

CURRENTS

A photograph of a modern, silver, spherical aerial gondola suspended from a cable. The gondola is positioned in the upper center of the frame, with a person visible inside. The background shows a clear blue sky with some light clouds, and a cityscape with various buildings and trees is visible in the lower half of the image. The overall scene is captured during the day, with soft lighting.

second quarter twenty-fifteen . baton rouge area foundation

ABOVE THE DIN

*Aerial gondolas are becoming a transit
alternative in choked cities*





Front Yard Bikes—story on page 50

Photo by Brian Baiamonte

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VOLUME NINE | NUMBER TWO

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*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

402 N. Fourth Street | Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802 | braf.org

LETTER



People who knew Helen S. Barnes probably would not be surprised to hear her described as a generous person. More surprising, maybe, was the extent of her generosity. She lived in a modest house in Hundred Oaks, and she donated \$5 million to four nonprofits when she died in 1979.

The Foundation placed the \$1.25 million we received in an endowment and set about finding the best way to put it to work for the purposes she'd specified. Earnings from the Helen S. Barnes Trust supplied grants to improve health care across the region.

For example, her gift provided \$100,000 per year for five years to supplement the salary of Dr. George Bray, the first director of Pennington Biomedical Research Center. By retaining leadership of his caliber, Pennington Biomedical quickly developed as one of the best research centers for nutrition and obesity in the world—as well as boosting the prestige of Baton Rouge and Louisiana in the process.

Since it was formed, the Barnes Trust has prospered, growing from the original \$1.25 million gift to more than \$5.5 million. Grants from the fund are approaching \$3.5 million.

Ms. Barnes is among many big-hearted people who have given

to South Louisiana through the Foundation. With the number of charitable funds here now exceeding 600, we have been able to grant more than \$350 million from those accounts to deserving nonprofits, not only in Louisiana but throughout the world.

The generosity of our donors is inspiring, but it's often overlooked too. Like Ms. Barnes, our benefactors are quiet and unassuming people. And, understandably, public attention is more easily attracted by the high profile civic projects that we undertake at the Foundation, like saving the lakes, reviving downtown, or transforming the traffic chaos around the Essen, Bluebonnet, and Perkins intersections into an orderly health district.

But we believe that the work we do here on behalf of our fund donors should never go unnoticed. In fact, we consider our most crucial mission to be carrying out the good will of those who entrust us with their gifts to the community. Last year alone, the Foundation's fund donors granted a little more than \$30 million.

The people who benefit from their generosity are your neighbors, your family.

They're schoolteachers throughout several parishes who received grants from our academic excellence funds, allowing those educators to purchase much needed supplies for their classes so that they don't have to dig so deep into their own pockets for paper, pencils, and crayons.

They're high school graduates from across South Louisiana

The charitable causes and good works enabled by these grants are as diverse as the donors who support them.

who received more than \$200,000 last year from our scholarship funds to attend college.

They're hardworking people at nonprofits who care for the ill, who feed the hungry, who fill our museums and theaters with beauty of all kinds to enlighten minds and enrich hearts.

The charitable causes and good works enabled by these grants are as diverse as the donors who support them.

The one you'll read about in this issue serves to illustrate the point. Kevin and Winifred Reilly pledged \$310,000 to the Louisiana Esperanza Project, an initiative of Catholic Charities here in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Esperanza—a word that means hope—aims to assist children who, for many years, have faced unspeakable evils in some Latin American countries. On the streets of their own hometowns, kids are being violently abused, beaten and raped. Government officials often look the other way. Often, too, it's the government officials themselves who are perpetrating these crimes. To escape, children travel hundreds of miles, trying to reach the U.S. border. Frequently, they journey unaccompanied, hoping to reunite with their parents who are already in the United States, working. When the kids reach the American border—the ones who are lucky enough to elude their tormentors and make it here safely—they arrive lost, surrendering to authorities and appealing for protection.

Some of these children have come to us here in the Baton Rouge area. But, with no one to speak for them or make their case, their future in this country is far from assured. The Esperanza Project was created to give them expert legal assistance in the midst of a governmental system that they can't begin to comprehend. Now, standing with them will be lawyers who can advocate for their asylum and for recognition of the basic human dignity that they could not find at home.

The work we do at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation has taught us much about the goodness of people in this community, like the Reillys, like Ms. Barnes. We know, therefore, that for these children, there is much cause for hope.

Sincerely,



C. Kris Kirkpatrick
Chair

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

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The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is a community foundation that takes advantage of opportunities to improve the quality of life in South Louisiana. We do so by providing two essential functions. One, the Foundation connects philanthropists with capable nonprofits to make sure the needs of our communities are met. For example, our donors support the Shaw Center for the Arts and education reform. Two, BRAF invests in and manages pivotal projects to improve the region.

For more information, contact Mukul Verma at mverma@braf.org.

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

ABOUT US

THE BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION ACCOMPLISHES ITS MISSION IN TWO WAYS :

1 We connect fund donors—philanthropists—to worthwhile projects and nonprofits. Over 51 years, our donors have granted more than \$350 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. Contributions to the fund are tax deductible. Donors use these funds to make 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.

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

UNIVERSITY, CITY PARK LAKES MASTER PLAN

(BATONROUGELAKES.ORG) : The Foundation is leading a master plan for restoring and enhancing the lakes. We are doing the work in a collaboration with the city-parish and LSU, which own the lakes, and BREC, which operates parks on and around the lakes. The final plan is due this summer.

JUST TREATMENT OF THE MENTALLY ILL :

The Foundation is partnering with Mayor Kip Holden, EBR council members, EBR District Attorney Hillar Moore, EBR Sheriff Sid Gautreaux, Baton Rouge Police Chief Carl Dabadie Jr. and behavioral health specialists to design a center for treating people with mental illnesses and substance abuse problems. Because of mental illnesses, people in crisis sometimes commit minor, nonviolent crimes and are incarcerated. The center will offer a less expensive and humane alternative.

BATON ROUGE HEALTH DISTRICT

(BRHEALTHDISTRICT.ORG) : The Foundation hired consultants to engage local health care leaders and the community to deliver a master plan for creating a Health District, including a four-year LSU medical school and a Diabetes and Obesity Center. The plan will also offer a design and destination for health care in Baton Rouge, with recommendations to improve the flow of cars and people in an area that is set to have more health care services.

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

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.

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GREATER BATON ROUGE



IBM BUILDING NEAR COMPLETION IBM employees—up to 800—will move into the first riverfront development in downtown in more than five decades. Programmers and their support staff were set to relocate from temporary space on Essen Lane to the building on North and Lafayette streets in May. Commercial Properties Realty Trust, the real estate developer and manager for the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, is developing the block. On the southern corner—Lafayette and Main streets—CPRT is completing a 85-unit apartment building by late summer. The project follows Plan Baton Rouge, a revival strategy for downtown that was underwritten by the Foundation more than 15 years ago. The IBM building was constructed in partnership with the state of Louisiana, which provided the computer firm incentives to locate in Baton Rouge.

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CPRT also is building the Onyx Residences, a 28-unit complex that completes the Foundation’s commitment to build out the Arts Block anchored by the Shaw Center for the Arts.

51st Annual Meeting

FOUNDATION DONATIONS RISE Philanthropists contributed \$50 million to charitable funds at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation in 2014, more than double the \$22 million the year before. From those charitable funds, these donors granted \$30 million to nonprofits across South Louisiana and the world, about the same amount as in 2013.

The results for 2014 were reported to members of the Foundation at an annual meeting in March. Numbering more than 600, the members also learned they had collectively given \$685,000 to the Foundation in 2014, 23% more than the \$559,000 the year before. Contributions from members let the Foundation conduct projects, including the lakes master plan and designing a treatment center for people with mental illness and substance abuse problems.

The Foundation's total assets rose to an unaudited \$550 million in 2014 from an audited \$507 million in 2013.

At the meeting, members elected directors to the board. Donna D. Fraiche, an attorney and shareholder of Baker Donelson, was picked for her first term of three years. Elected to second, three-year terms were William E. Balhoff, managing director of Postlethwaite & Netterville; Annette D. Barton, community activist; S. Dennis Blunt, partner at Phelps Dunbar; and Robert Ryland Percy, senior managing partner of Percy, Lanoux & Mumphrey.

The directors, in turn, picked the executive team: C. Kris Kirkpatrick as chair, Blunt as vice chair, Barton as secretary, Balhoff as treasurer and Mary Terrell Joseph, at large.

THE NUMBERS

To make sure that we are good stewards of funds entrusted to us by members and donors, the Foundation compares and sets its operating budget based on community foundations with similar asset bases. Our operating budget for 2015 is \$3.9 million on unaudited assets of \$550 million. Below are comparisons to other community foundations.

	Operating budget	Assets
Minneapolis Foundation	\$7.3 million	\$631 million
San Diego Foundation	\$9.2 million	\$612 million
Baton Rouge Area Foundation	\$3.9 million	\$550 million
Kalamazoo Community Foundation	\$3.6 million	\$438 million
Greater Houston Community Foundation	\$4.3 million	\$437 million



WATER CAMPUS UNDERWAY Workers are driving pilings for the second building on the Water Campus, a 35-acre riverfront development by the Foundation and Commercial Properties, which manages and develops real estate for the Foundation. Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority will be headquartered in the building on Terrace Street. Also under construction on Terrace is LSU's Center for River Studies. Soon, CPRT will start construction of headquarters for the Water Institute of the Gulf on the old Municipal Dock. When completed, the Water Campus will have 1.8 million square feet of space. Scientists and engineers working on water issues will be among those working on the campus, which also extends the rebirth of downtown toward LSU.

GOOD THINGS

AROUND DOWNTOWN In the plan for downtown's revival, two more items can be checked as completed. The Department of Public Works has converted St. Joseph and St. Ferdinand into two-way streets, eliminating unnecessary diversions from the two main roads linking to LSU. Motorists can now drive directly from Nicholson Drive and Highland Road into downtown.

Meanwhile, the Rotary Club of Baton Rouge's Centennial Committee announced a \$350,000 competition for an art piece at River Road and Florida Boulevard, where \$1.1 million in federal grants have created a gateway to the Mississippi River. The winning team is to be selected by Oct. 15.

Also, Mike Wampold has started construction of a hotel in the former Louisiana National Bank Building at 150 N. Third Street. The hotel will have 146 rooms. Wampold has not revealed the franchise flag. The Foundation's renovation of the Capitol House into a Hilton nearly a decade ago sparked new hotels in downtown. Hotel Indigo and Hampton Inn have opened since, and Holiday Inn Express is set to open this year on the Town Square.

NICHOLSON DRIVE MAKEOVER LSU has started remaking a stretch of Nicholson Drive from the former baseball stadium to the north gate. Ground has been broken for headquarters for the LSU Foundation Center for Philanthropy, and construction of that building should begin within two months at the corner of Nicholson and Skip Bertman Drive. Funded by private donations and borrowing, the \$10 million LSU Foundation building will consolidate offices into a headquarters in fall 2016. Behind it, the LSU Athletic Department will build a cafeteria for athletes. LSU plans new student housing along Nicholson in coming years and a mixed-use project to include retail and housing is slated next to the LSU Foundation building.



BALANCING LIFE IN MID CITY

Only a few streets around Webb Park have sidewalks. Children have no safe way to walk to the new slides and swings at the park. That could change soon. In October, the Center for Planning Excellence and the Department of Public Works painted temporary bike and walking paths in some Mid City Neighborhoods, a demonstration project that has produced prescriptions for improving infrastructure.

Included in planning were the neighborhoods of Webb Park, Westdale Heights and Steele Place. Among the 11 simultaneous demonstrations were painting a bike lane along Webb Park and connecting an existing bike lane near Country Club Drive to a possible new lane.

