

SECOND QUARTER TWENTY-TWELVE . BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION

# CURRENTS

A black and white photograph of an elderly man, John W. Barton Sr., wearing glasses and a suit. He is standing by a large window, looking out towards the right. His arms are crossed, and his hands are resting on his chest. The background shows a cityscape through the window.

John W. Barton Sr.  
...a life well lived



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*Baton Rouge  
Area Foundation*



Nearly 50 years ago, John Barton and his wife Scott discovered an active community foundation during a trip to Spartanburg, South Carolina. They witnessed the good that this institution was achieving for the Spartanburg community, and Scott wondered why Baton Rouge didn't have such a foundation of its own. In response, Mr. Barton set about working to change that. He gathered civic leaders together and guided them in creating the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. But he certainly didn't stop there.

Through the decades, John Barton devoted himself to building up and fortifying the foundation he had established. His influence was quiet, but powerful. His wisdom, his generosity and his guiding principles left a profound impression on the Foundation. And the fruits of his patient labors are nothing short of inspiring: today, South Louisiana is home to one of the largest community foundations in the country.

Mr. Barton was astounded by what the Baton Rouge Area Foundation had become and by what it had accomplished. But we aren't. We recognized his determination. We understood his kind heart. We saw that he cared more about others—even people he hadn't met—more than about himself. So it is little wonder to us that an institution rooted in his values should flourish the way it has.

Surrounded by his family, Mr. Barton died on March 3 at his beloved home, Beech Grove Plantation in Wilson. He had enjoyed 95 years of a life lived well. In this issue, we honor Mr. Barton's legacy by asking his family and friends to tell stories about him.

• • •

Also in this issue, you will read about Nikhil Dhurandhar's unusual journey, beginning with questions asked in India

and leading to answers found at the Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge.

As a medical doctor in India, Dhurandhar wondered whether viruses could cause obesity. His pursuit of that question brought him to America, where his hypothesis—dismissed early on as nonsense—has proven to be correct.

Dhurandhar's research team at Pennington is now taking the next step, studying methods to address the virus. Along with obesity, their work could lead to medicines that are useful in treating other diseases.

Louisiana, and particularly Baton Rouge, is fortunate that Pennington has made its home here. It was created by Doc Pennington's donation, which was among the largest when it was given. Since then, the Center has brought a good name to our city, thanks especially to the brilliance and diligence of researchers like Dr. Dhurandhar.

We must continue to support Pennington and dedicate resources to other such endeavors as they attempt to answer the most difficult challenges faced by our planet.

• • •

The Foundation has begun our annual membership campaign. Members can congratulate themselves for backing the civic leadership projects that turn the course of our region. Downtown redevelopment is the most visible, with the opening of the town square, the construction of a third hotel in 10 years, and new apartments on Main Street as evidence of a turnaround for the city center.

But there are many others made possible by membership. Our civic leadership projects included the creation of the Companion Animal Alliance, which has taken over the animal shelter and dramatically improved the welfare of

We must continue to support Pennington and dedicate resources to other such endeavors as they attempt to answer the most difficult challenges faced by our planet.

lost pets while they wait to be adopted. The latest venture is The Water Institute of the Gulf, a nonprofit created by the Foundation and partners to address a Louisiana concern that intersects with a worldwide problem: what to do about the imperiled deltas.

Because of members, we were also able to devote staff time to launch New Schools for Baton Rouge, a nonprofit that will link with education leaders at many levels to take on the most challenged public schools.

Above all, our members are about hope, about what is possible when we willfully chose to improve the quality of lives across South Louisiana.

Our campaign this year is +1. Each one of our members is a building block for the work we do here at the Foundation. Please renew your membership. And if you aren't a member, we invite you to join us at BRAF.org or by calling Ellen Fargason at 225.387.6126.

With many people, the lifting is much easier and more gratifying.

Sincerely,



Matthew G. McKay

## *Baton Rouge Area Foundation*

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The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is a community foundation that takes advantage of opportunities to improve the quality of life in South Louisiana. We do so by providing two essential functions. One, the Foundation connects philanthropists with capable nonprofits to make sure the needs of our communities are met. For example, our donors support the Shaw Center for the Arts and education reform. Two, the Foundation invests in and manages pivotal projects to improve the region. Our Plan Baton Rouge initiative spearheaded the downtown revitalization plan and now is working to revive Old South Baton Rouge. For more information, contact Mukul Verma at [mverma@braf.org](mailto:mverma@braf.org).

*Currents* is published four times a year by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, 402 N. Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802. If you would like to be added to our distribution list, please contact us at 225.387.6126 or email the Foundation at [mverma@braf.org](mailto:mverma@braf.org).



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## *Baton Rouge Area Foundation*

**The Baton Rouge Area Foundation** is among more than 700 community foundations across the country. We work to improve the quality of life for all people in the region. We do so in two ways.

One, we connect philanthropists with nonprofits to make sure the needs of our neighbors are met. Our donors, for instance, fund music programs for children, provide money to feed the hungry and underwrite education reform. Last year, our donors and the Foundation made thousands of grants worth more than \$28 million. Two, the Foundation begins and manages civic leadership projects, including rebirth of neglected neighborhoods. Our latest civic initiative is The Water Institute of the Gulf, which is an independent nonprofit that will provide a scientific response to the problem of eroding marshes, rising seas and changing climate.

**Mission:** The Baton Rouge Area Foundation unites human and financial resources to enhance the quality of life in South Louisiana. To achieve our mission, we:

- serve donors to build the assets that drive initiatives and solutions;
- engage community leaders to develop appropriate responses to emerging opportunities and challenges;
- partner with entities from all segments of our service area, as well as with other community foundations, in order to leverage our collective resources and create the capacity to be a stimulus of positive regional change; and
- evaluate our work and share the results with our stakeholders.

**Who we serve:** We conduct projects and provide grants across South Louisiana—East and West Baton Rouge, East and West Feliciana, Ascension, Livingston, Pointe Coupee and Iberville. The Foundation works in St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington and St. Helena

parishes through the Northshore Community Foundation, a support organization that operates independently from a home base in Covington. The Foundation also supports the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana. Based in Lake Charles, that foundation serves Calcasieu, Beauregard, Allen, Cameron and Jefferson Davis parishes.

**How we work:** The Foundation is funded in several ways. One key way is through generous people who choose to start donor-advised funds to provide grants to nonprofit groups and community projects. Philanthropists can start a tax-deductible charitable fund for \$10,000. To learn more about charitable funds, call Ellen Fargason at 225.387.6126.

The Foundation also is funded through earnings on unrestricted assets, which were donated by philanthropists and grow over time.

Among Foundation assets is the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, which is comprised of real estate left by the late Wilbur Marvin. Those real estate assets include the Hilton Capitol Center Hotel in Baton Rouge, as well as shopping centers in Louisiana and Texas. The real estate assets are managed by Commercial Properties Realty Trust.

**What's our size:** At year-end 2011, the Foundation had estimated assets of \$608 million, making it among the top-20 largest community foundations in the country. Donors of the Foundation have provided the assets over 48 years. Since 1964, the Foundation has issued more than \$275 million in grants to support our community. Also, the Foundation has contracted with for-profit organizations to provide social benefits to the region, such as guidance on health care reform and direction on whether to build a new airport or invest in our existing ones.

More information is available at [BRAf.org](http://BRAf.org) or by calling Mukul Verma at 225.387.6126.

## Foundation starts new website, FB page Membership program is also underway

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation has launched a new website and Facebook page to provide more information to donors, members and the community.

Located at BRAF.org, the redesigned website offers improved navigation to fund donors, who can recommend grants, check their charitable fund balances and research nonprofits at a secure donor portal. The Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/BRAreaFoundation>) and Twitter feed (BRFdn) will let the Foundation report quickly about our work and post stories about issues and solutions to improve South Louisiana.

Also, the Foundation began its annual membership drive after the annual meeting in March. Members champion the work of the Foundation and support civic leadership projects, which include inner-city redevelopment and education reform. Our latest project is The Water Institute of the Gulf, a nonprofit that is gathering the smartest scientists to take on the double threat of rising seas and vanishing lands on deltas. To join the Foundation, visit BRAF.org. Memberships start at \$100.



## Grants

The Foundation's donors make thousands of grants each year. Here are a select few. All the grants are enumerated in annual reports.

**TEACH A MAN TO COOK FISH** With the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and other donors, YouthBuild Gulf Coast has begun to renovate a forgotten building into a site for training people with the skills to work in the restaurant industry.

YouthBuild has IRD Gulf Coast as a partner in Café Climb. The former laundry they are renovating in Gulfport will have a culinary training center and a restaurant in a phase set to open in June. Forty disadvantaged people from 18 to 26 will be trained each year, with their food offered at the attached restaurant. Café Climb is based on a New Orleans-based youth culinary program with an accomplished record.

The second phase will have classrooms and offices from YouthBuild, AmeriCorps, the Mississippi Oil Spill Case Management Collaborative and a housing program.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted \$1 million to the project with BP as a partner. Other donors are

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Coast Coca-Cola, Mississippi Power Co., Naomi's Catering and Genzer-WHL Architects.

**FROM PHONE TO WEB** The Powell Group Fund at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted \$15,000 to the Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center, known widely for counseling services through The Phone program. The center is using funding to provide online counseling through CrisisChat.org.

**MAKE LEMONADE** In preparation for the upcoming Lemonade Day, Raising Cane's has created a fund at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and deposited \$30,000 into the charitable account. Contributors have added \$15,000 to the Lemonade Day fund, which is managed by the Foundation. Lemonade Day is a free and fun program that teaches 5- to 17-year-olds how to start, own and operate their own business using a lemonade stand. They earn money, share profits with charities and stimulate local economies. Lemonade Day is May 12.





**STORYTIME** The EBR Library System expects to begin construction of the new Rouzan branch library by the end of the year. The branch should open 18 months after building begins.

The branch has been years in the making, slowed at first by the search for a location and then by the accountability mechanisms of city-parish government, which oversees projects for the library system.

The 15,000-square-foot branch off Perkins Road near College Drive was designed by Looney Ricks Kiss. It will be accessible by bikes because the city-parish has federal money to build a path along Hyacinth Avenue from Glasgow to Stanford, connecting the neighborhoods to the library and city lakes.



**COEXIST** Stabbed in the Art, a novel art event, celebrated its third anniversary in March.

On the first Friday of every month, art lovers meet up at a warehouse on Perkins Road at Terrace Avenue in the Garden District to view local works and enjoy some food and drinks. Stabbed in the Art proves that social events, when managed well, can be held within residential areas without complaints from people who live there.

Jared Loftus, owner of a national T-shirt business and the first to try food trucks in Baton Rouge, created and hosts Stabbed in the Art at his warehouse.



**ROUND AND ROUND** LSU is an Eden in Baton Rouge. With admirable dedication, the university has built a campus recognized around the country for its Italianate architecture, groomed public spaces and emphasis on pedestrians.

In early spring, the university announced more beautification projects with practical benefits. A roundabout will be constructed on Dalrymple Drive to improve the flow of traffic near University Lab School. A monument will be at the center of the roundabout.

LSU will build signature gateways at the lake entrance on South Stadium and West Lakeshore drives, and at the intersections of Nicholson Drive and Nicholson Extension and Burbank Drive and Nicholson Drive. A video board featuring LSU events would be located at the entrance of Nicholson Drive.

The university is offering naming rights for the projects, which are estimated to cost \$1.2 million. Construction could begin later this year.



The Foundation conducts long-term civic leadership initiatives and short-term special projects—all underwritten in large part by members. Civic leadership initiatives include The Water Institute of the Gulf and reclaiming Old South Baton Rouge, while short-term projects include the No Kill effort that led to the birth of the Companion Animal Alliance, which has taken over the EBR Animal Shelter and reduced the euthanasia rate. Here, we provide an update on some of our projects.

**WATER INSTITUTE LAUNCHES** The Water Institute of the Gulf has launched as an independent nonprofit that will hire the best scientists to produce solutions for deltas that are imperiled by rising seas and subsiding land.

The Foundation created the Institute upon a request from U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu and in consultation with many scientists and the government, particularly the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. The Foundation granted \$1 million to start the Institute, which will rely on government funding, grants and private contracts to grow in coming years.

Kevin Reilly Jr., Lamar Advertising CEO, is the first board chair of the Institute, and Charles “Chip” Groat is the first top executive.

“Dr. Groat’s decision to join TWIG as president and CEO is a huge win for the foundation of this organization, and it’s an even bigger win for Louisiana and the very serious challenges the Gulf Coast faces both now and in the future,” said Reilly. “Along with the decades of experience he brings from the United States Geological Survey, academia and as a world-class scientist whose recent research has focused on energy and water resources, Dr. Groat spent many years developing an acute understanding of the needs of our coastal areas in Louisiana. On behalf of the board of directors, we look forward to establishing this institute under Dr. Groat’s leadership and advancing its mission.”

