

# CURRENTS

Should security forces be consolidated? Does East Baton Rouge support or oppose legalization of marijuana? Would residents pay a toll to bypass traffic on Essen and College? Should same-sex marriage be legal in Louisiana? Why is our HIV/AIDS rate so high? Why is private school enrollment on the decline? What is being done with all those abandoned buildings? Are people more or less afraid to walk alone at night in their neighborhoods? How are we reducing the high infant mortality rate?

CityStats2013



hey moon  
no allow



Before I die...





## **MINDING THE GAP**

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

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

*Baton Rouge  
Area Foundation*

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



BATON ROUGE

# CITYSTATS

Indicators for tracking our quality of life



VOLUME SEVEN | NUMBER THREE

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*Baton Rouge  
Area Foundation*



Big decisions should be based on facts, not secondhand anecdotes or popular assumptions. When individuals act on uninformed assumptions, it's a matter of personal irresponsibility. When our parish behaves in this way, it creates bad policy: scant resources are wasted, lives are changed—and seldom for the better.

This year's CityStats report, like the four before it, is designed to guide our parish—both our leaders and the residents who elect them—based on reliable information.

In the latest report, featured as our cover story, you'll find both good news and bad news. It's true that the economy in EBR has stayed stronger than in most of the nation's other counties. But our poverty rate remains stubbornly high, like a weight dragging our parish back a half-step for each stride forward that we make. The income gap between African American families and whites is persistently wide, for instance. When you consider our children together, the level of poverty is especially troubling: three of every 10 children are poor.

Each year, CityStats looks at the questions that are challenging us as a community, and then searches to find answers. This year, we found that people support the idea of merging the Baton Rouge Police Department and the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office into a single law enforcement entity; we discovered that residents would be willing to pay a toll for the road they are on if it meant bypassing the traffic that paralyzed College Drive and Essen Lane, and our poll shows that East Baton Rouge is trending in the same direction as the rest of the nation toward approval of same-sex marriage.

Year after year, we've found that people are impatient with the pace of progress in Baton Rouge, which we see as a desire to make their community better. They've demonstrated that desire by expressing their willingness to

support—and pay for—improved infrastructure, a livelier downtown, better parks, and other amenities that improve the quality of life here.

In this *Currents*, we dive a bit deeper to examine some of the issues that emerge from the CityStats indicators, such as the decline in private school enrollment, the too-high infant mortality rate, and the chance we have now to reduce blighted properties in the parish.

We do so in hopes that facts will be used in policy making in Baton Rouge, not only by local government but also by the agencies and nonprofits that are integral to how we fare together as a parish.

I want to thank Newton B. Thomas, a Foundation donor, for underwriting CityStats. His annual contribution through the Newton B. Thomas Support Foundation pays for this report and other research under our CityStats project.

• • •

Also in this issue, our writer Sara Bongiorno catches up with Chris Meyer to chronicle how far New Schools for Baton Rouge has come in its first year.

New Schools, as you may remember, was created by the Foundation with operating funding from some of our donors. Launched last year, New Schools was challenged to raise up to \$30 million for providing resources to charter school operators that would run troubled schools in North Baton Rouge.

New Schools has secured commitments for at least half of its funding goal, while also recruiting proven charter operators to apply to take over here. With LSU, New Schools also is conducting due diligence of charter operators to improve their chances once they take over a school.

Each year, CityStats looks at the questions that are troubling us as a community, and then searches to find reliable answers.

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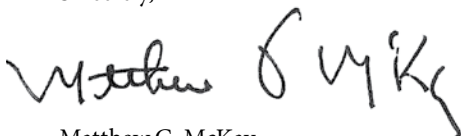
Also in this issue, we include a story about Salman Khan, a New Orleans native with the knowledge and talent to create an online revolution in education. He's got three degrees from MIT, an MBA from Harvard, a strategic mind, a superstar comedian's timing, and the self-deprecating charm and political skills necessary to upend how the world learns.

Khan Academy is succeeding because it's innovative—children take control of their learning by watching the videos as many times as needed to understand a concept. In class, the teacher helps them through rough spots and shows them the applicability of what they've learned.

With funding from philanthropists, classrooms are testing Khan Academy, and the free service has caught on around the world, potentially accelerating how fast we move ahead together as a civilization.

Education—once scarce and expensive—has become abundant and free.

Sincerely,



Matthew G. McKay

## Baton Rouge Area Foundation

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

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



AP PHOTO/SUSAN WALSH

## Gaines wins National Medal of Arts

Ernest J. Gaines traveled from Oscar on False River to the White House in July to accept the National Medal of Arts, given by President Barack Obama to the Louisiana author for a lifetime of work that has lifted the nation.

Mr. Gaines was among about two dozen people receiving the medal, including New Orleans musician Allen Toussaint. After a life of writing and world travel, Mr. Gaines returned to live in Pointe Coupee, where his life began 80 years ago.

"He did not let that define his future," Obama said of Mr. Gaines' life as a descendant of sharecroppers. "Instead, he took that experience and used it to help fill in gaps in American literature with the stories of African-American life... He spent more than 20 years teaching college students to find their own voices and reclaiming some of the stories of their own families and their own lives."

The National Medal of Arts is among a lifetime of accolades. In 1993, Gaines was awarded the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship for his lifetime achievements. In 1996 he was named a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France's highest decoration.

His book, *A Lesson Before Dying*, won the 1993 National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction, the most recent of numerous awards that Gaines has received. And *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* has become an undisputed classic of twentieth-century American literature and gave rise to the award-winning TV-movie adaptation starring Cicely Tyson.

Mr. Gaines is now a writer-in-residence emeritus at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The Ernest J. Gaines Center at the university is an international center for scholarship on his work.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and our donors created the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence to honor Mr. Gaines while supporting rising African American writers. The annual writing contest will choose its sixth winner this year and present the award in January. For more about the award, visit [ErnestJGainesAward.org](http://ErnestJGainesAward.org).





# FARMERS MARKET

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA - PROJECT OF BREADA

**We gladly accept**



**Tuesday Market (seasonally)—8am-12pm**

8470 Goodwood Blvd.

**Thursday Market—8am-12pm**

6400 Perkins Road—Enter off Kenilworth

(Pennington Biomedical Research Center)

**Saturday Market—8am-12pm**

5th and Main streets

Downtown Baton Rouge

Free parking inside the adjoining Galvez Garage

If raining, market is held inside the garage

[www.BREADA.org](http://www.BREADA.org) | [facebook.com/BREADA](https://facebook.com/BREADA)

[market@breada.org](mailto:market@breada.org) or 225.267.5060

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

*Baton Rouge Area Foundation*

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

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

**Donations to Foundation:**

**\$30.5 million**

**Grants to Nonprofits:**

**\$37.6 million**

**2012**

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

**Key Civic Leadership Projects:**

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

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

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

**Mission:** The Baton Rouge Area Foundation unites human and financial resources to enhance the quality of life in South Louisiana.

To achieve our mission, we:

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

**Population of Primary Service Area :**

**2+ million**

**Population of Secondary Service Area :**

**7+ billion (world)**

*Dr. John and the Nite Trippers*  
September 8

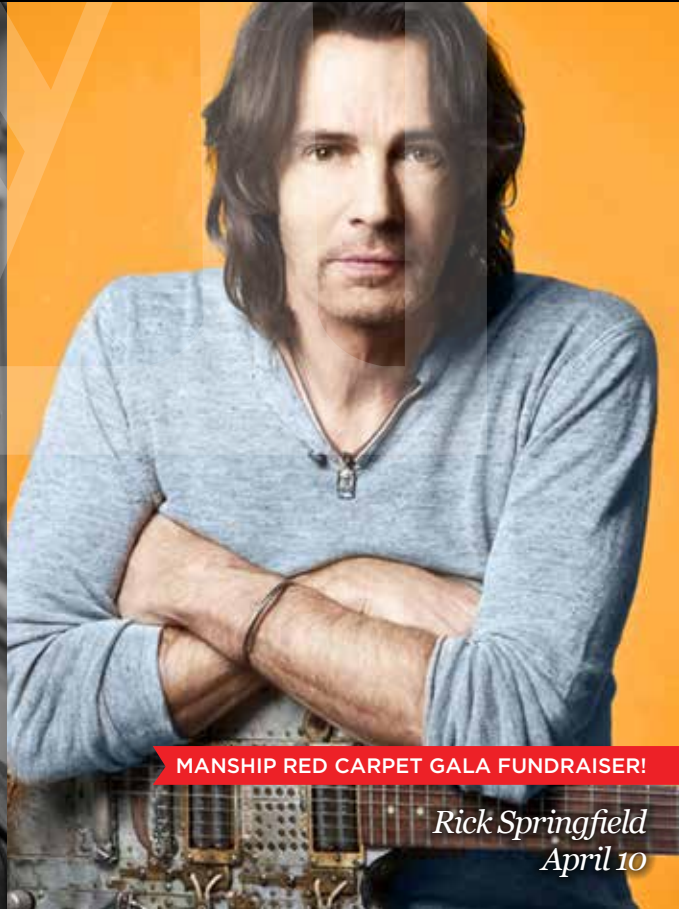


**Manship Theatre**  
**2013-2014 SEASON**

*River North Dance Chicago*  
February 12

**TICKETS: 225-344-0334 MANHIPTHEATRE.ORG**

*Jon Batiste and Stay Human*  
February 28



**MANSHIP RED CARPET GALA FUNDRAISER!**

*Rick Springfield*  
April 10





**LEMOINE TO BUILD IBM BUILDING** Commercial Properties Realty Trust has selected The Lemoine Co. as lead contractor to build a riverfront complex with space for residents and IBM employees. September is the starting date for construction, with full occupancy in mid-2015.

CPRT develops and manages real estate for the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, a nonprofit that supports the work of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

In spring, the state of Louisiana secured an IBM software programming center for Baton Rouge. As part of the deal, IBM will employ up to 800 workers in exchange for, among other things, office space for workers. CPRT and Lemoine are building that space with a \$30.5 million payment from the state of Louisiana.

IBM will be housed in an eight-story tower on the block that formerly housed *The Advocate* in downtown. Financed by the WMF, a second building on the block will have 95 apartments and nine townhomes. The two buildings will be connected by a 24,000-square-foot terrace.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation has worked with Lemoine to construct The Shaw Center for the Arts.

Meanwhile, WMF's Acadian Village redevelopment should

The Wilbur Marvin Foundation was created by a gift of real estate by the late Wilbur Marvin, who built a string of shopping centers across the Southeast from his base in Baton Rouge. WMF focuses on projects that make money while also doing social good, including sharing a portion of profits on community projects.

open in October. Galatoire's Bistro and Acme Oyster House, already open at the shopping center on Perkins Road at Acadian, will be joined by Trader Joe's as an anchor. Other tenants of the 70,000-square-foot center are Pei Wei, Smarter Eyewear, Petco, Kean's Fine Dry Cleaning, The Keeping Room, La Divina Italian Cafe, Baby Bump Maternity, Nadeau-Furniture with a Soul and Air Dry Bar.

The Wilbur Marvin Foundation was created by a gift of real estate by the late Wilbur Marvin, who built a string of shopping centers across the Southeast from his base in Baton Rouge. WMF focuses on projects that make money while also doing social good, including sharing a portion of profits on community projects. WMF has rescued Bon Carre in Mid City and redeveloped the abandoned Capitol House into a Hilton in downtown Baton Rouge.

#### **GRANT INCREASES CANCER SCREENINGS**

Louisiana has among the highest cancer death rates in the country. The main cause is too many late diagnoses among the poor and uninsured. A grant from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center is attempting to improve on that dismal statistic.

The Foundation has distributed \$2 million to Mary Bird Perkins to step up cancer screenings to the underserved population across the Gulf Coast. The Foundation donation was made from the Future of the Gulf Fund, which was seeded with more than \$80 million after wrapping up relief grants to deepwater rig workers from a \$100 million BP gift.

In turn, Mary Bird Perkins used the grant to purchase a cancer screening van and to operate it for five years.

Called "Early Bird II," the motorized clinic started rolling in April. It's MBP's second mobile clinic. The first has screened thousands of people over seven years. Since 2000, Mary Bird Perkins has tested more than 50,000 people for cancer at its clinics and through mobile services.

The latest clinic on wheels has three screening areas, a waiting room and a flip-out TV to provide medical information to people who may be waiting outside. At advertised locations, health care workers will check for breast, prostate, skin, oral and colorectal cancers for the uninsured and underinsured.

More about the free screenings is at the MBP website—[marybird.org](http://marybird.org).



**BUILDING A DESTINATION** The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority approved a \$700,000 loan to convert a block next to Baton Rouge High School. Lawyer and developer Danny McGlynn, working with Ritter Maher Architects, is improving a string of buildings on Government Street that are anchored by the Darensbourg Building.

Ritter Maher will relocate its practice to the Darensbourg Building. One of the structures will be removed to make room for parking, the others will be upgraded.

Next door to the project, the RDA had made a grant to improve the façade and landscaping at the Ogden Market, which houses the popular Radio Bar.

Government Street is among a handful of thoroughfares seen as drivers of redevelopment in Baton Rouge's comprehensive plan for the coming decades, called FutureBR.

In spring, the section of Government that includes Ogden Market was a site for the Better BlockBR demonstration project. To show how the street could be remade, bicycle lanes were added, traffic was calmed and pop-up restaurants and shops opened for business.

**GROW MID CITY** Architect Dyke Nelson has won \$10,000 from a competition to grow businesses in Mid City. Nelson will use the funding to buy equipment for manufacturing eco-friendly products, such as the bistro tables his DNA Workshop designed and built for Rock-n-Sake restaurant.

Nelson's firm focuses on reusing discarded materials from historic properties for its products. He makes furniture, lighting fixtures, installation pieces and panels.

