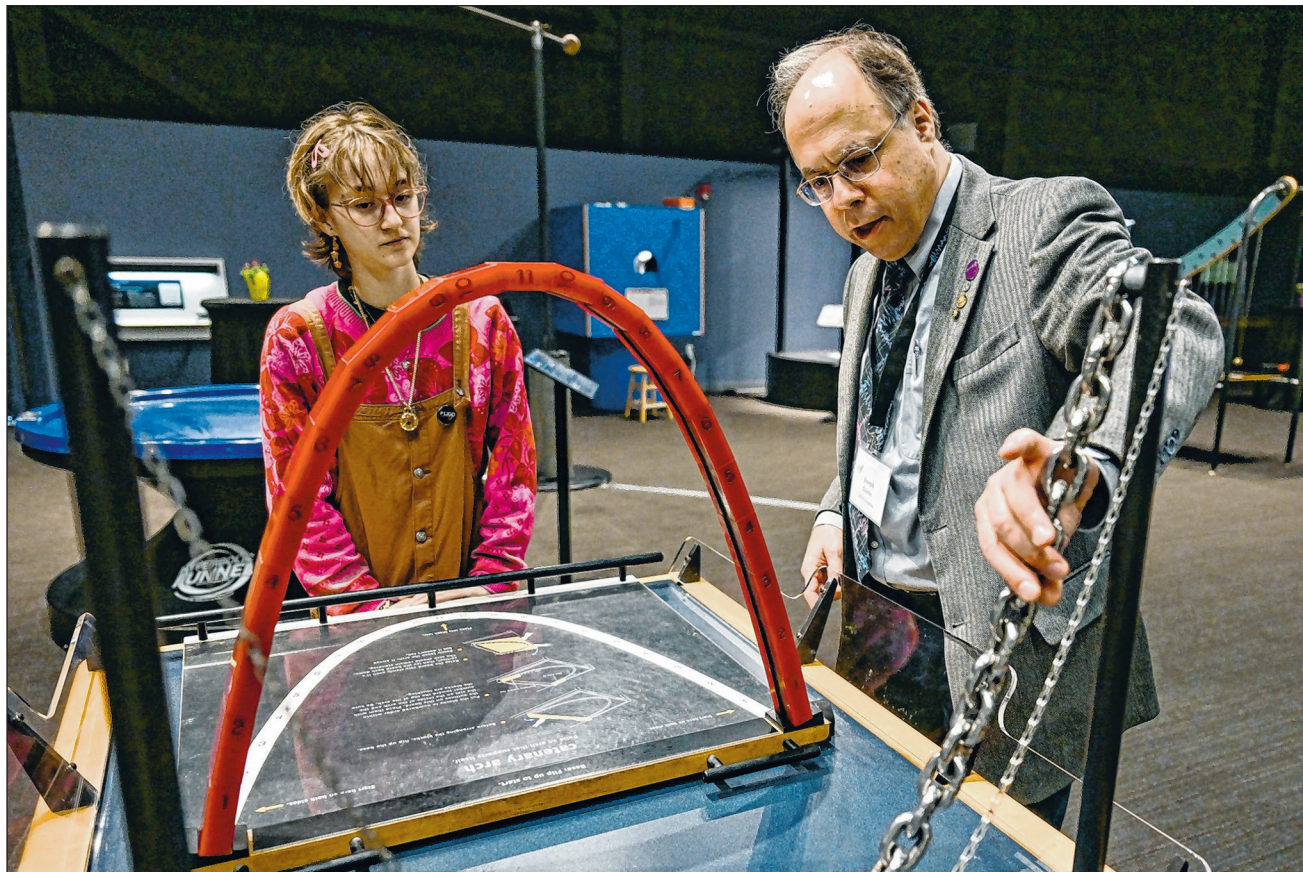


# Still searching for signals



STAFF PHOTOS BY JAVIER GALLEGOS

Joseph A. Giaime, right, observatory head of the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory in Livingston, explains the science behind the catenary arch to his daughter Domenica on Saturday. Ten years after detecting the first gravitational wave — caused by a pair of black holes colliding — and hundreds of gravitational wave detections later, LIGO is celebrating the anniversary of the historic event after a busy summer.

## Amid concerns over potential cuts, Livingston's LIGO scientists mark 10th anniversary of monumental discovery

BY CLAIRE GRUNEWALD  
Staff writer

A signal lasting less than a second traveled about 1.3 billion light years before it reached an observatory deep in the piney woods of Livingston 10 years ago.

