

THE BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION

# CURRENTS

Q4/2009

## CHARITABLE CALCULUS

Low rate triggers a chance to  
give to charities while cutting  
taxes and securing estates

LOUISIANA DROWNING/DOWNTOWN LIBRARY?/PLANNING TREASURE/OUR CANCER KILLER



2

## 20

### THERE YOU GO AGAIN

Once promising a new downtown branch, new library board now uncertain

## COVER STORY

## 24

### NO ANIMAL LEFT BEHIND

New Foundation initiative aims to nearly eliminate euthanasia of dogs and cats

## 28

### A GOOD TIME

In a low interest environment, a vehicle emerges to reduce taxes, give to charity and keep your assets

# Baton Rouge Area Foundation



36



42



54



58

## 36

### MAN VS. NATURE

With sea levels rising, Louisiana's coastal cities and towns are expected to disappear. Can we really stop the rising tide?

## 42

### THE VENERABLE SCIENTIST

Delivering a new means to fight cancer in his 80s, William Hansel seeks new discoveries in his ninth decade

## 54

### POCKET OF OPPORTUNITY

Prosperity around it, an underdog neighborhood gets its chance

## 58

### STEVE BONFANTI

Above the fray

# 3

## DEPARTMENTS

- 04 From the Chair
- 06 About Us
- 08 Lead In
- 12 Our Work
- 20 On the Ground

- 36 OnSite
- 42 What's Next?
- 54 The Corridor
- 58 Coda



In 2008, more than 9,000 cats and dogs were euthanized in the Baton Rouge area; most of them adoptable. That number represented 80% of the sheltered animals in the parish, compared to the national average of 50% of dogs and cats in animal control centers being euthanized. It

came to the attention of Foundation stakeholders that by addressing unnecessary euthanasia with a grassroots network of information and action we could impact our community in a positive way. A steering committee was convened in late summer to explore the possibility of having Baton Rouge embrace the No Kill community concept. We are encouraged that No Kill communities have euthanasia rates below 20% and that most of them end the lives of only violent and sick animals.

Over the next few months, the Foundation will continue to work with devoted animal welfare groups and the city-parish to craft a no-kill strategy for Baton Rouge. The target date to begin implementing the strategy is January 2010. Overall, the plan promotes programs and practices that dramatically increase spaying and neutering to reduce the pet population, while increasing adoption to find homes for pets. The Foundation supports the prospect of reducing the euthanasia rate of sheltered animals in East Baton Rouge from 80% to below 20%, which will be another measure of progress for the Baton Rouge community.

• • •

Inside this issue, the Foundation takes great pride in showcasing the accomplishments of

Elizabeth “Boo” Thomas, who has been a passionate advocate in the area of land planning policy since the Horizon Plan was created to guide Baton Rouge’s growth several decades ago. This article touches on just a few of the initiatives with Boo’s imprint. She spearheaded Plan Baton Rouge for the Foundation, a revival project that has inspired more than \$1.5 billion in downtown investments

Now 91, Dr. Hansel has no desire to stop discovering. “Frustration is no match for the drive to find out new things,” he tells us in an article in this issue.

over 11 years. After Katrina, Boo became the first president of the Center for Planning Excellence, the organization that birthed Louisiana Speaks, a regional plan for all of South Louisiana. Boo’s statewide influence sparked decisive, meaningful action for rebuilding towns and communities across the state after the storms.

In September, Boo’s life work was on display in Chicago, where she was awarded the prestigious Olmsted Medal by the American Society of Landscape Architects. The medal is the highest honor bestowed by the society. Considering the

breadth and depth of Boo's work, this honor is just a small token for her generous contributions to the Baton Rouge community and the greater community of the State of Louisiana.

• • •

The world is fortunate that Dr. William Hansel of LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center is focused on research instead of retirement. In his 80s, he had a brainchild that led to the creation of a cancer drug that is now in human testing. That drug, EP 100, could not only extend millions of lives in coming years, but also create substantial royalties for Louisiana State University. Dr. Hector Alila, who runs the company that is developing, testing and marketing drugs based on Dr. Hansel's research, says the discovery could be the greatest in Louisiana history. The Foundation has played a very small part by investing in two venture capital funds that seeded the firm that is marketing the cancer drug. Now 91, Dr. Hansel has no desire to stop discovering. "Frustration is no match for the drive to find out new things," he tells us in an article in this issue.

Sincerely,



Alice D. Greer

*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](mailto:mverma@braf.org).

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5

# 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 \$15 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 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. Last 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 Stewart Jones at 225.387.6126.*

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

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

**What's our size:** At year-end 2008, the Foundation had estimated assets of \$530 million, making it among the top-30 largest community foundations in the country. Donors of the Foundation have provided the assets over more than 40 years. Since 1964, the Foundation has issued \$225 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](http://BRAf.org) or by calling Mukul Verma at 225.387.6126.

# Gordon Pugh

1937-2009

The death of Baton Rouge attorney and civic leader Gordon Pugh in July 2009 brought tremendous sadness and loss to his family, friends and to the Baton Rouge community. Pugh, who died at 71, served as chairman of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's board in 1992-93 and was instrumental in its growth and evolution. It was one of many organizations he helped lead and shape.

A native of Plaquemine and a graduate of the LSU Law Center, Pugh was admitted to the Louisiana bar in 1962 and spent his career at the Baton Rouge firm Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson. He practiced business, banking and labor law, and was known for both his brilliant mind and a soft-spoken, strategic style that would make a room go quiet.

"He was a tremendous lawyer and the best negotiator I have seen in 40 years. I called him 'Steel Eyes,'" recalls businessman John Noland, who formerly practiced law at Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson and was mentored by Pugh. "He had a quiet sense of self-confidence, and a sincere sense of purpose and commitment. Gordon was a lawyer's lawyer. He found intellectual gratification from the work, and it never got old to him."

If law was endlessly fascinating to Pugh, so was the puzzle of community. A strong moral compass drove him to take stands on issues well before they were mainstream, says Baton Rouge Area Foundation President and CEO John G. Davies. Racial equality was one, which led Pugh to serve as co-chairman of the East Baton Rouge Parish Superintendent of Schools Advisory Council on Desegregation and earned him the respected Brotherhood/Sisterhood Citation Award from the Baton Rouge chapter of the National Conference for Community and Justice.

"Social justice was a big issue for Gordon," says



Davies. "He was working in that space before it was popular. He felt strongly about bigotry and intolerance and, while he never grandstanded, he would take very firm positions."

As chair of the Foundation board, Pugh met with Davies weekly and demonstrated intense interest in the direction of the organization, weighing objectives against the prevailing issues of the time. Pugh's civic work was rich and expansive. He served as president or chair of numerous boards of directors, including Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, the Baton Rouge Speech and Hearing Foundation, the Council for a Better Louisiana, the Baton Rouge Rotary Club, the Baton Rouge Symphony Association, the Greater Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce and the Baton Rouge Alliance for Good Government.

Educator and community activist Sister Judith Brun worked frequently with Pugh on civic projects. "Gordon was attentive to people's needs. His concern gave me hope," says Brun.

While his professional background brought tremendous value to the boards on which he served, Brun relied on Pugh for something else. "I realize I never called on him for legal advice. I always went to him to test what was the right thing, or the better thing, to do."

—Maggie Heyn Richardson



**Gateway project set >>**

A real estate project to spark more development in Old South Baton Rouge will be a mix of homes and retailers.

The project, a collaboration between the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Center for Planning Excellence and Gulf Coast Housing Partnership, is targeted for land on Nicholson and Terrace that wraps around to Highland Road.

The Foundation and CPEX have assembled and cleared titles to nearly 25 lots for the development, which is expected to be built by Gulf Coast Housing, a nonprofit. Under current plans, the gateway project would have 54 residential units and 4,000 square feet of retail in a first phase. Half of the 54 units

will be market rate; the rest will be affordable housing. Remediation of a gas station on Highland Road began in September in preparation for construction sometime next year.

The Nicholson gateway is among eight target areas in a strategic plan to bring back the neighborhoods between LSU and downtown.

Nicholson Drive could be remade pretty quickly. Near LSU, two developers have already built condos and retail space. Steve Keller, who constructed Towne Center on Corporate Boulevard, and a Lafayette businessman are ready to build a mixed-use project on 20 acres across from Magnolia Mound on Nicholson.

What's more, the city-parish is going to shut down the 20-acre sewer plant on

the river between downtown and LSU for redevelopment. An Atlanta investor has announced an apartment complex on the former Prince Murat Hotel site. •

**Redevelopment agency starts work >>**

A new agency responsible for redevelopment of blighted areas will begin programs this fall to support attainable housing and to return abandoned land to commerce. The agency—East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority—has at least \$5.5 million to begin its efforts.

The authority received \$5 million in federal Hurricane Gustav recovery funds through the Louisiana Recovery Authority and the city-parish. The funds will be used for rehabbing rental units, covering gaps in financing for mixed-use developments that include attainable housing, buying and returning abandoned properties to commerce and for small business grants.

Also, the authority will spend \$500,000 from the city-parish for banking abandoned land and for strategies to improve neighborhoods.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and the city-parish spearheaded the creation of the redevelopment authority. •



# 5%-30%

Boost in household incomes for Kenyans who use electronic money instead of the paper transactions that cost time to move money from bank to markets.



Underpass in Richmond, Va.

## Downtown redone

>> The Downtown Development District and the city are exploring welcoming makeovers for the entrances and exits of I-110. Davis Rhorer, executive director of the DDD, says parish road improvement money and a

grant could be used for the work. The road improvement program, Green Light, has a portion dedicated for beautifying streets.

In some other cities, highway supports have been improved with sculptures and lighting. San Francisco has clad the buttresses in stainless steel.

Also, the DDD has about \$1 million in federal funds secured by U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu and \$200,000 from the city-parish for improvements to North Boulevard and Florida Street at River Road. The money would begin building a central green at North

Boulevard and improve pedestrian access at Florida Street. Separately, the DDD is seeking grant funds to create a pedestrian bridge at North Boulevard to the river.

Meanwhile, the \$4.5 million town square on North Boulevard from the river to Fifth Street should go out to bid in December or January

and be completed about 12 months after that.

Also, the retail space in the parking garage on Third Street will be converted for a police substation and an art gallery. •

## Donations dip >>

Charitable giving in the U.S. is estimated at \$306.7 billion for 2008, the second consecutive year donations surpassed the \$300 billion mark but lower than 2007, estimates the Giving USA Foundation.

Donations in 2008 were down 2% as philanthropists worried about the economy. "However, what we find remarkable is that individuals, corporations and foundations still provided more than \$307 billion to causes they support, despite the economic conditions," says Del Martin, chair of the Giving USA Foundation.

Giving was 2.2% of the gross domestic product in 2008, down from 2.3% the year before. •

Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) congratulates our 12 Louisiana elected officials who have been awarded scholarships to the 9th annual

## New Partners for Smart Growth

Building Safe, Healthy and Livable Communities

February 4 – 6, 2010, at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center in Seattle. The conference will focus on curbing greenhouse gas emissions by reducing our dependence on foreign oil, creating a green economy, and building more livable, walkable, and healthier communities.