People representing the neighborhoods were reviewing the recommendations and offering their own ideas in March. Together with DPW, the neighborhoods will work on implementation.

“It has been a great process and we hope to assist other neighborhoods that are interested in addressing traffic calming and bike and pedestrian access,” CPEX Director of Implementation Haley Blakeman says.





the right thing

A center would treat the mentally ill while also saving tax money.

By Sara Bongiorno

In 2002, the Bexar County jail was being threatened with closure for inmate overcrowding. It was told to add 1,000 inmate beds.

Since then, the population of the west Texas County that includes San Antonio has grown by 500,000 people, but its jail has beds to spare—as many as 1,000 slots go empty at a time. It is closing some units for lack of need.

Bexar County these days saves at least \$10 million a year by diverting non-violent offenders with mental health and substance abuse problems into treatment. Civic leaders from 50 states and as far away as China and Canada travel to San Antonio to better understand its model for keeping the mentally

ill out of jails and hospital emergency rooms.

San Antonio's estimated \$50 million savings in corrections-related spending over five years has

caught the attention of leaders in Baton Rouge and elsewhere, yet the estimate is almost certainly wrong. Real savings are said to be even more.

"It's probably more in the range of \$17 million or even \$18 million (per year)," said Leon Evans, San Antonio's director of mental health services. "The \$10 million is a very conservative number that's easy to defend."

Evans is the founder and driving force behind the region's innovative approach to coping with an influx of people with substance abuse and mental health problems into the criminal justice system.

At the heart of San Antonio's approach is a "restoration

center,” a concept that is shaping efforts in East Baton Rouge Parish to create a kinder, more effective and less expensive alternative to locking up non-violent offenders with mental health and substance abuse problems.

Bexar County’s diversion efforts begin with a round-the-clock intake center where law officers can bring people who need mental health or substance abuse treatment. Screening at this single point-of-entry connects people with resources as varied as a place to sober up to long-term support to overcome a cycle of homelessness and re-arrest for petty infractions.

The Restoration Center includes a 48-hour psychiatric clinic; a medical clinic to treat offenders with minor physical injuries; a “sobering room” for drug or alcohol detox; outpatient psychiatric care; and a 90-day recovery program for substance abuse.

The integrated approach also includes housing for homeless people and job training.

Directors from hospitals, social services, law-enforcement agencies and other participating organizations gather regularly to measure how well

they are doing and look for ways to continuously improve the coordinated approach.

The center is funded from more than 90 sources that include hospitals, Medicaid insurance reimbursement and private grant-making groups.

The model saves San Antonio money and promotes public safety. Law officers who sometimes spent as many as 10 or 12 hours waiting with a psychotic offender in a local emergency room can drop off someone at the 24/7 intake center, fill out paperwork and get back to patrolling the streets in 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, homelessness in the downtown area has fallen by 70%. Parolees who complete the center’s treatment programs have a 6.6% recidivism rate during the three to five years after release, compared to a rate of up to 60% among those who do not, Evans said.

“Treatment is the difference; it works,” he said.

Nationally, there are 10 times as many mentally ill people in jail or prison than in state psychiatric hospitals, according to a 2014 joint report by the National Sheriff’s Association and the Treatment Advocacy Center.

The problem is particularly acute in Louisiana, which has the highest rate of incarceration in the U.S. and is “among the stingiest in expenditures for public mental illness services,” according to the report.

Louisiana inmates with mental illness are 17 times more likely to be in jail than in a psychiatric unit, according to Patricia Calfee, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation project manager guiding an initiative to decriminalize mental illness through an alternative to incarceration.

“Our jails have become our asylums because there is no place else for the mentally ill to be placed,” Calfee said.

The Foundation began working with local behavioral health experts and city-parish and local law enforcement officials at ways to divert mentally ill offenders into treatment after closure of Earl K. Long Hospital and its specialized

mental-health unit.

The hospital’s 2013 closure caused the number of parish inmates with mental health issues to spike, although precise data on increased public costs and changes in the make-up of the inmate population aren’t available, Calfee said.

A more detailed analysis of the impact—and potential cost savings from a local program along the lines of San Antonio’s—was being completed as this issue was going to press. It will be posted at BRAf.org and at facebook.com/BRAreaFoundation.

Prepared by the Perryman Group, the findings will shape ongoing discussions of what kind of diversion model would work best for Baton Rouge, and how to fund it.

Local leaders can already look an hour west to Lafayette Parish for additional evidence of the benefits of diverting offenders with behavioral health problems into recovery.

Over the past decade, Lafayette Parish has saved about \$20

FACT:

Parolees who complete San Antonio’s treatment programs have a 6.6% recidivism rate during three to five years after release, compared to a rate of up to 60% among those who do not.

million by redirecting non-violent offenders into treatment or community-based alternatives that include job training, GED classes and anger management.

Its inmate-screening process determines if an inmate needs mental health or substance-abuse treatment—and most do. At least 75% of inmates have either mental health or substance abuse problems or both, said Rob Reardon, director of corrections for the Lafayette Parish prison system.

Its diversion resources include a 24-bed inpatient facility adjacent to the parish jail where offenders can get 28 days of intensive therapy. There is also a six-month drug and alcohol rehab program.

About 200 offenders also take part in a reporting program that requires them to come to the corrections complex every day for classes in subjects as varied as parenting skills and work training. It also actively works to reunite offenders with their families to support their recovery and life after release or parole.

“It’s not a cookie-cutter approach,” Reardon said.

The intake program has diverted about 1,000 people from prison into treatment or training over the past year. Each inmate diversion saves money: Housing an inmate in the general prison population costs \$54 a day, compared to \$32 a day for correction-based substance-abuse treatment and \$22 a day for the daily-reporting program, Reardon said.

Diversion has eased jail crowding, which creates another cost savings: Reardon hasn’t had to pay a jail outside of Lafayette Parish to house inmates for four or five years.

“It’s driven by cost,” he said.

Still, Reardon wants to make further adjustments to Lafayette’s approach. He recently visited San Antonio to see its approach for himself. The power of its model, he said, is that it deters mentally ill and other non-violent offenders before they land in jail.

“We’re still catching them on the backend (through inmate screening),” Reardon said. “Their front-end model and the participation of a huge number of public agencies is what makes San Antonio’s model so effective.”

But Evans said getting so many agencies together a decade ago wasn’t easy. A Bexar County judge who championed his idea and ordered local law-enforcement officials and other agencies to work together was critical in making it happen, he said.

“Nobody wanted to do this at the beginning,” he said. “Nobody understood each other at the beginning, but now we do.” •



AUTO TRAINING CENTER BREAKS GROUND The authority that operates Baton Rouge Community College began construction of a \$25 million automotive training center at Ardendale, which is under development by the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority.

Construction starts the transformation of 200 acres surrounding North Lobdell and North Ardenwood. In the next 36 months, \$60 million will be invested on the North Lobdell side. Operated by the Baton Rouge Community College, the automotive training center will open next year. Within 36 months, a BRCC allied health training center will open, as will an East Baton Rouge Public Schools career high school.

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Ardendale began as a development of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation after Hurricane Katrina. The project has evolved since then, from a traditional neighborhood development into a neighborhood that will be anchored by education institutions. Ardendale will include housing and retail along North Ardenwood.

LAKES MASTER PLAN The people have been heard, both online and at meetings. Accounting for their suggestions and complaints, planners will reveal the first draft of the University and City Park Lakes master plan 6-8 p.m. May 12 at Lod Cook Alumni Center.

Working designs were shown at a public meeting in late January. They are posted at BatonRougeLakes.org

The designs incorporate dredged material—the lakes must be deepened to make them healthy—to form cypress and flowering wetlands to clean pollutants and nutrients from runoff, a bigger Wampold Park on Stanford and building separate bike and walking paths around perimeters.

Planners will revise the designs from remarks at the May 12 meeting. In July, a final plan will be released. That meeting has not been set.

With agreement from EBR government and LSU, which own the lakes, the Foundation hired SWA Group and Jeffrey Carbo Landscape Architects for a blueprint for the lakes.

The landscape architects were hired because the lakes are in decline. Already too shallow, the six water bodies are silting up with polluted sediment that runs off from surrounding neighborhoods and nutrients that bloom and die.

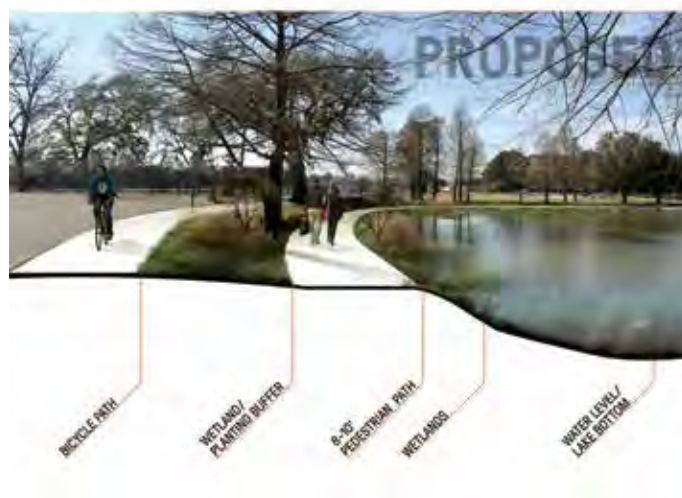
City Park Lake is the most threatened; it is only inches deep along the edges and about two feet deep, on average. If nothing is done, the lakes will turn into mudflats and swamps.

The master plan will include a cohesive landscaping scheme, suggestions for way-finding signs, a habitat restoration strategy and proposals for mitigating both noise and drainage from I-10. To achieve the goals, planners will identify potential funding sources for implementation. Recommendations for governance will be included to ensure the long-term upkeep and improvement of the lakes.

The work is being conducted in consultation with donors to the project and lake area residents, users of the lakes, LSU, the city-parish, BREC, Louisiana Division of Administration, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, La. Department of Transportation and Development, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, the Nature Conservancy and Audubon Louisiana.

LAKES MASTER PLAN PUBLIC MEETING

A draft will be revealed Tuesday, May 12, 2015, 6-8 p.m.
at LSU's Lod Cook Alumni Center
RSVP at BatonRougeLakes.org



PHILANTHROPY

TECHNOLOGY RETURNS Tech titans are sharing their riches. They were the leading donors last year on a list compiled by the Chronicle of Philanthropy. Together, the top 50 donors gave 27.5% more in 2014 than the year before. Seven in the top 10 earned their wealth in the technology business. And two of them—the creators of WhatsApp and GoPro—donated a combined \$1.05 billion to the Silicon Valley Community Foundation. The complete list is at Chronicle.com. The top five are below.

TOP 5 U.S. DONORS IN 2014

Donor	Business	Amount	Nonprofit
1. Bill and Melinda Gates	Microsoft Corp.	\$1.5 billion	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
2. Ralph Wilson Jr.	Buffalo Bills	\$1 billion	Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation
3. Ted Stanley	MBI (collectibles)	\$652.4 million	The Broad Institute
4. Jan Koum	WhatsApp	\$556 million	Silicon Valley Community Foundation
5. Sean Parker	Facebook/Napster	\$550 million	Sean N. Parker Foundation

52%

Percentage who told BNP Paribas in an annual survey that the most promising philanthropic trend is “impact investing.” Impact investing prioritizes social and environmental returns over financial returns, such as investing in businesses that produce goods or services that improve the world. Green technologies would fit this category.

The Gates Foundation is an example. The Foundation has invested in dozens of companies that align with its mission, reports the *New York Times*. That includes a \$52 million stake in CureVac, a German biopharmaceutical firm that is attempting to manufacture vaccines faster and cheaper.

