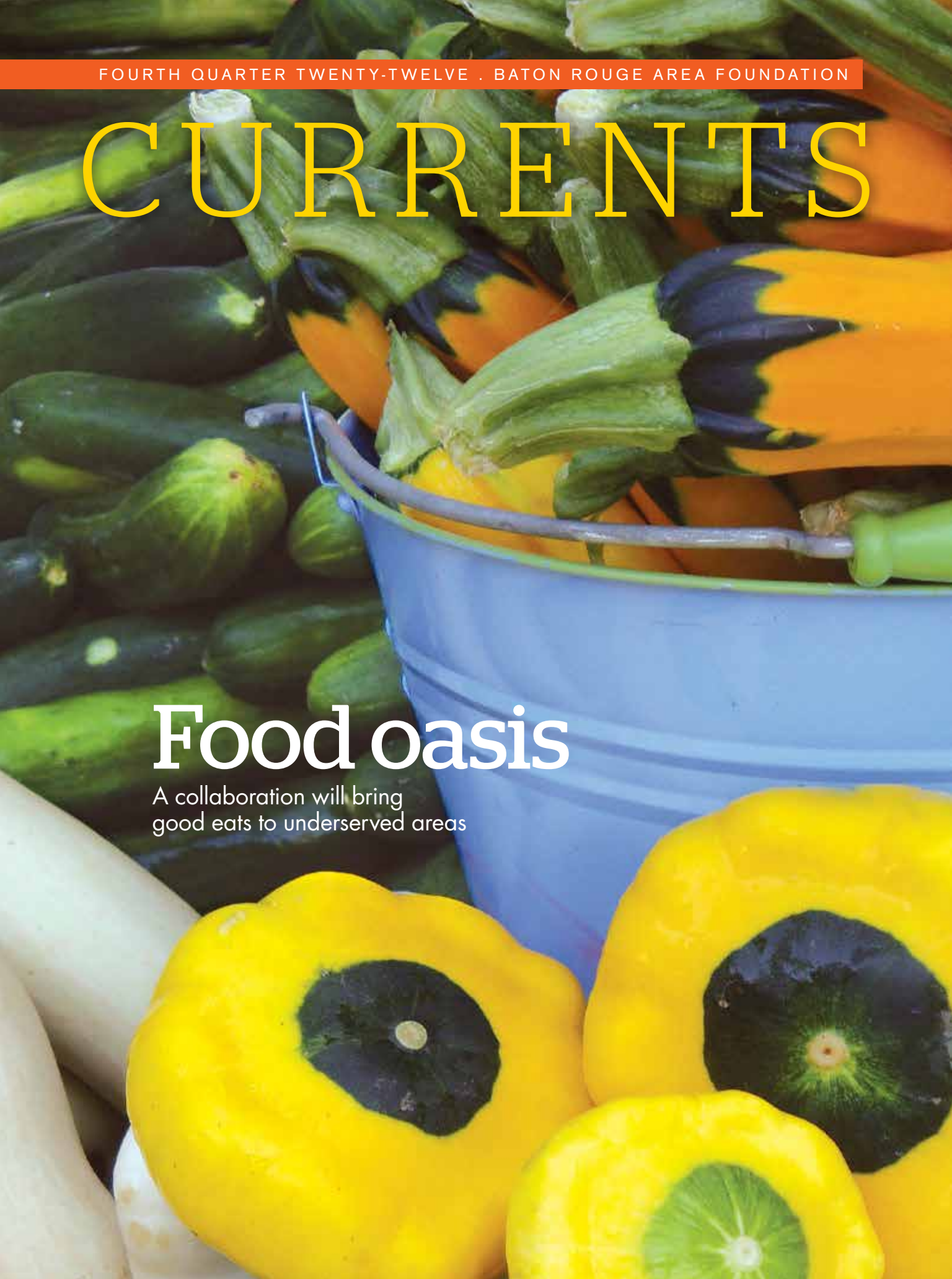


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*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*



There was a time when Baton Rouge's parks were not exactly a point of pride for our city. Too often, BREC pinched pennies when it came to our greenspaces, neglecting them until they became too overgrown to be much good to anybody. But visit one of the city's parks today and you'd never know it.

On most days, even hot ones, people flock to the parks. Children swing and slide at City Park, while down the hill dogs run around in a park of their own. Across town, BREC is putting the finishing touches on a major makeover for a dozen other parks, large and small, in various neighborhoods.

So the people of Baton Rouge should congratulate themselves for the blossoming of our park system here. After a public planning process known as "Imagine Your Parks," the people of our community passed new taxes in November 2004, investing in the upgrade of existing parks as well as the creation of new ones. Entrusted with \$70 million for park operations, BREC kept up its end of the bargain by spending money wisely and without even a hint of waste.

Along with this, BREC is reaching out in a new spirit of collaboration. Seeking out partners, the parks system is coordinating its efforts with neighborhood groups to improve some vital public spaces. People in the community raise money, and BREC matches the amount for additional amenities, like playgrounds and pedestrian connections. That's how Goodwood Park managed to spruce itself up so much, for example, and the same is happening at several others.

You can read the story of this neighborhood philanthropy in this issue.

•••

Last month, Gov. Bobby Jindal pledged \$13.9 million toward creating an automotive training center at Smiley

Heights, signaling no small victory for Baton Rouge, especially in the area surrounding Florida Boulevard and North Ardenwood.

The idea for the Smiley Heights development originated after Katrina, when the Foundation was looking for ways to meet the critical demand for housing for our new neighbors from downriver. More than just a housing development, however, what we came up with was a new model for building communities. Our goal then was to construct houses within a wide range of prices, drawing diverse income groups to live together in the same place. Good financing opportunities for the project were expected as part of the government's disaster relief. But they never materialized, and Smiley Heights was set aside. For a while.

A little more than three years ago, the Foundation and the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority saw an opportunity to restart Smiley Heights, and we seized it. The East Baton Rouge School System was searching for a place to build a career high school. At the same time, a surge in enrollment at Baton Rouge Community College had administrators there pondering an expansion. Both pledged to build in Smiley Heights.

So here we go.

Now, a new vision for Smiley Heights includes not only homes for people at different income levels, but also shops and acres upon acres of greenspaces and waterways. The neighborhood will have about 500 homes when completed and, by 2030, it will produce 20,000 new jobs through the learning centers, the retail stores and other commercial activity in the vicinity.

First up is the automotive training center the governor announced. Planning should be under way early next year, and the center should open in 2015. A new, highly skilled

workforce will emerge, ready to repair the next generation of technologically advanced automobiles. To get that kind of training today, Louisiana workers have to travel to Texas. But when the facility at Smiley Heights opens, they will come to Baton Rouge instead, reducing the costs to students and keeping their money here at home in the state.

In order for Smiley Heights to come together, many cooperative partners came together first. East Baton Rouge government and the East Baton Rouge Mortgage Finance Authority provided funding to buy the 200-acre parcel of land from several nonprofits. Next, the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority and the Foundation provided the staff support, and the RDA took over the job of developer. Finally, the Baton Rouge Community College System stepped forward to operate the training center, and the Baton Rouge Legislative Delegation pushed the center forward, making it a priority in state requests.

We are grateful to everyone who had faith in our vision for Smiley Heights, particularly members of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Our members are the driving force behind civic leadership initiatives like Smiley Heights.

You can become a member for as little as \$100, allowing us to advance more of these kinds of innovative initiatives, designed to solve real problems right here at home. Become a member at BRAf.org or by calling Ellen Fargason at 225.387.6126.

•••

Finally, we congratulate BREADA and its partners for winning a \$1 million grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation. BREADA operates the successful Red Stick Farmers Market and the Main Street Market—two institutions that have helped to bolster the revival of our downtown through the years, and earned the affection of the community in the process. BREADA will use the funding to purchase and staff a mobile market, bringing fresh fruits and vegetables into underserved areas. The partners aim to introduce healthy foods into poorer neighborhoods while encouraging people to change their eating habits.

Good food to go.

Sincerely,



Matthew G. McKay

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

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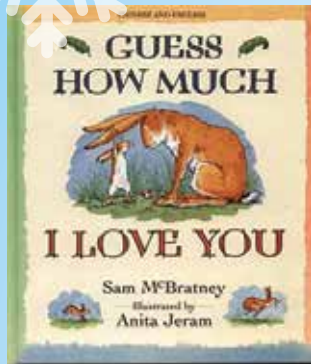
The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is a community foundation that takes advantage of opportunities to improve the quality of life in South Louisiana. We do so by providing two essential functions. One, the Foundation connects philanthropists with capable nonprofits to make sure the needs of our communities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

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



2nd show added by popular demand!

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DECEMBER 9 | 2:00PM
SPECIAL KIDS CLUB GUEST PAUL MAINIERI 12:30PM



HERMAN JACKSON SWINGS INTO THE HOLIDAYS
DECEMBER 15 | 8:00PM



Holiday FILMS AT MANSHIP

- DECEMBER 19 | 7:30PM
HOLIDAY INN
- DECEMBER 20 | 10:30AM
POLAR EXPRESS
- DECEMBER 22 | 8:00PM
SCROOGED
- DECEMBER 23 | 2:00PM
THE NUTCRACKER: ROYAL BALLET
Ballet in Cinema

DOKTOR KABOOM!! THE SCIENCE OF SANTA
DECEMBER 7 | 7:00PM
KIDS CLUB TGIF
DECEMBER 7 | 5:45PM
DECEMBER 8 | 2:00PM



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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.

One, we connect philanthropists with nonprofits to make sure the needs of our neighbors are met. Our donors, for instance, fund music programs for children, provide money to feed the hungry and underwrite education reform. Last year, our donors and the Foundation made thousands of grants worth more than \$28 million. Two, the Foundation begins and manages civic leadership projects, including rebirth of neglected neighborhoods. Our latest civic initiative is The Water Institute of the Gulf, which is an independent nonprofit that will provide a scientific response to the problem of eroding marshes, rising seas and changing climate.

Mission: The Baton Rouge Area Foundation unites human and financial resources to enhance the quality of life in South Louisiana. To achieve our mission, we:

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

Who we serve: We conduct projects and provide grants across South Louisiana—East and West Baton Rouge, East and West Feliciana, Ascension, Livingston, Pointe Coupee and Iberville. The Foundation 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 Covington. The Foundation also supports 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 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 Ellen Fargason 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 shopping centers in Louisiana, Texas and Puerto Rico. The real estate assets are managed by Commercial Properties Realty Trust.

What's our size: At year-end 2011, the Foundation had estimated assets of \$608 million, making it among the top-20 largest community foundations in the country. Donors of the Foundation have provided the assets over 48 years. Since 1964, the Foundation has issued more than \$290 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 is available at BRAf.org or by calling Mukul Verma at 225.387.6126.



Anchored by Trader Joe's, Acadian Village should be open in fall 2013. (Architecture by Antunovich Associates)

ACADIAN VILLAGE PROGRESSES, HILTON SOLD

Trader Joe's, the destination grocer from California, will anchor Acadian Village, a shopping center on Perkins Road being redeveloped on behalf of the Wilbur Marvin Foundation of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation by Commercial Properties Realty Trust.

Trader Joe's will occupy 13,000 square feet in the 66,000-square-foot development. Acme Oyster House is located there, and Galatoire's Bistro is under construction with an expected opening date before the holidays. Trader Joe's and other retailers should open in fall 2013.