*The following officials have been awarded scholarships:*

<b>Police Jury President Major Coleman</b>	St. Helena Parish
<b>Councilwoman Donna Collins-Lewis</b>	East Baton Rouge Parish
<b>City-Parish President Joey Durel</b>	Lafayette City-Parish
<b>Councilwoman Ronnie Edwards</b>	East Baton Rouge Parish
<b>Councilwoman June Hooper</b>	Town of Logansport
<b>Police Juror Chris Landry</b>	Calcasieu Parish
<b>Councilwoman C. Denise Marcelle</b>	East Baton Rouge Parish
<b>Police Juror Pat Moore</b>	Ouachita Parish
<b>Councilman Purvis Morrison</b>	Lafayette City-Parish
<b>Councilman Kent A. Schexnaydre</b>	Ascension Parish
<b>Parish President James B. Tuck</b>	Vernon Parish
<b>Senator Sharon Weston Broome</b>	Louisiana State Senator



Every community in Louisiana made extraordinary through planning excellence.

CPEX has awarded twelve \$1,000 scholarships to officials passionate about supporting the use of Smart Growth planning principles in their communities. This is the third year that CPEX has offered the scholarship to elected officials. Previous recipients of the award attended New Partners for Smart Growth conferences in Washington, DC and Albuquerque, NM.

# LEADIN

## Livable suburbs >>

Living in the suburbs can be difficult. A movement to retrofit the sprawling places received a jolt from people living on the Web. In a month-long contest from *Dwell* magazine and Inhabitat.com, people offered ideas on re-designing the suburbs.

Calvin Chiu was the winner, taking the grand prize of \$1,000 and an expected mention in *Dwell's* December issue for proposing that abandoned suburban tracts be converted into wetlands for cleaning water for nearby urban centers.

Second place was an idea to relax the zoning in suburbs, a



Big box agriculture: a productive suburb

means to let shops, showrooms, offices and entrepreneurial ventures replace abandoned suburban housing. The third place winner recommended turning abandoned big box stores

and their parking lots into urban farms with the former stores fitted for greenhouses and restaurants.

For more, visit [ReBurbia.com](http://ReBurbia.com).

## CITYSTATS

Indicators for tracking our quality of life

### INDICATOR: Library books checked out

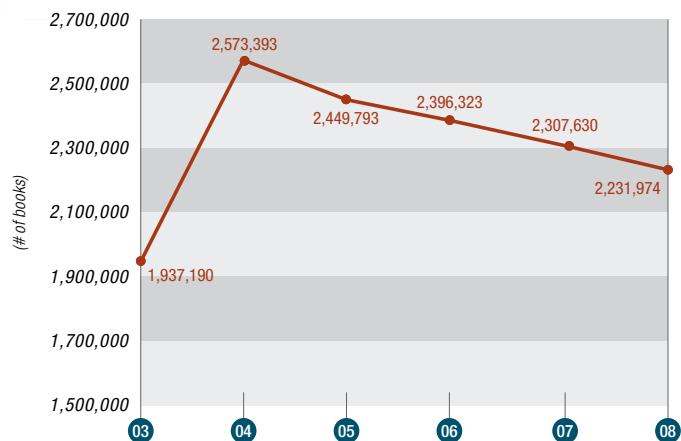
#### What it measures

The number of library books checked out annually through the system.

#### How EBR is doing

The number of books checked out spiked in 2004, then declined each year through 2008. Since 2004, the number of books checked out has dropped about 13%.

### LIBRARY BOOKS CHECKED OUT



Source: East Baton Rouge Library System

Read our story about the library system on page 20.

AWARDS & HONORS

# The difference engine

THOMAS WINS OLMSTED AWARD FOR PLANNING LEADERSHIP >> by LACY STROHSCHNEIN

A little more than a decade ago, planning across Louisiana trailed other decisions. Infrastructure, housing, stores and offices were built either with no planning or by ignoring plans forgotten on shelves. Then Plan Baton Rouge came along, showing that community input combined with the wisdom of land planners could spark the revival of a downtown, and that a good plan fosters places that we can all admire.

Elizabeth “Boo” Thomas was the tenacious landscape architect behind Plan Baton Rouge. With the success of Plan Baton Rouge, Thomas and her colleagues ventured outward, creating the Center for Planning Excellence, a nonprofit that has given a hand to South Louisiana, providing the blueprints that are making towns and cities better places to live, while preserving the unique culture of the state.

For her dedication to the field, the American Society of Landscape Architects has awarded Thomas with the Olmsted Medal, which was named after Frederick Law Olmsted, the legendary landscape architect and environmental steward whose great designs include Central Park in New York City.

Thomas, president and CEO of CPEX, joins former Vice President Al Gore, former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the Nature Conservancy among the handful of honorees since the award was created in 1990. With the medal, the ASLA seeks to honor individuals or organizations outside the profession of landscape architecture who have made a commitment to preserving natural heritage on a regional or national level, as Thomas and CPEX have sought to do through both the Louisiana Speaks plan for South Louisiana and continued advocacy for Smart Growth.

“It’s an incredible honor for CPEX to be rec-



ognized by the ASLA, as we highly value their perspective,” said Thomas. “We still have a lot of work to do. Hopefully, this recognition will only increase the demand for long-term planning in our state, and raise awareness and value for thinking systemically about community and economic growth.”

Founded as an initiative of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation in 1998, CPEX was first established as Plan Baton Rouge. At the time of its inception, the focus of the organization was revitalizing downtown Baton Rouge and the adjoining neighborhoods by actively engaging residents and stakeholders to participate in planning a better community.

Having begun her career working on the first comprehensive plan for East Baton Rouge and then becoming executive director of the Mid City Redevelopment Alliance, Thomas was in a unique position to lead Plan Baton Rouge with a clear understanding of Smart Growth principles.

By leveraging public investment to inspire private interest, Plan Baton Rouge worked with a national team of consultants to create a sustainable master plan for downtown and surrounding residential areas. Tackling issues such as affordable housing, transportation and business development, the tools and lessons learned through this process were instrumental in evolving Plan Baton Rouge into the Center for Planning Excellence in 2005.

Following hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Thomas equipped CPEX to deal with chal-

lenges beyond downtown Baton Rouge and to meet the recovery and redevelopment needs across the state. Working with the Louisiana Recovery Authority, CPEX facilitated the Louisiana Speaks planning process, the largest regional planning effort and public participation process ever undertaken in the United States. Across the 35 storm-struck parishes in



Elizabeth "Boo" Thomas

Louisiana, CPEX provided the tools and materials to ensure that post-Katrina Louisiana continues to develop with best practices in regional planning. By providing resources such as the Louisiana Speaks Planning Toolkit and conducting workshops and seminars with leaders and community members across the state, CPEX has promoted the very principles on which the Olmsted Medal was created. •

## Foundation gets top rating

Charity Navigator, an independent nonprofit rating organization, has given the Baton Rouge Area Foundation its highest mark for financial management. Less than one-fourth of evaluated charities receive a four-star rating.

To evaluate nonprofits, Charity Navigator considers organizational efficiency and capacity, combining financial ratios and performance categories to compute an overall rating.

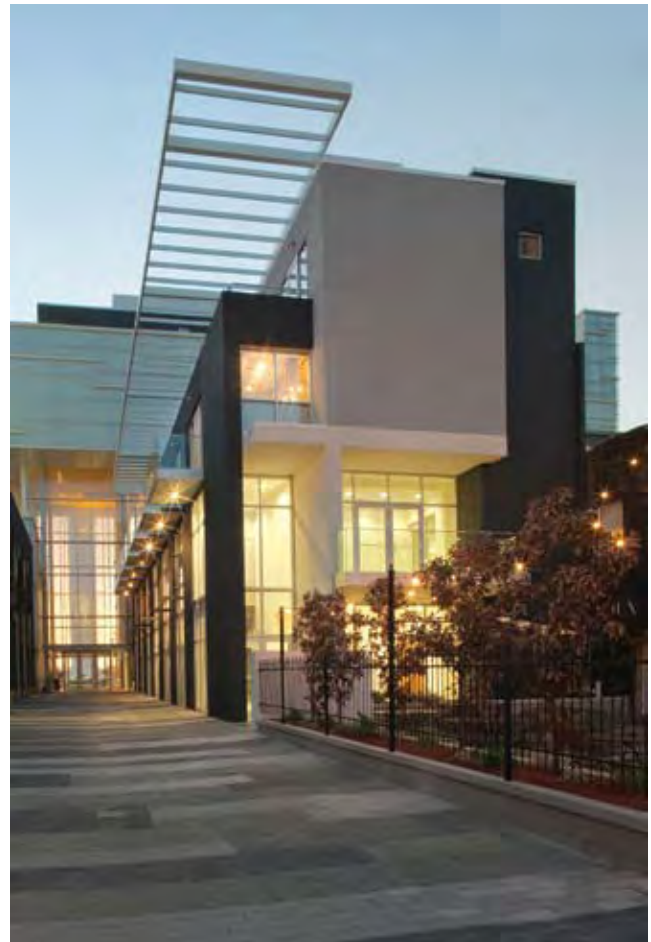
“Our ratings show givers how efficiently we believe a charity will use their support today, and to what extent the charities are growing their programs and services over time. We provide these ratings so that givers can make intelligent giving decisions, and so that the philanthropic community can more effectively monitor itself,” says Charity Navigator.

Charity Navigator gave a four-star rating to the Foundation in its last rating period as well. •



14

**Isn't it beautiful?** Architects believe so, for they have bestowed a Rose Award on the designers of OneEleven, the Foundation project on the Arts Block. Designed by Remson Haley Herpin architects, OneEleven's "restrained palette of plaster, metal and glass creates a layered experience of varying public and private outdoor spaces," says the description of the winning entry. The American Institute of Architects Baton Rouge Chapter sponsors the Rose Awards. OneEleven has 12 rental lofts and 5,000 square feet of office space on Third Street at the Shaw Center for the Arts.



## Expanding the market

The Main Street Market serves up many delights—pecan pies, salads with bits of real bacon, sushi, pasta, biscuits—while giving a considerable assist to downtown life. Now, there is room for more good things.

Using an \$18,000 grant from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the nonprofit overseeing the downtown market has improved the building's electrical system, providing power to more booths.

The Big River Economic and Agricultural Development Alliance, BREADA for short, is already talking to potential tenants, but don't try to corner the leadership for details. Their ability to keep secrets is legendary, like the Louisiana tomato. •



## Into the blue ocean

The LRA Support Foundation, created after Katrina and Rita to back up the Louisiana Recovery Authority, has committed to fund a study that could guide Louisiana's economic future. With additional funding from Louisiana Economic Development and the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the study will identify eight to 10 business segments that are predicted to grow rapidly and are not dominated by other states.

Conducted by McKinsey and Co., the Blue Ocean study should be finished within six months. Possible target industries include digital media and nuclear industry manufacturing—areas in which Louisiana already has a growing presence. The report will be forwarded to the newly formed Louisiana Innovation Council.