Capital One Bank, in partnership with Mid City Redevelopment Alliance of Baton Rouge, underwrote the business competition.



PHOTOS BY LAWLES BOURQUE



**OASIS IN THE FOOD DESERT** The Red Stick Mobile Farmers Market began selling fresh produce to people who don't have a grocery store near them. Funded by a grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation, the market began operating in May on Wednesdays at two locations—the Scotlandville Library on Scenic Highway and Star Hill Baptist Church on North Foster Drive. More locations are being added.

BREDA operates the mobile market, the Red Stick Farmers Market and the Main Street Market.

## Civic leadership initiatives

### **WATER INSTITUTE, DELTARES LEVERAGING**

**RESEARCH** The Water Institute of the Gulf and Deltares USA Inc. have signed to partner on research related to water management projects, coastal modeling applications and international projects.

The Water Institute was created by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation upon a request from U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu and Governor Jindal's office. The independent nonprofit is providing the best science to guide policy for taking on land loss and rising seas—double threats that are predicted to affect Louisiana's coast more than any shoreline on the planet. Deltares is the Netherlands' counterpart of The Water Institute.

Through the agreement, both organizations are committing to collaborate on opportunities that are mutually beneficial and that provide value to communities in Louisiana and around the world.

"We're extremely excited to add Deltares to our strong network of partners. Their expertise will add valuable capacity to efforts to meet challenges and develop solutions here in Louisiana and around the world," says Chip Groat, president and CEO of The Water Institute. "Deltares is a global leader in this research, and we're excited to have the chance to share knowledge and expertise between our respective teams."

Groat says the partnership will provide opportunities to explore and enhance shared interests, including integrated water resource management, development of coastal modeling capabilities, research focused on subsidence, and creating software and tools to assist with data management efforts.

### **MANSHIP THEATRE RENOVATIONS NEARLY**

**COMPLETE** A \$2 million transformation of The Manship Theatre and The Shaw Center for the Arts is expected to be completed in late fall.

A new entrance on North Boulevard for the Hartley-Vey Theatres is expected to improve visibility of the smaller performing rooms that are around the corner from the main stage. A new bar will serve all three stages of the Manship Theatre, and more restrooms will provide convenience to patrons.

Philanthropists led the construction of The Manship Theatre, an asset of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

**CAA SHELTER PROPOSED** LSU's Board of Supervisors has agreed to reserve land next to the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine for a new animal shelter operated by the Companion Animal Alliance.

CAA, an independent nonprofit, was jump-started by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to improve the welfare of dogs and cats in East Baton Rouge. The nonprofit has

nearly tripled the number of dogs and cats saved from 20% since it took over the shelter from the city-parish in 2012. CAA finds permanent homes for unwanted animals.

CAA wants to move the shelter from Progress Road near the Baton Rouge airport to 3.7 acres of land on Skip Bertman Drive. The nonprofit will start a

capital campaign to raise funding for the new shelter with a goal to build and relocate in two years.

A shelter next to the Vet School would provide learning and service opportunities to students.

**NOW HEAR THIS** The Baton Rouge Area Foundation's special projects team is assisting the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra in creating a plan to grow the nonprofit.

On behalf of the Foundation, LSU's Public Policy Research Lab conducted a poll of the current BRSO audience to understand how performances can be improved. The audience was asked about the venue, timing and music performed by the symphony, as well as the downtown experience.

The results of the poll will be folded into a strategy for the symphony.

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

## Philanthropy

**\$2.1 BILLION** Total online giving to charities in America last year, a 14% increase from the year before, says a special report by the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*.

Campus Crusade for Christ International led all online fundraisers with \$86.9 million. Second was the American Heart Association at \$54 million. The newspaper estimates that one of every \$5 will be donated online by next year.

**VOLUNTEERING DOWN** Fewer people in Baton Rouge are volunteering with local charities. People saying they volunteered with a charity in the previous 12 months declined for the second year in a row. Seventy-one percent said they volunteered in 2011, 66% in 2012 and 60% in 2013. The results are from the CityStats survey conducted annually by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. The sample represents the entire parish. More from the survey is online at BRAF.org.

## Grants

The Foundation's donors make thousands of grants each year. Here are a select few. All the grants are enumerated in our annual report, which is at BRAF.org.

### NOVEL CHARTER SCHOOL

Thrive is a public charter boarding school, among only 10 in the country and the first in Louisiana. Opened and operated by Sarah Broome, the school completed its first year with a sixth-grade class. Expansion to an additional grade is due in fall.

At Thrive, children live in groups of five with a resident advisor. After school, the children exercise, create art and are tutored. In the evenings, they work together to operate the household, learning how to cook, clean, wash clothes and manage money.

The Foundation and its donors have granted more than \$233,500 to Thrive.

**INTERNATIONAL GRANTS** An anonymous donor of the Foundation has granted \$24,800 to build a three-room primary school in Bobo-Dioulasso, the second-largest city in Burkina Faso. The donor has also built schoolhouses in Burkina Faso, a landlocked country in West Africa. The country is among the poorest in the world. Foundation donors have made grants around the world, including



The school yard in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso.

assistance for outfitting orphanages with computers in Mexico and sending a heart diagnostic device to Mongolia.

### OUR FUND DONORS AND THE BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION GRANTED \$7.8 MILLION TO NONPROFITS IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2013.

Donors recommend grants from their charitable funds, and the board of the Foundation reviews and approves grants. A list of the second quarter grants follows.

100 Black Men of Metro Baton Rouge, \$6,500  
ABC Children's Aid USA Inc., \$24,800  
Academic Distinction Fund, \$66,552  
AFS-USA, Inc., \$200  
Aldersgate United Methodist Church, \$7,000



ALS Association, Louisiana-Mississippi Chapter, \$30,000  
 Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area, \$9,500  
 American Cancer Society, \$750  
 American Heart Association, \$2,500  
 American Heart Association Greater Southeast  
 Affiliate, \$10,000  
 American National Red Cross, \$2,000  
 AMLkids, \$10,000  
 Angels On Earth Foundation, \$450  
 Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge Inc., \$5,000  
 Ascension Tennis Association, \$500  
 Asparagus Club Scholarship Fund—Spenddown, \$1,000  
 Associated Marine Institutes Inc., \$10,000  
 Autism Services of Southwest Louisiana Inc., \$2,500  
 Bascom-Louise Gallery, \$5,000  
 Baton Rouge Alliance for Transitional Living, \$200  
 Baton Rouge Area Foundation Fund—Unrestricted, \$250  
 Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre, Inc., \$300  
 Baton Rouge Children's Advocacy Center, \$15,180  
 Baton Rouge Crime Stoppers Inc., \$25,000  
 Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center, \$91,753  
 Baton Rouge Gallery, \$1,250  
 Baton Rouge Green Association Inc., \$638  
 Baton Rouge High School Foundation, \$2,000  
 Baton Rouge Opera Guild, Inc., \$1,906  
 Baton Rouge Progressive Network, \$2,000  
 Baton Rouge Speech and Hearing Foundation Inc., \$269,179  
 Baton Rouge Sponsoring Committee, \$10,000  
 Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra, \$6,645  
 Baton Rouge Youth Coalition, \$30,300  
 Benton Academy Inc., \$10,000  
 Beth Shalom Synagogue, \$1,000  
 Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, \$1,000  
 Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Louisiana, \$5,000  
 Big Buddy Program, \$5,900  
 Bishop Ott Works of Mercy Trust/Catholic Diocese, \$197  
 Blackhawk Flight Foundation, \$1,500  
 Boy Scouts of America—Istrouma Area Council, \$3,775  
 Boys and Girls Club of Southeast Louisiana, \$200  
 Boys Hope Girls Hope of Baton Rouge, \$1,000  
 BREADA (Big River Economic & Agricultural  
 Development Alliance), \$11,500  
 Breast Cancer Action, \$500  
 BREC Foundation, \$3,170  
 Bridge House Corporation, \$1,000  
 Cancer Services of Greater Baton Rouge, Inc., \$81,500  
 Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless, \$25,000  
 Capital Area Animal Welfare Society, \$323  
 Capital Area CASA Association, \$800  
 Capital Area Family Violence Intervention Center, \$1,300  
 Care Help of Sulphur Inc., \$5,000  
 Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans, \$20,000  
 Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida, \$833,333  
 Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge /  
 Bishop's Annual Appeal, \$28,000  
 Catholic High School, \$3,175  
 Center for Planning Excellence, Inc., \$25,500  
 Cerebral Palsy Association of  
 Greater Baton Rouge Inc., \$8,200  
 Children's Hospital, \$5,000  
 Chinese Christian Church of Baton Rouge, \$301  
 Christ the King Parish and Catholic Center at LSU, \$11,750  
 Church of the Good Shepherd, \$6,000  
 City Year Baton Rouge, \$80,000  
 Coastal Conservation Association, \$200  
 Community Foundation of South Alabama, \$18,750  
 Community Fund for the Arts, \$40,000  
 Companion Animal Alliance, \$64,000  
 David Toms Charitable Foundation, \$2,500  
 Denham Springs High School Athletic Association, \$350  
 Desire Street Ministries and Academy, \$10,000  
 Doctors Without Borders USA, \$1,000  
 Douglas Manship Sr. Theatre Complex Holding Inc., \$93,257  
 Dream Day Foundation, \$10,000  
 Dream Teachers LLC, \$5,500  
 Dyslexia Association of Greater Baton Rouge, \$636  
 EBRPSS - Highland Elementary School, \$200  
 Education's Next Horizon, \$5,000  
 Episcopal High School of Baton Rouge, \$173,042  
 Ernest J. Gaines Literature Award, \$21,921  
 Evergreen Foundation, \$250  
 Fellowship of Christian Athletes, \$1,000  
 Feminist Women's Health Center Inc., \$5,000  
 FINS Swim Club Inc., \$500  
 First United Methodist Church, \$2,000  
 Fit Families for CENLA, \$350  
 Fletcher Community College Foundation, Inc., \$133  
 Food Bank of Covington, Louisiana, Inc., \$9,000  
 Foundation for a Better Louisiana, \$2,000  
 Foundation for East Baton Rouge School System, \$54,432  
 Foundation for Historical Louisiana, Inc., \$3,597  
 Friends of Hilltop Arboretum Inc., \$2,200  
 Friends of Louisiana Public Broadcasting Inc., \$3,670  
 Friends of the Animals BR Inc., \$500  
 Friends of the Baton Rouge Zoo, \$200  
 General Health Foundation, \$33,500  
 Georgia Organics Inc., \$15,000  
 Georgia WAND Education Fund, \$5,000  
 Girls First Inc., \$100  
 Girls on the Run of Greater Baton Rouge, \$25,350  
 Gonzales Soccer Club, \$6,000  
 Greater Baton Rouge Community Clinic, \$300  
 Greater Baton Rouge Economic Partnership Inc., \$100,000  
 Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, \$177,500  
 Greater Baton Rouge Hope Academy, \$9,655  
 Groves Academy, \$2,500  
 Habitat for Humanity International, Inc., \$500  
 Habitat for Humanity of Greater Baton Rouge, \$1,500  
 Habitat for Humanity, St. Tammany West, \$41,000  
 Hampden-Sydney College, \$8,000  
 Hampshire Country School, \$500  
 Harding Academy, \$25,000

Health Care Centers in Schools, \$7,500  
 Heifer Project International, \$500  
 Heritage Ranch, \$1,000  
 Hole in the Wall Gang Fund Inc., \$1,500  
 Holy Family Catholic Church, \$11,968  
 HOPE Ministries of Baton Rouge, \$5,000  
 Hospice Foundation of Greater Baton Rouge, \$250  
 Houston Symphony Society, \$1,500  
 Iberville Foundation for Academic Excellence, \$6,024  
 Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, \$500  
 International Center for Journalists Inc., \$5,000  
 International Hospitality Foundation, \$883  
 International Rescue Committee, \$1,000  
 Jambalaya Capital of the World—  
     Gonzales Louisiana Inc, \$10,000  
 Jefferson Performing Arts Society, \$20,000  
 Jewish Children's Regional Service, \$1,000  
 Julius Freyhan Foundation, \$10,552  
 Junior Achievement of Greater Baton Rouge, \$12,049  
 Junior Achievement of Greater New Orleans, \$10,000  
 Junior Achievement of Southwest Louisiana, \$5,000  
 Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation  
     International, \$10,000  
 Kids' Orchestra Inc., \$25,000  
 Knock Knock Children's Museum, \$25,000  
 LANO (Louisiana Association of Nonprofit  
     Organizations), \$5,000  
 LCTCS Foundation, \$10,000  
 Leadership Seminars of America Inc Louisiana  
     Youth Seminar, \$500  
 Lemonade Day, \$10,000  
 Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, \$700  
 Lighthouse for the Blind in New Orleans Inc., \$10,000  
 Louisiana Art and Science Museum, \$8,828  
 Louisiana Bar Foundation, \$250  
 Louisiana Capital Area Chapter of the American  
     Red Cross, \$273,817  
 Louisiana College, \$5,000  
 Louisiana Cultural Economy Foundation, \$2,500  
 Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum, \$5,000  
 Louisiana Industries for the Disabled, \$3,750  
 Louisiana Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial  
     Literacy, \$35,000  
 Louisiana Museum Foundation, \$1,000  
 Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, \$3,000  
 Louisiana Public Health Institute, \$146,500  
 Louisiana Resource Center for Educators, \$13,500  
 Louisiana State Univeristy and  
     Christina Marie Grommon, \$1,000  
 Louisiana Success, \$10,000  
 Louisiana Symphony Association, \$10,000  
 Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation, \$520  
 Louisiana Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters, \$7,000  
 Louisiana Wildlife Federation, \$100  
 Loyola University, \$10,000  
 Loyola University—College of Law, \$2,000  
 LSU Alumni Association, \$250  
 LSU Delta Sigma Pi, \$700  
 LSU Foundation, \$53,000  
 LSU Foundation—Burden Horticultural Society, \$2,000  
 LSU Foundation—E.J. Ourso College of Business, \$2,500  
 LSU Foundation—LSU Museum of Art, \$3,500  
 LSU Foundation—LSU Press, \$25,000  
 LSU Foundation—Manship School of  
     Mass Communication, \$500  
 LSU Foundation—Paul M. Hebert Law Center, \$4,000  
 LSU Foundation—Readers and Writers, \$1,000  
 LSU Foundation—School of Art Gallery Support  
     Fund, \$8,000  
 LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans, \$1,000  
 LSU School of Art, \$24,542  
 Mandeville Soccer Club, \$20,000  
 Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center, \$88,600  
 Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center Foundation, \$1,000  
 McNeese State University Foundation, \$4,500  
 Mental Health Association of Greater Baton Rouge, \$250  
 Mercy Ships, \$50,000  
 MetroMorphosis, \$15,000  
 Miami Suns Youth Development Inc., \$5,000  
 Mid City Redevelopment Alliance, \$250  
 Millennium Relief and Development Services, \$1,000  
 Milton Academy, \$25,000  
 National Center for Disaster Preparedness, \$263,061  
 National Multiple Sclerosis Society, \$5,000  
 National Wildlife Federation, \$100  
 National World War II Museum, Inc., \$1,000  
 New Heights Therapy Center Inc., \$30,000  
 New Orleans Arts and Cultural Host  
     Committee Inc., \$20,000  
 New Orleans Jazz Orchestra Inc., \$20,000  
 New Orleans Museum of Art, \$20,000  
 New Orleans Opera Association, \$3,350  
 New Schools for Baton Rouge, \$116,666  
 Northlake Mandeville Rotary Foundation, \$2,000  
 Northshore Community Foundation, \$143,150  
 Northshore Families Helping Families Inc., \$12,350  
 O'Brien House Inc, \$3,700  
 Of Moving Colors Productions, \$11,000  
 Ollie Steele Burden Manor, \$369  
 Opera Louisiane, \$500  
 Options, Inc., \$2,500  
 Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, \$37,116  
 Our Lady of the Lake Foundation, \$400  
 Oxfam-America Inc., \$500  
 Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, \$500  
 Parkview Baptist School Inc., \$3,918  
 Partners in Health, \$1,000  
 Pearl River Community College and  
     LaQuavier Benton, \$1,000  
 Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation, \$38,500  
 Planned Parenthood of the Gulf Coast, \$56,000  
 Playmakers of Baton Rouge Inc., \$200