Most recently, Groat has served as the director of the Center for International Energy and Environmental Policy and associate director of the Energy Institute at The University of Texas at Austin. He served as director of the

## THE WATER INSTITUTE OF THE GULF

U.S. Geological Survey under presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

“The institute will break new ground in the study of coastal and deltaic systems with independent, world-class science to inform ongoing coastal protection and restoration efforts led by the state of Louisiana, and we’ll do it by working in cooperation with the many talented researchers already studying the field,” Groat said. “We’ll gather the best scientific minds to build what we believe will become one of the world’s premier coastal and deltaic research facilities, and it’s going to be located right here on the Gulf Coast.”

“It’s no secret we face a critical challenge along the Gulf Coast as it relates to needs for both protection and restoration,” Groat said. “By locating TWIG in Louisiana, we are able to use the perfect laboratory to learn and advise efforts for Gulf Coast protection and restoration, and leverage the information across the world to help other areas facing similar challenges.”

Groat is forming a Science and Engineering Advisory Council that will outline a strategic science plan for the institute, including program elements and priorities, and staffing needs.

TWIG board members are Charlotte Bollinger, executive vice president of Bollinger Shipyards Inc. and a member of its board; James A. Joseph, a professor of Duke University’s Practice of Public Policy Studies program and a former U.S. ambassador to South Africa appointed by President Clinton; Mary Matalin, a respected author, political strategist and former host of CNN’s *Crossfire* program; Retired Maj. Gen. Thomas Sands, an attorney and senior advisor with the Washington, D.C.-based firm Dawson & Associates and former commander in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Thomas Strickland, partner in WilmerHale and former assistant secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks as well as chief of staff to Sec. of the Interior Ken Salazar from 2009-2011; and Jacqui Vines, senior vice president and general manager for Cox Louisiana. •

## Ernest Gaines book award

In late January, the Foundation awarded the fifth annual Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence to Dinaw Mengestu for his novel, *How to Read the Air*. Mengestu flew in from Paris to accept the award and to teach at area schools.

At the awards ceremony, Mr. Gaines, who lives in Oscar, La., spoke a few words before Mengestu read from his work. Below is an excerpt of Mr. Gaines' speech and the opening paragraph of *How to Read the Air*.

**ERNEST J. GAINES:** "I'm still around. I heard over the radio over the last couple of days that the award was given in my memory, instead of in my honor. I've been walking around the house very carefully, with the aid of my walker, to ensure of being here tonight. For how long, I don't know, but at least I'm here tonight.

I've said it before and I say it again. I feel that I'm one of the luckiest men on the face of the Earth when you consider the depth of the poverty I came from—the plantation 20 or so miles away from here, in Pointe Coupee Parish; born in a cabin such as the one that my ancestors had lived in as slaves; worked in the cotton fields as a child, as my ancestors had done in slavery. From the depth of that poverty to reach the pinnacle of this day, when another young African American writer will receive a literary award for literary excellence in the name of Ernest J. Gaines on behalf of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

Yes, yes. I feel that I'm one of the luckiest of guys on the face of the Earth. The journey to here has not been smooth. I had to leave home to be educated, to study the art of writing. But I never forgot home or the people at home. The young writer whom we are recognizing tonight also had to leave home, had to leave his country, Ethiopia.

Before I started teaching writing at the University of Louisiana Lafayette, I, along with a couple of older writers in San Francisco, would gather at someone's home to help other beginning writers. One of my students brought a story one night about a guy sitting on a bed, wondering should he go or not go to work. Over and over, should he go or not go to work? The author worked at the Navy shipyard. I told him that the story needed emotion; it needed action; something should happen.

The next week, he brought back the story with the opening word, 'Boom.' Capital 'B' 'O' 'O' 'M' with three exclamation

Ernest J. Gaines is seated. Standing, from left, judges Pat Towers and Tom Beller, winner Dinaw Mengestu and judge Elizabeth Nunez.



tion points. Now the character, he doesn't move. Now he sits on the bed wondering what went 'BOOM!!!.' I wrote on his paper that he should stick to his shipyard job.

Our writer tonight begins his novel with a BOOM, not the word "Boom." But with the action, with movement—the best way to get a reader's attention for a book.

The first paragraph, if not the first sentence, should get his or her attention. If not the first sentence or paragraph, he surely won't get it in the second paragraph, because the person will not read it.

Tonight's guest knows those rules. Readers searching for a book want something from the first paragraph. They want people going somewhere, or coming back from somewhere, or getting ready to go somewhere, or just came in from somewhere."

### Opening paragraph from *How to Read the Air* by Dinaw Mengestu

"It was four hundred eighty-four miles from my parents' home in Peoria, Ill., to Nashville, Tenn., a distance that in a seven-year-old Monte Carlo driving at roughly 60 miles an hour could be crossed in eight to twelve hours, depending on road signs offering side excursions to historical landmarks, and how often my mother, Mariam, would have to go to the bathroom. They called the trip a vacation, but only because neither of them was comfortable with the word "honeymoon," which in its marrying of two completely separate words, each of which they understood on its own, seemed to imply when joined together a lavishness that neither was prepared to accept. They were not newlyweds, but their three years apart had made them strangers. They spoke to each other in whispers, half in Amharic, half in English, as if any one word uttered loudly could reveal to both of them that, in fact, they had never understood each other; they had never known who the other person was at all."

For more about the award, visit [ErnestJGainesAward.org](http://ErnestJGainesAward.org).

# BREC

Carolyn McKnight has joined the parks system at an opportune crossroads. She arrives as the new superintendent in time to complete the Imagine Your Parks initiative, which has converted mostly neglected parks into inviting destinations.

All the while, she's ready to take the next big step, with a long-term goal of building a comprehensive network of trails. First, though, she's interested in engaging the community, making certain that BREC's advancement matches the desires of residents.

We spoke with McKnight, who is returning to the field of parks management after a spell with Dallas government. She has worked as assistant parks superintendent in Dallas and San

Diego, which has one of the best park networks in the country.

## What are her favorite parks?

She quickly names three: Millennium Park in Chicago, Central Park in New York and Balboa Park in San Diego.

But a park she loves dearly is a small one in Dallas that is a joint project of the parks system and neighborhood civic association.

With responsibility granted by the park system, the Swiss Avenue Association programmed events, such as weddings, at the pocket park. Earnings from the programming, coupled with Dallas park maintenance programs, meant the park

was among the best. "They planted flowers and trees and they would do meticulous maintenance of the park," said McKnight.

**Was that an unusual arrangement?** "It's not unusual for other parts of the country to engage community groups for higher level of park maintenance. I'd like to do some of that in Baton Rouge."

She cites the relationship with Raising Cane's to build dog parks in Baton Rouge as a model BREC can use to connect with businesses, civic groups, churches and the school system, where she sees an overlap in services. "We are doing the same things. We can get a bang for the buck."

**On crime:** Without being asked, McKnight says BREC is an obvious component for reducing the Baton Rouge crime problem. "We should be one of the major spokes in the wheel to address that situation."

How so? She expects to work with churches to create athletic leagues that keep children busy after school. "We want to keep them engaged so we are that safety net between school and home."

**Back to Millennium Park, the first choice she gave as her favorite park.** The superintendent cites the Chicago park as exceptional because it offers programs around the year and does so for many audiences. There is, for instance, ice skating in winter and fountains to run through in summer. Open space lets people do what they wish, while the Frank Gehry-designed amphitheater is a venue for performing arts. "It's a park you can play in all year."

## What's her favorite park in Baton Rouge?

She's quick to say Greenwood Park, recently opened near Baker. "It is incredible." Within it, there is a zoo, a golf course, a playground, a splash pad, walking trails, a dog park, a lake with boat rentals, a community theater, open spaces. "We even have food so you don't have to leave. It's like Central Park for East Baton Rouge Parish, but it's not centrally located."



**A problem:** BREC has 61 recreation buildings, about 20 more than Dallas, which has three times the population. “It costs a lot of money to operate 61 recreation centers. It’s a huge part of the budget. I want us to be smart how we provide services.” She would prefer shifting toward larger facilities that offer more services to multi-generational audiences.

**A big goal:** McKnight names a trail network among her top priorities. Such a network would link neighborhood trails with community parks and regional trail networks, “so we can go from one part of the parish to the next without having to drive.” Trails serve more than recreation; they address traffic problems by providing an alternative. Patience is her request, because creating a trail network takes time. (See accompanying story in this issue about bike trails, page 32.)

**Her next step:** Over the next 18 months, BREC will convene residents to create its next strategic plan, a follow-up to the Imagine Your Parks initiative. “It’s in good shape; that’s what I tell my staff,” she says of the parks system. “But it isn’t good enough. We want to get a national Gold Medal again.”

—Mukul Verma



## Letter from Kids' Orchestra

Dear Friends at the Foundation,

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the opportunity for a few members of Kids' Orchestra to perform for the 48th Annual Meeting of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation at the Manship Theater.

Although it was cold and rainy outside, the response of the attendees was warm and embracing!

Our kids grow from every performing experience, and March 21 was no exception.

One small musician even volunteered to play a solo and carried it off with great aplomb, even though she had only been studying about six weeks.

We are indeed building confidence and leadership skills. Many have asked how they might learn more about Kids' Orchestra, and lend their support. They can do so at our website, [www.kidsorchestra.org](http://www.kidsorchestra.org).

We welcome donations of time, funds, and instruments, and hope to see many of you at our upcoming Spring Concert May 21.

Best wishes,  
Gwen Jones  
Executive Director, Kids' Orchestra

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**Editor's note:** The Kids' Orchestra was featured in a recent *Currents* issue. The group received startup funding from Nanette Noland's charitable fund at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.



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Janet Simmons and HOPE Ministries are using online sales to get the poor out of poverty.

# Why not?

## HOPE Ministries tries unconventional ideas to lift the poor

By Maggie Heyn Richardson  
Photos by Tim Mueller



Every weekday morning, dozens of struggling Baton Rouge residents make their way to HOPE Ministries, a versatile nonprofit on Winbourne Avenue whose mission is to prevent homelessness and promote self-sufficiency. Men and women perilously close to economic ruin flock to HOPE's campus—a former church—where staff members meet with them one-on-one and connect them to local resources that fit their needs. An on-site food pantry organized like a grocery store allows them to shop with dignity, and a family counseling program helps them understand financial literacy and make long-term personal changes. The North Baton Rouge neighborhood in which HOPE is situated suffers from disinvestment and high crime, but the nonprofit's staff members greet clients with compassion and optimism within its walls.

“Our job is to look poverty in the face every day and stare back at it with hope,” says Ed Cooper, who retired from the corporate world and now serves as HOPE's volunteer coordinator.

For many years, HOPE Ministries has enjoyed a strong reputation among Baton Rouge nonprofits. The agency voluntarily earned the rigorous Standards for Excellence certification through the Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations. But like nonprofits nationwide, HOPE is now focused on balancing increased demand with diminishing resources. Public funds, once a security blanket for many charities, are scarce, while grants and private donations are more competitive than ever.

This new reality led to a bold strategy at HOPE. In 2006, the nonprofit's executive staff began to examine how

"It's really become important for charities to develop those independent sources of revenue," Williamson says. "The trick is to find a business idea that fits the abilities of the nonprofit."

Simmons says for nonprofits like HOPE, which have expertise in working with people in poverty, pinpointing a viable business idea can be difficult. Unlike an organization such as the YMCA, there were no obvious services for which HOPE could charge a fee.

But HOPE's staff and board were undeterred. In 2006, they met to discuss potential social ventures and came away



Our job is to look poverty in the face every day and stare back at it with hope.

—Ed Cooper, HOPE Ministries volunteer coordinator

social enterprise could help permanently sustain its operating budget and free it from the whims of a tumultuous economy.

"We were looking at how well social enterprise had worked for the Girl Scouts, the YMCA and Goodwill," recalls Janet Simmons, HOPE's director of operations and social enterprise. "We needed to find ways of generating income that was neither donations nor grants."

Social enterprise refers to the combining of business practices with social good, and it can originate within a business or a nonprofit.

Businesses engaged in social enterprise develop a double bottom line, in which profit and social good are dual priorities. (In the case of a triple bottom line, the company also measures environmental stewardship.)

For nonprofits, the idea is to develop new business streams that can ultimately generate sustained revenue. This "modest profitability," says LANO President and CEO Ann Silverberg Williamson, allows a charity to continue—and grow—its mission despite future economic disruption.

with a substantial list.

"We brainstormed 55 ideas," recalls Simmons. "Nothing was off limits."

Three ideas had the most promise: HOPE believed it could develop a successful fee-based training program on the dynamics of poverty, which could help other agencies to learn to work with this particular population. Second, a retail program seemed doable. Finally, the nonprofit believed it could eventually develop a housing program that would generate income while providing places to live for low- to moderate-income residents.