Since its creation by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the LRA Support Foundation has hired consultants to explore key issues, including airport improvements in South Louisiana and state-wide health care reform. •

# 15

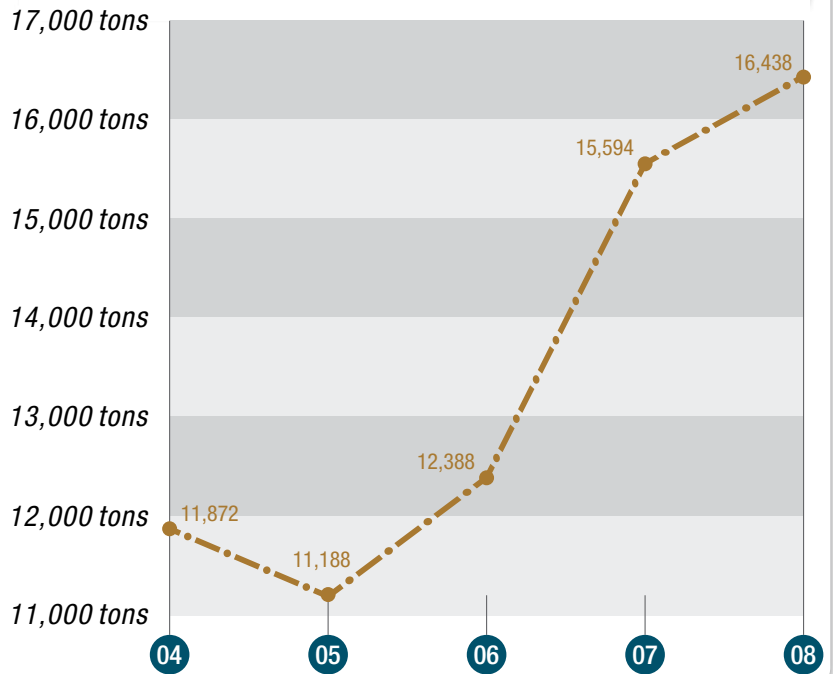
# CITYSTATS

Indicators for tracking our quality of life



16

## CURBSIDE RESIDENTIAL RECYCLING



Source: East Baton Rouge Parish

### INDICATOR: Curbside residential recycling

#### What it measures

Tonnage of recycled material picked up curbside from homes.

#### How EBR is doing

Curbside recycling has jumped each year since 2005. In 2006, the city-parish switched to rolling plastic containers for recycling, which made it more convenient to recycle.

For more indicators, visit [BRCityStats.org](http://BRCityStats.org).

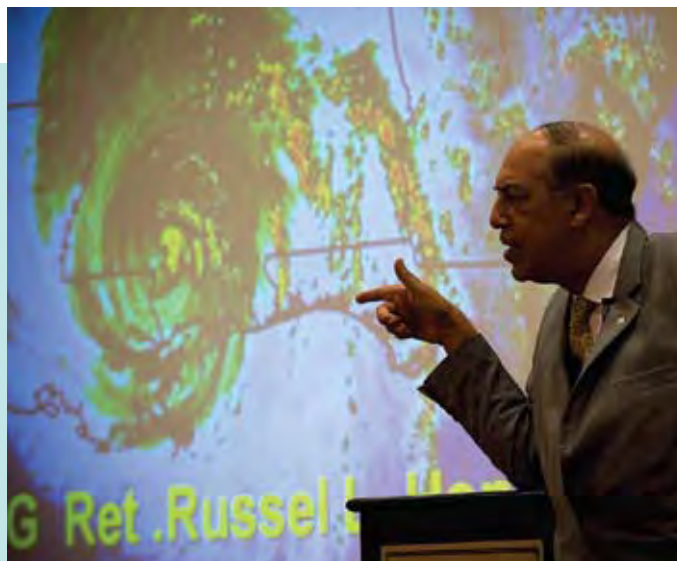


## Faith-based organizations gather

Just before the hurricane season, the Foundation gathered faith-based organizations for a seminar on disaster preparedness, providing them a chance to understand our work and to network with each other.

The event was headlined by Lt. General Russel L. Honoré, a human force as powerful as any storm. He brought order to New Orleans after Katrina. Honoré announced at the gathering of about 100 faith-based leaders that he was moving to Baton Rouge from Atlanta to “shake things up a bit.”

Faith-based organizations have become key to disaster recovery. Their local knowledge and ability to reach people quickly was



relied on after Katrina to feed, shelter and care for thousands of evacuees.

Representatives of the Foundation, Capital Area Red Cross, Capital Area United Way, Louisiana Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters and the Food Bank discussed disaster recovery strategies. •

## Love, actually

The Rocket Men are coming to town, bringing their tennis playing friends along—and for a good reason. Hard-serving Andy Roddick, who placed second at Wimbledon, and Elton John, known for his songs but also for tennis, are headlining a tennis exhibition Dec. 8 at the Pete Maravich Assembly Center.

The event is produced by the Sir Elton John AIDS Foundation and the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation. Funds raised through the exhibition will be granted to local HIV/AIDS organizations.

It's a love match. John and tennis great Billie Jean King have been sponsoring Smash Hits since 1993. The Pennington Family Foundation's tennis exhibitions have raised money for several causes. Duel Under the Oaks II raised \$216,000 for Hurricane Gustav relief and recovery.

Tickets for the event can be purchased at [LSUSports.net](http://LSUSports.net). •





*Creating Complete Communities*

## Growing smarter

A decade ago, a mention of Smart Growth in Baton Rouge would produce quizzical looks in response. Now, there are traditional neighborhoods under development across the parish, the city-parish has adopted Smart Growth zoning codes, and a Smart Growth summit by the Center for Planning Excellence grows in participation each year.

In the summer, town planners, elected officials and developers were among more than 800 who attended the Smart Growth Summit, which featured an appearance by Andres Duany, a founder of the movement. Duany, who developed the downtown revitalization strategy known as Plan Baton Rouge, said traditional neighborhood developments are evolving to include local agriculture, a reply of sustainability to the changing environment.

U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu revealed that she's requested \$1 million to support CPEX's work of land planning across Louisiana. After Katrina, CPEX was birthed from Plan Baton Rouge as a new nonprofit for providing knowledge to improve the built environment.

The summit also welcomed Don Phoenix of NeighborWorks America. The nonprofit provided \$675,000 to the Baton Rouge Area Foundation for leveraging the rebuilding work in Old South Baton Rouge, the area between LSU and downtown. •

18

## You know, for kids

America spins on convenience, so the idea of making health care easily available where kids are—in schools—would seem like a winning proposition. It is: Health Centers in Schools opened two more school-based clinics this year.

With HCS leaders, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation has created a capital campaign for the nonprofit. HCS' goal is to raise \$3 million, a bridge to secure operating funding from public sources to serve more than 40,000 students.

HCS staff provides primary care, immuniza-



## Health Centers in Schools

tions, vision and hearing screens, special services to disabled children, counseling and daily nursing care. Because of HCS, kids don't miss school as often, and their parents don't have to take time from work to provide routine care.

The Foundation's Special Projects team also works with other key nonprofits, building capacity for growth. They include 100 Black Men, Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana and the Julius Freyhan Foundation of St. Francisville. •

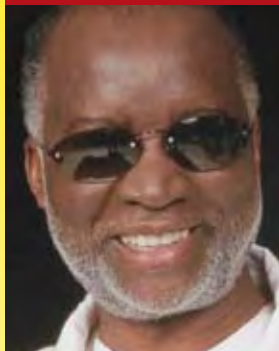
# 2009-2010 RIVER CITY JAZZ MASTERS SEASON

DOWNTOWN BATON ROUGE



www.artsbr.org  
225.344.8558

## NEA JAZZ MASTER ARTIST



**Ahmad Jamal**  
Thurs. Nov. 19, 2009  
7 p.m. & 9 p.m.  
Manship Theatre

A preeminent master of American Classical Music and legendary pianist and composer, Jamal continues to sell out concerts and garner awards and honors. Every performance is profound and thrilling. "The most exciting, creative keyboard artist living." *Melody Maker* from *Jazz the Rough Guide*

## NEA JAZZ MASTER ARTIST



**Paquito D'Rivera**  
Thurs. April 22, 2010  
7 p.m. & 9 p.m.  
Manship Theatre

Nine-time Grammy winner, Paquito D'Rivera fuses the classical and jazz worlds creating an explosive mixture of jazz, rock, and traditional classical Cuban music. "A formidable musician and the man to call for Pan-Latin concert music!" Ben Ratliff, *New York Times*

**TO PURCHASE TICKETS TO MANSHIP THEATRE:**  
225.344.0334 | www.manshiptheatre.org.



This event is supported by the NEA Jazz Masters Live, an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest.

## SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT

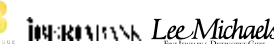


**Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis**  
Tues. March 9, 2010  
8 p.m. | River Center Theater

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# There you go again

ONCE PROMISING A NEW DOWNTOWN BRANCH, NEW LIBRARY BOARD NOW UNCERTAIN >> by SARA BONGIORNI

**T**he issue of a new or improved library in downtown Baton Rouge returns to the public spotlight this fall. The board of the East Baton Rouge Library System begins the task of considering its options with about \$24.4 million in tax money.

That's the amount the board has for discretionary spending, including for possible additional branches or renovations of existing locations, according to library officials. It does not include funds for the new library at Independence Park, a \$5.2 million Fairwood branch or \$6 million for a Burbank branch approved by the board in late summer.

But the amount the board decides to spend on a downtown project, whether at a new site or the existing River Center location, could be far different depending on a host of factors.

For starters, the projected \$24.4 million will drop to about \$20 million by 2016, even if the board

does not approve any additional projects. That's because annual operating costs will rise by \$4 million to roughly \$40 million with the completion of the new headquarters and additional branches, says Brenda Lovett, the library system's business

manager.

Further, she would recommend the board keep some money in reserve for unforeseen costs, although "that's the board's decision," Lovett said.

The fate of a branch at the planned Rouzan mixed-use development on Perkins Road is also in play. The library board's August approval of a branch on donated land off Burbank Drive seemed to resolve the

issue of where a branch in the southern part of the parish would be. For years, the idea has been that a branch would be built at Rouzan on land donated by developer Tommy Spinosa or on the Burbank property—not both places.

But JTS, the developer of Rouzan, has run into

**“I’m hoping by November or December we start making some decisions about downtown.”**

—DAN REED

20

Trahan Architects envision a renovation of the existing downtown library (top) would connect the library through windows to the new town square.



financial problems with its up-scale Perkins Rowe development off Bluebonnet Boulevard. That has prompted speculation about Rouzan's prospects, and the status of an additional branch there.

Dan Reed, president of the seven-member library board, said a branch at Rouzan is still possible, although not likely. "We don't know it's not going to happen," he said.

Reed said the library board needed to make a decision about the Burbank property near Lee Drive because the land would revert to the donors if a new branch wasn't under way by the end of 2009, some five years after it was offered to the library system.

The board had previously designated \$6 million for a south branch. It could tap into the reserve account if the board moves forward with both Rouzan and Burbank, although Reed said that he would not be in favor of two branches in the same area of the city. "But I'm only one member of the board," he said.