Pointe Coupee Central High School, \$250  
 Pointe Coupee Historical Society, Inc., \$500  
 Project Purr BR, \$250  
 Pyramid Atlantic Inc., \$100  
 Reading Partners, \$1,200  
 Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge, \$20,000  
 Red Shoes, Inc., \$300  
 Rice University, \$10,000  
 Richard Murphy Hospice Foundation, \$1,000  
 River City Jazz Coalition Fund, \$2,500  
 Rocketkidz Foundation, \$350  
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge, \$107,995  
 Rotary Club of Baton Rouge Inc. Foundation, \$30,000  
 Runnels School, \$350  
 Sacred Heart of Jesus School, \$6,199  
 Salvation Army, \$10,500  
 Sams Helping Hand Foundation, Inc., \$20,000  
 Save the Children, \$51,000  
 Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response Center, \$15,000  
 Single Stop USA, Inc., \$499,500  
 Smile Train, \$250  
 Society of Saint John the Evangelist, \$1,000  
 Society of St. Vincent de Paul Baton Rouge  
 Council, \$30,900  
 Southeastern Louisiana University, \$300  
 Southern Dominican Province, \$1,000  
 Southern Garden Symposium, \$500  
 Southern Rep, \$21,000  
 St Louis Catholic High School, \$1,500  
 St. Aloysius Church, \$500  
 St. Andrew's Village, \$2,500  
 St. Augustine Church, \$925  
 St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, \$2,000  
 St. Francisville Area Foundation, \$5,400  
 St. Gabriel Health Clinic, Inc., \$20,000  
 St. Gerard Majella Church, \$10,500  
 St. James Episcopal Church, \$3,000  
 St. Joseph Cathedral, \$85,100  
 St. Joseph Hospice Foundation Inc., \$500  
 St. Joseph Spirituality Center, \$2,000  
 St. Joseph the Worker Church, \$5,962  
 St. Joseph's Academy, \$15,000  
 St. Joseph's Academy Foundation, \$2,200  
 St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, \$8,250  
 St. Mary's Episcopal Church, \$850  
 St. Patrick's Episcopal Church, \$1,500  
 St. Paul Adult Learning Center, \$200  
 St. Paul's Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, \$500  
 St. Pauls School Foundation, \$500  
 St. Tammany Hospital Foundation, \$5,000  
 Swine Palace Productions, Inc., \$500  
 Teach for America—South Louisiana, \$67,923  
 The Ascension Fund, \$15,597  
 The Benedictine Sisters, \$1,000  
 The Children's Health Fund, \$187,500  
 The Dunham School, \$2,956  
 The Friends of the Rural Life Museum Inc., \$167,200  
 The Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge, \$250  
 The Jason Project, \$80,000  
 The JL Foundation, \$55,000  
 The Life of a Single Mom, \$27,500  
 The Louisiana Architectural Foundation, \$5,300  
 The Louisiana International Film Festival, \$50,000  
 The Nature Conservancy, \$350  
 The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana, \$418,624  
 The Ogden Museum of Southern Art, \$500  
 The Original Richland Library Restoration Society, Inc., \$843  
 Thrive Baton Rouge, \$10,000  
 Tiger Athletic Foundation, \$5,000  
 Trinity Episcopal Church, \$35,000  
 Tulane University, \$35,000  
 Tulane University Sponsored Projects  
 Administration, \$309,396  
 Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union  
 (UCSJ), \$250  
 Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge, \$15,000  
 United States Holocaust Memorial Council, \$1,500  
 United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area, \$10,000  
 University Baptist Church, \$10,000  
 University Lab School Foundation, \$1,000  
 University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Maria Rachal, \$1,000  
 University of New Orleans Foundation, \$9,918  
 University Presbyterian Church, \$19,350  
 Upward Community Services, \$12,000  
 Vanderbilt University, \$2,500  
 Vision 21 Foundation, \$2,500  
 Volunteers In Public Schools Inc., \$1,250  
 Volunteers of America, \$1,000  
 Water Institute of the Gulf, \$460,250  
 West Baton Rouge Foundation for Academic  
 Excellence, \$6,100  
 Woman's Hospital Foundation, \$5,000  
 Wounded Warrior Project Inc., \$2,000  
 WRKF Public Radio Inc., \$1,500  
 Yelp BR, \$5,000  
 YMCA of the Capital Area, \$2,000  
 YMCA of Greater New Orleans, \$11,000  
 Young Aspirations/Young Artists Inc., \$5,000  
 Young Leaders' Academy of Baton Rouge, Inc., \$5,000  
 Young Life New Orleans, \$25,000  
 Youth Build Gulf Coast, \$83,333

# A sound mind

With the ethic of running, nonprofit teaches young girls about life

By Sara Bongiorno | Photo by Tim Mueller

**H**ydie Wahlborg was searching online for a charity partner for the 2008 Chicago Marathon when she chanced across a group called Girls on the Run.

She read the description of its goal: Encouraging girls to be joyful, healthy and confident. It wasn't really about running. Running was a tool to help girls develop confidence and skills to cope with adolescent perils from gossiping to body image.

The Baton Rouge mother of three forgot about the marathon. She called the group's national headquarters. Did they have a Louisiana chapter? Not yet, she learned.

She got started establishing its first in-state chapter that day. "I never felt so instantly connected with something," Wahlborg said. "I just dove into it."

Girls on the Run of Greater Baton Rouge began in 2009 at University Lab School on the LSU campus, where Wahlborg's younger daughter was then in fourth grade. The concept caught on fast in Baton Rouge, and it continues to quickly expand across the state.

By fall of 2013, it will have volunteer-led chapters in 32 elementary schools in the region, with 500 girls participating in the program.

Most chapters meet after school, with parents mostly serving as volunteer chapter leaders.

The nonprofit also has chapters in New Orleans, Houma/Thibodaux and Alexandria. A Lafayette-based chapter will open this year. It is changing its name to Girls on the Run of South Louisiana, from Girls on the Run of Greater Baton Rouge, to reflect its growing reach.

Participating local schools include Buchanan Elementary, St. Jude and Episcopal School. Roughly half of

Kate Porter and her father, Lance Porter, ran a 5K to top off her Girls on the Run training. Teaching confidence and life skills to impressionable adolescent girls are among the goals of the fast-growing nonprofit.

Donors of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation have granted \$82,000 to Girls on the Run of Greater Baton Rouge.



the girls participate through scholarships for low-income families. Others pay fees based on a sliding scale determined by family income.

“We’ve never had to turn a girl away,” said Wahlborg, its executive director.

Most of the children participate in the third-to-eighth grade curriculum, with a smaller number taking part in a separate but similar Girls on Track program for sixth to eighth graders.

Part of what makes the program effective is that it reaches girls at a period in their lives when they are especially receptive to positive messages that can impact their emotional, social and physical well-being. They are starting to look more to their peers, but still open to the guiding influence of the adults in their lives.

“This is really the age when we can reach them with these positive lessons,” Wahlborg said.

The national organization got its start in 1996 in Charlotte, N.C., with 13 girls. As in Louisiana, it has grown by leaps and bounds each year since. More than 100,000 girls in 47 states and Canada now participate in its semester-long, after-school sessions.

The focus of the 10- to 12-week curricula is helping girls build confidence and develop the skills to help them navigate life experiences, in particular the looming teenage years.

Running plays a part in each lesson, but the focus is fun, friendship and health, not athleticism or competition. In one lesson, for instance, girls are asked to write negative terms that they might use about themselves, and then run across a field to drop it into the “negative Nellie” box, Wahlborg explained.

The girls then run back across the field to rephrase the negative term using positive words as replacements on another paper card.

“You might first say that you don’t like your haircut, but then tell yourself that your hair will grow,” recalled Kate Porter, 9, an incoming fourth-grader at the Lab School and program participant this spring. “You learn how to turn a negative into a positive.”

Kate also discovered how much she enjoyed running,

something that she did not expect.

Each lesson has a distinct focus, from how to be a good friend and the meaning of gratitude to healthy food choices.

There is a service component as well. The girls together choose a way to give back to their communities, from sending cards to U.S. soldiers serving overseas to raising money for local animal shelters. A recent project for the Lab School chapter was providing water for runners and dogs making their way around the LSU lakes.

“They learn how to speak up for themselves, but also how to connect with the community around them,” Wahlborg said.

Local programs everywhere culminate with five-kilo-

meter runs that celebrate the sessions’ positive message, including the idea of setting a goal and working toward it. Girls learn strategies for coping with challenges like muscle cramps and thirst, lessons that underscore the larger concept of tackling obstacles with persistence.

In Baton Rouge, the girls run and celebrate in and around the campus of the Pennington Center for Biomedical Research. This

spring’s run drew more than 1,500 people, including the 500 adult partners who run with each girl.

Kate’s older sister, incoming seventh-grader Jane Shelby, 11, participated in her school’s chapter in fourth and fifth grade. She never doubted she could complete the 5K, which she ran with her father, Lance Porter.

“It was kind of hard; I wasn’t surprised I could do it because we had been practicing,” Jane Shelby said.

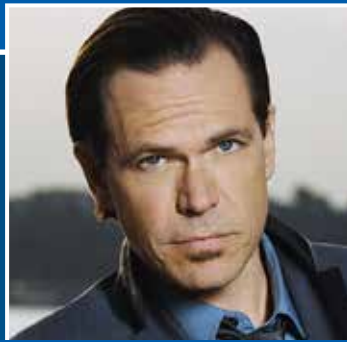
On a recent afternoon, the Porter girls shared painted bandanas that are souvenirs of the run. On the day of the event, each girl chooses a fabric bandana hung from a line that has a message painted by another girl. The girls then wear the bandana around their foreheads during the race.

Jane Shelby’s read, “Dream Big.” Kate’s choice: “Groovy Chick.”

“It was fun to watch the girls figure out their limits as they go along, and then start to extend past those limits,” said Lance Porter. “Everything about the experience is thoughtful and positive.” •

“This is really the age when we can reach them with these positive lessons.”

—Hydie Wahlborg, Girls on the Run South Louisiana executive director



Kurt Elling | Vanessa Rubin | Berta Rojas | Fred Hersch



The Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge presents

# Living Legacy

A concert event of great music benefitting  
the Derek E. Gordon Arts Fund

Celebrate Derek's life and work with his friends:  
jazz vocalists Kurt Elling and Vanessa Rubin,  
classical guitarist Berta Rojas and jazz pianist Fred Hersch.

Tuesday, September 10, 7:30pm  
Manship Theatre

TICKETS TO SHOW AND RECEPTION:  
\$75 & \$100 — 225-344-0334/MANSHIPTHEATRE.ORG  
BENEFITING THE DEREK E. GORDON ARTS FUND

The Derek E. Gordon Arts Fund was established by the  
Arts Council to support artistic endeavors and creative  
opportunities in the Baton Rouge community.

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arts  
COUNCIL  
OF GREATER BATON ROUGE

BATON ROUGE

# CITYSTATS

Indicators for tracking our quality of life

2013

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation uses statistics and a survey to produce a snapshot of the quality of life in East Baton Rouge. Called CityStats, the report tells the community where EBR is, how far it's come and where it needs to go.

The Foundation uses CityStats to guide its civic leadership projects and to assist fund donors in making grants.

