

# CURRENTS

## Difference engine:

Wilbur Marvin's legacy continues in \$55 million downtown project



we're  
in this  
for good.

*Baton Rouge  
Area Foundation*

402 N. Fourth Street | Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802 | [braf.org](http://braf.org)



Story on page 200.



## **MINDING THE GAP**

Already, traffic strangles the roads around Essen Lane and Bluebonnet Boulevard. With more hospitals and clinics going up, eventually that corridor will become entirely choked. What can be done? Community leaders asked us. In reply, our civic leadership group began working to create a \$500,000 master plan to hasten the movement of people and vehicles through the area. Possibilities include a stop for commuter rail to New Orleans and points in between. Sounds nice, you say, but that's a long way off. It's all right, for the Foundation and its members promise to be faithful to South Louisiana across the generations.

**WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP,** our staff will pursue initiatives like the one here, projects that provide a big return to the community now and for decades to come. **JOIN TODAY AT [BRAFO.ORG](http://BRAFO.ORG).**

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Area Foundation*

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*Baton Rouge  
Area Foundation*



Within a small circle of economic development partners, a special project was taking shape, referred to enigmatically as “Hal.” The name alluded to a futuristic supercomputer whose artificial intelligence was the subject of Stanley Kubrick’s classic film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. If you were enough of a sleuth to have made that connection, you might have also realized that the name “Hal” is a cipher: replace each letter by the one that follows it in the alphabet to reveal what those economic development representatives had been quietly nurturing on a need-to-know basis.

Negotiations were under way with IBM.

With a deal struck in late March, Gov. Bobby Jindal and Mayor Kip Holden announced that the global giant had selected Baton Rouge as the site for its next software development center. Growing each year, the new IBM center would ramp up to 800 employees—software programmers writing custom code, along with staff to support their work.

It’s the kind of high-tech, clean industry every community in America is competing to attract. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation did its part to bring the deal home. In choosing among cities that would host their new center, IBM was seeking certain incentives. A decisive one was office space. For this, the state of Louisiana turned to the Foundation.

The new IBM building on the downtown riverfront will be constructed by Commercial Properties Realty Trust, the firm that develops and manages real estate for the Foundation. CPRT will also build an 11-story residential tower next door.

Some community leaders regard landing this catch as nothing short of transformational. There’s good reason to think so. For one thing, when a corporation like IBM chooses a city, it’s a strong show of faith in that town, and an encouraging signal to other tech companies unsure about where to find the right place to set up shop. Along with attracting

new businesses, the roots that IBM is putting down in Baton Rouge will help to anchor in place those tech enterprises that are already here. We foresee other advantages as well. There will soon be more than 800 IBM employees working in new jobs downtown and carrying out their daily commerce there. Adjacent to their workplace, hundreds more will be living in new apartments and townhomes. These are the kinds of changes that are crucial to the success of the Plan Baton Rouge revival strategy underwritten by the Foundation 15 years ago. A thriving new residential-work complex on the riverfront should pave the way for other developers to take a chance on our downtown.

This is the hopeful future that community leaders were secretly cultivating for 18 months under the nickname “Hal.” Entrusted with something that began as a mere fragile possibility, they patiently pursued this opportunity until it materialized. We thank CEO Carolyn Martin and her staff at Commercial Properties for moving so quickly to deliver a deal that was agreeable to the state’s best interests as well as IBM’s. Attorney Charles Landry and architects Antunovich Associates worked long hours on behalf of CPRT. Mayor Kip Holden and Gov. Bobby Jindal each provided steady support for this project as it evolved, as did Adam Knapp at the Baton Rouge Area Chamber. LSU’s engineering school offered IBM necessary assurances by committing to an expansion of the computer science department so that the company could count on a reliable supply of smart, homegrown programmers. And, with the Louisiana Department of Economic Development leading the charge, LED Secretary Stephen Moret demonstrated once again how much he cares for LSU, the state and the future of Baton Rouge.

You can read the details of the project in this issue of *Currents*.

•••

I am fortunate to serve as chair during the 25th anniversary of John Davies' tenure as CEO and president.

When John Noland recruited John Davies to lead the Foundation 25 years ago, John was a successful 38-year-old consultant working with independent schools across the country. Since his arrival, much has happened at your community foundation.

In assets, we're now ranked among the top 30 community foundations in the country. Under John's watch, donors and the Foundation have granted more than \$300 million to deserving nonprofits across South Louisiana and throughout the world.

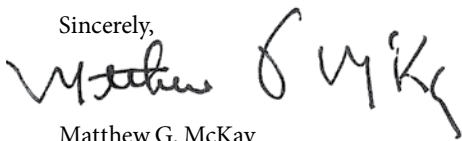
The projects championed by the Foundation over the years have been as diverse as they are successful. We purchased the land that became the BREC Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center. We created the civic group called Forum 35 as well as the Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations and the Center for Planning Excellence. With many working beside us, we launched the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, the Water Institute of the Gulf, and, most recently, New Schools for Baton Rouge. Through the Foundation's Plan Baton Rouge, our city's downtown has drawn more than \$1.5 billion in public and private investments, giving us the Arts Block with the Shaw Center for the Arts, as well as the renovated Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center. All these things came to pass under John's leadership.

John will tell you that it was our generous donors, members and many willing partners who are responsible for leaving the Foundation's deep imprint on Baton Rouge. He is right. But I also know that many of our best endeavors would never have even begun without his passion for the well-being of all Baton Rouge's people.

In presenting his personal review of our last quarter century at the annual meeting of members, John declared, "The next 25 years promise to be years of great economic prosperity for Baton Rouge."

At the Foundation, we are all grateful for his pledge to be with us for many of those years to come.

Sincerely,



Matthew G. McKay

## Baton Rouge Area Foundation

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Roland M. Touns

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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).

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**The Baton Rouge Area Foundation accomplishes its mission in two ways:**

*Baton Rouge Area Foundation*

>1 We connect fund donors—philanthropists—to worthwhile projects and nonprofits. Over 49 years, our donors have granted more than \$300 million across South Louisiana and the world.

The Foundation offers several types of charitable funds, including donor-advised funds, which can be opened for a minimum of \$10,000. Donors use these funds to make tax-deductible grants to nonprofits. The Foundation manages the money in the charitable accounts, offers local knowledge about issues and nonprofits, and manages all the necessary paperwork.

**Donations to Foundation:**

**\$30.5 million**

**Grants to Nonprofits:**

**\$37.6 million**

**2012**

>2 We conduct civic leadership initiatives that change the direction of the Baton Rouge region and South Louisiana. Members support these projects, which solve fundamental problems. Tax-deductible memberships range from \$100 to \$10,000.

**Key Civic Leadership Projects:**

**New Schools for Baton Rouge :** Created and underwrote startup costs for a nonprofit that will support turnaround schools in Baton Rouge by recruiting the best charters, teachers and staff.

**The Water Institute of the Gulf :** Launched the scientific institute to offer solutions for coexisting with rising seas and vanishing coastlines. The independent nonprofit has hired several top scientists and expects to grow in coming years as a worldwide resource.

**Smiley Heights :** Supported the EBR Redevelopment Authority in advancing a 200-acre community off Florida Boulevard that will include housing, retail and parks—and be anchored by a career high school operated by EBR schools and an automotive training academy operated by Louisiana Community and Technical College System.

**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 our 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 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.

**Population of Primary Service Area :**

**2+ million**

**Population of Secondary Service Area :**

**7+ billion (world)**



BATON ROUGE'S *premier* PET-FRIENDLY GALA



# FUR BALL

*benefiting*

Companion Animal Alliance of Baton Rouge—CAABR.org

**MAY 4, 2013**

Join us for Baton Rouge's premier pet-friendly black-tie gala, a unique event for humans and their well-mannered, on-leash or in-carrier canine companions.

Enjoy live entertainment by the Doc Holliday Band, silent auction, Petz Plaza pet spa and photos of you with your pet on the red carpet!

**Human and pet tickets available at [FurBallBR.org](http://FurBallBR.org) or by calling 225-381-7117**

*Pet tickets must be purchased before the event in order to have all pets registered.*

6:30pm to 10:30pm

**Crowne Plaza Baton Rouge**

4728 Constitution Avenue

**Tom & Lisa Adamek**

**Bubba & Honey Olds**





### ACADIAN VILLAGE OPENING IN FALL

Commercial Properties Realty Trust is midway through construction of Acadian Village shopping center, an asset of the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, a supporting organization of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

Come September, the center will open with California grocer Trader Joe's as an anchor, and more than a dozen restaurants and stores. La Divinia Italian Café, an offshoot of La Divinia Gelateria of New Orleans, will sell gelato, sandwiches and coffee; Pei Wei, the fast casual division of P.F. Chang's China Bistro, will offer noodles and Asian fusion dishes. In the center will be Baton Rouge favorites Kean's Fine Dry Cleaning and The Keeping Room; and newcomers Smarter Eyewear, Nadeau Furniture and Baby Bump Maternity.

Galatoire's Bistro opened at Acadian Village in January and Acme Oyster House has been operating there since 2008.

CPRT develops and manages real estate for the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, which invests a portion of profits in community projects.

Located at the corner of Acadian Thruway and Perkins Road, the center once had an abandoned Wal-Mart. The Wilbur Marvin Foundation is investing more than \$18 million to redevelop it as a lush 70,000-square-foot shopping destination.

CPRT develops and manages real estate for the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, which invests a portion of profits in community projects. The company is building an office and residential complex on the Baton Rouge riverfront. All those projects are assets of WMF. (Read our cover story for more information).

**DOWNTOWN LIBRARY DESIGN** The East Baton Rouge Parish Library and architects led by WHLC and Schwartz Silver have begun to design the \$19 million replacement for the downtown library.

The library will be somewhat different from other branches. Some features: a studio where people can create media, an area for creating film and music, a ground floor café, a rooftop terrace with a view of downtown and the river. The building's exterior may have a screen or surface for displaying large digital images. The library is scheduled to open in 2016.

A main library at Independence Park is under construction with a 2014 opening date.

**EBR GOES CHARTER** The East Baton Rouge Parish School System is partnering with LSU's Laboratory School to operate Mayfair Elementary off Staring Lane, starting this fall.

The joint project is among innovations by EBR Superintendent Bernard Taylor, who assumed the job in 2012. Among his other short-term goals is to place schools in zones so they can compete against each other for students, and expanding of the magnet programs. Lee High School, which is moving to swing space until the main building is razed and replaced with a modern facility, is getting a magnet program in fall.



**BIKE AND SHOP** BREC is building a bike and pedestrian path—aka a linear park—from Siegen Lane to Bluebonnet Boulevard along Ward's Creek. The parks system is spending \$1.7 million on the path and expects to build more across the parish for years to come.

The path connects the Mall of Louisiana with neighborhoods off Siegen. Along the way is The Grove, a residential and retail neighborhood that developer Richard Carmouche began building last year. BREC has plans for the path to link with hospitals and clinics in a loop. The first segment will open this year.

**NEW DIRECTORS ELECTED** Members of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation elected four new directors to the board at the annual meeting in March at the Manship Theatre.