Meanwhile, Quarters has leased more than 30,000 square feet at the Foundation's shopping center at the corner of Sherwood Forest and Coursey Boulevard. The entertainment venue will include laser tag, bowling lanes, arcade games and a restaurant.

After a successful rebirth of the landmark hotel, Commercial Properties sold the downtown Hilton Capitol Center to RockBridge Capital of Columbus, Ohio. The four-diamond hotel will be managed by Prism Hotels & Resorts of Dallas, Texas, and continue to employ the 180 workers who have delivered numerous awards, including being ranked in the top 10 Hilton Hotels of

North America.

Commercial Properties renovated and reopened the historic Heidelberg and Capitol House hotel on the Mississippi River as the Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center in August of 2006, meeting the city's request for rooms to lure conventions and proving the demand for downtown hotels. Since, Hotel Indigo has opened across the street and a Hampton Inn will add 137 rooms in January. All three hotels are located on Lafayette Street.

A share of profits from the Wilbur Marvin Foundation's real estate holdings are used to better South Louisiana.



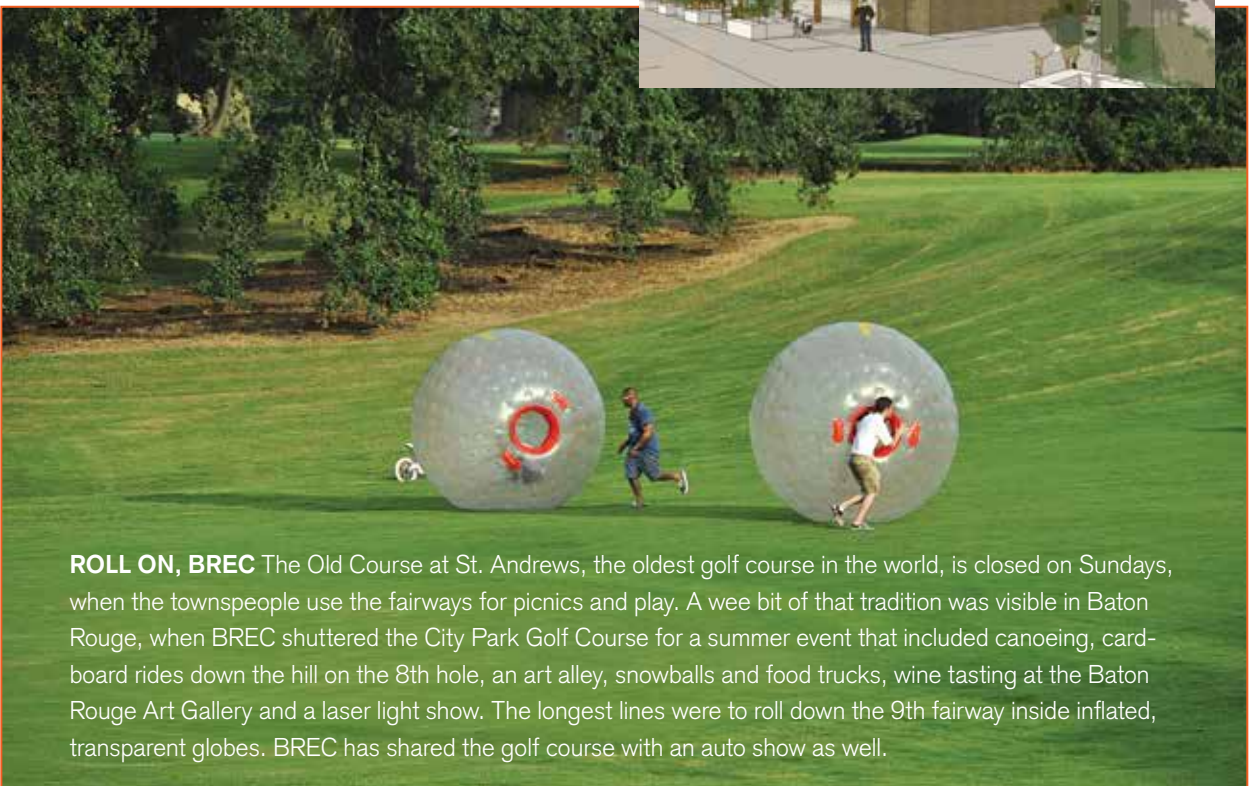
MID CITY DEVELOPMENTS Danny McGlynn, an attorney and maverick developer, is partnering on two projects on Government Street, which is a focus of redevelopment in East Baton Rouge's comprehensive plan adopted by local government last year.

McGlynn and Dennis Hargroder are building 30 apartments at Circa 1857, their previous redevelopment of an abandoned drug store into a collection of boutiques, a home goods store and restaurant. They will build the apartments next to Circa's main building. Designed by Norman Chenevert, the \$6 million building will have some units at lower rents for artists, who can showcase and sell their works in a wide hallway that doubles as a gallery in the building, says McGlynn. Construction is set to begin in January.

McGlynn's other project would build on a mini-revival next to Baton Rouge High School. He controls a block on Government from Bedford to Ogden drives, which is lined with small stores and the burned-out, two-story Darenbourg Building. His partner, Ritter Maher Architects, will occupy the top floor of a renovated Darenbourg Building, and shops will be on the first

floor. One of the buildings will be razed to create off-street parking for the string of stores. Total cost of the project is more than \$1 million. Construction is set to begin in fall.

The area has some new life to it. Homes in Ogden Place, next to Baton Rouge High School, have been renovated. Ogden Marketplace next to the Darenbourg Building has received a facelift with an investment by owner Brett Furr and façade improvement grants from the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority. Radio Bar has opened in Ogden Place. Across the street, a nonprofit linked with Catholic High School has purchased the Westmoreland Shopping Center and razed an abandoned building with a long-term goal of redeveloping the site. CHS will expand into a portion of the former Westmoreland.



ROLL ON, BREC The Old Course at St. Andrews, the oldest golf course in the world, is closed on Sundays, when the townspeople use the fairways for picnics and play. A wee bit of that tradition was visible in Baton Rouge, when BREC shuttered the City Park Golf Course for a summer event that included canoeing, cardboard rides down the hill on the 8th hole, an art alley, snowballs and food trucks, wine tasting at the Baton Rouge Art Gallery and a laser light show. The longest lines were to roll down the 9th fairway inside inflated, transparent globes. BREC has shared the golf course with an auto show as well.

Civic leadership initiatives

The Foundation's civic leadership initiatives are underwritten by our members. With their support, we take on short- and long-term projects that attempt to solve underlying problems.

Thirteen years ago, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and parish government underwrote a strategic plan to draw people back to downtown. More than \$2 billion has been invested in projects in the city center since. There is much more under construction and planned. Here are some of the highlights.



Parish government and Downtown Development District have won a \$1.1 million federal grant for designing and beginning construction of a bike path network to connect downtown with Memorial Stadium and City Park. The city and Downtown Development District already had \$2 million in grants for the project, which should begin construction next year. To build out the whole network with amenities would cost \$12 million, but Davis Rhorer of the DDD says the segment from downtown to City Park can be done with current funding.

The DDD says that completing the design is required to secure more grant money and possible private funding. With the path partly running along the interstate, it will double as a gateway to downtown. One section of the proposed path would run in the median of North Boulevard and along the interstate to City Park.



In summer, parish government approved \$200,000 for beautifying Lafayette Street. Rhorer says the money will be used to fix sidewalks and plant trees, and possibly to screen surface parking. The project should start before the year is over.



BREC built a pocket park at the corner of Convention Street and North 7th. The \$250,000 park opened in October.

Downtown had no hotels a decade ago. Since, the Hilton, rehabbed by the Foundation's Commercial Properties Realty Trust, and Hotel Indigo have opened on Lafayette Street. A \$17 million Hampton Inn & Suites on Lafayette Street with 137 rooms will open in January.





The DDD won an \$886,000 federal grant for a Mississippi River gateway at Florida Street. The gateway will link to the new Town Square and the 6-mile levee-top bike trail. Construction should begin next year.



Wedged between the Old State Capitol and the River Center, Repentance Park is undergoing a transformation. Interactive water fountains will line the highest terrace, leading to a gradual sloped lawn that will double as an amphitheater for concerts and other performances. Completion is scheduled for November.

Several residential developments are under construction or development. On Main Street, across from St. Joseph's Cathedral near Fourth Street, Norman Chenevert and Kevin Cunningham are building 22 apartments. And Gulf Coast Housing Partnership and associated developers are constructing 100 apartments known as The Elysian on Spanish Town Road near I-110.

Under development are Dyke Nelson's 16 condos on Lafayette Street around the Tessier Building, the oldest building in the parish. Meanwhile, New Orleans developer TJ Iarocci paid \$1.3 million in August for the Commerce Building on Third and Laurel streets, with the goal of turning the 180,000-square-foot building into 100 modern lofts and 75,000 square feet of retail.



The Elysian

A CHANCE ON CHANGE Goldman Sachs is investing \$10 million in social impact bonds, which will finance a New York City jail program. The company will receive a return on investment only if the program significantly reduces the recidivism rate.

The city is the first in the country to try social impact bonds, a new means to spur innovation and fund social services. The money will pay MDRC, a social services provider that is designing the program. If the recidivism rate drops by 10% over four years, Goldman would receive the money back. A rate greater than 10% would produce earnings of as much as \$2.1 million, while a rate less than 10% means Goldman would lose \$2.4 million.

"This promising financing model has potential to transform the way governments around the country fund social programs, and as first in the nation to launch it, we are anxious to see how this bold road map for innovation works," New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg said in a statement. "Social impact bonds have potential upside for investors, but citizens and taxpayers stand to be the biggest beneficiaries."

GIVING PATTERNS East Baton Rouge Parish households ranked No. 944 out of 3,115 U.S. counties in giving to charities in 2008, reports the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* in an in-depth review of government records.

The *Chronicle* looked at Internal Revenue Service income tax filings to compute charitable giving down to the zip code level, adjusting the numbers with other federal data to figure out giving levels by household income after taxes and expenses.

Residents of EBR contributed 7.2% of their incomes in 2008, ranking the parish among the top 33% in the nation for giving. Louisiana ranked 12 among states with 5.3% of average discretionary income donated in 2008. Utah (10.1%) was No. 1, followed by Mississippi (7.2%) and Alabama (7.1%)

The *Chronicle* reported that giving was higher in areas that were more religious, a signal that people were donating to houses of worship.

The *Chronicle* found that people who earned less gave more of their money to charities. People earning \$50,000 to \$99,000 in EBR donated 7.2% of their income, compared to 3.7% for those making more than \$200,000.

\$324.4 million

Amount Walmart Stores gave in cash to nonprofits in 2011, the largest amount among companies tracked by the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*. The total was 4.1% of Walmart's pre-tax profits, much higher than most companies on the list. The retail sector was the most generous. Target donated 4.7% of its pre-tax profits and Kroger 10.6%. Walmart's lead causes were education, health care and women's issues.

BLUE CROSS FOUNDATION GRANTS MILLIONS

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation has granted \$10.2 million from its Challenge for a Healthier Louisiana program, which aims to reduce the rising obesity rate. One million dollars of the total was awarded to BREC for a bike and walking path between Siegen Lane and Bluebonnet Boulevard along Ward's Creek. Carolyn McKnight, BREC superintendent, says the pedestrian link will be the first in a network eventually built across the parish.

Construction of the Ward's Creek path has been planned for four years. McKnight says BREC will put up \$1 million to match the Blue Cross grant to commence construction in fall.

With the path, BREC expects to convince the community—including potential opponents to paths near their homes—that a network linking waterways and parks is welcome and necessary.

