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Q4/2008

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Will it be a good one?

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In the past few weeks, Baton Rouge and South Louisiana experienced another round of devastating hurricanes, and I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family well as we all continue to recover from Gustav and Ike. Gustav, sparing New Orleans, toppled thou-

sands of trees across the capital region, crushed many homes and businesses, caused widespread power outages and, unfortunately, took 57 lives.

gion the day after Gustav struck. Since that time, we have issued \$443,000 in grants to support organizations serving people in need—those grants include funding for shelters, meals and first responder support.

I would like to thank Board Member Alice Greer, Partnership Relations Director Gerri Hobdy, Lori Bertman with the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation, our staff and more than 40 volunteers who made this work possible. Thanks also goes to the many donors who contributed to the Hurricane Gustav Relief and Recovery Fund, providing more than \$750,000 for relief, with a considerable assist by Gov. Bobby Jindal's endorsement.

Moving forward, the Foundation has decided to

Our staff and volunteers began conducting field assessments across the region the day after Gustav struck. Since that time, we have issued \$443,000 in grants to support organizations serving people in need.

4 Less than two weeks later, Hurricane Ike wreaked havoc on coastal Texas, swamped much of the Lake Charles region and complicated relief efforts in many Gustav-affected areas.

In our neighborhoods and communities, though, there have been overwhelming demonstrations of compassion. Ironically, Gustav built community. Strangers helped each other clear yards, traded stories about power outages, shared hot—and cold—meals. In the end, many of us made new friends.

At the Foundation, our staff and volunteers began conducting field assessments across the re-

create FoundationsForRecovery.org. Under this project, we have established the Recover Louisiana Fund, which is dedicated to supporting communities across our state as they face and recover from hurricanes Gustav and Ike and future storms.

The goal of the project is to ensure that our communities always have the resources for immediate relief and for longer-term projects that reduce the need after future disasters. The Northshore Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana, both sister organizations, have enlisted in this effort.

Foundations for Recovery grants will be issued

*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 the capital region. 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 buy eyeglasses for needy children. 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.

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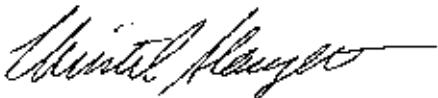
from disaster funds based on field assessments by our staff and funding priorities set by the board.

This fund allows donors to act in a preemptive manner to help keep our community and foundation prepared to respond to future crises. If you are interested in helping us support relief and recovery efforts and prepare for future incidents, then visit www.foundationsforrecovery.org and click on Recover Louisiana—or contact Jake Holinga at jholinga@braf.org or (225) 387-6126.

In other news, there has been much fervor about town regarding recent decisions made by the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board. Regardless of how the issue of routing test scores from magnet schools to local schools shakes out, it is clear that our school system needs a bold new vision and leader. As Superintendent Charlotte Placide approaches retirement, it is time for our school board to conduct a national search and hire a top-quality candidate with a track record of successfully improving troubled public education systems. By acting immediately, it may still be possible to attract a candidate that can begin to quickly develop an aggressive plan to confront those challenges.

By acting now, we can give our next superintendent the opportunity to evaluate our schools and work with Superintendent Placide before her retirement to understand the problems facing students, teachers and families, allowing for an innovative strategy for improving public education in our parish.

Sincerely,

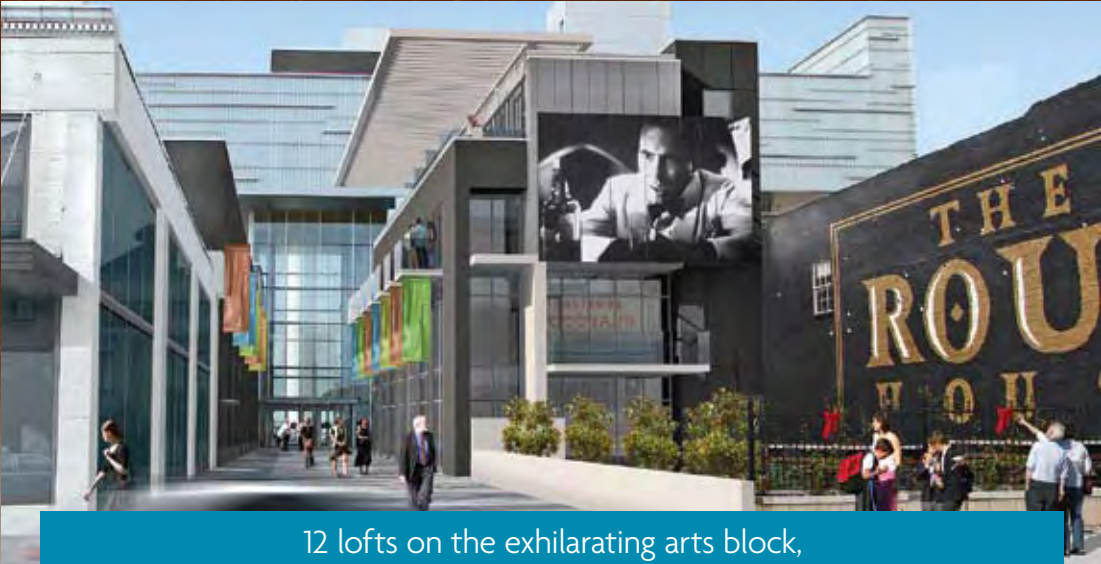


Christel C. Slaughter, Ph.D.

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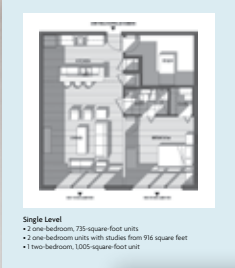


Sweet dreams in the heart of downtown

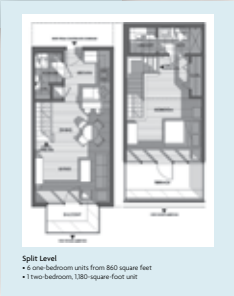


12 lofts on the exhilarating arts block, steps from cafes, galleries, restaurants and more

Wide-plank French oak floors—Up to 12-foot ceilings with exposed ductwork
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About Us

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

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

First, we connect philanthropists with exceptional nonprofits to make sure the needs of our neighbors are met. Our donors, for instance, fund safe havens for abused women and children, provide vaccinations to prevent cancer and pay for teacher supplies. Last year, we provided thousands of grants worth \$18.8 million.

Second, the Foundation invests in and manages pivotal projects. Working with partners, we have revitalized downtown Baton Rouge, are rebuilding neighborhoods between downtown and LSU, supporting the improvement of public education through experimental schools, creating an economic corridor across South Louisiana and much more.

Who we serve: We conduct projects and provide grants in eight parishes in South Central Louisiana: Ascension, East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, West Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston and Pointe Coupée.

The Foundation also works in St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington and St. Helena parishes through the Northshore Community Foundation, a support organization that operates independently from a home base in Mandeville. This year, the Foundation started providing support services to the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana. Based in Lake Charles, that foundation serves Calcasieu, Beauregard, Allen, Cameron and Jefferson Davis parishes.

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

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

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

What's our size: At year-end 2007, the Foundation had estimated assets of \$568 million, making it among the top-30 largest community foundations in the country and the largest in the Gulf South. Donors of the Foundation have provided the assets over more than 40 years. Since 1964, the Foundation has issued \$210 million in grants to support our community. Also, the Foundation has contracted with for-profit organizations to provide social benefits to the region, such as guidance on health care reform and direction on whether to build a new airport or invest in our existing ones.

More information about the Foundation is available at BRAf.org or by calling Mukul Verma at 225.387-6126.

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Audubon ALIVE on ballot >>

In the media, the Foundation's project with the Audubon Nature Institute and the city-parish has been labeled many ways. It's been called a zoo, an aquarium, a tourist attraction.

But the proposed ALIVE is much more. It would be a discovery center, a place to learn about the world. It would bring hundreds of thousands of visitors to Baton Rouge who would cover most of the costs of building the attraction. It would be an iconic building that creates a brand for East Baton Rouge. It would create thousands of jobs and pay for itself in 10 years.

And it's on the near horizon. On Nov. 4, Baton Rouge residents will have an opportunity to vote on the project, which is part of the mayor's \$989 million tax package. Of that amount, Audubon Alive is an estimated \$247 million.

Other projects in the tax package include synchronizing traffic lights, replacing the outdated jail, building a shared HQ for the police and sheriff's departments, improving drainage parishwide to stop flooding and upgrading the River Center to lure \$100 million in new hotel investments for lifting the tourism



A concept for the Audubon ALIVE project.

ALIVE by the Numbers >>

Audubon ALIVE is expected to boost the economy, employing construction workers when under construction and full-time employees when it opens. An independent report by LSU economist Jim Richardson predicts ALIVE will pay for itself in just 10 years. Here are other findings:

Attendance: Nearly 600,000 in 2012, year of opening, rising to 725,000 by 2016. Nearly 85% of the attendees will be from outside East Baton Rouge.

Jobs: 1,000 construction jobs in year 1, 3,000 construction jobs in years 2 through 5, 2,000 permanent jobs in year 6 and rising with demand.

The project is expected to trigger development across the riverfront, adding more jobs.

Tax collections: New collections of \$11 million in 2012, when ALIVE opens, rising to \$30 million in 2016. •

industry.

Audubon ALIVE would be the largest attraction operated by the New Orleans non-profit, which annually draws more than 13 million visitors at its zoo, aquarium, insectariums and other science centers.

ALIVE would be 220,000 square feet on riverside land.

Viewed by motorists driving in from the west, it would signal a great city rising on the river.

Inside ALIVE, there will be wondering and fun. On the drawing board are a rainforest, a wrap-around theater that simulates soaring over the planet, tigers and jaguars in a jungle, a 900-seat

Number of U.S. jobs requiring at least some college training by 2025. The nation will need 16 million more college graduates by then, according to Paul Lingenfelter, executive director of the State Higher Education Executive Officers.

live performance venue, an attraction that unleashes the ferocity of storms.

Appropriately, ALIVE will teach about the majesty of nature, using entertainment to do so.

Mayor Kip Holden revealed the ALIVE project in mid-July. It is proposed for batture land next to Hollywood Casino. The land, which is nearly as high as the levee in spots, was to become DeSoto Park under Gov. Mike Foster, who set aside money to raise the expanse above flood level. Negotiations are under way with the state to fund land improvements, which would provide 9 acres—6.5 acres for ALIVE and the rest for a public park.

ALIVE would open in 2012, just in time for the 75,000 people expected for the largest bowling tournament in America.

ALIVE would add a new layer to the economy. Jim Richardson, LSU economist, estimates ALIVE will produce new tax collections, based on net present value, of \$513 million through year 2031. •

Acadian Village

>> Bulldozers have razed the abandoned Wal-Mart on Perkins Road. The Acme Oyster House is open at the site. And the Baton Rouge



The concept restaurant at Commercial Properties' Acadian Village development.

Area Foundation, which counts the real estate among its assets, has unveiled plans for a redevelopment.

Commercial Properties Realty Trust, the real estate manager and developer for the Foundation, expects to build 102,630 square feet of retail on the site. Rezoning will allow residences on the site, and 53 apartments are in the plans, though rents won't be set until the project opens. The apartments will be above shops.

Commercial Properties will accelerate marketing of the project after all city-parish rezoning approvals, which could be in hand later this year. The goal is to fill the development with the best retailers and restaurants from the region, which continues the spirit of the Perkins Road Overpass district.

Commercial Properties is not setting a target for beginning construction, but expects to move quickly on the project.

The development firm is in discussions with prospects, but tenants are not disclosed until deals are signed, which is standard industry practice. Lush greenery will be planned at Acadian Village. Unlike in some developments, the planting wells will be big enough to let trees grow tall and prosper. Acadian Village will have nutall oaks, southern live oaks, shumard red oaks and star magnolias. The drainage system will double as irrigation for the trees, letting water seep into the ground, thereby reducing pollution and runoff in the area.

A fountain will be part of a walking promenade. People will be able to move among the shops on foot.

The city-parish's Green Light Plan will provide improved circulation to the area, including a traffic light on Perkins at the development that will let people safely cross the street. The city-parish expects to start traffic improvements before summer. •

Foundation launches donor portal >>

The distance between the Foundation and its donors has been compressed. The Foundation has launched a website that lets donors manage their charitable accounts anywhere there is an Internet connection.

Donors can log into the secure portal through the Foundation's website at BRAF.org. Awaiting them are a number of convenient tools that permit donors to make giving decisions.

Donors can check amounts in their charitable accounts, make grant recommendations, review their giving patterns and examine information on nonprofits, such as their missions and who runs them.

There's much more on the site. Donors can add new nonprofits to the database, triggering reviews of the new nonprofits by the Foundation. They can keep track of their favorite nonprofits and have approved grants delivered on a date they choose.

The donor portal runs on Stellar Financial, a new accounting system that also is used by Vanguard and other large financial institutions. The Foundation will continue to enhance the donor portal in coming years, making it a focus for improving quality of life in the region. And we expect to shift our entire website to the new system, deploying new tools to be more transparent and to provide more



A Pittsburgh dump transformed.

timely information to donors, members and stakeholders.

For more information on the donor portal, donors can email mverma@braf.org.

Redevelopment lessons >>

The home pictured above sits on the site of a former slag heap, a mountain of leftover waste from the departed Pittsburgh steel industry. The original proposal to remake the dump into homes and shops was booed by area residents.