New directors are Mary Terrell Joseph, attorney with McGlinchey Stafford; Rose J. Hudson, president and CEO of the Louisiana Lottery Corp.; John B. "Jay" Noland Jr., real estate developer; and Roland M. Toups, chair and CEO of Turner Industries.

The board elected Matthew G. McKay of All Star Automotive as chair, C. Kris Kirkpatrick of Long Law Firm as vice chair, Suzanne L. Turner of Suzanne Turner Associates as secretary, William E. Balhoff of Postlethwaite & Netterville as treasurer, Dr. Albert D. Sam II of Tulane Heart and Vascular Institute as member at-large and Alice Greer as past chair.

Directors continuing on the board are Annette D. Barton, S. Dennis Blunt, Donald H. Daigle, G. Lee Griffin, Raymond A. Jetson and R. Ryland Percy II.

The Foundation reported contributions from donors was \$30.5 million in 2012. Contributions by donors to their charitable funds ultimately underwrite grants to nonprofits and projects in South Louisiana and across the world. Total grants in 2012 were \$37.6 million, \$10 million more than 2011.

Total assets of the Foundation declined to \$563 million in 2012 from \$603 million the year before for two reasons. One, the Foundation made large grants from the Future of the Gulf Fund, which was created from a \$100 million BP donation after the oil leak. Two, the value of real estate assets declined with the depressed market.

## Civic leadership initiatives

**ANSWERING RISING TIDES** The news for Louisiana's coast gets more challenging with each new report on sea rise.

In February, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association placed Louisiana's coast at the greatest peril on the planet. The agency estimates seas will rise 4.5 feet along the state's coast by century end, maybe by more than 6 feet under the worst-case scenario.

Louisiana's coast is in a more precarious position because sea level rise and land subsidence are working together against it. This double threat, NOAA says, means Louisiana's shoreline is disappearing nearly four times faster than Key West.

If nothing is done, relative sea level rise will take costly assets with it. Ninety percent of Terrebonne and Lafourche are already at or below sea level, so entire towns could wash away.

In response, the state's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is executing a 50-year, \$50 billion plan to co-exist with the rising tides. And CPRA, in turn, is working with The Water Institute of the Gulf, which was created by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to provide independent science to guide public policy.

Below, Chip Groat, CEO of the Water Institute, offers an update on the stand-alone nonprofit's work.



**LETTER FROM CHIP GROAT**, The Water Institute of the Gulf, February 2013

As many of you know, I was fortunate to return to Louisiana a year ago to serve as the founding president and CEO of The Water Institute of the Gulf. This is my third professional stint in Louisiana, after previous positions at LSU, the

Louisiana Geological Survey and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources. It's certainly good to be home.

I am privileged to work with an incredibly talented and passionate team at the Institute. In addition, we get to work with committed partners and stakeholders that understand how important it is to make sound decisions in our collective efforts to address the multitude of challenges that threaten the livelihood of coastal Louisiana.

This month we celebrate our first birthday—and there is much to celebrate. Below is a list of some of our accomplishments to date:

We have built a team of world-class leaders with proven expertise in a number of fields including the following:

- \*Denise Reed, Ph.D., chief scientist;
- \* Ehab Meselhe, Ph.D., P.E., natural systems modeling and monitoring;

\* Mead Allison, Ph.D., physical processes and sediment systems;

\* Clint Willson, Ph.D., P.E., engineering design and innovation; and,

\* Ernst Peebles, Ph.D., coastal systems ecology

Their previous experiences include academia as well as the public and private sectors. In fact, three of our program directors also serve as faculty members at LSU, Tulane and the University of South Florida. In addition, we have a talented, versatile group of research associates and support staff.

To support the quality of the Institute's efforts, we established a Science and Engineering Advisory Council, comprised of individuals that are world-renowned in their fields. The council's members have expertise in a variety of technical disciplines, including familiarity with the challenges facing the Gulf Coast.

We opened up our offices in One American Place in downtown Baton Rouge in April. In the next month, we are expanding and taking on additional space adjacent to our current office to accommodate additional staff.

We are actively working on over 20 projects and have produced a number of reports and products for several clients, including the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Science Foundation.

As an example, we have launched the Louisiana Coastal Innovation Partnership Program, a collaboration between

The Foundation's civic leadership initiatives are underwritten in large part by our members.



PHOTO BY FRANK MCMAINS



PHOTO BY FRANK MCMAINS

the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and The Water Institute of the Gulf. The program will solicit and evaluate innovative concepts, technologies and techniques to support the implementation of Louisiana's 2012 Coastal Master Plan. More information on the program can be found at [www.thewaterinstitute.org/innovation](http://www.thewaterinstitute.org/innovation).

We recently established an Academic Liaison Group, chaired by Dr. Robert Twilley of Louisiana Sea Grant, which includes representatives from Louisiana's academic institutions with the goal of establishing a two-way path of communication between universities and The Water Institute to discuss how we can collaborate on research priorities that are of critical need. Additionally, Karen Gautreaux of The Nature Conservancy has agreed to chair our Environmental NGO Liaison Group. This group will serve in a similar capacity as the academic group in terms of providing an avenue for shared communications and potential collaboration.

We have launched an upgraded, full feature website, along with an overview video. The website contains more detailed information about our team, what we do and our current projects.

Lastly, we have started in earnest our broad-based strategic planning effort. The strategic plan will support the Institute's initial focus on coastal Louisiana and the Gulf Coast, while laying the foundation for the export of capabilities that address water management issues in deltaic and coastal systems throughout the world. We have engaged the National Research Council to provide ideas for our strategic plan. The council is working with us to explore links among natural science, engineering and the dynamics of social and economic systems that underpin integrated water management decisions in coastal and river systems.

We are grateful for the support of our stakeholders and clients and we look forward to future collaborations and shared successes. •

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation created The Water Institute of the Gulf, which is now a standalone nonprofit chaired by Kevin Reilly Jr. The Institute provides independent research and solutions to coexist with rising seas along the Gulf Coast and the world. The Institute is expected to grow to several hundred researchers and staff in coming years.

Louisiana's coast is in a more precarious position because sea level rise and land subsidence are working together against it. This double threat, NOAA says, means Louisiana's shoreline is disappearing nearly four times faster than Key West.

## Special projects

**FUR BALL** The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is giving a hand to the Companion Animal Alliance on preparations for the second Fur Ball. The inaugural Fur Ball last year raised nearly \$85,000 for CAA, a nonprofit that is saving more than 60% of dogs and cats that end up at its animal shelter.

Before CAA took over the shelter in 2011, eight of every 10 animals were being put down.

The Fur Ball will be held May 4 at Crowne Plaza. The event features food, drink and an elaborate silent auction. Dogs with tickets are welcome.

Funds from the Fur Ball and donors have been invested wisely. CAA staff and volunteers have improved the health and well being of unwanted animals in the shelter, which, in turn, improves their chances for adoption. That's because animals that appear sickly or miserable just don't appeal to families looking to bring a pet into their homes. But little things can do so much to help, like providing new bedding so that cats no longer sleep on cold cement floors, or creating new recreational areas that allow dogs to play outside each day.

The CAA also has used donations to expand adoption hours and add new locations, as well as to cooperate successfully with animal advocates working to ban gas

chambers from Louisiana's shelters. Donations have enabled the CAA to partner with other animal rescue groups and expand the network of foster families. They have helped the organization to link with LSU's School of Veterinary Medicine and other local vets, boosting their efforts to sterilize more animals and reduce the population.

For more information about the Fur Ball or to buy tickets, please visit [FurBallBR.com](http://FurBallBR.com)



Brinkley Maginnus and B.B. Anne, winner of 2012's Fur Ball Queen.

## Philanthropy



### KICKING THE DISEASE

On Feb. 25, India celebrated a hard-won triumph. For two years, not a single case of polio had been reported in the country. That seemed impossible to Apporva Mallya when he joined the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

"When I started at Gates Foundation five years ago, I was absolutely convinced—and my colleagues were absolutely convinced—that India would be the last place to eradicate polio," said Mallya, a program officer for the vaccine delivery team. "The population density, the sanitation conditions and

extreme poverty make ideal conditions for polio to transmit from person to person, and for the virus to resurface. But in a few short years, we are now in a position where we can say polio is gone in India."

If no cases are reported by February 2014, India will be declared polio free. No more polio virus spreading to children, leaving them crippled for life.

Mallya spoke to the Baton Rouge Rotary Club in March about progress against the disease. Rotarians around the world have contributed hundreds of millions of dollars over 25 years for a boots-on-the-ground campaign to rid the world of polio.

The Gates Foundation joined the fight with money and brains a few years back. The disease is almost gone,



from 350,000 cases in 150 countries when the World Health Assembly began the global campaign in 1988 to 220 cases in three countries last year—Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In the three countries, the disease is limited to about 25% of the areas—the rough borders where inadequate health systems make it difficult to find all children for vaccinations and where parents are hesitant to vaccinate children. Terrorists, too, menace and kill health workers.

But Mallya is hopeful a new plan that includes advanced technology to reach into distant territories—along with considerable backing and financial support from the elected heads of the three countries—will eliminate polio by the end of 2014.

If no cases emerge in three years after the last one is recorded, health care officials can certify polio has been eliminated and stop vaccinations altogether.

Quoting his boss Bill Gates, Mallya said, “We have the vaccine, we have the system, we are so close, we have to do this.”

**CDP IN THE NEWS** *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* picked The Center for Disaster Philanthropy among its “5 Nonprofit High Points in 2012.” CDP was started with the assistance of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Lori Bertman of the C.B. and Irene W. Pennington Foundation. Bertman is the inaugural chair.

Says the *Chronicle*, “Nonprofits and foundations that aid victims of natural disasters can now get help to ensure they respond in the most effective way. The Center for Disaster Philanthropy—headed by Bob Ottenhoff, former chief executive of GuideStar, a publisher of data on charities—aims to get more information to donors and help them pool their money so their gifts can make a bigger difference.”

## Grants

The Foundation’s donors make thousands of grants each year. Here are a select few. All the grants are enumerated in our annual report, which is at [BRAFOrg.org](http://BRAFOrg.org).

**GULF GRANTS** The Colbert National Gulf of America Fund, established by political satirist Stephen Colbert, granted nearly \$100,000 to four nonprofits. Receiving grants for general support were Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans (\$32,635), New Orleans Youth Build Gulf Coast (\$22,000), Single Stop USA (\$22,000) and Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center (\$22,000).

Colbert established the fund at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to assist nonprofits after the BP oil leak. He raised money from sponsors and fans of his HBO show, *The Colbert Report*.

**THAT’S A WRAP** Donors of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted \$85,000 to the inaugural Louisiana International Film Festival. Held in mid-April, the festival featured movies, short films, documentaries, seminars

and networking parties. An award ceremony at the Rural Life Museum wrapped up the festival.

**MEDICAL CORRIDOR** The Baton Rouge Area Foundation has granted \$750,000 from the Future of the Gulf Fund for a plan to improve the movement of people and vehicles around Essen Lane and Bluebonnet Boulevard, which is expected to get even more traffic with more hospitals and clinics under construction or on the drawing board.