"I would love to see us have a trail network in the parish that would help to not only ease the burden on the roadways and freeway system, but also let us get people out and active to stay healthy," said McKnight. "This path is a way for us to begin the idea."

Eventually, BREC wants to extend the path along the creek to The Burden Center at Bluebonnet Boulevard in one direction and Pecue Lane in the other.

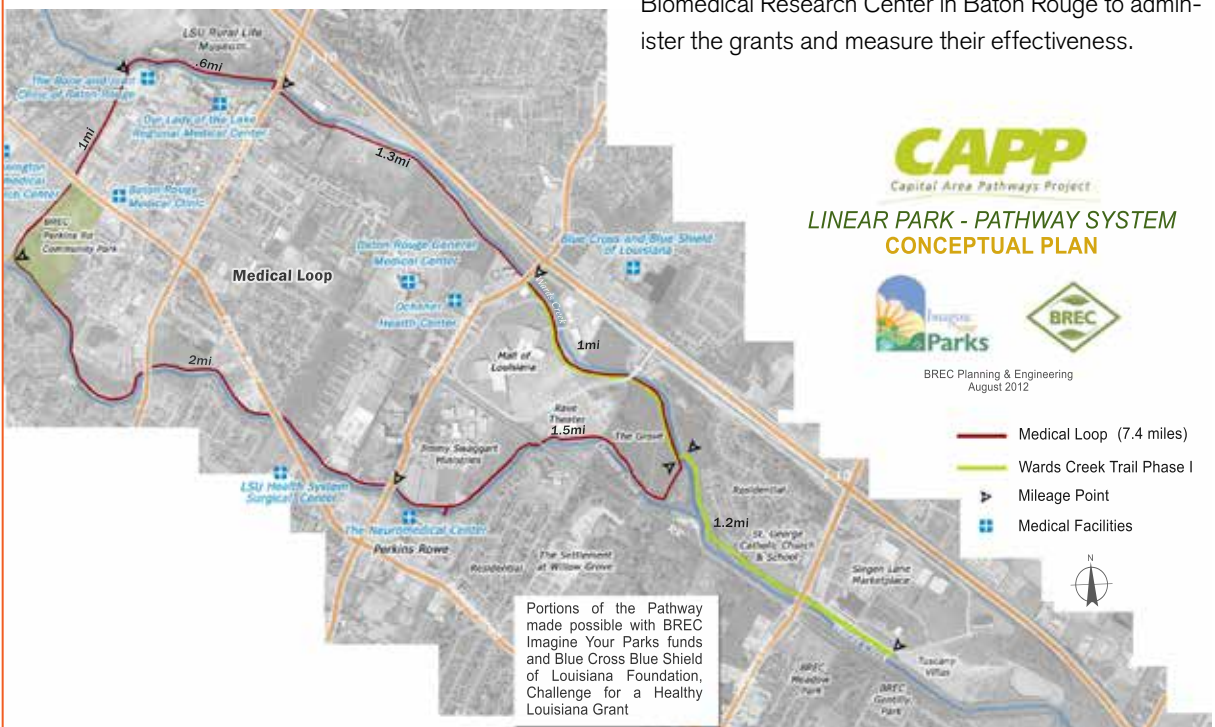
Blue Cross' funding will pay for a mobile playground as well. The playground will roll to fields with games and equipment, such as balls and bats. "That will help children stay healthy," McKnight says.

Blue Cross' foundation said 12 total grants would draw \$16.8 million in matching funds from local governments and community organizations.

In the Capital Region, Fresh Beginnings received a \$1 million Blue Cross grant to bring healthy foods to 61,000 residents in underserved areas of Baton Rouge (story on page 20).

"These 12 programs are precisely the kind of transformational, collaborative efforts that the Challenge for a Healthier Louisiana was designed for," says Christy Reeves, director of the Blue Cross Foundation. "The grants are enabling multiple organizations to combine their resources, working together at the community level to create environments that encourage healthy lifestyles."

The Blue Cross Foundation will work with Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge to administer the grants and measure their effectiveness.



Gaines winner chosen for MacArthur Genius Grant

Dinaw Mengestu, last year's winner of the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence, has been chosen by the MacArthur Foundation as one of its 23 Fellows for 2012, an honor that earns him \$500,000 over five years to pursue his work as a writer, journalist and teacher.

Mengestu won the 2011 Gaines Award, an annual prize of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to the best novel written by a rising African American writer. The award encourages African American writers and honors Ernest J. Gaines, a Louisiana native who is among the best writers of his generation.

Gaines, who is a resident of Oscar, La., is best known for *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. His novel, *A Lesson Before Dying*, won the 1993 National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction. Mr. Gaines is a MacArthur Fellow as well.

Mengestu won the Gaines award for *How to Read the Air*. He accepted the award in January, when his week in Baton Rouge included teaching writing at local schools.

The MacArthur Fellows Program awards unrestricted fellowships to talented individuals who have shown extraordinary originality and dedication in their creative pursuits and a marked capacity for self-direction. There are three criteria for selection of Fellows: exceptional creativity, promise for important future advances based on a track record of significant accomplishment, and potential for the fellowship to facilitate subsequent creative work.

Mengestu's novels and nonfiction open a window into the little-explored world of the African diaspora in America. A native of Ethiopia who came to the United States with his family at the age of 2, Mengestu composes tales distilled from the experience of immigrants whose memories are permanently seared by escape from violence in their homelands.



Ernest J.
GAINES
award for literary excellence



Opened in 2002 by a partnership that included the state and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the **Main Street Market** will get an upgrade with funding from the state and BREADA, which will raise funds for fixtures. Cost is being estimated, and construction could begin late next year. The redesign by Commercial Design Interiors reflects a mix of old-style market and the state’s Art Deco buildings.

Grants

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

MOBILE CANCER SERVICES: The Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted \$2 million to the Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center to buy and operate a mobile medical clinic for five years. The rolling clinic will begin operating next year in Terrebonne and St. Tammany parishes, where Mary Bird Perkins collaborates with Terrebonne General Medical Center and the St. Tammany Parish Hospital. The clinic will have three exam rooms and provide access to individuals who are often poor, uninsured or under-insured. Operating funds will pay for a full-time early detection and education specialist, patient navigator and outreach coordinator.


LET’S PUT ON A SHOW: The Hartley/Vey Theatres, which are part of the Manship Theatre complex in downtown, will have their own main entrance on North Boulevard next year. The visibility should boost atten-

dance for the variety of live performances at the two theaters. The venues were repositioned in the mind as well with a new brand and website.

To help fund the new identity, the theaters raised \$15,816 from 114 backers on Kickstarter, an online funding platform for creative projects. The Rick Hartley and David Vey Fund at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation matched up to \$15,000 raised on Kickstarter.

FOR THE KIDS: The Academic Distinction Fund at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted \$163,538 to assist educators from the beginning of 2012 to the first day of school. The fund provides grants to teachers for classroom projects. Since its inception in 1991, ADF has granted more than \$2.3 million. Companies and individuals make donations to ADF, with earnings used for awards.

The Foundation also manages three additional charitable education accounts: The Ascension Fund, Iberville Foundation for Academic Excellence and West Baton Rouge Foundation for Academic Excellence.



“The park was tired and needed to be restored, but we also felt it was important that it link up with the jogging path that had been built on Seven Oaks so that we could really create a sense of connectivity and community.”

—Dennis Vidrine, president of the Goodwood Property Owners Association



Fields of dream

Neighborhood groups are raising private funds to create dynamic public spaces

By Maggie Heyn Richardson

The popular Old Goodwood neighborhood in Baton Rouge is known for its central location, mature trees and family atmosphere. But lately, its hottest attribute is a newly restored park that attracts scores of runners, dog walkers, adults and children. Not long ago, the public park was in need of a facelift and was little used by residents; today, Goodwood Park is the place to be. It features a covered pavilion for parties, new playground equipment, attractive trees and shrubs, a dog watering station, a tetherball pole and a jogging loop that connects to a neighborhood footpath. Residents hold all sorts of well-attended events, including a recent outdoor family movie night, an art show and an evening of astronomy.

Completed in August 2011, the park restoration project was the result of a partnership between the Goodwood Property Owners Association and BREC, the parks and recreation authority for East Baton Rouge Parish. The neighborhood is one of several in the community and nation that have helped restore local parks by supplementing public funds with private fundraising.

Like all neighborhood parks in the parish, Goodwood Park had been slated for eventual improvement. But with so many smaller parks in need, many of them in low-income neighborhoods, it was low on the priority list.

Moreover, the public funds allocated for Goodwood's neighborhood park improvements wouldn't have gone as far as neighbors here had hoped. They wanted their park restored to higher level—one that would better accommodate the needs of 1,600 residents, many of them families

with young children. And they wanted to connect the park to a pedestrian trail that had recently been established on nearby Seven Oaks Avenue, says Dennis Vidrine, president of the Goodwood Property Owners Association.

“The park was tired and needed to be restored, but we also felt it was important that it link up with the jogging path that had been built on Seven Oaks so that we could really create a sense of connectivity and community,” he said.

Vidrine and other members of the neighborhood association approached BREC Foundation Executive Director Carl Stages and BREC Assistant Superintendent of Planning, Operations and Resources Ted Jack about the possibility of the neighborhood working with BREC to raise additional funds. Stages and Jack embraced the opportunity.

“We knew that eventually BREC would improve the park, but we wanted to be involved, and we wanted to make it as high quality as we could.”

—Julie Perrault, Friends of Webb Park

BREC has worked for several years to improve local parks through a long-term planning process called Imagine Your Parks, initiated in 2004. But Imagine Your Parks’ emphasis has been on renovating 12 larger, community parks that attract neighborhood residents as well as a wide swath of Baton Rougeans. About half have been completed to date. The plan was less focused on neighborhood parks, so BREC administrators welcomed the chance to work with motivated residents in improving parks in their own backyards.

The Goodwood Property Owners Association raised more than \$60,000 in a combination of private funds and state funds that support the expansion of the walking trail.

Goodwood wasn’t the first neighborhood to approach BREC. The park system had already worked closely with neighbors around Leeward Park, who raised more than

\$22,000 to supplement public funds for their own park improvement.

“There were a bunch of us who went to the park regularly and we just decided to approach BREC to see if there was something we could do to improve it,” recalls resident Kathi Mery. “The playground equipment was really outdated, there was sand but not playground turf, and we kept saying how great it would be for the families here if the park had better amenities.”

Mery and a core group of volunteers contacted BREC and learned that they could indeed raise their own funds to supplement the amount that had been allocated for Leeward. They began working with Jack on a plan.

“This type of thing is real beneficial,” said Jack. “When we work with these groups, we usually get great ideas. They know what they need and what they think will really work.”

Stages adds that neighborhood partnerships are victories for the community.

“The BREC Foundation likes to participate in these projects because it gives the neighborhood ownership, and there is no doubt that it creates a better product,” he says.

Mery and other volunteers prepared fliers explaining the fundraising project, and collected ideas about what the park needed. Neighbors gave their feedback and invested in the project. Mery collected the donations and turned them over to the BREC Foundation, which handled the administrative and accounting functions. Residents installed a sign with a thermometer that measured the level of funds raised, and once they met their goal and completed the plan, construction started.

Today, Leeward is a magnet for neighborhood residents as well as other community members who are drawn to its family-friendly atmosphere. Old playground equipment was replaced with modern play structures that fit a range of ages. Benches now line each side of the triangular park, and updated fencing around the periphery keeps young children safely inside and away from the street.