VERBATIM

“What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult for each other?”

—George Eliot

GRANTS

The Foundation's fund donors make thousands of grants each year. Grants for the first quarter are listed below. They total \$5.5 million. If you wish to learn more about opening a charitable fund at the Foundation, please call John Carpenter, director of donor services, at 225-387-6126.

A.C. Lewis Branch YMCA \$100
Academic Distinction Fund \$53,610
ALS Association Louisiana-Mississippi Chapter \$5,000
Alzheimer's Association \$500
Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area \$15,353
American Cancer Society Inc. \$2,500
American Heart Association Greater Southeast Affiliate \$3,500
Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$7,260
Aubin Pictures Inc. \$25,000
Audubon Nature Institute Inc. \$1,650
Baton Rouge Children's Advocacy Center \$100
Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center \$7,144
Baton Rouge First Church of the Nazarene \$350
Baton Rouge Green Association Inc. \$230
Baton Rouge Opera Guild Inc. \$4,714
Baton Rouge Speech and Hearing Foundation Inc. \$36,225
Baton Rouge Youth Coalition \$19,500
Bella Bowman Foundation \$3,000
Beth Shalom Synagogue \$600
Bevill State Community College \$2,000
Big Buddy Program \$2,300
Birmingham-Southern College \$1,800
Bishop Ott Works of Mercy Trust/Catholic Diocese \$199
Boy Scouts of America Istrouma Area Council \$3,000
Boys Hope Girls Hope of Baton Rouge \$4,000
BREADA \$12,000
BREC Foundation \$3,500
Bridge Over Troubled Waters \$1,500
Brothers of the Sacred Heart Foundation of the New Orleans Province \$1,000
Cancer Services of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$1,700
Capital Area Animal Welfare Society \$327
Capital Area United Way \$59,500
Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge/Bishop's Annual Appeal \$50,000
Catholic High School Foundation \$1,769
Center for Planning Excellence Inc. \$39,750
Centre for the Arts \$1,000
Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Baton Rouge Inc./McMains Foundation \$2,500
Chapel on the Campus \$700
Chinese Christian Church of Baton Rouge \$304
Christ Episcopal Church \$5,000
Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church \$1,000
Christ the King Parish and Catholic Center at LSU \$12,025
Church of the Incarnation \$2,500

Cinderella Project of Baton Rouge \$1,000
Citizens for Conservation Inc. \$500
City Year Baton Rouge \$127,500
City Year Inc. \$10,000
CLIMB Community Development Corporation \$50,000
Closer Walk Ministries Inc. \$1,000
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation \$100
Colorado State University \$2,000
Community Fund for the Arts \$7,500
Companion Animal Alliance \$25,000
Cool Cooperative Inc. \$25,000
Delta State University \$2,000
Denham Springs Project Graduation \$500
Deutsche Samstagsschule Houston Inc. \$1,000

HOW WE ISSUE GRANTS

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 Louisiana Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross \$327
 Louisiana Children's Museum \$5,000
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Louisiana State University in Shreveport \$500
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 LSU Foundation - LSU Museum of Art \$11,000
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 Southern University and A&M College \$1,750
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 St. Aloysius School \$250
 St. Augustine Church \$945
 St. George Catholic Church \$12,000
 St. Gerard Majella Church \$10,500
 St. James Episcopal Day School \$1,500
 St. John Interparochial School \$1,045
 St. John the Baptist Catholic Church \$25,000
 St. Joseph Cathedral \$800
 St. Joseph the Worker Church \$6,109
 St. Joseph's Academy \$700
 St. Jude Children's Research Hospital \$2,500
 St. Luke's Episcopal Church \$4,960
 St. Margaret's Episcopal Church \$4,000
 St. Mary African Methodist Episcopal Church \$1,500
 St. Philip Parish \$3,741
 St. Thomas Aquinas Regional Catholic High School \$14,566
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 United Way of Beaumont and North Jefferson County \$10,000
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NONPROFIT

*2015
John W. Barton
Awards*

Winners answer a few questions

By Mukul Verma | Photos by Tim Mueller





Three nonprofit leaders have won the John W. Barton Sr. Excellence in Nonprofit Management Award, which is given each year by The Baton Rouge Area Foundation. The award is named for the late Mr. Barton, who led a group that created the Foundation in 1964. The Foundation honored Barton winners at its annual meeting of members at the Manship Theatre in March. Each winner received \$10,000 with a request that they spend it on themselves. Donors with charitable funds at the Foundation nominate nonprofit executives for the recognition; former Foundation chairs choose up to three winners each year. The award is in its 14th year.

Judy K. Bethly

Executive director of Volunteers in Public Schools

Bethly recruits people who want to be useful and connects them with children who need help in school. She has done this for more than a decade as head of Volunteers in Public Schools. VIPs' budget has doubled under Bethly.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY FROM CHILDHOOD?

Spending time at my maternal grandmother's house was the best. Mama Maybelle, as we affectionately called her, lived in a big, rambling house in a part of Baton Rouge that was called Easy Town. Everyone was your neighbor and acted accordingly—maybe that's why Mama Maybelle's front door was never locked, let alone closed. Stray dogs, cats and people just wandered in to help themselves to whatever was cooking on the stove. And whenever the mood hit her, which was often, Mama Maybelle took to mind to host a supper. In the African American community, a supper occurs when a neighbor cooks huge amounts of food and invites friends over to purchase a plate. However, in Mama Maybelle's case, no one ever paid for their food. My grandfather, who we affectionately called "Daddy Irvin" or sometimes "Daddy Good," was one of the first groups of African Americans hired at Standard Oil, so we know the suppers were not about the money. We think they were an excuse for my grandmother to rent a jukebox, throw a party and surround herself with family, friends and strays. This could be why Lackawanna Blues is one of my favorite movies. It's the best

depiction of growing up in Mama Maybelle and Daddy Good's house.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?

From Carrabba's, scallops and shrimp cooked in a delicate red vodka sauce poured over linguine.

EXCLUDING BATON ROUGE, WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CITY AND WHY?

There are various aspects from several cities that I admire: Washington D.C. for its diversity, an abundance of free attractions, awesome public transportation; San Diego, where many of the vacant lots displayed children's artwork, and there were lots of street vendors, colorful wildflowers along the interstate and awesome public transportation. Austin for the traffic flow.

SOLVING WHICH PROBLEM WOULD PROVIDE THE GREATEST RETURN TO OUR REGION?

Public education must become a priority in this region. Knowing that the Minimum Foundation Program dollars can only be stretched so far, we must decide where to place our greatest attention in order to prevent a watering down of the entire system. We must create a comprehensive, goal-oriented education plan that takes into account the areas of deficiencies, an action plan that turns those deficiencies into strengths, and measurement tools to assess if the goals were achieved.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE HERO IN FICTION?

Being a 60s child, I love people who have the courage to take a seat at the table and speak up for those who can't get a reservation. My favorite character is Vianne Rocher in the book *Chocolat*. Vianne blew into a strict religious French village as a single mother, wearing red pumps and, of all things, she opened a chocolate shop during Lent. But to make matters worse, she befriends the gypsies. Vianne took on the townspeople, the parish priest and an abusive husband to show that we are more alike than we are different. She changed people's lives and hearts by operating from a spirit of inclusion.

WHAT DOES BATON ROUGE LACK THAT YOU WISH IT HAD?

Suitable grocery stores, coffee shops, restaurants with healthy options, movie theaters, bookstores, more great schools...in North Baton Rouge.

WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE AND WHY?

Archbishop Desmond Tutu for his amazing gift and teachings on recognizing the goodness in all people. When facing opposition of any sort, he asks us to use a lens of compassion and empathy, instead of blame and division. If we see ourselves as equals, not a cut above or a cut below, but cut from the same cloth, it becomes easier to recognize our similarities as well as our frailties. His book, *Made for Goodness*, is a must read.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?

I try to treasure the simple things that cannot be possessed; a good night's rest, time spent with family, a great conversation, and a pretty garden (I am not fond of yard work) and a delicious meal (nor am I fond of cooking), which makes these last two truly treasures.

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE WHAT TO COME BACK AS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

My faith tells me I'm going to a place that is comparable to OZ. Why would I want to come back?

IF YOU HAD A \$1 BILLION, HOW WOULD YOU SPEND IT TO IMPROVE THE REGION?

Being in agreement with Mahatma Gandhi, I too believe, "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members." Expand Medicaid so those individuals making less than \$12,000 and families less than \$30,000 can afford health care. Let's increase money for higher education and the MFP dollars for public education.

We want the best teachers teaching in every classroom; we want the most effective and experienced teachers in the classrooms teaching students with the greatest needs. We want modern school buildings equipped with top-notch technology. Research shows that the earlier we start educating children, the higher the results. Let's invest in affordable, high quality pre-K programs.

We should invest in public transportation that allows citizens the opportunity to put away their cars and still be able to get to doctor's appointments, grocery stores and dine out. A portion of this billion must be used to build a passenger rail system between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. That would be the best—to go to a Pelicans game and leave the car at home.



Amanda Brunson

Executive director of Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana

Brunson was promoted from programs to leader of PCAL when the organization was in peril. State and private grants had declined; the nonprofit was deeply in debt. She saved the nonprofit, reducing debt by hundreds of thousands of dollars and expanding programming at the same time.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY FROM CHILDHOOD?

I am fortunate to have parents with a great sense of humor. When I was a teen-ager, they went out of town and left my older brother and me home alone. Throughout the weekend, any time we tried to access something that was off limits, like the liquor

cabinet, their car keys, etc., we found a Polaroid picture of my dad. He was in varying cautionary poses with statements like “I’m watching you!” scribbled on the bottom. It still cracks me up just thinking about it.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?

Boiled crawfish. Without a doubt. I think about them at least once a week, year-round.

EXCLUDING BATON ROUGE, WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CITY AND WHY?

Probably Natchez, Mississippi. It is only about 45 minutes from my house, so it makes for a quick, easy getaway for my husband and me. We love to stay at different bed and breakfasts and just walk around the city or kick back and lay low.

SOLVING WHICH PROBLEM WOULD PROVIDE THE GREATEST RETURN TO OUR REGION?

Preventing childhood trauma would provide the greatest return to our region. Research has linked adverse experiences in childhood, like child abuse and household dysfunction, to poor physical and mental health outcomes for adults. We could see dramatic reductions in depression rates, suicide attempts, substance abuse and several leading causes of death like COPD, heart disease and cancer. Louisiana ranks 47th in the nation in overall child well-being and 48th in overall health. Those two go hand in hand. If we give our kids a better start, we will all reap the rewards.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE HERO IN FICTION?

The donkey in the well, from an old folk tale. If you haven't heard the story... A farmer finds that his donkey has fallen in the well and no matter what he tries, he can't get him out. The donkey is distraught. The farmer gathers his neighbors and despite their best efforts they can't lift the donkey out of the well. The farmer

Preventing childhood trauma would provide the greatest return to our region. Research has linked adverse experiences in childhood, like child abuse and household dysfunction, to poor physical and mental health outcomes for adults.

decides to give up. Shovel by shovel, the farmer and his neighbors throw dirt on the donkey's back. The donkey panics at first but then grows quiet. After a while, the farmer makes a startling discovery. Every time a shovel of dirt lands on the donkey, he shakes it off his back and steps up on it. Before long, he walks right out the well. I love this story. It reminds me to roll with it, shake it off, and celebrate every small success along the way.

WHAT DOES BATON ROUGE LACK THAT YOU WISH IT HAD?

I wish Baton Rouge had more wide-open greenspaces. I'm a country girl.

WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE AND WHY?

I really admire Megan Boudreaux. She used to work for Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana and several years ago she sold everything she owned and followed God's calling to Haiti. She has done incredible things for the children there. She is young, driven and has the biggest heart and faith of anyone I know.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?