The grant will also pay for research to determine how medical centers in Baton Rouge can collaborate to create a unique advantage for the region’s health care delivery industry. The Foundation and health care leaders will oversee transportation and health care consultants to produce the recommendations. The Foundation is working on the transportation segment upon request from the FutureBR implementation team, which includes the parish planning department and the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority. The reports will be delivered within two years.

# 2013 John W. Barton Awards

Winners answer a few questions

Photos by Tim Mueller

Each year, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation chooses three nonprofit leaders for the John W. Barton Sr. Excellence in Nonprofit Management Award. The \$10,000 award is named after Mr. Barton, a founder.

The winners are announced at the Foundation's annual meeting in March. We accept nominations from our fund donors, with the winners chosen by past chairs.

This year's winners are Barbara W. Auten of Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area, Renee Chatelain of the Manship Theatre and Randy W. Nichols of Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless.

We ask the winners a few thoughtful questions each year. Their responses are below.

## Barbara W. Auten

Barbara Auten has led Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area for five years.

She has found more resources for the nonprofit, collaborated with community partners and generated revenue through unique projects. Among them is Charlie's Place, a national model for respite care.

Charlie's Place welcomes Alzheimer's patients who are being cared for at home, giving their caretakers up to six hours to themselves.

Auten lived in New Orleans for 30 years, where she was active as a community volunteer. Hurricane Katrina brought her to Baton Rouge, where she promptly began to improve services to Alzheimer's.

### What is your greatest accomplishment?

Being awarded the John W. Barton Sr. Excellence in Nonprofit Management Award meant I have earned the respect of the leadership, past chairs and membership of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Earning the respect of these people that I hold in great esteem means a great deal to me. Second to that would be 24 years of volunteering for Girl Scouts and mentoring hundreds of girls who have accomplished their dreams.



### What is your favorite memory from childhood?

With eight children, my parents could not afford annual vacations so they purchased 57 acres of forested land for \$1,500. My dad was the county parks planner and he turned it into a nature park where we spent most weekends. I learned about conservation there and how we need to steward the earth. He carved out the nature trails, slept in lean-tos and created a nature preserve over the years. It's what makes me appreciate Louisiana's wildlife and nature so dearly.

### What is your favorite meal?

Being from Buffalo—roast beef on weck (roast beef on a kummelweck roll) or a Sahlen's hotdog.

### If not yourself, who would you be?

In fiction, Atticus Finch, he's the voice in my head telling me to "walk in another man's shoes."

### Excluding Baton Rouge, what is your favorite city and why?

Chicago has so much to offer. I could spend days in the Field Museum and, of course, with the arts and the parks, you never run out of things to do. They've accomplished so much by reclaiming their river. I admire their leadership for that.

### Solving which problem would provide the greatest return to Baton Rouge?

Education remains the greatest challenge for all of Louisiana. Baton Rouge is becoming fractionalized with independent school districts when we should be uniting to share costs, seek system-wide answers while allowing a good measure of school autonomy, and raising the salaries of teachers while overhauling the tenure system. It's a huge problem, not easily solved but demands the attention of every adult because it is our future as well as that of the students.

### Who is your favorite hero in fiction?

Atticus Finch.

### What does Baton Rouge lack that you wish it had?

More infrastructure. We're still catching up from the post-Katrina influx of permanent residents.

### Which living person do you most admire and why?

She's not famous but I admire Lana O'Dwyer. She was the principal at Christ the King Parish School in Terrytown, where I first was a board member and then worked as a development director. Her leadership mentored best practices. She brought in a shared vision model, and discernment that truly advanced the board's ability to advance the school's success and impact the education.

### What is your most treasured possession?

A rosary that belonged to my paternal grandmother that I keep in a case. In that case, my father kept eight dimes and two quarters for our Sunday contributions at church. It represents my faith, my family and my community.

### If you had \$1 billion, how would you spend it to improve our region?

I would invest in two areas, coastal restoration and education. We need to save what coast we can. Not many people realize that two-thirds of the nation depends on the river for commerce and over \$1 billion in commerce is derived from our seafood and wildlife industries. Funds for education would be invested in early education, developing a sound foundation and hopefully a life-long thirst for knowledge.

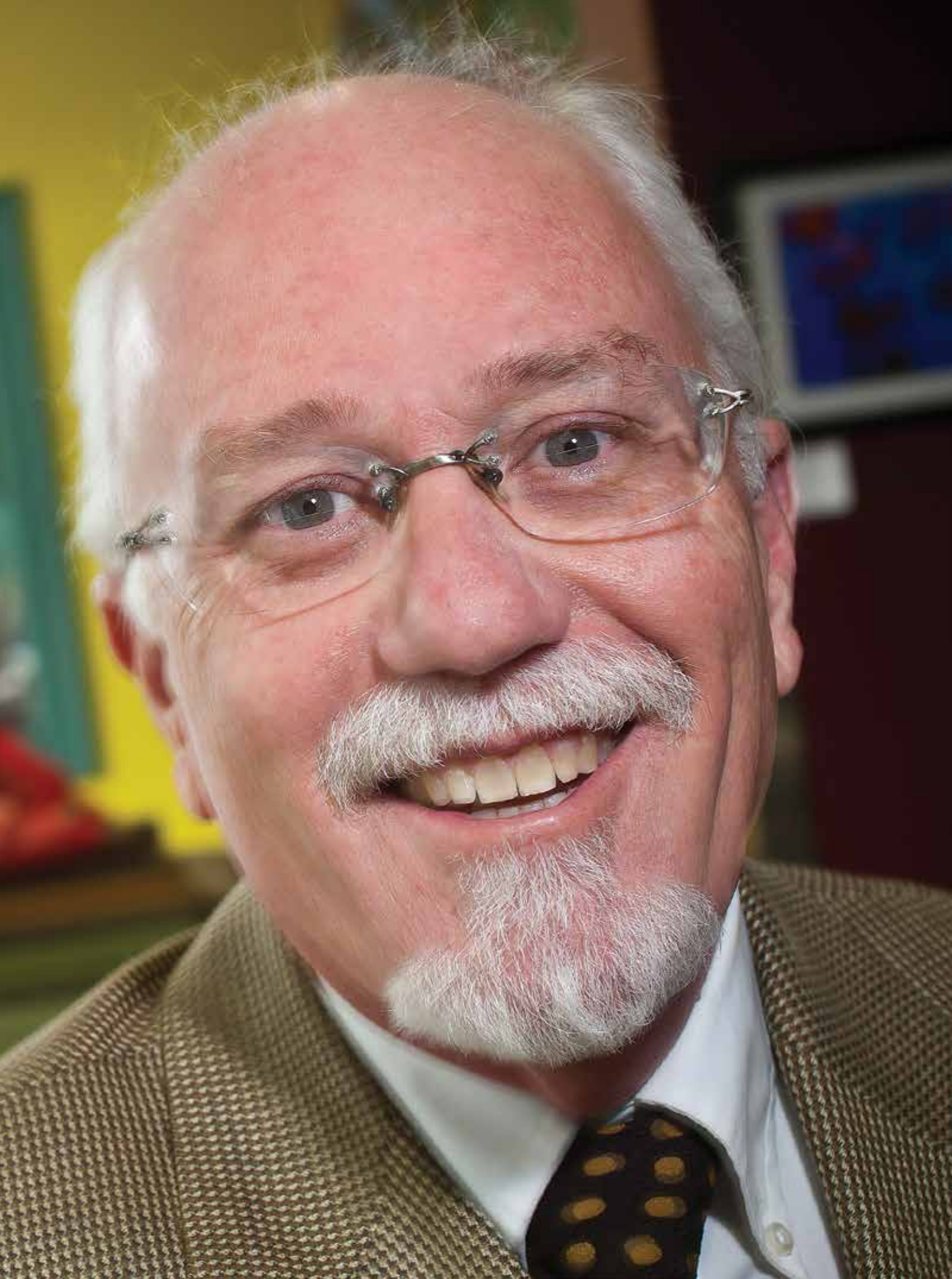
## Randy Nichols

Homeless people and families face immense challenges to return to productive lives.

Their struggles are lightened by Randy Nichols.

As leader of Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless, Randy has spearheaded two projects that have opened recently.

The One Stop Homeless Services Center in Mid City provides housing and services under the same roof. So homeless people can shower and wash their clothes, while also getting counseling and assistance on navigating the



social services system. The center offers skills training and health services.

Randy has also partnered to renovate an abandoned school in Mid City into apartments for people who work but don't make enough for a home.

### **What is your greatest accomplishment?**

I am very proud of my family. My wife teaches history at LSU and has published several books based on her research. Our two sons have a variety of interests and abilities. But they are certainly not "my accomplishments" in any way.

So that leaves my pride in the two housing developments that Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless has partnered to complete. The Scott School Apartments repurposed a beautiful, historic school building, and the new construction of our One Stop Center and apartments is beautiful and meeting a real need in the community.

### **What is your favorite memory from childhood?**

Cold nights at my great-grandmother's house: she warmed a blanket and put it between the sheets so you wouldn't be cold. Of course, I loved everything about time at my grandmother and great-grandmother's house: I was the first grandchild and great grandchild. I ruled.

### **What is your favorite meal?**

Thanksgiving dinner—if it includes my cousin's cornbread dressing—or any meal at NOLA.

### **If not yourself, who would you be?**

Novak Djokovic is a great tennis player with an even greater sense of humor.

### **Excluding Baton Rouge, what is your favorite city and why?**

Our family lived in Manchester, England, for three years. It was in no way a tourist destination, so it had a gritty urban feel that was exciting.

### **Solving which problem would provide the greatest return to Baton Rouge?**

Of course, my first thought is to solve the problem of homelessness. People don't realize the cost of homeless-

ness as a public expenditure, with ER visits and public safety expenses being primary; but there is the larger problem of eliminating blight and redeveloping the corridor along Florida Boulevard and North. Successful businesses and thriving neighborhoods would be a boon to the city in terms of increased sales tax revenues as well as quality of life for all citizens.

### **Who is your favorite hero in fiction?**

Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* was principled without being overbearing.

### **What does Baton Rouge lack that you wish it had?**

A transit system that would attract choice riders; it would be great if even people with cars preferred using public transit. A big component of the system would be a high-speed train connecting Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

### **Which living person do you most admire and why?**

Alice Waters. She is a great chef, and she has changed the way we think about food ingredients and production.

### **What is your most treasured possession?**

I would say family and friends, but you don't possess them. More and more there are few possessions I would be disappointed to lose.

### **If you had \$1 billion, how would you spend it to improve our region?**

We need an investment in the North Baton Rouge area along the lines of an infill mixed-use development project. It would include housing and economic development with a focus on micro-lending to give residents the help needed to start new businesses.

## **Renee Chatelain**

Renee Chatelain has been executive director of the Manship Theatre for three years. During that time, she has changed the direction of the theater.

Now, the theater complex hosts a greater variety of acts that draw a diverse crowd. The B-52s and The Go-Gos have



performed there, as have classical musicians and Flamenco dancers.