The board is considering a special meeting with developer Spinosa on Rouzan. Like Reed, board



vice president Tanya Freeman said a decision on Rouzan "is still out there." However, a third board member, Jamie Griffin, said the library system is under an agreement to build a branch at Rouzan if Spinosa meets certain conditions.

Griffin and another board member, Elizabeth Tomlinson, were not able to attend the August meeting and did not vote on the Burbank site.

In any event, Reed said an additional branch at Rouzan would not greatly impact what happens downtown. There is "easily \$6 million to \$10 million available for downtown," Reed said, but conceded that those amounts are "way lower" than projections of \$20 million for a new downtown location, especially if the board decides to buy land



In a plan for renovation and expansion, Trahan has used the book as inspiration for a new wing to the library.



Several options would move book stacks to the center of the building and create reading spaces along the outer perimeter of a structure of up to four stories. Trahan said he hoped the concepts were “the beginning of a dialogue” with the board and the community about “how we come together in spaces.”

Freeman agreed that more public feedback is needed before the board moves forward. “We need a bigger opportunity for public impact,” she said.

Griffin said he wants an innovative design that builds on downtown cultural and civic assets, such as the new town square along North Boulevard and the nearby Shaw Center. He said he’d like to see a library that departs from the traditional suburban library—he mentioned a rooftop terrace and spaces for cultural events as possible features—and also said he wants more input from the public before moving forward.

But he also said he doesn’t think the existing River Center location, whose many problems include restrooms that don’t allow wheelchair access, can be renovated. “My opinion is to tear down the building and do something innovative,” Griffin said.

The issue of a downtown library has been hotly debated in public meetings since surfacing several years ago, and plans have zigged and zagged with changes in the board.

for a new site.

“The issue will be how much we are going to be willing to spend,” Reed said.

The board will take up the issue of a downtown library over the coming months, said Reed, adding that he hopes board members can decide on an architect by the end of the year. “I’m hoping by November or December we start making some decisions about downtown.”

New momentum on the issue began in August when Baton Rouge architect Trey Trahan presented the results of a feasibility study that considered options for renovating, renovating and expanding or replacing the existing 26,000-square-foot River Center branch, including adding new floors and roughly doubling its size to 56,000 square feet.

Trahan Architects conceives a new library that would provide views of the river and downtown. Some have suggested a new library could include a top-floor restaurant and a ground-floor coffee shop.

A brochure published by the library system in late 2005 to build public support for 10-year renewal of the 11.1-millage that sustains it said a new main branch would be built downtown and the River Center branch closed.

Former library director Lydia Acosta, who left the area for a job in Florida, said the library board's commitment to the public at the time was to pursue a downtown project, although the vote did not include specific dollar amounts for proposed locations.

In July 2005, the previous five-member library board passed a motion to create a new downtown headquarters library but did not identify a specific site. Contentious public meetings featuring downtown-versus-Independence Park factions followed that action.

Mayor Kip Holden took action in early 2007, suggesting that the board build the new main library at Independence Park and opt for a branch downtown.

Davis Rhorer, executive director of the Downtown Development District, says he hopes the board will be open to an innovative plan. "Libraries of today are not just a matter of circulating books. The buildings come alive." •



# No animal left behind

NEW FOUNDATION INITIATIVE AIMS TO NEARLY ELIMINATE EUTHANASIA OF DOGS AND CATS >> by SARA BONGIORNI

**T**he Baton Rouge Area Foundation has joined with a coalition of animal enthusiasts to end the practice of euthanizing healthy, treatable adoptable cats and dogs in East Baton Rouge Parish.

The No Kill Baton Rouge project will bring a sea change in the treatment of homeless cats and dogs in the Baton Rouge region, where the use of euthanasia is sharply higher than the national average.

The goal of a no-kill community is to avoid putting down healthy dogs and cats as a means of controlling the animal population. To prevent overcrowding at shelters with limited space and funds, successful no-kill communities increase pet

adoptions and expand affordable spay/

neuter programs to decrease the number of animals that end up in shelters in the first place, says Andrew Rowan, executive vice president of the Humane Society of the United States.

A steering committee of the local initiative in late summer began studying the most effective no-kill practices, and hopes to present a plan for action by year end, said Patricia Calfee, BRAF project manager. "We are looking at what has worked best elsewhere."

The no-kill concept has gained speed over the past decade, with California supplying much of the momentum. In 1994, San Francisco became the first city in the U.S. to initiate a no-kill effort, seeking to transfer animals to the local SPCA before considering euthanasia. Since then, San Francisco has lowered the euthanasia rate to nearly zero.

More recently, California enacted a law mandating that shelters spay or neuter animals before releasing them. But places as diverse as Reno, Nev., Charlottesville, Va., and Tompkins County, New York, also have established no-kill projects.

The No Kill Baton Rouge initiative will unfold against an encouraging national backdrop. In the 70s, as many as 20 million cats and dogs were put down at U.S. shelters each year. That has dropped

24





to about 4 million animals per year, according to Humane Society figures. The number of animals entering U.S. shelters likewise has fallen sharply over that period, Rowan said.

Experts are not certain of the reason for the decline, but the drop-off in both euthanasia and shelter intakes means that no-kill communities—Rowan prefers the term “no homeless pets communities”—are within striking distance. “Quite frankly, we’re so close to the goal,” he said.

Still, the no-kill effort here will face special challenges. In East Baton Rouge, dogs and cats are less likely to be spayed or neutered, leading to more unwanted animals.

The rate of euthanasia is also higher. Nationally, 12.5 shelter animals are put down per 1,000 people. In East Baton Rouge, it is 20.4, according to a Humane Society analysis. In East Baton Rouge Parish, roughly 11,000 cats, dogs, kittens and puppies—65% of them healthy—were put down in 2008, according to Calfee.

Momentum for No Kill Baton Rouge began earlier this year after Foundation officials began meeting with representatives of Cat Haven Inc. about how the local nonprofit cat rescue group could expand its ability to spay and neuter animals. In the course of that work, the Foundation started to research the larger issue of animal euthanasia locally and across the region, Calfee said.

Cat Haven is one of the stakeholders in the

**What:** Foundation and partners launch No Kill, a project to eliminate the euthanasia of companion animals.

**When:** A steering committee is writing up a strategy that will be implemented beginning early next year.

**Who:** Partners of the Foundation are LSU School of Veterinary Medicine, East Baton Rouge Parish Animal Control and Rescue, Spay Baton Rouge, the Metro Council, Cat Haven, Capital Area Animal Welfare Society, the Humane Society of the United States and the Baton Rouge Area Veterinary Medical Association.

**How you can help:** You can donate to this effort at [NoKillBR.org](http://NoKillBR.org) or by calling Helen Fisher at 225.387.6126. Donations are tax deductible.

No Kill Baton Rouge initiative and a member of the steering committee. Others are East Baton Rouge Animal Control and Rescue, Spay Baton Rouge, Capital Area Animal Welfare Society, LSU School of Veterinary Medicine, the Metro Council, the Humane Society of the United States and the Baton Rouge Area Veterinary Medical Association.

The group is examining the practices of successful no-kill communities in formulating its plan of action for the local region. The best no-kill prac-

25

In the 70s, as many as 20 million cats and dogs were put down at U.S. shelters each year. That has dropped to about 4 million animals per year, according to Humane Society figures.

tices include increasing the availability of no- and low-cost spay and neuter programs, implementing comprehensive adoption programs, and expanding volunteer programs to provide foster shelters and feral cat programs focused on trapping, neutering and releasing the animals.

Other strategies include policies like that at work in Alberta, Canada, where a licensing rate of more than 90 percent allows the city to return animals to their owners, often without ever taking them to shelters, Rowan said.

But educating the public about the link between euthanasia and pet reproduction is critical to convincing pet owners to take action. Increasing adoptions from shelters is another goal, one that will get a boost this fall from a nationwide Ad Council public-service campaign that encourages such adoptions. "Informing people that spaying or

neutering their cats and dogs helps keep animals from being put to sleep is the most compelling way to get people to do it," Rowan said.

Making the process as easy as possible is also key. "Go to the malls," Rowan said.

One of the places the No Kill steering committee will study is comparatively close to home. In Shreveport, a new shelter director hired in 2008 has helped increase pet adoptions by more than 200%. Changes in daily shelter operations have helped decrease euthanasia by 15% over the same period.

The Foundation and partners are taking steps to increase adoption now and expect to begin implementing a plan early next year. •

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# Sunday in the park



**Oct. 25th**

**Greg Hayden & Vintage**

Hayden takes a bit of the past and molds it with contemporary sounds. Influences like Jackson Browne, Gordon Lightfoot and James Taylor come into play with Hayden's dry, up front vocals and steady piano parts to bring home a message with attitude.



**Nov. 1st**

**The Dirty Dozen Brass Band**

An innovative blend of traditional New Orleans sounds and modern jazz sensibilities. Mixing intriguing approaches to familiar material that emphasizes their original creations, they resurrected, revitalized and put a distinctly personal stamp on the tradition of New Orleans brass bands.



**Nov. 8th**

**Trombone Shorty & Orleans Ave.**

They will mesmerize and deliver a high-energy funk rock show. Troy Trombone Shorty Andrews is equally hot on trombone and trumpet. Wynton Marsalis said of him, "Troy possesses the rarest combination of talent, technical capability and down home soul. I'm his biggest fan."

MARCIA KAPLAN KANTROW COMMUNITY LECTURE SERIES 2009



David Wood, Director of the Institute for Responsible Investing at Boston College, will tell us how charitable assets and mission investments are being leveraged to create Smart Growth communities, regenerate urban areas and retrofit the world.

6:00 p.m., Thursday, October 29, 2009  
at the Manship Theatre  
100 Lafayette Street, Baton Rouge

*Baton Rouge  
Area Foundation*



# A good time

IN LOW INTEREST ENVIRONMENT, A VEHICLE EMERGES TO REDUCE TAXES, GIVE TO CHARITY AND KEEP ASSETS >> by **MUKUL VERMA**

28

**H**is job is to reduce taxes, a technical task that requires the smarts of a businessman mixed with the savvy of an attorney. Jeffrey W. Koonce enjoys this work, but takes extra satisfaction in creating strategies that combine tax advantages with improving the world through philanthropy.

Koonce says clients are concerned about the economy. At the same time, low interest rates meant to boost the economy also provide a rare window to give to charities, while reducing or wip-

ing out estate and gift taxes.

The vehicle for this tumble of good fortune is the charitable lead trust. Koonce recommends people interested in donating to a charity consider a charitable lead trust, as does the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

Why now? "As interest rates go down, the value of donations to charities goes up," says Koonce, who works from a corner office at Phelps Dunbar in Baton Rouge. "Right now, with historically low interest rates, the benefits from a charitable lead



Jeffrey Koonce, tax attorney, has not seen rates so low in his lifetime. A good time, he says, for giving to charities and cutting the tax burden.

trust are much, much more attractive.”

When you set up a charitable lead trust, several good things can happen. Money earned from the trust pays income to a charity for a period time. When the trust ends, the assets in the trust revert to you or a family member.

What’s important, you—the donor—receive tax breaks that depend on the type of charitable lead trust you establish.