My parents and I saved a ton of things from my childhood. I have boxes of old notes, letters written home from summer camp, ticket stubs. My kids even get a kick out of looking through them. My girls are sad that fifth grade boys don't write love notes to girls anymore.

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE WHAT TO COME BACK AS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I would have to say a bird. They seem so peaceful and free. Flying isn't a bad deal either. And it would be nice to be able to carry a tune.

IF YOU HAD \$1 BILLION, HOW WOULD YOU SPEND IT TO IMPROVE THE REGION?

Interestingly, that is less than the amount of money Louisiana will spend this year treating and dealing with the consequences of child abuse. I'd put it all into prevention and we'd be blown away by the improvements we saw in school readiness, parent engagement, violence reduction and overall health.

Bob Jacobs

CEO of YMCA of the Capital Area

Jacobs was picked to lead the YMCA of the Capital Area 18 years ago. Since then, the Y has added locations, its budget has grown fourfold to more than \$15 million, and scholarships have grown by 10 times to \$650,000 per year.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY FROM CHILDHOOD?

I enjoyed going with my grandfather and dad to the Los Angeles



Dodger's baseball games and seeing Sandy Koufax and Don Drysdale pitch a double-header. I also have great memories playing little league baseball.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?

Lasagna.

EXCLUDING BATON ROUGE, WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CITY AND WHY?

Cocoa Beach, Florida. As a child, I spent time at the Patrick Air Force Base. For over 33 years, I have visited the area, enjoying the inter-coastal water and beaches, golfing and relaxation. It is a great city to visit and unwind.

SOLVING WHICH PROBLEM WOULD PROVIDE THE GREATEST RETURN TO OUR REGION?

Improving education, traditional and non-traditional, for the less fortunate, so they can gain meaningful employment.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE HERO IN FICTION?

Superman.

WHAT DOES BATON ROUGE LACK THAT YOU WISH IT HAD?

Annual PGA golf event.

WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE AND WHY?

I admire Pete Rose for his hard work, hustle and determination. When adversity struck, he never gave up and continues to fight to be a part of Major League Baseball, America's pastime.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?

A college degree diploma and ring from the Citadel.

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE WHAT TO COME BACK AS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Westminster Kennel Club show dog.

IF YOU HAD \$1 BILLION, HOW WOULD YOU SPEND IT TO IMPROVE THE REGION?

I would improve the traffic flow in, around and through Baton Rouge. •

I enjoyed going with my grandfather and dad to the Los Angeles Dodger's baseball games and seeing Sandy Koufax and Don Drysdale pitch a double-header. I also have great memories playing little league baseball.



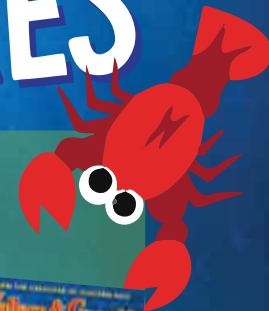
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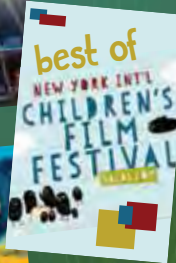
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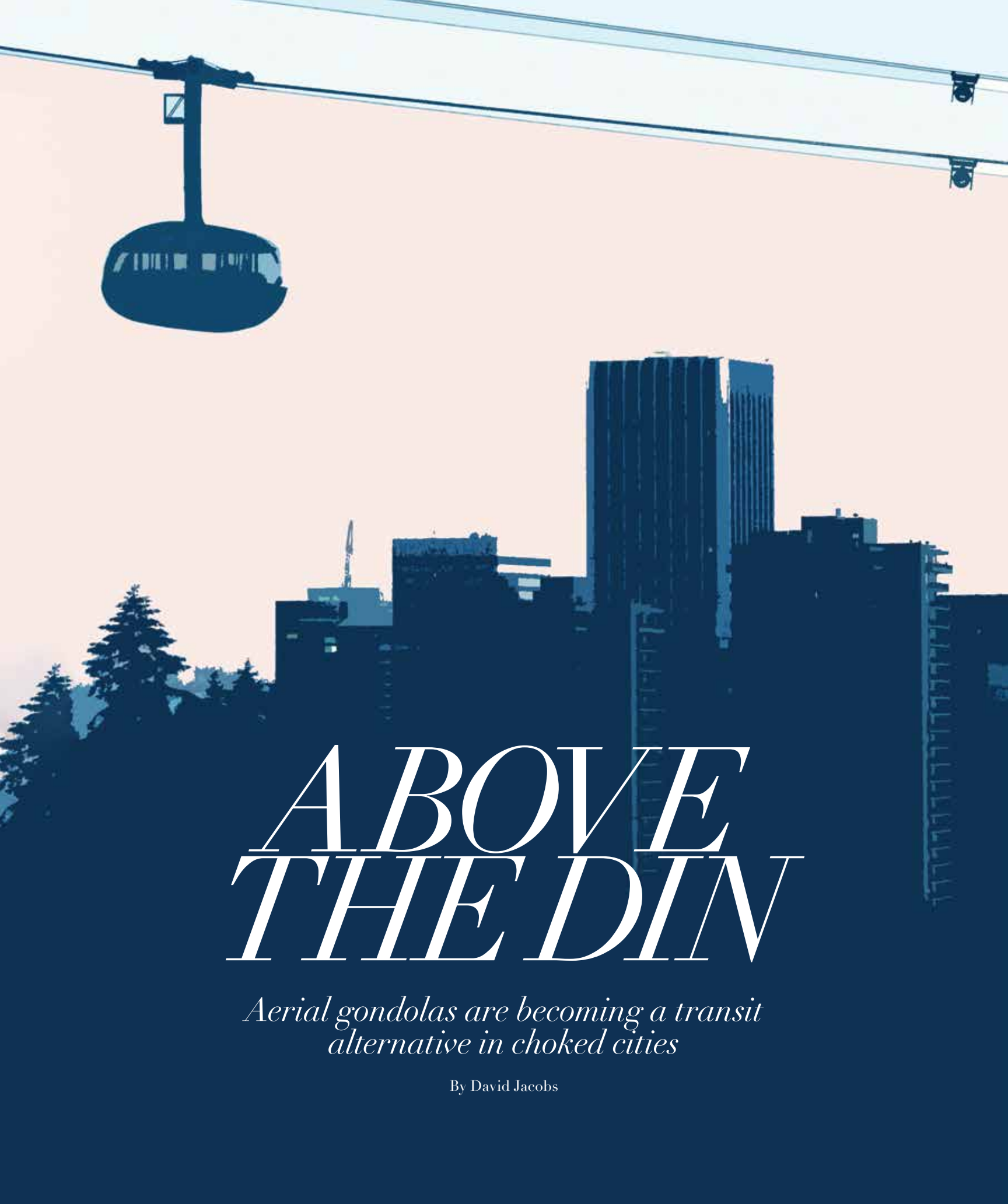


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ABOVE THE DIN

*Aerial gondolas are becoming a transit
alternative in choked cities*

By David Jacobs

COVER



The Portland Aerial Tram connects downtown with Oregon Health & Science University on a four-minute ride over two-thirds of a mile. Each of the two cabins can transport 79 people.



A tram connects Roosevelt Island to the Upper East Side of Manhattan over the East River in New York. Each of two cabins has a capacity of 110 people. The trip is three minutes.

Urban planner Steven Dale first rode a gondola in 2007 at a ski resort in Switzerland. Dale isn't much of a skier, and he was nervous about climbing into a vehicle that soon would be dangling 2,000 feet in the sky from a cable.

But as he began to ascend the mountain, he noticed a truck driving by on a surface road underneath.

"I went, 'Hmm. There's no traffic 25 feet in the air,'" Dale recalls.

Curiosity piqued, he did some research and found that while few people in the planning world knew much about gondolas, the technology has a lengthy history. With backing from the Canadian Urban Institute, he compiled what he says is the first-ever literature review about cable cars as mass transit.

Dale, the founding president of Creative Urban Projects in Toronto and creator of The Gondola Project website, says acceptance of gondolas (or "cable-propelled transit") as a viable tran-

sit option has grown over the past few years, although the idea remains weird enough to at least get people's attention.

"No city wants to be the first," he says. "Every city wants to be second."

Given Baton Rouge's serious traffic problems and limited transit options, could a gondola system make sense here? While not officially under consideration, the suggestion has been kicked around for the Baton Rouge Health District being planned in one of the most congested sectors of the parish, the Essen Lane corridor.

"At this point," says Karina Ricks of Nelson\Nygaard, the health district's transportation consultant, "everything should be on the table."

THE RIGHT TOOL?

"It's not that this is [necessarily] the best technology," Dale says. "In transportation planning, it's really about fitting the best technology for the task at hand."

Dale says gondolas are useful as part of "medium-distance,

GONDOLA FAQ'S

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions about gondolas as urban transit, along with answers, provided by The Gondola Project.

ISN'T USING GONDOLAS FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT CRAZY?

Like any form of transit, there are places where it makes sense, and places where it doesn't. Dozens of projects have been completed, are under construction, or are being considered around the world from Algeria to Venezuela.

IS IT SAFE?

Statistically, cable-propelled transit is one of the world's safest forms of transportation. There has not been a lift-related fatality at a ski area (where gondolas are the norm) since 1993.

AREN'T GONDOLAS ONLY FOR MOUNTAINS?

While cable lifts are typically used in topographically constrained areas, they also can be useful on flat surfaces. If you look around you'll notice that city traffic may be the ultimate urban topographical challenge.

HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN GONDOLAS MOVE?

Cable-propelled transit technology is improving. Theoretically, a system can handle about 6,000 to 8,000 people per hour per direction.

ARE GONDOLAS REALLY SLOW?

While the top speed of a gondola is significantly slower than, say, a bus, remember that a gondola doesn't have to fight traffic or wait for a light to change. Average speed matters more than top speed. For example, urban cable lifts in Medellín, Colombia, have average operating speeds of 16 kilometers [a little less than 10 miles] per hour, while streetcars in Toronto have average speeds of 13 kilometers per hour.

CAN A GONDOLA RUN IN SNOW AND ICE?

This question comes up surprisingly often for a technology that is most commonly associated with skiing. Gondolas are built in some of the world's harshest and most unforgiving climates. There have been many advancements in gondola lift technology and many systems have been designed for and built primarily on mountains.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A GONDOLA LIFT MALFUNCTIONS MID-RIDE?

All cable-propelled transit systems are built with one or more back-up diesel engines. Emergency procedures with trained crews are put in place to help with evacuation, although it's rarely necessary.

IF THIS IS SO GREAT, WHY DON'T WE SEE IT IN MORE PLACES?

Modern cable technology has been around for more than 70 years, but a lack of available, accurate information helped keep it on mountains for many years. Cable was first seen in cities in the form of cable cars (think San Francisco) and funiculars, but was quickly made obsolete by electrically powered streetcars.

Only recently has urban cable been built in the form of aerial cable. Since the first lines in New York City and Medellín, Colombia, the number of urban cable systems has increased rapidly.

WHO MAKES GONDOLAS?

The world's two biggest manufacturers are Doppelmayr and Leitner.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO INSTALL A GONDOLA?

Smaller, less complex systems can be designed and built in about a year.

ARE CPT SYSTEMS EXPENSIVE?

Similar to other public transit technology, the true construction costs depend on numerous factors such as local considerations and technology. Generally speaking, a CPT system's cost is competitive and can be built at a fraction of the cost of a similar rapid transit technology.

MY GRANDMOTHER IS AFRAID OF HEIGHTS; WHAT MAKES YOU THINK SHE'LL GET ON A GONDOLA?