To date, HOPE has executed the first two objectives. In 2009, the agency launched its popular Understanding the Dynamics of Poverty training program and has taught the workshop to more than 100 different social service agencies that work with low-income men and women. The Louisiana Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers has approved the training for six continuing education hours.

Simmons says the purpose is to help bridge the gap between the "middle-class world," which follows certain





rules and expectations, and the poverty world, which operates outside of those rules.

“When you’ve been brought up in poverty, things like time, punctuality and transportation might mean something completely different to you,” Simmons says. “You probably don’t have a car, and your daily life has traditionally been about survival.”

HOPE has also developed a training program for businesses that have employees with roots in poverty. The DREAM program was originally developed for Woman’s Hospital and trains employees in personal financial literacy. With a better understanding of saving, retirement, long-term budgeting and more, these employees will begin to build stronger financial futures and will more likely work hard and retain their jobs, says Simmons.

For its second social enterprise, retail, HOPE staff and board members considered selling a variety of different products, but could not come up with anything competitive enough to trump what was already available in stores. That’s when they decided to create an online portal called the Louisiana Community Marketplace that would allow consumers to donate to local charities while ordering goods online. Currently, 233 stores are assembled in the online shopping mall. The cost of goods isn’t higher for patrons since the nonprofit donation comes from a commission paid by the stores. As the owner and host, HOPE keeps 50%

of each commission.

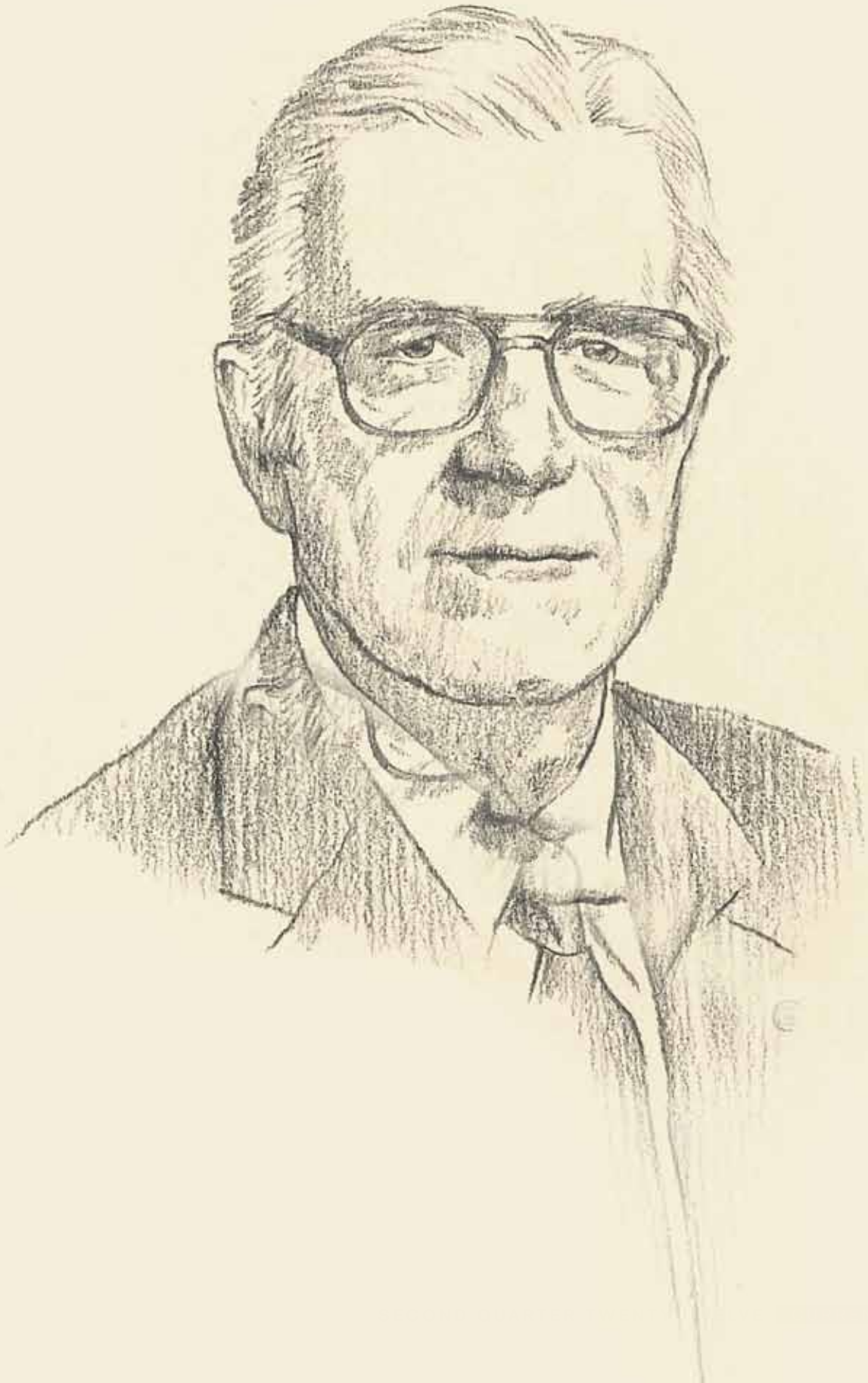
“Every year, \$4.5 billion leaves Louisiana in online sales,” says Simmons. “We wanted to capture some of that and direct it toward Louisiana nonprofits.”

HOPE announced the creation of Louisiana Community Marketplace last August at the LANO annual meeting in New Orleans. The nonprofit is hoping to raise funds to support a major marketing effort to help consistently drive traffic to the site.

Back on HOPE’s campus, everyday life remains a challenge for its clients. Outside the food pantry, a bench is full of men and women waiting their turn to select fresh, canned and packaged food items. Today at the food pantry, flowers are even available, an overrun from a local merchant. Cooper loves it when that happens, because it reinforces the food pantry’s goal to provide a normal, shameless experience. Meanwhile, other clients are taking part in a counseling program called Getting Ahead in a Just-Getting By World, which helps them understand the root causes of poverty and how they can permanently get out of it.

While HOPE’s social enterprise programs are in their early stages, Simmons sees them as a strong part of the nonprofit’s future. She’s confident more will follow.

“Thinking this way is essential to agencies today,” she says. “Our dream is to generate a stable pipeline of revenue.”



# John W. Barton Sr., 1917-2012

## A life well lived

By Sara Bongiorno and Mukul Verma

**T**he story of John W. Barton Sr.'s life began on the first day of 1917. For 95 years, he lived an inspirational life—the kind of life that offers a model for a good Southern gentleman.

From the small town of Napoleonville, he moved to the relatively big city of Baton Rouge, where he established and purchased several businesses, including Jack's Cookies. With hard work and smart investments, he built a small fortune. And he generously shared it with others.

His character was shaped by the lessons of his father, who taught him, above all else, "To work hard. Be diligent. Be honest. And to stand up for what you think is right." And, in turn, John W. Barton's character helped to shape the region.

He was a founder of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. He was a chief fundraiser for the Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center. But besides contributing so much himself, he famously enabled other people to make their own marks on their communities.

In a 1995 interview, Barton said, "Well, without it being a cliché, I guess the objective I always had was either to hire or become associated with the most talented people I could attract, and then give them as much responsibility and support as I could. I guess having been given that sort of opportunity in my own personal situation, I thought it was exciting to do it for others."

On Sundays, he would pack the family into the car and drive from rural Old Hammond Highway to check on the operations at Jack's Cookies, where his children would get to feast on the broken cookies. Or they would head over to Ryan Airport, where Barton practiced shooting skeet, honing his skills to become a national skeet-shooting champion. Remarkable in so many ways, "He was the kind of man you cannot imagine," says Annette D. Barton, his daughter.

Here, we remember him through personal stories from those who knew him well.



He had a way of asking questions that could illuminate a path forward without telling me what to do.

—Todd Stevens, Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center

## **Todd Stevens**

Todd Stevens was struggling with the complexity of a proposed public-private partnership with Louisiana State University's medical physics program. As the president and CEO of Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center, Stevens liked the idea, but the deal had bogged down in the details.

He points to a conversation with Barton, one of the cancer center's founding directors, as a breakthrough moment that helped him clear the way to move forward with this vital collaboration. During a visit to Barton's office in late 2003 or early 2004, Stevens mentioned the proposal to him. Barton was unfamiliar with the concept that Stevens had in mind, but he seemed intrigued. Barton probed the issue with a series of fundamental questions, such as whether the project would really lead to improved cancer care for patients. Unencumbered by the kind of details that had bedeviled Stevens, Barton simply asked about what mattered most.

"A couple of days after that conversation, it became crystal clear to me what needed to happen," Stevens says. "He had a way of asking questions that could illuminate a path forward without telling me what to do. Many times over the years, his observations and comments guided me."

Barton was instrumental in raising the funds that first allowed Mary Bird Perkins to start operations in 1971. Stevens remembers getting suggestions about who would be important for him to meet after he joined the cancer center in 2000. He was struck by the unanimity of the response. "Mr. Barton was on everyone's list of who I needed to meet."

## **David Ellison Jr.**

A few weeks before Barton passed away at age 95, David Ellison Jr. enjoyed lunch with him. During the meal, Ellison turned to another companion at the table and made a prediction.

"I told him that before we left the room, five ladies were going to kiss (Barton)," Ellison said. But he was wrong. "Six ladies kissed him before we left the room. Who among us has had six ladies kiss us, ever? A seventh lady kissed him outside as he was leaving," Ellison added, a little dismayed.

Ellison first met Barton in 1958 during his first week as a lawyer. A partner had asked him to assist with a transaction involving Barton. So, for two weeks, Ellison ran errands, carried Barton's briefcase, "and we became friends," he says.

During their 54-year friendship, Ellison and Barton spent lots of early mornings together in the hunting blinds, waiting for turkeys. Turkey hunting was a passion of Barton's—his first joy, after his family, according to Ellison. Barton enjoyed those cool spring mornings when the forest, blooming with dogwoods, was still dark, before the first warblings of songbirds or the unmistakable gobble of a turkey. Turkeys have keen vision and they are not easily fooled, but, with inexhaustible patience, Barton was able to slowly lure the birds close to the blind with a series of calls. His skill in coaxing the birds to come to him was legendary.

"It was the total experience that he loved," Ellison says.

Barton's devotion to the sport and his focus in the field left a powerful impression on his fellow hunters. Years ago, state Supreme Court Justice Fred Blanche spent four hours sitting motionless next to Barton in a blind as he called a turkey. Ellison later asked Blanche how he'd managed to remain still for so long.



John Barton and his wife, Scott Duchain Barton

“He told me, ‘I’m afraid of that man,’” Ellison recalls. “He said, ‘That man made me sit still.’”

About 30 years ago, Barton’s late wife, Scott, asked Ellison to try to talk Barton into giving up turkey hunting. Ellison told her he couldn’t do it.

“I said I wouldn’t ask him because it was something he enjoyed so much,” Ellison says. “That was what thrilled him.”

Barton didn’t give it up. In fact, he hunted for the next 30 years or so, making his final outing just a year ago at the age of 94 on the first day of turkey season in Mississippi. His companions included a 97-year-old friend, Paul Haygood.

And Barton bagged a turkey.

## **Kevin Couhig**

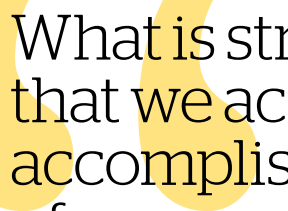
Kevin Couhig grew up in the Felicianas, not far from John Barton Sr.’s home at Beech Grove Plantation. His

parents were casual friends of the Barton family. Barton became a mentor to Couhig in the mid-1980s while they worked together on the formation of Louisiana Seed Capital Corp., the forerunner of Source Capital and the first certified capital company in the country. Barton was chairman of the board from the time of the organization’s launch in 1988 until about 2005.

Couhig has been president and CEO of Source Capital since its inception, and he met monthly with Barton for more than 20 years to discuss strategy and operations.

He calls Barton “a mentor the likes of which few people will ever have,” and he credits Barton’s “unique capacity to remain optimistic” as one reason he was willing to embrace innovative solutions to a spectrum of business and community challenges.

“He didn’t dictate solutions, but he could understand a need and knew how to ask the right questions to help lead you to a solution,” Couhig says, echoing remarks made by



What is striking to me is that everything that we accomplished together we accomplished when he was past 70 years of age.

—Kevin Couhig, Source Capital

others about Barton's style of guidance. "He knew how to nudge without pushing."

Lending his considerable credibility to the effort, Barton played an active role in finding a creative, though untested, entity for early-stage financing. It was an ambitious endeavor that began when Barton was already more than 70 years old, and it was uncharted territory.