At the first community meeting, 200 people showed up to protest the project, known as Summerset. "Yes, they wanted to keep the slag dump," Tom Murphy, former mayor of Pittsburgh, told members of the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority at a recent learning retreat.

Redevelopment faces resistance from the frightened status quo. But the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, more than once, has combined innovative funding

with able deal making to overcome the opposition in remaking the former steel town.

Murphy, now a resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute, discussed the URA's successes at a planning retreat for the redevelopment authority, a public agency formed to return adjudicated and neglected properties to commerce. Working with the city-parish, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation helped to create the local redevelopment authority, which is getting its footing before staffing up and pursuing its mission.

As mayor of Pittsburgh, Murphy was confronted with an eroding population base. "We made a decision we didn't want to manage decline."

Instead, city leaders placed \$100 million from taxes, corporations and foundations into the

URA, creating the first such fund in the nation set up to buy land and underwrite deals. Since then, the URA has become the economic development agency for the city, taking on projects that developers won't touch, helping businesses, re-establishing neighborhoods.

The URA creates a platform for high-value jobs and improves the built environment, which is necessary to compete against other cities.

Southside Works is an example. With partners, the URA invested \$103 million to prepare the site of a former steel mill for a new future. The result is more than \$219 million in private investments that include a movie theater, office buildings, restaurants, a science center, a sports performance center and the FBI regional offices.

Among other projects, the URA has collaborated with the school system to create a performing arts high school. The school is so popular that non-residents buy condos in Pittsburgh so their children qualify to attend.

The URA also provided incentives for Home Depot to locate in a struggling neighborhood, creating local jobs. It did so by hijacking Home Depot's CEO, making a case for setting up a store in a location the company didn't consider worthy. The store's success lured a Whole Foods to the neighborhood.

"At the end of the day, it's

about having the community will to do this," said Murphy. "You need to be willing to say the status quo is not acceptable." •

Philanthropists see, philanthropist do

>> An Australian billionaire is following a path cleared by Bill Gates and Warren Buffett. Andrew "Twiggy" Forrest, the richest man in Australia, is donating his \$8 billion before he dies.

"I have a philosophy (about wealth) and that is that it doesn't do much for you," he said in reports. "I know very wealthy people who have survived and become good guys despite their wealth, but I also know many others around the world who haven't."

Forrest, who became wealthy by growing an iron ore business, won't disclose what he will do with his donations. In the past, he has been a benefactor for aborigine and children's issues. •

Try, try again >> A number of leaders, including the chair of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and the superintendent of the Baton Rouge school system, had applied to get a charter school operated by Knowledge Is Power Program, among the most successful school innovators in the country.

KIPP did not choose the Baton Rouge group, but asked the leaders to apply again next year. And the group does expect to

try again, as it usually takes more than one go to meet KIPP's requirements, which include a functioning school building and

"I know very wealthy people who have survived and become good guys despite their wealth, but I also know many others around the world who haven't."

—ANDREW FORREST

considerable financial support.

San Francisco-based KIPP was founded in Houston in 1994 by two youthful Teach for America teachers who were looking for a more effective way to keep low-income, minority children in school and thriving. Its approach includes longer school days, Saturday classes and three weeks of summer school, time that adds up to 60% more class hours than in traditional public schools. •

Way to go >> There is no debate about the downtown wayfinding signs. People here really, really like them. And now the International Downtown Association is among those applauding.

In September, the association awarded an Outstanding Achievement Award in Transportation to the wayfind-

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Look right. Look left. Look good.

by the DDD and the city-parish. The city-parish is replacing existing traffic lights with ornamental ones that also synchronize traffic. A town square is being designed for North Boulevard from the river to Fifth Street. •

Moving waste >>

East Baton Rouge’s \$1.2 billion sewer program doesn’t get much play. Except for civil engineers, not many people want to talk about sewer pipes and plants.

But here’s a hook that gives the rest of us something to chatter about: Scheduled to be completed by 2015, one of the sewer projects will eliminate the River Road plant in Old South Baton Rouge, moving the sewage it treats to an expanded South Sewer Treatment plant.

The riverfront sewer plant, which is located between LSU and downtown, has been a hur-

dle to development in the area, which the Foundation is working to revive with partners that include the new East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority.

Hearing the news about the removal of the plant has lifted developers, particularly a group that bought a stretch of Nicholson Drive homes in front of it. That group has hired Steve Oubre, known for his River Ranch in Lafayette, to design a mixed-use project.

After the plant moves, the city-parish will have 20 riverfront acres available. The relocation also is expected to save \$20 million in operating costs over 20 years because the city-parish will be operating one less plant.

OneEleven >>

Construction schedules are not written in concrete. Bad weather slows down the hammering. Not being able to locate the main water line delays apartments, condos and other bricks-and-mortar projects. And so it is not unexpected that OneEleven, the Foundation’s loft apartments and

office development on the bustling Arts Block, is a couple of months behind the expected occupancy date.

A construction fixer, a Harvey Keitel type, was called in to move the project along. Power tools holstered, he made the final push—and OneEleven should be ready for ten-

ing signs, which were a project of Sasaki & Associates and WHL Architects, assisted by Baton Rouge firms Covalent Logic and ABMB Engineers.

Not only do the signs provide directions, but they also reveal the culture of the region.

“The creative and innovative tactics that the DDD and its partners exercised in funding, developing and implementing the Downtown Baton Rouge Wayfinding Signage Project make this initiative an extraordinary case study for best practices in planning and design,” said IDA President Dave Feehan.

“It will be looked to as a model for others for many years to come.”

The signs continue improvements initiated





Interior of Commercial Properties' OneEleven development.

ants in November. The project is the first new construction of housing in downtown in decades, signaling the city center continues to rebound at a steady pace.

The 12 lofts have open floor plans, granite countertops and wide-plank floors. Tenants will have access to a pool and fitness center. But the best feature may be the terraces and balconies. On most lofts, tenants can step out onto a balcony overlooking the walkway between Third Street and the Shaw Center. From their bedrooms, they can step out onto a terrace that runs along the length of the building, but provides privacy with frosted glass dividers. (For more information or to rent a unit, visit CPRT.com/oneeleven.)

The Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge is likely to occupy the 5,000-square-foot first floor.

Next up is the Stroube's Chophouse, a restaurant on North Boulevard and Third, just a

few feet from the arts block. The fixer says the restaurant will be open in December or January. •

A summit success

For two days in mid-August, the Shaw Center for the Arts in downtown Baton Rouge was filled with some of the brightest minds in planning and some of the most forward-looking leaders in Louisiana. The reason for this impressive gathering? Livable Louisiana: A Summit on Smart Growth, the annual educational event hosted by the nonprofit Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX).

"This year's summit brought together a unique blend of smart growth advocates and doubters, and provided great information for all," said Elizabeth "Boo" Thomas, president and CEO of CPEX.

The 2008 Summit attracted more than 500 attendees for its two days of presentations and

events. The crowd included state and local elected officials, community leaders, developers, planners, architects, transportation experts and interested residents.

The attendees were treated to more than 25 separate presentations and discussions about topics that addressed the Summit's general theme: "Are We Building in a Way that Will Work for the Future?" Internationally recognized experts such

as Emory University School of Law Professor Frank Alexander and Michael Pyatok, principal of California-based Pyatok Architects, addressed blight, the lack of workforce housing and other tough issues before standing-room-only crowds in the Manship Theatre.

"Frank Alexander's clear explanation of the very complex topic of redevelopment authorities was one of the Summit's highlights," said Thomas, noting that the topic was a timely one, considering the recent launch of the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority. "Mr. Pyatok's presentation on the multifamily housing that he has built across the country was inspiring. He proved by example that well-designed and affordable can go hand-in-hand."

The expert speakers showed that Smart Growth is being implanted across the country. "The

Summit speakers are not only experts, but practitioners. They don't just talk about the ideas behind Smart Growth, but real-world experiences and applications," said Summit attendee Chad Ortte, real estate agent and development consultant with Donnie Jarreau Real Estate in Baton Rouge.

Summit guests also heard presentations on transportation and Smart Growth issues from experts at the AARP and the Transportation for America Campaign, as well as an examination of the connections between planning and public health by representatives of the Pennington Biomedical Research Center and the Louisiana Public Health Institute. Louisiana elected and appointed officials such as Senator Mary Landrieu, Congressman Don Cazayoux, Baton Rouge Mayor Melvin "Kip" Holden, Commissioner of Agriculture Mike Strain and Department of Transportation and Development Secretary William Ankner presented the latest on the state's planning and development efforts.

Planning for the 2009 Summit is already under way. •

Tennis, everyone?

>> The Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation are holding Duel Under the Oaks II, an exhibition tennis match between Pete Sampras and James Blake to benefit hurricane

DUEL DETAILS

Date: Dec. 14.

11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.: Children's Clinic Pete Sampras, James Blake and the LSU women's and men's tennis teams will give tips and instruction to children at LSU Dub Robinson Tennis stadium on LSU campus.

1:00-1:45 p.m.: Ryan Harrison versus Michael Venus in the PMAC Originally from Shreveport, 16-year-old pro Ryan Harrison will face off with Michael Venus, ranked No. 1 on the LSU tennis team.

2:00 to 4:00: Sampras versus Blake in the PMAC Best of three exhibition match. Tickets: \$10 to \$75.

Buy tickets at lsusports.net or call 225-578-2184. For sponsorship opportunities, call Lori Bertman at 225-928-8346 or visit DuelOaks.com.

relief.

Organized by Paula Pennington de la Bretonne, the two top players will compete at Pete Maravich Assembly Center on LSU's campus Sunday, Dec. 14. It will be the first time Sampras, the top player before his retirement, and Blake, the world's eighth-ranked player, will meet on the court.

The first Duel Under the Oaks, where Sampras played Todd Martin, raised money for LSU Medical Center students who were displaced by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Sampras versus Blake will gather funds for the Duel Under the Oaks Hurricane Relief and Recovery Fund of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

The Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation will raise money through sponsorships and ticket sales. The funds will be used to provide shelter, food and other needs after hurricanes. The fund also will provide grants to organizations that help resi-

dents resettle where hurricanes have hit.

"The Pennington Foundation is deeply committed to assisting Gulf Coast area nonprofit organizations that are now facing even larger challenges and are in dire need of more resources to help communities recover after Hurricane Gustav and Hurricane Ike," said Paula Pennington de la Bretonne, Pennington Foundation trustee and chair of the event. •





**FARMERS
MARKET**

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA - PROJECT OF BREADA

**November is our Harvest Month!
...and we celebrate...**

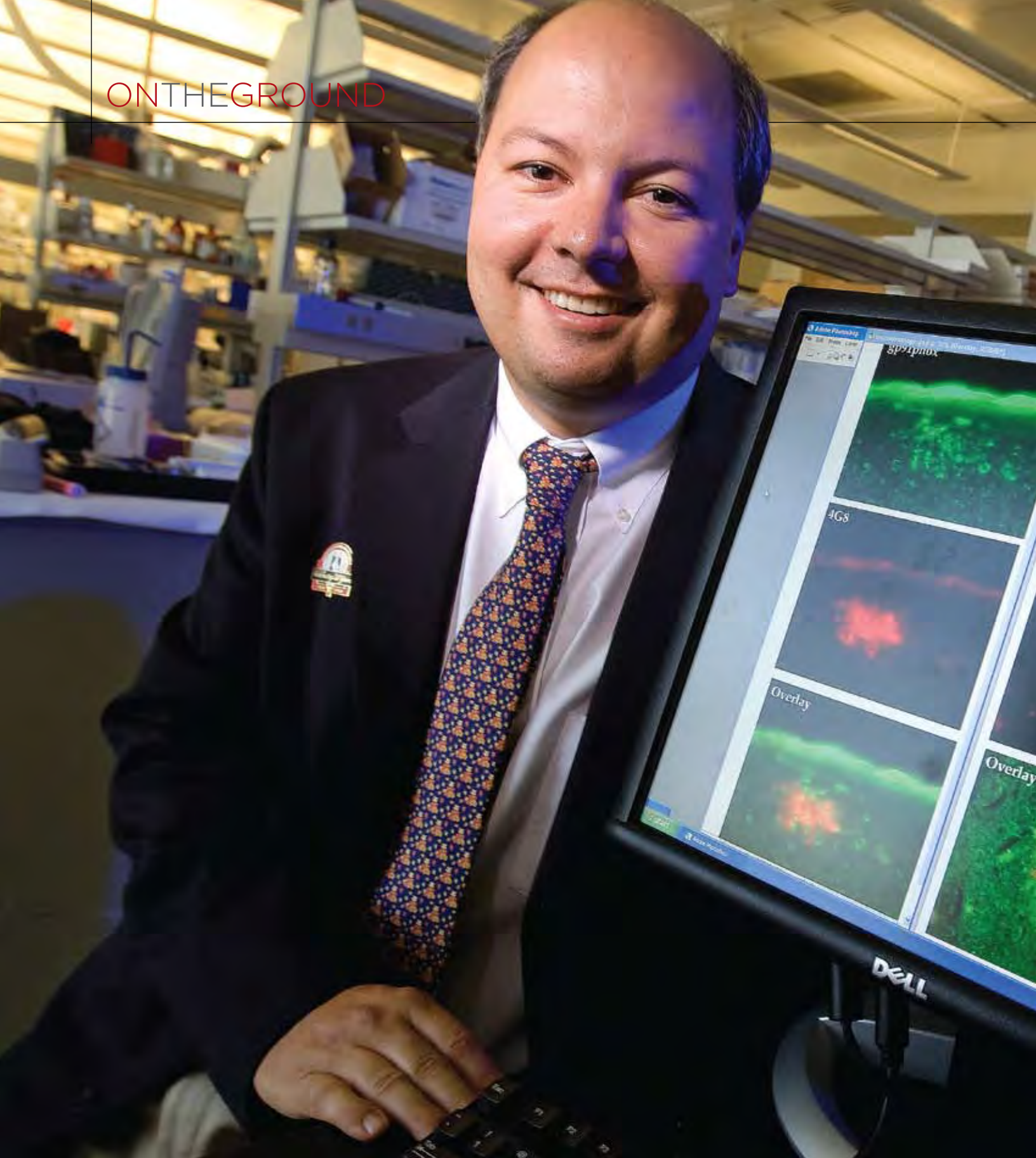
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ONTHEGROUND





Beautiful Mind

PENNINGTON BRAIN RESEARCHER
ESTABLISHING DEMENTIA RESEARCH
AT WORLD-CLASS CENTER

>> by **SARA BONGIORNI** photo by **TIM MUELLER**

Jeffrey N. Keller is on a mission to help people of the world age better.