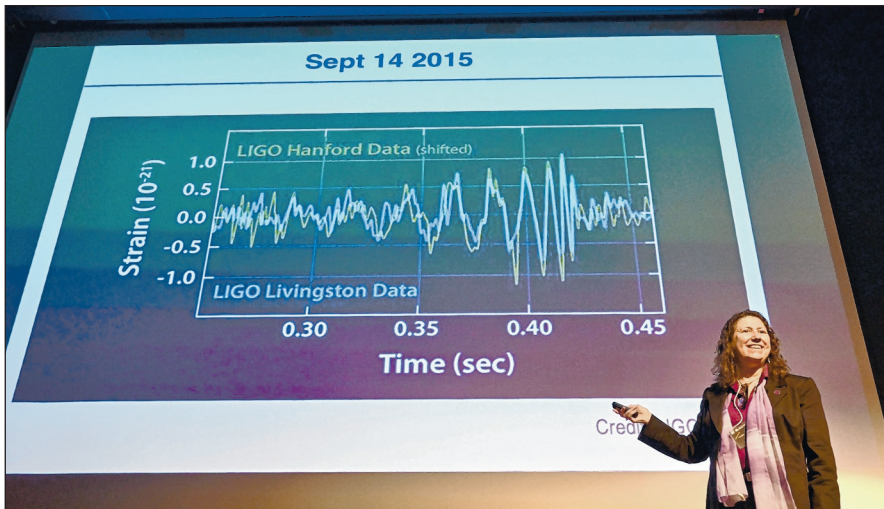
The brief signal — caused by a pair of black holes colliding — was the first gravitational waves ever detected, and it created a new way for scientists to look into the universe.

The Sept. 14, 2015, detection confirmed a key prediction of Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity, earned the Nobel Prize in physics and kick-started a new era of astronomy.

"Most of us had figured that with nature being perverse, that the first signal would be really hard to pull out of the noise. And then the signal came beautifully, beautifully clear," said Joseph Giaime, head of the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory in Livingston.

The observatory is one of two in the United States funded by the

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**ABOVE:** Gabriela Gonzàlez, LSU Boyd Professor of Physics, shows the crowd an image of LIGO's initial gravitational wave detection in September 2015 during LIGO's 10-year celebration on Saturday. **LEFT:** Bryce Laxen, 9, sticks his head in a live model tornado at LIGO in Livingston.

## Audit: La. pregnancy centers lack oversight

Millions budgeted for services

BY EMILY WOODRUFF  
Staff writer

The Louisiana legislative auditor recently found that the state's effort to steer women toward childbirth instead of abortion has weak oversight, according to a report released this month.

The Pregnancy and Baby Care Initiative, created by lawmakers in 2024 and run through the Department of Children and Family Services, was meant to expand services for women facing unplanned pregnancies. Lawmakers earmarked \$4 million in state funds to pay nonprofit centers for specific services.

But less than a year later, auditors found that DCFS contracts don't match state law in what they define as services eligible for state funding, centers were paid without proof of

➤ See **AUDIT**, page 4A

## State plans to repair or replace 62 bridges

New agency targets end of 2026 for completion

BY ALYSE PFEIL  
Staff writer

Louisiana's new transportation agency is quickly ramping up, and its first major task is fixing 62 small bridges scattered across rural parts of the state by the end of next year.

It's the opening gambit for state lawmakers and Gov. Jeff Landry as they seek to accomplish what they argue the state's lumbering Department of Transportation and Development has for years failed to do — efficiently maintain thousands of miles of Louisiana roads and bridges.

Legislators this spring announced they planned to take "extraordinary

➤ See **BRIDGES**, page 6A

## Rita transformed southwest Louisiana's response to disasters

BY MEGAN WYATT  
Staff writer

Two decades after Hurricane Rita struck southwest Louisiana, one of its enduring impacts is how the region prepares for and responds to disasters, having paved the way for stricter building standards and more detailed evacuation and shelter planning.

The Category 3 hurricane's storm surge flooded

coastal parishes and its high winds uprooted trees, splintered utility poles and peeled roofs from homes in Lake Charles, Sulphur and Westlake.

Just a few weeks before Rita made landfall, Hurricane Katrina's hit on the southeastern side of the state offered a warning for public officials in southwest Louisiana, who started to worry that they would eventually face a

major storm. The concern quickly became a reality.

"That shocked us into awareness," said Randy Roach, who was mayor of Lake Charles at the time. "We knew what we were going to have to do. We just didn't know we'd have to do it that quickly."

Rita was the first major storm to hit the region in nearly 50 years, often overshadowed in the collective memory by Ka-

trina. It challenged existing systems for preparing for and responding to disasters.

But those changes better prepared both public officials and residents when another major storm, Hurricane Laura, approached southwest Louisiana 15 years later.

"We knew what to do as a team," said Bryan

➤ See **rita**, page 6A



Water inundates Holly Beach in Lake Charles after Hurricane Rita tore through southwest Louisiana in September 2005.

PROVIDED PHOTO BY CITY OF LAKE CHARLES