“Everyone has just loved it,” says Mery. “It’s attracting a lot of people.”

Elsewhere around Baton Rouge, neighborhood leaders have taken inspiration from Leeward’s success.

“We saw what had been done at Leeward, and we really wanted to have that same quality right here,” said Julie

Perrault, a resident of Steele Place who helped launch Friends of Webb Park. “We knew that eventually BREC would improve the park, but we wanted to be involved, and we wanted to make it as high quality as we could.”

The group met with BREC and began to prioritize the features it most wanted in the park. Jack prepared multiple sets of plans that demonstrated what could be accomplished with different final dollar amounts. Friends of Webb Park committed to a fundraising goal of \$75,000 by Jan. 31, 2013. By July, the group had raised more than \$46,000 and was confident about securing the balance.

The group launched the fund drive by asking volunteers to participate in a canvassing day. More than 40 volunteers stepped forward and went door to door to explain the project and answer questions of their neighbors.

“People were very positive about it,” says Perrault. “Most of them really loved the idea of having a great park that they would actually use in their neighborhood.”

The plan for Webb Park is to remove and replace old playground equipment with structures that appeal to younger and older children, and convert a pool into an expansive lawn area with a covered pavilion for community events. The park will also include attractive landscaping and other features.

Perrault believes that public parks have entered a new era in the Capital City. Larger, renovated recreational areas such as City Park and the Perkins Road Park have reminded residents that they can, and should, enjoy their local park system.

“I’m from Baton Rouge, but I didn’t grow up going to BREC parks,” says Perrault. “But when they built City Park, I was shocked at how much my family and I use it. To have a park in our neighborhood will be a great way for even more of us to come together.”

The LSU-area neighborhood, College Town, has also embraced the idea of a public-private park partnership to improve its park on Amherst Avenue, says volunteer Gwen Graves.

“Our park has been in pretty bad shape. It’s certainly not the worst park in town, but we knew we’d be waiting years

down the road to see improvements,” said Graves. “When we heard about other neighborhoods doing this, we decided to jump on it.”

A year and half ago, Graves and other volunteers began explaining the project and encouraging neighbors to donate. They surveyed residents about their priorities for the park, and met with Jack about their options.

“We knew we wanted to keep it natural and open, and that we need new, safe equipment that was appropriate for children ages 2 to 5 and 5 and up,” says Graves. “Many of our residents have used Leeward Park, so they knew how nice it could be.”

While a small percentage of residents questioned why they needed to invest in a publicly funded facility, most



embraced the idea of a high-quality park nearby. Most residents, especially those with young families who search out great parks around town, understood the value, says Graves.

Residents raised more than \$62,000. Construction started in August and should be completed by the end of 2012. The neighborhood already has ideas about a second phase of work, which includes connecting the park to the adjacent Le Havre neighborhood.

Back in Goodwood Park, Vidrine says the neighborhood has felt more cohesive as a result of the park’s overhaul. Neighbors are outside more and they’re getting to know each other. The more they know each other, the more likely they are to watch out for crime, he adds.

“What we’ve been able to do is more than just rebuild a park,” he said. “We’ve also rejuvenated our sense of community.” •

Rolling oasis

One million dollar grant to bring fresh food to underserved areas

By Sara Bongiorno

E

Ever Jarreau recalls picking peas in her grandmother's backyard garden as a young girl and popping them into her mouth for that sweet taste.

More than 60 years later, the retired elementary school teacher's enthusiasm for fresh-from-the-vine produce is undiminished. Jarreau can spin out an easy recipe for spaghetti squash to a novice cook who has never heard of the gourd. She delights in recalling the pleasant surprise of young people given their first taste of well-prepared mustard greens.

Almost every Saturday morning, you can see her at Red Stick Farmers Market in downtown Baton Rouge, picking the best seasonal produce, brown rice, meats and breads, and watching people and trading recipes with fellow shoppers.

And while she doesn't mind making the trip, Jarreau recognizes that having to cross town to buy fresh, locally grown produce literally puts it out of the reach of some neighbors of her Southern Heights development and other nearby north Baton Rouge neighborhoods.

"Food grown locally is different, and better," Jarreau says.

"But you need to introduce it to people for them to understand the difference. I believe it's something that people of all ages can embrace if given the chance."

In the coming months, more of Jarreau's neighbors will get the chance to see and taste for themselves. A \$1 million, three-year grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation will fund an innovative, multi-pronged initiative to better connect 61,000 north Baton Rouge residents to fresh, locally grown produce and the health benefits tied to consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The Fresh Beginnings project will target three north Baton Rouge ZIP codes identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as "food deserts," meaning residents have limited access to affordable, fresh fruits and vegetables.

But the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation and the consortium of groups supporting the project, including Mayor Kip Holden's Healthy City Initiative, hope it will create a blueprint for tackling high obesity rates and other lagging health indicators across the region and state.

All together, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation is funding about \$10.2 million in healthy living projects to combat obesity and other diet-related health conditions



through improved nutrition and new opportunities for physical activity from play to walking. Local governments and nonprofits are adding about \$17 million to the projects, making the total investment just below \$30 million.

The objective is to “move the needle” by making measurable improvements in health that over time will change the state’s dismal national ranking in a host of health measures.

“Our goal is to develop ways to impact the health of people in Louisiana through projects that really work and result in changes we can measure,” said Christy Reeves, executive director of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation. “We’re looking for results.”

In Baton Rouge, the Fresh Beginnings project will focus on improved access to fresh produce coupled with community outreach and education on the links between good nutrition and good health. It comprises five elements:

- a mobile farmers market that will serve parts of the 70805, 70807 and 70802 ZIP codes in north Baton Rouge. The new mobile market will be operated by Big River

Economic & Agricultural Development Alliance, or BREADA, which runs Main Street Market and the Red Stick Farmers Markets. The new mobile farmers market will make stops in north Baton Rouge at least twice a day, four days a week in Fresh Beginnings’ target area;

- grants and other assistance from the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority to north Baton Rouge grocers to encourage them to stock more fresh fruits and vegetables,

- new playground equipment at four north Baton Rouge elementary schools to be provided by California nonprofit Project Fit;

- community advocacy and support for the initiative through civic group Together Baton Rouge; and

- teacher training at the selected schools to help educators incorporate lessons on nutrition, physical fitness and other health-related topics into the classroom curriculum. The Evelyn J. Daniel Foundation will fund this element of the project.

The mobile farmers market will be the most visible

element of Fresh Beginnings. Its centerpiece will be a walk-in refrigerated truck that will make stops in north Baton Rouge at least eight times each week. The truck will hit the streets in early 2013, although it’s too soon for a precise date.

Like BREADA’s existing markets, the mobile farmers market will include outdoor tents where local vendors will sell breads, eggs, meats and other items. The market will likewise feature cooking demonstrations and fitness events. Tables and chairs will encourage shoppers to linger and visit over coffee, and occasional wellness events will help to

bolster the tie between fresh, seasonal produce and good health.

Like BREADA’s existing markets, the mobile market will accept Louisiana Purchase electronic food-benefit cards to encourage shoppers of all income levels to buy local, seasonal produce.

BREADA’s executive director said she sees additional benefits that will make the market about much more than food. Copper Alvarez says the market will help neighbors connect and socialize and

provide a new avenue for small fruit and vegetable growers to sell their produce.

BREADA will be recruiting producers whose current production levels aren’t big enough to sustain the four-hour duration of its established markets but who are interested in expanding production levels.

Recruiting those farmers, and potentially helping them grow into full-time producers, will add to the strength and diversity of the region’s food system, Alvarez says.

The truck could even play a role in the distribution of local produce to stores and restaurants in Fresh Beginnings’ target area that want to carry more local foods.

“We will be looking for ways to capitalize on all the opportunities (the mobile market) will create,” she says. “The idea is to make an impact on those who buy produce, but also on small businesses and connections between neighbors, which can be a factor in helping to combat crime. The opportunities for helping people better understand their food supply are enormous.”

“Food grown locally is different, and better. But you need to introduce it to people for them to understand the difference.”

—Ever Jarreau, local food enthusiast

Continued on page 28.



FRANK MCMAINS

Ever Jarreau travels from North Baton Rouge to buy fresh vegetables at the downtown market. Soon, the market will roll to her.

Food for thought

By Amy Alexander

Maybe you've never stopped to think about how far you drive to go grocery shopping. But here's the reality: Many Baton Rouge residents cruise a long way to buy skim milk, eggs, fruits and vegetables.

The city is riddled with what experts have coined food deserts—neighborhoods that lack nearby access (within a mile) to grocery stores that might offer up a fresh, healthy variety of foods.

Residents who go by foot, bike or mass transit are often painfully aware of how hard it is to get fresh food.

A handful of community groups in Baton Rouge, including BREADA, Healthy BR and the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, are taking steps to bring healthy foods into neighborhoods and areas that otherwise lack access to them.

Community organizers are basing many of their efforts on research conducted by Dr. Stephanie Broyles, a biostatistics researcher at Pennington Biomedical Research Center.

Currents caught up with Broyles to find out more about Baton Rouge's food deserts and why the city should think more closely about what its residents are eating.



Dr. Stephanie Broyles
Pennington Biomedical
Research Center

How do you figure out that you're dealing with a potential food desert?

The USDA has an interactive map on their website. They have done the most work in pulling together everything we know about food deserts for everyone who's measured it. The presence of chain or large grocery stores is one way to measure food deserts. An issue with measuring things that way, though, is you eliminate a lot of the smaller grocery stores, and we have a lot of smaller grocery stores here. You think about all of the Associated Grocers stores. Those

would not necessarily show up in the way that the USDA is presenting their data on the food atlas.

So did you find yourselves having to do some on-the-ground investigation to find out where people were buying their food?

We used the survey instruments of the NEMS survey, the Nutrition Environment Measures Survey for stores. It assesses the cost and availability of healthy versus unhealthy food options in 10 broad categories such as milk, beverages, meat, fruits and vegetables. Then we actually had to go out and validate store addresses. In some cases we went out and there wasn't a store there. Then research assistants went out and collected data about the stores we found. We did over 500 stores. They have some great stories. It's not something that you would do on an annual basis.

So there actually were stores in food deserts?

Yes—but not grocery stores. Corner stores, convenience stores, gas stations and mini-marts. There are a lot of them.

So then the question becomes converting those corner stores into food oases, right?

We ask: Why don't convenience stores stock fruits and vegetables? Why do they only stock whole milk? You talk to them and they say because if I stocked it, it wouldn't sell. We live in a supply-and-demand model, that's the reality. So I think a lot of the groups that are focused on increasing food options are working with the food stores to increase supply, and they are also working with the residents to increase demand.

How do you go about increasing demand for healthy foods?

Some groups are introducing more fruits and vegetables to the neighborhood and doing more in concert with cook-

ing demonstrations and education. It's also important to take into account the culture of the group. So when we work with some of the lower economic groups that live in the Mississippi Delta region, the recipes that they cook from, having the extended family over for dinner and all of the dishes that people are making, we don't necessarily make them completely overhaul and serve new recipes. Instead, we ask how can we introduce healthier aspects to what you already consider your comfort food? How can we bring some more vegetables into that? Maybe it's using brown rice instead of white rice.

Do food deserts occur mainly in socioeconomically depressed areas?