An expert on diet and the aging brain, Keller, the new associate executive director for basic research at Pennington Biomedical Research Center, will lead Pennington's effort to build a world-class facility to understand—and ultimately prevent—Alzheimer's disease and other forms of age-related dementia.

"That's why I came here," says Keller, who joined Pennington in January after holding a number of positions at the University of Kentucky, including assistant director of its highly regarded Sanders-Brown Center on Aging. A key component of Keller's work in Baton Rouge will be bringing together researchers in Louisiana from a range of fields to devise innovative treatments to treat dementia in humans.

"We want to help researchers in Louisiana to apply their expertise in areas linked to dementia—such as diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease—to finding novel ways to prevent it," Keller says.

Louisiana residents facing a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease have more limited access to specialists than pa-

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tients in many other parts of the country because there is comparatively little research in the state. “They have few options because there is no center of excellence (for Alzheimer’s treatment and research), so they have to travel to Houston or elsewhere for treatment. We want to change that.”

Keller’s expertise in neurobiology and brain degeneration, along with his ability to bring together a cross section of researchers to tackle “big science questions,” makes him a potent asset as

“All of this is aimed at supporting successful aging, including the prevention of dementia...”

—JEFFREY KELLER

Pennington expands into this new area of neuroscience, according to Claude Bouchard, Pennington’s executive director.

“He will help us with our total basic science program and lead us as we move into a new research concentration,” says Bouchard. “He has the ability to bring people together as we move in this direction.”

MEETING OF MINDS

The cornerstone of Keller’s efforts will be Pennington’s new Institute for Dementia Research and Prevention, which will be in place on the Perkins Road campus in coming weeks. The institute will comprise three core elements: a longitudinal study of age-related changes in the healthy brains of volunteers age 60 and older; a world-

class screening platform to test the effectiveness of treatments for dementia, including drugs, gene therapy and lifestyle factors such as diet; and educational outreach to inform doctors, care providers and others of available therapies for Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia.

Initially, all support for the institute will be private. As it matures, it will gain the ability to pursue funding from the National Institutes of Health, the state and other sources of research support. “From the start, the community is going to be a critical part of this effort at all levels,” says Keller, who already receives funds from NIH.

NEURONS AFAR

The most publicly visible element of the institute—and the centerpiece of its first efforts—will be the long-term study of age-related changes in the healthy brains of as many as 1,000 volunteers from Baton Rouge and elsewhere in Louisiana. The study will provide researchers with important insights into the ways in which diet, weight, exercise and other factors contribute to brain function over time, with a real-time view of those changes as they occur.

Information from the study will be valuable to researchers and drug companies looking for effective therapies for dementia, but also useful to the volunteers themselves. At the University of Kentucky, for instance, participants in a comparable study made changes in diet and other aspects of their lifestyles in response to changes detected by yearly measurements of brain function, Keller says.

At Pennington, study participants who undergo brain changes, including those who develop dementia, will be eligible for clinical trials to test the effectiveness of a range of therapies, from diet to drugs to gene therapy. In time, the institute will establish a brain bank where study volunteers can donate their brain after death and thereby provide researchers with another critical tool for under-

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY STACY JANIS.



Here is a view of how massive cell loss changes the whole brain in advanced Alzheimer's disease. This slide shows a crosswise "slice" through the middle of the brain between the ears. The left side shows a healthy brain and the right side shows a person with advanced Alzheimer's.

In the Alzheimer brain, the cortex shrivels up, damaging areas involved in thinking, planning and remembering. Shrinkage is especially severe in the hippocampus, an area of the cortex that plays a key role in formation of new memories. Ventricles (fluid-filled spaces within the brain) grow larger.

standing what factors help to keep a brain healthy.

"All of this is aimed at supporting successful aging, including the prevention of dementia," Keller says. "I've already seen what a positive impact it can have on a community to bring volunteers, researchers, clinicians and care givers together to share resources and information. That is what we plan to bring here."

ACCUMULATING KNOWLEDGE

A challenge for researchers everywhere is finding ways to translate what investigators know about what helps and hurts the brain into real-world therapies to stop or lessen the impact of dementia. For example, researchers know that a high-fat diet accelerates aging, and that obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease are likewise linked to dementia, says Keller.

Researchers also know that sharply restricting caloric intake in mice helps to keep active an enzyme that removes toxic substances from cells.

In humans, that enzyme works less effectively as people age, leading to declines in the function of the skin, muscles, liver and brain. Finding a way to

mimic caloric restriction in humans without actually requiring people to sharply reduce their food intake for long periods—perhaps through a new drug or changes in diet or lifestyle—could help keep the cell-cleaning enzyme active and stave off or prevent declines in the function of the brain and other organs.

And while researchers know that a high-fat diet accelerates aging, "what we don't know is what are the long-term effects if you stop eating a high-fat diet, in terms of the impact of aging and the brain," Keller says.

At Pennington, Keller will lead the search into such questions through an exploration of the links between Alzheimer's disease and diet. The research team will include his wife, Annadora Bruce-Keller. With more collaborators across the country, they will examine the role of oxidative damage and the development of Alzheimer's disease.

Meantime, Keller encourages individuals who are interested in participating in the longitudinal study to contact him for more information. He can be reached at (225) 763-2973 or by e-mail at dementia@pbrc.edu. •

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Swing line: Near Franklin on Highway 90, crews huddled around downed power lines in an open field. Some people in South Louisiana didn't have power for more than two weeks.

Still Standing

SHRUGGING OFF GUSTAV, LOUISIANA RESIDENTS AND FOUNDATION RESPOND >> by **MUKUL VERMA** photos by **LORI WASELCHUK**

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ce, tarps, food, water. Repeat. The National Guardsman dropped the necessities into car trunks and truck beds in a makeshift drive-thru relief line. Then it all stopped.

“We got deadwood,” barked one. A truck had broken down, requiring several guardsmen to muscle it to the side. Order was restored to the Gustav queue.

From Houma through Baton Rouge and beyond, the storm resulted in remarkable scenes of recov-

ery, countering the sobering calculation—Gustav had caused \$1.8 billion in losses. That's just insured losses. Many had no insurance, particularly in poorer neighborhoods in towns like Donaldsonville, where homes are patched to await the next storm.

A ride through devastated areas showed that Gustav was far different than Katrina. And so was the response of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

After Katrina, the Foundation was the intersection of philanthropy meeting hurricane response.

Millions of dollars were raised from around the world for immediate needs, which included helping more than 70 shelters cover their expenses because government rules excluded federal assistance.

What Katrina did was obvious. Gustav was different. Its expansive destruction was mostly understood by people living in the mess. You know what happened.

Water oaks leveled houses. Power was out for weeks. Cars played stop-and-go at traffic lights. High deductibles required people to dig into their own pockets to fix houses.

Just as after Katrina, some people evacuated their homes for shelters. This time, the national TV crews didn't show up with bright lights looking for children split from their parents. Because New Orleans had been spared, Gustav wasn't what they call a "TV story."

One thing, though, paralleled the two storms. The Foundation again matched the power of philanthropy with needs in the community.

It started the day after Gustav. E-mails—those that reached their destination—called a Foundation staff meeting, which was convened at the community room of the Main Street Market because there was no power around the corner at the of-

fice. People in wellies and raingear armed with BlackBerries and portable computers talked while eating chicken and noodles, thanks to Paul Wong,

a market restaurateur who showed up to feed the troops for free.

Some staff members updated the world about the work of the Foundation, using a connection at the Louisiana Technology Park

to post on the web. Most fanned out across Baton Rouge to gather knowledge about the situation on the ground. When they returned, the response plans made after Katrina were adjusted to meet the demands of Gustav. The Foundation began filling gaps in need at local shelters.

Most shelters were well-prepared. Evacuees were resting comfortably.

Drive-thrus doled out food to people in vehicles.

One shelter, though, was heavy with misery. Evacuees from a hospice were sleeping on the floor, some of their final days spent in the dark, with little food

and water—and only each other's unhappiness as comfort. A wheelchair-bound woman at that shelter grabbed our photographer's hand. Not letting go, she looked at the light outside and desperately whispered, "I see the door; let's go."

Saddened, our photographer couldn't go

\$600 million

Entergy's estimated cost of restoring power after Hurricane Gustav. Entergy will attempt to recover the \$600 million from customers.

\$1 million

Edison Electric Institute's estimate for burying one mile of power lines, a hot topic after Hurricane Gustav. North Carolina is among states considering burying some lines to reduce storm-related outages. Burying major lines is more expensive.

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Nothing to smile about: In Thibodaux, an awning from a family store was pitched about by Gustav. Still, the immigrant family managed to open for business within days of the storm.



Cut it out: Destruction was spread across Donaldsonville, but the poorest neighborhoods suffered the greatest damage. City employee Reginald Brown cleared tree branches near the historic district.

along with her escape plan—and moved on. The Foundation responded with supplies and a goal to eliminate substandard shelters.

In the next few days, we traveled around Louisiana, making notes of places that had been spared and those that were pushed around by Gustav. Houma and Baton Rouge appeared the worst. Thibodaux and Donaldsonville were also battered.

Soon after, the Foundation made \$257,000 in

\$443,000

Amount the Foundation granted in the first three rounds of grants for hurricane relief. Another \$200,000 was committed to recovery in Southwest Louisiana and Acadiana via the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana, a sister foundation.

grants to nonprofits, offsetting some of the unexpected expenses incurred after Gustav. Some of the nonprofits received additional funding from the Foundation's partners—The Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation and the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation. Together, the partners were able to move rapidly after disasters and provide more relief by pooling resources, including sharing

1.9 million

Evacuees for Gustav, the largest evacuation in U.S. history.



Laughter as medicine: Near Morgan City, National Guardsmen took a break for laughter. The 159th Fighter Wing of the Air National Guard, based in Belle Chasse, had set up a relief line at Stephenville to distribute ice, water, tarps and meals.

\$750,000

Amount raised by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to pay for hurricane relief this year. After Katrina, the Foundation raised \$45 million. Nationwide, charities raised \$25 million for hurricane relief in 2008, far less than the cost of helping people. Catholic Charities USA raised \$54,000 after Gustav, compared to \$150 million after Katrina. Relief donations have been scarce because of stock market turmoil, national attention on the presidential election and the national media ignoring the Gustav story, the Chronicle of Philanthropy reports.

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One way: On the road from Thibodaux to Donaldsonville, Gustav ripped apart more vulnerable homes, particularly dwellings that were next to open fields.

\$1.8 billion

Insured losses in Louisiana stemming from the hurricane. ISO Property Services estimates 245,000 claims will be filed.

information about the needs.

Meanwhile, the Foundation also committed \$200,000 to assist in the recovery of the Lake Charles region and Acadiana through the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana, a sister organization.

After both Ike and Gustav, we discovered more than needs to fill. We also discovered that Louisiana residents are more resilient—and hopeful—after storms. Such as the National Guardsmen from Louisiana, who pushed that stopped truck out of the drive-thru line and returned to providing meals, tarps, ice, water. They had been working

since before Gustav.

First, they drove evacuees in school buses for six hours from New Orleans to Shreveport. Afterward, they rode out the storm at their Belle Chasse base. When the storm was over, they dispatched to Stephenville, near Morgan City, to work the relief line. There was joy in their work—and good humor.

“We’re gypsies,” said Chris Montz, a guardsman from Abita Springs. •



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Town Square Take Two

by MUKUL VERMA

Sit for a while, have a coffee with a side of conversation. Or get on your mark, get set, run a 5K. Dance to live music. Share the holidays with neighbors and strangers. Watch fireworks on the river. See Baton Rouge go by.

These are the dreams for the future town square, a plaza stretching from the river to Fifth Street along North Boulevard, the tree-lined street that already is a dysfunctional gathering space.

The first take by designers received mixed reviews.

Two of the concepts were contemporary, meaning they were open and flexible spaces for a variety of uses. One idea imprinted the river's currents on the square's grounds, placed a stage next to the library, offered sitting areas along North Boulevard and placed a digital display atop the library. A second design had solar panels and other sustainable elements. The other two concepts were traditional. Think of them as outside rooms with purposes.