Planner Steven Dale says he met a gondola skeptic who said it's hard enough to get his grandmother on a subway—which she finds terrifying—let alone a gondola. By that standard, Dale says, cities should stop building subways entirely. Which is to say that any idea, great or not, won't appeal to everyone.

ABOVE THE RIVER

Louisiana once had the only urban aerial lift in the United States. The Mississippi Aerial River Transit, or MART, was built for the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition.

It transported about 1.7 million people from the Warehouse District in New Orleans to Algiers on the West Bank during the fair. Travelers would dangle 200 feet above the river on a four-minute trip between two stations. Privately financed for \$12 million, MART failed to attract enough riders after the fair and shut down operations in mid-1985. The 358-foot towers that supported the cable were demolished in the early 1990s, but the 53 cars were repurposed into fishing huts, deer stands and bus shelters. Five were converted for a while into restaurant booths for The Olde N’Awlins Cookery.



medium-capacity feeder systems that have a significant last-mile problem.” The wait time between vehicles can be as brief as 10 to 20 seconds, he says. That’s appealing for passengers who, for example, don’t want to wait 15 minutes for a bus to take them to the subway. He says that while aerial cable systems can be cheaper than some transit options, there is no rule of thumb about how much they actually cost.

The gondola system that connects Telluride, Colo., with neighboring Mountain Village was completed in 1996 for less than \$20 million. Operations cost between \$4 million and \$5 million annually and are paid for with an assessment on real estate transfers, says Mountain Village Transit Director Chris Colter.

He says the system has more than 2 million riders every year; some are snowboarders and skiers of course, but most are pedestrians. And while many of those riders are tourists, he says quite a few are locals who use the gondola for their daily commute.

While not cheap, the service is valuable to the community, Colter says, in part because it keeps cars off the road and helps

control pollution.

“It’s an amenity in and of itself,” he adds. “It’s a free ride to anybody, and that’s a huge visitor draw.”

Like many gondola projects, the Portland Aerial Tram was built to solve a topographical problem. Oregon Health & Science University wanted to expand, but was essentially land-locked at the top of a hill.

The Portland tram was first discussed as a \$15 million or so project, explains Richard Eisenhauer, program manager with the Portland Bureau of Transportation. That guess proved wildly optimistic.

The upper station was supposed to be part of a new OHSU building, until someone realized the vibrations would disturb surgeries there and a freestanding 10-story structure was needed. The lower station is in an earthquake-liquefaction zone, which presents other expensive construction issues.

The city held an international design competition for the system, and while the final product is a well-regarded land-



GERMANY



SANTIAGO, CHILE

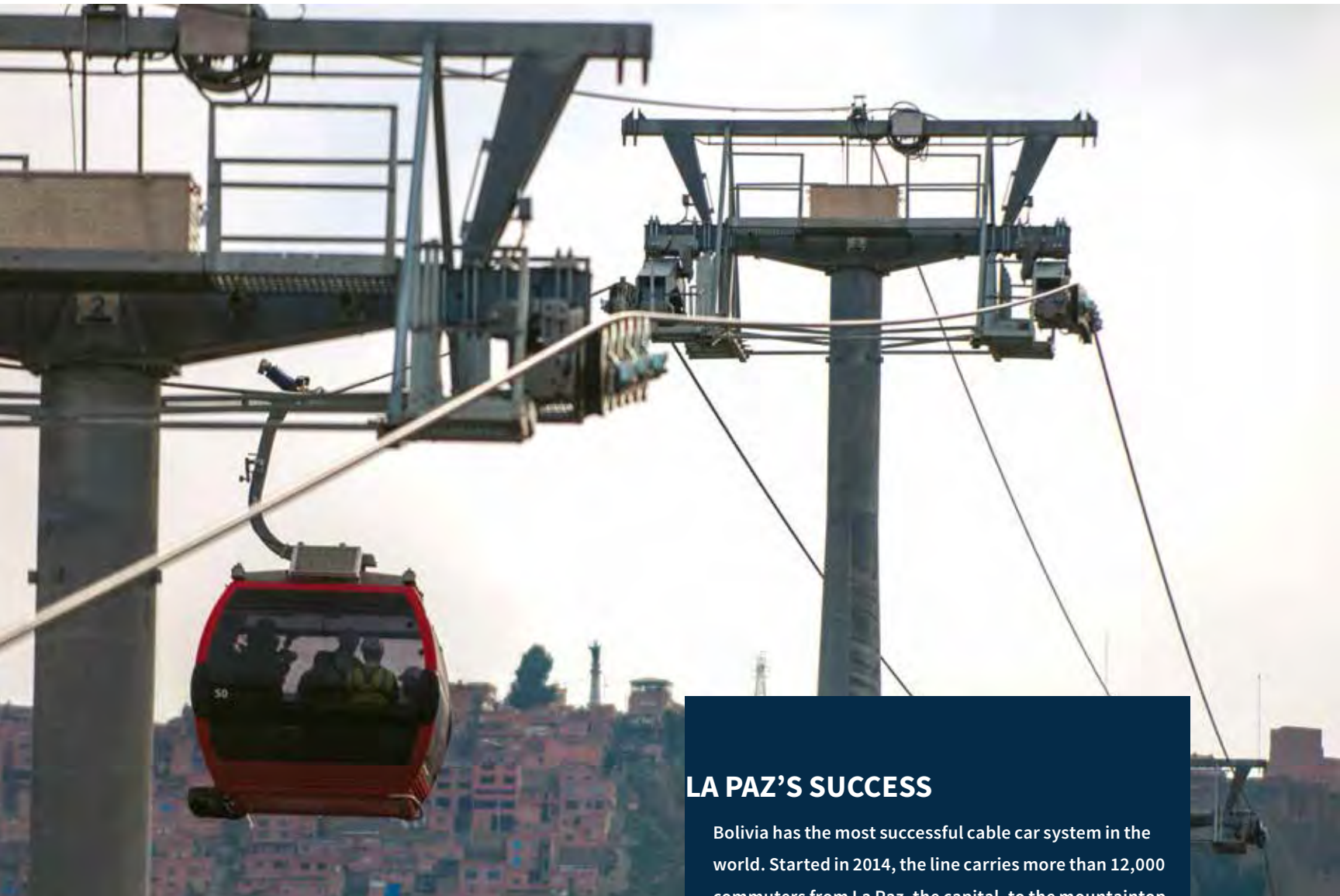


SINGAPORE



LONDON

GONDOLAS FOR BR?
The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is underwriting a master plan for the Health Care District, an area where health care assets are clustered. In our work, we came upon the growth of aerial cable cars in urban areas. Master planners are examining gondolas for the Health Care District, which is bounded by Essen Lane, Bluebonnet Boulevard and Perkins Road. For more on the master plan, visit BRHealthDistrict.org.



LA PAZ'S SUCCESS

Bolivia has the most successful cable car system in the world. Started in 2014, the line carries more than 12,000 commuters from La Paz, the capital, to the mountaintop city of El Alto.

The trip costs 40 cents and takes about 10 minutes, compared to 35 cents for a 30-minute ride by minibus on crowded, narrow streets. Bolivia paid for the \$234 million project in cash because of a gush of money from selling natural gas to neighboring countries.

La Paz is expanding the service to new areas of the city. Five more lines will begin construction soon, and 13 in total are planned.

mark, the snazzy aesthetics helped raise the project's price to \$57 million.

The Portland tram links Marquam Hill with the city's new South Waterfront District, and has helped to spur almost \$2 billion in private investment in the district, OHSU says.

"It was really transformational," says John Fregonese, the Portland-based planner who led creation of the FuturEBR comprehensive plan that calls for a health district. "The tram has become a tourist attraction, and it actually functions very well."

NOT RULING IT OUT

No one has yet put pen to paper to figure out whether a gondola-style tram might be feasible in a Baton Rouge Health District. But Fregonese says the idea is worth considering as a way to tie "all those different buildings together so they can work in a more integrated fashion."

The Bluebonnet/Essen corridor already is thriving, and further growth of the area's health care sector could make the already-serious traffic problems even worse. An aerial tram of some sort might ease movement for patients, providers and researchers among the various facilities.

In theory, the project could be funded by some sort of assessment on the businesses that would benefit most from its use.

Ricks, the transportation consultant, says district planners haven't discussed the possibility of a gondola in Baton Rouge. While being able to simply float over congestion might be appealing from a mobility standpoint, she says, a gondola service that only connected institutions might detract from the street-level interactions planners hope to encourage.

"I'm sure there are ways to work around that," she says, "but transit works best when it's part of an integrated whole."

However, Ricks says district planners have talked seriously about elevated light rail of some sort. Some Latin American and Asian cities have transit operations that otherwise operate at the street level but have dedicated pathways to bypass congested intersections, she adds.

Since planners haven't contemplated the possibility of a gondola-style system in the health district, Ricks didn't have very much to say on the subject. But the lack of discussion also means they haven't decided against it. In any event, the idea of gondolas-as-urban-transit doesn't seem quite as exotic as it did when Steven Dale rode that Swiss gondola back in 2007.

"Something creative is going to have to happen there," Ricks says. "I wouldn't rule it out just yet." •





LEGACY



Safe in Baton Rouge

Reilly donation to Catholic Charities is saving children from violence and murder

By David Jacobs

In a Central American town, a little girl named “Carmen” was raped again and again by members of a drug gang. Not unexpected, she was pregnant at 14. Worried that an even worse fate would befall her, Carmen’s parents sent her to a safe haven; the home of an uncle is better than dangerous streets. They were mistaken, for the uncle only continued the pattern of abuse.

At 17, Carmen decided to take control of her fate. Packing up her 3-year-old son, she traveled hundreds of miles toward the promise of America. She surrendered to border authorities, and made her way to her mother in the United States.

The abuse she suffered at home, and the inability of her own government to protect her, makes Carmen a good candidate to become a resident of the U.S., says David Aguillard, the executive director of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

On March 9, Carmen had her first immigration hearing in New Orleans. Standing with her was a lawyer arranged by Catholic Charities. “She wasn’t there on her own, unable to speak the language, not knowing what this process is all about, or being fearful of engaging in an official process,” Aguillard says.

Catholic Charities found Carmen a place to live and arranged for mental health counseling, all funded through a U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops grant. “Here’s a woman who came here, and saw salvation when she crossed our border,” Aguillard says.

Catholic Charities was assisting many refugees from Latin and South American countries last year.

With her husband, Kevin Reilly Jr., Winifred Reilly helped kick off the Louisiana Esperanza Project with a pledge of \$310,000 over four years. The project will provide legal services in an attempt to protect immigrant children and assure their sanctuary in the U.S. remains documented.

When the nonprofit discovered that it didn't have enough money to meet the need, it started the Louisiana Esperanza Project. The first substantial gifts to the project were from Winifred and Kevin Reilly Jr.

They donated \$310,000 to Esperanza—"hope" in Spanish—through a fund managed by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. The Reillys wish others would donate as well, enabling Catholic Charities to care for more children who are running away from grim circumstances.

The plight of unaccompanied minors showing up for sanctuary at the border became a big news story last summer. To most Americans, the crisis seemed sudden and surprising. Not so to Aguillard.

"The number of refugees has steadily been climbing," he says.

"In looking for opportunities, I knew that Catholic Charities had both the legal expertise and a compassionate heart to help."

—Winifred Reilly, on the Louisiana Esperanza Project

"Years ago, Congress was warned that this is going to be a catastrophe if we didn't move to do something."

Many refugees are facing violence that their governments are unable to prevent. In some places, even government officials are to be feared. Honduran officials, for instance, arrested and tortured a boy because they were trying to get information about the whereabouts of his father, who was accused of a crime. The boy fled to the United States and voluntarily surrendered to authorities.