Chatelain has represented Manship Theatre in the renovations that are under way. The improvements will provide a stand-alone identity to the Hartley-Vey theaters.

Her service to the community began more than 20 years ago. She was co-founder of Mid City Dance Project and led that organization for 13 years.

### **What is your greatest accomplishment?**

Accepting a phone call from the Dr. Leo S. Butler Community Center asking me if I might volunteer to teach a ballet class 27 years ago. That phone call reset the course of my life.

### **What is your favorite memory from childhood?**

Seeing my first movie, Disney's *Cinderella*, at the Paramount Theatre in downtown Baton Rouge.

### **What is your favorite meal?**

A tie between gnocchi and risotto.

### **If not yourself, who would you be?**

Sylvie Guillem (French ballet dancer).

### **Excluding Baton Rouge, what is your favorite city and why?**

New York City—so much great dance, music, food, art, theatre...and just more.

### **Solving which problem would provide the greatest return to Baton Rouge?**

Education and poverty.

### **Who is your favorite hero in fiction?**

Charlotte from *Charlotte's Web*.

### **What does Baton Rouge lack that you wish it had?**

Real public transportation.

### **Which living person do you most admire and why?**

Kevin Lyle—for his compassion, insight and loyalty, quiet philanthropy, intelligence and focus, and for having an unwavering moral compass.

### **What is your most treasured possession?**

My relationships with family and friends.

### **If you had \$1 billion, how would you spend it to improve our region?**

I am not sure about the parameters of "our region," but if it is the Greater Baton Rouge area, then the money would be spent in the areas of education (with arts integration being a requirement!), especially early education and technical training, public transportation, sustainable living initiatives and economic development. •

“There is no greater thrill than to see people who are willing to lead with their time and talents, and work at it for the overall good of the community. You exemplify the joy of giving and there is no end to what you can do.”

—John W. Barton Sr.





## Fresh Fest 2013

Special Events Every Saturday • Local Chefs Cooking Seasonal Menus  
Kids Art & Garden Activities • Summer Music

- |                |                        |                |                        |
|----------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| <b>May 25</b>  | Butterfly Extravaganza | <b>June 29</b> | Star Spangled Saturday |
| <b>June 1</b>  | Dairy Day              | <b>July 6</b>  | Just Peachy            |
| <b>June 8</b>  | Blueberry Bash         | <b>July 13</b> | Melon Mania            |
| <b>June 15</b> | Corn & Squash-Tastic   | <b>July 20</b> | Cool as a Cucumber     |
| <b>June 22</b> | Tomato Me Crazy        | <b>July 27</b> | Everything Eggplant    |

## RED STICK FARMERS MARKET

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Renderings by Antunovich Associates



# Difference engine

Wilbur Marvin's legacy continues in \$55 million downtown project

By Mukul Verma



The residential building will be on Main Street at Lafayette. The building will have 95 apartments and nine townhomes, each with a balcony overlooking the Mississippi River. Residents will have use of an infinity pool with a river view and fitness facilities. Rents and prices have not been set.

# Through a generous legacy, Wilbur Marvin continues building even today along our riverfront, bringing new life to Baton Rouge.

Wilbur Marvin relished negotiating a good deal even more than signing one. He always knew the amount in each of his business accounts, practically down to the penny. For him, a good weekend was one spent scouting plots for a future shopping center.

Marvin's hard work did not draw a lot of attention, and that's how he liked it. Almost unnoticed, he built a real estate empire that stretched across the southeastern United States and throughout Puerto Rico.

And, just like that, he gave it all away.

To this day, Wilbur Marvin's generosity continues to benefit the residents of his beloved Puerto Rico, the people of South Louisiana and, especially, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

To find evidence of his ongoing legacy, you need look no further than downtown Baton Rouge. In late March, the Wilbur Marvin Foundation played a decisive role in bringing a new IBM programming center to the riverfront.

With our real estate manager Commercial Properties Realty Trust as the lead developer, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and WMF are constructing an eight-story office building for the 800 workers that IBM will employ downtown. Next to it, CPRT will raise an 11-story residential building, with 95 apartments and nine townhouses—each one with a balcony overlooking the Mississippi River.

This new complex will transform the downtown riverfront.

It's the outcome of negotiations that began nearly two years ago between the State and IBM. The global giant was weighing Baton Rouge as the site for its newest software development center, which would generate good jobs for local programmers, many of them earning more than \$70,000 per year. But IBM needed office space for the center's large staff; that would be a key incentive for the company's choice of location. So the State turned to the Baton Rouge Area

Foundation, based on their successful collaboration on a handful of other projects, such as building the Shaw Center for the Arts together.

In March, Governor Bobby Jindal, Mayor Kip Holden, and IBM executives stepped up to the podium at the Shaw Center together and announced that Baton Rouge had been chosen as the home of the new software facility. In fact, IBM was ready on that very day to begin hiring new employees, the first of 800. IBM's newest staff will be temporarily located on Essen Lane while their new offices are built on the riverfront.

The center will provide IBM's domestic clients with software services that meet the increasing demand for flexibility in keeping up with Big Data, cloud and mobile needs. IBM Services Center: Baton Rouge will deliver on vital requirements like system integration, as well as application development and management.

"Today's announcement is a game-changer that will have a generational impact on Baton Rouge and our entire state," said Jindal.

Slowly but steadily, Louisiana has been growing its high-tech sector and bringing its high-paying jobs to people who live here. This has been an important priority. IBM's selection of the capital city is expected to accelerate that growth, making this region a more attractive landing place for other high-tech companies.

To best leverage this economic development opportunity, Louisiana is investing in LSU. The State will provide \$14 million over ten years to expand higher education programs in technology and boost the number of graduates ready for high tech work. At least 65% of this money will be dedicated to growing the Computer Science Division at LSU's

# Wilbur Marvin Foundation

**What:** The Wilbur Marvin Foundation is a supporting nonprofit that holds most of the real estate assets of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Commercial Properties Realty Trust manages those assets and oversees new developments.

**Governance:** WMF is governed by an independent board. Board members are John G. Davies, Dudley W. Coates, Kevin P. Reilly Jr., Christel C. Slaughter and Charles Valluzzo.

**Assets:** WMF has shopping centers and office developments, mainly across Louisiana. The centers include Acadian Village and a controlling interest in Bon Carre business center. WMF, the Foundation and CPRT are developing a \$55 million residential and office complex on the downtown riverfront. Partners in the office development are the state and city-parish. IBM will occupy the office building.

School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. The university plans to double its computer science faculty, and to triple the number of graduates from that program within five years. That would vault LSU into the top 15 schools in the nation for the number of bachelor's degrees in computer science awarded annually.

These are the kinds of changes that city- and state officials expect to ultimately result from the arrival of IBM downtown. The new complex on the riverfront will continue the revival of the downtown district that began 15 years ago with Plan Baton Rouge, an urban master plan underwritten by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Since then, downtown has drawn more than \$1.5 billion in investment, taking the form of new restaurants and clubs; top class office space; three hotels, including the Foundation-revived Hilton that was sold last year; a new Town Square anchored by a courthouse; improvements to the convention center, and a money-saving consolidation of state office spaces.

Of course, an improved downtown means more people want to live there now. But the few available apartments and condos in the heart of the city are not nearly enough to satisfy the demand of a larger urban-dwelling population.

CPRT's project may change that. The multi-use complex will be the first new riverfront development in more than half a century.

Combining workspace with residential use, the \$55 million, 455,000-square-foot complex will house IBM's offices in one tower and more than 100 new apartments and townhomes in another.

In the planning stages since fall 2012, the project was launched with a generous gift to the Baton Rouge Area Foundation from the Manship Family, who donated a parcel of land. The buildings were designed by Antunovich Associates, which has a history of developing IBM facilities and has collaborated with CPRT on other projects.

The State of Louisiana is investing \$30 million for the offices, while CPRT is securing private financing for the residential tower. With the planning and design nearly completed, construction of the two buildings is expected to begin before summer, making them ready for occupancy in 2015.

It will rise on the empty site where *The Advocate* newspaper headquarters stood, placing it on the riverfront block bounded by Main, North and Lafayette streets.

Known as 525 Lafayette, the 11-story residential building will contain apartments. Studio, one-, and two-bedroom units will range from 445 to 945 square feet. Rents have not been set.

The residential tower will connect to the office building by way of a 24,000 square-foot private terrace. Residents and IBM employees will share a private fitness center.

The new complex could transform Baton Rouge, which has been made much easier by what Wilbur Marvin did.

A quiet man who worked more hours than most, Marvin made an amazing business for himself, building new properties. Through a generous legacy, Wilbur Marvin continues building even today along our riverfront, bringing new life to Baton Rouge. •



The office building for IBM, foreground, will be eight stories with a rooftop terrace. A 24,000-square-foot terrace will connect the two buildings. Construction is slated to begin in fall with the buildings ready in early 2015.

# Slow and steady

A nonprofit links the pleasure of food to the welfare of the environment

By Maggie Heyn Richardson | Photos by Jeffrey Dubinsky

Outside the One Stop Homeless Services Center on North 17th Street in Baton Rouge, AmeriCorps member Maggie Conarro walks contemplatively around two raised garden boxes she and a team of volunteers installed last October.

Dozens pitched in to clear the overgrown and littered plot of land that sits on the south side of the year-old Homeless Services building. There, they built two four-by-eight foot garden boxes, which now sprawl with stately Swiss chard, mustard greens, kale, cilantro and other fall crops. The plantings are starting to seed, and it's time to pull them up and prepare the beds for summer herbs and vegetables. Just steps away, a crowd of homeless men and women are milling near the center's main entrance, and the garden is in their full view. The beds sit square in the middle of otherwise dreary space. They bring beauty and possibility.

Homeless Services Center Executive Director Randy Nichols says the project has been a big success. The garden provides an opportunity for both volunteers and clients of the Homeless Services Center to work together to maintain the space and grow food. The periphery of the property around the garden boxes is sometimes strewn with litter, but the garden has become a sacred site that clients and neighbors both admire and respect, he says.

"Everyone wants to see it thrive," he says. "No one bothers it."

The garden is the handiwork of Slow Food Baton Rouge, the nonprofit with which Conarro has been placed through her term of service with the Louisiana Delta Service Corps.

Slow Food Baton Rouge is part of Slow Food USA, a national nonprofit focused on making "good, clean and fair food" more available in communities across America. It sprang out of a movement founded in Italy in 1986 that called attention to erosion of food traditions and small-scale farming due to mega-farming and mass-production of food. The Baton Rouge chapter is one of 225 across the United States.

"It's a tradition that has been lost, but getting it back would go a long way in improving neighborhoods. We want to see a vibrant garden culture in Baton Rouge."

—Carl Motsenbocker, LSU horticulturist

Founded in 2009, Slow Food Baton Rouge has accomplished a lot in a short period of time to bring awareness about regional food systems. The organization's signature fund-raiser is its annual Dinner in the Field and farm tour where a handful of local chefs cook a four-course gourmet







meal at a local farm with ingredients from Louisiana farms and producers.