The designers, who are led by Brown Danos Land Design and Joseph Furr Design, returned to the drawing board in late September. As this publication was going to press, the Downtown



Development District had set an Oct. 14 meeting to unveil round two of the designs. More input will be gathered before the final design is turned over for construction drawings.

Construction should begin in summer 2009, with the square, along with the new courthouse that lines it, opening in 2010. The city-parish has set aside \$4.5 million. The Downtown Development District may seek sponsorships if the cost of the square is more.

"It will be a gathering place for active and passive things in the community," said Davis Rhorer, executive director of the DDD. "It will give a sense of who we are as a community, and there will always be something going on there."

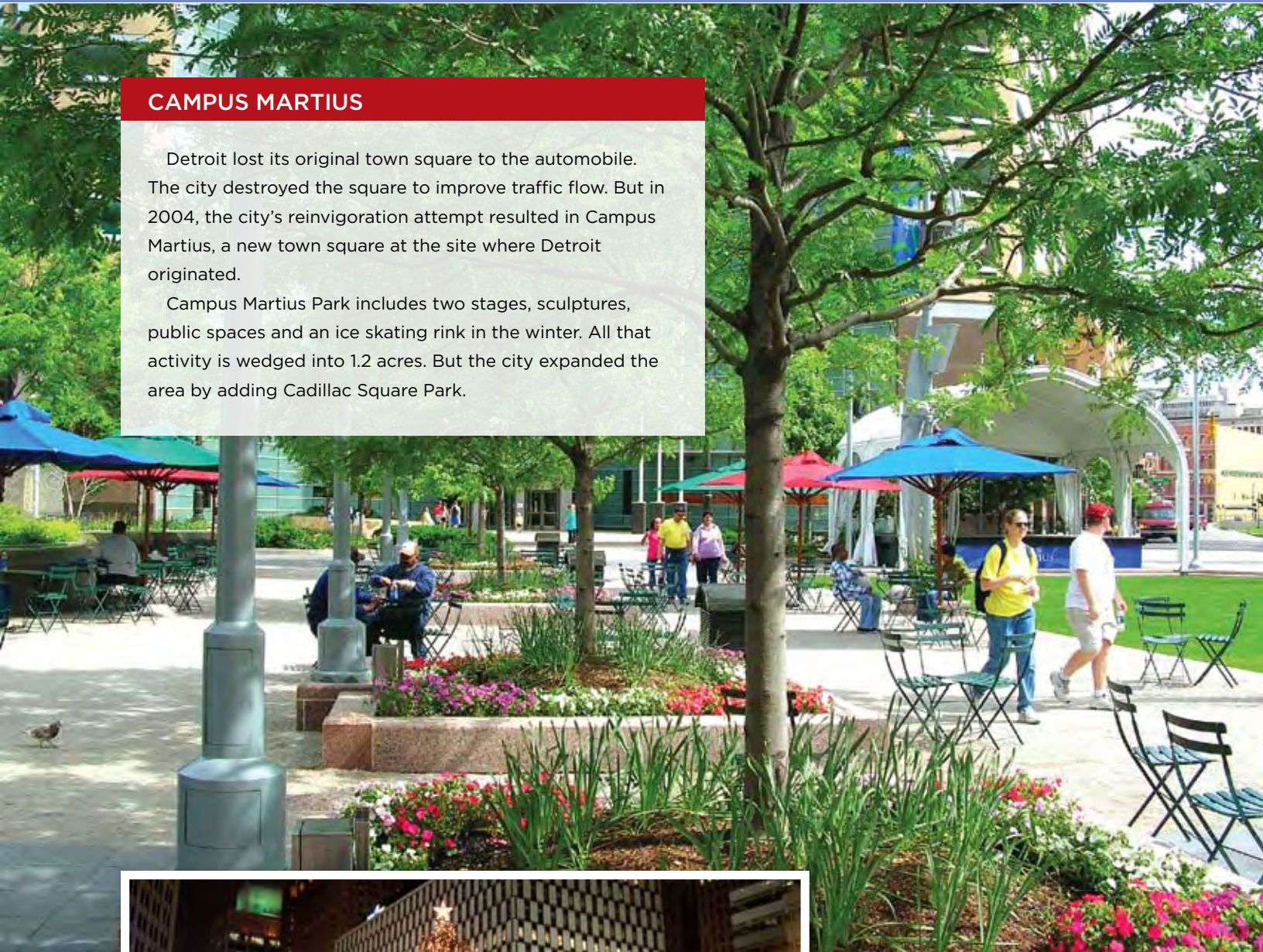
But what is a town square? Here, we provide a primer, so you can gauge whether Baton Rouge is getting a good town square. >>

But what is a town square? Here, we provide a primer, so you can gauge whether Baton Rouge is getting a good town square. >>

CAMPUS MARTIUS

Detroit lost its original town square to the automobile. The city destroyed the square to improve traffic flow. But in 2004, the city's reinvigoration attempt resulted in Campus Martius, a new town square at the site where Detroit originated.

Campus Martius Park includes two stages, sculptures, public spaces and an ice skating rink in the winter. All that activity is wedged into 1.2 acres. But the city expanded the area by adding Cadillac Square Park.



Two seasons in Detroit's Campus Martius Park.



Urban planner Phil Myrick has worked for 12 years at the Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit that helps people create great places.

Hip Squares

>> by MUKUL VERMA

Town squares were not uncommon more than five decades ago. Anchored by markets, they were places for mingling, shopping, meeting neighbors. A flight to the suburbs caused a decline in town squares. Even in large cities, squares became little used from neglect.

Town squares, though, are rebounding with a resurgence of cities. Phil Myrick, vice president of the Project for Public Spaces, has consulted on some of the best, including Discovery Green, which opened in Houston this year to greater-than-expected crowds.

We spoke with Myrick about town squares, why some succeed while others fail and asked him to pick some of his favorites.

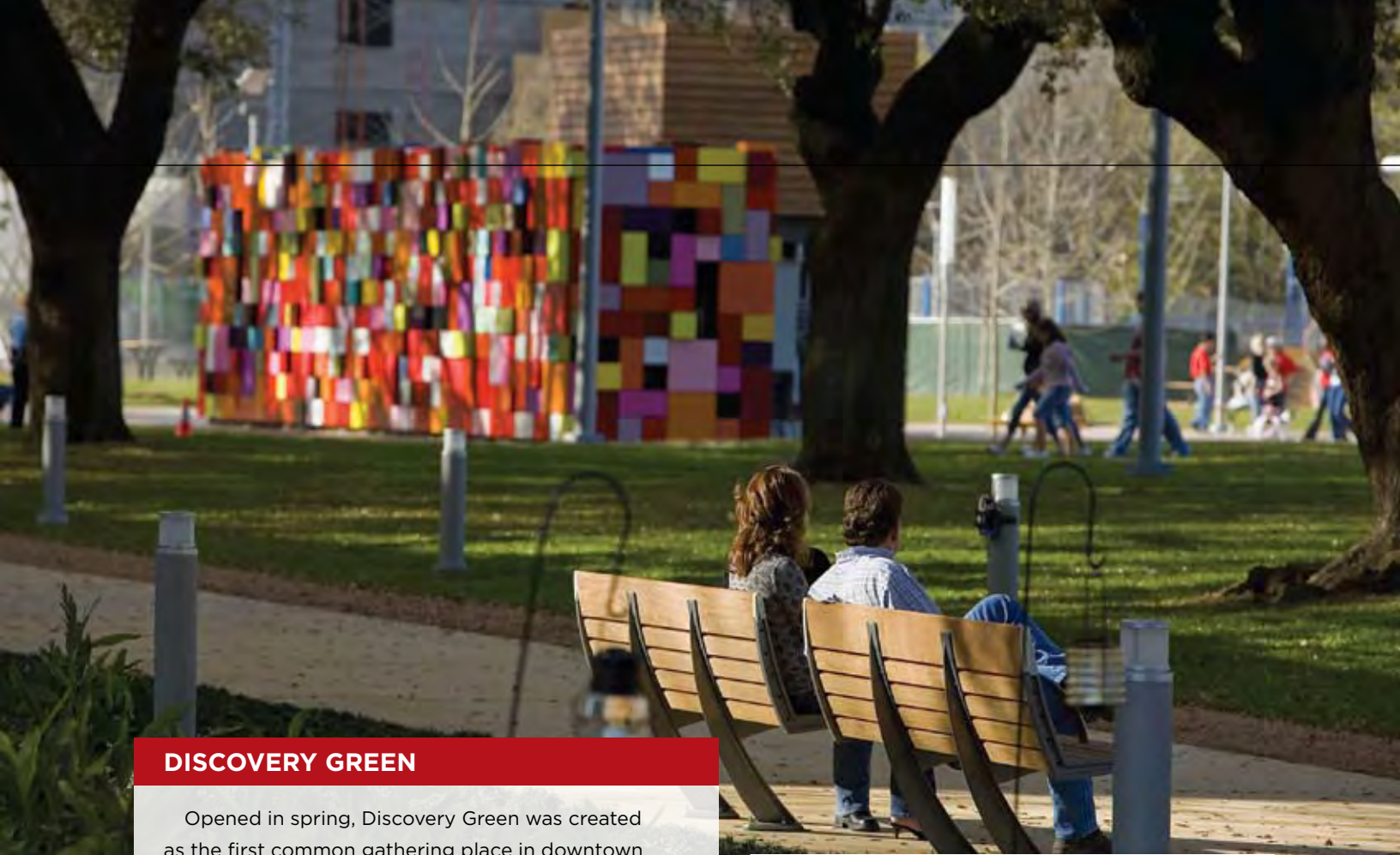
Why a town square? A city needs a town square because so many cities have lost that sense of belonging, community spirit, friendliness and neighborliness. We have designated those opportunities out of our lives in terms of how we program our lives and build our cities. Town squares provide opportunities to do what people on the earth are here for—socialize, spend time with each other, have accidental opportunities to meet other people. All of those things have been overlooked for much of

the last century, and I really think people are sick of the resulting trimming down of all the dimensions of their lives to a few predictable, thin experiences that isolate them from other people.

It appears that town squares are returning.

Yes. Right now, I have in front of me a design that we are reviewing for Pittsburgh's downtown—the Pittsburgh Market Square. They are putting this very nice European-style market right smack in the downtown of Pittsburgh. Unfortunately, for decades, the square has been overlooked and not programmed or well-maintained. No one really considered it a priority. But a couple of years ago, the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership called us and said, "This is too important; people want this. People are rediscovering our downtown. They want to live here, and we have an urgent need to create these kinds of social places to serve the people."

Why did town squares disappear? Part of the reason is that the need for the places was forgotten because of flight from cities over the last 50 years. Now that people are coming back, it's on top of their priorities. You have to start paying attention to the quality of life factor if you want to main-



DISCOVERY GREEN

Opened in spring, Discovery Green was created as the first common gathering place in downtown Houston, with design led by Hargreaves Associates and an assist from the Partnership for Public Spaces. The park is surrounded by a convention center, sports arenas and a hotel. Houston converted underused green spaces and parking lots into the 12-acre “backyard.”

Discovery Green has stimulated economic development. A high-rise building is under construction next to it. It’s the Discovery Tower, a 30-floor office tower with ground floor retail.

Discovery Green includes a one-acre lake for model watercraft, children’s playground, interactive water features, amphitheater stage and slope, dog runs, public art, green open space and restaurants, natural gardens, ice skating and a bandstand. An underground car park serves the convention center and sports arenas. The space is designed to accommodate many needs.

The city, the Houston Downtown Park Corp and private sources paid \$127 million for the project. Land alone cost \$57 million.



Margo Sawyer’s *Synchronicity of Color*, seen above, is among public art at Discovery Green in Houston. The town square has been welcomed by big crowds and spurred development.



UNION SQUARE

Union Square in New York is at a key crossroad of Manhattan. Because of its location at the intersection of subway lines, the greenmarket at the square attracts more than 250,000 customers each week. The square includes statues of pivotal historic figures. Surrounding the square are restaurants, clubs, off-broadway shows and destination retailers. An imperative for the modern age—the square offers free wifi.

The nonprofit Union Square Partnership improves the square with assistance from residents and businesses. The partnership is comprised of the Local Development Corp. and the city's first business improvement district, which has taxing authority.

tain the momentum of people coming back to the cities.

Economic studies have shown property on parks has higher values. Is that true of town squares as well? Downtown Houston's new Discovery Green has delivered a huge economic impact. It has directed development around it. Same thing with Campus Martius in Detroit. It's all because of the immense amenity they have put in each city. It somehow doesn't matter how much it cost (Discovery Green was \$127 million), the return on investment is much more.

Give us a heads up. What is the top reason a town square fails? The mistake a city typically makes is underprogramming a space, and treating a town square as a design exercise only. And not taking the early step of creating a really great vision that focuses on human activity. You have to give people reasons to go there.

You can spend a lot of money on a park or square and if you forget programming, you face a real danger that no one will go to that space.

Could you provide an example of success? Pittsburgh Market Square. A brilliant idea was to put the market back. I'm looking at a design right now that will provide a fantastic experience. It looks like it's got eight to 10 meat stalls, 10 fish stalls, a produce section. It also has a stage for events, extra-wide sidewalks. I can look at it and predict it will work. If they manage the market well, it's going to have a huge, positive impact on downtown.