The project is underwritten by the Newton B. Thomas Support Foundation, a supporting nonprofit of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Research for the project is conducted under contract with the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and the LSU Public Policy Research Lab, which runs the survey.

The entire report can be downloaded and printed from BRAF.org under the News section.

In the fifth year of CityStats, we take a deeper look here at some of the issues that emerged from the survey and statistics.



## [culture & recreation]

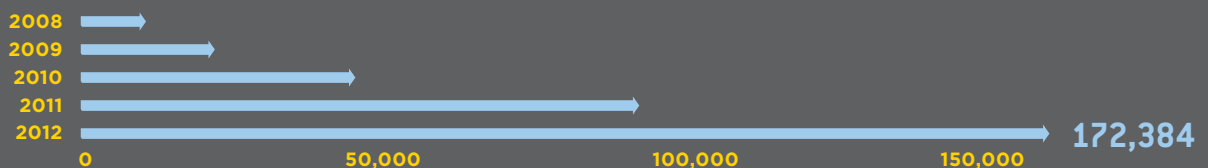
### LIBRARY USE

#### Total circulation

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
2,231,974	2,284,918	2,392,827	2,340,208	2,338,802

Total circulation is printed books, CDs and digital downloads of books, video and audio.

#### Digital circulation





## PRINT VS. DIGITAL: MAKE NEW FRIENDS BUT KEEP THE OLD

“A library’s function is to give the public in the quickest and cheapest way, information, inspiration, & recreation. If a better way than the book can be found, we should use it.”—Melvil Dewey (1851-1931)

Today’s libraries provide access, but embracing the digital age comes at a cost. Since so many Louisiana residents—38%, as of spring 2013—do not have access to computers or the Internet, let alone high-speed Internet, the Library each year dedicates a significantly higher portion of its operating budget to creating and maintaining the infrastructure necessary to provide updated computer hardware and software, with high speed Internet connections for these computers, as well as for the growing number of Wi-Fi users.

This has also impacted services—the demand for free computer classes, demonstrations of popular e-readers and other devices has soared over the past three years, and library staff continue to develop new finding aids and *Infoguides* to guide patrons through the sometimes bewildering process of setting up their devices.

And as the demand for access has increased, so has the demand for digital resources, such as databases, downloadable products and streaming media.

Since first circulating downloadable e-books and audiobooks in 2005, the Library has devoted more funds towards the purchase and licensing of content for these new formats, and added music and magazines to the digital library.

Major digital collections include *OverDrive* (e-books, audiobooks and other media), *3M Cloud* (e-books), *Freegal* (music) and *Zinio* (magazines).

Library patrons have responded in kind, embracing these new formats in ever-increasing numbers. Digital circulation has gone up exponentially since 2007, and the digital collection now numbers at more than 41,000 e-books, plus thousands of other items. Usage should continue to climb as prices come down for e-readers, and the library staff continues to test new resources for possible inclusion.

But the demand remains just as high for traditional print books and, in fact, more are being published than ever before. The demand is also growing for large-print materials for our aging population.

Over the past two years, the library system has made significant adjustments to the collections budget. This

However, these new digital formats are here—until they are replaced by the next wave. Therefore, the Library will continue to meet the demand for content in whatever format is suitable for a public library access model.

resulted in a much higher volume of purchases across multiple platforms and also strengthened the subscription plans for popular fiction.

Library staff examines studies on usage from the Pew Research Center, the Association of American Publishers and the Book Industry Study Group, and monitors reserve lists closely to see what is trending, and adds electronic versions as well as print versions as needed to meet the demand. The EBR library has also invested in *Collection HQ*, an evidence-based collection analysis tool, which will not only help with inventory control but will also help with meeting user needs by branch, determining what needs to go where and when.

The Library benefits greatly by being able to offer new formats for its patrons. In fact, digital products can bring people back to the Library. Therefore, extra staff time has been devoted to creating digital records of our online resources so that patrons may discover them more easily.

On the other hand, many products are still not available to Libraries via a digital platform—the e-publishing business has not developed an industry standard for how to properly pay them for access to their works, and the rules vary wildly from publishing house to publishing house, with libraries being charged many times what the individual purchase price would cost an end user, or with strict limits on how many uses the book may have.

However, these new digital formats are here—until they are replaced by the next wave. Therefore, the Library will continue to meet the demand for content in whatever format is suitable for a public library access model.

—Mary Stein, assistant library director

## [health]

## REDUCING INFANT MORTALITY

A high rate of infant mortality continues to plague the parish.

Infants born in East Baton Rouge are far more likely to die before their first birthday than babies across the nation, according to 2010 figures.

Experts view infant mortality rates as a meaningful gauge of a community's overall health and well-being. The parish has long shared its poor ranking with other Louisiana communities, a reflection of the state's high rate of poverty.

But this grim marker of community well-being in East Baton Rouge may be changing. Preliminary data collected by state officials show the infant mortality rate for East Baton Rouge dropping from 11.3 to 8 deaths per 1,000 births between 2010 and 2011.

That translates into a 29% reduction in the rate of infant deaths in a single year, if final numbers hold true.

"We still have a lot of work to do, but we do think there will be a sizeable decline," said Dr. Takeisha Davis, assistant state health officer with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals.

The year-to-year drop suggests a statewide effort to understand and prevent premature births in Louisiana is taking hold. That effort gained new urgency after the March of Dimes in 2010 gave the state an "F" for its high rate of premature deaths. DHH announced its unprecedented Birth Outcomes Initiative after the failing grade from the March of Dimes.

A cornerstone of the effort is ending elective inductions of delivery before 39 weeks of gestation, when a baby's lungs and other vital organs are still developing. Mounting evidence is changing public and medical understanding

of how much critical development takes place in the final weeks and days of pregnancy. That has health care providers rethinking inductions for the sake of convenience.

"Just because we're ready for the baby doesn't mean the baby is ready," Davis said.

Over the past year or so, all 58 birthing hospitals in Louisiana have voluntarily agreed to end policies that allow elective inductions before the 39-week mark, which reflects a March of Dimes initiative to improve birth outcomes.

Louisiana, in 2012, became the first state to accept its challenge of reducing the rate of premature births by 8% over a two-year period.

The Louisiana initiative also recognizes the strong connection between a mother's overall health and that of her baby, and improving the health of Louisiana women of childbearing years is another core aspect of the program. It seeks to do that by improving access to health care before, during and after pregnancy, including through its Bayou Health Medicaid Initiative, Davis said.

Other elements of the BOI include public education on the role of folic acid in reducing birth defects and tobacco-cessation programs.

Better understanding why so many babies in Louisiana are born too soon is another part of the effort. The state recently changed the way it collects data on infant deaths and other vital records. Modifications in early 2013 to the Louisiana Electronic Event Registration System, or LEERS, permit officials to more quickly recognize and react to patterns involving infant deaths, Dr. Davis said.

"It means we can see a pattern and react to it more quickly," she said.

—Sara Bongiorno

#### INFANT MORTALITY RATE Deaths within 12 months per 1,000 live births

The U.S. rate was 6.14 in 2010, the lowest in history. Better prenatal care and fewer premature births are reasons for the decline. The rate in EBR, though, hasn't dropped and is nearly double the national average.

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
11.25	10.7	9.7	11.9	11.3



## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE CITYSTATS SURVEY OF THE REPORT :

The survey of East Baton Rouge Parish residents was conducted by the LSU Public Policy Research Lab in February and March of 2013. Working for the Foundation, the lab gathered 513 responses from EBR residents –360 via land lines and 153 by cell phones. The margin of error is plus or minus 4.3%.

>> 60% support consolidating East Baton Rouge Police department and the sheriff's office. A majority across all demographics –race, age, gender, income, education–support consolidation. Only 27% were against consolidation; 13% were undecided.

>> 57% said they would pay a toll to use a road to avoid traffic on Essen Lane and College Drive. In FutureBR, the parish's comprehensive strategy for growth, planners recommend building a road to connect Kenilworth Parkway to Corporate Boulevard along the back edge of the Burden Center.

>> 58% of respondents believe the planet is in a period of global warming. What's more, 56% says human activity is either "primarily" or "partly" responsible for global warming. 63% want the government to do more to regulate emissions that are responsible for global warming.

>> 49% oppose legalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use, 45% were for it. A strong majority under the age of 34 support legalization, while nearly seven of 10 over 65 are against it. Two states—Colorado and Washington –last year approved the private cultivation, sale and possession of marijuana.

>> For the first time in the three years the question has been asked, more people in the parish were for legalizing same-sex marriage than opposed to it. 47% were for legalizing, while 45% were against it. In the previous survey, 44% were in favor; 49% against.

>> Asked to identify themselves on the political spectrum, 31%—the largest group—said they were "moderates." Meanwhile, 28% said they were "conservative" and 15% said they were "very conservative." Twenty-one percent said they were "liberal" or "very liberal."

>> 31% said they couldn't afford food sometime in the previous year and 32% said they couldn't afford health care.

>> 42% said their neighborhoods are getting better, a rise from 35% the year before. The percentage saying things are worse in their neighborhoods dropped to 30% in the latest survey from 35% in 2012.

>> People remain impatient with the rate of progress. 56% said progress is too slow, an improvement from 60% the year before.

>> On a five-point scale, where "five" is excellent and "one" is poor, the fire department received the highest mark (4.6), followed by the library (4.4), BREC (3.8), the police department and sheriff's office (3.6), Department of Public Works (3.3) and EBR public schools (2.6). The rankings for the agencies are about the same as the year before.

>> 57% were concerned that they or a family member would be a victim of crime in the coming year, an improvement over 62% the year before.

## Adjudicated properties

Adjudicated properties declined as the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority began to put some back in commerce. Warning, though, it's believed that thousands of properties are not counted as adjudicated. Many people work in downtown, but live far away, presenting an opportunity to gain population in areas near the central business district through redevelopment of properties. Source: EBR government

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
4,389	6,746	7,408	7,965	6,483

## [economy]

### A PARTIAL SOLUTION FOR ABANDONED PROPERTIES

They are sights that make eyes sore, causing despair to the people who live near them.

Adjudicated properties—6,483 in 2012—are in a legal and economic limbo. Because they are worth so little and located where demand is feeble, few want to redevelop them. On top of that, laws required that the properties' owners be permitted three years to redeem them, even if they are not interested in doing so or have allowed the real estate to fall into disrepair.

Meantime, the left-behind properties put the brakes on neighborhood revitalization.

The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority has cleared title and returned adjudicated properties to nonprofits that are building affordable housing. Still, there are thousands of neglected properties on the books and thousands more that are known to be abandoned but not accounted as such by government.

But that may be changing. A couple of alterations to state law this year may speed up the reclamation process and let local government fight blight instead of reacting to it. One change lets the parish government claim clear titles after notification in 18 months instead of three years.

Under the second change, the EBR government can impose liens for mowing grass and other care of neglected properties, and foreclose on the properties if owners don't pay the liens. Also, the law allows the local government to create a code enforcement system for imposing penalties on blighted properties, while protecting property owners, who

can contest actions through an appeals process.

The system mirrors effective methods for fighting blight in other cities, including New Orleans, which received the authority after Katrina.

The next step is for local government to create and staff a blight enforcement mechanism.

—MV

### ECONOMY STEADY, BUT INCOMES INEQUITABLE

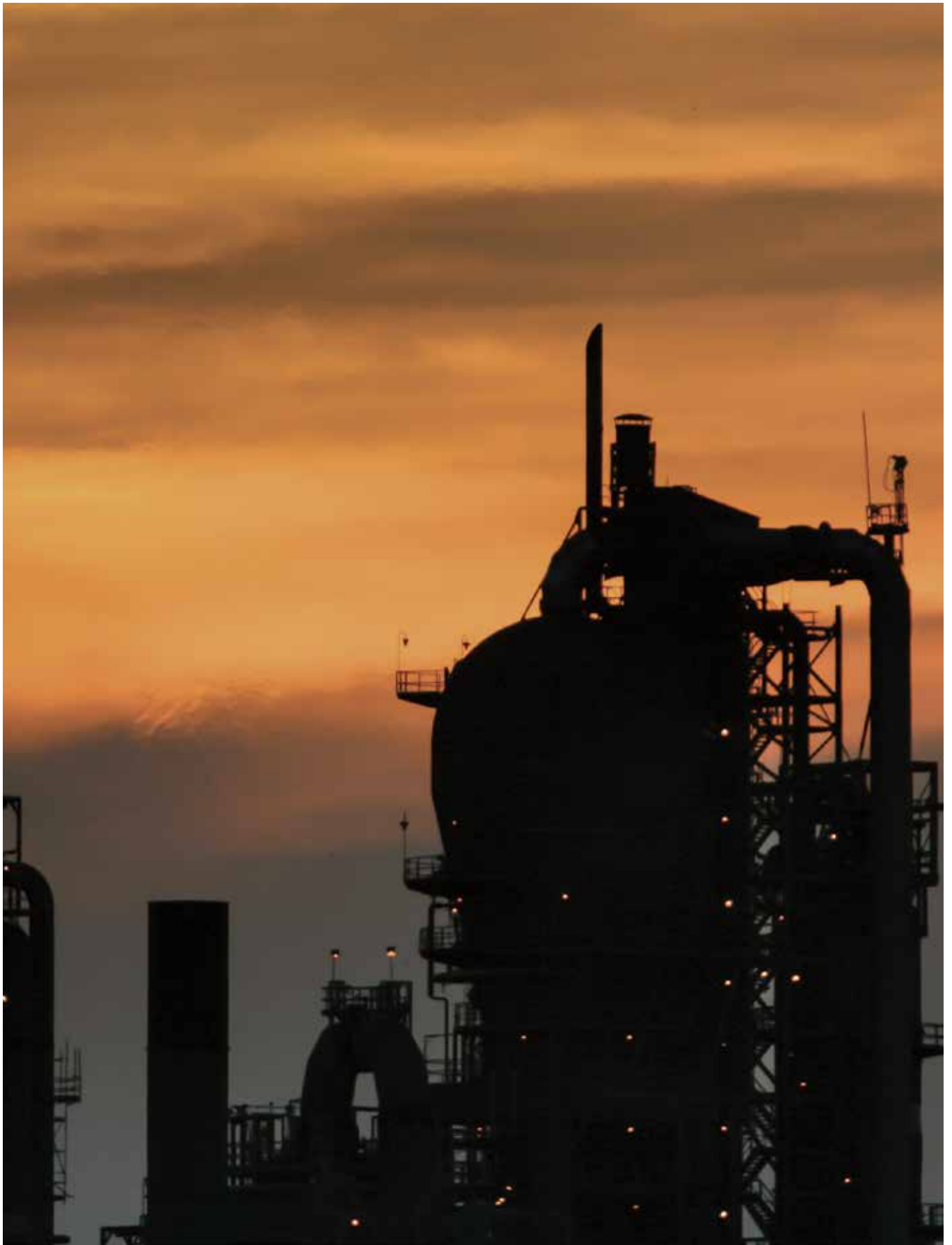
The economy of East Baton Rouge is more durable than most areas—a happy consequence from diversification and being the nexus of a region. Employment is spurred by petrochemicals, health care, local and state government, retail and two universities.