"We knew there was a need, but nobody knew what to do," Couhig says. "What is striking to me is that everything that we accomplished together we accomplished when he was past 70 years of age."

Barton could almost always sort out the right course of action, typically by asking questions that got to the heart of a problem, Couhig says. Barton cared about doing the right thing, and he insisted on the same from anybody he was involved with on a project or a venture, Couhig adds.

Barton could turn a phrase or tell a story in a way that was likely to linger in the mind of his listener. He was fond of the expression, "There are more ways to choke a dog than feeding it cookies." But Couhig concedes that he was never sure whether Barton coined the saying—or even what it meant exactly.

Barton also knew how to tell a joke, even when the joke was on him. That was the case when, as a renowned conservationist, he helped reintroduce the black bear back into

the Louisiana wilds. Barton had arranged permits to trap and transport several bears from the upper Midwest back to Louisiana. He gathered a group and sent them north to do the work of finding, capturing and moving the bears.

Couhig recalled Barton telling the story, which is at least 20 years old, in this way: "Being a resourceful group of Cajuns, they noticed bears liked to gather around dumpsters at the outskirts of town. So they set their traps by the dumpsters and brought back about 50 bears to Louisiana. But after they released them here, local officials started getting all kinds of reports of bears hunting for food by dumpsters and behind businesses. The bears had been acclimated to life with dumpsters. It caused all kinds of problems."

Of course, in his retelling, Couhig admits to leaving out plenty of the colorful details that used to amuse Barton's listeners so much.

"He knew how to make that story last for hours," he says.

### **Austen Delahaye and Leonard Nachman**

John Barton Sr. had very clear ideas about what constitutes a gentleman, and especially about what a gentleman should wear—or not wear—to the dinner table.

Austen Delahaye was sitting at the table at the "turkey house," Barton's camp at Beech Grove Plantation, when

# THE FOUND -ATION

INNOVATORS +1

Our members champion our work and provide funding for civic leadership projects. You can see what they have done across East Baton Rouge, South Louisiana and the world.

With them, the Foundation has visibly improved downtown Baton Rouge, created nonprofits and made them effective, and originated the EBR Redevelopment Authority, which is beating the odds to reclaim forgotten neighborhoods.

Next up is The Water Institute for the Gulf, a nonprofit launched with our members to provide the best science for answering the dual threat of rising seas and disappearing lands, which are imperiling our vital coast and cherished cities—New Orleans, Cocodrie, Delacroix.

Members are our +1. They are the building blocks the Foundation stands upon to give all people a chance to live more accomplished lives.

Become a member at [BRAf.org](http://BRAf.org) or by calling Ellen Fargason at 225.387.6126.

*Baton Rouge  
Area Foundation*



John Davies, CEO of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, with John Barton at Barton's 95th birthday party, January 2012.

Barton commented on the cap the boy was wearing.

"He said it was a nice cap and he'd like to take a look at it," Delahaye recalls.

Barton gestured for Delahaye to give it to him for inspection, and then beckoned him to follow him outside. Barton was carrying a shotgun. Behind the house, he suddenly chambered a shell, tossed the cap into the air, took aim at it. He did not fire.

Barton then turned to the bewildered Delahaye and told him that if he liked his cap he'd do well to remove it at the dinner table.

"I haven't worn a hat at the table since," said Delahaye.

The story is a favorite among Barton's friends, and in the intervening 20 years it has been embellished to include firing of the gun. Longtime friends describe Barton as a gentleman, and his dramatic demonstration behind the camp was part of a lifelong effort to instill gentlemanly values in young men, said attorney Leonard Nachman, who

met Barton as a young attorney in the mid-70s.

"He was a gentleman, and that was his approach, even in hunting," Nachman said.

Besides good manners, Barton modeled gentlemanly behaviour in every way. For him, that also meant working to conserve the wildlife he hunted, Nachman said.

The point made outside the turkey house wasn't lost on the young Delahaye.

"In essence what he was telling me was that if you are a gentleman, that doesn't stop when you get to the hunting camp," he says. "It served its purpose."

### **John Noland**

Within 48 hours of the death of John Barton Sr.'s beloved wife, Scott, there were no less than 20 casseroles on his doorstep, recalls his friend John Noland. "These were 20 women eager to signal their availability and interest,"



Noland says. “He was a friendly, marvelously patient man, admired by everyone who knew him. Even when he was in his 90s, women noticed him. He was born handsome, and he died handsome.”

Barton was also a keen marksman and an expert turkey caller. Noland recalls that his friend had a sack with 50 to 100 calls inside. “He called up hundreds of turkeys,” Noland says. “I don’t think anybody had the skill he had to call up a turkey.”

Barton took great joy in calling up turkeys for his friends, especially if it was their first bird. Noland was among those he estimates as dozens of friends in the Baton Rouge area who brought down their first turkey thanks to Barton’s uncanny skill in calling the birds from the blind. Barton was 30 years Noland’s senior and, from the start, the younger man admired him.

“He lived for 95 years, had friends of all ages, and I don’t think he ever had an enemy,” Noland says. “When I grow up, I want to be John Barton.”

his car’s astonishing fuel economy that he wrote letters of praise to company headquarters in Detroit, Bailey recounts. But, after about a month, the same group of friends began instead to siphon gas from the car’s tank at night.

“So he went from getting 100 miles to the gallon to getting maybe three miles to the gallon,” Bailey says. “I don’t know if John Barton was directly involved or not, but he liked to tell the story. He very much enjoyed life, and he wasn’t perfect, because if he had been, people would not have loved him. And they did love him.”



My mother said John Barton was the handsomest man she ever met. I’d say he was also one of the most modest.

—Jim Bailey

## **Jim Bailey**

John Barton Sr. was better looking than screen idol Clark Gable.

That was the conclusion of Jim Bailey’s mother, who knew both men. Certainly, Clark Gable was good looking. Mrs. Bailey had met him in the 1950s when the star was filming a movie at the family’s River Road plantation. And he was charming too.

But, apparently, Clark Gable had nothing on John Barton.

“My mother said John Barton was the handsomest man she ever met,” Bailey says. “I’d say he was also one of the most modest.”

Barton enjoyed a good practical joke and a well-told story, and Bailey remembers one of Barton’s tales as a particular favorite from his youth. It centers around Baton Rouge’s first Chevrolet dealership. The young man who owned the newly opened dealership proudly drove a new Chevy as his personal vehicle. Friends of the young business owner spent several weeks sneaking off with that Chevy every night to fill it with gas. The dealership’s owner was so impressed with

## **Terrell Brown**

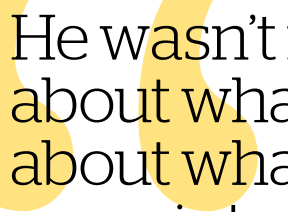
John Barton Sr. was better known as a hunter, but he also loved to fish. When Terrell Brown admitted to him that he did not own a rod and reel, Barton got mad and had one dropped off at Brown’s house.

“He told me to be ready the next time he asked me to go fishing,” Brown says.

And when Barton asked Brown about the biggest deer he’d ever shot, Brown confessed that he could not claim one of any size; he had never shot a deer. Barton was utterly confounded and resolved to correct this grievous deficiency in the man’s life.

Barton told him to be ready to go hunting the following Sunday afternoon. Brown arrived at the appointed time at Beech Grove Plantation, and they took some practice shots. Then they drove deep onto the property in search of deer. They passed several in the first meadow. Brown asked if they should stop. Barton said this wasn’t the place.

In time, the men arrived at a deer stand in a meadow. They parked, climbed up, and Barton took a short nap. The



He wasn't focused on short-term impact, or about what something meant to him, but about what a project would mean 20 or 30 years into the future. He looked forward at every age.

—Terrell Brown

day wore on, and Brown sat waiting and watching as more and more deer meandered out from the woods and into the meadow. He figures that there were maybe 50 deer within shooting range. Barton woke up. Brown asked if he should take a shot. Barton shook his head, and gestured across the field.

“Your deer isn't here,” he told Brown. “He's going to come from over there.”

The men waited, but Brown's deer did not appear. Eventually, a flock of low-flying Canadian geese spooked the deer, which scattered. There was nothing left for them to do but climb down and head for home.

“The deer he had in mind never showed up,” Brown says. “It was probably the most complete day of hunting you could have, even without shooting anything.”

Yet even Barton's connection to wildlife provides an illustration of his instinctual search for precisely the right long-term solutions to issues that were important to him. Barton was devoted to the conservation of wild turkeys, for instance. He worked regionally and nationally supporting the preservation of the bird that was the focus of so many of his outings with friends.

Barton was always one to take the long view, no matter his own stage of life.

“Even when he was over 70 years old himself, he was

always looking for long-term solutions, and that was true whether the issue was education, politics, social concerns, or conservation,” Brown says.

That patient search for the right long-term solutions was what led Barton to the founding of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and the Forum 35 civic group. It spurred his efforts in raising funds to support vital institutions like Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center and to meet the operational expenses of the Pennington Biomedical Research Center after the bricks-and-mortar gift of Doc Pennington.

“His idea was always, ‘What's this project or this initiative going to mean for your children and grandchildren?’” Brown says. “He wasn't focused on short-term impact, or about what something meant to him, but about what a project would mean 20 or 30 years into the future. He looked forward at every age.”

## **Nanette Noland**

Nanette Noland knew nothing about fundraising. Besides, she had always hated to ask people for money, no matter what it was for.

But when John Barton Sr. and Milton Womack asked her to head the \$1-million fundraising campaign for a new building for Cancer Services of Greater Baton Rouge, she



John Barton and his wife, Scott Duchain Barton

knew what her answer had to be.

“I couldn’t say no to either one of them,” Noland says, recalling their meeting in Womack’s office in the mid-1980s. “I had no experience raising money, but neither one of them was going to let me out of that office until I agreed.”

Barton provided crucial guidance to Noland during her tenure as chair of the organization’s fundraising committee. He was already heavily involved in his own work to raise money for the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, so Noland enjoyed the benefit of observing Barton’s successes and learning from his insights, she says.

“I could not have done it without him,” Noland admits.

If Barton was there at the start of Noland’s work, he was also there at its conclusion. To construct a new building for Cancer Services of Greater Baton Rouge, she needed to raise

a million dollars. But Noland found herself \$75,000 shy of her goal. That’s when Barton called to tell her that he had a donation that he wanted to bring to her. He presented her with a \$75,000 check from Doc Pennington.

“He certainly made my day,” she says.

Barton was well-known for the forward-looking vision that characterized his civic work. But his easy partnership and friendship with women in the business community also distinguished him, Noland points out.

“He liked everybody, including women, and he was bold and comfortable with the idea of having women as friends, which was unusual,” she says. “He was a charmer.” •

# The EBR we want

Some believe that Baton Rouge has sorted itself into four geographic areas that are quarreling over the direction of the parish. That appears not to be true. Our CityStats survey late last year reveals that there is much agreement over what people want for themselves and the parish, including a vibrant downtown, taxes for mass transit and infrastructure, and components of the FutureBR plan.

The poll presents an opportunity for EBR leadership, providing a clear policy direction for the parish.

On behalf of the Foundation, LSU's Public Policy Research Lab polled EBR residents in October and November 2011. The goal was to discern agreements and disagreements on various issues among the four geographic areas: South Baton Rouge, Southeast Baton Rouge, North Baton Rouge and Baker/Central/Zachary.

Pollsters questioned at least 300 residents in each of the four regions and compared the results. The overall parish sample, which included 300 cell-phone surveys, is 1,618 with an error margin of plus or minus 2.5%. The margin of error for the four areas is 5.7%.

The survey is part of CityStats, a Foundation information project that measures the quality of life in the parish. CityStats is underwritten by the Newton B. Thomas Support Foundation. The complete survey report is available at [BRAFOrg](http://BRAFOrg) and at [Facebook.com/BRCityStats](https://Facebook.com/BRCityStats). Our annual CityStats Report will be released in May.

## CITYSTATS®

Indicators for tracking our quality of life

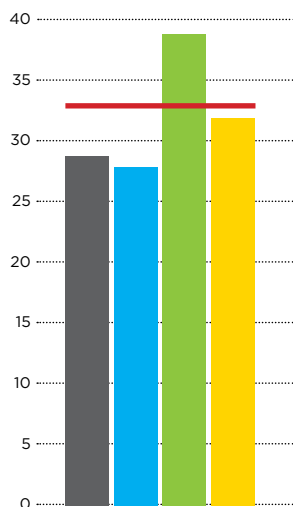
## PERCEPTIONS AND ATTACHMENT

### BACKGROUND

In surveying 26 cities that were served by Knight-Ridder newspapers, Gallup Poll tried to understand what makes a community desirable and whether communities with more attached residents are better off. Completing thousands of surveys, Gallup discovered the top three reasons that make a community desirable: **social offerings**, such as entertainment venues and places to meet; **openness**, or how welcoming a place is to different types of people; and the area's **aesthetics**, or its physical beauty and green spaces. When all three were present, residents were more attached to their community and, consequently, the community was more economically prosperous.