You can receive a tax deduction equal to the present value of the income that will be donated

to the charity through the trust. Now that interest rates are at a historical low, the calculated value of that deduction is higher.

What’s more, by establishing a charitable lead trust, you can shields assets – and their appreciation – from estate taxes.

For those wanting to give to charity and preserve their assets, the charitable lead trust can save hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxes on a \$1 million trust of 10 or 20 years, says Koonce.

Because each person has different financial sit-

uations and philanthropic goals, a visit first to a financial advisor is recommended. Additional information about charitable lead trusts, establishing charitable accounts and guidance on giving to nonprofits is available from the Foundation's donor services department and legal counsel.

The AICPA says you should consider charitable lead trusts if you:

- Own securities, real estate or other assets that are expected to increase in value over the term of the trust.
- Don't need current income
- Can afford to set aside a portion of your assets for a certain number of years
- Want to make annual gifts to charity
- Want to ensure your heirs receive an inheritance, but not immediately
- Want to reduce estate taxes

## AN EXAMPLE

Mr. Black puts \$1 million in a twenty-year charitable lead trust to benefit Baton Rouge Area Foundation. The trust agreement stipulates that the Foundation is to receive \$60,000 in income annually for the purposes spelled out in the trust agreement. At the end of the 20-year term, Mr. Black's son, Jack, is to receive the trust principal.

For gift tax purposes, only the remainder interest (what the IRS estimates the value of the trust principal will be at the end of the trust period) is subject to tax. In this case, Treasury tables project the value of the remainder to be \$123,634. The trust principal, however, actually grows to about \$2,543,804 (assuming a 3% annual net return), and this is what Jack

In an AICPA brief, an estate planning attorney says community foundations, such as the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, are ideal for receiving the income from a charitable trust. They provide arms-length charitable transactions that are a shield against the IRS taxing the assets in the trust.

• • •

The Foundation provides many opportunities for your charitable giving. Here's a primer.

## STARTING A FUND: HOW TO MAKE A BETTER WORLD

If you are ready to become a donor, we are ready to help. A first step is talking with our donor services department. They will provide all the details and create a custom philanthropy package for you.



Helen Lowery and Stewart Jones of the Foundation donor services department can guide donors through the charitable giving options, receives. The difference between the value of the remainder interest under the Treasury tables and the actual trust value at the end of the trust term (\$2,420,170) passes to Jack, free of transfer taxes. Mr. Black's tax liability is based only on the projected value of the remainder interest (\$123,634), and even this could be offset by Mr. Black's available gift tax exemption. •

Calculations by Jeffrey Koonce

Baffled and abandoned, they wander the streets—dogs and cats whose greatest need is simply the care of a faithful companion. Each year, East Baton Rouge captures thousands, hoping to find new homes for them. Instead, most of them are put down each year by the local animal shelter.

We don't have to call it a necessary evil any longer.

## WITHOUT US THEY ARE LOST

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and animal welfare groups are writing a strategy to nearly eliminate unnecessary euthanasia, with the goal of deploying it in January.

You can help by giving seed money to support the effort.

**DONATE at [NoKillBR.org](http://NoKillBR.org)**



## STEP 1: CHOOSE A TYPE OF FUND

You can open a charitable account for \$10,000. Placed in an investment pool, earnings and your gift can be used for granting to nonprofits. The Foundation offers several types of funds.

**Donor Advised Funds:** Our most popular option for individuals, donor advised fund comprise more than 40% of our funds.

After making gifts to the Foundation that are placed in the fund, donors can recommend grants to nonprofits. Donor advised funds offer excellent tax benefits, letting you keep more of your earnings or good fortune for effective philanthropy.

**Field of Interest Funds:** Field of interest funds let you target your philanthropy, whether it's the arts, education or the environment. As in other funds, the government gives a tax benefits for qualified gifts to the fund.

**Unrestricted Funds:** Donors wishing to rely on the Foundation to meet the timely needs of the community choose unrestricted funds. Our expert staff and board make grants from unrestricted funds to meet pressing needs and for projects that improve how communities work.

**Scholarship Funds:** Donors can start a scholarship to give students a hand with education costs. The Foundation promotes scholarships and manages the paperwork, including gathering and compiling applications. Qualified gifts to scholarship funds are tax deductible.

**Corporate Advised Funds:** Our version of donor advised funds for businesses. Businesses put money in their corporate advised funds, proposing grants to nonprofits from earnings or the principal. The board reviews and acts on the grants.

**Supporting Foundations:** People considering their own private foundations should get more details on supporting foundations. We handle the administration and reporting, while you work with the supporting foundation's board to make grants.

## STEP 2: DEPOSIT ASSETS IN YOUR FUND

It's not far-fetched for us to claim that we accept just about any assets. We have accepted gifts of all types because we know they ultimately will be used for a high purpose. Our staff will assist you with documentation and determining the timing of the gift. Because donations are tax deductible, money remains in the community.

**Cash:** It's the easiest way to make a difference.

**Appreciated Stock:** Your investments are reinvested in the community, and you qualify for an immediate tax deduction based on the market value.

**Real Estate:** The Foundation has deep expertise in using real estate for the common good. Our Wilbur Marvin Foundation was created to hold real estate, which is managed by Commercial Properties Realty Trust, a wing of the Foundation. Our staff can seek an appraisal and other necessities in making a gift of real estate.

**Business Interests:** Business owners can gift closely-held stock or limited partnership interests to the Foundation. Our donor services department will team up with your financial advisor to consider options for the gift.

**Life Insurance:** You can get tax benefits now for life insurance policies left as gifts to the Foundation.



# ADVANTA WTT SMASH HITS

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**Dedicate now for later:** More people are giving while they are living, letting them direct their charitable dollars. But many prefer to include philanthropy in their estate plans. Either way, they are choosing charity over taxes. Options include bequests by wills, charitable remainder trusts, charitable lead trusts and retirement fund allocation. Donor services will help you choose the option that suits you.

### STEP 3: MAKE GRANTS

Now that you have established an account, you are ready to execute your vision for a better world. The staff of the Foundation will help you create a robust philanthropy plan—and make sure your grantmaking is effective, enduring and effortless.

A staff member will be assigned as your consultant, with a staff of about 20 supporting you. We recommend you begin by talking more deeply with partnership relations and donor services, the divisions that have connections and knowledge of issues in Baton Rouge and the nonprofits doing the best job.

You can make a grant by making a phone call or by visiting a private website for donors. At the secure website, you can recommend and track grants, review your grant history, check out nonprofits and monitor amounts in charitable funds.

For each grant, we manage the procedures, from writing checks and acknowledgements to reviewing the impact of the grant. •

### JOINING OUR DONORS

Donors come to us with a desire to change the world, a little at a time, and we're here to help them do it. Numbering more than 400, our donors have entrusted the Foundation to help them make more than \$200 million in grants through the decades. Of course, philanthropists could always start their own private foundations or write checks to nonprofits. But our asset base lets us offer services that make giving easier. Because of the large number of donors we work with and the size of our donations, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation has the resources to serve them better.

When donors approach us, we listen to what they want to do and hope to achieve, then jointly establish a path for their philanthropy. With a minimum of \$10,000, philanthropists can open charitable funds—a donor account for doing good.

Our size and experience allows us to respond to a wide variety of donor interests and to accept a diverse range of assets. Typically, donors invest cash, publicly traded securities, mutual funds, business interests, and real estate in their donation accounts. Nonprofits with substantial assets also rely on us to administer their investments.

These assets are managed by various investment houses, but they are overseen by our local board and an investment committee. With the earnings from their accounts, donors can make grant recommendations. These, in turn, are acted upon by the Foundation Board, as the IRS requires. Overall, the Foundation makes philanthropy about as simple as a savings account.



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You were faster than Speedy Gonzales. You could flap your arms and fly.  
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You emerged—richer, stronger, wiser.

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Run fast, fly, change the world.

*Baton Rouge  
Area Foundation*

ONSITE



LSU researcher Harry H. Roberts is co-author of a report that says sediment from the Mississippi River cannot save Louisiana's coast because of rising sea levels. Louisiana will lose coastal land about the size of Connecticut by the end of the century, Roberts predicts with Michael Blum, a former LSU geologist.



TIM MUELLER

# Man vs. Nature

WITH SEA LEVELS RISING, LOUISIANA'S COASTAL CITIES AND TOWNS ARE EXPECTED TO DISAPPEAR. CAN WE REALLY STOP THE RISING TIDE?

>> by **JEREMY ALFORD**

**C**oastal communities are dying a slow death, commercial fishermen are no longer able to work and family homes are disappearing into marshy terrain. That's what a giant pelican was trying to relate to children gathered at Barnes and Noble on Corporate Boulevard in Baton Rouge one August evening. There were also people dressed as an oversized alligator, eagle and dolphin—all cast members of *The Estuarians*.

They're part of the multimillion dollar outreach efforts of America's Wetland, a nonprofit advocacy group that has received state money to spread the coastal erosion message across the nation. Walter Williams of *Mr. Bill* fame created the endearing characters, which are featured on the Web and in commercials. They've worked to convince the masses that Louisiana's land loss problem is a threat to America as a whole.

But many people living along the coasts of America don't need convincing. They live in the middle of the peril. California's soft cliffs of sedimentary rock are under attack and Devil's Slide, Santa Barbara and Malibu are regularly affected by land loss. In Hawaii, nearly 25% of Oahu's

37

beaches have been lost or significantly narrowed over the past century, and greater reductions have been reported on the island of Maui. In Florida, Miami officials routinely dump truckloads of sand on the shoreline.

Around the globe, erosion challenges are eras-

of land the same size as Tiger Stadium every 20 minutes.

Government officials in Louisiana and Washington, D.C., have responded; the state has an entire agency dedicated to coastal issues now, and Congress has approved a funding scheme based

on oil revenues that channels \$20 million annually to Louisiana until 2017 and upwards of \$600 million a year after that. By the end of the fiscal year 2008-2009, the state alone had awarded \$1.5 billion in coastal restoration contracts—this, during an era of unprecedented billion-dollar shortfalls.

But it's uncertain whether the money will accomplish much. Growing research indicates rising seas will wipe out coastal areas, including cities, in Louisiana and around the world. In some scenarios, even cities like Miami will be drowned by climate change causing the oceans to rise.

Timbalier Island is a homegrown example. A barrier island located off the shore of Lafourche Parish, Timbalier

benefited from \$35 million worth of government-funded sand 20 years ago, but another \$20 million in rocks and other materials had to be poured in a decade later. A subsequent restoration in 2000 pumped more than 3 million cubic yards of dredged mud into the area. The island still has restoration projects pending on the books.

The problem, says Windell A. Curole, general manager of the South Lafourche Levee District and a member of Gov. Bobby Jindal's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, is that the projects only work well in the short term. The solution, he says, may be drawing a line between the Gulf and coastal Louisiana. "We need to decide



Marsh balls accumulated inside and outside the levee which was supposed to protect a neighborhood in St. Bernard Parish south of New Orleans.

ing archaeological sites like Egypt's monuments of Alexandria and Scotland's Neolithic settlement of Skara Brae. In the United Kingdom, scientists are studying old paintings of the Isle of Wight and the Hampshire coast to assess what erosion has done to their homeland.