Yes, but not always. The groups that are most affected by food deserts are those with higher poverty, who have more transportation issues. When you have an area that is more affluent and their grocery store is 10 miles away, and then an area that has higher poverty, with the closest grocery store 10 miles away, that second group is really going to be impacted by that lack. In the more rural areas, it's a lack of transportation infrastructure that also seems to be one of the important barriers to people getting food.

What about farmers markets? Are they part of the solution?

When organizations look at different indicators of nutrition, one of the things they look at is the number of farmers markets—the more the better. Then they look at what percentage is accepting SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits, or food stamps. My perception is we are really doing well with that in East Baton Rouge Parish, and even in Louisiana. There is room for improvement, but that is really neat to see. I think a lot of people don't realize that the farmers markets accept, essentially, food stamps.

Why should a city work to make sure residents can eat right?

There's so much information out there right now about how much the obesity epidemic costs now, and how much it's going to cost us in the future. Government isn't necessarily telling this family you have to do certain things. But what we are talking about is the role that government can play in ensuring that every citizen has as healthy an environment to live in as possible. •



“The idea is to make an impact on those who buy produce, but also on small businesses and connections between neighbors, which can be a factor in helping to combat crime.”

—Copper Alvarez, BREADA executive director

Sweet Peppers
\$ 3.50 tray



You believed as a kid.

You were faster than Speedy Gonzales, the fastest mouse in all of Mexico. You could flap your arms and fly. You could change the world.

But then life happened. Work, school, home took you away. You emerged—richer, stronger, wiser. And the kid came back, reminding you there is much more to do.

With the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, you can believe once again.

We welcome you as a member, joining hundreds who support our civic projects. The ones that have transformed downtown, are rebuilding the inner city, and now creating Smiley Heights, a 200-acre community of mixed-income homes and parks anchored by learning institutions.

Memberships begin at \$100. Please renew or join us for the first time at BRAF.org or by calling Ellen Fargason at 225.387.6126.

*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

Downtown Redevelopment

EBR Redevelopment Authority

Hilton Hotel—Baton Rouge

Shaw Center for the Arts

Companion Animal Alliance

The Water Institute of the Gulf

New Schools for Baton Rouge

FutureBR initial funding

FOUNDATION CIVIC LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES

CityStats

Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence

Creation of Northshore Community Foundation

Creation of Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana

*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*





“We want to see what works and then use that information to replicate efforts across the state. We want impact.”

—Christy Reeves, executive director of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation

Continued from page 22.

Where the market will stop—and what days and times—will reflect what’s best for neighborhood residents. BREADA will be meeting with local groups about times and places in the coming months to establish when and where the market will be. Churches and schools are likely stops.

Like Alvarez, Marcelle Boudreaux of the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority says economic development is another goal of Fresh Beginnings. Grants to small stores to encourage them to carry fruits and vegetables will strengthen the commercial infrastructure in the project’s target zone by giving existing stores a new revenue source.

The grants will help small stores more accustomed to selling chips and sodas understand how to stock and sell fruits and vegetables whose limited shelf life requires special considerations.

“We want to help operators see how they can make this work for them,” Boudreaux says. “Looking to empower grocery stores in this underserved area is one way to improve community access to fresh produce.”

Fresh Beginnings’ use of the mobile market to confront the area’s food deserts is unusual, if not unprecedented. A mobile market in inner-city Nashville has helped that city address urban food deserts there. But the Nashville market stocks general produce, not the seasonal, locally produced fare of BREADA’s markets.

There is reason to believe Fresh Beginnings’ can make a measurable impact on the health of north Baton Rouge residents because similar projects are working elsewhere around the country.

In New York State, for instance, an education and outreach initiative that stressed the health benefits of fruits and vegetables more than doubled spending on such items by food-stamp recipients in a single year, according to the National Institutes of Health.

In Pennsylvania, an innovative school-nutrition policy developed by the Food Trust, a national leader in eradicat-

ing food deserts, targeted Philadelphia elementary schools with high rates of obesity. The project included nutrition education components, new requirements for nutritious school foods and outreach and education for parents and teachers. A follow-up study found that the incidence of overweight students at the schools fell by 50% over two years after the new policy was put in place.

“The question is, ‘Can we do something powerful that can actually impact the health of people living in this area?’ ” says Coletta Barrett, vice president of mission for Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center and chairman of the mayor’s Healthy City Initiative. “There’s data out there to tell us the answer is yes, and much of the Fresh Beginnings project reflects that evidence-based practice.”

Fresh Beginnings will look to build on that body of evidence. Project partners will be working with researchers at Pennington Biomedical Research Center to establish how best to track and measure the results of the initiative. Pennington will also help other healthy-living projects funded by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation track outcomes.

“We want to see what works and then use that information to replicate efforts across the state,” Reeves said. “We want impact.” •



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FAMILY MARKET

CityStats 2012:

At least once a year, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation produces a quality-of-life report about East Baton Rouge Parish as part of our CityStats project.

The report reveals where the parish has been, how far it has come and where it needs to go. CityStats includes more than 70 indicators, a mix of public statistics combined with a survey representing parish residents.

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

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

Conducted in early spring, the sample was 430 land lines and 107 cell phones for a total of 537 responses from parish residents. The margin of error is plus or minus 4.2%.

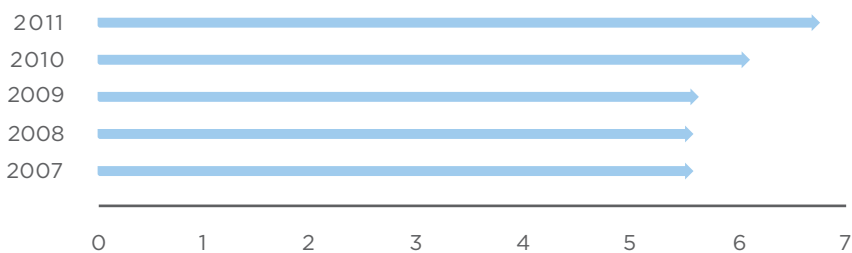
The entire CityStats report is available at BRAf.org under projects.

CULTURE & RECREATION

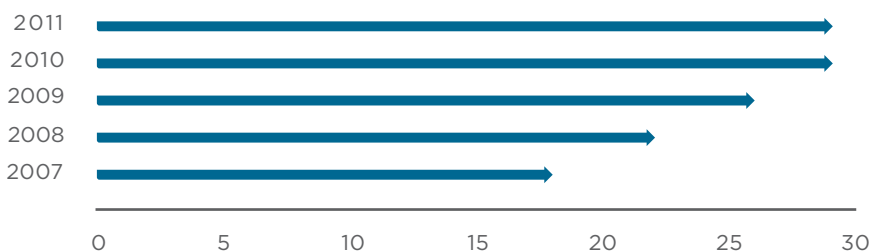
PARKS AND TRAILS

More land, no more trails

BREC, the parks system, has spent more than \$100 million to build community parks with many uses. To do so, the system has purchased and preserved land. But Baton Rouge has a scant amount of bike and other trails, only 29.3 miles compared to more than 1,400 in Austin, Texas. Local government agencies have planned more bike trails, but there is no driving force behind the projects and no dedicated source of revenue to build them.



PUBLIC PARK ACREAGE (THOUSANDS) / Source: BREC



MILES OF PUBLIC TRAILS / Source: BREC, City Parish

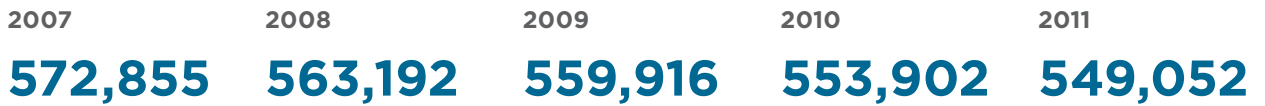
CULTURAL VISITS

Attendance at cultural facilities

People visiting cultural attractions—Louisiana Art and Science Museum, USS KIDD, LSU Museum of Art, Baton Rouge Zoo and Manship Theatre—has declined 4% over five years.



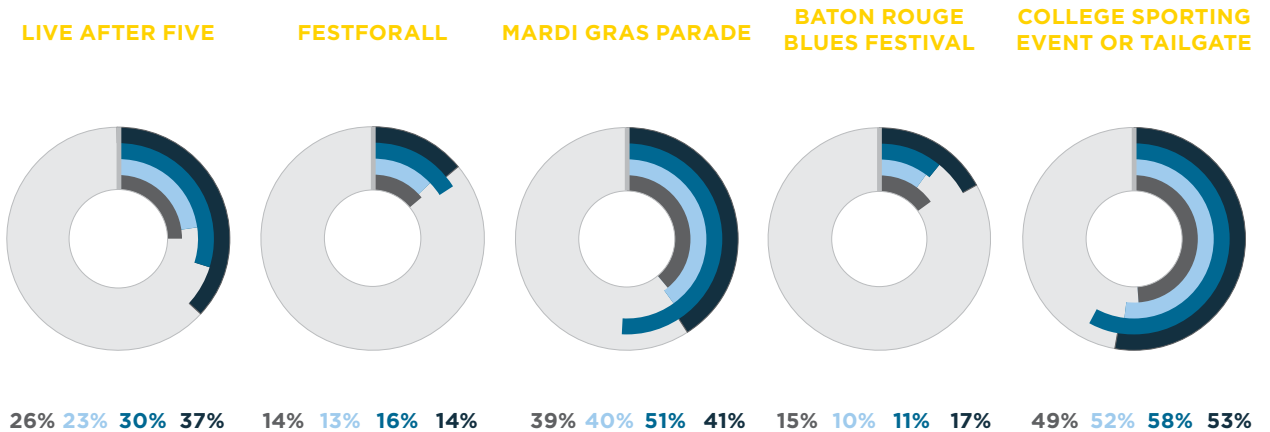
People visiting cultural attractions in Baton Rouge



Source: LASM, USS KIDD, LSU Museum of Art, Manship Theatre, Baton Rouge Zoo

Attendance at cultural events

Live After Five attracts more people each year. With the new Town Square and stage now open, the Friday afternoon concerts could draw even more music lovers this year. Meanwhile, college sporting events were more popular among higher earners (80% earning more than \$100,000 attended versus 28% earning less than \$25,000), as were Mardi Gras parades (60% making more than \$100,000 attended versus 32% earning less than \$25,000).



EBR LIBRARY



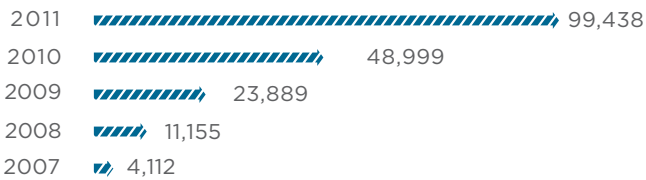
The digital shift

Library circulation echoes a revolution in the world. Total circulation, including printed books, has been flat or declining for years. But digital download of books, video and audio has doubled each year for a half decade, even though content is limited.