Our survey conducted by LSU's Public Policy Research Lab asked similar questions to determine how residents view social offerings, aesthetics and openness of EBR, as well as their level of attachment to the parish. We also asked some general perception questions to determine what beliefs might be shared across the four geographic areas.

### 1 NEED FOR FUNDAMENTAL OVERHAUL OF EBR



A majority of East Baton Rouge residents believe the community needs to be improved: 33% say a “complete overhaul” is needed and 59% more say “some improvement” is necessary. Only 7% say EBR is fine as it is. **This pattern is fairly consistent across region, age, income, race and education.**

■ South Baton Rouge ■ Southeast Baton Rouge ■ North Baton Rouge ■ Baker-Central-Zachary — Entire Parish

### SNAPSHOT OF RESULTS

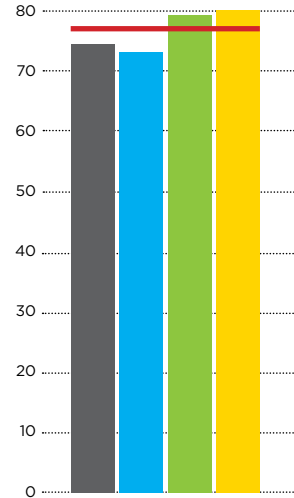
Baton Rouge residents believe the parish needs to be improved. They aren't attached to it, with about 40% saying they would not be upset if they had to leave the parish. Residents believe that the parish is divided over a common direction, though that isn't true, as their responses to other questions reveal considerable agreement on where the parish should go. Also, there is no clear majority on whether they believe the parish would be better off if Baton Rouge returned to city governance.

The surveyed are mixed about openness, social offerings and aesthetics—the three key factors for attachment found by Gallup in its polls. For instance, they give parks high marks, but the upkeep of medians and common areas—a responsibility of city government—is rated at the bottom.

## PERCEPTIONS AND ATTACHMENT

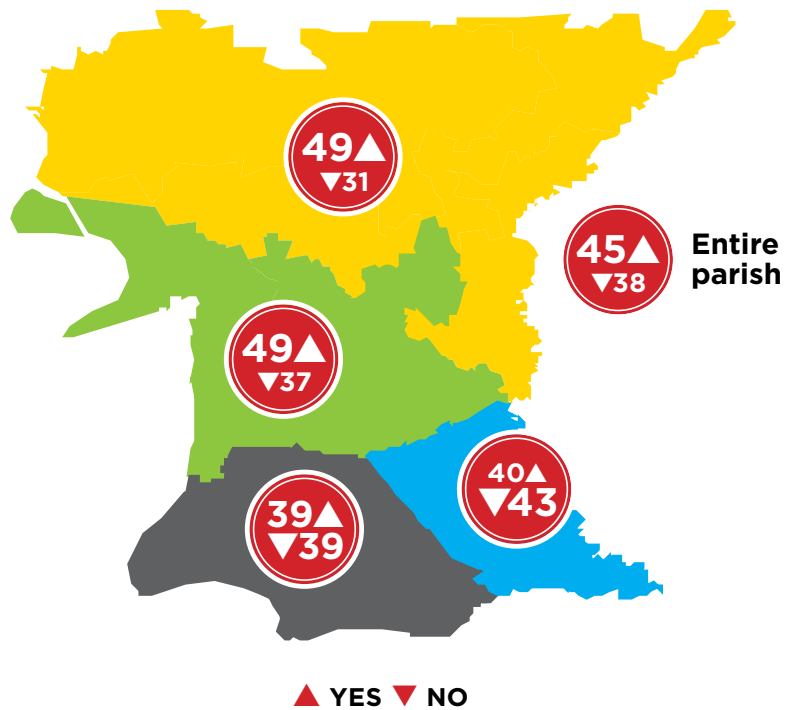
### 2 BELIEVE PARISH IS DIVIDED

A near consensus of EBR residents—76.8%—say the parish is divided into several disagreeing communities. While there is some variation across various demographics, a consistent and substantial majority—never less than 66 percent—see the community as divided and lacking a common direction.



### 3 YOUR COMMUNITY BETTER IF BR WERE INDEPENDENT?

For years, there have been low-level rumblings that Baton Rouge should go it alone as a city. But there is no clear majority on whether the departure would result in better communities. A slight plurality of respondents believe their own communities would be better off with an independent Baton Rouge, but nearly four in 10 did not, and 17% more were unsure or didn't know. Respondents in North Baton Rouge and outlying areas were more likely to answer "yes" to this question.

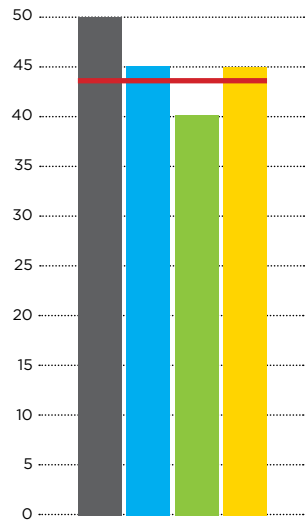


South Baton Rouge Southeast Baton Rouge North Baton Rouge Baker-Central-Zachary Entire Parish

Two questions were included to understand the respondent's attachment to EBR. Residents were asked about their level of agreement with these two statements:

**4 SORRY TO LEAVE BATON ROUGE**

STRONGLY AGREE & AGREE



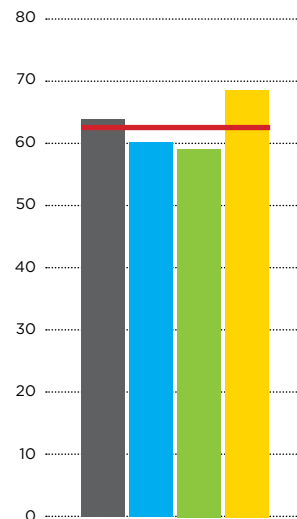
Only 44% of respondents would be sorry—“strongly agreed” or “agreed”—to move from EBR. Meanwhile, 56% would not be troubled or are ambivalent about leaving the parish, meaning that more than half of the respondents are not attached to EBR.

**KEY FINDING:** Forty-eight percent of African-Americans compared to 25% of white respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would be sorry to leave East Baton Rouge. Similarly, 49% of respondents earning less than \$25,000 per year disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would be sorry to leave compared to 27% of respondents earning \$100,000 or more

**5 SENSE OF PRIDE IN LOCAL COMMUNITY**

The second question yields greater attachment. Sixty-two percent of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement that they feel a sense of pride when they tell fellow Louisianans they are from East Baton Rouge.

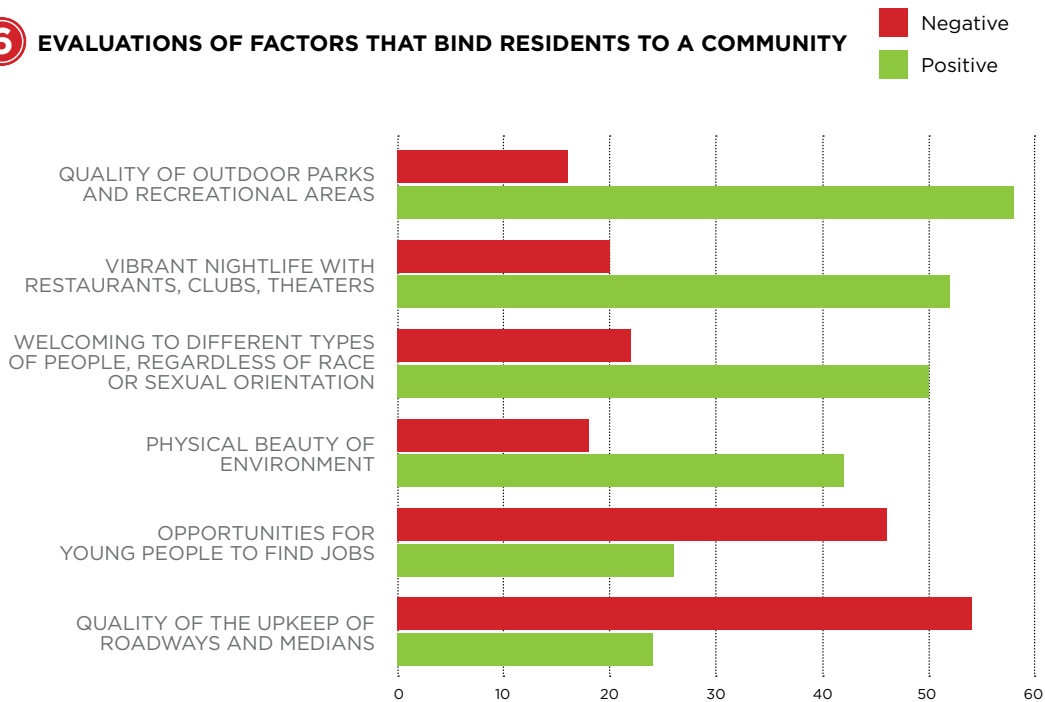
STRONGLY AGREE & AGREE



■ South Baton Rouge ■ Southeast Baton Rouge ■ North Baton Rouge ■ Baker-Central-Zachary — Entire Parish

## PERCEPTIONS AND ATTACHMENT

### 6 EVALUATIONS OF FACTORS THAT BIND RESIDENTS TO A COMMUNITY



Using Gallup's findings that openness, social offerings and aesthetics are key reasons people choose to live in a community and are attached to it, our LSU surveyors asked residents to rate various dimensions of those qualities for EBR. Residents give the highest rating to the quality of outdoor parks and recreational areas (58% positive ratings) and the lowest rating to opportunities for young people to find jobs and the quality of the upkeep of roadways and medians. (Positive = "4" + "5" on a 5-point scale; Negative = "1" + "2")

# CITYSTATS

Indicators for tracking our quality of life



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# FUR BALL

BATON ROUGE'S *premier*  
**PET-FRIENDLY GALA**

**MAY 4, 2012**

7:00 to 10:00 pm  
Crowne Plaza Baton Rouge  
4728 Constitution Avenue



# Nowhere to ride

With another cyclist killed,  
what is being done about safe places to roll?

By Jeremy Alford | Photos by Tim Mueller

There are no bike lanes on Spanish Town Road in front of the State Capitol. But there are cracks in the pavement. One of the riders on the Tour du Café—an extended ride hosted by the Baton Rouge Bike Club and aided by a coffee stop—figured this out in early March when such a crack ate his front wheel. So did the rider trailing closely behind, who was launched into the air after hitting the downed bike.

Nothing too gnarly to report from the two-rider spill. Probably a busted helmet, certainly preferable to a busted head or cracked arm bone.

For club member Bruce Wickert, chairman of the Sunday ride event, it was a chance to teach. The first rider was taught to slow upon advancing on a crevice like that; the other learned to implement an “instant turn” and not follow so closely. “One of the reasons I lead the Sunday Tour Du

Café is to have the opportunity to pass on learnings to newer riders, so that hopefully they will not have to learn the hard way,” he said.

Wickert knows of what he teaches. He rides about 7,000 miles each and every year, the bulk of it in the Baton Rouge area. If you shop at Oak Point Fresh Market, you may have seen him carting groceries around in the large basket attached to his bike—well, one of his bikes.

Wickert is more than a weekend warrior. He’s actively involved with the Capital Region Planning Commission, a group charged with easing transportation problems, among other duties, in East Baton Rouge and the surrounding 10 parishes. He’s quick to brag about Red Stick’s 23 existing miles of programmed paths, lanes and routes. “The only limit is the amount of money we can get and the political will to keep moving forward,” he said. “There’s only so





Bruce Wickert of the Baton Rouge Bike Club leads a group of riders in the weekly Tour du Café. Following Wickert, from left, is Lou Leggio, Susan Kocke and Brandy Parsons. The Baton Rouge Bike Club promotes cycling safety and education.

much to go around.”

The push to create a more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly community generates more interest every year, he said. But large gains, those that require the force of law, have traditionally followed tragedy. “That’s unfortunate, but not unusual,” Wickert said.

In 2002, two cyclists in a training group were killed and another six injured as a result of a car crash on River Road. As a result, the area was marked as a bicycle training route with “Share the Road” signs. In 2008, another cyclist died in the area and the Legislature created a “three-foot law” to safeguard riders from being overtaken unsafely by passing vehicles. The sad pattern continued earlier this year when a drunk driver ran over and killed another bicy-

## The Promise

Local governments pledge to increase the number of bike paths in the parish. As part of his Healthy BR and Future BR initiatives, Mayor Kip Holden, along with BREC and LSU, announced that the city-parish will eventually triple the miles of bicycle paths in the city-parish. The program involves a joint effort among the city-parish, LSU and BREC to create a more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly community.

clist on Perkins Road.