Simply put, wherever you can find saltwater making contact with land, you'll find the telltale signs of coastal erosion.

The gigantic pelican and the rest of The Estuarians are right on the money to single out Louisiana. The state's outer coast bears the brunt of 80% of the nation's coastal land loss each year—equal to 25 to 35 square miles, or losing a piece

what's worth defending and what should simply be maintained," Curole says. "I think we'll find some of the work isn't worth doing at all."

Harry H. Roberts, Louisiana State University professor emeritus of oceanography and coastal sciences, provides an even harsher estimate. He argues there's no chance whatsoever to save the state's coast. In June, he published an article with Michael Blum, a former LSU geologist now working for ExxonMobil in Houston, that states the Mississippi River will never be able to supply enough sediment to rebuild the coast—no matter what is done, be it opening up dams or retooling levee systems.

They predict Louisiana will lose 5,200 square miles of coastline during the next 90 years, a chunk of earth that is about the size of the state of Connecticut. "We conclude that significant drowning is inevitable, even if sediment loads are restored, because sea level is now rising at least three times faster than during delta-plain construction."

Roberts, who will soon publish another paper that could debunk the traditional roles marshlands play in coastal restoration, says the reaction to his research this summer has been mixed and emotional. "I think most people were shocked," he says. "While many have suspected this for a very long time, this was the first opportunity where they got to see all the numbers. It's clear to me that the entire coastal plain cannot be saved, so let's direct the sediment we do have to places where it will do the most good."

So why are billions being spent on stopping coastal erosion if more research says the coast cannot be saved? "There is no greater threat to Gulf Coast sustainability than the threat of inac-

tion," responds America's Wetland Chairman R. King Milling.

He adds that coastal restoration is also a form of hurricane protection, since land serves as a buffer. "The urgency has never been greater, for the next Katrina is a question of when and where, not if."



Live oak trees in Golden Meadow were killed by saltwater intrusion from rising water.

Plus, the state has placed huge investments in coastal protection, hiring 150 workers in its new Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration. LSU is creating new coastal engineering degree programs and an entire industry is sprouting to take advantage of the federal money.

Scott Angelle, secretary of the state Department of Natural Resources, says Louisiana's master plan for coastal restoration and hurricane protection is breaking molds when it comes to science and construction. It's "charting new ground."

He says the state could draw the nation's brightest to take part. Compared to the so-called "brain-drain" Louisiana has experienced with out-



TIM MUELLER

“It’s clear to me that the entire coastal plain cannot be saved, so let’s direct the sediment we do have to places where it will do the most good.”

—HARRY H. ROBERTS

ral and manmade erosion further chips away at the community, the aftereffect of saltwater intrusion, oil activity and a bevy of other factors. Favorite fishing banks have become water, homes have been swallowed by the Gulf of Mexico and once-solid land is turning into marsh.

For Dupre, a former state senator who now serves as head of the Terrebonne Levee and Conservation District, it’s another reason to fight back and rebuild. The land belongs to the people, and it’s important to “oubliez jamais ton monde,” he says, or “never forget your people.”

Dupre says it’s an appropriate maxim to cling to, especially since many of Louisiana’s coastal residents share a collective past that’s worth remembering—and a future that’s worth saving, no matter the obstacles. “My ancestors were kicked out of France in the early 1700s, and later in the 1760s we were kicked out of Canada by the British,” he says. “Eight generations ago, my ancestors settled here, in South Louisiana. My people are now facing a third exile in less than 300 years. This time, however, the exile is being caused by Mother Nature with coastal land loss. We’re facing one of the worst environmental holocausts in history and doing nothing is not the answer.” •

migration, he adds the new industry could be a “brain train” back.

To hear Reggie Dupre explain it, coastal restoration has become the singular weapon his community can wield against the encroaching Gulf of Mexico. His family, friends and neighbors are an “endangered species” fighting against something as natural, powerful and seemingly unstoppable as the rising tide. He says that’s the general consensus in the small Cajun hamlet of Pointe au Chien, one of the first buffers between the Gulf and lower Terrebonne Parish.

The locals, like Dupre, have inherited the land they occupy, handed down by generations of commercial fishermen, underpaid roughnecks and other lively characters. Every few years, a Betsy or a Katrina or a Gustav blows through the town and obliterates the landscape. But the locals, they rebuild. In between hurricanes, an amalgam of natu-



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# The venerable scientist

DELIVERING A NEW MEANS TO FIGHT CANCER IN HIS 80S, WILLIAM HANSEL SEEKS NEW DISCOVERIES IN HIS NINTH DECADE >> by **MARY ANN STERNBERG** photo by **TIM MUELLER**

When the Pennington Biomedical Research Center hosted a symposium in September 2008 to honor Dr. William Hansel, more than 120 people gathered from across the country and from abroad to salute the internationally respected research scientist. They included the honoree's family members, colleagues past and present, graduate students, post-docs, and others whose lives had been touched.

The event, officially dubbed *Celebrating Excellence in Science*, featured an eminent keynote speaker who addressed "Advances in Reproductive Biology Research," Dr. Hansel's field. Another prominent scientist commended Dr. Hansel's contributions to the field of reproductive biology, and cancer research, and a parade of LSU luminaries paid tribute. The LSU Board of Supervisors extolled his accomplishments in a formal resolution, especially "a long and exemplary record of service to his profession" and "pioneering research discoveries." The Pennington Center renamed its weekly professional seminars, chaired by Dr. Hansel and featuring visiting scientists, in his honor. And the day culminated with a wonderful dinner.

Such extensive celebrations are usually held in retrospect of a brilliant career as its star takes his bow and retires. In this case, however, the pomp and circumstance merely acknowledged that Dr. William Hansel, internationally recognized reproductive physiologist and extraordinarily fine person, was observing a landmark, his 90th birthday.

After the fanfare, Bill Hansel returned to his office in the labyrinthine working core of the Pennington Biomedical Research Center to resume his team projects.

"So as long as I feel well and have new ideas," said the remarkable nonagenarian with a bright smile, "I think I'll keep going."

## THE GREATEST GENERATION

Bill Hansel leans back in his comfortable desk chair amid a great U-shaped work space, with stacks of papers, files and neat bookshelves of journals and tomes. A few awards and certificates are propped above a bookshelf, just a sampling of the many accolades he has received that decorate the walls of the William Hansel Seminar room at the LSU AgCenter's Embryo Biotechnology Laboratory, at its St. Gabriel Research Station.

Dr. Hansel, a man of medium stature with neatly combed salt and pepper hair and large glasses that set off a warm expression, looks and seems much younger than his age. Associates attribute it to a sharp mind, an extraordinary memory, an indomitable spirit and an abiding curiosity. These are augmented by a hearing aid and two recent knee-replacement surgeries.

In the office, his requisite white lab coat hangs on a hook behind the door and he is casually dressed—khakis and a short-sleeved tan shirt, its collar encircled by a black bolo tie with a distinctive round metal clasp imprinted "9/4." "It's the insignia of the



“Frustration is no match for the drive to find out new things.”

—DR. BILL HANSEL

94th Infantry Division,” his World War II unit, he explains.

The 94th, Cornell University and a love of research are the enduring threads that, after his family, have woven happiness through Hansel's long, full life.

He grew up on a dairy farm in western Maryland, a dedicated member of 4-H, who selected a major in dairy science at the University of Maryland. But like many in his generation, Hansel made an unexpected career detour between his 1940 college graduation and the advanced degrees he needed to pursue science: He was drafted into World War II, spending six months at Officer Candidate School, then going overseas with his division, the 94th Infantry of General George Patton's Third Army in Europe.

In 1945, Patton's troops were positioned in the Saar-Moselle triangle on the now-famous dash to the Rhine but, recounted the old soldier with a self-deprecating smile, “I didn't make it to the Rhine.” He was wounded on a land mine and spent the remainder of the war in a hospital. When he eventually arrived at Cornell for graduate study in animal physiology, he was still on crutches.

In 1949, Cornell invited the newly minted Dr. Hansel to join the faculty where he remained for over 40 years. He became a well-known researcher in reproductive physiology, ultimately concentrating his work on the function of the corpus luteum, which, he voluntarily offers, controls ovulation and the length of the reproductive cycle.

His tenure at Cornell was notable. He was awarded the Liberty Hyde Bailey Distinguished Professorship, served as chairman of the university-wide physiology department, and produced groundbreaking research that garnered prestige, fellowships, and grants from funders such as the NIH, the National Science Foundation and the USDA. He also attracted consultancies from prominent pharmaceutical companies. A large, brightly

colored, primitive oil painting of the Ithaca campus dominates one wall of his Pennington office, a daily reminder of the place that he, his wife and two daughters called home.

## A LOUISIANA VICTORY

Despite his achievements, however, New York state's mandatory retirement law required him to step down in 1990. He was 70.

Louisiana, however, had no comparable age restriction and LSU was looking to strengthen the study of biotechnology in animal and veterinary sciences. They invited Hansel to come south and, he recalls, “I jumped at the opportunity.”

Dr. Robert Godke, Boyd Professor of Reproductive Physiology at LSU and now a good friend, was among the locals who rejoiced. “Bill Hansel is one of the greatest reproductive physiologists in our field,” said Godke. “He's a rare find and we were surprised and elated he accepted our invitation.”

The new arrival served as Gordon Cain Professor of Animal Physiology in the departments of Animal Science and Veterinary Science for four years until he was lured to the Pennington Center. There, in 1997, his work transitioned into targeting cancer.

It came about almost serendipitously. His beloved wife Milbrey had been diagnosed with ovarian cancer and her doctors admitted they had no cure. “I went to a conference in Poland where a friend gave a talk about (cancer) receptors and a light went on,” Dr. Hansel remembers. He was struck with the realization that there might be potential in conjoining what he knew about hormones and reproductive control in animals with the new application for destroying cancer cells.

It was the kind of insight he was known for, says Godke. “The special skill of seeing what other people don't.”

Though his wife died later that year, Hansel's new research direction with associates Dr. Carola

Leuschner and Dr. Fred Enright ultimately led to the development of a new class of cancer drugs capable of targeting and destroying both primary tumors and metastases in reproductive system cancers—prostate, breast, testicular and ovarian.

In scientific terms, their discovery involved using lytic peptides (small proteins responsible for penetrating membranes) and conjugating them to Luteinizing-hormones, resulting in a treatment called cell membrane disruption. But Hansel, who has loved teaching almost as much as research, knows that a lay audience needs a simpler explanation. “We used specific hormones like guided missiles carrying a warhead,” he defines. “The missile is the hormone and the warhead is lytic peptides. It destroys the membrane of the cancer cells, kills the cells, then cleans them up. We target the compound by putting it on a hormone that attaches to the receptors that are on cancer cells.”

The project consumed almost eight years—from chemistry lab to computer lab to test tubes and then to tests on animals, in this case, mice. “And he has been proven right in the lab,” Dr. Claude Bouchard, director of the Pennington Center, proudly notes. The next step for achieving FDA approval for a prescription drug involves three levels of testing in human subjects.