There's always an ebb and flow to the number of refugees apprehended at the border, says Virginia Fitchett, who is the Safe Release Support Program Coordinator with the national Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. But the recent influx was a bit of a surprise, she says.

"No one was quite prepared for the sheer magnitude of the violence that's happening in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala," she says. "You always hear from the children and youth who are crossing that, 'If we couldn't leave, we wouldn't be alive.'"

Aguillard laments that children are caught in the crossfire of a partisan political battle. Many Republicans blamed the influx

on President Obama, while Democrats were seen as pandering for Hispanic votes. The politicized narrative often portrayed the refugees as "illegal immigrants," which in many cases is misleading.

"These children are here legally," Aguillard says.

That's because Congress passed the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act in 2008, both easily and without controversy. President George W. Bush signed the bill into law just two weeks after it was introduced.

Under the law, unaccompanied children who are detained by border authorities have the right to be protected by our legal system. The law protects children from countries that don't share a border with the U.S., particularly those from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, where the need is greatest. Prior to a final decision regarding deportation, each case is supposed to be evaluated to determine if the child is likely to be harmed if sent back home.

From the perspective of Catholic Charities, the politics distract from the moral responsibilities driven by faith. Aguillard cites Jesus' reminder that "our response to the least among us is the same as our response to Him: 'I was a stranger, and you welcomed me.'"

The Louisiana Esperanza Project follows the long tradition of the U.S. Catholic Church

helping immigrants fully integrate into our nation's melting pot, Catholic Charities says.

"Catholics particularly should help these children," Aguillard says. "Immigrant Catholics were at one time unwelcome in our nation and considered a threat to our way of life. Such intolerance is just as wrong today as it was last century."

Like many Americans, Winifred Reilly learned of the plight of unaccompanied minors from Central America through the media. As a mother, she says, she wanted to protect them.

"In looking for opportunities, I knew that Catholic Charities had both the legal expertise and a compassionate heart to help," says Reilly, who is not religious.

And much like Aguillard, she is frustrated by seeing vulnerable children treated as political footballs. "It's surprising that some people wanted to make the children's escape from danger into a political issue about borders rather than reaching out to help them and being faithful to their values," she says. "Why? It's the right thing to do. It's about loving kindness and about basic human and legal rights."

With her husband, Kevin Reilly Jr., she helped kick off the Esperanza Project by pledging \$310,000 over four years. The



David Aguillard of Catholic Charities

project will provide legal services in an attempt to protect the children's lives and assure their sanctuary in the U.S. remains documented.

Aguillard says research shows that one of two things happen to children who lack representation: they miss their court dates and disappear unsafely into our country as undocumented immigrants, or they are deported back to the dangerous environments that led them to flee in the first place.

Catholic Charities says children without an attorney are 1.5 times more likely to be deported than those with one.

Some cities offer public defender services in immigration court. Louisiana does not, although it has received a disproportionate share of refugee children relative to its population.

At last count, Catholic Charities was working on about 20 open cases in Baton Rouge with help from the Reillys' donation, with hopes of getting that number up to 50 within the next few months. Two Department of Justice fellows also are joining the local effort, Aguillard says.

Catholic Charities is looking for not only immigration attorneys but also those with expertise in family law. They need inter-

preters and tutors, as well as mental health counselors and social workers to help the children deal with the trauma that many faced in their home countries and on the journey here.

The 2,000 or so children who have been released into Louisiana during the most recent surge have identified sponsors, usually family members, who have been approved by the federal government. Of the 500 or 600 applicants Catholic Charities has screened, roughly 75% have a strong case to make for their continued presence in the U.S., while the other 25% likely would be sent home, Aguillard estimates.

He says most children in the first group fall into one of two categories.

The first category, asylum, generally means that the person has suffered persecution and is likely to face imprisonment, injury or death because of their race, religion, nationality, political views or inclusion or exclusion from a certain group.

The other category is Special Immigrant Juveniles Status, which means a child has been abandoned, abused or neglected and that it is unsafe for that child to return home. SIJ status is revoked upon reaching adulthood, although children can get

“No one was quite prepared for the sheer magnitude of the violence that’s happening in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. You always hear from the children and youth who are crossing that, ‘If we couldn’t leave, we wouldn’t be alive.’”

—Virginia Fitchett, Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Service

a green card through the program that allows them to live and work permanently in the U.S.

“We should, by the end of this year, be able to take on around 200 cases,” Aguillard says. “But there’s still hundreds of kids that are in need.”

The Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Service, through an agreement with the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, operates the Safe Release Support Program. Since 2006, it has served about 75% of those who present themselves as potential caregivers for unaccompanied refugee children, LIRS says. Thanks to LIRS’s partnership with Catholic Charities, Baton Rouge is one of only 20 Safe Release support locations, and the only one on the Gulf Coast between Texas and Atlanta.

The need is only growing, says Fitchett with LIRS. “This summer we had an unprecedented number of children who were apprehended crossing the border,” she says, “which means an unprecedented number of potential caregivers were coming forward.”

Building on that partnership with Catholic Charities, LIRS piloted a program here to educate those caregivers about how to advocate for the children in their care; how to enroll them in school, for example.

LIRS and Catholic Charities also partner with the federal Office of Legal Access Programs, which facilitates access to information about the process and creates incentives for attorneys and law students to accept pro bono cases.

But none provides legal representation, which brings us back to Louisiana Esperanza. The funds from Esperanza will be used to expand Catholic Charities’ legal team and to recruit and train pro bono attorneys who can handle Louisiana custody and federal immigration law issues. Additionally, Catholic Charities will seek to hire more advocates to become accredited for immigration court.

Only about 20% of the refugee children in Louisiana have

a legal representative, which is about half the national average. “We know from the data that the children who don’t have representation, we don’t really know what happens to them,” Aguillard says. “They disappear. The judge can stamp a case closed and order them for deportation, but the child’s not there to hear that. The case is closed without the child ever having had their day in court.”

That’s why the initial pledge from the Reillys has been described as a challenge grant. It’s enough to begin Louisiana Esperanza, but Aguillard estimates that about \$2 million more is needed to build a sustainable program.

“We hope people realize that the Reillys kind of got it started, but it’s not enough to take care of all the needs,” he says.

Winifred Reilly is hoping others take up the challenge. “There are hundreds of kids still in need,” she says. “I hope that others will be faithful to Christian values and contribute so that more children who have turned to us for safety and protection can take advantage of our laws.” •

GIVING OPPORTUNITY

For more information about the Louisiana Esperanza Project, visit Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge at ccdiobr.org.



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LEGACY

All in the family

The Barker family nears 20th anniversary for scholarships

By Sara Bongiorno

“My mother instilled in us the importance of education,” says Alyssa Moore, a 21-year-old Harvard University junior studying public policy and environmental science. “She made sure we understood that.”

The message wasn’t lost on Moore and her siblings. An older brother is a senior at Harvard. Another brother is finishing law school, and her sister is in high school.

Moore had a passion for “pure science” while a standout student at Baton Rouge Magnet High School, but Louisiana’s vanishing wetlands and events like Hurricane Katrina and the 2010 BP oil spill shaped her interest in policy to better protect people and the environment.

She would like to work in the emerging field of corporate sustainability after graduation in 2016. “I want to apply what I learn by helping for-profit corporations operate in sustainable ways,” she says. “Louisiana has a lot of environmental problems, so growing up here you understand how that affects people.”

Moore’s passion for science and the environment has shaped her time at Harvard, but in a very real sense it also helps her thrive there.

Stanford professor Lucius Barker, seen with wife Maude, began a scholarship at the Foundation to honor the learning legacy of his Washington Parish family.





Studying at Harvard, Alyssa Moore wants to work in corporate sustainability after graduation.

THOUGHTFUL GIVING

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation manages 20 college scholarships. Grants from the scholarships totaled \$207,000 in 2014. More about the scholarships is at BRAF.org/scholarships.

She is a four-year recipient of a Baton Rouge Area Foundation-administered college scholarship that for nearly 20 years has helped Louisiana students pursue higher education to prepare them to work in fields as varied as teaching, geophysical engineering, agriculture and nursing.

“What we look for is passion, not a specific field of study,” says Tracey Barker Stevens, a deputy district attorney in Los Angeles whose family has deep roots in the town of Franklinton in rural Washington Parish. “Our family is driven by education, and we want to help as many young people as we can achieve their educational pursuits.”

The Twiley, Marie and Bringier Barker Scholarship Fund is deeply personal to the Barker family. It honors the courage and dignity of Barker Stevens’ uncle, Bringier Hudson Barker, who worked as a teacher and guidance counselor during desegregation of Washington Parish public schools. He later served as the parish’s first African-American school board president.

Bringier Barker’s five siblings moved away from Louisiana to pursue careers in academia, teaching and nursing. His older brother, Lucius Barker, a recently retired professor of political science at Stanford University, started the scholarship in 1996 in memory of his brother and their parents, who also worked in Washington Parish’s then-segregated public schools.

“It was such a battle to stay and face the hostility on the front

lines of desegregation,” says Barker Stevens. “(Bringier Barker) stayed and dealt with the racial divide, and that is something that his siblings deeply admired.”

The Barker scholarship will hit a milestone in 2016, when it will mark its 20th year. Its fundamental purpose hasn’t changed, but in recent years the family broadened its pool of applicants beyond Washington Parish to include students in East Baton Rouge and other parts of south Louisiana.

The family is also exploring fundraising and other options, such as social media to increase the amount of funding it can provide to students with financial need.

“The scholarship is of utmost importance to us, and we intend to continue with it as long as long as we possibly can,” says Barker Stevens.

The program is open to students of all races in need of assistance to pay for college. It has helped to fund the college education of about 50 students over the years. Choosing recipients is also deeply personal for the Barkers. Barker Stevens and other members of the selection committee spend many hours carefully reading essays and other material submitted to them via the Foundation.

“You feel you get to know these young people, and it is always a very hard decision to choose,” she says. “We take it very seriously.”

The Barkers have never met in person with any of the 50 or so recipients, but Moore says the family’s work has made a big difference in her time at Harvard, where students can pay as much as \$500 a semester on textbooks alone.

“It’s an amount that really makes an impact,” she says. “It’s a tremendous help to me.” •

“It was such a battle to stay and face the hostility on the front lines of desegregation.

Bringier Barker stayed and dealt with the racial divide, and that is something that his siblings deeply admired.”

—Tracey Barker Stevens

BARKER SCHOLARSHIP

The Twiley, Marie and Bringier Barker Scholarship Fund grants up to four scholarships each year to seniors graduating from a public high school in one of the Florida Parishes. The scholarship is in honor of Twiley Barker Sr. and his wife Marie Hudson, who were pioneer educators in Washington Parish. Mr. Barker served as teacher, principal and supervisor; Mrs. Barker served as an elementary school teacher and a piano teacher. Of their six children, all but one became a teacher at the public school or university level.



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“Bless you,” he says, pedaling away from Front Yard Bikes on a blue two-wheeler of his own making, heading toward a job of his own.

Bikes are for moving around. They serve one other purpose at Front Yard Bikes. Underserved children can work at the shop and repair bikes to earn credits. Work an hour, earn \$5 in credit. Build credits and choose the bike of your liking.

All this happens inside—and around—a leaky warehouse on Roosevelt Street in Old South Baton Rouge. Out back is a community garden with tiny tomato plants leaning toward the spring sun. Inside is the founder of this enterprise, Dustin LaFont. Bikes in need of repair are hanging from hooks on the walls, most of them donated by local bike shops, generous people and the Baton Rouge Police.