Slow Food Baton Rouge has also launched a series of free hands-on workshops in beekeeping, raising chickens, edible landscaping and other aspects of urban agriculture to help more residents grow their own food. And the organization has become the hub in Baton Rouge for starting and maintaining community gardens. Launching the garden at the Homeless Services Center is just one of Conarro's projects; she has also helped organizations resurrect moribund gardens by assisting them with long-term maintenance and education plans.

"It's not enough to build gardens," says Conarro. "You have to build gardeners."

Slow Food Baton Rouge started when a small group of like-minded people familiar with the Slow Food movement gathered to discuss the state of food in South Louisiana, recalls Carl Motsenbocker, an LSU horticulturist and former board member of the Big River Economic and Agricultural Development Alliance (BREDA), which operates the Red Stick Farmers Market.

"Our volunteers brought a variety of different strengths and focus areas," says Motsenbocker. "There were people with urban agriculture experience, chefs concerned about where their food comes from and people who love food. But we all had the same general ideas about building a more sustainable food system in our area."

By then, the farmers market in Baton Rouge had

expanded significantly, often hosting more than 50 vendors, and the concept of buying locally was becoming better understood among Baton Rouge consumers. Still, there was work to be done in educating the community about how to improve the broad availability of good, clean and fair food, especially in the Capital City's numerous food deserts, says Motsenbocker.

Currently Slow Food Baton Rouge is an all-volunteer organization hoping to fund a part-time staff position. In 2011, Slow Food began partnering with the Louisiana Delta Service Corps, which has placed two AmeriCorps members with the organization to help it grow programs.

Conarro, along with Sarah Bolinger, a recent graduate of Oberlin College, are spearheading two important Slow Food programs, community gardens and urban agriculture workshops.

The Homeless Services Center garden is only one of the gardens Conarro has assisted since she began her service in fall 2012. She has also helped install or resume projects at the Baton Rouge Youth Coalition, a nonprofit that prepares promising but disadvantaged high school students for college; Thrive, the first charter boarding school in Baton Rouge; and the school garden at Glasgow Middle School.

Bolinger plans urban agriculture workshops on a variety of topics. Their purpose is to empower residents, especially in lower-income neighborhoods, to get back to a tradition of growing their own food.

"It's a tradition that has been lost, but getting it back would go a long way in improving neighborhoods," says Motsenbocker. "We want to see a vibrant garden culture in Baton Rouge."

It's not simply to beautify blighted areas, says Motsenbocker, an expert in international sustainable agriculture.

"We have a real problem with food deserts in our community, places where people have easy access to healthy foods," he says. "The idea would be to build a network of gardens

"It's not enough to build gardens. You have to build gardeners."

—Maggie Conarro, Slow Food Baton Rouge

that could then have their own farmers market.”

If growing new farmers is at one end of Slow Food Baton Rouge’s work, deepening the connections between the community and existing farmers is at the other. One of the ways the organization accomplishes this is by holding its annual farm tour and Dinner in the Field event.

Held this year in late March, the event includes a self-guided farm tour of several farms near to Baton Rouge. Slow Food provides a map on its website that participants use to drive from farm to farm at their leisure. Along the way, they stop and visit with growers and producers, tour operations and ask questions. This year’s participants included Port Hudson Organics, a community-supported agriculture (CSA) farm, McKowen Farms, which features sheep tended by a team of herding dogs, Feliciana’s Best Creamery and Yardbird Farm in Zachary, which raises chicken, eggs and specialty produce. Motsenbocker says the farm tour has become a popular draw because it allows consumers to view the operations of farms located just a short distance from a major metropolitan area.

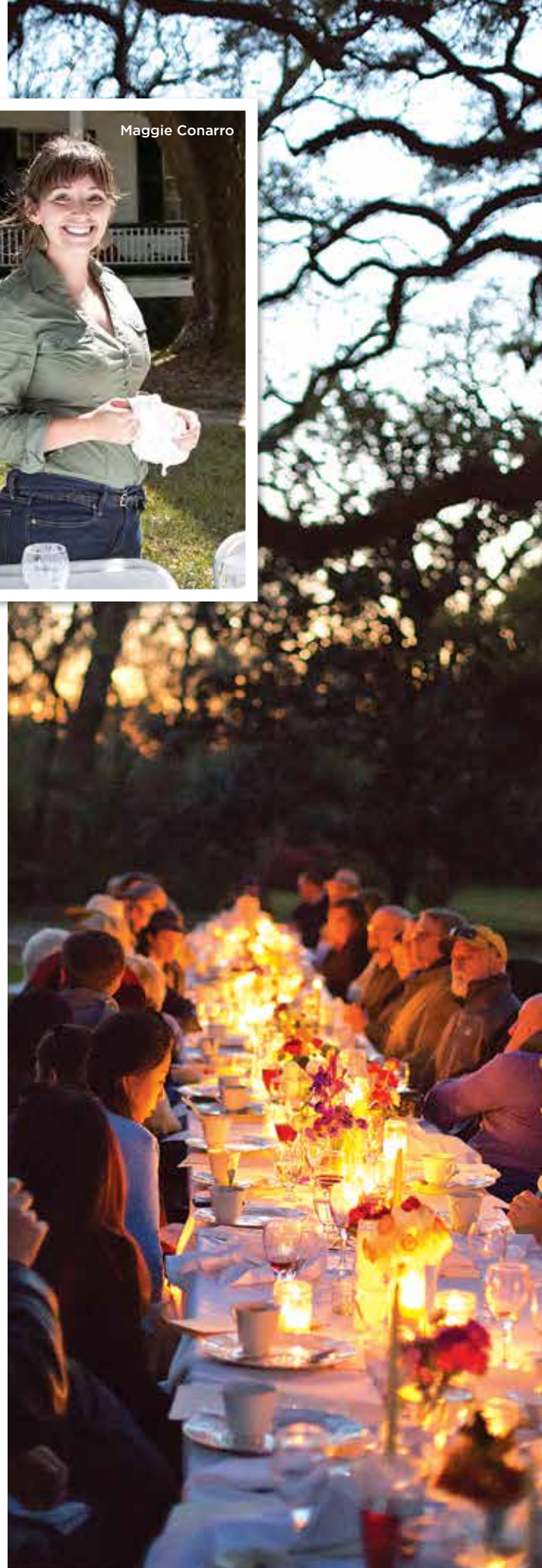
Following the farm tour is Slow Food’s reservation-only fundraiser, Dinner in the Field, a casual but chic event held under sprawling live oaks at Oakland Organics plantation in Gurley. This year’s third annual event was planned by lead chef Jaime Hernandez, executive chef at Juban’s Restaurant. Hernandez has worked diligently over the last two years to bring more regionally grown foods to the menu of the popular South Baton Rouge restaurant by buying directly from small-scale ranchers and farmers.

Hernandez and a team of other local chefs volunteered their time to create a last-minute menu based on what was emerging from local fields. The provenance of every dish was traceable to farms within driving distance of the table.

“We believe that food close to the source tastes better, and it’s nice to see so many people becoming more interested in what is locally grown and produced,” says Hernandez.

Motsenbocker says Slow Food Baton Rouge might be one of the youngest chapters in the country, but there is tremendous value in observing the successes and failures of well-established chapters nationwide.

“There are a lot of great examples out there of what programs work in communities and which ones don’t,” he says. “We want to learn from those experiences.” •



# LSU builds a village

## New housing will blend with retail, offices

By Mukul Verma

Thousands of students have set up their homes across decades in the Nicholson Apartments at LSU. Students who lived in the low-slung, cinder block buildings had cargo trains roaring out their back door and sports fans headed to games up front. LSU leaders considered the area the “backside” of the campus.

The 100 acres has become prime land—and LSU is about to undertake a nearly \$200 million redevelopment that will convert the apartments and land around it into a destination, complete with restaurants and market-rate residences for faculty and staff. New student housing will take up a considerable portion of the land, but will be reconfigured to offer a much higher quality of life.

The big space is about two miles from downtown, a district that has returned with more than \$1.5 billion in new housing, offices, restaurants, clubs, arts centers and government offices. Across the street is Tiger Stadium, which draws more than 90,000 ticketholders and thousands of more tailgaters to SEC games.

The goal of the redevelopment, says LSU Director of Residence Life Steven Waller, is manifold: provide a captivating gateway for the university, lure more students to live on campus, offer visitors a place to shop and be entertained.

“We have an opportunity here to create a destination,” he says.

LSU’s Board of Supervisors in March approved the blueprint created by consulting firm AECOM. At the same meeting, the supervisors agreed to a lease with the LSU Foundation for the first project in the redevelopment—a \$20 million foundation headquarters at the corner of Nicholson

and Skip Bertman drives. Situated on a prime corner, the building will have limited retail on the first floor.

The master plan recommends 1,240 beds for students, 89 apartments for faculty and staff, 110,000 square feet for offices and 137,000 square feet for retailers.

Students housed on Nicholson will move to open apartments elsewhere on campus while LSU builds replacement units. New housing will remain in the same location, but be multi-story to liberate space for common greens.

Mixed-use buildings across from Tiger Stadium will include retail, such as a small grocer, a sports bar and restaurants. Waller mentions a collegiate version of Wal-Mart as a possibility. The gargantuan retailer has begun opening stores of less than 10,000 square feet at universities with basic groceries, general merchandise, some financial services and pharmacies.

LSU planners designed their project within the city-parish’s new overarching master plan, FutureBR. The university is building complete streets with wide paths that integrate walkers and bicyclists, a green buffer for pedestrians, a maximum of 11-foot lanes to slow traffic, and a wide median to accommodate a future light rail line between LSU and downtown.

The project is expected to move pretty quickly when compared to similar, large real estate developments. That’s because LSU has a captive market. Construction could begin later this year and be completed before the end of the decade.

“We have the land, we have the brand and we have the demand,” says Waller. •





Mixed-use buildings will surround a plaza at the location of the former baseball stadium. The plaza will be framed on three sides with retail shops and restaurants and open to the east with views to North Stadium Drive and Tiger Stadium.



The West Side Residential District will have buildings in a quadrangle shape with each having a common green courtyard. Seen here is the sidewalk in front of the residential buildings on Nicholson.



LSU wants to make its section of Nicholson Drive a complete street. Narrow lanes will slow traffic and a wide median will accommodate a streetcar if the city follows its master plan and builds one. Sidewalks will be wide enough for bikers and walkers to travel in harmony.







Steve Maher, *left*, and Scott Ritter are partnering with attorney Danny McGlynn to remake the former Darensbourg Building on Government Street near Baton Rouge Magnet High School. The entire block is being remade with assistance from the EBR Redevelopment Authority, which was launched by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

# Top model

RDA, developers partner to remake block on Government Street

By Maggie Heyn Richardson | Photo by Tim Mueller

At first glance, Government Street is just a bustling corridor shuttling thousands of motorists a day from downtown Baton Rouge eastward toward the center of the city. It wears the patina of age and heavy use. Many of its buildings are in need of repair, there is little landscaping, and it's almost impossible for anyone to safely cross the street on foot.