East Baton Rouge's unemployment rate has remained lower than the national average throughout the recession.

Still, unemployment was above 7% in 2010 and 2011 and the number of people employed in the parish declined from 206,713 in 2008 to an estimated 201,306 in 2012.

Baton Rouge, though, improved a bit in net migration—an indicator of population gain. The U.S. Census Bureau counted net migration at 1,414 in 2011, a reversal from the year before and the biggest improvement since 2005 and 2006, when Katrina caused a surge of more than 12,000 in this number.

Cheap natural gas produced from new drilling technologies is the main driver of petrochemical expansion across the corridor. CF Industries is investing \$2.1 billion to expand a plant in Donaldsonville. Other regional



expansions of note within the last year are Exxon Mobil (\$215 million), BASF (\$108 million) and Nachurs Alpine Solutions (\$215 million). Petrochemical businesses generate few direct jobs, but their capital investments produce work for industrial contractors, such as The Newtron Group and Turner Industries, among the largest companies in the region.

Baton Rouge, meanwhile, landed a big win in 2012. Long wanting to diversify the economy, the state coaxed IBM to locate a software programming center on the riverfront. The firm began staffing a temporary center on Essen Lane.

IBM will have 800 workers at its Baton Rouge operation, many of them high-paid software writers. In drawing IBM to Baton Rouge, the state is spending \$30 million for a high-

rise office at the corner of Main and Lafayette streets that will be constructed by Commercial Properties Realty Trust and owned by the Wibur Marvin Foundation, a supporting organization of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

The building—and a \$25 million companion residential tower—will continue the rebound of downtown and could pull more development to the riverfront.

One of the problems for the parish is income disparity. Median family income for African Americans was \$35,476 in 2011, down 10% from the prior year. At \$81,251, median family income for whites was more than double that for African Americans. The problem persists across generations.

—MV

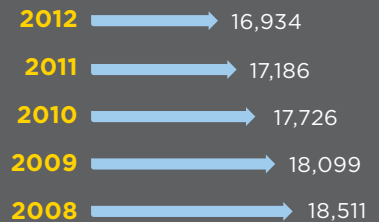
### Median family income

One of the problems for the parish is income disparity. Median family income for African Americans was \$35,476 in 2011, down 10% from the prior year. At \$81,251, median family income for whites was more than double that of African Americans.





#### PRIVATE SCHOOL ENROLLMENT



## [education]

### PRIVATE SCHOOL ENROLLMENT DECLINES

A slow housing market and sluggish U.S. economy were key factors in an 8.5% drop in private-school enrollment in the parish between 2008 and 2012, local observers tell us.

The number of children in non-public K-12 schools dropped from 18,511 to 16,934 over the five-year span.

The decline is in step with a national drop-off in private-school enrollment that accelerated after the 2008 recession.

“I don’t think there are a lot of people in our country who weren’t affected in some way by the housing market decline or the stock market decline,” said Hugh McIntosh, head of school at Episcopal School of Baton Rouge.

Admissions at Episcopal, for instance, fell from 980 just prior to the downturn to 930 by 2011, according to McIntosh. The number has since edged up to 940.

Fewer non-public options could be an additional factor in the parish decrease in private-school enrollment. In 2007-08, there were 59 private and faith-based schools in the parish, according to the state Department of Education. By 2012-13, the number had fallen to 52, a drop of 12%.

Small faith-based schools with less than 100 students were most likely to close over the 5-year span, the state figures show.

The ripple effect of the larger economy is also a factor in flat enrollment or slower growth in parish public schools in

Zachary and Central. Enrollment in both of those districts changed little in 2012 after a streak of year-to-year jumps.

Notably, population growth in both cities came to a standstill after the recession, growing by 0.3% between 2010 and 2011, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates. That compares to overall population growth in Louisiana of 0.9% for the same year, according to the most recent Census estimates.

Scott Devillier, superintendent of the Zachary Community School District, said the number of new housing subdivisions in the area slowed sharply after booming from 2003 to 2008. The reprieve had an upside, he noted: It gave the district a chance to catch up after years of rapid expansion.

“We had a lot of kids in ‘T’ (temporary) buildings, but now there are very few,” Devillier said. “We had been growing so fast for several years, but that has leveled off.”

Central, likewise, is forecasting an uptick after three years of flat enrollment. District enrollment reached about 4,300 students in the most recent academic year, but registration for 2013-14 indicates another 500 students are headed to its schools.

—SB

**NEW HIV CASES**

In recent years, Baton Rouge has been either No. 1 or No. 2 in new HIV cases. AIDS rates in the parish have also topped cities of comparable size. Poverty, education and stigma are among reasons for the high rate. The greatest number of cases is among black men, who mostly contract the disease in prison and spread it in the population upon release.

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
258	250	243	248	230

**[health]****THE REASON FOR HIGH HIV/AIDS**

Baton Rouge is infamous. The city's rate of people with AIDS and the number of new HIV cases lead all other cities of similar size. Once the rate is high, it is likely to remain high for many reasons.

The most obvious reason comes from good news—medicine is keeping people with AIDS alive much longer. But there are less obvious institutional and cultural causes of a high AIDS and HIV infection rate.

We asked Peter Gamache of the Louisiana Public Health Institute to explain the situation around the disease in Baton Rouge. He's been hired under a grant from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation to collaborate on lowering HIV and AIDS in Baton Rouge.

**Why are HIV/AIDS rates high here?**

You've been top five in many different sexually transmitted diseases for many years. HIV is another indicator of what was already happening. When it hit the news that Baton Rouge was No. 1, that's when it became more of a lightning bolt issue. Most of the reasons for HIV transmission have been taken care of, so it's mostly transmitted now through unprotected sexual contact.

**What are the drivers of the disease in Baton Rouge?**

You have stigma here, incarceration, low access to care, poverty issues, lack of education, policy issues. So someone living here could have the same behavioral risks as some-

one in another city, but the risks of contracting the disease are higher because people are surrounded by all these challenges.

**Let's go through some reasons. Stigma?**

We are in the South. There is an avoidance of talking about unpleasant topics—sex and drugs. So sex is the major mode of transmission.

**So the lack of openness here causes more HIV cases?**

Oh, very much so.

**The biggest group of infected people is black men. Why?**

It's men having sex with men, which is a useful way of looking at it. If you were to say "gay," for example, people are not going to self-identify. They may be having sex that way, but they won't say they are gay. It's spreading in prison and people are coming out of incarceration and spreading it in the general population.

**And that's why our high incarceration rate is a driver?**

That's exactly how it happens.

**In other places, do they treat the incarcerated differently?**

Since 2006, the Centers for Disease Control have recommended opt-out testing, meaning that people are automatically tested in a setting, whether it's a clinic or a prison.



But in Louisiana, the prison system has not been following the guidelines. Each parish prison has its own method. The state Office of Public Health is trying to make it universal.

There is a resistance to testing at prison intake because the systems would be on the hook for medications. If you ignore the infection and don't want to find it, you don't have to pay for it. Even though, from a public health standpoint, that's the worst thing ever, because it will be way more costly to someone down the line. That's why we are No. 1 in AIDS; it's a late-term diagnosis.

**So people are going untested for HIV in prison but they don't yet have the disease. And when they are released, they spread the virus?**

Exactly.

**What are some of the other reasons Baton Rouge has a higher rate?**

You also have the poverty issue and access to care. So let's say someone is poor and from a rural area of Louisiana, you have a hundred different barriers for getting to the local clinic. You have to be educated, which is a barrier. Then it comes down to other barriers—transportation and clinic hours, and it's competing with other priorities, such as working. Managing your health care can be a full-time job.

**Will the Affordable Care Act reduce the HIV rate?**

I think it will. It will offer access to health care for more people. But the problem will be educating people to a whole new way of getting health care. Educating them on not only enrolling into a health insurance package, but also the pharmacy benefits management issues.

**Would sex education in schools help to reduce the rate?**

That would be huge. We know that youth are having sex from the teen pregnancy rate. We can see from health department statistics that they are being treated for STDs. You can see gonorrhea, syphilis, HIV. The reality is in front of us. It's happening; let's deal with it.

—MV

**It's spreading  
in prison and  
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incarceration  
and spreading  
it in the general  
population.**

—Peter Gamache,  
Louisiana Public Health Institute

## [government]

## STATES LEGALIZE MARIJUANA

Incarceration rates began to rise soon after President Richard Nixon initiated the War on Drugs nearly half a century ago. Stronger drug sentencing in 1984 nearly tripled incarceration. The U.S. now leads the world in incarceration; Louisiana is No. 1 among the states.

Yet, federal government surveys show illegal drug use in the U.S. has remained at about the same level over 25 years.

“The global war on drugs has failed, with devastating consequences for individuals and societies around the world,” wrote the Global Commission on Drug Policy in a summer 2011 report. “Fifty years after the initiation of the U.N. Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, and years after President Nixon launched the US government’s war on drugs, fundamental reforms in national and global drug control policies are urgently needed.”

An experiment in changing drug policy is under way in Colorado and Washington. Both states last year legalized production, sale and possession of marijuana. They are creating rules to oversee growers and sellers before opening the markets; residents can possess up to 1 ounce of marijuana for recreation use.

Soon after voters approved legalization in Washington last

November, some jurisdictions dropped charges and stopped pursuing marijuana violations. Meanwhile, the state expects to generate more than \$500 million in taxes over three years after production and sale begins.

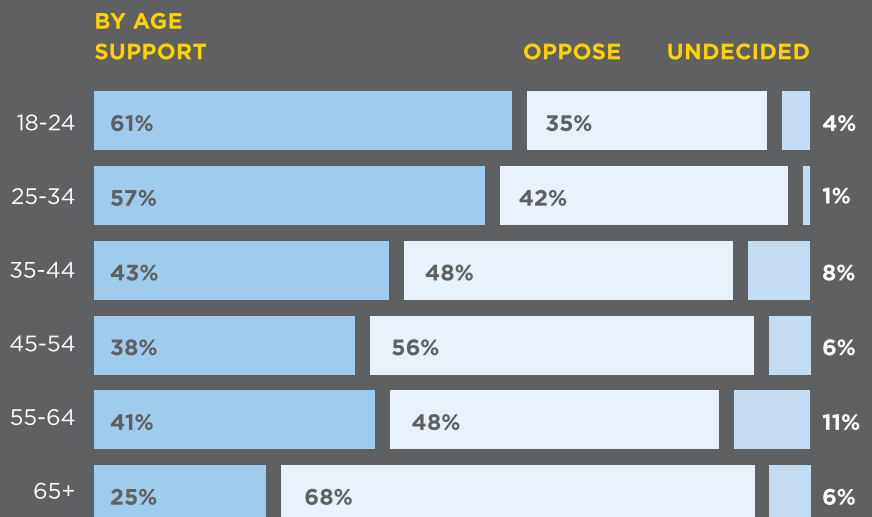
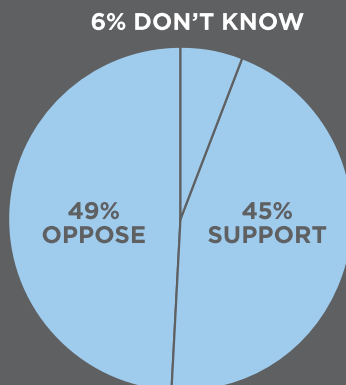
Across the country, marijuana laws have been shifting toward leniency. In the West, for instance, every state but one allows marijuana dispensation for treating disease. Oregon, the sole holdout, is considering legalizing consumption of marijuana for medicinal purposes. In the South, only Mississippi has decriminalized possession.

The nation’s mood toward legalizing marijuana is rapidly changing. In a Pew Charitable Trust poll released in spring, 52% of Americans supported legalization—7% more than two years ago and 20 points higher than 2002. The survey showed 65% of people born since 1980 back legalization, and about half of baby boomers and the Gen X generation were in favor.

In our poll of East Baton Rouge Parish, it’s close—48% are against legal possession of small amounts for personal use, while 45% are in favor. As across America, legalization is more popular among the young. A majority below 34 years of age support legalization, while older people do not. • —MV

## LEGALIZING MARIJUANA

Do you support or oppose legalizing small amounts of marijuana for personal use?