You said they are putting the market back. Did it leave? Yes. A lot of downtowns evolved around markets. Markets were the first economic activity in a town. When a market succeeded, it created more reasons for people to go there. Markets are

wonderful economic generators that people absolutely connect to.

Other than a lack of programming, why have some squares failed? Programming is definitely No. 1. But another mistake is to not connect the project properly to the surrounding city, to not treat the surrounding streets holistically with the design of the square.

A square could fail if it has an excessively wide street. Or if it does not incorporate nearby destinations with great sidewalks and great streets.

Another common mistake is to not tap a community of partners—adjacent businesses, adjacent property owners, local institutions, the community at large—and get them excited and brainstorming and participating in solutions and in making things happen in that space. Getting the university, for instance, to see it as a performance space. Getting churches to see it as a space for celebrations and weddings. Getting the schools to see it as a place that can be incorporated in their curriculum or for recreation.

Name your favorite town squares? Union Square in New York has a great market and it has revitalized the area and the whole district around it. Union Square in San Francisco has transformed its area. Copley Square in Boston was transformed from a barren place in a real important part of the city into a space with a market, greenspace and trees. Campus Martius in Detroit is one of the biggest success stories in the last several years.

Do you expect more town squares across the country? Cities are on a roll. To keep them on a roll, they will have to deliver these types of amenities and quality-of-life characteristics. Quality of life now almost defines economic development in cities. •

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10 Principles for Creating Town Squares

Reprinted courtesy of the Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit dedicated to creating and sustaining public places that build communities.

>> IMAGE AND IDENTITY

Historically, squares were the center of communities, and they traditionally helped shape the identity of entire cities. Sometimes a fountain was used to give the square a strong image. Think of the majestic Trevi Fountain in Rome or the Swann Fountain in Philadelphia's Logan Circle. The image of many squares was closely tied to the great civic buildings located nearby, such as cathedrals, city halls or libraries. Today, creating a square that becomes the most significant place in a city—that gives identity to whole communities—is a huge challenge, but meeting this challenge is absolutely necessary if great civic squares are to return.



The Piazza di Trevi, Rome.

Power of Ten” to set goals for destinations within a square. Creating ten good places, each with ten things to do, offers a full program for a successful square.

>> AMENITIES

A square should feature amenities that make it comfortable for people to use. A bench or waste receptacle in just the right location can make a big difference in how people choose to use a place. Lighting can

strengthen a square's identity while highlighting specific activities, entrances, or pathways. Public art can be a great magnet for children of all ages to come together. Whether temporary or permanent, a good amenity will help establish a convivial setting for social interaction.

>> ATTRACTIONS AND DESTINATIONS

Any great square has a variety of smaller places within it to appeal to various people. These can include outdoor cafés, fountains, sculpture, or a bandshell for performances. These attractions don't need to be big to make the square a success. In fact, some of the best civic squares have numerous small attractions such as a vendor cart or playground that, when put together, draw people throughout the day. We often use the idea of “The

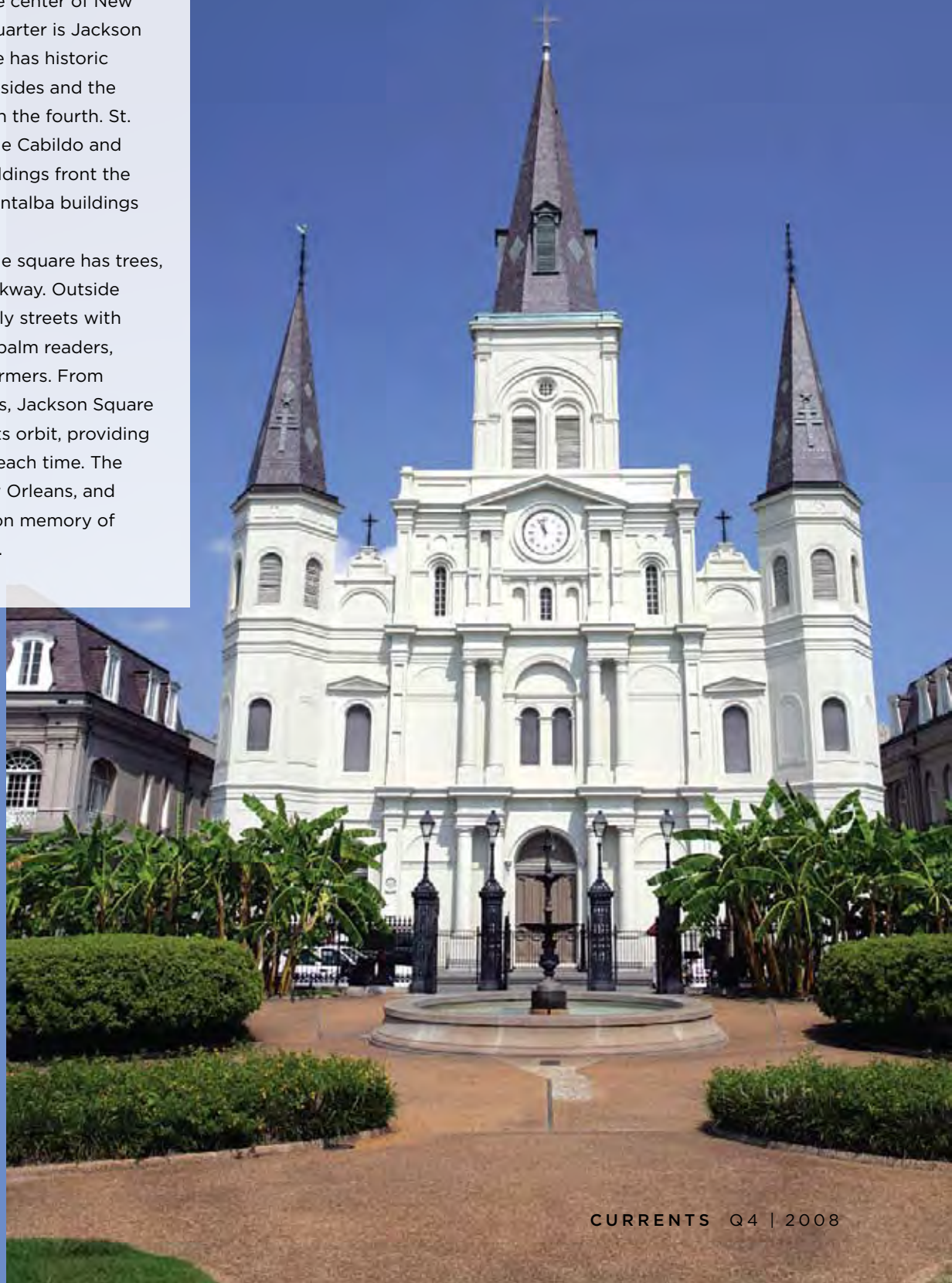
>> FLEXIBLE DESIGN

The use of a square changes during the course of the day, week and year. To respond to these natural fluctuations, flexibility needs to be built in. Instead of a permanent stage, for example, a retractable or temporary stage could be used. Likewise, it is important to have on-site storage for movable chairs, tables, umbrellas and games so they can be used at a moment's notice.

JACKSON SQUARE

Most people reading this magazine have visited one of the best squares in the world. At the center of New Orleans' French Quarter is Jackson Square. The square has historic buildings on three sides and the Mississippi River on the fourth. St. Louis Cathedral, the Cabildo and the Presbytere buildings front the square, and the Pontalba buildings are on either side.

A park within the square has trees, benches and a walkway. Outside the park are friendly streets with musicians, artists, palm readers, vendors and performers. From surrounding streets, Jackson Square pulls visitors into its orbit, providing a new take on life each time. The space defines New Orleans, and becomes a common memory of people who visit it.



>> SEASONAL STRATEGY

A successful square can't flourish with just one design or management strategy. Great squares such as Bryant Park, the plazas of Rockefeller Center and Detroit's new Campus Martius change with the seasons. Skating rinks, outdoor cafés, markets, horticulture displays, art and sculpture help adapt our use of the space from one season to the next.

>> ACCESS

To be successful, a square needs to be easy to get to. The best squares are always easily accessible by foot. Surrounding streets are narrow, crosswalks are well marked, lights are timed for pedestrians, traffic moves slowly, and transit stops are located nearby. A square surrounded by lanes of fast-moving traffic will be cut off from pedestrians and deprived of its most essential element—people.

>> THE INNER SQUARE & THE OUTER SQUARE

Visionary park planner Frederick Law Olmsted's idea of the "inner park" and the "outer park" is just as relevant today as it was over 100 years ago. The streets and sidewalks around a square greatly affect its accessibility and use, as do the buildings that surround it. Imagine a square fronted on each side by 15-foot blank walls—that is the worst-case scenario for the outer square. Then imagine that same square situated next to a public library: the library doors open right onto the square; people sit outside and read on the steps; maybe the children's reading room has an outdoor space right on the square, or even a bookstore and café. An active, welcoming outer square is essential to the well-being of the inner square.

>> REACHING OUT LIKE AN OCTOPUS

Just as important as the edge of a square is the way that streets, sidewalks and ground floors of adjacent buildings lead into it. Like the tentacles of an octopus extending into the surrounding neighborhood, the influence of a good square, such as Union Square in New York, starts at least a block away. Vehicles slow down, walking becomes more enjoyable and pedestrian traffic increases. Elements within the square are visible from a distance and the ground floor activity of buildings entices pedestrians to move toward the square.

>> THE CENTRAL ROLE OF MANAGEMENT

The best places are ones that people return to time and time again. The only way to achieve this is through a management plan that understands and promotes ways of keeping the square safe and lively. For example, a good manager understands existing and potential users and gears events to both types of people. Good managers become so familiar with the patterns of how people use the park that waste receptacles get emptied at just the right time and refreshment stands are open when people most want them. Good managers create a feeling of comfort and safety in a square, fixing and maintaining it so that people feel assured that someone is in charge.

>> DIVERSE FUNDING SOURCES

A well-managed square is generally beyond the scope of the average city parks or public works department, which is why partnerships have been established to operate most of the best squares in the United States. These partnerships seek to supplement what the city can provide with funding from diverse sources, including rent from cafés, markets or other small commercial uses on the site, taxes on adjacent properties and benefit fundraisers. •

Phase One Begins for Phase Two of Plan Baton Rouge

>> by **ROB ANDERSON** photo by **TIM MUELLER**

It was standing room only in the studio room at the Shaw Center for the Arts. Though it was the end of a long first day of presentations at the Center for Planning Excellence's "Livable Louisiana: A Summit on Smart Growth" event, the crowd was still energized. There was a palpable sense of anticipation in the air as they awaited one last speaker: Alex Krieger, leader of the team that would be developing the second phase of Plan Baton Rouge, the city's comprehensive master plan for downtown.

Though his presentation was an overview of cities that had invested to successfully revitalize their urban core and did not address the specifics of Plan Baton Rouge's new phase, the appearance provided an exciting peek at what lies ahead for downtown. It also held a symbolic meaning: The second phase of Plan Baton Rouge had begun.

Since that late-August appearance, symbolism has given way to real-world action. In mid-September, Plan Baton Rouge Phase Two Project Manager Alan Mountjoy of Krieger's award-winning, Massachusetts-based urban design firm Chan Krieger Sieniewicz, visited Baton Rouge to tour downtown, collect background data and, perhaps most importantly, to execute the Phase Two contract with the Center for Planning Excellence.

Next up was a meeting with the mayor and

a blue-ribbon committee of local leaders on Oct. 23. Also that day, Krieger returned to Baton Rouge for another presentation, this time as the headliner for the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's Marcia Kaplan Kantrow Lecture Series.

The Phase Two process is expected to last six to nine months and it will include public input sessions during the process. Initial planning concepts for Plan Baton Rouge Phase Two will be presented in a public meeting in mid-November. Project information and progress will be posted on the Downtown Development District's new website, downtownbatonrouge.org.

The City of Baton Rouge, Fannie Mae, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and the Center for Planning Excellence are the major funding partners for Plan Baton Rouge Phase Two. Other funding was contributed by the Downtown Business Association, Downtown Development District and the Baton Rouge Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. The Downtown Development District and the non-profit Center for Planning Excellence will work directly with the Chan Krieger Sieniewicz team as they develop Plan Baton Rouge Phase Two. •



Participants in the Rock Band Tournament at the Roux House on Third Street in downtown Baton Rouge. EA Sports helped sponsor the tournament so participants could meet EA representatives and ask about job opportunities at their new testing facility set to open later this month on LSU's South Campus.

In the Game

VIDEO GAME DEVELOPER CHOOSES BATON ROUGE,
OPENING CHANCES FOR MORE LUCRATIVE JOBS

>> by **AMY ALEXANDER** photos by **TIM MUELLER**

At the Austin Game Developers Conference each September, the air grows electric, not just with the sound of blips and beeps, but also with the hungered networking of animators, musicians, programmers and other professionals who blend their skills into a complex dance that makes the next Madden Football or World of Warcraft.

Stacey Simmons mingles. "We definitely try to talk to everyone," says the director of the Baton Rouge Area Digital Industries Consortium, BRADIC. "The atmosphere is fun, but intense."

Simmons' pitch at gaming conventions around the country: Think Baton Rouge. Think Louisiana.