Source: EBR Library



TOTAL CIRCULATION



DIGITAL CIRCULATION



COMPUTER LOGINS

ECONOMY

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME



TOTAL POPULATION

WHITE ALONE

AFRICAN AMERICAN

ASIAN

HISPANIC OR LATINO (OF ANY RACE)



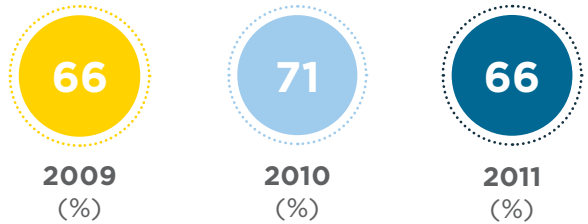
Year	Total Population	White Alone	African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)
2005	\$54,551	\$75,274	\$31,247	\$52,266	\$35,762
2006	\$59,389	\$89,046	\$36,823	\$65,017	\$43,913
2007	\$56,917	\$77,412	\$38,990	\$53,163	\$38,909
2008	\$59,855	\$86,418	\$37,292	\$62,822	\$48,166
2009	\$54,493	\$81,513	\$32,889	\$57,545	\$40,009
2010	\$60,239	\$83,852	\$39,454	\$62,650	\$53,933

Source: CityStats Survey

GOVERNMENT & CIVIC PARTICIPATION

FEWER PEOPLE VOLUNTEERED LAST YEAR

In the past year, have you donated time to any charitable, civic, religious or other volunteer organization without receiving any money or tangible benefits?



Source: CityStats Survey

HEALTH

NEW CASES OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009
HIV	248	259	258	250	243
SYPHILIS	99	70	58	40	43
GONORRHEA	1,601	1,226	1,000	923	957
CHLAMYDIA	2,069	2,189	2,307	2,850	3,227

Source: La. Office of Public Health

INFRASTRUCTURE

WORK COMMUTE IN MINUTES



Source: U.S Census Bureau

RIDING THE BUS

Over the past year, how often have you ridden a public bus in Baton Rouge?

- almost daily: **4%**
- weekly: **2%**
- monthly: **2%**
- yearly: **5%**
- never: **87%**

Source: CityStats Survey

BR AIRPORT TOTAL PASSENGERS

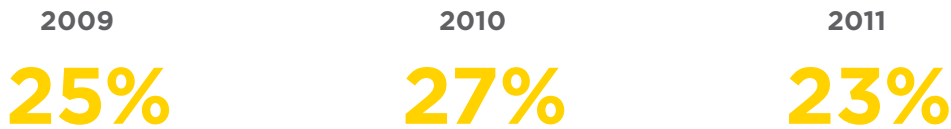


Source: Baton Rouge Metro Airport

PUBLIC SAFETY

MANY SAY THEY ARE VICTIMS

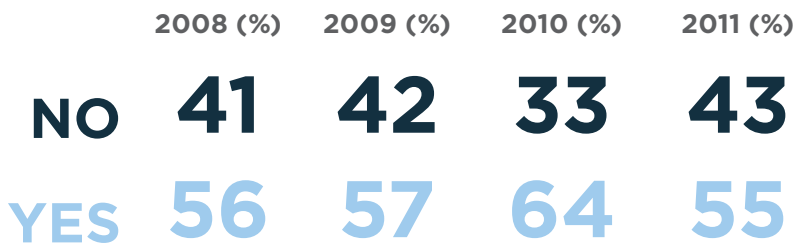
Crime is not contained in EBR, but the less educated and poor were struck last year more often. Nearly four of 10 without a high school education were crime victims, compared to 23% of those with college degrees. At 29%, crime on people earning less than \$25,000 was about triple the rate of those earning \$100,000 or more. Did you have your money or property stolen, property vandalized, home broken into, car stolen? Or have you been the victim of a personal assault or attack in the past year? >> **YES**



MANY ARE SCARED

Do you feel safe walking alone at night in your neighborhood?

Too many people are afraid to walk alone in their own neighborhoods at night. More African Americans (57%) and people without high school degrees (62%) are frightened, likely because there is more crime in their neighborhoods.



SOCIAL WELL-BEING

MORE RESPONSIBLE TEENS

3.83 of every thousand 15-19 year old girls became pregnant in 2010

Because of wider use of contraception, fewer teens are getting pregnant in America and East Baton Rouge. The 3.83 rate in 2010 was an improvement over 4.2 in 2009. The rate was 6.1 in 2003.

Source: U.S. Center for Disease Control

SPLIT BY SKIN COLOR

We remain a parish divided by race. Thirty-four percent of blacks said racism is a “serious problem;” only 10% of whites did.

(5 = SERIOUS PROBLEM / 0 = NO PROBLEM)



ERNEST J. GAINES AWARD FOR LITERARY EXCELLENCE

"In a strong debut, Watts chronicles in 10 stories the lives of black North Carolinians who come from or lived near the "dark house of tangled dirt roads on the fringes of the county."...The kind of love found in the Carolina hills—and in these stories "demands tribute."

—Publishers Weekly



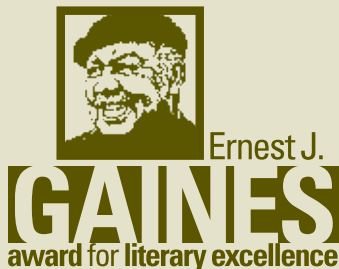
CONGRATULATIONS TO STEPHANIE POWELL WATTS

for winning the 2012 Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence, which is presented by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

An independent panel of judges chose her debut collection of short stories—*We are Taking Only What We Need*—from 17 entries.

Ms. Watts will be honored at a ceremony Jan. 18, 2013. People wishing to attend the free event at Manship Theatre must send an email to gainesaward@braf.org.

A reception and book signing with Ms. Watts will follow the event.



THE ERNEST J. GAINES AWARD FOR LITERARY EXCELLENCE
402 N. Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802
www.ErnestJGainesAward.org





CONTROL POINT
BAYON ROUGE

YARD LIMIT

YARD LIMIT

Slower train coming?

Study funded by Foundation and others to look at NOLA airport connection

By Jeremy Alford

If the goal of light rail is to take commuters from Point A to Point B and beyond, then New Orleans and Baton Rouge remains stuck at or just shy of Point A. But it's not for lack of effort.

Three years ago, as part of President Barack Obama's stimulus package, the feds made money available to build a high-speed rail system between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Public and private groups responded quickly by commissioning studies and forming coalitions. Some state lawmakers got behind the idea as well.

But Gov. Bobby Jindal had other ideas.

Jindal announced that the Bayou State didn't need, or want, the rail line. The announcement brought him bouquets from anti-Obama conservatives as he explained to Louisiana boosters that a high-speed rail system would

“High speed rail has become a hot-button political issue. It just makes more sense to look at light rail.”

—La. Rep. Walt Leger, D-New Orleans

cost the state \$18 million annually—money he said Louisiana didn't have—to operate the modern line at full capacity.

Undaunted, nonprofits in the two cities trudged

forward, eventually abandoning the high-speed concept for a commuter rail proposal that's still being discussed.

“High speed rail has become a hot-button political issue,” says state Rep. Walt Leger, D-New Orleans. “It just makes more sense to look at light rail.”

Leger's sentiments aren't exclusive to Louisiana. Members of the Southern High-Speed Rail Commission, which includes members from Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, voted last month to change the group's name to the Southern Rail Commission. The commission could be a major player in the coming months and years as plans for

MANSHIP THEATRE FAMILY PROGRAMS

Manship Theatre's rich educational offerings include summer camps, master classes, school performances and off-site demonstrations.



Bad Boys of Dance give a master class at St. Joseph's Academy, November 2011.



Kids perform on stage with Terrance Simien during the Creole for Kidz event.



Manship Theatre offers school performances throughout the year.



Young campers stay active with dance classes at Happy Movers summer camp in June 2012.



Flamenco Vivo performs a demonstration at The Haven at Windermere Retirement Community, February 2012.



Missoula Children's Theatre camp 2012.



Yoga at Happy Movers camp.

Happy Movers!



Matt and Catherine Saurage



For more information, contact the Director of Family Programming and Educational Outreach at 225.389.7222.

MANSHIP THEATRE
AT THE SHAW CENTER FOR THE ARTS
100 LAFAYETTE STREET | DOWNTOWN BATON ROUGE

New Orleans rail lines continue to take shape.

The agency has the ability to pull down millions in federal funds for studies and planning. Plus, more tellingly, Leger was recently elected as its new chairman.

Leger, who serves as speaker pro tem of the Louisiana House of Representatives, says he's eager to find ways for Louisiana to tap into the long-term goal of a high-speed rail linking Houston and Atlanta, but right now his priority is light rail lines serving New Orleans.

Leger added that one project that may gain momentum during his tenure as commission chair involves a passenger line from New Orleans to Jacksonville, Fla. That line at one time was part of Amtrak's Sunset Limited line, which stretched from Los Angeles to Jacksonville. It was abandoned in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, now stopping in New Orleans.

Repairs have enabled the restoration of freight train traffic on the New Orleans-Jacksonville line, but Amtrak has not re-established any of the services needed for passenger travel. The federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 required Amtrak to submit a plan to do just that, but so far there's been no movement.

Mayor Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans supports rejuvenating the line and has argued that it could boost tourism, not to mention rail transportation in general. This past summer, Landrieu's office urged Amtrak to look closely at the demographics and at the jobs available in New Orleans, for which commuters outside the region could use rail lines to obtain.

There's likewise a strong push coming from the East Coast, says Robert J. Stewart, chairman of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, a nonprofit advocacy group. "Passenger rail service between New Orleans and Jacksonville is a strategically important component of the national intercity passenger train system," Stewart says. "This route segment will serve an unmet need by connecting Florida with the southern and western United States."

Then there's the proposed line linking Baton Rouge and New Orleans, which could use existing tracks, at least in theory. For boosters, the war cry is a simple one. "Apart, the two cities are less competitive than they are together," Leger says. "I hope this year we start to see some movement. I'll certainly be focused on it."

A major feasibility study, for which money is already secured, is expected to be awarded in the coming months, but there have been serious gaps in the tracks of a proposed

planning group.

According to Huey Dugas, executive director of the Capital Region Planning Commission, his group and the New Orleans Metropolitan Planning Organization have each put up \$105,000 for the study; the Baton Rouge Area Foundation has committed another \$90,000. "We should see some action on that early next year," Dugas says.

The study's most significant finding may be new information it reveals about the impact (and benefits) of adding service to Louis Armstrong International Airport. Supporters say it's an aspect that has been ignored by previous talks about a possible New Orleans-Baton Rouge line.

The concept of a New Orleans-Baton Rouge line is not new, but movement on the Baton Rouge end is. In 2010 the state Legislature created the Louisiana Intrastate Rail Compact, which was supposed to serve as a political subdivision for two or more local governments to explore passenger rail. The New Orleans City Council immediately signed on and appointed members, but the compact is waiting for Baton Rouge elected officials to join and name members.

A 2009 study proposed six stops on the route: downtown Baton Rouge, southeast Baton Rouge, Gonzales, LaPlace, Kenner and downtown New Orleans. The stops in Baton Rouge were recommended for downtown and near the Mall of Louisiana.

Leger advises keeping an eye on federal elections.

"Right now there seems to be a commitment on the federal level for rail between Jacksonville and New Orleans. It's also expected that Congress will take up a new transportation bill next year, and we are hoping to participate in that," he says. "We have a tremendous amount of work ahead of us. We just need to continue building support." •

Magnetic attraction

In unusual program, BRHS alums underwrite their alma mater

By Maggie Heyn Richardson

On a cool, fall day the bell rings at the recently expanded Baton Rouge Magnet High School and gaggles of backpack-clad students shift from one class to another. Some head for a drama workshop in one of the new black box theaters adjacent to the historic auditorium. Some move to Mrs. Lai Cao's physics classroom, a place known for launching students into national robotics competitions. Others head to the practice gymnasium or outside to the track where they will help the school maintain its stellar reputation in both gymnastics and track and field.

