT
Staff writer

Two Louisiana students are competing this week in games like dodgeball, kickball, and endurance and sports skills challenges as they represent the state in the Patriot Games, a national athletic competition that is part of President Donald Trump's celebrations of America's 250th anniversary.

Owen Dozier-George, a senior at Lafayette High School, and Eva Melton, a junior at Mount Carmel Academy in New Orleans, are competing with other high school athletes from every state at Spire Academy in Geneva, Ohio. One boy and one girl will be chosen as winners, each receiving a \$125,000 prize.

Athletes competed Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. A one-hour special highlighting the competition will air on ABC at 8 p.m. Thursday. Trump flew out Tuesday to observe some of the events in person.

"Everyone back home is so proud to have them representing our state," Gov. Jeff Landry said in a video posted to social media.

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Trump used elaborate ruse to leave Turkey

Report: President swapped planes following summit

By The Associated Press

President Donald Trump secretly flew out of last month's NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey, on an alternate military

aircraft while the White House made it appear that the Republican president was flying on Air Force One, according to a report published by The Washington Post.

The Post said Monday the operation was prompted by an Iranian assassination threat against Trump. The ruse was carried out as journalists and some White House staff mem-

bers were led to believe they were on the same plane as the president as he began his journey back to Washington from the annual gathering of NATO country leaders.

The Post cited material reviewed by the newspaper, a U.S. official familiar with the operation and another person with knowledge of the president's travel. The Associated

Press has not independently confirmed the report.

Trump had flown to the summit in a new Qatari-gifted and retrofitted red, white and navy blue jet. But ahead of departing Turkey, he said he would fly partway home on an older-model baby blue Air Force One plane instead.

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