The area around LSU and the Mississippi River levee, which now sports a nice path on top that’s connecting the campus with downtown and the communities of GSRI-Burbank, is an example of tragedy prompting government action. Elsewhere in the city, there are only smaller projects that range from the painting of images on pavement to full-fledged grids.

Local enthusiasts gripe that Baton Rouge is unwilling or unable to take major leaps,

like St. Tammany Parish did in 1992 when it purchased a massive right-of-way from the Illinois Railroad Company. Today, the end product is known as the Tammany Trace. It spans 28 miles and serves nearly 300,000 pedestrians and bicyclists annually.

Stretching across 31 railroad bridges, a paved trail leads through Covington, Abita Springs, Mandeville, Lacombe and Slidell. While the path weaves through wooded areas and park-like terrain, it isn't confined to the rough roads, like many of Baton Rouge's trails. It winds through residential areas, linking residents with a safe route for not only exercise, but also for reaching work, school and shopping.

Ted Jack, BREC's assistant superintendent of planning and operations, said there are a number of challenges in building paths and trails. While planners can strategize around some obstacles, there are still many unknown factors. For example, Jack said there have been connectivity issues in the past due to BREC having to negotiate with different landowners.

BREC is one of the many agencies in the Baton Rouge area involved in cyclist-friendly pursuits. The Capital Region Planning Commission, Department of Public Works and Downtown Development District are others. But BREC's options are limited for those looking to bike on the streets. There's the velodrome, a 333-meter smooth concrete cycling track that's one of only 15 in the U.S., and loads of trails better suited for mountain bikes.

However, there are plans to start connecting major parts of the city, Jack said. Among the more lofty is the Wards Creek Trail. It has been in the planning stages for more than four years, held up initially by negotiations with the Mall of Louisiana. As envisioned, the trail would stretch more than 2.25 miles along Wards Creek from Siegen Lane to Bluebonnet Boulevard. It's a \$2 million project that will eventually include the areas around St. George Catholic School and Perkins Rowe, as well as Essen Lane.

Jack said the project is very close to being bid out, but there has been a new bureaucratic wrinkle to contend with. "This is a new thing and the first time is always the hardest," he said. "The path runs underneath some bridges, so now we're waiting on the federal government to complete its review. The money is in place. We're not trying to reinvent the wheel or anything."

Closer to the heart of the city, there's a planned Downtown Greenway, a 2.75-mile, multi-use pathway that has been in the works for several years and is being planned by the Downtown Development District. It could cost as much as \$12 million. As planned, it would connect City Park with Memorial Park and bring in neighborhoods like Beauregard Town.

The DDD and the city-parish have already been awarded

a \$1 million grant through the state's Transportation Enhancement Program, according to DDD Executive Director Davis Rhorer. When coupled with state Recreational Trails grants from 2010 and 2012, the project now has approximately \$1.2 million for design and construction, with additional grant applications currently under review.

The DDD will soon use a portion of these funds to select a team of landscape architects and engineers to develop an overall detailed master plan for the greenway. Once a master plan is completed, the DDD will begin to bid out the greenway in phases as funds are made available.

Still, for some, it's not enough to cheer about. About 16 years ago, the city-parish compiled a Bicycle Pedestrian Plan, which called for new lanes and a holistic approach. Today, there are very few paths in place that connect people with where they work or spend money. Plus, the 1996 plan called for creating an urban transportation planner on the city-parish level, a job that was vacated in 2009 and remains unfilled.

## Making opportunities

With BREC currently operating and maintaining more than 180 parks within the city-parish, future development in the parks system needs to focus on establishing pedestrian and bicycle connections between these parks and neighborhoods, while working to enhance and maintain existing trails. EBR has many opportunities to enhance the existing trail system, including:

>> linking centers, corridors and neighborhoods with the network of open spaces, greenways and trails,

>> building upon the Greenlinks Plan to establish a network of active and passive recreational spaces using existing rights-of-way and stream corridors, and

>> enhancing the Riverfront Levee path as an amenity.

# Proposed pathways and trails

>> Create linear pedestrian and bike path connections along Bayou Duplantier from the LSU area south along established neighborhoods to Dawson Creek, medical complexes at Essen Lane, and ultimately to BREC's planned Wards Creek path.

>> Increase bike and pedestrian access to parks in North Baton Rouge, by creating paths along Government Street, Brightside Lane, 17th Street, Choctaw Drive and North Acadian Thruway.

>> Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections from the Mississippi River to Scenic Highway and Scotlandville via Swan Avenue, eastward to Hurricane Creek, in the Scotlandville area of North Baton Rouge.

>> Extend the levee trail to connect Southern University to the north and Farr Equestrian Park south of LSU, effectively becoming an alternative transportation route linking North and South Baton Rouge. This would form a key segment of the proposed Galvez Trail between New Orleans and Port Hudson as set forth in the Louisiana Trails Master Plan.

>> Identify readily accessible points along the Amite River and segments along the corridor providing the best terrain for a trail.

These days, the job belongs to Ingolf Partenheimer, the Department of Public Works' chief traffic engineer. He said there's a lot to be excited about in Baton Rouge. While the strategy at one time was to lump in paths with ongoing transportation projects or simply extend trails, Partenheimer said his office is working hard to avoid "bike paths to nowhere."

For proof, he said, look no further than the 72nd Street area in North Baton Rouge. "We're trying to figure out where people want to go and how we can best utilize existing resources," Partenheimer said. "With the 72nd Street project, we're creating bike arteries and linking schools, libraries and homes with a grid system."

Mark E. Martin, a founding member of Baton Rouge Advocates for Safer Streets, said there needs to be more common sense applied to the overall approach. That much was evident from this year's first bicycle fatality in January. He wrote as much in an open letter to city officials recently.

For starters, there are no bicycle paths paralleling Perkins Road, he pointed out. "There are no bicycle routes through the neighborhoods because many of the developments are not connected," he said. "There is only one way to get to many places in town on a bicycle and that is on the road with motorists."

This doesn't have to be the way things are, Martin added. "Cities are built. We could have built bicycle facilities, sidewalks and a mass transit system with dedicated on-street facilities to be used in conjunction with motor vehicles over the past 60 years. But we didn't," he said. "We gave our city over to the automobile and it is killing us every day. Not just bicyclists but other motorists and pedestrians die."

As for the benefits of bike trails and paths, it can be a long list. According to a recent study conducted by researchers from McGill, Harvard and Northeastern universities, paths encourage exercise, and they've actually been known to curb crash and injury rates. The construction of cycle paths should be encouraged in urban areas, the study found.

Then there's the economic benefits. Based on research from the League of American Bicyclists, the national bicycling industry contributes an estimated \$133 billion a year to the U.S. economy. It supports nearly 1.1 million jobs and generates \$17.7 billion in federal, state and local taxes. Another \$46.9 billion is spent on meals, transportation, lodging, gifts and entertainment during bike trips and tours.

The league's study also found that in urban areas, where



cars and bicyclists travel at similar speeds, bike lanes can accommodate seven to 12 times as many people per meter of lane per hour than car lanes. And bicycles cause less wear on the pavement. Based on the study, the cost of a bike lane varies depending on the location, the condition of the pavement, lane-painting expenses, changing traffic light signalization and other factors. But it can cost as little as \$5,000 a mile. It is most cost effective to create a bike lane when an existing road is being repaired or a new road is put in.

National planning consultant John Fregonese helped craft the FutureBR model, which is a comprehensive master plan, and it calls for an extensive framework to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. He said creating bike paths is one thing, but making a city bike-friendly is something different altogether. Routes should be planned on low traffic streets, parking opportunities should be in place and an entire transportation system set up just for riders.

Being practical is the key, he added. “Places that have high biking rates use bikes for practical tasks, not just exercise,” Fregonese said. “So people dress in normal clothes. They have bikes that can carry lots of cargo and they get used to biking in various weather conditions.”

Clustering “practical destinations” within a two to three-mile radius also makes biking more attractive. “When I talk about bikes, it is usually done so as part of a healthy living agenda or in regard to how inexpensive it is,” Fregonese

We gave our city over to the automobile and it is killing us every day. Not just bicyclists but other motorists and pedestrians die.

—Mark E. Martin, Baton Rouge Advocates for Safer Streets

said. “But it also becomes quite a social activity for people. In other cities, bikes are often in groups for what are urban trips.”

For diehards like Bruce Wickert, the teacher extraordinaire from the Baton Rouge Bike Club, it’s an exciting discussion to have. That’s because, in part, it speaks to a better tomorrow. “There’s a lot going on. You’ll soon hear more about safe routes to school for kids and how these paths can raise property values,” he said. “There’s not a year that goes by without a new group of people catching the enthusiasm. It’s finally generating a lot of interest. And that’s the way it should be.” •







# Cheers! 2012 Barton Award Winners

Photos by Frank McMains

Since 2001, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation has chosen three exceptional nonprofit leaders for the John W. Barton Sr. Excellence in Nonprofit Management Awards. The winners each receive \$10,000 with the request that they enjoy the money, not devote it to their work.

Fund donors—those who have charitable funds at the Foundation—make Barton nominations, with the winners chosen by past chairs of the Foundation. In its 11th year, the awards honor Barton, among the leaders who created and advanced the Foundation.

The winners for 2012 are Michael Manning, Keith Ouchley and Kenneth Tipton.

We asked each one a set of questions, wishing that the answers might provide an understanding of their personalities.

**Michael Manning** is president and CEO of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. Food distribution has grown nearly 60% since Manning was picked in 2004 to run the nonprofit that feeds people who can't afford to eat. Most recently, his organization raised more than \$10 million to retrofit a donated warehouse that will improve efficiency while expanding its reach.

## What is your greatest accomplishment?

From a personal perspective, I would say that my greatest accomplishment has been convincing my wife to put up with me for 30 years. From a professional perspective, I would say that my greatest accomplishment was how our organization was able to respond and provide relief in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

**What is the single hardest thing about your job?** Seeing the suffering and loss of hope that so many of the people we serve are experiencing is the hardest thing about my job.

**What is your favorite meal?** My wife prepares an artichoke stuffed chicken breast with a vegetable casserole that is a phenomenal meal.

**If not yourself, who would you be?** Bill Gates. I would love the opportunity to impact the nation through the use of funds from the foundation that he established with most of the wealth he gained from Microsoft.

**What keeps you up at night?** I spend time trying to identify ways to address the issue of childhood hunger and its negative effect on children and their ability to learn.

**Besides Baton Rouge, where would you like to live and why?** Mobile, Ala.—I would like to live closer to help take care of my aging mother.

**Your favorite hero in fiction?** Jack Ryan, the character from the Tom Clancy novels.

**What does Baton Rouge lack that you wish it had?** Simply put, I wish Baton Rouge had an exceptional public education system.

**Which living person do you most admire?** Rev. Billy Graham.

**What is your most treasured possession?** I am not really a possession person, so I would say that it is my wedding ring for what it symbolizes.

**If you had \$1 billion, how would you spend it to improve our region?** My focus for \$1 billion would be on creating high-performing public education systems that ensure all children have a legitimate opportunity to succeed, and ensuring sufficient nutritious diets to support that effort.

**Keith Ouchley** is executive director of The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana.

Because of him, the nation is watching what happens with an intriguing experiment in North Louisiana. In Morehouse Parish, levees that contained the Ouachita River have been leveled, letting the rich river water spread across a 25-mile preserved plain. It is the largest U.S. effort to reconnect a river with a plain—and one that could become a model for similar projects if the rich waters of the Ouachita create a new forest while also reducing the excessive amount of nutrients flowing into the Gulf of Mexico.

The Conservancy in Louisiana has preserved tens of thousands of acres under Ouchley, and now is working with national firms, including Disney and Delta Airlines, to plant acres of new forests for trapping carbon dioxide.

**What is your greatest accomplishment?** Having the privilege of being married to my wife Susan for the past 27 years.

**What is the single hardest thing about your job?** Balancing the different components and aspects of the business, both internal and external, to make the entire organization more effective in our mission.

**What is your favorite meal?** It would be something like fresh fish, particularly if I just caught it.

**If not yourself, who would you be?** I can't imagine. I'm pretty content.

**What keeps you up at night?** Usually a good book.

**Besides Baton Rouge, where would you like to live and why?** I think it would be someplace relatively warm, someplace around water and lots of outdoor opportunities. Someplace with an interesting cultural setting. Kind of sounds like Louisiana.

**Who is your favorite hero in fiction?** I don't read a lot of fiction, mostly a lot of history and science-related literature. But I do love the classics. In the last



couple of years, I've re-read nearly all of Mark Twain's works. Perhaps Huck Finn would be one of my favorite fictional heroes.