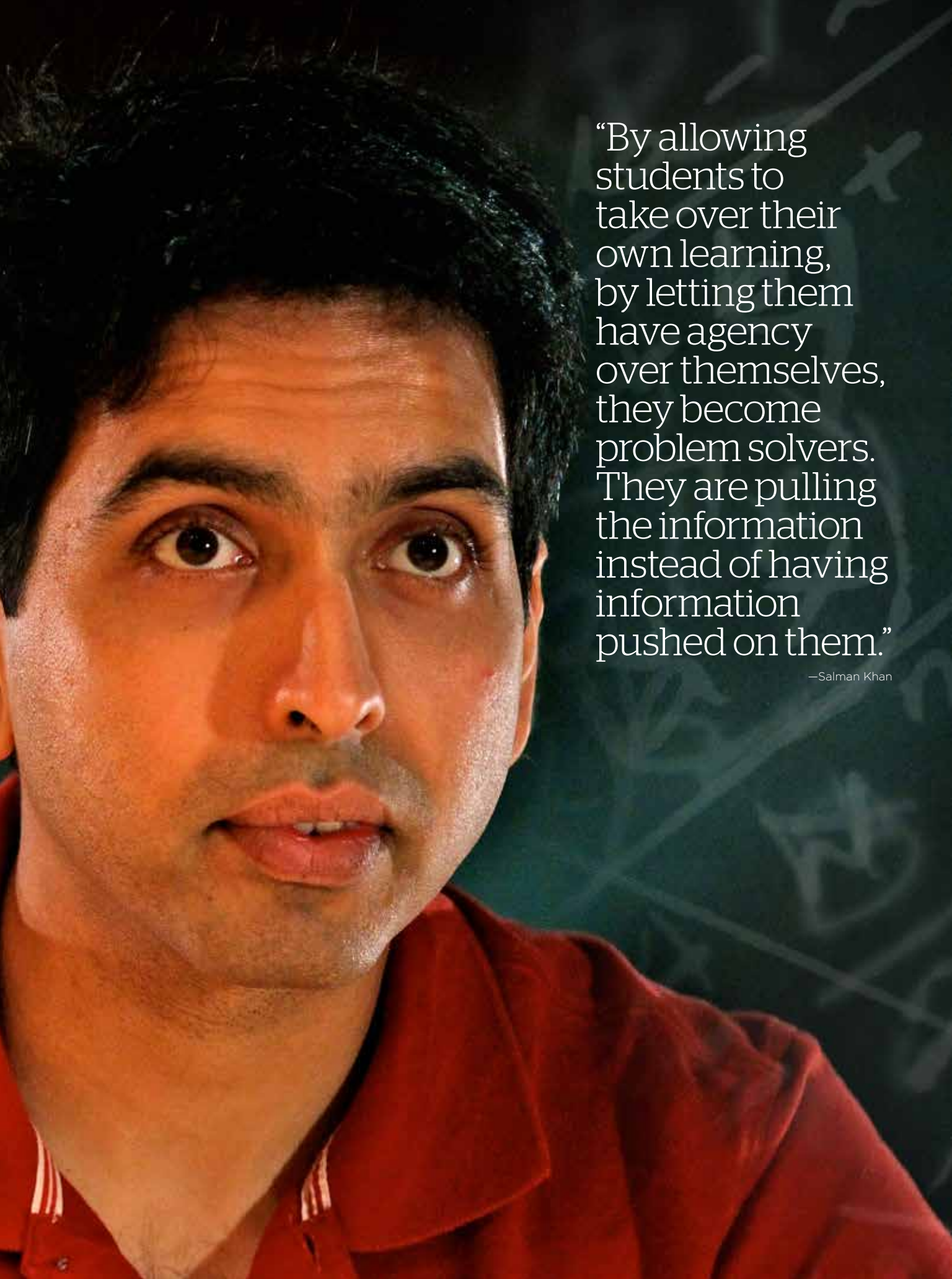
# The math of Khan

**Tutoring a cousin from afar, Louisiana native stumbles upon a potential education revolution**

By Mukul Verma

Salman Khan is what you could call an “accidental educator.” All he had set out to do was to remotely tutor his New Orleans cousins by creating instructional videos and posting them on YouTube. But good teaching never goes unnoticed for long. Struggling students everywhere started watching them, and Khan soon had an online following of thousands.

Khan knew the value of a good education. With four degrees from MIT and an MBA from Harvard, he had earned success as a hedge fund analyst. But in 2009, he quit his job and invested the family savings to create Khan Academy, a nonprofit with the noble mission of offering a world-class education for anyone, anywhere. For free.

A close-up portrait of Salman Khan, looking slightly to the right with a thoughtful expression. He is wearing a red polo shirt. The background is dark with faint, light-colored geometric patterns.

“By allowing students to take over their own learning, by letting them have agency over themselves, they become problem solvers. They are pulling the information instead of having information pushed on them.”

—Salman Khan

# Yes, he Khan

Salman Khan answered questions after his address at UNO in late May. Here are some excerpts:

**On the role of videos and teachers:**

“The videos are probably the least important part of it. What they help to do is take the lecture off the table so the classroom can focus on what the teacher is saying.”

**On an appropriate audience for Khan Academy video lecture:**

“It’s an open question. We are discovering every day who it might work for and who it might not work for. The other day we heard it’s in use in prison systems. On some level, they are a captive audience for us... We’ll see where the boundaries are.”

**On his videos:**

“I definitely prepare a lot. I definitely try to read as much as I can, understand the subject. I call up friends who might be experts in the field. Once it’s distilled in my own mind—and I feel it’s gotten simpler, and when I’m excited—only then will I record it. Before recording, I force myself to laugh and force myself to smile because I think it does carry over to the video itself.”

**On standardized testing:**

“The main issue is that most standardized tests are actually quite superficial. And because they are superficial, and if you are teaching to that somewhat superficial test, and if that is the only measure by which you are measuring someone, then it does kind of create an artificial environment. And you start to, frankly, miss out on a lot of things with students. Every time that people say schools are broken and the kids in Estonia can crack polynomials better than us—which is apparently true—they say we need more rigidity, we need more testing, we need to change the curriculum, we need to micromanage what the teachers do even more closely. That might—and I stress might—help de-risk some of the very bottom performing teachers. But it completely handcuffs really creative teachers. What we at Khan Academy are saying is ‘yes, we do want to measure what you understand of this concept, but you are going to do it at your own pace. It’s really about freeing up the teacher so more can happen in the classroom.’”

Eventually, Khan began to run short of money. What he didn't know, however, was that among his thousands of online fans and followers was Bill Gates. He stepped in to help. Two weeks later, Google called. Millions poured into the project, and three years later Khan Academy is educating more than 50 million people around the world, all with a staff of only 40.

Khan, a native of New Orleans, spoke in late spring to a group of eager listeners at the University of New Orleans, a day before delivering a commencement speech at Ben Franklin High School, where one of his cousins was graduating.

What Khan Academy has achieved is nothing short of a role reversal for the traditional classroom. Students learn on their own in the evenings, watching the videos at home. When they get to school, teachers help them to understand and apply what they have learned—traditionally the role of homework. Khan Academy is now being used at some level in 30,000 classrooms.

“By allowing students to take over their own learning, by letting them have agency over themselves, they become problem solvers,” Khan says. “They are pulling the information instead of having information pushed on them.”

Khan Academy lets students learn at a pace that best suits them as individuals. With no artificially imposed deadlines, they can watch the videos as many times as they need to comprehend a concept.

That's different from traditional teaching, where all children in a classroom are dealt with collectively rather than individually. They are required to learn the material within a given time frame, and when the time allotted for that unit has passed, the students are moved on to the next topic, and sometimes even the next grade, as a group—whether each one has actually mastered the material or not. Sooner or later, the gaps in knowledge grow wide, causing students to stumble and give up on a subject, particularly math.

“Instead of artificially holding fixed how long you have to learn something and the variable is how well you learned it, do it the other way around,” says Khan. “What should be variable is when you learn something and how long you have to learn it. What should be fixed is how well you learning something.”

Khan Academy offers teachers electronic tools for tracking how well each student is doing on a topic. A student who is stuck can get help from a teacher or a peer.

The data collected by the system on student progress has

led to a truly important conclusion: students may struggle with a given topic, but if they are allowed the time they need, they will eventually come to understand it and catch up to their peers. Some even race to the top of the class.

“We are seeing this in public schools, private schools, charter schools, rich neighborhoods and poor neighborhoods,” Khan said.

Meanwhile, millions of people use Khan Academy for independent learning, often paralleling what is being taught in their schools. Can't quite comprehend the new equation the teacher introduced in the classroom? Afraid everyone will move on before you're able to grasp it? Stream the video at home as many times as you need to understand whatever is holding you back.

The potential here has always been apparent. In describing it, Khan used to say, “Who knows? Maybe one day this could be used in Mongolia.”

A year ago, Khan received an email from a girl in Mongolia named Zaya. She had connected to Khan Academy after engineers traveling through her country linked her orphanage to the Internet.

“That was pretty powerful for me and the rest of our team,” said Khan. “This 17-year-old orphan girl in Mongolia is our top content creator in the world. She has created over 100 videos; she is becoming a teacher for her people.” Khan Academy has begun to translate its content in all the world's major languages, starting with Spanish.

The innovator points out that education—which has always been scarce and expensive for most of the world's population—can now be plentiful and free, the only cost being the Internet connection.

“We can give the Zayas of the world the exact same resources as Bill Gates' kids.” •

# Invisible devices

## LSU researcher works with light, nanostructures to improve technology

By Sara Bongiorni



**G**eorgios Veronis, LSU physicist, writes algorithms aimed at developing new ways to transmit light waves using ever smaller, ever more efficient optical devices.

The three-dimensional equations he creates in his campus office are so complex that they cannot be sketched out on paper and solved by hand. Veronis submits

them to a computer that can take into account multidimensional factors like space and time.

At least that is an ordinary mortal's take on what the soft-spoken native of Greece does. It is hard to describe Veronis' work, in part because the words that describe it fall outside of the ordinary lexicon.

Yet his research holds promise for emerging communications technology and renewable energy resources, and it is creating new opportunities for the study of science and computing for high school and college students across the state and region.

Veronis' particular area of expertise is plasmonics, or the study of technology based on metallic nanostructures. Nanostructures are objects whose size falls between the microscopic and molecular level. Nanophotonics refers to

Georgios Veronis won a \$400,000 federal science grant to pursue work that could improve communications technology.

the study of optics, or light behavior, at the very small scale.

His research includes looking for ways to overcome the diffraction limit of glass fibers, which can be made only so small. Over time, Veronis' work could support the development of metal-based light waveguides tiny enough to be placed inside a microchip—something that is not possible with glass fibers.

Additional research could support development of new technology to improve the absorption of photons from the sun as an alternative energy source.

The driving idea is to develop tiny, high-density optical devices that can transmit large amounts of data with optimal efficiency—systems that are better and smaller than present-day fiber optics.

“With technology, you always want to make things smaller, and metal can be made much smaller than glass fibers,” said Veronis, who is Charles Siess Jr. Distinguished





Assistant Professor of the LSU Division of Electrical & Computer Engineering and Center for Computation & Technology, or CCT.

“With glass fibers, you can’t just make the structure as small as you want it to be,” said Veronis, who studied electrical and computer engineering at the National Technical University of Athens before completing a master’s of science and doctorate in electrical engineering at Stanford University and arriving at LSU in 2008. “Metals can be used to make much smaller devices to guide light.”

An additional area of Veronis’ work is using computer algorithms to identify potential errors in the fabrication of new plasmonic technology.

It’s important work with the potential to revolutionize modern technology. It recently won Veronis a \$400,000, five-year Early Career Development grant from the National Science Foundation in recognition of outstanding work as both a teacher and scholar.

## Metals can be used to make much smaller devices to guide light.

—Georgios Veronis, LSU physicist

He will use the grant to support further research into physics-based modeling techniques related to nanoplasmic devices.

The NSF grant includes an educational component to develop new coursework in nanophotonics at LSU as well as outreach and recruitment of underrepresented students in science and engineering. In connection with that goal, he will form new collaborations with Baton Rouge-area high schools to help spark interest in science among students.

“We want more students to consider study and work in science and technology,” Veronis said. “This will give us a new opportunity to do that.” •





# Report card

## New Schools accounts for its work in first year

By Sara Bongiorno | Photo by Tim Mueller

The new nonprofit charged with drawing dozens of exceptional charter schools to North Baton Rouge has not yet been a part of opening a single school. That won't happen for another year.

But education experts across the nation are already observing New Schools for Baton Rouge. That's because what happens in North Baton Rouge over the next several years will help inform the debate over whether charter schools can rescue large numbers of poor children from failing traditional schools.

Nobody understands the stakes better than Chris Meyer, New Schools' 31-year-old CEO.

At a meeting in San Francisco this spring, Meyer listened as the head of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's educational initiatives singled out Baton Rouge as one of five U.S. cities that will be proving grounds for the charter model itself. New Orleans was also on the list of cities where proponents will try to prove that the charter model can work on a large scale.

"We're right in the mix of places that will try to show that," said Meyer, who worked as deputy superintendent of the Recovery School District in New Orleans before taking the job in Baton Rouge a year ago.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and some of its donors created New Schools in spring 2012.

New Schools is raising money to support as many as 30 charter schools that may replace failing public schools in the year-old Baton Rouge Achievement Zone created by the state. The nonprofit has been recruiting the best charter operators and is collaborating with LSU to examine them to

"We very much want decision makers to know the results of that analysis ... and that we really are demanding top-tier operators to apply to the New Schools fund."

—Chris Meyer, New Schools for Baton Rouge

recommend ones that can get the job done.

New Schools will aim to draw at least five charter operators to take over schools in the Achievement Zone in fall of 2014, with its first high school to open by fall of 2015.

A year into its existence, New Schools is midway to its fundraising goal of \$30 million over five years to augment public funding the schools will receive. It has commitments for about \$15 million, with the possibility of additional money from national supporters, Meyer said.

There have been other developments for New Schools, with more big decisions to play out this summer and fall.