But Government Street, say regional and national planners, is perfectly positioned to become a thriving, New Urbanist thoroughfare complete with traffic calming measures and pedestrian amenities. While it needs improvements, it has valuable assets, including a generous supply of homegrown retailers, restaurants and art galleries that give the street an intrinsic funkiness impossible to replicate in a new development. It is also bordered by engaged neighborhoods—the Garden District, Ogden Park and Capital Heights—where residents embrace walking, running and biking and support local businesses.

In recent years, Government Street has seen a vote of confidence with a few key projects, such as the Circa 1857 mixed-use development, the expansion of Dufrocq Elementary and the \$85 million renovation of Baton Rouge Magnet High School, all within the same area. In 2011, it was also listed as an area ripe for streetscape improvement in Baton Rouge's FutureBR parish land use plan.



After renovations, the Darensbourg building will house Ritter Maher.

Now, more action is in the offing, including the “Model Block” project under way on the north side of Government Street between Ogden and Bedford drives.

Model Block LLC, a development led by Scott Ritter and Steve Maher of Ritter Maher Architects and attorney Danny McGlynn, will rehabilitate the entire block, including the anchor Darensbourg building and five other structures.

Maher says the intention of the project is to bring the entire block into commerce, improve the facades and landscaping and configure parking in a manner that will facilitate efficient use. The largest undertaking is the renovation of the Darensbourg building, a recognizable space that once housed the Darensbourg family’s shoe repair business. Ritter Maher Architects plans to move into the top floor of the building. Maher says the firm is eager to be part of the neighborhood’s transformation and to move back into “the heart

“There is a lot of synergy in this particular part of Government Street right now. This will serve as a model for what’s possible because it’s not just one building, it’s an entire block.”

- Mark Goodson, EBR Redevelopment Authority

of the city.” Currently, the firm’s office is located off Bluebonnet Boulevard.

“We love rolling up our sleeves and being where the progress is,” says Maher. “We see Government Street as a diamond in the rough, and we want to be there as it continues to improve.”

But putting together a project like this isn’t easy. The price tag is about \$1.2 million, and financing for properties surrounded by inconsistent conditions remains a challenge. Maher says the partners have relied on the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority to help make the project happen. The RDA is providing gap financing to make up the shortfall from commercial lenders, and it is funding façade improvements.

For every \$10,000 spent on storefronts, landscaping and other visually appealing conditions, the RDA will issue a \$7,500 rebate.

The Model Block project is considered a good example of what can be done on Government Street, says RDA

# RDA Update

## Back into commerce

Abandoned lots are a chronic problem for struggling neighborhoods. Since it began operations in 2009, the RDA has removed an impressive 105 abandoned properties from adjudication and sold them to four different housing nonprofit organizations, including Habitat for Humanity and the Jarvis Green Foundation, which have built new housing for low- to moderate-income families.

The RDA's work in returning these lots to commerce has served a twofold purpose—removed neighborhood eyesores, and increased badly needed housing stock in neighborhoods that have seen rampant disinvestment.

Historically, the process of gaining clear title to these properties was lengthy and complicated, helping the adjudication rolls swell to more than 6,500. The RDA has streamlined the process, making it easier for housing nonprofits and developers to turn the parcels of land into something positive. “It’s a clearly defined process now, so organizations and developers can come to us with their plans for improving these lots,” says RDA Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Mark Goodson. “We vet them, and if they’re acceptable, we can move forward.”

## Fresh food initiative

Many of North Baton Rouge’s neighborhoods are considered food deserts, places where the local population has trouble accessing fresh healthy food. Instead of a traditional supermarket, corner convenience or liquor stores dominate the local landscape. Many residents don’t have personal transportation, and are stuck purchasing unhealthy and often overpriced foods from these small markets.

For years, conversations about food deserts have focused only on the lack of a major grocer in a given area, but the RDA has adopted a quicker solution. In partnership with the city’s new Fresh Beginnings



program, and a \$1 million childhood obesity grant funded by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation, the RDA is helping existing convenience stores stock their shelves with fresh produce and other healthy food items that neighborhood residents want. Throughout 2013, the RDA will work with four pilot stores in North Baton Rouge to add new appealing items. Partners, including the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, will provide program assistance.

“The goal is to change the composition of what’s on the shelves in those stores,” says Goodson. “There is a deficit of fresh foods, but there are established stores, so the idea is to incentivize the stores to help change the culture.”

The fresh food initiative includes two additional components, a mobile farmers market project held in conjunction with the Big River Economic and Agricultural Development Alliance, and a continuing effort to attract supermarkets throughout Baton Rouge’s urban core. •

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Mark Goodson. “There is a lot of synergy in this particular part of Government Street right now,” Goodson says. “This will serve as a model for what’s possible because it’s not just one building, it’s an entire block.”

The plan for the block includes a \$1 million renovation of the Darenbourg building, a distinct rectangular building at the corner of Government and Bedford whose front door is placed at a 45-degree angle. Maher says this and other features will be maintained, including the longstanding white color and tall exterior windows along Bedford Drive. This allows the partners to take advantage of tax credits through the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation, says Maher.

Once completed, the top floor of the two-story building will house Ritter Maher in a modern, open space for a staff of up to 16. The firm currently has eight employees. Denicola’s, the upholstery and furniture business now located next door, will move into the first floor of the building. Four of the adjacent buildings will see repairs, and one will be razed to accommodate a parking lot.

“Parking is one of the biggest issues for a block like this,” says Maher.

RDA Project Manager Susannah Bing says the Model Block project is positioned to succeed because it already has design elements that planners want to replicate throughout Government Street. The buildings are located in close to the street itself, keeping the visual focus on storefronts rather than on unattractive surface parking lots. Moreover, the block is flanked by several promising components, including Baton Rouge Magnet High immediately to the west and the Ogden Market strip development to the east, which recently completed façade improvements and houses the popular new Radio Bar.

Meanwhile, the dilapidated Westmoreland Shopping Center across the street was recently purchased by its neighbor, Catholic High School, and will be redesigned soon. “With so much activity in the area and so many students and neighbors, we see this as a block with tremendous potential,” says Bing. “You have a lot going on in a concentrated area. Further down Government the activity is spread out and the street is wider, and it becomes more challenging.”

Bing says the Model Block could eventually include amenities that appeal to the area’s large student and residential population, including a coffee shop and pop-up retail or restaurants.

“We love rolling up our sleeves and being where the progress is. We see Government Street as a diamond in the rough, and we want to be there as it continues to improve.”

—Steve Maher, Ritter Maher Architects

Showing what is possible is the Center for Planning Excellence’s Better Block initiative, which coordinated a demonstration project in mid-April about possible street improvements along Government Street between Ogden Drive and Acadian Thruway. Here, the City of Baton Rouge is examining reducing traffic from four lanes to three and adding a center planted median. These potential street improvements would soften the street visually and calm traffic, says Bing.

“We’re really encouraged by the Model Block project and everything happening around it,” says Bing. “This is an eclectic part of town with so much potential, and this will really add to it.” •



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PUESTO

# Easy button

Nonprofit assists students to graduate from community college

By Sara Bongiorno

Nationally, 69% of community college students give up before completing a degree. The No. 1 reason is they don't have enough money to live.

Jacquelyn Moore doesn't fit the image of an undergrad at a four-year college. She's 27 years old and the mother of a four-year-old boy. She works multiple jobs. Yet, here she is, two years into a nursing curriculum at Delgado Community College in New Orleans.

"I want something better for us," says Moore, who plans to become a registered nurse after completing her associates' degree in nursing at Delgado. "Wanting something better for him is my motivation."

Moore's juggling of parenting and college coursework isn't unusual at Delgado, where the average age of students is 28. But students at Delgado and community and technical colleges across the U.S. aren't just older and poorer than students at 4-year schools; 40% of them, like Moore, are also parents.

She has never considered quitting school, even when her purse was nearly empty. Yet many community college students are beat down by parenting, working and going to college at the same time. Nationally, 69% of community college students give up before completing a degree. The No. 1 reason is they don't have enough money to live.

"For a lot of students it comes down to choosing between groceries for their families and graduation," says Dr. Arnel Cosey, vice chancellor for student affairs at Delgado's main campus next to New Orleans' City Park. "Most of the time, when students have to make that choice between food for their family and staying in school, they are going to quit school."

The national dropout rate is particularly sobering given research that tells us students who do graduate do well financially in life. Thirty percent of Americans with associate degrees—two year diplomas that vouch for "middle skills" for jobs like machinists and medical technician—earn more than those with bachelor's degrees, a 2013 study by Georgetown University's Center on Education shows.

“Our graduates get jobs because the classes and training we offer are what employers want and need,” Dr. Cosey says. “If we can get students through 18 months or two years of training and education, then we can get them into the job market and into the tax base.”

An innovative program introduced at Delgado in 2012 and funded through a grant from Baton Rouge Area Foundation helps community college students stay in school to complete their studies and do just that. The Foundation is also looking to greatly expand the reach of the program, called Single Stop USA, through an enhanced partnership that will establish it on community and technical college campuses across Louisiana and the Gulf Coast.

At Delgado and 16 other community colleges in six other states, Single Stop USA focuses on connecting students to two proven poverty-fighting forces: community colleges and longstanding public benefits programs like food stamps and housing and childcare assistance. The idea is to connect students to existing public benefits as a powerful but temporary way to help them complete school and then move into the workforce.

In the five years since its founding, Single Stop USA has helped 700,000 low-income individuals and families access more than \$2 billion in public benefits like food stamps, Medicaid and housing and childcare assistance. Nearly 80% of the community college students served by Single Stop over that time represent the first generation in their family to go to college. More than half work at least part time, and some 70% make \$10,000 or less a year.

“You are reaching people who need help, and you are reaching them at exactly the right time,” says Elisabeth Mason, Single Stop USA’s chief executive officer. “Our model looks at the government safety net not as a long-term crutch but as a short-term springboard to help families achieve financial stability by getting parents into jobs.”

She sees the program as a good investment of public money and also a crucial element of regional and national economic vitality. She notes that each dollar spent on Single Stop USA programming results in at least \$14 in cash and non-cash assistance for the individuals it serves. In one three-month span of 2012, for instance, Delgado’s Single Stop office connected students there to more than \$226,000 in public assistance.

And community colleges like Delgado are working to equip students with the skills that employers in Louisiana want, meaning it plays a vital role in the state’s economy by

addressing a shortfall in skilled workers.

“There are jobs that go unfilled in this state, but community colleges are creating graduates to expand that workforce,” she says. “Community colleges don’t just benefit students. They are also part of the long-term vitality of our country.”

President Barack Obama has acknowledged that role. His administration has committed to investing \$2 billion for expanding job training at community colleges by 2020. In 2011, the White House Social Innovation Fund recognized Single Stop USA with a \$1.1 million grant as one of six U.S. nonprofits tackling poverty and other issues in a revolutionary way.

It’s a model that is sustainable and that can be scaled up to reach huge numbers of low-income college students in the U.S., Mason notes.

“We’re using resources like food stamps and other services that have been right in front of us for so long,” Mason says. “But we’re connecting them to people who need them in a way that’s revolutionary.”

Single Stop’s year-old Delgado operation follows its national model. Its four core components, all provided free to students, are enrolling student in existing state and federal benefits programs; preparing their tax returns so they can apply for federal student financial aid and other services; legal assistance; and financial counseling.