This unusual place has an equally unexpected beginning. Five years ago, LaFont’s OSBR neighbor—10-year-old Rejay Wilson—needed a little help. He wanted a bike repaired. An energetic Cajun from Houma, LaFont struck upon a small idea.

“If I could teach him to to repair a bike and he did the work, then he earned that bike,” says Lafont.

Word of such a deal doesn’t stay contained in a neighborhood full of little boys and girls. Seeing Rejay’s bike, his friends starting showing up in twos and threes and fours on LaFont’s front yard. A dozen children at a time were repairing bikes that they would take home.

In the last three years, LaFont has taught more than 140 children the art of bike repair. Some come back to work for more credits to upgrade their bikes. Others show up to spend time with each other.

On Fridays, LaFont and children ride their bikes on field trips, such as to the library or LSU. He tutors them weekly at nearby University Terrace Elementary School, where his wife, Kimberly, is a Kindergarten teacher.

Front Yard is LaFont’s full-time job now. He quit working as a Westdale Middle School history teacher to devote time to the children and to expand the nonprofit. An anonymous donor provides a salary that matches LaFont’s teacher pay.

LaFont is seeking more support as he searches for a larger location in the area so his nonprofit can do even more for the children of Baton Rouge.

“If we work together as a community, we can be very strong.” •



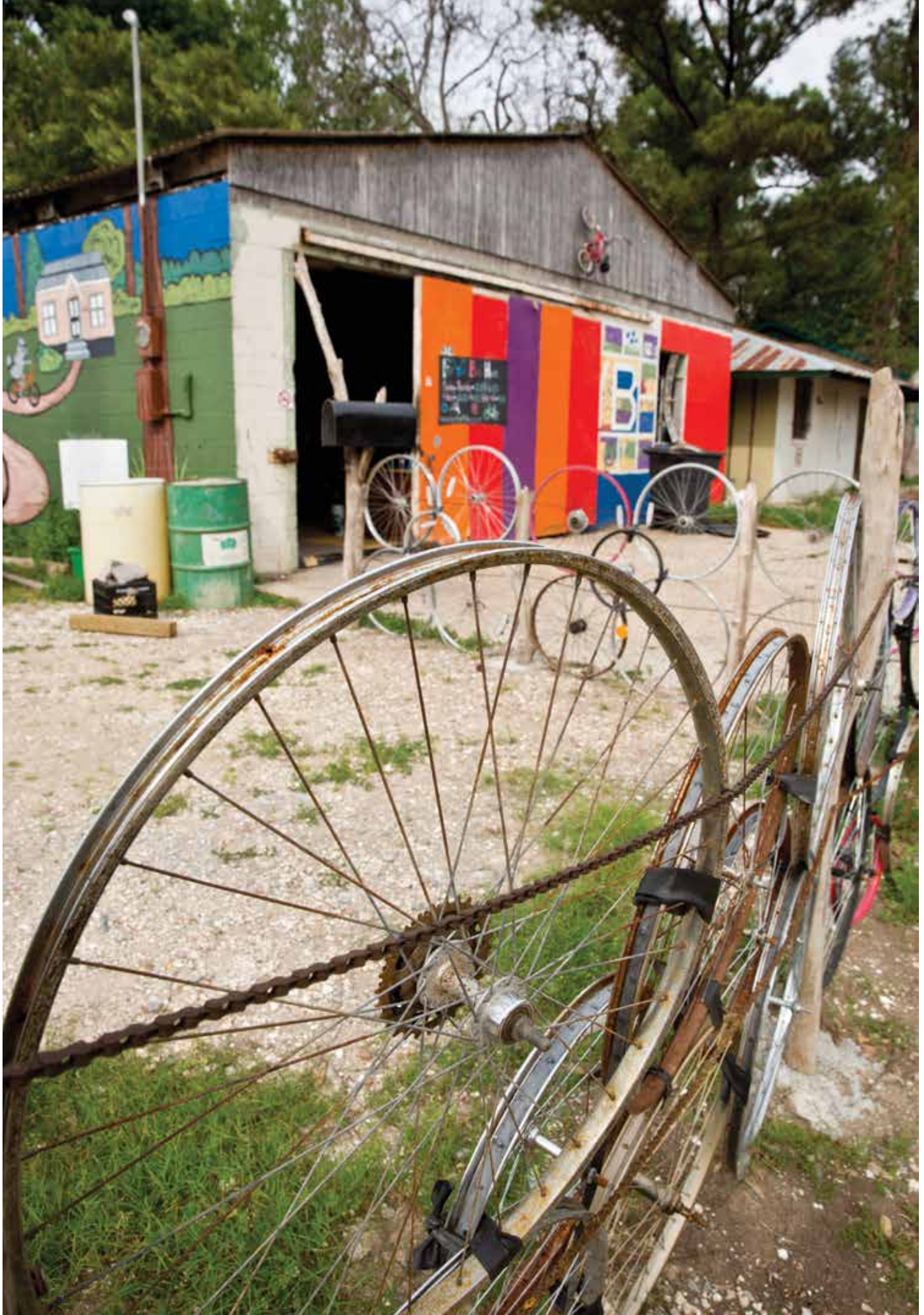
ONPROFITS



Roll on

At Front Yard Bikes, children work to earn a bike

By Mukul Verma | Photos by Brian Baiamonte



Expectations:

1. Respect Everyone
2. Be willing to help and listen to others
3. Never steal from the shop
4. Dont trade parts with FYB
5. Keep it clean
6. Dont blame the tool or the people helping you



Dustin LaFont helps Lee Magee balance a wheel at Front Yard Bikes.



Middle school students Dominique Washington, left, and Donovan Flowers repair a bike to earn credits that can be used to pick bikes for themselves.





Second-grader Desmond Magee puts a tire back together. He's among more than

140 children who have earned bikes from Front Yard Bikes in Old South Baton Rouge.



Dustin LaFont has a quiet moment with the children at Front Yard. His wife, Kimberly, is a kindergarten teacher at University Terrace in Old South Baton Rouge.

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SPARK





Buzz kill

*LSU doctoral student
takes to the air to take out
bad bugs*

By David Jacobs | Photo by Tim Mueller

Charles Malveaux, an LSU doctoral student, has long had an affinity for robotics and unmanned aerial vehicles. The novel idea of using the technologies to fight diseases came to him after his uncle's neighbor died from West Nile virus.

"Aviation and aviation-related devices are what really got me into engineering," he says. "I saw unmanned aerial vehicles as a way that you could potentially save lives."

Mosquitoes are far more than just pests. According to the American Mosquito Control Association, they cause more human suffering than any other organism. With their bite, mosquitoes infect people with West Nile, dengue, yellow fever and several types of encephalitis, which involves inflammation of the brain.

But the most prevalent disease transmitted by mosquitoes is malaria. The disease kills more than 800,000 people a year. Vast resources have been deployed to reduce malarial deaths, including free mosquito nets. For a permanent solution, the Gates Foundation is spending hundreds of millions to develop vaccines.

In the meantime, there is Charles Malveaux. He wants to kill mosquitos from the air before they hatch. Doing so is not a new idea. Planes dump mosquito-killing pesticides over large areas, but the method is imprecise and wasteful, and can have harmful ecological side effects.

Malveaux realized that unmanned drones are quite useful for remote sensing. Airplanes and helicopters, due in part to their size and speed, may not be able to gather the level of detail needed to find and identify the shallow ponds and containers of water where mosquitoes breed. Remote-controlled drones can go places that manned aircraft cannot.

“The UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) can come over an area at a very slow rate of speed, very close to the ground, and get really high-definition images that you just can’t get with satellite or with manned aircraft,” Malveaux says. “With those high-definition images, you can find habitats where mosquitoes might be and places of interest that you can treat.”

Very small drones weighing less than five pounds could be used for imaging. A separate, somewhat harder—but still fairly small—UAV might be used for applying chemicals to areas of interest found by the first system.

Hopefully, greater precision would equal greater effectiveness. But using less chemicals might also help protect the environment.

“We’re applying chemicals that have a toxic effect,” says LSU’s Steven Hall. “You want to minimize that, both from a cost point of view and also from an ecological and health point of view.” Hall is an associate professor and graduate coordinator for biological and agricultural engineering at the LSU College of Engineering and the AgCenter, where Malveaux does his research.

“We’re very interested in the health of desirable insects,” including bees and ladybugs, Hall says. “You don’t want to impact them any more than you have to.”

The more targeted approach also has the potential to save money on chemicals, since less would be needed. And while drones aren’t cheap, they’re typically far less expensive than full-size planes. All of which raises hope that, if proven effective, the drone-based approach to fighting mosquitoes could be inexpen-

sive enough to be brought to the developing world.

Todd Walker, who directs mosquito abatement and rodent control for East Baton Rouge Parish, says the city-parish is in the process of working out an agreement with the AgCenter to help develop and implement the technology. He says the equipment likely would be used initially for surveillance, then for larva control and perhaps control of adult mosquitoes as well, allowing him to reduce pesticide use and labor costs.

“Sometimes there are areas we can’t get to, and we end up having to spray with a plane, so we spray a large block,” Walker says. “With this, we can get to these smaller breeding sites,

and concentrate our control efforts on them and reduce the amount of pesticides we use.” Small sites can breed enough mosquitoes to create a large problem, he adds.

Walker says drones are a new idea for mosquito control, although they’re being tried in a few areas, such as New Jersey and Florida. While not a silver bullet, he expects drones one

day will be considered an indispensable tool in the mosquito control toolbox for districts throughout the United States.

Richard Duhrkopf, a professor at Baylor University who studies mosquito biology, also expects drones to be widely used to control mosquitoes in the near future.

“I’ll be shocked if within two years, it isn’t completely common in the state of Florida,” he says. “I think it will be [used] throughout Louisiana.”

Duhrkopf, a board member with the American Mosquito Control Association, echoes the belief that drones could allow for more precision than other common tools. Spraying pesticides from a passing truck isn’t as effective as it used to be, he says, because people are more likely to have fences and other barriers that keep the mist out of the backyards where the mosquitoes are. Larvacide can be sprayed directly into a pool of water from a mobile backpack, but someone needs to tromp around in peoples’ yards to deliver it, which homeowners don’t always welcome.

Of course, people might not be thrilled by the idea of drones hovering over their backyards either. The Federal Aviation Administration has not yet finalized its rules for commercial drone operation; for now, a certificate of authorization from the FAA is required, Malveaux says.

“It’s not so much about whether or not you can do it, but can you prove scientifically that this is an effective method for mosquito control.”

—Charles Malveaux, LSU doctoral student



He says his PhD research generally involves environmental remote sensing and control systems. A drone that looks for mosquito habitats is an example.

“It’s not so much about whether or not you can do it, but can you prove scientifically that this is an effective method for mosquito control,” he says. Scientific questions that must be answered include deciding what kind of camera system and wavelength of light are most useful.

Malveaux’s UAVs are powered by aluminum electric motors, are composed largely of carbon fiber, and are surprisingly light.

“This can carry over 20 pounds,” he says, while standing in an LSU workshop and pointing out the sort of drone that might one day carry chemicals and a sprayer. “The development of lightweight composite materials and battery technology made it possible to build UAV systems that can be used for mosquito control applications.”

He says a simple remote-controlled drone system could cost perhaps \$10,000 to \$30,000, although more elaborate systems could be far more expensive. He would love to see the technology used in the developing world one day, although that would require a patron with enough money to make it happen.

One day, UAVs should be widely used in all sorts of industries, from filmmaking to journalism to land surveying. Malveaux

“I want to use high technology to improve the environment and improve lives. The application of this technology, what it can do to save lives and improve lives, is limitless.”

—Charles Malveaux

mentions agriculture and monitoring the state’s coastline as two additional potential uses.

Environmental Robotics Institute, the small business Malveaux has started, could one day develop some of those applications. He says the idea for the company came to him in a dream.