For this, the rights to the discovery were transferred to Esperance Pharmaceuticals, a Baton Rouge start-up in which Hansel is not directly involved. Although frequently researchers join a company to help develop a new pharmaceutical, “I’m probably the world’s worst businessman,” Hansel confides. “I didn’t really want to form my own company” because he’s never appreciated administration. In fact, he turned down an invitation to be provost at the University of Maryland, influenced by his wife but especially by his own preference for research and teaching.

Especially research, about which he waxes passionate. “The desire to find out is a driving force;

there’s no substitute,” he declares. And when his research inevitably hits a dead end as it has many times? “You have to have the courage to continue. Frustration is no match for the drive to find out new things.”

“We were so lucky (Hansel) came here,” says Bouchard. “He brought not only a wealth of experience but also an extraordinary ability to see the big picture,” a trait that many research scientists lack.

After turning over cell membrane disruption to Esperance, Hansel began a new lab—targeting human pancreatic cells put in mice. And next he hopes to start a cancer prevention lab.

His work remains a driving force in his life. In fact, these days “I am kind of delinquent on pastimes,” he admits. At Cornell, located in New York’s grape-growing region, he was an avid, if avocational winemaker and an active member of the Ithaca Wine Club. In Baton Rouge, he joined Pennington’s wine club for tasting and sociability, which he thoroughly enjoyed. “But now I take medicines and can’t have wine.”

He still drives a car, however, and travels—to visit grandchildren and a great-grandchild, to attend occasional reunions of the 94th and to scientific meetings. He was recently in Pittsburgh for a gathering of the Society for Study of Reproduction, “the world’s leading society for reproductive biology... the cutting edge of science,” enthuses the man who is both a founder and former president of the organization, and in early September, he returned to Cornell to give a lecture.

Clearly, Dr. William Hansel is very much involved in the science that he loves and still making a contribution to it. And he celebrated his 91st birthday in September. •

# WHAT'S NEXT?

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation has invested in two venture capital funds that invest in emerging Louisiana technology businesses. The funds have provided capital to Esperance Pharmaceuticals.



Carola Leuschner and Hector Alila developed a cancer drug that could wipe out tumors and provide considerable royalties to LSU. They work for Esperance Pharmaceuticals, which was created to market the drug.

# Cancer killer?

NEW FIRM BEGINS CLINICAL TRIAL OF PROMISING CANCER DRUGS CREATED IN BATON ROUGE >> by **MUKUL VERMA** photo by **TIM MUELLER**

**T**here is a man in Arizona who once was counting his life in days and months. Cancer cells were spreading inside him. But this past summer, he received a shot of hope—a novel drug born from Louisiana minds with the potential of extending millions of lives, while also spinning off huge sums for Louisiana State University.

The drug, named EP 100, emerged as an idea from William Hansel, who postulated that receptors unique to cancer cells were like an Achilles heel. A drug, he believed, could be created to seek out the receptors, latch onto them, then unload a poison to kill the killers. Working at Pennington Biomedical with researchers Fred Enright and Carola Leuschner of LSU, Hansel developed a technology platform based on his a-ha moment.

Now, Esperance Pharmaceuticals has been formed at LSU's emerging technology business incubator to create and market drugs based on the technology platform. Created by Leuschner and Hector Alila of Esperance, the first drug began human trials this summer. Other drugs in the Esperance pipeline target different receptors on cancer cells.

A veteran of the medical industry—and a former student of Dr. Hansel about three decades ago at Cornell University—Alila had so much faith in the technology that he tried to buy it for a previous employer. He has been recruited instead to move drugs from the technology to market as president of Esperance.

"It actually gets rid of tumors in animal testing," said Alila. "It really has been amazing." What's more, the drug doesn't have the debilitating side effects of chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

Because he has seen the promise of new drugs turn into vapor, Alila remains cautious about EP 100 and other Esperance drugs that are under development. Yet it's difficult for him to contain his enthusiasm, for the drug is alone in its ability to reduce and kill cancerous tumors, not just slow down their growth as other medicines do. "What we have seen so far, we are optimistic."

Alila believes the discovery, which he credits to many people working together, could be the greatest in Louisiana history. Though the drugs are years from being approved for market, they could generate untold royalties for LSU. He won't guess how much, but says an existing drug that works on only 30% of breast cancers generates \$2 billion annually. By comparison, an Esperance drug could take out more than 80% of breast, prostate, ovarian, endometrial and other cancers.

The first phase of trials will take 18 months. After those tests for safety, a second phase of two to three years will reveal whether the medicines work in humans. If they are wildly successful, the FDA could let Esperance market the drugs after the second clinical trials. But the normal course is for a third round of trials before the FDA makes a final decision. The drugs could be on the market in about five years.

The next step for Esperance is to raise hundreds of millions required for the expensive second phase of trials. Alila says large drug manufacturers have shown deep interest in the technology and he has even fielded buyout offers.

"It validates our approach. It validates Louisiana and Baton Rouge." •

47

## More care, better health

Does expanding health care produce better health outcomes? It has in Massachusetts, where coverage was expanded to almost every state resident in 2006, says John Auerbach, the state's health commissioner, who shared some benchmarks with the *Wall Street Journal*.

Expansion of Medicaid coverage, for instance, caused an 11% surge of smokers using patches and other cessation tools. A year later, the state recorded an 8% drop in adult smokers, the biggest decrease in a decade.

Colonoscopies, not covered previously, increased among people who should get tested. The number of people inoculated against the flu also increased, an indication that more people were visiting their primary care doctors, the dispensers of flu shots.

On the downside, the expansion has caused an increase in wait time for specialists, and the program is being curbed because total costs are higher than expected. •



## Eco-districts

Portland is no wallflower. Progressive with a bent toward taking chances, the Oregon city is leading again, this time creating eco-districts that others around the nation could follow. Pushing to make Portland's footprint on the planet a bit lighter is Mayor Sam Adams, who was enthralled on a China trip by that country's building of entire green cities.

The Portland Development Commission, its version of the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, has hired Sera Associates to give a hand in formulating eco-districts. One goal is to use common chillers to reduce energy consumption by

20%. Another is to capture water across an area for irrigation. Eco-districts could include car sharing, habitat conservation plans and common social and environmental goals.

The first green district is expected to be Portland State University. Separately, the university is collaborating with local government, nonprofits, the redevelopment authority and others to create a Sustainability Center of Excellence. Located in the ultimate green building, the center would be a resource for green research and education. (<http://oregonsustainabilitycenter.wordpress.com>) •





## Here comes everybody

Crowds are smarter than individuals. That idea has been extensively used for town planning, where residents gather to design the future for their communities. Extending the idea with technology, San Jose, Calif., has established an online means to crowd-source for plotting its future.

The Envision San Jose 2040 master plan has a website—a wiki—for tapping the collective. Residents can visit the site to offer their ideas for creating what San Jose should become, answering questions in a survey to do so.

The city is using Wikipanning.com, which has an array of tools to engage and educate the community. Residents can review community projects, exchange ideas on message boards, download podcasts of walking tours through project sites, among other things.

San Jose is boosting use of online tools by offering tickets from arts, entertainment and cultural organizations. The project is supported by a grant from the Knight Foundation. •



## Mosquito killer

There are stories in Louisiana, unverified but believable, of mosquitoes carrying off small dogs that are never seen again. A researcher with his own mosquito tale—he had malaria as a kid in India—has discovered a chemical compound that could reduce insect bites while being kind to the environment, thereby saving lives.

Anandasankar Ray, entomologist at the University of California Riverside, found that a compound of hexanol and butanal inhibited fruit fly brains from sensing carbon dioxide—the chemical that attracts flies and mosquitoes to humans.

In a release, Ray says the compounds can guide research in developing novel repellents and masking agents that are inexpensive and environmentally safe. His team has begun lab work on mosquitoes that spread malaria and dengue fever, and are working with researchers around the world on other mosquito species and tsetse flies.

His work could save people. Malaria kills nearly 1 million each year. •



## Counting sheep

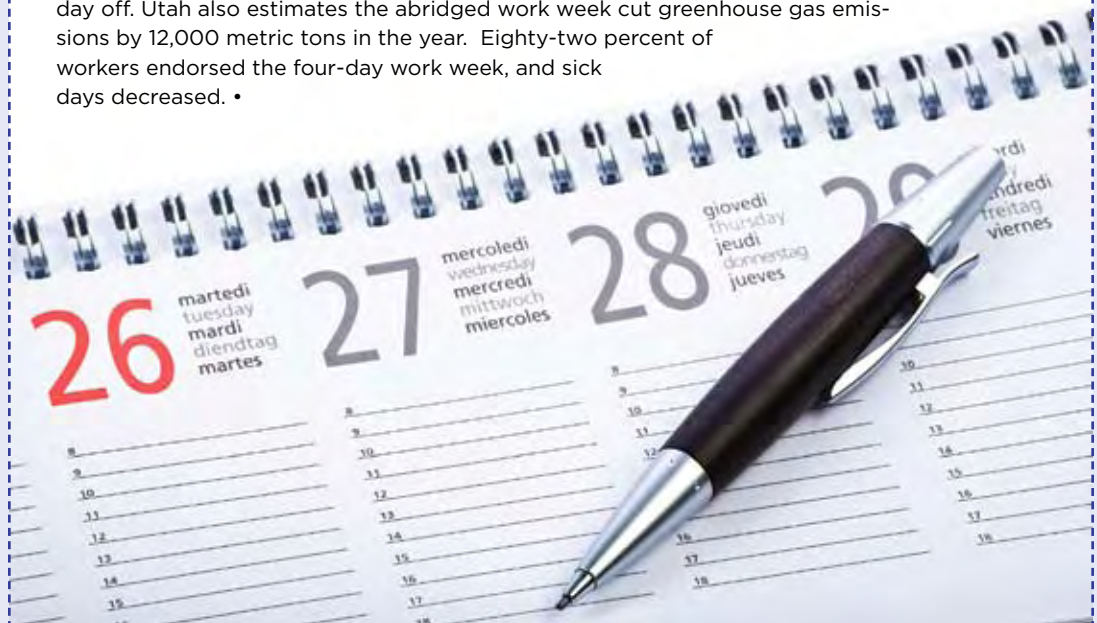
Are you sleeping right through the Ambien? Breathe deeply, for there's always something new to help the sleep deprived. The latest is the Zeo, a sleep monitoring system for the home. Zeo's headband senses electrical activity in the brain to track sleep patterns and wirelessly transmit them to a bedside device that looks like an alarm clock. The device summarizes patterns of sleep, gives a single score to gauge the quantity, quality and depth of sleep each night, calculates the time it takes to fall asleep and more. Users can upload the information to a website, which tracks sleep patterns and has current sleep research information. (Zeo.com) •



## Working 4-10

We have talked about the four-day work week in this space. The movement is growing—and has support from most workers, except parents who must figure out what to do with children in the time gap between work and school.