For starters, the number of children in the Achievement Zone is significantly larger than officials believed at the outset. Last year, education officials estimated that up to 10,000 local children attended public schools in the Achievement Zone, which is made up of D or F schools by state standards. The estimate has since swelled to about 12,000, according to Meyer. "It's a more accurate number."

Recent efforts to create a breakaway public school district in South Baton Rouge might have boosted the number of students in the zone by another 2,000 to 3,000 children. But the push for another new district ended when supporters couldn't recruit enough votes in the Louisiana House to pass a constitutional amendment that would have, with voter approval, enabled the new system.

Meyer is not discouraged by the larger numbers of students in the Achievement Zone. "We want the organizations that we recruit to run the schools to be able to scale up over time to serve more kids," he said. "We think our model will be a success, so reaching more children means we can provide more of a solution."

Meyer also noted that another 10,000 children in East Baton Rouge Parish who attend schools outside the boundaries of the zone are also enrolled in public schools with a D or F rating. Without improvement, the state RSD could opt to take control of those schools, too.

"We think of the limits of the zone as a little fuzzy ... because we think all schools ought to be excellent," Meyer said. "We hope we don't ever get to that because we want the East Baton Rouge public school district to start doing the right things at those schools, but ultimately the RSD could take them over."

Finding top-notch charter operators has been a focus during New Schools' first year. It has examined the academic track records of more than 150 charter operators, and it has invited seven schools to apply for the authority to manage

schools in the North Baton Rouge zone.

The list of potential school operators will likely grow in the coming months as New Schools continues its recruitment efforts, Meyer said.

The seven organizations recruited so far include Knowledge is Power Program, or KIPP, and Collegiate Academies, which both run charter schools in New Orleans. The others are new to the state, with most of them based in California or the Northeast.

New Schools won't rely solely on its own vetting process to identify outstanding charter operators. In spring, it hired a team of LSU education researchers to complete an independent analysis of the seven charter organizations that will seek Board of Elementary and Secondary Education authorization to operate schools in the zone.

The analysis will be completed before BESE makes decisions on charter school authorizations in August.

Meyer is eager to make public the findings of the LSU team because he believes they will validate his organization's own processes for identifying the best school operators. "We very much want decision makers to know the results of that analysis ... and that we really are demanding top-tier operators to apply to the New Schools fund," he said.

BESE's approval isn't directly tied to funding from New Schools, but it is a necessary preliminary step. Potential operators will still need to submit precise plans to New Schools.

Charter operators who want to open a school in the zone will also make decisions on school leaders this fall. Staffing the schools and configuring operating plans will take much of the second year.

Each operator most likely will open just one school at first, but that could change, Meyer said. Other core decisions, including where the schools will be and whether they will share facilities with existing schools at the outset, also are ahead for Meyer and his staff.

"We're at the starting line, and now the real work begins." •

Donors of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation have granted \$2.1 million to support the operations of New Schools for Baton Rouge.



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# Young movers, with a passion for change

By David Bornstein



The inaugural Peace First Prize—a new award, introduced by Boston-based Peace First, recognizes young people the group identifies as “peacemakers”: people in the United States from the ages of 8 to 22 who engage in courageous, compassionate and collaborative actions to make their communi-

ties stronger, safer and better over the long term.

The announcement of the winners, who will each be awarded \$50,000, won’t happen until the fall. But the application round has recently closed and I had a chance to speak with some of the entrants—there were 658 from 47 states and the District of Columbia—and they offer a glimpse into a hidden side of reality, one that may help us to anticipate the future. While the peacemakers are not typically news headliners, there are a lot more of them than there are terrorists.

These young peacemakers challenge the standard notions many adults have about people their age. “We tend to look at young people in one of two ways: they’re either victims or potential victims we need to protect, or they’re perpetrators we need to punish. That’s our narrative. That’s our public policy,” said Eric Dawson, Peace First’s founder. “The idea behind the Peace First Prize is to offer a different narra-

tive. That young people are peacemakers—powerful change makers.”

Consider Emily-Anne Rigal, from Virginia, who, at 16, turned her talents for videography and social media into a lively online platform, WeStopHate, that is attacking bullying at its roots, providing a space where hundreds of thousands of teenagers exchange views and insights about self-image.

Or check out the work of 11-year-old Gerry Orz, from Los Angeles, whose organization, Kids Resource, teaches young people how to prevent or respond to bullying. Gerry and his friends have made two short films that dramatize bullying: *Day of Silence* and *Born to Bully*; they’ve put together a public service announcement, and they are busy at work on other films. “I have gay parents and I am Jewish so people had two things to bully me about,” Gerry said. “I didn’t want to see any other child go through this.”

Many of these young people are drawing upon their own painful experiences. Amit Dodani, 15, from California, struggled with a speech impediment for many years. So he established My Name, My Story, offering a space for young people to exchange stories and start clubs that aim to build empathy.

Christopher Carswell, 14, from Georgia, has endured serious health problems and seizures for much of his life. After receiving life-changing assistance from a service dog, he decided to create 1Boy4Change, an organization that

provides service dogs and iPads to disabled children and veterans. Caitlin Chapski, 18, from New Jersey, was distressed to see friends and family members struggling with depression. For her Girl Scout Gold Award project, she brought youngsters together to express themselves through art in public places.

Fifteen-year-old Sarah Cronk, from Iowa, was a high school cheerleader. Her older brother, Charlie, was on the autism spectrum. After an older student encouraged Charlie to join the swim team, Sarah saw that it “turned his life around.” She wondered if she could open up cheerleading to students with disabilities?

When she approached school administrators, they were “incredibly skeptical,” she recalled. But she managed to persuade them to let her try it out. She found students who were excited by the idea; they practiced for a month and a half, and then, one Friday night, under the bright lights in front of thousands, they walked onto the football field arm in arm. “The crowd rose to their feet and started chanting in unison,” Sarah recalled. “I’ve never seen bigger smiles.”

Since then the Sparkle Effect has spread to 90 schools and Sarah has won a prestigious Do Something Award. Students with a wide range of physical and developmental disabilities, from different age groups, are involved. “Our youngest participant was in second grade,” said Sarah. “She’s never going to know what it feels like to be excluded.”

Young peacemakers are deepening our appreciation of the environment. At age 9, Avalon Theisen founded Conserve It Forward, and for the past three years she has been teaching others about habitat loss and conservation through class presentations, interactive booths at parks, zoos and community gatherings, and other outreach efforts. (Avalon is particularly compelling when she talks about frogs, and the importance of saving them.)

A sense of economic justice also runs deep. When Nicholas Lowinger, from Rhode Island, was 5 years old, his mother took him to a homeless shelter. He was shocked to see kids who didn’t have sneakers. When he was 12, he

“We tend to look at young people in one of two ways: they’re either victims or potential victims we need to protect, or they’re perpetrators we need to punish. That’s our narrative. That’s our public policy. The idea behind the Peace First Prize is to offer a different narrative. That young people are peacemakers—powerful change makers.”

—Eric Dawson, Peace First’s founder

started the Gotta Have Sole Foundation to provide new shoes to children in shelters. “A lot of the kids are being ridiculed or bullied because they have used shoes or holes in their shoes,” he said. To date, Nicholas’ foundation has assisted 8,000 kids. “A lot of people in the United States think they have to go to a third world country to find poverty,” he added.

Yasmine Arrington, 20, isn’t one of them. A sophomore at Elon University, in North Carolina, Yasmine never got to know her father because he was in and out of prison throughout her childhood. When she was in high school, she took part in a program called LearnServe International, which encouraged her to address a social problem in her community. She created ScholarCHIPS, a scholarship program for children with incarcerated parents. “I understand the financial and emotional struggles that come with having a parent in prison and being stigmatized,” she said. ScholarCHIPS is now supporting its first four students. Yasmine hopes to support hundreds more over





the next five years. “The average age of a child of an incarcerated adult is 8 years old,” she said. “There are a lot of children growing up feeling like they’re not good enough for college. We need to give them opportunities.”

Karim Abouelnaga, 21, a senior at Cornell University, agrees. Karim is the son of Egyptian immigrants, and next month he will be the first person in his family to graduate from college. He attributes his success to a mentoring program. That’s why he started Practice Makes Perfect, a summer program that pairs academically struggling middle school students with high-achieving high school students from the same low-income neighborhoods. Last summer, Practice Makes Perfect served 100 students in high-poverty areas of New York, demonstrating impressive results. Karim’s goal is to raise \$100,000 to serve 500 students this summer. “I think this is an opportunity to replace summer school for middle school nationwide,” he says.

Some of the children focus in on needs that adults overlook. Jessica Carscadden, 10, from California, was adopted at the age of 5 from an orphanage in China. She had been abandoned by her birth parents because she was born with a cleft lip and palate. Two years ago, Jessica was thinking about how frightening it is for children when they are involved in fires or car accidents and she got the idea to donate her stuffed animals to the local fire department. “It just kind of came to me,” she said. “I got really sad for those kids and I thought a cuddly bear could help them.”

Since then the We Care Bears Project has collected hundreds of bags of bears, which now sit in every emergency response vehicle in San Diego, as well as in hundreds of others across Southern California and Nevada, plus the Ronald McDonald Houses of San Diego and Las Vegas. For this October, Jessica is organizing a drive at her school, hoping to collect 500 more bags of bears. “They have to be clean,” she insisted. Her dream is to take the project to New York City, where she has heard about the bravery of the firefighters.

The peacemakers I spoke to had plenty to say about what they’d learned. They spoke of skills they’d acquired: how to work in a team, how to spread an idea, how to fund-raise, how to talk with the media, how to fill out legal forms, how

“We don’t call our young people to big things. We spend our time telling them not to use drugs, not to smoke, not to be a bully. All good messages, but at the end of the day what are we advising young people to do?”

—Eric Dawson, Peace First’s founder

to present themselves so people will take them seriously.

Given this extraordinary education, it makes you wonder if our schools should focus far more on peacemaking than test taking.

“We don’t call our young people to big things,” says Eric Dawson, whose organization has been training educators to teach peacemaking skills for two decades. “We spend our time telling them not to use drugs, not to smoke, not to be a bully. All good messages, but at the end of the day what are we advising young people to do?”

Dawson suggests three things adults can do:

1. Ask young people questions of engagement. What do you think about that? What would you do? How do you think we could make this better?
2. Take young people’s ideas seriously.
3. Give young people concrete opportunities to act on their ideas.

“The idea is to invite them to try on this role,” he adds. “And to show that peacemaking isn’t holding hands and singing songs, nor is it the huge examples of Dr. King and Gandhi and Mother Teresa. It’s having courage and compassion, taking risks, showing perseverance, crossing lines of difference, mobilizing and working with others.” •

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*David Bornstein is the author of How to Change the World, which has been published in 20 languages, and The Price of a Dream: The Story of the Grameen Bank, and is co-author of Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know. You can read his work at The New York Times website in the FIXES blog.*

**15** IBM  
**Taste**  
Part 4 of 5

5 PREDICTIONS THAT WILL CHANGE OUR LIVES IN 5 YEARS.

UNFORTUNATELY, OUR LIFESTYLES HAVE EVOLVED FASTER THAN OUR BRAINS.

WHEN FOOD WAS HARD TO COME BY, IT MADE SENSE TO EAT AS MANY CALORIES AS POSSIBLE.

TODAY, FOOD IS MORE ABUNDANT, BUT OUR BRAINS STILL CRAVE HIGH-CALORIE FOODS.

TASTES VARY AROUND THE WORLD: COGNITIVE SYSTEMS WILL LEARN TO ADAPT.

OUR SENSE OF TASTE HAS EVOLVED TO PROTECT US:

FOODS THAT CONTAIN THE MOLECULES OUR BODIES NEED TASTE GOOD, WHILE DANGEROUS COMPOUNDS OFTEN TASTE BITTER OR UNPLEASANT.

WHY DO SOME THINGS TASTE BETTER THAN OTHERS?

SWEET  
BITTER  
SOUR  
SALTY  
UMAMI

YOUR TONGUE IS LIKE YOUR OWN PERSONAL CHEMISTRY LAB, ANALYZING THE MOLECULES IN THE FOOD YOU EAT.

IN FIVE YEARS, COGNITIVE SYSTEMS WILL BE ABLE TO INVENT NEW RECIPES THAT APPEAL TO OUR SENSE OF TASTE - WHILE ALSO MEETING OUR NEED FOR FOODS THAT ARE HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE AND AFFORDABLE.

“IN FIVE YEARS, COMPUTERS WILL KNOW WHAT YOU LIKE TO EAT BETTER THAN YOU DO.”

DR. LAV VARSHNEY  
RESEARCH SCIENTIST  
SERVICES RESEARCH, IBM

ON THE FUTURE ...

PERSONALIZED WEB APPLICATIONS WILL OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON OUR MEDICAL NEEDS AND FLAVOR PREFERENCES.

SCHOOL LUNCHES WILL BE OPTIMIZED FOR KIDS' PALATES, MAKING VEGGIE DISHES ALMOST AS POPULAR AS DESSERT.

RECIPES WILL AUTOMATICALLY ADAPT TO INCORPORATE LOCAL, SEASONAL INGREDIENTS, MAKING AGRICULTURE MORE SUSTAINABLE.

## Cooking by the numbers

IBM computers have used logic to beat the best chess player and the top *Jeopardy* champion. Company engineers are demonstrating that the machines can be creative, too.

An IBM computer has crunched databases of recipes and preferred flavors to concoct new dishes and flavors. The pairings include white chocolate and caviar, Jamaican rum and blue cheese, and lobster grilled with saffron, green olives, pumpkin, oregano, orange and other ingredients.

"This system is creating something that's never been seen before," writes IBM team leader Lav Varshney. "It's pushing computing to new fields of creativity and quickly giving us designs for novel, high-quality food combinations."

So far, most dishes are edible, but not all, such as the Mid Eastern mushroom stroganoff.