“I want to use high technology to improve the environment and improve lives,” he says, summarizing the mission of ERI. “The application of this technology, what it can do to save lives and improve lives, is limitless.” •

LIVE LONG AND PROSPER

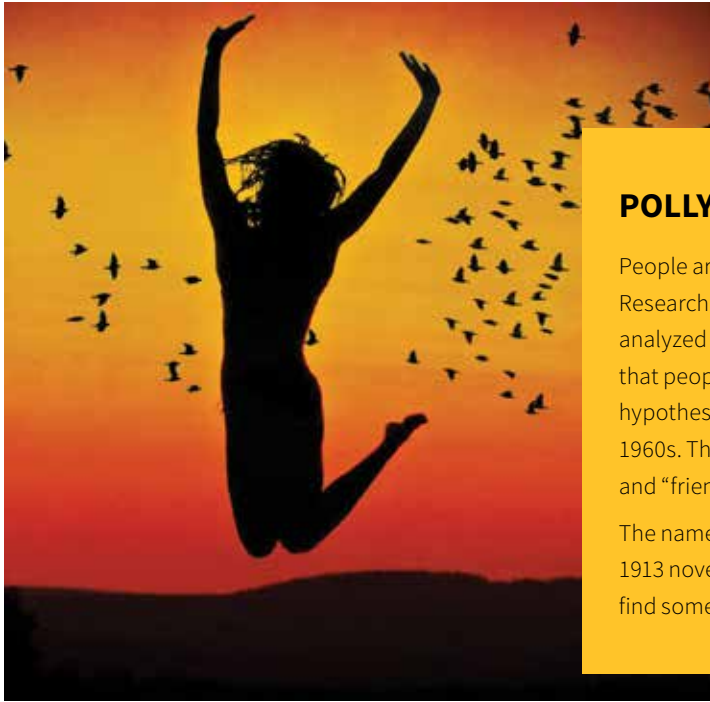
Scientists have discovered an elixir that may slow down aging in humans and offer a healthier lifespan. Researchers from The Scripps Research Institute, Mayo Clinic and other institutions tried existing drugs – cancer drug dasatinib and antihistamine quercetin – to target cells that stop dividing but won't die in animal models. They had remarkable results in flushing out these senescent cells, which accumulate and accelerate the aging process. In old mice, cardiovascular function was improved within five days of a single dose of the drugs. A single dose of a combination of the drugs led to improved exercise capacity in animals weakened by radiation therapy used for cancer. The effect lasted for at least seven months following treatment with the drugs. Periodic drug administration in mice with accelerated aging extended the healthspan of the animals, delaying age-related symptoms, spine degeneration and osteoporosis. The authors caution that more testing is needed before human trials.



BIKE REVOLUTION Design firm Teague and Sizemore Bicycle have won a contest to remake the bike. Named Denny, the bike has removable handlebars that double as a lock, electric assist to make it easier for commuting and riding in hilly areas, a removable battery pack, flexible storage near the handlebars, automatic shifting, brake lights and turn signals and lights that come on when the sun goes down. Fuji Bike is manufacturing the Denny, with availability and pricing due in coming months.

VERBATIM: *“Once you really solve a problem like direct brain-computer interface ... when brains and computers can interact directly, to take just one example, that’s it, that’s the end of history, that’s the end of biology as we know it. Nobody has a clue what will happen once you solve this. If life can basically break out of the organic realm into the vastness of the inorganic realm, you cannot even begin to imagine what the consequences will be, because your imagination at present is organic. So if there is a point of Singularity, as it’s often referred to, by definition, we have no way of even starting to imagine what’s happening beyond that”*

—Yuval Noah Harari, author of *Sapiens*, quoted on Edge.org, a website that brings smart people together and has them ask each other the questions they are asking themselves.



POLLYANNA WAS RIGHT TO BE GLAD

People are not cynical, not if you judge them by the words they use. Researchers from the University of Montana and the Mitre Corp. analyzed millions of words in 10 diverse human languages to determine that people have a positive bias, which may confirm the Pollyanna hypothesis, a theory of language use offered by social scientists in the 1960s. Their research showed people use upbeat words like “healthy” and “friend” more often than “suffering” or “idiot.”

The name for the Pollyanna hypothesis, meanwhile, is derived from the 1913 novel *Pollyanna*, in which a girl plays the “glad game”—trying to find something to be happy about in every situation.



BATTERY BREAKTHROUGH?

Computer chips double in computing power about every 18 months. But the batteries powering them don’t improve much at all. Now and then, a startup trumpets a battery storage breakthrough, but results in the lab don’t scale up during production. Skeptics might say here we go again, but this time could be different, for battery maker Sakti3 has drawn real money from investors, including Dyson, the manufacturer of battery-powered super vacuums. Based in Michigan, Sakti3 says its batteries double the energy density of today’s lithium-ion technology at one-fifth of the cost. If that’s true, reports say that a \$25,000 electric car with a 300-mile range is possible. The technology could reduce the cost of all products powered by lithium-ion, including smartphones and tools. Production could begin in the next two years.

“Sakti3 has achieved leaps in performance which current battery technology simply can’t,” says Dyson founder James Dyson.

PAGING DR. FRANKENSTEIN: YOUR BRAIN IS READY

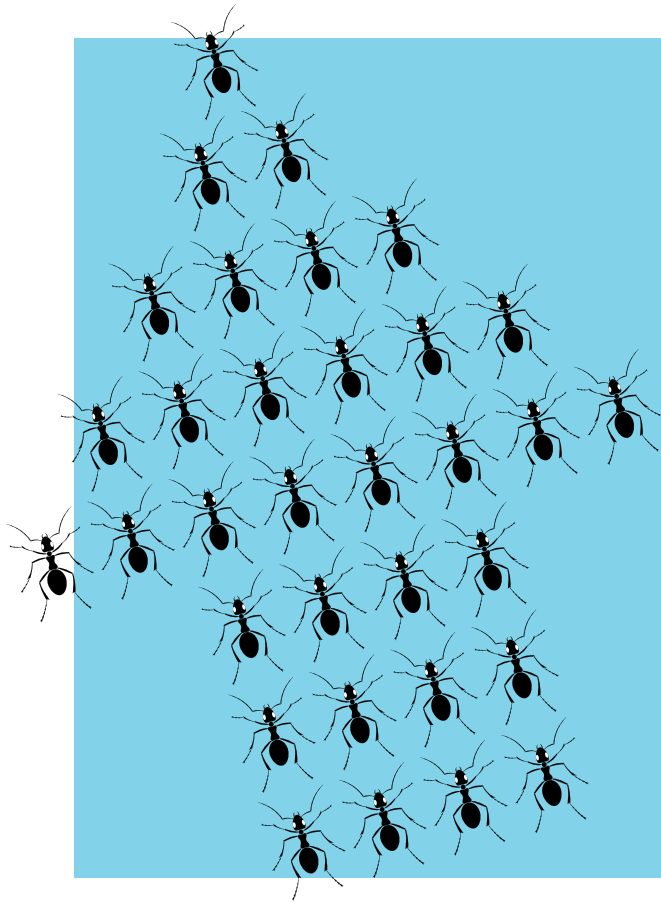
Researchers have created a new process for growing brain cells in the lab, a technique that ranks among the top 10 breakthroughs of 2014 by Technology Review, MIT’s magazine and website.

Madeline Lancaster and Jürgen Knoblich of the Institute of Molecular Biotechnology and Rudolph Tanzi and Doo Yeon Kim of Massachusetts General Hospital turned a

stem cell into neurons—brain cells—and grew them into three-dimensional clusters in the lab. The clusters can be used to test medicines, to explore how brains work, and to create models of brain disease, such as autism and schizophrenia.

“I’m mainly interested,” Lancaster told Technology Review, “in figuring out what it is that makes us human.”





MARCHING ORDERS When their world is disturbed, ants run around like chickens with their heads cut off. Not termites. In their experiments, LSU Ag Center researchers shook plates with more than 110 termites to observe behavior. The termites responded by following hidden rules: worker termites formed a single line and followed the lead termite, while soldiers surrounded them and started snapping their mandibles, as if ready for battle. They went around and around the plates, not searching for a way out. And when one fell, the others waited for it to right itself.

Termites might be more organized than other insects because they formed communities much earlier. LSU entomologist Gregg Henderson, an author of the report, told the *New York Times* that termites “were the first animals to form societies,” about 200 million years ago, 50 million years before ants and bees.

TOUGH STUFF

What material would withstand the water pressure in the deepest part of the ocean? Sylvia Earle, an Explorer in Residence at National Geographic, believes it is glass. With a molecular structure a bit like liquid, glass molecules get closer together under pressure. Earle and her colleagues are attempting to build a submersible that can peek at the creatures that live deepest in the seas.

SUPER RICE

Rice and corn are so plentiful that together they account for 40% of what people eat around the world. There’s a gap, though, between the amount produced and the demand from a growing population. Just in time, a solution might be coming out of the lab. Researchers at the International Rice Institute have engineered a variety that yields 50% more crop per acre, while not requiring more water and fertilizer. They have done so by introducing a gene that boosts photosynthesis, enabling leaves of rice plants to turn more carbon dioxide into energy. More experiments must be done before you can pour gumbo over your super rice.

HOW TO REDUCE POVERTY

Upon a request from three New York-based nonprofits, the Urban Institute tested seven government-assistance programs to determine which would reduce the poverty rate the most. UI concluded that all seven together make the largest difference.

But a transitional jobs program produced the greatest reduction, lowering the poverty rate in UI's model from 21.4% to 15.9%. A transitional job often turns into full-time employment while also providing more income to a household and letting families access other benefits, like the Earned Income Tax Credit, says UI.

Transitional jobs programs subsidize employment and training for unemployed and underemployed individuals, including those who are hard to employ, such as the long-term unemployed, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients, disconnected youth and the formerly incarcerated.

UI studied income supplements, a higher minimum wage, increased housing vouchers and guaranteed child care subsidies as well. All the benefits together reduced the poverty rate to 6.7%.

The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New York and UJA-Federation of New York underwrote the research.

EQUITY IN SPEEDING

Be warned: Speeding fines in Finland can exceed the cost of a luxury car. Finland calculates fines based on two factors: half-day earnings multiplied by miles exceeding the posted limit. Going about 15 miles per hour, for instance, equals 12 days times half-day pay. Most offenders pay fines of less than \$500. A wealthy Nokia executive, though, was fined \$103,000 in 2002.



GO BIG

Frank Wells believes big actions produce big results. His organization, Venture House, has received \$5 million in financing to rehab dozens of houses at a time in a St. Petersburg, Fla., neighborhood.

“You can’t make a dent in the problem thinking about it as one house at a time,” Wells says in a report. “We have to think about it as 100 houses and a whole portfolio. That’s the kind of scale to make a dent.”

Banks, local governments and philanthropists raised the money for the rehabs, with the banks agreeing to also finance startups at a low interest rate. People who buy homes from Venture House can’t take more than 3% equity out per year, reducing the chance that people are buying to flip homes.





ODA

BEAUTIFUL THINGS

The LSU Medical Education and Innovation Center's most special place may be a terrace designed by Suzanne Turner. The centerpiece of this very special outdoor space is a Dale Chihuly glass sculpture that was purchased by donations to the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

Overlooking lush Louisiana treetops off Essen Lane, the terrace itself is a space where students can gather to talk, trade ideas or simply sit and reflect in quiet. The sculpture—Red Reeds—was created from fire and sand in Chihuly's Washington studio.

The sculptor's works are included in more than 200 museums worldwide. "I want my work to appear like it came from nature, so that if someone found it on a beach or in the forest, they might think it belonged there," Chihuly says.

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