Jobless level dips in April

BATON ROUGE — Unemployed workers in Evangeline Parish collected $280,041 in benefit payments during April as unemployment declined in the parish, according to figures from the Louisiana Department of Labor.

While the state’s unemployment rate was at its lowest since January 1986, it remained almost twice the national level of 6.2 percent. Louisiana continues to lead the nation with 12 percent unemployment, followed by West Virginia with 11.4 percent and Mississippi with 9.3 percent. The March rate was 13.5 percent.

The jobless rate in Evangeline Parish dropped from 18.3 percent in March to 15.9 percent, partially due to a 75-person decline in the parish labor force. The number of unemployed for April was 2,175 — 325 fewer than in March. The number of employed grew by 250 to 11,475.

Assumption Parish still reported the state’s highest level of unemployment with 25.9 percent. Lincoln remained the parish with the lowest rate at 5.2 percent. Only six parishes had jobless rates of 20 percent or more, compared to 11 parishes in March.

Secretary of Labor Gayle F. Truly says 230,000 were unemployed in April. She adds the state’s unemployment may continue to decline as manufacturing and construction work increases.

The oil and gas industry lost the 100 jobs it gained in March, but manufacturing employment continued to rise. Construction jobs increased by 100, and transportation and utilities employment was 500 jobs greater. Government employment dropped by 100 jobs during March, a decline of 7,400 jobs since April 1986, with 4,100 of those jobs in state government.

Unemployment rates for the major labor market areas in April were as follows: Alexandria, 9.8 percent, down from 11 percent in March; Baton Rouge, 9.5, down, from 10.7; Houma-Thibodaux, 17.5, down from 20; Lafayette, 13.2, down from 14.9; Lake Charles, 12.7, down from 13.5; Monroe, 9.8, down from 11.2; New Orleans, 9.9, down from 10.9; and Shreveport, 11.1, down from 13.

Louisiana’s unemployment rate may fall slightly during the next month, as construction benefits from better weather conditions. Manufacturing could also increase during the next few months.