Baton Rouge High was first founded in 1880. Since 1927, it has operated from an expansive, oak-trimmed campus on Government Street. The iconic school is known for its stately architecture and its reputation for graduating scientists, elected officials, entrepreneurs and artists. Earlier this year, an \$58 million construction project renovated parts of the original building and added a new wing that tripled square footage. Students returned to the campus in August.

Now Baton Rouge High is embracing a capital campaign not often seen among public schools. Armed with loyal alumni and an energetic nonprofit foundation, the school hopes to raise \$3 million by 2015 to provide its teachers and coaches with badly needed unfunded resources.

"Yes, we have this incredible new building, but it's like moving into a new house. You still have to fill it with

furniture. In our case, that means a long list of equipment and supplies our faculty needs," said Principal Nanette McCann, the 2013 Louisiana Principal of the Year.

The Baton Rouge High Foundation is spearheading the effort. Founded in 1995 as the Baton Rouge High Alumni Association, the group raised \$170,000 to date through an annual golf tournament and other projects. But in 2009, a small group of alums began to consider what else Baton Rouge High graduates and the community could do to help the school continue to flourish. They believed it was possible to do more for the student population, who were consistently demonstrating their ability to excel. Alumnus Lauren Ford, whose son Josh was attending Baton Rouge High at the time, was part of the group that approached McCann.

"We knew we were going to get a new building then which





Stafford Kendall has donated \$25,000 to Baton Rouge High School, where her daughter Quinn is a student.



“When companies look at Baton Rouge High, it’s a true showpiece that demonstrates Baton Rouge does invest in education. All of Baton Rouge has something to gain from a great Baton Rouge High.”

—Stafford Kendall, owner of Covalent Logic who donated \$25,000 to Baton Rouge High School

was great, but we had kids there then and we understood that the teachers were often working with old or broken equipment,” says Ford. “We loved this place and we wanted to give the teachers what they needed to help students compete on a national level.”

McCann responded with a comprehensive list that included technology and laboratory needs, athletic equipment and other unfunded items. By then, Baton Rouge High students were competing with great public high schools nationwide, many of them better funded. With Baton Rouge High’s strong base of success, McCann and Ford wondered how far students could go with the right resources.

The conversation formed the basis of the Raise Our Standards High Campaign for Excellence, along with another fund, the Student Excellence Fund, that raises money in perpetuity to help high-achieving students pay for AP testing fees, national competitions and other relevant costs.

“This is an incredibly diverse student population, and for some families, paying for things like AP tests at \$85 each is hard. We want there to be no barrier for students to be able to achieve their educational goals,” says Ford.

Indeed, the student population demonstrates drive and grit. Ranked No. 285 in *Newsweek*’s top public U.S. high schools in 2012, Baton Rouge High routinely attracts high-achieving students who excel in science and math, the arts and athletics. The school regularly produces more National Merit and AP scholars than other Louisiana high schools, public or private. Many go on to attend the nation’s top universities, some earning full scholarships.

Like public schools nationwide, Baton Rouge High’s history includes the effect of middle-class families leaving the public school system in the ’70s and ’80s. In 1976, it became a magnet school to help it compete and remains

one of only two dedicated high school magnets in the state.

“You don’t find that very often,” says McCann, who has served as principal since 2001. “The whole school is a magnet, which means everything we do is more rigorous.”

Eighty students enrolled during Baton Rouge High’s inaugural year as a magnet school. Today, there are 1,364 students throughout the school, all of whom must apply for acceptance.

If they have the right grade requirements (a 2.5 average GPA from middle school and LEAP test scores of basic and above), students from any school, public or private, in East Baton Rouge can apply and are placed into a lottery with a possible 450 slots. About 200 of those go to students from two Baton Rouge magnet program feeder schools, Sherwood and McKinley Middle. The remaining open slots go to students from a wide range of schools and must include 50% students who require free or reduced lunch. It results in an environment of diverse students committed to a rigorous education.

In fact, says McCann, it’s harder to stay in Baton Rouge High than it is to get in.

“It sounds cliché to say this, but we are a college preparatory school, and that means we are preparing our students to go to any school in the nation, including places like MIT, Harvard and Brown or wherever they want to go,” she says. “It’s intense because we work them so hard.”

Students who can’t maintain a 2.5 are asked to leave. When McCann arrived in 2001, attrition was 100 of 420 students. Today, it’s about 30 per 450. She says she has reduced it not by lowering the bar, but by keeping it high for both students and teachers. She has encouraged teachers to push beyond lecturing in favor of hands-on teaching techniques, and she requires all ninth and 10th graders to have a level-appropriate book at all times. This “accelerated



HIGH SCHOOL



“Baton Rouge High is a renewable resource for the community. Every year it’s producing talented graduates, many of whom are going to work or starting companies in Baton Rouge. It’s an economic development tool.”

—H.N. “Hank” Saurage IV, BRHS alum and campaign chair

reader” program sprang from the awareness that students simply were not reading for pleasure, says McCann.

“Kids are now reading more, and we’ve seen a big increase in ACT scores as a result,” she says.

In addition, she transformed the way students approached the idea of Advanced Placement courses.

“It had been known as being only for an elite group of students, but we use an English curriculum in ninth and 10th grade that gets students used to a more rigorous way of teaching,” says McCann. “They’re more apt to go into AP level courses after that.”

Baton Rouge High features 22 AP level courses, one of the highest numbers in the state.

The school’s reputation has motivated alumni to come out in strong support of the campaign, says chairman H.N. “Hank” Saurage IV, a 1980 Baton Rouge High graduate.

“I feel really good about where we are,” says Saurage. “It’s a pioneering project and one we hope the community as well as alums will get behind.”

Saurage acknowledges that a capital campaign is commonplace in private schools, but not in public. But he believes the message has legs.

“Baton Rouge High is a renewable resource for the community,” he says. “Every year it’s producing talented graduates, many of whom are going to work or starting companies in Baton Rouge. It’s an economic development tool.”

Baton Rouge High alum Stafford Kendall, founder of fast-growing communications firm Covalent Logic, agrees.

She says her time at Baton Rouge High inspired her to think and to excel beyond what she could have achieved elsewhere simply because she was surrounded by exceptional students who pushed each other to succeed. Kendall relished the school’s theater program, taking all of its classes, then being allowed to design personal internships

with local nonprofits to enhance her experience.

She soaked up math, English, history and languages. And she found particular inspiration in the classroom of her logic and philosophy instructor Thom Barber, who still teaches at Baton Rouge High.

“He’s the reason my company is called Covalent Logic,” says Kendall, 38. “He taught me how to think critically, and completely changed the way I look at the world.”

Kendall’s personal donation of \$25,000 will be acknowledged through one of many anticipated donor plaques that will hang throughout the school. She has requested that it hang outside Barber’s classroom.

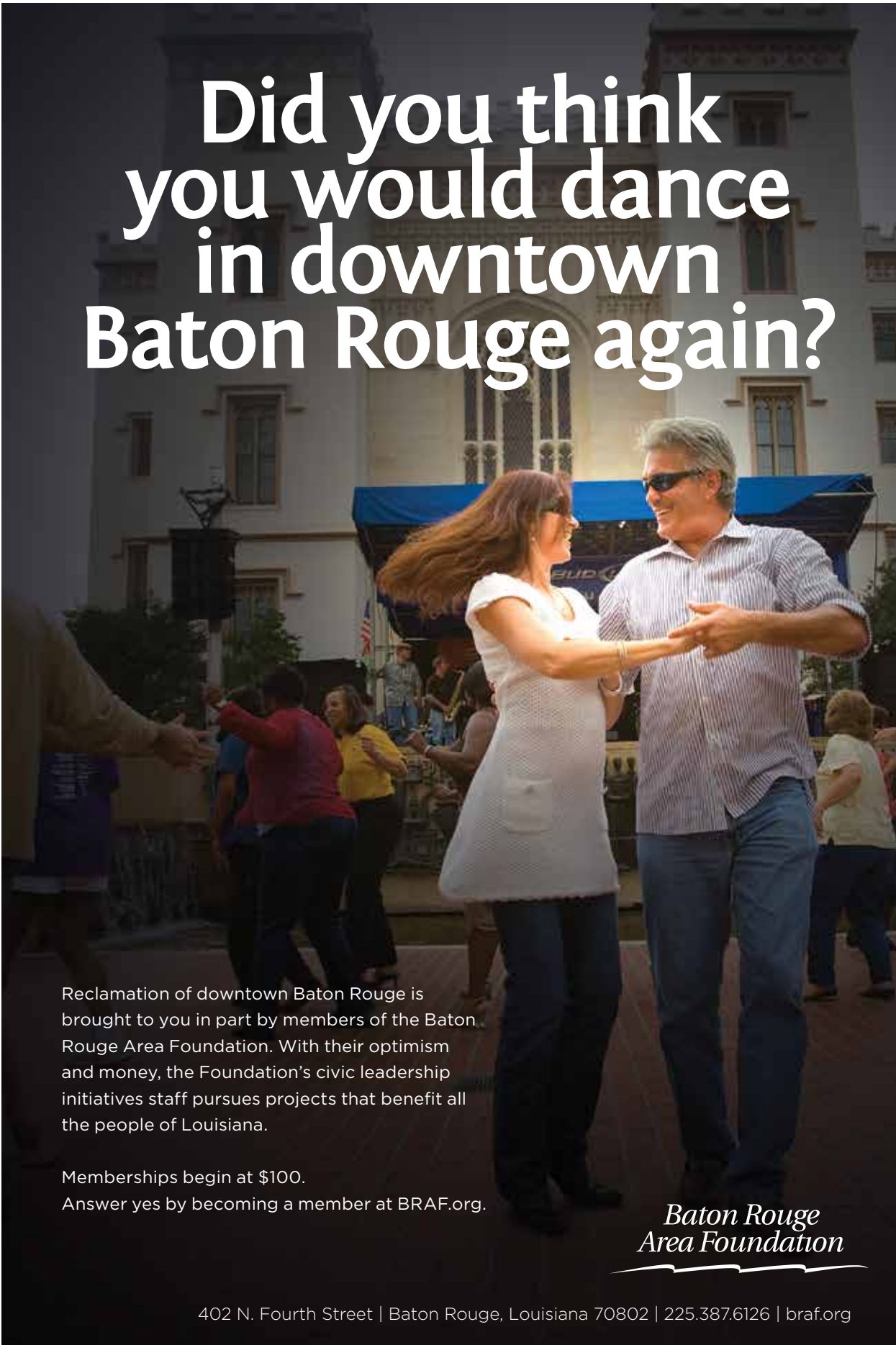
While Kendall credits Baton Rouge High for paving the way for her personal success—her six-year old company has 17 full-time employees and was ranked 155th by *PR Week* among public relations agencies in 2011—she believes the school is an asset the Baton Rouge community at large enjoys.

“When companies look at Baton Rouge High, it’s a true showpiece that demonstrates Baton Rouge does invest in education,” she says. “All of Baton Rouge has something to gain from a great Baton Rouge High.”

Even if a family doesn’t personally take advantage of the school, Kendall says, they might enjoy its student-run radio stations WBRH and KBRH. They might see its students contributing an impressive number of volunteer hours to local community causes. And they might see Baton Rouge’s reputation enhanced nationally when Baton Rouge High students compete in national academic competitions, attend top-tier colleges and universities and make substantial professional contributions.

“The thing that I find to be incredibly exciting about this campaign is that members of the community can make an investment on behalf of the best and brightest in the city.” •

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This is a place where people talk to understand what services a family is already getting and what they need.