Twelve months in, the state of Utah reports a 13% decline in energy use for the 17,000 employees working four 10-hour days. Employees saved up to \$6 million in gasoline costs over the year, though the calculations don't consider workers might be driving elsewhere on the day off. Utah also estimates the abridged work week cut greenhouse gas emissions by 12,000 metric tons in the year. Eighty-two percent of workers endorsed the four-day work week, and sick days decreased. •



## E-books are cleaner

Are electronic book readers better for the environment than paper books? A new study by Cleantech says so.

The environmental researchers says e-readers could have a major impact on improving the sustainability and environmental impact on the publishing industry, one of the world's most polluting sectors. In 2008, the U.S. book and newspaper industries harvested 125 million trees, not to mention wastewater that was produced or its massive carbon footprint.

Cleantech says the carbon emitted in the life cycle of an Amazon Kindle is fully offset in the first year of use. "Any additional years of use result in net carbon savings, equivalent to an average of 168 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per year (the emissions produced in the manufacture and distribution of 22.5 books)," writes Emma Ritch of Cleantech.

There are limits. The report assumes a book sold on a Kindle equals one less book printed. It also doesn't count how often people upgrade technology and the environmental pollution from discarded devices.

A new Kindle is back-ordered on Amazon. Sony is delivering an advanced version of its reader for the holidays. Apple is said to be working on a media tablet that can read books. A handful of universities have begun testing electronic readers for textbooks. •



# \$13

Cost of manufacturing a mobile phone. The widespread use of cheaper mobile phones has allowed poor people to dial up information that boosts their fortunes. Farmers, for instance, can call around for the best price for their crops.

A large, vibrant image of a sunflower with bright orange and yellow petals, set against a dark background. The image is framed by a dashed red border.

## Sun lighter

California firm Nanosolar has launched its first factory to automate the production of a new type of solar power technology. Opened in Germany because of subsidies there, the factory makes solar panels by combining copper, indium, gallium and selenium into an ink that is printed on rolls of inexpensive aluminum foil. Though CIGS panels are not as efficient, automated manufacturing and cheaper installation makes the technology competitive with coal, the company claims. Nanosolar has secured \$4.1 billion in contracts for its cells. The first panels will be for solar farms, but a residential product is in the works. •

## Tracking H1N1

Want to know if there's a swine flu breakout near you? There's an app for that.

Outbreaks Near Me, an iPhone application, collects data from news media and the public to track the spread of infectious diseases. Users can see cases of outbreaks on maps and get text alerts of new disease cases.

John Brownstein, an assistant professor at Children's Hospital Boston, led the creation of the software, which is based on HealthMap, a website that searches the Internet for disease information and displays the data on maps. •





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# Pocket of opportunity

PROSPERITY AROUND IT, AN UNDERDOG NEIGHBORHOOD GETS ITS CHANCE

>> by **MAGGIE HEYN RICHARDSON** photo by **ABBY MILLER**

**N**early every morning of her life, Frances Dunn has awakened in the same Covington neighborhood, an area known as the West 30s. Her current and childhood homes are separated by just seven blocks.

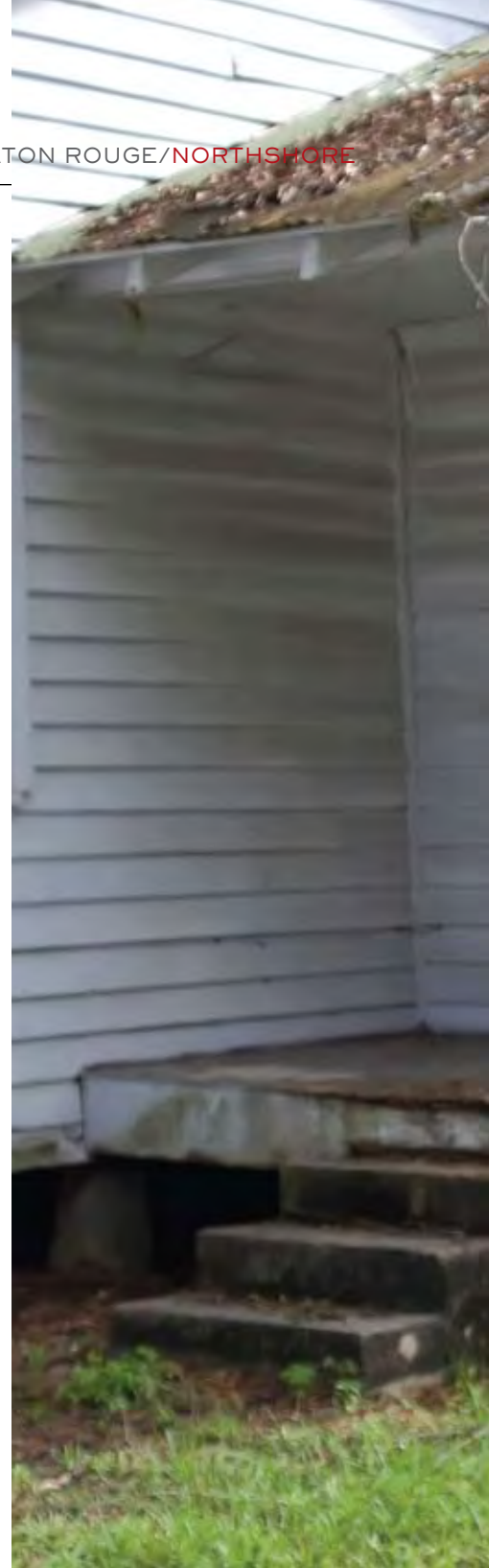
“This neighborhood had the village effect on me,” says Dunn, 61, a former lab manager at Charity Hospital in New Orleans who now serves on the Covington City Council. “I had a calling to remain here.”

It wasn’t an easy choice. Dunn and others have watched the West 30s surrender to decline. High unemployment, crime and blight prevail—even as the rest of the Northshore continues its growth and prosperity.

“This is one community that has not benefited from the post-Katrina boom,” says Frank Saxton, Northshore Community Foundation director of community development. “It’s basically a neighborhood that is suffering.”

The West 30s also has languished while the areas immediately surrounding it have flourished. Bordered by Covington’s picturesque, pedestrian-friendly downtown, high-priced neighborhoods and retail-rich Collins Boulevard, the 70 square blocks of the West 30s remain rife with overgrown lots, dilapidated housing and despair.

“When we looked at it, we saw all this investment nearby, and then here is this pocket of disinvestment,” says Susan Bonnett, CEO and president of the Northshore Community Foundation. “We thought





Frances Dunn moved to a Dallas suburb after Katrina. Returning to her home in Covington, the councilwoman wants to make her blighted neighborhood shine like her temporary home in Texas.

that was unacceptable.”

Over the summer, the leadership announced the NCF would provide up to \$150,000 for a master plan for the West 30s through the Hurricane Katrina Planning Assistance fund. The fund supports community development projects in St.

Tammany, St. Helena, Tangipahoa and Washington parishes, and usually requires a match from local government. This time, says Saxton, the NCF will foot the entire bill for the master plan.

“The concerns were so large, and we felt it was so important, that we wanted to put our name behind it,” he says. “We think it will become a sales piece, and will help unlock other sources of funding down the road.”

In August, the NCF and the community group Friends of the West 30s selected Nashville-based The Walker Collaborative to lead the planning process from an original list of 23 applying firms. TWC has focused largely on revitalization strategies for small- to medium-sized towns in the Southeast. Saxton says the master plan will be completed in a year.

Bonnett says neighborhood residents will drive the plan’s content.

“This has to be an initiative of the West 30s,” she says. “The most important part of it is that it comes from within.”

Dunn agrees. “This is going to come from the community. I don’t want it to be my plan. It should come from the whole area.”

Dunn says that the West 30s’ decline was one of her biggest reasons for running for City Council two years ago. After Hurricane Katrina, she and her mother, Jennette Dunn, also a lifelong resident of the neighborhood, left the Northshore to stay with her daughter in McKinney, Texas, a Dallas suburb. The Dunns were impressed with the community, so much so that Jennette, 80, has remained there.

Dunn returned, but says the experience made her think hard about the erosion of the West 30s

and what she could do to help. Friends encouraged her to run for City Council, and she took them up on it. Convincing her neighbors things can improve has been one of her chief objectives.

“When things are so low, you get accustomed to it,” she says. “But I kept saying, ‘We can revitalize this. Our kids don’t have to be in this atmosphere. We can set an example about reaching for the best things in life.’”

Saxton says that while the area’s challenges are considerable, the West 30s’ inherent features could give it a leg up. “It’s got a lot of things going for it. It’s on a grid, it’s walkable and it couldn’t be better situated,” he says.

The neighborhood’s close proximity to growth and prosperity also feeds a prevailing concern among some neighbors that revitalization will result in gentrification. Saxton and the foundation team understand this fear, but he says that neighborhoods survive and thrive when they feature a diversity of housing, which permits the drawing of new investment while allowing continuity.

Ideally, the housing mix in the West 30s will provide for varying income levels and will feature small businesses, retail outlets and civic amenities.

Over the next few months, residents will attend neighborhood charrettes, or town planning meetings, run by WCI in which they will discuss their current concerns and hopes and dreams for the future. After the 12-month planning process concludes, implementing its goals will become the new focus.

Covington Mayor Candace Watkins says the West 30s master plan is “the answer to many prayers.”

“Revitalizing this important part of our city has been a longtime goal and one that is critical to future opportunity for all Covington families,” she says. “It’s the chance to restore the beauty and vibrancy of this very close-knit portion of our community.” •





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TIM MUELLER

# Steve Bonfanti

ABOVE THE FRAY

58

After Steve Bonfanti was badly beaten in a road rage incident, he surprised everyone with an act of generosity directed at his attacker’s baby daughters.

Bonfanti, 71, was en route to his Highland Road neighborhood in September 2008, a routine task made difficult by Hurricane Gustav’s massive damage. Bonfanti crept along at a snail’s pace. When he slowed further in a school zone, it triggered the ire of the men in the car behind him, who gestured angrily, sped by and ultimately blocked Bonfanti’s passage. “I thought I’d talk to them,” recalls Bonfanti. “The kindness of words can sometimes change a guy’s mind.” But before Bonfanti could speak, Johnny Mutrie, 26, and Eric Mutrie, 19,

delivered relentless kicks and blows, damaging his ear canal, knocking out eight teeth and opening lacerations that required 40 stitches. Their mother, Rhonda Mutrie, had remained in the backseat of their car throughout the assault.

A year later, the Mutrie brothers were sentenced to 10 years, and their mother was ordered to pay restitution of \$41,500. Bonfanti responded with a pledge. He said he would set the money aside for Johnny Mutrie’s two young daughters’ college education and match it himself one-to-one. “I want them to see that life can be different for them,” he said, “and that there are good people in the world.”

—Maggie Heyn Richardson

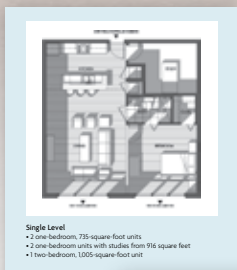
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# Sweet dreams in the heart of downtown

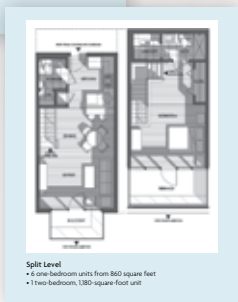


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