Each element of the program reflects an identified need among Single Stop’s target population.

As elsewhere, public benefits like food stamps and health-care assistance often go unused by low-income students who do not know about them, do not believe they are eligible, or lack time or transportation for sometimes frustrating trips to multiple government offices.

“It can be a confusing process,” says Brandy Gros, Single Stop’s benefits coordinator at Delgado. “We make it fast and easy.”

Using a software program owned by Single Stop, Gros can determine in 15 minutes what local, state and federal benefits programs a student qualifies for. Next she enrolls students in the programs at Single Stop’s on-campus office.

Gros also helps with confusing forms, and students use available equipment like the office fax machine to submit required paperwork.

Students often come to ask Gros about financial help in one area only to then discover that they qualify for additional programs, she says.



Moore, for instance, first came to Single Stop to ask about childcare assistance. Gros helped her enroll in a subsidy program that paid more than half of those expenses, but also determined that Moore qualified for \$384 a month in food stamps and a state program that pays for preventive health exams free of charge.

“It’s made a big difference for me to get that assistance,” Moore says. “I didn’t know that was something I could get.”

Preparing students’ tax returns often likewise turns up underused but valuable benefits. The average tax refund for Single Stop students at Delgado is \$300.

But in some cases, the return identified by tax preparers is much more. The federal Earned Income Tax Credit, for instance, can result in a refund of \$2,000 to \$3,000 for some students, Mason says, who calls it the nation’s “biggest poverty-fighting tool after Social Security.”

“We have people with incomes of \$10,000 a year coming in to see us and learning that they will be getting a refund that is equal to 20% or 30% of what they make in a year,” she says.

Other services also help students cope with pressing needs so they can stay in school and then transition successfully into the job market. Its staff attorney at Delgado assists students with legal issues from divorce to child custody to expunging old parking tickets and infractions from their legal histories.

“Those are things that can prevent them from getting a job, so it’s important that we help them address those issues so they are ready to go to work after they finish school,” says Gros.

Single Stop’s coordinators make presentations around campus and actively reach out to members of the faculty to encourage them to send students to see them.

“We recognize that a student’s school life is not separate from the rest of their life, so this puts everything they need in one place, whether it is help on campus or in the community,” says Gros. Adds Dr. Cosey: “Students often talk to faculty first about problems in their lives, so we want the faculty to know how Single Stop can help.”

Early research shows that Single Stop’s model does help students. A recent analysis at a community college in Brooklyn, N.Y., found that students who used Single Stop’s services were 17% more likely to stay in school than

“Our model looks at the government safety net not as a long-term crutch but as a short-term springboard to help families achieve financial stability by getting parents into jobs.”

— Elisabeth Mason

students who earned four times more but did not receive services. “These students were much poorer but also more likely to stay in school,” Mason says.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation will be building on its partnership with Single Stop USA as the organization looks to expand its model to community colleges across the Gulf South.

Although details are still under development, the Foundation is directing a \$5 million grant to support Single Stop USA sites at 19 community colleges in Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and western Florida. As at Delgado, the funds come from the Future of the Gulf Fund at the Foundation, which was seeded by a BP donation after the oil leak.

The effort will more than double the number of Single Stop sites at colleges across the country.

Meanwhile, Delgado’s Cosey says officials there are exploring how to make the program accessible to all its students. “We’re finding it to be so powerful and effective that we want as many as students as possible to benefit from what it offers,” she says.

Delgado student Brian Larsen views Single Stop from a unique vantage point. The program helped Larsen, a 37-year-old transplant from Minnesota, with legal issues related to a now-closed business he managed before enrolling at Delgado to study accounting.

Larsen, an artist-by-training who is also trained as a tax preparer, now completes tax returns for Delgado students at Single Stop’s campus offices. “There’s a feeling of inclusion to doing this,” he says. “If I take the time to explain to people why they need to do their taxes or file their back taxes, that is going to help them going forward. There is an art to living and working, and this helps them prepare for that.” •

# What's down there?

LSU researcher explores life under the Antarctic ice

By Sara Bongiorno

Arctic biologist Brent Christner keeps a chainsaw and a photograph of Pittsburgh Steelers legend Jack Lambert in his office at Louisiana State University.

The chainsaw is a workplace souvenir of sorts. Christner carved a tunnel through Antarctic ice with it. The framed shot of the Steelers, famously missing his top front teeth is a memento of Christner's childhood in Pennsylvania.

"I'm still a Steelers fan," he says. "That's not something you get over."

In January, Christner was among 50 on a U.S. research team that discovered and collected living microbes from a subglacial lake under 2,500 feet of ice in Antarctica. He compares the lightless, watery ecosystem in which the microbes survive to swampy south Louisiana covered by ice sheets that are a half-mile or more thick and millions of years old.

Until recently, there had been fairly little research into the biological material that gets caught up in the countless layers of frozen water that make up glaciers in the Arctic and Antarctic.

"What finding the cells doesn't tell us is how these ecosystems function and what is the source of energy to fuel life there?"

—LSU researcher Brent Christner

Researchers with the Whillans Ice Stream Subglacial Access Research Drilling project are working to understand the ecosystems of the ice sheets, including their movements and their function in climate history.

The January trip to Lake Whillans resulted in the first collection of clean living samples of subglacial organisms as well as video recordings of the murky underworld of one of the last unexplored aquatic environments on the planet.

The discovery of lakes and streams below the ice sheets of Antarctica is fairly new. Lake Whillans, where Christner's team bored into the ice, was found in 2007 after another research team noted a rapid rising and falling of the ice that could only be explained by the motion of water under it.

There are more than 250 subglacial lakes in Antarctica. They are formed as ice melts in the comparative warmth below the glacier. While the surface of the glacier might be -55 degrees Celsius, the temperature below the ice could



be -0.5 Celsius—that’s just under freezing—because Earth itself is a source of heat, Christner explained.

He and other members of the expedition sponsored by the National Science Foundation had expected to find living organisms under the ice of Lake Whillans. But reaching the subglacial lake and then extracting a sample uncontaminated by equipment used in the ice-drilling process was a core element of the years of planning that went into January’s expedition.

The team used a hot-water drill to cut through half a mile of ice to the lake below. Two days of drilling in 24-hour sunlight allowed the team to collect lake water, lake-bottom sediment and tiny organisms that will be studied in laboratories across the country, including at LSU.

Dye added to the samples after the extraction confirmed the presence of DNA contained in living microbes.

What Christner and other researchers don’t know, and what will be the focus of new research, is what keeps the microbes alive.

One possible food source, Christner said: Rocks caught up in the glacier and pulverized into sandlike bits over millions of years. In theory, the oxidized rock could release compounds that allow the microbes “to make a living from them,” he said.

“What finding the cells doesn’t tell us is how these ecosystems function and what is the source of energy to fuel life there,” Christner said. “We know the sun is not the source of energy, so what causes chemical change there? That’s a key question that we will look at.”

The research could provide new understanding of life on the icy moons of Jupiter and Saturn. The ice-covered moon Europa, Christner noted, is probably even colder than Antarctica’s much larger Lake Vostok, but the cold, dark conditions there may be similar in key ways to the ecosystems under the ice sheets.

The January expedition was years in the making. A key challenge for researchers was finding a way to avoid contamination into samples while drilling through the ice into the subglacial lake. To prevent it, all the equipment that went into the borehole had to pass through a high-intensity UV lamp.

Figuring out a way to get massive amounts of drilling and testing equipment to Lake Whillans was likewise complex. It took a specialized engineering team 12 days to move the equipment across 600 miles of ice to the drilling spot on an enormous sled.

Christner and other scientists did not join the convoy, but instead flew to Lake Whillans from the U.S. McMurdo Station after stopping over in New Zealand to be outfitted in government-issued gear to protect them during weeks on the ice.

Christner spent three weeks in one of dozens of bright orange tents designed to withstand the cold.

“It’s really warm in the tents,” he said. “My wife still doesn’t believe me when I tell her that.”

Christner spent a decade studying ice cores of the better-known Lake Vostok. Over the years he has made seven or eight trips to the Antarctic. He also studies glacial ice in the Arctic and on Greenland.

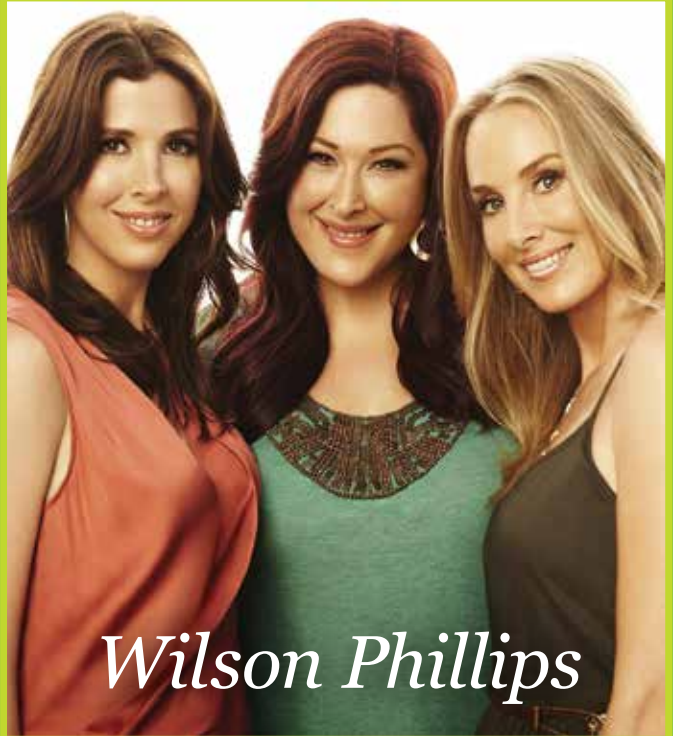
Ironically, as a graduate student at Ohio State University, he originally intended to study organisms that live optimally at hot temperatures. He began looking at ice cores after the principal researcher in his lab received funding to study ancient ice and encouraged him to pursue that line of investigation. At LSU, ice cores preserved for study include bits containing frozen bubbles of methane gas captured in the ice millions of years ago.

What’s trapped in glacial ice, including ancient methane bubbles, is of growing interest in light of climate change because, over time, the gas could be released into the atmosphere as the ice melts.