**What does Baton Rouge lack that you wish it had?** I would love to see more greenspaces connected by a series of biking/walking trails throughout the city and into the surrounding areas. The opportunity is there.

**Which living person do you admire most?** That's a great question and there are many people that I really look up to in both my personal and professional life. I will stick to the professional side of things and would have to say E.O. Wilson, professor of biology at Harvard.

**What is your most treasured possession?** It's not so much actual "things." It's more about family and close friends who I do really treasure.

**If you had \$1 billion, how would you spend it to improve our region?** Two ways. I would split it 50-50 for two different foundations. One would have the mission of protecting and restoring natural areas and outdoor spaces in the greater Baton Rouge area and the surrounding parishes. The mission of the second foundation would be to help fund education needs in the same region and I would weigh that board heavily to classroom teachers. I would make it clear that the two foundations have to work together by using the natural world as a platform for teaching and learning experiences.

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**Michael Tipton** is executive director of Teach for America South Louisiana. He began as a TFA corps member and was the second youngest executive director when he was hired. Local funding for TFA has grown from \$600,000 to \$2.5 million under his leadership. His goal is to expand the corps to 200 teachers from 150 in the next two years.

**What is your greatest accomplishment?** First, the accomplishment of my students is certainly my proudest. Watching 90% of my original ninth graders in the Bronx graduate in four years compared to the normal

I've re-read nearly all of Mark Twain's works. Perhaps Huck Finn would be one of my favorite fictional heroes.

—Keith Ouchley

graduation rate of 45% made me incredibly proud of them, incredibly grateful to have been a part of their lives. Second, the growth of Teach For America in Louisiana. When I started in 2007, Teach For America's total presence in the state was approximately 250 people. Today, our presence is well north of 1,300.

**What is the single hardest thing about your job?** Communicating what is possible for Baton Rouge, specifically related to education. I know from firsthand experience that all children can achieve an excellent education and that we can have an absolutely excellent education here for all of our students. My challenge is figuring out how to make this vision of excellence for all students a reality through the interactions that I have and that our team has each day.

**What is your favorite meal?** Sushi Yama sushi, particularly the Volcano and Fuji Mountain rolls.

**If not yourself, who would you be?** The governor of Louisiana. I think we have so much potential in Baton Rouge and in Louisiana and want to do everything possible to see that potential become reality.

**What keeps you up at night?** Realizing that we can and should do more to make progress and wanting to fit as much towards this end into every day as possible. Existentially, what keeps me up is the fear that, as a community, we'll choose to not progress but rather to stay the same and, in that respect, fall further behind.



**Besides Baton Rouge, where would you like to live and why?** I love New York. I loved teaching there; I loved living there and I enjoy the energy, the diversity and the pace of life in the city.

**Your favorite hero in fiction?** Ender in the Ender's Game book series.

**What does Baton Rouge lack that you wish it had?** An excellent education for all children and the vibrant community that would result from this.

**Which living person do you most admire?** My father. He's an example of hard work and leadership that I try to live up to.

**What is your most treasured possession?** Memories and relationships. I'm not big on too many things, but I do value and keep mementoes from places, from experiences, from great friends and colleagues. So if I had to pick a most treasured possession, it would be the boxes of assorted stuff from these experiences.

**If you had \$1 billion, how would you spend it to improve our region?** Human capital and improving education. In order to build a great community, we need a world-class education system, and having the nation's best teachers, principals and innovators would certainly be part of this. Additionally, we need to recruit and retain the best talent to Baton Rouge in every profession, and spending the time and the energy to attract top talent and new ideas will help to build the vibrant market that will launch new businesses, new ideas and new opportunities that will make this an exciting community for generations to come. •

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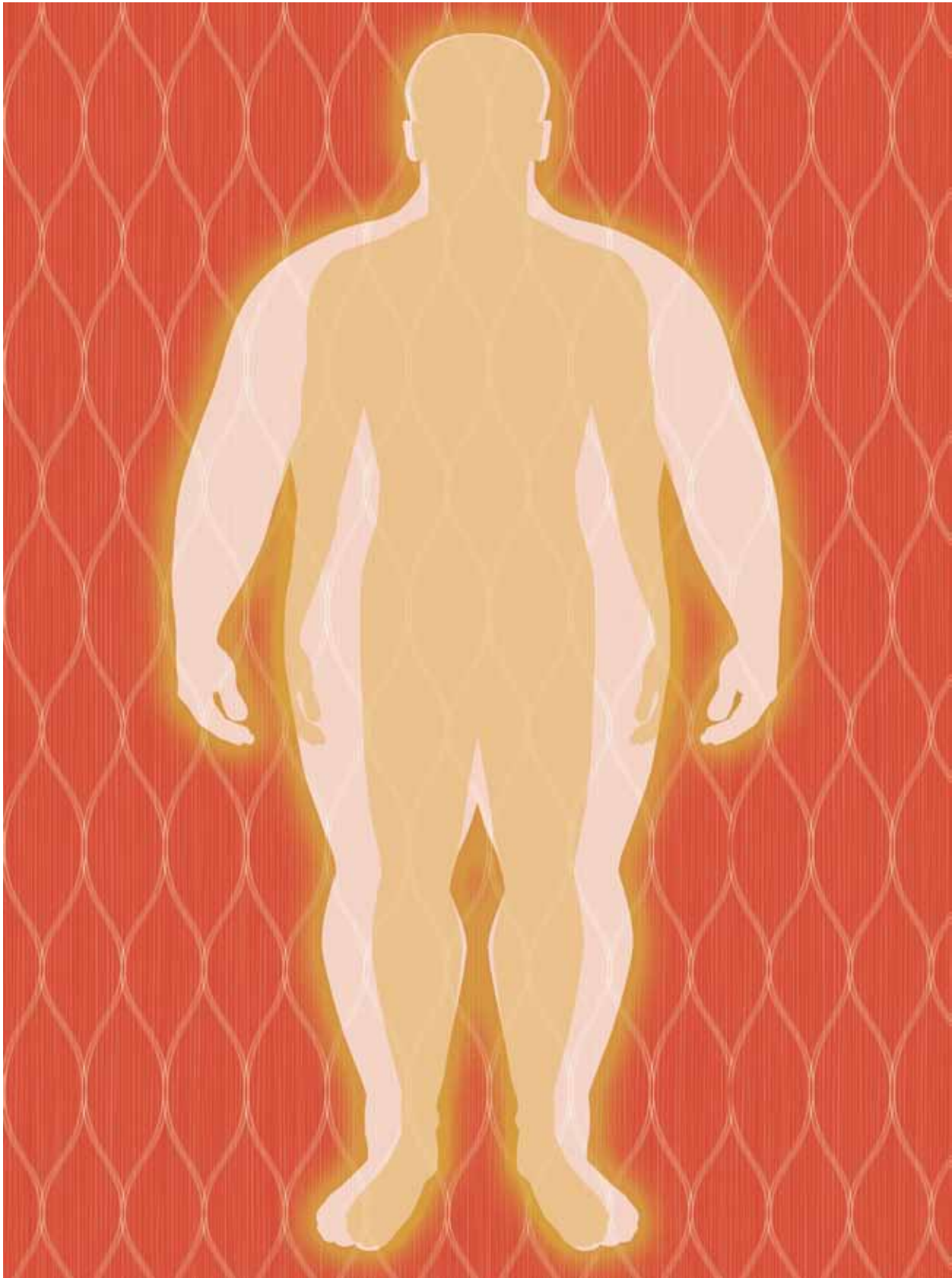
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# Fat chance

A Pennington researcher crosses the globe to prove a radical theory—viruses can cause obesity

By Sara Bongiorni | Photo by Tim Mueller

**D**r. Nikhil Dhurandhar, an obesity researcher at Pennington Biomedical Research Center, recalls the afternoon more than 20 years ago when he began to think about a connection between viruses and obesity.

He was in his native India, having tea with a family friend named S.M. Ajinka, a pathologist at Bombay Veterinary College. Ajinka had discovered a virus that was killing thousands of chickens, yet when he examined the dead birds he discovered they were often fat.

As he listened, it struck Dhurandhar as paradoxical that birds that had been ravaged by a virus would be fat at death.

“You’d expect them to be wasted away,” he recalls thinking.

So Dhurandhar, then an obesity doctor in Bombay, posed a question to Ajinka: Could the virus be making the birds fat?

What Ajinka said next would shape Dhurandhar’s life’s work. It would prompt him to give up his medical practice in Bombay, move his family across the globe and lead him to sunflower fields outside Fargo, North Dakota, where sometimes he worried giant combines would inadvertently decapitate him as he strolled among the 10-foot plants.

It would lead him to repeatedly buck convention, starting with the hundreds of letters he would write to strangers in the U.S. asking them to permit him to do research in their labs. He would coin the term “infectobesity,” the idea

that microbes cause obesity in some cases, and which has its own entry in the online encyclopedia Wikipedia.

None of that would have happened if Ajinka had said he doubted a connection was possible.

“I would have dropped the idea if that was his answer,” Dhurandhar said recently. “But that’s not what he said. He told me, ‘I don’t know.’”

Instead, Ajinka suggested that Dhurandhar investigate the idea. So Dhurandhar, who was doing graduate work in biochemistry at the time, did a small experiment at the vet school. He infected healthy chickens with the SMAM-1 virus identified by Ajinka. Over three weeks, the infected birds got fatter, but the levels of cholesterol and triglycerides in their blood improved.

He did another test, this time with 100 birds. It confirmed the earlier findings: the infected birds quickly got fatter, while their blood levels of triglycerides and cholesterol dropped. Fellow researchers at the lab told Dhurandhar he was headed in a fruitless pursuit.

“They told me nobody was looking at this so I shouldn’t either,” he said. “That made me want to do it more.”

Dhurandhar expanded his research to include blood samples taken from the patients at his medical clinic, which specialized in the treatment of obesity. He tested 52 blood samples from patients and found that 20% of them tested positive for antibodies for SMAM-1. Patients who had been

exposed to the avian virus were also heavier than those whose blood did not contain the antibodies—by an average of 33 pounds.

He says there are textbooks today that tell you human beings cannot be infected with avian viruses like SMAM-1, the virus identified by Dr. Ajinka in the late 1980s. That is a common refrain the scientist has no patience for. “I have no respect for conventional wisdom.”

“You see an obese person eating an ice-cream cone and you judge them,” he said. “But you see someone thin eating ice cream and you don’t think about it. But the physiology of an obese person is not the same as the physiology of a thin person. It’s not a question of moral failing.”

The quest to better understand that physiology brought Dhurandhar to the U.S. Around 1990, after his SMAM-1 experiments, he started writing to U.S. research labs in



The physiology of an obese person is not the same as the physiology of a thin person. It’s not a question of moral failing.

—Nikhil Dhurandhar

But the discovery of antibodies to a chicken virus in human blood was only one way his findings ran counter to conventional wisdom. The idea that obesity did not lead to elevated cholesterol and triglyceride levels also ran counter to established science. Then there was evidence to suggest a connection that remains nothing shy of revolutionary: that a virus can cause obesity.

Dhurandhar seems an unlikely candidate for bucking convention. He speaks in measured tones, and he has a genteel air. He is trim, soft-spoken, with impeccable manners and a reserved but friendly demeanor.

He comes from a family of obesity researchers. His father was the first clinician in India to focus on obesity and founder of the Indian Obesity Association in the 1960s. But obesity is also personal for the younger Dr. Dhurandhar: his father was overweight as a young man, and lost 55 pounds in one year.

And as a child, his father shared stories with him about frustrated patients who struggled to lose weight, or who lost weight just to regain it, or who were preyed upon by weight-loss scammers. Although slim himself, he is sensitive to criticism that obese and overweight people have succumbed to failure of self-discipline.

search of a post-doctoral position. The standard order of things in academia is for post-docs to help further the research of a more established scientist. Dhurandhar wanted perfect strangers to give him a job at a lab so that he could do his research. He got scores of rejection letters, when the labs bothered to respond at all.

He tweaked his strategy. He decided he would take any paid post-doc position he could get in the U.S., regardless of the field of study. In time he got an offer in North Dakota, studying pectin in sunflowers. He gave up his medical practice in Bombay and moved his wife and young son to Fargo. He gave himself two years to move into another position that would allow him to test his virus-obesity theory. If he couldn’t get a post that allowed him to do that, he would return to India and resume his medical practice. He wrote letters to more than 200 universities. Nobody bit at his offer.

In 1994, just a month before the deadline he had set for himself, he got a call from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The university’s Richard Atkinson was keen on Dhurandhar’s idea, and invited him to come to Madison. But the pair ran into a new obstacle before they could get started. U.S. agriculture authorities would not let them import the avian virus SMAM-1. Dhurandhar and



Pennington Biomedical Research Center researcher Nikhil Dhurandhar's insights may open new horizons for reducing obesity and for treating diseases.