"There is more computing power per capita in Louisiana than anywhere else in the country," she says. "Louisiana has one of the most advanced infrastructures in the nation, and more available supercomputing power than even North Carolina's research triangle."

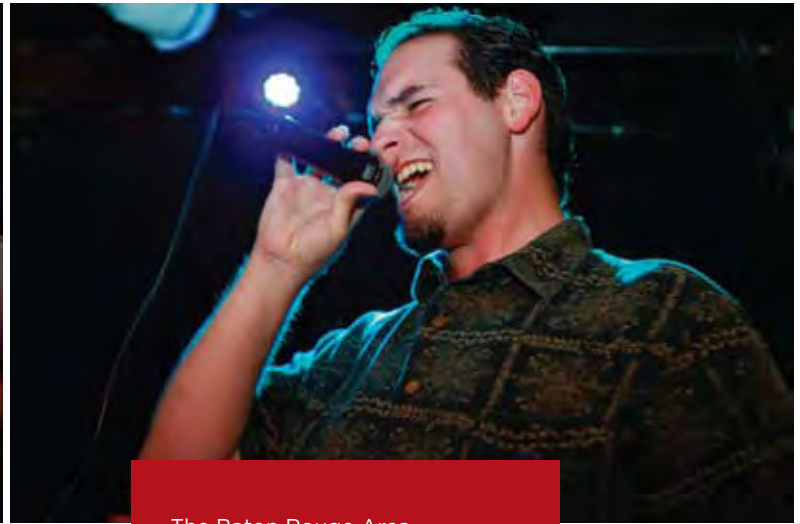
That was enough to grab the attention of EA Sports, a Redwood City, Calif., interactive entertainment software company that is establishing a new global quality assurance center in Baton Rouge.

The company will test its EA Sports software titles at the new facility. It will be the first of its kind in the U.S., and will eventually have 20 full-time employees and 200 part-time game testers made up mostly of college students. The testing facility will be housed at LSU's South Campus off of GSRI Road.

"I know this will be a dream job for some kids, but it is also a key part of strengthening our state's economic development so we become the best place in the world to do business and all of our children can stay right here at home to pursue their dreams," said Gov. Bobby Jindal.

The company will partner with Louisiana State University and expects to be in operation by the end of 2008.

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The Baton Rouge Area Foundation, along with the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and the city-parish, provide funds each year to support the Red Stick Animation Festival and the digital initiative. The goal of the effort is to build the digital media business, with the landing of EA Sports as a big win.

“EA Sports is a great fit with LSU, as there is a deep-rooted heritage in sports at the university,” says Sharon Knight, senior vice president of central development services at EA. “This partnership will open future opportunities for the state of Louisiana, LSU and EA.”

GAME ON

Baton Rouge has the potential to become a center for the digital media industry, a sector that brings in more than \$10 billion per year in U.S. sales. Together with LSU, BRADIC, and local and state governments, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation is working to ignite local opportunities in the digital media industry.

Already, video game companies such as Nerjyzed Entertainment, Yatec Games, Turbo Squid and Resurgent claim Baton Rouge as their home.

In the capital city, companies can take advantage of the aggressive tax incentive program put

into place by the Louisiana Legislature in 2002. When the tax incentive program passed, it included both a motion picture component and a video gaming component. The glimmer of making movies was foremost in many people’s minds. In reality, says John Spain, executive vice president of the Foundation, the video gaming industry “is already much larger than all of the film business combined.”

Louisiana’s tax incentive program is a “wow!” factor for big companies. “But for the start-up companies, it’s just as good and perhaps more important,” Spain says.

Big companies are also seeking a local workforce that is trained and savvy.

In 2006, LSU began strategizing how students could ready themselves for new industries by



Performers during the Rock Band Tournament at the Roux House on Third Street in downtown Baton Rouge.

meshing their education across the various disciplines the university offers. Out of this effort arose The Arts, Visualization, Advanced Technologies and Research (AVATAR) Initiative, an educational program that spans the departments of Computer Science, Electrical and Computer Engineering, and English, as well as the Center for Computation & Technology.

The AVATAR initiative will, in essence, bolster local efforts to attract digital media companies by creating a pipeline of highly educated employees and executives who have the skills to push the industry forward, not only in Baton Rouge but around the world.

AVATAR's proposed curriculum has been reviewed by executives at EA Sports, Sony Imageworks, Disney Studios and Rhythm & Hues. The initiative will also bring a dozen world-renowned scholars, artists and scientists to LSU. Their research and teaching will enhance the discipline and make LSU more capable of training undergraduates for careers in the industry. EA plans to assist LSU in its AVATAR initiative.

Baton Rouge's Red Stick Animation Festival attracts industry professionals from around the world. Its continuing success is another feature that serves to make Baton Rouge attractive to companies in the gaming industry.

TAKING AIM

When Simmons of BRADIC found out that EA was considering outsourcing its testing operations, she approached EA executive Philip Holt, asking him for a meeting before he made any decisions. In January, Simmons flew to Orlando and made her pitch to Holt. After a few trips to Baton Rouge and meetings with Jindal and Baton Rouge Mayor Kip Holden, EA Sports was presented with an incentive package that it accepted.

"The chamber, city, state and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation all played their roles in making sure the incentive package was attractive and realistic and that goals could be met," Simmons says. "I brought the group to Baton Rouge; the chamber negotiated the incentives with the city and state and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation made sure



“A lot of the higher-ups in these digital media organizations came into their careers through one of these testing facilities.”

—JOHN SPAIN

that the company understood that there was political and public will for them to be here.”

Once it’s up and running, the testing facility will house hundreds of video-game-playing employees. But they won’t just be lounging around. They’ll provide the perspective that will make the games better. “A lot of this testing that will be done in Baton Rouge was happening in Romania,” Spain says.

He adds that LSU students likely know a bit more about the cultural aspects of, say, college football or NASCAR, than someone from another country. That kind of feedback is a valuable part of making a game more playable and more realistic.

What’s more, those who are hired to work at the facility will have a foot in the industry’s door.

“A lot of the higher-ups in these digital media organizations came into their careers through one of these testing facilities,” Spain says.

To build a keen understanding of the digital media industry, Holden has attended a few video

gaming conventions. He says companies such as EA bring the kind of jobs—clean and high paying—that make Baton Rouge’s future bright.

Spain notes those over 40 might not immediately realize the amazing potential of the digital media industry. “If you say ‘video gaming’ to someone who’s over 45, they don’t know anything about gaming and therefore tune out.”

To that end, he’s now the owner of a PlayStation 3. His favorite game is NCAA Football, which just happens to be a product of EA Sports. “I have Alabama and LSU, because my son-in-law is from Alabama. We play the game in Tiger Stadium, and LSU always wins.” •

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Trigger Men

THE WORLD'S NEED FOR MEDICAL PHYSICISTS IS GROWING. AN ACADEMIC PROGRAM TRAINS THEM IN BATON ROUGE

>> by **MAGGIE HEYN RICHARDSON** photos by **TIM MUELLER**

For most, the act of measuring is limited to the rudiments of life: pouring a cup of flour, marking the height of a growing child, penciling where to trim a two-by-four. For Dan Neck, a husband, father and medical physicist, measuring means those things—and much more.

His job is to manhandle thousands of calculations, calibrations and measurements to ensure that machines firing radiation at a cancer patient's offending cells do so with precision and accuracy. Radiation cannot be seen nor felt, and as past generations of cancer survivors can attest, its collateral damage to healthy cells can be extensive. When Neck measures, he's making certain that a beam of ionized radium is going exactly where it's intended. Every millimeter counts.

Medical physicists are a big-brained set who've chosen to apply their facility with movement and matter to cancer treatment. They're not physicians, but without them, oncologists can't operate the highly sophisticated radiation therapy machines that dispense treatment. The world needs more, and now, through a joint program between Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center and LSU, medical physicists, like program graduate Neck, will be trained—and many will remain—in Baton Rouge.

Established in 2004, the MBPCC-LSU Medical Physics program has made impressive strides, including luring Dr. Kenneth Hogstrom, a renowned heavyweight in the field. Hogstrom left a 25-year career at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston to help grow the program. He holds the Dr. Charles Smith Chair of Medical Physics at LSU and serves as aca-

Dr. Kenneth Hogstrom, left, of LSU and Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center leads a program to train medical physicists. With him is former program student Dr. Daniel Neck.

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TomoTherapy
HI-ART

MARY BIRD PERKINS
CANCER CENTER
Daniel Neck, MS
Medical Physicist

The Wilbur Marvin Fund of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted \$100,000 toward the purchase of the TomoTherapy machine at Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center.

demic program director. He is also chief of physics at Mary Bird Perkins.

That's where his 12 graduate students spend most of their time. With five, soon to be six, treatment rooms in which to work and observe, the students study everything there is to know—and what's not yet known—about the radiotherapy machines and the technology that drives them.

In the last decade, the field of radiation therapy has advanced faster than at any other point in history. Large, powerful linear accelerators, which look similar to CT scanners, are capable of mind-blowing acts: they can send radiation around anatomical obstructions; they can vary dosage levels to ensure each set of cells receive precisely the amount of radiation required and no more; they can fire in tight corridors to minimize residual damage.

But they must be constantly calibrated, checked for quality and programmed with enormous amounts of data. Everything from the dimensions of a patient's physical frame, to the exact location of the tumor, to the proximity of healthy tissues must be converted mathematically and fed into the machine.

"You've heard the expression in computers: garbage in, garbage out?" Hogstrom asks. "The same is true here. The machine is only as good as the person operating it."

Currently, there are about 6,000 medical physicists in the U.S., and most, like Neck, work as clinicians. The American Association of Physicists in Medicine, AAPM, projects a need for 300 new med-

ical physicists per year nationally, which is about double the capacity of established programs. That shortage will only intensify as baby boomers age, says Hogstrom.

Thus, the intention of the MBPCC-LSU program is to produce well-trained, marketable medical physicists who can both work in South Louisiana and move on to top jobs nationwide. The average pay in 2007 was \$164,000, according to AAPM.

In his short tenure, Hogstrom has crafted a strong master's degree curriculum, attracted top-caliber students, built an infrastructure and gained accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Physics Education Programs.

During the last academic cycle, more than 70 students from around the country applied for five openings.

"I'm a firm believer in focusing on quality, not quantity," says Hogstrom. "If you attract the best people, you'll grow the right way."

Next on the horizon is a PhD program, which Hogstrom believes will allow MBPCC-LSU to produce more research, the key, he says, in positioning it to be competitive.

Students in Hogstrom's program published seven research papers in respected academic journals over the last year.

"If you don't have students doing research, you don't have time day-to-day to push the abilities of the program," he says.

As a well-known field leader and the former medical physics chair at UT-M.D. Anderson, Hogstrom is often asked what it will take to propel the Mary Bird Perkins-LSU program to the top ranks of national cancer centers.

"Becoming like M.D. Anderson might be 50 years out," he says, "but if we keep doing what we're doing and we move into research, we'll be on the right track." •

PLAN BATON ROUGE: 1998-2008



SEE THE SUCCESS

The groundbreaking Plan Baton Rouge was unveiled in 1998, providing a blueprint for reclaiming and revitalizing Downtown Baton Rouge. A decade later, the plan's success is evident. Downtown is alive around the clock with people working, dining, socializing and enjoying museums, restaurants, concerts and events...

See for yourself how far we've come.

Call 225-267-6300 today and request your free copy of the new, commemorative photo book *Plan Baton Rouge: 1998-2008*.



Dumping the Grid

Curses to the electric grid. The rains come, transformers go bang in the distance, the lights flicker, moments later you are sitting in the dark.

Escaping the grid is becoming less expensive, but the cost of solar energy is three to five times higher than power from your friendly, local energy company. Still, solar energy believers with some extra money can switch—with a little help from the state of Louisiana and the federal government.

Louisiana offers up to a \$12,500 credit for solar installations, thanks to former Gov. Kathleen Blanco's administration. The state covers half the cost of a solar installation. So Louisiana would pay for \$12,500 of a \$25,000 system and \$5,000 of a \$10,000 system. The state provides a tax credit and writes a

check for any amount not covered by the credit.

A federal tax incentive reduces the cost of solar by another \$2,000, but hurry, for the incentive expires this year unless the government extends it.

Meanwhile, solar breakthroughs continue at a hot pace. The latest is from Day 4, a British Columbia firm that has discovered a way to cut the cost of solar energy by 25%. The company claims its process reduces the cost per watt to \$3 from \$4, which equals electricity prices of 20 cents per kilowatt hour.

The company's redesigned electrodes permit solar panels to absorb more light and operate at a higher voltage. Unlike some other advances, Day 4 says its technology will reach the market within 18 months.

That fantasy about your power meter turning backwards—selling energy to the power companies—is getting closer. •



Drivers: Look Out

A mix of fear and knowledge can prevent deaths. That is the logic for SafeRoadMaps.org, a website that provides details of vehicle-related deaths. Using federal data, the site shows where motorists died, whether there was alcohol involved and if riders were wearing safety belts.

The sophisticated site is run by the Center for Excellence in Rural Safety at the University of Minnesota. The goal of the site is to provide policymakers and drivers with information to

make roads safer.

The site gets personal. Enter your zip code to find the traffic deaths around you. And use the Safe Road Maps to compare traffic safety legislation in your area with others.