## **“I’LL BE GOVERNOR OF LOUISIANA.”**

Today, from studying the spoken word and his own innate gifts, Dominique Ricks knows how to take over the room, how to enthrall a crowd. His will to succeed makes him hard to overlook. A few years ago, he caught the attention of leaders in the Baton Rouge Youth Coalition, which was formed with funding assistance from our donors and staff resources from members. BRYC mentored him, tutored him twice a week, recommended him to the University of Wisconsin and helped him secure \$100,000 in scholarships from the school. One day, he promises, “I’ll be governor of Louisiana. There are a lot of things to fix.”

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

*Baton Rouge  
Area Foundation*

## Bionic ear

The singularity—where everything is one and one is everything—seems a little closer each day.

Researchers at Princeton have combined cells with electronic components to invent a bionic ear that is superior at hearing to the one produced by evolution. The bionic ear can listen to a greater range of radio frequencies.

“The design and implementation of bionic organs and devices that enhance human capabilities, known as cybernetics, has been an area of increasing scientific interest,” the researchers wrote in the journal *Nano Letters*. “This field has the potential to generate customized replacement parts for the human body, or even create organs containing capabilities beyond what human biology ordinarily provides.”



Scientists combined human cells and nanoparticles to create the ear on a 3-D printer. Surgeons could use the ears in reconstructive surgery.



## Under the dome

The company that gave the world a river of books is building a giant dome for housing plants.

Amazon.com wants to build a biosphere—three intersecting domes—next to its new skyscraper in downtown Seattle. The 65,000-square-foot structure would be filled with plants that live in high-elevation climates. It will function as a work environment and lounging spaces. The world's largest retailer will have dining and meeting spaces in the giant domes.

Amazon is waiting for city permission before announcing when construction will begin.

**That's fast**—Samsung has developed transmission technology for sending data to smartphones at several hundred times the rate of current 5G networks. The technology was demonstrated in New York earlier this year, but won't be available to telecom companies until around 2020.

At the high data rates, you'll be able to watch HD movies without interruption on whatever mobile device is the rage in the next decade.

## Nest Energy Services

Nest reinvented the programmable thermostat. That was part of the firm's secret plan to revolutionize energy consumption in America, or so says a founder on his blog.

Founded by former Apple engineers, Nest has started pilot programs with several energy companies. Customers using a new feature called Auto Tune permit energy companies to control their thermostat, turning down the cooling or heating during peak hours, while making sure the temperature remains in a comfort zone learned by the device.

In field trials, Nest owners have used 5% to 10% less heating and cooling with the service. Customers who feel uncomfortable can take back control of their thermostat, but 80% have opted to continue after trials. On top of a reduction in usage, energy companies offer up to \$60 in credits to Auto Tune customers during summer.

"Everything your Nest learns about you—your schedule, your energy plan, the temperatures you like, when you're home and away, what the weather's like near you, how efficient your furnace is and how leaky your windows are—can now be used to take full advantage of every money-making opportunity and energy-saving tweak that makes sense for your home," the company says.

Reliant, Green Mountain Energy, Austin Energy and Southern California Edison are the first Nest allies.



## Refuge for refugees

Escaping strife and persecution, more than 3.5 million refugees around the world are housed by the United Nations in tents. Too often, families have to make their homes in the flimsy tents for years.

Working with the IKEA Foundation, the UN has come up with an alternative. The Swedish company known for practical furniture—some would even call it stylish—has developed a cheap, flat-packed, build-it-yourself house with an electricity-generating roof. The house takes four hours to assemble, can house up to five people in comfort and lasts 10 times longer than a tent.

IKEA is testing the houses in Ethiopia with the goal of reducing the cost from \$10,000 to \$1,000 in mass production.



## Solar breakthrough?

Solar energy can't compete with fossil fuels because it's more expensive. One way to make it cheaper is to convert more sunshine to power. Harry Atwater of Caltech has accomplished this.

A professor of materials science and applied physics, Atwater invented an affordable device that generates twice the power of today's solar panels. He's done so by splitting sunlight into up to eight wavelengths, with each color absorbed by a special semiconductor that can absorb its wavelength. His lab's work was awarded as one of 10 breakthrough technologies for 2012 by *Technology Review*, a publication and website from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Atwater and his team are experimenting with different designs for the device. The best performing device could end up being manufactured, though skeptics say that Atwater can't deliver at a competitive price.



## Shaken, not stirred

MIT Senseable City Lab and Carlo Ratti Associati, an Italian architecture firm, have invented a robot bartender that can mix millions of different cocktails. They demonstrated the contraption at Milan Design Week.

Makr Shagr, an assemblage of three robots, showed the Third Industrial Revolution paradigm through the simple process design-make-enjoy, and in just the time needed to prepare a new cocktail," explains the project website.

No robot bartender is complete without an app. People wanting a cocktail ordered them through their smartphones.

Makr Shagr does all the movements of a real bartender. What it doesn't do, though, is dispense advice to people down on their luck.



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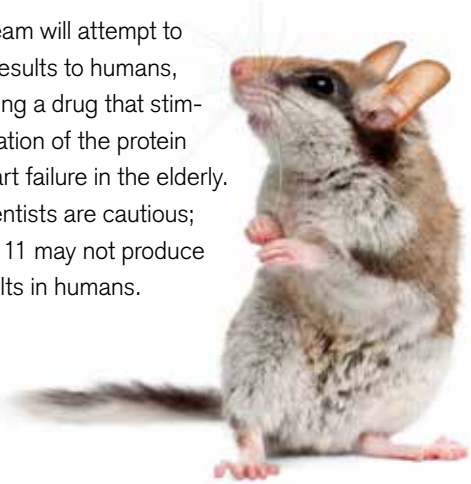
## Forever young

Researchers at Harvard Stem Cell Institute have identified a protein that turns an old mouse's heart young again.

As hearts age, they become stiff and their walls thicken. Linking an old mouse to a young one, scientists discovered that the older mouse's heart functioned better. They hunted down the reason; it is a protein called GDF 11.

"We did this pretty much as a long-shot experiment to see if there was some pathway that would give us insight into the heart-aging process," Richard T. Lee, a cardiologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital and the Harvard Stem Cell Institute in Cambridge, told the journal *Nature*. "We were just totally stunned when it worked."

Lee and his team will attempt to translate the results to humans, possibly creating a drug that stimulates the creation of the protein to combat heart failure in the elderly. But some scientists are cautious; they say GDF 11 may not produce favorable results in humans.



## Heart healthy

The discovery of a rare mutation that reduces cholesterol to very low levels is causing a race to mimic the medical advantage using drugs. Sanofi, Pfizer and Amgen are in advanced testing of medicine that promises cholesterol below 50, about half the amount in normal adults.

Because high cholesterol affects one-fourth of the population and is among the leading causes of heart failure, drugs based on the genetic advantage could save millions of lives and enrich the companies.

How much the drugs will cost and when they will be available is not known, reports *The New York Times*.



## Moving forward

In November, Toyota will introduce a fuel cell sedan that the company wants to put on the market in late 2014.

Powered by hydrogen, fuel cells have been a distant dream for a long time. Though power generated by hydrogen fuel cells emit harmless water vapors, manufacturing hydrogen from other fuels, such as plentiful natural gas, has been difficult, and the fuel cells themselves are expensive to produce.

Quietly, though, large auto manufacturers have managed to reduce the cost of fuel cells. In published reports, Toyota says its fuel cell car is now priced at around \$100,000, one-tenth of the cost only a decade or so ago. With further improvements, the firm hopes to sell the car at less than \$50,000 when it comes to market, making it competitive with luxury sedans.

One large problem remains. The country doesn't have a network of fuel cell stations. Only if the cars become more competitive in price will there be a push to add enough fuel cell stations to compete with internal combustion cars that can be fueled at gas stations.



## Little ribbit

LSU researcher Chris Austin has found a frog species that is the smallest known vertebrate. His discovery was recognized by *Species* magazine's list of the top 10 new species discovered in 2012 and by *Discovery* magazine as one of the top 100 science-related stories of 2012.

"It was particularly difficult to locate *Paedophryne amauensis* due to its diminutive size and the males' high-pitched insect-like mating call," said Austin. "But it's a great find. New Guinea is a hotspot of biodiversity, and everything new we discover there adds another layer to our overall understanding of how biodiversity is generated and maintained."

The frog averages 7.7 millimeters in size, about one-third of an inch, smaller than the surface of a dime.

In a release, Austin says, "The size limit of vertebrates, or creatures with backbones, is of considerable interest to biologists because little is understood about the functional constraints that come with extreme body size, whether large or small."



## Aging slowly

East Baton Rouge is a little younger than Livingston and Ascension.

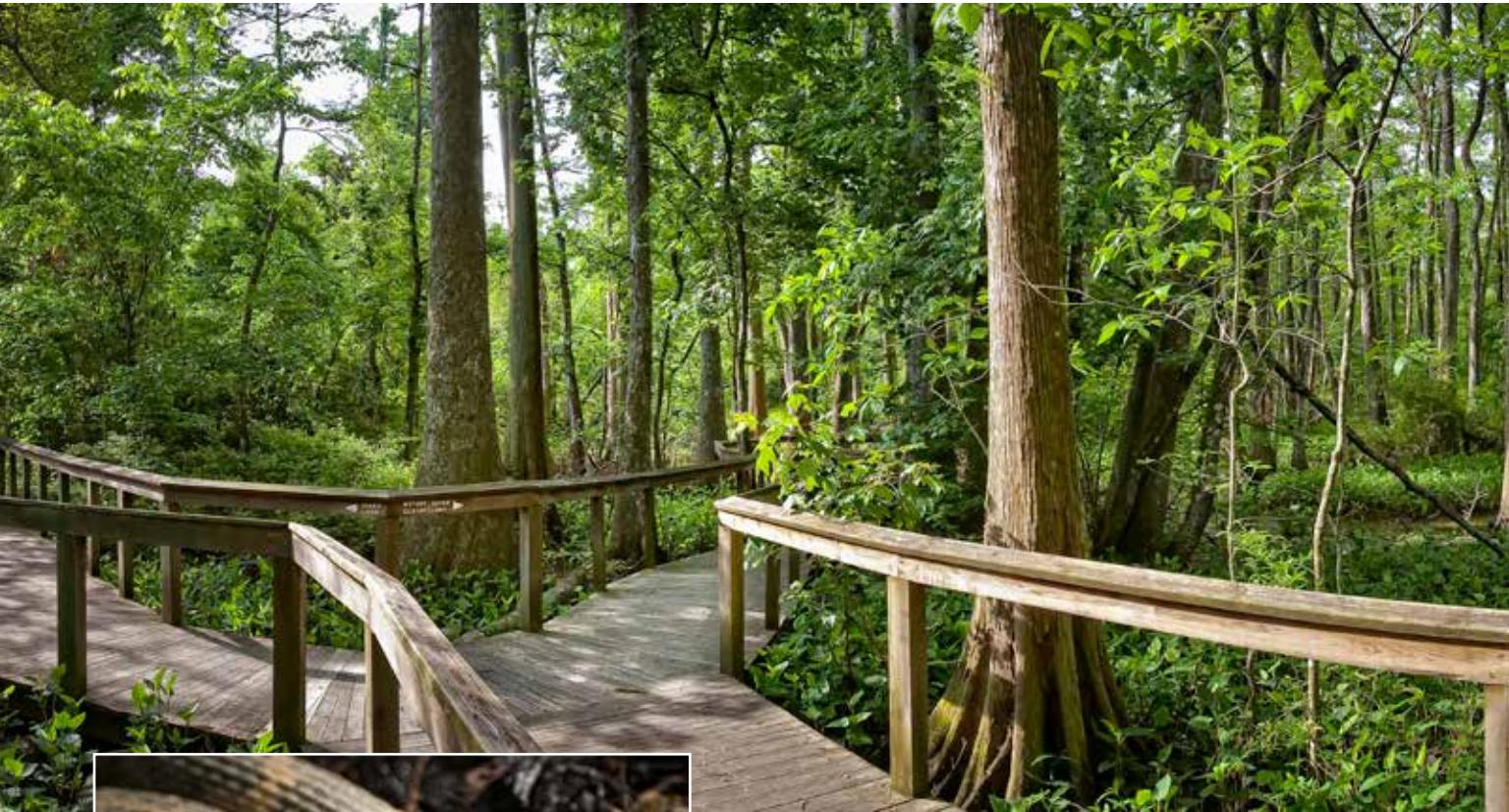
The median age of the largest parish in the region was estimated at 32.9 in 2012, six months higher than the 2010 census. Two universities keep Baton Rouge younger.

The Census Bureau calculated Livingston's median age at 35 and Ascension at 34.7. Both aged about the same rate as EBR since the 2010 census.

About 285,000 of 440,000 people in EBR were below the age of 44 in 2012.

Overall, the populations of Louisiana and 39 other states got older over two years ending in 2012, shows an analysis of Census data by *Governing* magazine.





Worried mothers would tell their children, “Don’t go in there.” But warnings are temptations to boys; a little scared, they would trudge into Bluebonnet Swamp, sidestepping water moccasins and snapping turtles as a rite of passage.

The wildlife they found within was eventually opened to less daring people, starting with a grant in 1989. Back then, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation donated \$25,000 to the Nature Conservancy, which combined the money with other donations to buy 165 wet acres off Bluebonnet Boulevard. In turn, the Conservancy donated the land to BREC, which invested \$900,000 on exhibits, a teaching center and a boardwalk that snakes through the heart of that dark still water.

More than 400,000 people have visited Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center since it opened in 1997. They can see shy possums, questioning owls, majestic egrets—and, from a safe distance, the moccasins and snapping turtles that drew little boys to the marvel in a city that was crowding around the wildlife.

—Mukul Verma

# A swamp tale

Photos by Tim Mueller

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