In Dr. Dhurandhar's lab, researchers are tapping the fundamentals of life to determine whether there are beneficial consequences to the discovery that viruses cause obesity.

Atkinson looked in a virus catalogue with an assortment of 50 viruses, and ordered something called Adenovirus-36, or AD-36, a common human virus. The choice wasn't entirely random, because the virus had some similarities to SMAM-1.

Their findings gave similar results to earlier efforts involving SMAM-1: lab animals infected with AD-36 rapidly gained weight, but their blood levels of triglycerides and cholesterol improved. Research involving patients produced more evidence of a connection between obesity and microbes, showing that AD-36 antibodies were three times as likely to be present in obese patients, and that obese patients who had been exposed to the virus were more obese than obese participants who did not have the antibody in their blood.

His work took him to Wayne State University in Detroit, where an anonymous donor made a \$2 million bequest to support his research. He came to Pennington in 2005.

Ten of 12 subsequent peer-reviewed studies around the world have shown a link between microbes and obesity. Dhurandhar's goal is to build more indirect evidence to show that link to obesity, with the ultimate goal of developing a vaccine to counter it. (Infecting humans with viruses to test the link is off limits for ethical reasons.)

Dhurandhar does not posit that viruses are the only factor in obesity. Obesity, he says, is influenced by multiple factors, from genetics to lifestyle, but the standard answer—to eat less and move more—is, for Dhurandhar, maddeningly simplistic, and one that has changed little over the past 50 years. His work is fueled by a desire to find a more effective long-term solution to obesity.

"We need better treatment for obesity," he says.

He's also careful to note the critical difference in a link between microbes and obesity and causation.

"What we know is that there is an association," he says. "We don't know if viruses cause obesity in humans." •

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## RIVER CITY JAZZ MASTERS

2011-2012 SEASON

May 17 | **PATTI AUSTIN**  
Grammy-award-winning Jazz vocalist

**IBERIABANK**

7PM & 9PM—TICKETS \$45 & \$25  
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The River City Jazz Coalition thanks: Verge and Cheri Ausberry, C.J. Blache and Sherri McConnell, Gary and Joyce Dennis, Maria and Brian Despinasse II, Leo and Gwendolyn Hamilton, Tim and Stacia Hardy, Dr. Antoine Keller and Allison Chauvin, Cornelius and Karen Lewis, Drs. Jamel and Nicolette Martin, Ronald and Belinda Mason, The John and Virginia Noland Fund, Albert and Roberta Sam and The Josef Sternberg Memorial Fund.

## Gas up

John B. Hess, chairman of Hess Corp., warned at a conference that \$140 per barrel oil was coming this decade.

This summer, gasoline is predicted to surpass \$5 per gallon. At that price, a roundtrip in an SUV or truck to Gulf Shores will cost \$160, while commuting to work between Denham Springs and North Baton Rouge would cost more than \$4,000 per year.

“As demand grows in the next decade, we will not have the oil production capacity we will need to meet demand. Supply will then have to ration demand, and prices will skyrocket—with the likely outcome of bringing the world’s economy to its knees.”

— John B. Hess, chairman of Hess Corp.

Compressed natural gas is cheaper, half the price of \$5 gasoline and about one-third cheaper than current gasoline prices. But there are comparatively few CNG vehicles on the road. One reason is upfront costs: a Honda Civic GX, which runs on compressed natural gas, starts at \$26,155, while a Civic EX has a base of \$15,605. Once you own a CNG, there are few places to fuel them and a home charging station costs \$4,000.

There is some hope. Because natural gas is even more plentiful in the United States, companies in the business are encouraging use. Chesapeake Energy, a significant natural gas player in Louisiana’s abundant Haynesville Shale, has joined GE to begin offering CNG In a Box, which allows quick setup of CNG pumps at existing service stations and stores.

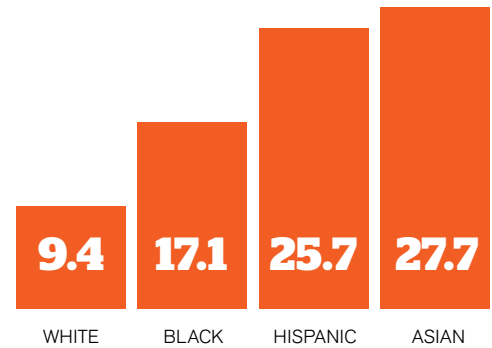
Meanwhile, 3M says it has reduced the cost of buying or converting a vehicle. The company is using nano materials and carbon fibers to produce a CNG tank—the most expensive part—that is smaller and cheaper, though the firm won’t say how much cheaper. Pending government approval, the tanks will be marketed next year.

Natural gas vehicles  
in U.S.: **112,000**  
Globally: **13 million**  
(Pakistan leads with 2.85 million)

# 8.4

Percent of interracial and interethnic marriages in 2010, double from 1990, says a Pew Research Center report. Deriving its assessment from U.S. Census data, Pew estimates that 4.8 million marriages are between races and ethnicities. An influx of Asian and Hispanic immigrants, as well as more African Americans marrying whites, are Pew's reasons for the increase. Acceptance of mixed marriages has risen. Sixty-three percent told Pew they would be OK if family members were to marry outside their own race.

## Percent of newlyweds married to someone of a different race/ethnicity



—Pew Research Center



## Gut buster

Put down that Nutella sandwich and dig some quarters from your pocket.

Soon, eaters may be able to drop their coin into a vending machine and fetch some healthy food. HUMAN, which is being touted as an up-and-comer by *Forbes* and *Entrepreneur* magazines, is spreading vending machines with healthy food around the U.S.

Machines have power bars, soy milk, juice and hundreds of other products tested by HUMAN, which sees schools and fitness clubs among its promising locations.

<http://www.healthyvending.com/?split=1>

## And we get closer to the singularity

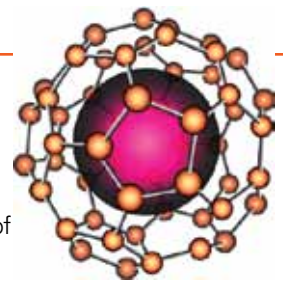
Quantum computing was thought to be decades away. But a breakthrough announced by IBM researchers in February might lead to the ultra-fast computers much sooner. IBM scientists ginned up three fundamental states known as quantum bits, or qubits.

One optimistic researcher declared that quantum computing is merely 15 years away.

Computers now are binary, using electrical pulses at rapid rates for calculations. Quantum computers would work at the atomic level, allowing them to use qubits to

compute in multiple numbers, not just the ones and zeroes of binary computing.

Quantum computers could take on really big problems and produce results very rapidly. With a quantum computer, a digital assistant like Apple's Siri would experience no delays and image recognition would be near perfect. More important, difficult problems—such as how diseases spread—could be modeled and solved very quickly.





Delancy Underground, or the Low Line, before and after.

## Dark green

New York City has transformed an abandoned, elevated railway into a linear park. Two designers, working with Columbia University's School of Architecture, want to do the same with an underground trolley station that went silent decades ago.

The novel idea is getting a boost from a unique way to raise startup money. Organizers took to KickStarter to raise \$100,000 from people who believed in their idea. The money is for concept and design.

In Manhattan, the darkened trolley station has reminders of a romantic past—old cobblestones, criss-crossing rail tracks, 20-foot ceilings, steel columns.

James Ramsey, a former NASA satellite engineer and current principal at RAAD studios, has developed a series of fiber-optic tubes to one day flood the station with light. Next up is public engagement to gather ideas, also from people on the Web.

## EzyStove

Nearly half the world's population cooks over an open flame each day. Open flames are dangerous, and they spew greenhouse gasses.

Several do-gooders have created stoves for developing countries to replace the open fire. The most recent entry is EzyStove by Ergonomidesign, in collaboration with the United Nations Global Development Program.

The design firm is touting the stove's low cost. At a mere \$10, it's less than others on the market. Like others, it focuses the energy from combustible materials, requiring 40% less fuel than a campfire. Cooking times are reduced by 70%.

Ergonomidesign expects to sell 5 million stoves by 2020.





## Someone hit the “Easy” button



A patron saint for minor miracles must be smiling on Eric von Choultz. He has solved a tiny problem that troubles too many on the planet.

The Swiss engineer has invented a better key ring. The common key ring requires fumbling—and the occasional broken fingernail—to add or remove a key. Von Choultz’ Free Key pops open with a press.

Free Keys sell for about \$11 apiece.

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## Why there are potholes

Baton Rouge is not alone in having potholes and rusting streetlights as part of its degrading infrastructure. In a *Governing* magazine column, Alex Marshall writes this problem is common across the country, even in liberal cities where people pay more taxes. So what gives? Marshall says one problem is that annual operating budgets for infrastructure upkeep are raided.

“Maintenance budgets are one of the first places mayors and governors look for money to fill budget shortfalls,” William Reinhardt, editor of *Public Works Financing* told Marshall. “That’s because the effects of underfunding maintenance are not immediately obvious.”

The raids eventually cost more money. “Every dollar spent in keeping a good road good precludes spending \$6 to \$14 to rebuild one that has deteriorated,” said Reinhardt. “This is another example of kicking the can down the road—a case of bad governing that has a huge future cost.”

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## Mother Nature’s little helper

How do you finance a brilliant idea, the one that is bound to transform the world and put a load of money in your pocket? KickStarter was the answer. On the site, anyone can post an idea to seek seed capital. A potentially good idea gets funded; a likely dud ignored.

IOBY has copied KickStarter but for smaller environmental

## Get on the bus (and the trolley)

A greater number are riding mass transit, thanks to an economic two-step: more people are working but gasoline prices are higher.

Americans took 10.4 billion rides on public transportation in 2011, up 200 million from the year before and 1 billion more than in 2,000, reports the American Public Transportation Association, a nonprofit trade group.

“What is exciting is that the uptick in ridership occurred in large, medium and small communities, showing the broad support that public transportation has nationwide,” says Michael Melaniphy, the group’s president, in a statement.

Light rail (modern streetcars, trolleys and heritage trolleys) ridership increased 4.9% in 2011, the most of any category. Ridership on the New Orleans trolleys was up 11.3%.



projects in neighborhoods. Funders on IOBY—In Our Back Yard—have donated for composting sites, beautification projects, chicken apprentice workshops.

IOBY began in New York City. But the nonprofit branching across America, soon to a neighborhood near you.

# Doug Gay, *rock's pied piper*

The music came to Doug Gay early in his life. His band teacher wanted him to blow a horn, but Gay chose to beat on the drums.

He was entranced. First came a gig with school band named Purple Heart, which had a logo of a heart and a skull. During college and after dropping out, Gay kept the rhythm for Voodoo Grove, a band that successfully toured across the Southeast for six years, warming up the crowd with covers and mixing in original music. Their lone video lives forever on YouTube.

Gay dropped back in, completing a degree in music education from Northwestern State. He moved to Baton Rouge and began to teach at private schools, providing extra lessons to students who wanted to play Rock 'n' Roll. So many students wanted lessons that he opened Baton Rouge Music Studios in 2006. Since, more than 1,000 would-be musicians have learned how to play at BRMS, with nearly 300 students now on the roster.

Gay moves his students from lessons into bands pretty quickly, then finds venues around town for the groups to put on a show. Grandparents show up to hear Metallica's *Enter Sandman*.

This year, Gay started something that could turn out big. With an open call for teen bands, he found five groups good enough to play at the first Rock of Ages Youth Music Festival on the plaza at the Shaw Center for the Arts.

He still plays on occasion with acclaimed Louisiana musicians, including Tab Benoit. But prefers to devote his life to transfer his thrall for music to teens that will make sure Rock 'n' Roll won't die for another generation.

"Turning some kid onto music is more important to me than having someone pat me on the back after a gig." •



# Kids Rule at Manship!

Come have summer fun with us!



**SLAM Camp**  
a Lyrical Poetic Workshop Series

**June 11-29**

**June 25-29**

**Missoula  
Children's Theatre  
Performance Camp**  
performing *Secret Garden*

*MISSOULA CHILDREN'S THEATRE* **mct** *International Tours*

**July 16-21**



## and...Summer Film Matinees!

June 6: **An American Tail**

June 13: **Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs**

June 20: **Bee Movie**

June 27: **Open Season**

*All movies at 10am. Ticket includes popcorn, juice or water & a sweet snack. Kids! Come ready to play in the fountains outside after the show (weather permitting).*

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## You believed as a kid.

You were faster than Speedy Gonzales. You could flap your arms and fly.  
You could change the world.

But life happened. There was school, work and making a home.

You emerged—richer, stronger, wiser.

And the kid came back, reminding you there was more to do:  
You could change the world.

At the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, we can help you make a  
mark.

To pursue your endless possibilities, open a charitable fund at the  
Foundation. Find out how by calling Ellen Fargason at 225-387-6126.

Run fast, fly, change the world.

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