One thing the site makes clear: Motoring is dangerous. Across the country, there were 42,000 automobile-related fatalities in 2006. •



Sweet Deal

In a special issue of *Currents* featuring Louisiana ideas and innovations, we wrote about Verenium Corp., which has a pilot plant in Jennings producing biofuels from sugarcane waste. Since then, the firm's prospects have turned sweeter.

In summer, energy giant BP invested \$90 million in Verenium, locking up the company's promising technology. With BP as a partner, Verenium has the resources to spread its biofuels plants, which are novel because they turn sugarcane refuse instead of corn and other foodstocks into fuel.

Verenium says its Jennings plant can produce ethanol for less than \$3 per gallon. The company is improving production techniques to drop the price even further. The firm hasn't disclosed the location of its first commercial plant, but has said it would start with plants in Louisiana, Texas and Florida.

Verenium's technology works with cellu-



lose, the most abundant organic molecule on the planet. Verenium doses bagasse—the remains after juice is squeezed from cane—with acid and tosses the material into brewing tanks. In the tanks, microbes produce an enzyme that unlocks sugar. In a subsequent step, two other enzymes turn the sugar into fuel.

BP praised Verenium's technology. "This deal puts us at the head of the cellulosic biofuels game," said Sue Ellerbusch, BP Biofuels North America president. •

Energy Rocks

Alternative energy is hot. And nowhere is it hotter than under your feet.

Geothermal energy—produced by radiation in the Earth's mantle—fuels a limited number of power plants in the world. But Google.org, the philanthropic arm of the search company, is betting that tapping into the heat will produce vast amounts of energy.

To move the technology along, Google.org is investing \$10 million in AltaRock Energy and Potter Drilling, and also fund-



ing research into enhanced geothermal systems, EGS.

EGS aims to create steam power by injecting water into deep wells that tap superheated rocks. Water emerging as steam spins turbines to produce electricity. The technology would unhook geothermal energy from geysers, allowing EGS plants to be built wherever it's feasible to drill deep into the earth. •

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Clean Coal

Underground heat is one way to produce energy from the earth. (See previous item). Another promising technology has been around for decades, but has gotten new life now that oil and gas prices are in a rising cycle.

Coal is dirty, but coal gasification provides a chance to burn coal without producing carbon dioxide, which is accumulating to heat up the atmosphere. To gasify coal, a hole is bored into the ground and the coal ignited. Oxygen pumped into the hole feeds a fire that produces gases, which emerge from a second borehole to turn turbines.

The Wall Street Journal reports that a plant in Uzbekistan has been using the technology for 50

years and that China and India are working on the technology. The U.S. and Russia have the most coal reserves, followed by China and India.

There is some worry. Though the plants trap noxious gases underground and produce useful byproducts, such as hydrogen, they could be a threat to underground water supplies and create big sinkholes where coal is burned. •



Brighter Idea

Those beady LED lights from yesteryear are predicted to vanquish incandescent and fluorescent bulbs. They can last up to 40 years and they don't have the mercury common in fluorescent lighting.

Not only are the bulbs cheaper over time and environmentally friendly, they also can be used in new ways. Ann Arbor's downtown, according to a report, is testing LED bulbs in street lights that are connected to a network.

Lights can be selectively dimmed, for instance, after 11 p.m. near downtown homes. The wattage can be increased around clubs late into the night to boost safety. And the



lights can even flash when in front of a house that has placed a 911 call, letting cops and fireman find their destinations without fail.

"It's leading to some pretty amazing things," David Konkle, the city's energy coordinator, told *Governing* magazine about the light experiments. •

Net Speeds Up

Internet users who transmit pirated movies and music account for up to 60% of traffic. The massive files slow down the network, causing Internet providers to complain and threaten charges based on usage instead of set rates.

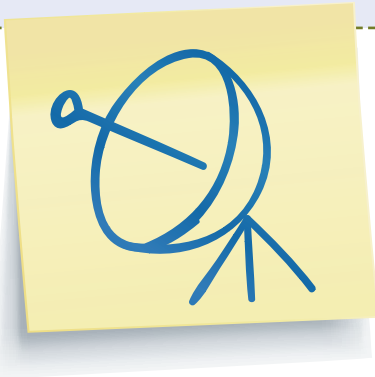
There may be a work-around. Researchers claim they have developed an algorithm that speeds the way such files are sent across the Internet.

An algorithm by professors Arvind Krishnamurthy of the University of Washington and Richard Yang of Yale pinpoints user locations to find the shortest Internet path between them. The professors contend files can be downloaded 20% faster than conventional file-sharing, while cutting bandwidth usage by 80%.

P4P, the name of their algorithm, hides the location of senders and won't allow users a peek at route maps of Net providers.

"We think we've come up with a way to end this catfight between Internet service providers and peer-to-peer users," Krishnamurthy told *Technology Review*, the MIT magazine.

Verizon is testing the service. •



Google World

Google, Liberty Global and banking giant HSBC have formed a company to deploy 16 low-earth orbit satellites that will provide the bandwidth to drop the cost of Internet access in poorer nations.

O3B Networks—"O3B" refers to the 3 billion people without Internet—is spending \$750 million on the project. Google says the satellite network will reduce the cost of bandwidth in emerging markets by 95%.

People in emerging markets are mostly expected to access the Internet using smartphones.

What's good for improving lives in emerging countries also is good for Google's business. •

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E-Paper 2.0

Everything about the Internet these days is Web 2.0, which has become tiresome. Here's something 2.0 that is refreshing. Plastic Logic of California is introducing the next version of an electronic paper device, a thin-film display that emulates paper.

The first iterations were by Sony and Amazon. Sony's digital Reader is beautiful; Amazon's Kindle is cartoonish but successful.

Plastic Reader's display will be larger, thinner, but weigh about the same.

The screen size is 8.5 by 11 inches, compared to six-inch screens for the others. The e-paper can take more of a beating because it's below plastic, not glass. Another big advantage: Readers can flip pages by swiping their fingers instead of using buttons.

Plastic Logic expects to produce 11 million displays, which are said to be exceptional for reading newspapers and magazines on the go. The company will reveal the reader's price and publishing partners in January. •

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The Arts Market Celebrates
10 Successful Years Saturday,
November 1st with a Birthday Bash!



The Baton Rouge
Arts Market

5th at Main Street
from 8 a.m. - Noon

The free celebration includes:

- Live music from 9 - 11 a.m. provided by The Sax Project
- Delicious birthday cupcakes!

And for the kids: ■ Potter Quaja Bell of Baton Rouge will teach kids to "throw" clay pots at the Arts Market Kids Booth, 8 a.m. - Noon.

While you are there discover that
unique and perfect gift for everyone on your list!



Presented by the Arts Council
of Greater Baton Rouge

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If it rains, the market will relocate to the
Galvez parking garage, 500 Main Street.

FREE concert events Sunday in the park

11/2 Otra

Afro-Cuban jazz grooves that seem timeless, but are of recent vintage.

brunch & music
under the oaks

noon to 3pm

Lafayette Park
@ Shaw Center
DOWNTOWN BATON ROUGE

11/9 Carla Cook

Grammy-nominated jazz
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Presenting sponsor Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation
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Pete Sampras vs James Blake

Pete Maravich Assembly Center
Sunday, December 14, 2008, 1pm
Tickets: Adult \$25-75, Student/Child \$10
On sale at LSU Ticket Office,
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or by calling 225-578-2184.

An Exhibition Tennis
Match to raise funds for those
affected by hurricanes Gustav
and Ike in Baton Rouge and
the surrounding areas.



GRANTED



Patricia Butler loves the Chevy S-10 truck she bought with the help of Family Service of Greater Baton Rouge's Ways to Work program, which helped her clean up her credit.



A Loan of One's Own

A NEW CROP OF BORROWERS FIND OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH FINANCIAL LITERACY AND LENDING PROGRAM

>> by **MAGGIE HEYN RICHARDSON** photo by **TIM MUELLER**

Patricia Butler knows something about driving. For 10 years, she piloted a city bus in her native New Orleans, navigating the Garden District's oak-lined streets, negotiating downtown's hairpin turns and neatly skirting the periphery of the French Quarter. But when Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, she lost it all—house, possessions, car and job.

The exodus pushed Butler to Erwinville, a rural community west of Baton Rouge, where extended family helped her resettle. Butler, 41, eventually found work as a school bus driver, and began the slow process of building a new life for her children and grandchildren. She was grateful for a job, but says her income was lower than it had been in New Orleans, making it hard to purchase the one thing she wanted most: a car.

"I wanted to be independent, and not have to rely on everybody else for rides," says Butler. "And there is no public transportation in Erwinville."

Butler started asking around about how someone like her, who had a good work record, but imperfect credit, could borrow enough money to buy a reliable, used vehicle. She soon discovered Ways to Work, a financial literacy and loan program run by the veteran nonprofit, Family Service of Greater Baton Rouge.

Earlier this year, Butler applied to the program and was accepted. In the spring, she attended a three-hour fi-

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GRANTED

financial literacy class and cleaned up her credit. Ultimately, she secured a \$4,000 loan and, with it, purchased a 1998 burgundy Chevy S-10 truck.

She chuckles over her choice. "I always wanted a truck because I didn't want to have to ask anyone to help me to move things."

The intention of Ways to Work, says Project Manager Kandee Wickboldt, is to educate working poor families about financial issues and provide them with one-time, low-interest loans up to \$4,000. The program provides an alternative to predatory lenders whose high interest rates can keep many low-income families in a cycle of suffocating debt.

Ways to Work was established in 1984 in Minnesota by the McKnight Foundation, which expanded it nationally in 1996. Today, there are 44 sites in 21 states. The Family Service of Greater Baton Rouge site is one of the program's biggest volume lenders, granting the highest number of loans nationwide in four of the last six years.

"There's a tremendous need here for financial literacy," says Wickboldt. "We spend a lot of time on the basics, like budgeting and making sure clients understand what they have coming in, and what they have going out."

Ways to Work clients must have been turned down for conventional loans, and must also demonstrate consistent and current employment, says Wickboldt.

Once applicants are approved, Wickboldt and her two staff members coach them on how to open a savings account and clean up credit. Clients obtain copies of their own credit reports, and then get to work on untangling what, for many, is a life-long knot of financial challenges.

Some, says Wickboldt, have had bad credit attached to their Social Security numbers since before they were old enough to work.

"Their parents might have opened an account with the power company, and when they couldn't

CREDIT WHERE DUE

After the sale of the Credit Bureau of Baton Rouge, the members of the cooperative created a supporting fund at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. That fund, called the Credit Bureau of Baton Rouge Foundation, began making grants last year to boost financial literacy education.

Since its inception, the fund has made 32 grants worth \$928,000. Among the fund's grants was \$20,000 to Family Service of Greater Baton Rouge for Ways to Work, a financial literacy program that helps people improve their credit.

Family Service has trained 410 clients under the program.

pay it under one name, they'd open another until they'd gone through all the children in the house," she says.

Clients are instructed to not hide from creditors, but to ask for settlements and work out plans to pay off all or some of their existing debt. The required financial literacy seminar features instruction on budgeting, taxes and the importance of checking credit reports regularly for the rest of their lives.

Even after they're issued loans, clients receive instruction and coaching from Wickboldt and her staff about how to work with car dealers and how

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to be discriminating consumers.

“We have to approve what they buy,” says Wickboldt. Before the purchase is made clients must obtain a reputable mechanic’s sign-off at their own expense.

Loans are paid back within two years, enabling a working family to buy a used car for \$181 per month, plus insurance.

The program’s value, says René Taylor, Family Service executive director, is its ripple effect.

“It removes barriers that keep people from being productive,” she says. “With a car, they can go to work, they can take their children to school, they can be more independent.”

Ways to Work loans are funded by the program’s national headquarters, leaving Wickboldt to raise money for salaries and operating costs. It takes a tremendous amount of time, she says, to work with each client, who must be screened, trained, and fostered for more than two years. At any point, about 20% of borrowers are late on loan payments, necessitating a “high-touch” approach to keep them on track and to avoid default.

If a client defaults, there are no second chances, says Wickboldt.

A recent grant provided by the Credit Bureau of Baton Rouge Foundation through the Baton Rouge Area Foundation helped Wickboldt and her team expand Ways to Work’s financial literacy component. They trained 410 clients between May 2007 and April 2008.

“Better educating people about money and how it works is our biggest challenge,” she says. “We especially wanted them to understand more about credit reports.”

Credit Bureau of Baton Rouge Foundation President Layne McDaniel says the need for financial literacy is urgent.

“Previous generations did not have this issue of instant credit. Today, knowing how easy it is to fall into the bad credit trap has not been given the pri-

“It removes barriers that keep people from being productive,” she says. “With a car, they can go to work, they can take their children to school, they can be more independent.”

—RENÉ TAYLOR, FAMILY SERVICE OF BATON ROUGE

ority it needs,” he says. “We wanted to have a significant impact on financial literacy.”

Back in Erwinville, Butler says having her own car has made a huge difference in her life. She can get to and from work on her own, take her children to the doctor and return to New Orleans to see her mother.

She misses the Crescent City, but plans to stay in the rural community.

“It’s nice and quiet,” she says.