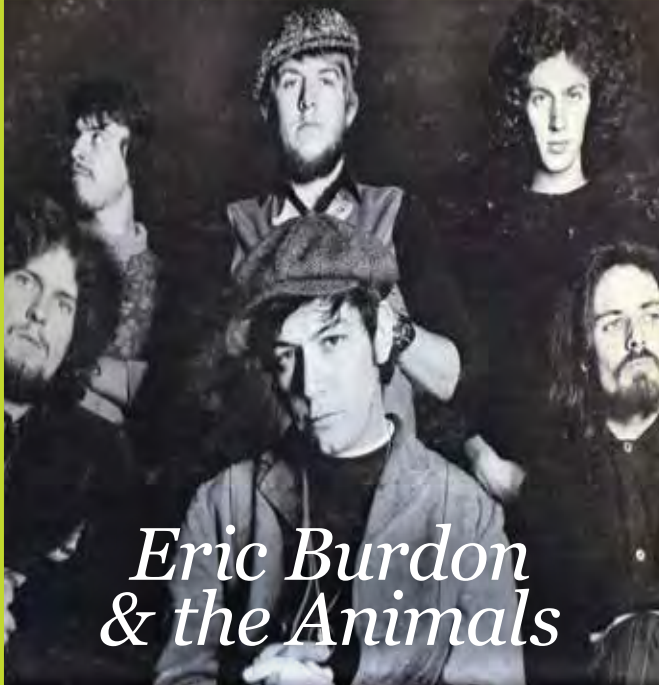
Christner is already planning his next trip to the bottom of the world for more study.

“I was only there for three weeks (in January), which is really a pretty short time to be out on the ice,” he said. •

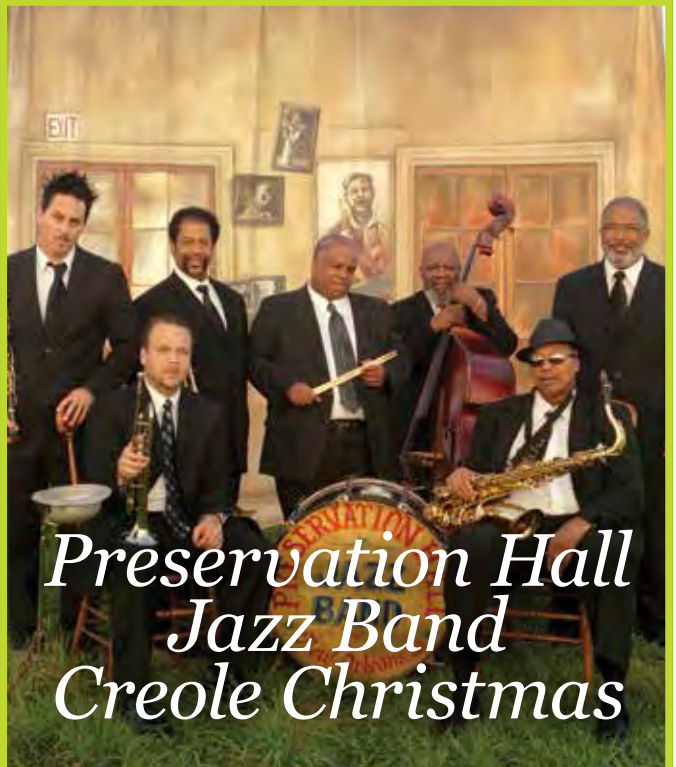
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## Clever packaging

Designer Aaron Mickelson has come up with clever methods to reduce packaging and the resulting waste. He envisions trash bags that are pulled one by one from the center until the last one—also a trash bag—is reached. Dishwasher soap would be packaged in dissolving pods; bath soap would be in a dissolving package that is also made of soap. And plastic containers would include printed packaging material on the outside instead of on a box, with the printed material washing away upon use.



## Buy to save

Ford has launched a collaboration to show how the typical American family can purchase and integrate its hybrid car and other energy-efficient products to reduce expenses and the carbon footprint.

Working for the project, Georgia Institute of Technology's computer model predicted a 60% reduction of energy costs and more than 9,000 kilograms of carbon dioxide per year for homeowners integrating the suggestions of the MyEnergi project.

If every home in the U.S. implemented these energy-saving technologies, it would be equal to removing 32 million homes from the electric grid, or all houses in California, New York and Texas combined.

Savings include \$2,000 per year from a 5-kilowatt solar panel array and \$1,700 from driving a Ford C-Max plug-in hybrid. Also, a household would reduce expenses by using appliances like washers and dryers overnight, when power is cheaper.



# DIY health care

Felling a bit ill? In the future, your smartphone will tell you whether a trip to the doctor is necessary. Several companies nowadays offer devices that link cheap health sensors to smartphones.

The leader in the space could be Scanadu, a California firm that has created a hand-held unit that communicates with a smartphone. Named Scout, the sensor detects heart and respiration rate, blood oxygenation, pulse transit time and temperature when placed to a patient's temples. The company hopes to begin selling Version 1 this year for around \$150.

Scanadu is inventing disposable tests for the flu and other upper-respiratory infections as well.

The company's vision is a device that quickly diagnoses many types of illnesses and recommends treatment, reducing clinic trips.



## One large step ...

The cost of building a lunar base has been astronomical—until now.

The advent of 3-D printing – where machines spray fine materials in layers to create objects—means a lunar outpost could be made for a reasonable sum. Using a 3-D printer would eliminate the need to ferry modules to the moon.

In testing, Enrico Dini, inventor of large-format 3-D printer D-Shape, the European Space Agency and Foster+Partners have created large building blocks made of the raw material found on the moon.

Many more steps must be taken before launching a printer to the moon. The initial results, though, show this moon shot is possible.

## Common Crawl



Common Crawl, a nonprofit, wants do for the world what Google did for itself. The upstart's software cataloged more than 5 billion pages, then uploaded them to the public domain for use by creative people and businesses.

Common Crawl also wants to provide tools that people can use to invent new uses for all that data.

"Having an open, shared corpus of human knowledge is simply a way of democratizing access to information that's fundamental to innovation," Gilad Elbaz, who founded Common Crawl, told *Technology Review*.

Posted on Amazon's cloud service, the data can be accessed for \$25. Common Crawl is counting on donations and grants to continue the work.



## MagicBands

Disneyworld will soon deploy MagicBands, a means to improve its already high standards for customer service.

Containing RFID chips, the bands will include customer and credit card data. Guests can use the bands to unlock hotel rooms, grab fast passes for rides, buy food and enter Disneyworld without a paper ticket. Hidden sensors will read data on MagicBands, providing information for personalized greetings, such as Mickey Mouse saying, "Hello, John, welcome back to Disneyworld."



## Spinning solar

Startup firm V3Solar claims its novel solar system can produce power at 8 cents per kilowatt-hour, about half the price of electricity generated by established companies. The company's spinning, conical solar cell grab more electrons from sun rays.

"One Spin Cell produces as much energy as five flat panels. So if you needed twenty flat panels to power your house, you would only need four Spin Cells," says the company.

An independent scientist has verified the claim. V3 is shooting to produce the cells by early 2014 at an undisclosed market price.

## LittleSun

A little light can transform lives for the poor. A child can do schoolwork, for instance, late into the evening. So Olafur Eliasson's creation of LittleSun may be embraced by villages without electric power.

Shaped like a flower, LittleSun is portable. It can be attached to a lamp base, hung on a wall or placed on the handlebars of a bicycle. Powered by the sun, the light can operate for five hours on a three-hour charge. Best thing, the LittleSun is inexpensive, costing about \$12 to off-grid communities, about half the price for the rest of us. LittleSun also is less expensive than a kerosene lamp.







## Light revolution

North Carolina lighting manufacturer Cree has introduced an LED bulb that could live up to the excitement of the technology.

Cree's not short-selling its light bulb. The marketing slogan is "The biggest thing since a light bulb is a light bulb."

Cree says a 40-watt bulb will retail for under \$10, less than half the price of competitors. LED bulbs use about 15% of the power needed for an incandescent bulb and last more than two decades. Cree's bulb pays for itself within a year.

What may be most important, Cree says light from its LED has the glow of a cherished incandescent bulb.

The bulbs are available online at Home Depot and soon at stores.

## Look ma, no hands

Audi is among the leaders in testing autonomous cars. The German car maker also is ahead of others in creating the technology for cars that one day promise to drive themselves.

Early driverless cars by Google and Audi were equipped with large roof-mounted lasers to scan their surroundings. Audi has shrunk these robotic eyes into a device that fits into the grill of a car. The company also has created a smaller motherboard—the computer driving brains—for driverless vehicles.

Driverless vehicles are being publicized as a means to speed up traffic, vastly reduce accidents, cut gasoline consumption through more efficient driving, and curb the need for more lanes because the cars can motor in convoys.

## Love this shack

In a South African slum, researchers at the University of Stellenbosch are testing a high-tech shack for alleviating oppressive slum life.

The iShack (improved shack) comes with solar power to run three lights, an outdoor motion detecting light and a phone charger. Adobe walls moderate the temperature; cardboard combined with packing materials are insulators. A slanted roof funnels rainwater for harvesting. A radio, DVD player, small refrigerator and television are upgrades.

At \$660, the iShack costs about \$100 more than



competitors. But the investment is recouped from energy and water savings.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has granted \$250,000 to Stellenbosch to build 100 iShacks for field trials.

# Dominique Ricks, a sure thing

From studying the spoken word and his own innate gifts, Dominique Ricks knows how to take over the room, how to captivate a crowd. His will to succeed makes him hard to overlook. He worked extra jobs during high school to add a little money to the family budget, while making sure his younger siblings kept up with their education.

A few years ago, Ricks caught the attention of leaders in the Baton Rouge Youth Coalition, then a startup providing hard-working teens access to the resources they need to pursue their dreams. They mentored Ricks and tutored him twice a week; his ACT score increased by 50%. BRYC recommended him to the University of Wisconsin, and helped him secure \$100,000 in scholarships from the school.

After graduating from UW, Ricks wants to spend two years serving in Teach for America, followed by law school. He will return to his home state one day, where he promises, "I'll be governor of Louisiana. There are a lot of things to fix."

—Mukul Verma

With our members support, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation special projects team assisted in the launch of Baton Rouge Youth Coalition. Since, Foundation donors have granted more than \$130,000 in operating support to BRYC, which is doubling its capacity this year.



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Children will experience the visual and performing arts inspired by fairy tale classics, famous historical figures and scoundrels! Mediums include watercolor, sculpting, dance and theatre.

Session I/**MONSTERS & FAIRIES**

May 28 - June 7 - \$342/\$432 (extended day)

Session II/**PIRATES & MERMAIDS**

June 10 - 21 - \$380/\$480 (extended day)

Session III/**TOADS & TIARAS**

June 24 - July 3 (no class July 4) - \$342/\$432 (extended day)

Plus an additional non-refundable \$15 registration fee.

Held at The Dufrocq School, 330 S. 19th St., Baton Rouge.



Ages 13 and older

July 8 - 12 • 8:30-3:30

Five fun days of drawing, painting and mixed media. Campers will also take field trips to nearby museums.

\$200 (includes supplies, museum fees & snacks)  
Plus a non-refundable \$15 registration fee

Minimum of 8 students/  
Max of 15

Held at the Arts Council,  
427 Laurel St.



Ages 4 & 5

June 17 - 21 • 8:30 - noon

A one week, half-day "camp" for preschoolers. Projects range from visual art and dance to music and theatre.

\$125 (includes supplies & snacks)  
Plus a \$15 non-refundable registration fee

Minimum of 15 students/  
Max of 20

Held at the Arts Council,  
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For info on all Blasts and Camps or info on our

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**WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP**, our staff will pursue initiatives like the one here, projects that provide a big return to the community now and for decades to come. **JOIN TODAY AT BRAF.ORG.**

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