And getting around is no longer an issue. •

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Reaching Deep

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BEATING ODDS, NORTHSHORE MAN HELPS ADULTS CONQUER ADDICTION

>> by NATHAN SELF

There's a young hero working in Covington. And he doesn't wear a cape or mask, have a utility belt or flying car. His name is Nathan Young and he's the executive director of Upward Community Services—a nonprofit that saves young lives and transforms the lives of adults who have struggled with alcohol and drug addiction.

"It's a 24-hour-a-day job, but it's also my life and I love it," says Young, showing his Upward's

Northshore facilities. There's a small office building where his staff handle administrative duties. Across the street, there's a church—pastored by his father, who started Upward more than 20 years ago. There's a house on the adjacent corner where participants in Upward's 4:13 program live as they tackle their dependency on drugs and alcohol.

The 4:13 program's cornerstone is Philippians 4:13—"I can do all things through him who

strengthens me.” Upward uses the biblical passage to inspire the men trying to turn their lives around.

“We help about 30 men at a time,” says Young, “and they live together in the house for 90 days while we help them get back on track.”

The men are up and out of the house by 5:30 a.m. and aren’t allowed back until after 9 p.m. In the mornings, they participate in what Nathan refers to as “sweat equity,” working in the area to help seniors and others with lawn care, basic maintenance and other projects. In the afternoons and evenings, they participate in classes and counseling designed to help them stay clean.

“We try to teach the guys about overcoming obstacles, so they can avoid the behaviors that led them to trouble in the first place,” says the executive director. That includes Bible study, conflict resolution and basic budgeting.

“After 90 days, we help them find employment and they participate in evening classes for a year.”

During that time, they turn over their paychecks to Upward and submit budgets, requests for funds and receipts to verify their spending. “Money is a huge risk factor, so we help them manage it—and most often they have saved a nice nest egg that they can use to start their new lives after they’ve completed a year in the program.”

As they lunched after a morning of hard work in the community, the men related heartbreaking stories with an underlying determination to rebuild their lives. Ask him, and Young will gladly share the many success stories of the program—of men and women salvaging their marriages and getting their children on positive paths. The program has temporarily suspended the women’s section as Upward looks for a suitable new housing facility.

That’s rehab. On the other end of the spectrum, Upward runs a summer camp for local kids and hopes to relaunch an afterschool program in the near future.

“When I got out of the military,” Young says,

“I came back to Covington and worked as a counselor at the summer camp. And when kids started coming back to me and telling me how we had changed their lives I knew this was my calling.”

About 350 kids participated in the program last summer. His father’s church, a separate entity, lets Upward use its building to host the summer camp.

“These are at-risk kids,” says Young, “kids who need guidance, who need a positive influence in their lives, someone who can help them develop dreams and figure out how to reach those dreams.”

Many of them live in poverty, something you might not expect in the wealthier Northshore area.

“Summertime is a break for kids, but often means additional hardship for the parents. They have to provide additional meals and activities for their kids and this can really strain a family. So we only charge \$10 a week and work with the community to fund the remaining expenses,” says Young.

From a pocket of poverty, hidden from even many Northshore natives, many kids have left the summer program to go on to college and start their own businesses. And many come back to work as counselors, helping other kids find their passions. The program helps them overcome the risk factors that often surround them.

“Let me take you to the West 20,” says Young, “and I can show you homes with no power, no running water—neighborhoods where drugs, alcohol and violence are rampant.”

He recalls his own youth, mentioning a youth football team he participated in as a boy. “Of about 30 kids, only three of us are still alive and not in jail.” It’s a somber moment, one that speaks to the urgency that drives this 31-year-old. •

The Northshore Community Foundation has granted \$20,050 to Upward Community Services, a nonprofit that helps adults overcome alcohol and drug addiction.



Most Rev. Bishop Jude Speyrer, right, has established the first charitable fund at the upstart Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana in memory of his friend, Monsignor Fernand H. Gouaux, left.

Religious Studies

LAKE CHARLES BISHOP ESTABLISHES FUND
AT FOUNDATION SWLA >> by MORRIS LEBLEU

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A charitable fund honoring a well-known priest who served for decades in the Lake Charles area has been established with the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana.

The fund, which will honor the memory of Msgr. Fernand H. Gouaux, was begun with a contribution from the Most Rev. Jude Speyrer, bishop-emeritus of the Diocese of Lake Charles. It's the first charitable fund for the upstart community foundation, which is a sister organization of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

Speyrer and Gouaux were friends in school and served together in the 1960s at Our Lady of the

Lake Church in Lake Arthur.

The fund, known as the Bishop Jude Speyrer Fund in Honor of Monsignor Gouaux, will offer scholarships for advanced church studies to ordained clergy of the diocese when the principal reaches \$1 million.

"We hope the fund will generate about \$50,000 a year once the principal peaks at \$1 million," said the bishop.

Speyrer also has made provisions that property near Carencro where he resides will be sold after his death to benefit the fund. More than 30 years ago, Speyrer and Gouaux bought the house, where

they had hoped to retire together.

“He and I bought this house long before there was a diocese of Lake Charles, in 1977 or 1978,” Bishop Speyrer said. “After we purchased the place, we used it together, once or twice a month, on our days off.”

The home was supposed to be a quiet retreat for Lake Charles bishops, but Speyrer realized it was of little use for that purpose. “When you are almost two hours away, it’s no hop, skip and a jump. So I thought, just sell the place and put the money to good use and remember Msgr. Gouaux by establishing this memorial.”

Speyrer remembers his own time studying abroad. He graduated from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. “I remember gratefully the advantages I had doing my theology abroad,” he said. “I thought what an advantage it would be to expose the clergy in future years to similar contacts, and give these priests the benefit of an education abroad, of travel, and perhaps of picking up a language or two.”

Speyrer discovered the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana through a United Way press release. The release described how the Baton Rouge Area Foundation intended to help develop a comparable entity in the Calcasieu area. “I had heard of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, which successfully oversees more than \$500 million invested for charitable purposes. I thought this vehicle would be a good way to get started.”

The fact that a local foundation was being re-established made it even more appropriate. The bishop also knows that his seed money is far from enough.

“The Gouaux Fund will not consist exclusively of money from the sale of the property,” he continued. “Msgr. Gouaux served in eight parishes in his lifetime, four of them in the area of the Diocese of Lake Charles. I think his memory is still alive in these parishes. I invite his former parishioners to

“We hope the fund will generate about \$50,000 a year once the principal peaks at \$1 million.”

—BISHOP JUDE SPEYRER

support this. He was greatly loved wherever he went.”

Within the geographic region of the Diocese of Lake Charles, Gouaux served in Lake Arthur as assistant pastor and administrator pro tem. Later he became pastor of Bell City, St. Margaret in Lake Charles and Our Lady Help of Christians in Jennings. Gouaux, who was ordained in

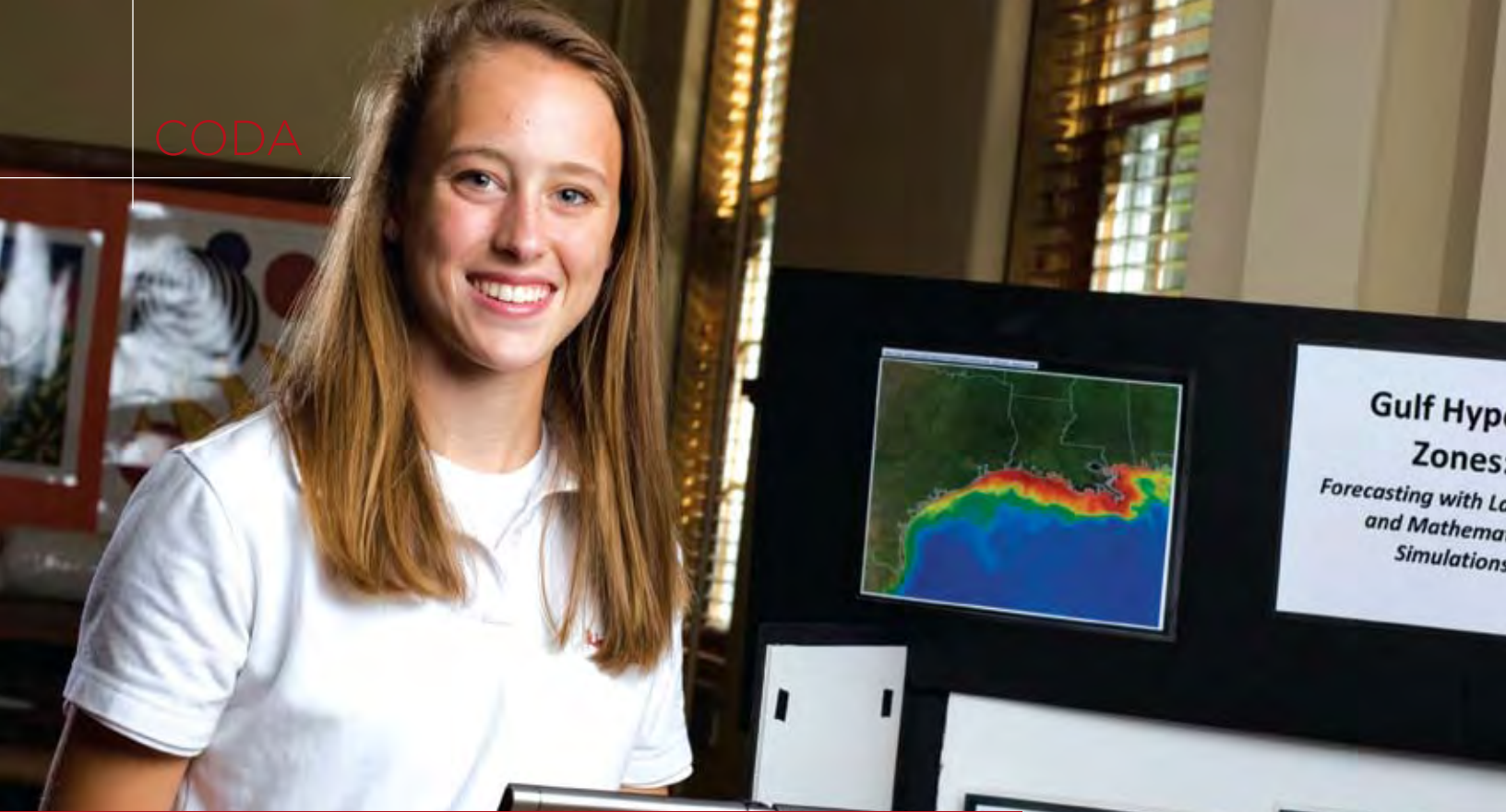
1956, died in December 1985. “He was such a good priest, he served well, was loved wherever he went and did a fine job,” the bishop said.

Those interested in making a contribution to the Bishop Jude Speyrer Fund in Honor of Monsignor Gouaux may contact Chip Gauthe, Director of Development, Diocese of Lake Charles, 439-7400, Extension 307 or Lisa Verrette, President/CEO, Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana, P.O. Box 3125, Lake Charles, LA 70602 or 337-491-6688. •

CHARITABLE FUNDS

Donor advised funds are the most popular type at community foundations. Donors use earnings to make grants to nonprofits. At the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana and the Northshore Community Foundation, donor advised funds can be started with \$10,000. For more information about tax-deductible charitable funds, call Jake Holinga at 225-387-6126.

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Bonnie McLindon

SCIENTIST

TIM MUELLER

In pops Bonnie McLindon, looking every bit like your expectation of a teenager, the scrubbed girl next door. But then she begins to talk of nitrogen, phosphorous and algae, about how they mingle to create a vast dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico—and Bonnie is no longer what you expect.

The 16-year-old St. Joseph's Academy junior is a scientist.

This summer, she competed in the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, along with 1,500 challengers from nearly 50 countries. McLindon was expecting to learn the ropes for a possible future victory.

So when the judge called her name, she didn't hear it, her world was a blur of mumbles and cheers. Her friend had to cuff her, tell her to "Go Up There."

McLindon had won first place in the earth and planetary sciences category for her project, "Gulf Hypoxic Zones: Forecasting with Mathematical and

Laboratory Simulations."

The victory earned her nearly \$10,000 in scholarships, which she will spend to keep studying in this field in college. A second honor was having a planet named after her.

When she was young, her grandfather, LSU chemical engineering professor Louis Thibodeaux, got her started asking questions about how the world works.

"He inspired an interest in science," she says.

And she is his inspiration, says Thibodeaux, remembering the precocious little girl who taught herself to read and write before the first grade.

"I was in heaven doing science with her," says Thibodeaux, who advised Bonnie on the project. "It was like the brightest star of a student right here in my own family. What can I say; it is a science-nerd grandfather's best dream come true."

—Mukul Verma

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REGINA CARTER



Nicholas Payton

**BLUE NOTE RECORDS
70TH ANNIVERSARY**



PATTI AUSTIN

Jazz It Up!

with three great performances



Presented by the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge and the River City Jazz Coalition

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7 p.m. & 9 p.m.

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PATTI AUSTIN
Thursday, Mar 26, 09
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This phenomenal singer began her career at age four; today she is one of the most beloved artists in the world. She received the 2008 Grammy Award for Best Jazz Vocalist and she really knows how to swing! The New York Times called her performance “Exhilarating!”

PURCHASE TICKETS

at the Manship Theatre Ticket Desk: 100 Lafayette St., or call 225.344.0334, or on-line: www.manshiptheatre.org

FOR MORE INFO

about the concerts and the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge visit www.artsbr.org or call 225.344.8558



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