—Roxson Welch, director of the Family and Youth Service Center

Drop in

With nonprofits, new center offers convenience to cut truancy, boost learning

By Sara Bongiorno | Photos by Brian Baiamonte

The director of what may be the only truancy-prevention center of its kind in the nation stands at the edge of a treeless circle of grass at the former Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired in Baton Rouge.

For the moment, Roxson Welch isn't focused on the unprecedented array of legal and social services whose co-location at the Government Street site makes it perhaps the most comprehensive anti-truancy facility in the nation.

Welch is thinking about how she can make the newly opened Family and Youth Service Center still more innovative in helping struggling families keep their children in school and off the streets, where truant youngsters often begin what spirals into a life of crime and incarceration.

Welch intends to put to use every bit of the 9-acre, state-owned campus to fulfill the center's mission, including this patch of grass.

"This is where I want a vegetable garden," she says. "Over there we could have an orchard. I see a garden playing a role for our families."

She gestures toward a two-story brick building across the grass—the old school gymnasium building, where the gleaming wood floors and indoor heated swimming pool go mostly unused these days.

"We could have midnight basketball there," Welch says.





“We need a safe place where kids here and in the neighborhood can come and just play.”

She heads down a concrete walkway to show an empty auditorium—one of two well-preserved performance halls on the grounds. Light streams into the room through tall windows.

“Isn’t this beautiful?” Welch asks.

Here Welch envisions after-school fine arts, dance

programs and performances. She wants to open a restaurant and job-skills training facility in the fully equipped school cafeteria and kitchen, also both in good condition, and maybe on-site courses in restaurant and business management.

She is working with Big Buddy on a grant to provide free after-school care for children to allow their parents to participate in workforce training or study for their high-

Once the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired, the Baton Rouge Family and Youth Service Center opened in fall on nine acres on Government street near I-10. The center has dorms, a gym and an indoor swimming pool. Roxson Welch, who runs the center, wants to expand services to Old South Baton Rouge in a partnership with nonprofits and government agencies. THRIVE, a separate organization, has opened a residential charter school on the site.



school equivalency diplomas in one of site's many available classrooms. The center will add mental-health services to serve a need that often goes unmet, even after a diagnosis, among families with truant tendencies.

It will house a community-based, research-driven initiative to combat youth gang violence that is bringing national experts to Baton Rouge. On-campus dorms are home to about 20 sixth-graders, the first-year class of a new—and separate—charter boarding school called THRIVE Academy.

Nearly all of the programs at the center are long-time providers of social and legal services for local students and families. What's new, and what supporters say will make the center uniquely transformative, is the agencies' co-location at a single site. The Mahalia Jackson Center in New Orleans comes close, but its services to families are focused on early childhood education.

Welch says she has never heard of another center anywhere that will bring such a broad lineup of programs to combat truancy together in one place. "We've researched, but we can't find anything else like it."

Proximity and integrated technology will help agencies at the center better coordinate services and identify families' needs. But it will also make it easier, and therefore more likely, for families to get the help they need, whether that is job training or referral to low-cost housing or mental health care. Truancy is a reflection of bigger problems, poverty chief among them.


The center's multifaceted approach targets that underlying problem to help get children back in school. "You can't do that unless you look at the needs of families and students in a comprehensive way," says Welch. "That's what we are doing here."

On any given day, about 2,100 of the parish's 42,500 public-schoolchildren miss school without an excused reason, such as illness. Children are truant when they have missed five or more days of school without an excuse. It is a prosecutable offense under state law, though few cases end up in court. Habitual truancy is often the gateway to juvenile crime, which is itself a gateway to a lifetime of adult

criminal offenses.

Indeed, the average level of educational attainment of inmates serving time in Louisiana prisons is seventh grade. And more than half of crimes committed by young offenders in Baton Rouge happen during school hours.

"If we are able to fight and reduce truancy, then we can reduce the crime rate," says District Attorney Hillar Moore, whose office is providing \$100,000 per year to support the center in its first three years of operation.



Here, when families need something, we won't send them across town, we will send them down the hall.

—Jennie Ponder, director of the Truancy Assessment and Service Center

The Mayor's Office, the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board and the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office each are providing an additional \$100,000 per year seed funding for the next three years.

The district attorney and Mayor's Office were key forces behind one of the new programs at the center, which is home to a new initiative to counter gang violence among Baton Rouge youth.

Project BRAVE, for Baton Rouge Area Violence Elimination, will focus on reducing gang-related crime among about 200 chronic juvenile offenders between the ages of 14 and 17 in the city's 70805 ZIP code. The area of the city is a "hot spot" of juvenile crime with a violent crime rate that is 25 times the national average and accounts for 30% of the city's homicides each year.

Similar gang-diversion strategies in some violence-plagued inner cities have reduced gang-related murders by as much as half in one year.

Project BRAVE, along with the larger center itself, emerged out of discussions between the mayor and D.A. of the need for a less fragmented approach to reducing public-school truancy and crime by young offenders.

“What we have here are agencies that can communicate with each other. This is a place where people talk to understand what services a family is already getting and what they need.”

—Roxson Welch

Another lead tenant with a track record of innovation is the Truancy Assessment and Service Center, a state-funded initiative of the LSU Office of Social Service Research and Development. TASC provides early intervention to reduce truancy among kindergarten through fifth-grade children at elementary schools in poor neighborhoods across the state, including at 19 elementary schools in East Baton Rouge Parish.

In fact, TASC has worked closely with Moore’s office on truancy-intervention programs, including through a “truancy court” that targets habitual truancy among elementary and middle-school children.

Data collected by Louisiana State University about TASC suggest that truancy is not an intractable problem when the early interventions are in place. About 70% of local school-children whose families received services from TASC had five or fewer unexcused absences for the remainder of the 2010-11 school year. Of those, 65% had none or just one additional, unexcused day. Overall truancy rates fell by 44% for children served by the program in 2010-11.

The program has been recognized as a national model for reducing truancy at high-risk elementary schools.

TASC works with families to identify what’s keeping children out of school and then create an individualized plan to get them back into class. The program includes intense monitoring and follow-up to make sure families adhere to the plan and to help them get the resources they need to do that.

Chronic truancy is nearly always caused by poverty and resulting problems, including family disruptions caused by frequent moves, the incarceration of a parent or untreated health conditions, including mental illness in children, parents or both.

To that end, an effective plan to help a child attend school “may mean helping families apply for housing assistance or getting a parent mental-health services,” says Jennie Ponder, director of TASC’s Baton Rouge office, which

moved into the Government Street site this summer. “Every plan is going to be different.”

Ponder and other tenants of the new center say having a full array of services at a single site makes it far more likely that families with truant tendencies will get the help they need.

“A lot of our families don’t have transportation, so having what they need in one place can often make the difference in getting what they need or not getting it,” says Ponder. “Here, when families need something, we won’t send them across town, we will send them down the hall.”

Adds Dr. Bernard Taylor, superintendent of the parish schools, which will also play a key role in the effort: “This is a place where parents will see that they can come and get what they need so they can get their children in school.”

New technology will bolster the agencies’ ability to prevent students and families from slipping through the cracks. A \$100,000 grant from the Henry and Angelina Wilson Foundation is helping to pay for technology that will allow all the agencies to track needs and services provided to each family.

Automated intake forms for each family will allow the agencies to track the services being provided, and what remains to be done, Welch says.

The computer system will also flag specific family and student needs. For instance, if an intake form indicates that a parent is unemployed or did not complete high school, the system will instantly flag those needs and connect the parent to the appropriate office at the center. It will also flag missed appointments and even let other on-site agencies know if a parent is coming down the hall for help or information after a referral by another agency at the site.

“What we have here are agencies that can communicate with each other,” says Welch. “This is a place where people talk to understand what services a family is already getting and what they need.” •

Saving cows

A vaccine made by University Products that protects cattle from anaplasmosis, a disease that destroys red blood cells, could go into production at a Louisiana laboratory within a year, says veterinary scientist Gene Luther of the LSU AgCenter.

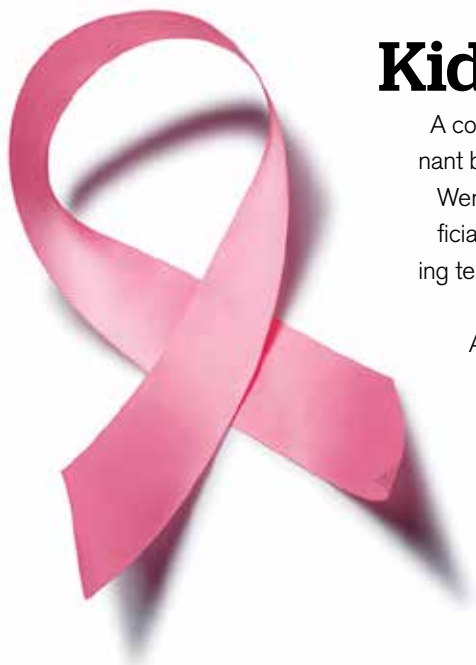
Luther and scientists Lewis Hart and William Todd developed the “killed vaccine,” which means it uses the dead organism to create immunity in cattle. More than 15 states have been approved by the USDA for sale of the vaccine.

Anaplasmosis costs U.S. cattle and dairy producers an estimated \$300 million per year. The cause of it is an intracellular microorganism that destroys red blood cells in cattle, occurring primarily in warm tropical and subtropical areas, Luther says. Once confined to the Gulf and West coasts in the United States, it has spread to other parts of the country with the movement and distribution of cattle.



Give 'em the boot

New York City is using advanced technology to collect unpaid traffic and parking tickets. A contracted firm drives around with automated license plate readers to spot automobiles that have outstanding fines of more than \$350. The cars are booted instead of towed. People who pay the fines by calling a toll-free number receive a code that releases the boot, which must be returned to the city within 24 hours.



Kids today..

A computer program written by a teen can detect 99.1% of malignant breast cancers from fine needle aspirates, an existing test. Brittany Wenger won the Google Science Fair for writing the software—an artificial intelligence program that was nearly 5% more effective than existing tests.

She won a \$50,000 scholarship and a 10-day trip to the Galapagos Archipelago, where Darwin studied the diversity of nature to form the theory of evolution.

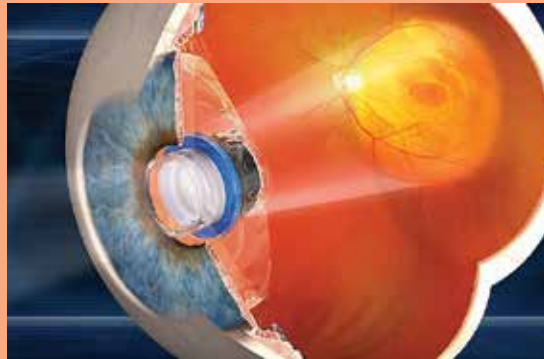
Wenger became interested in programming in seventh grade. She plans to attend the University of Wisconsin to develop more neural networks for cancer testing.

I can see clearly now

Like millions in the United States, Virginia Bane had advanced age-related macular degeneration, which is the leading cause of blindness among adults. This year, the 89-year-old was the first to be treated with a tiny telescope that magnifies images enough to overcome the dark spot caused by the disease.

“Colors are more vibrant, beautiful and natural, and I can read large print with my glasses,” she said in a report.

The surgery was conducted at UC Davis, where doctors implanted the device created by VisionCare. The device is being tested in patients 75 and older. Price is \$15,000, but Medicare is expected to cover the cost of the implant.



Not Trenta

It may be shocking, but there are small places that Starbucks can't open stores. The company may have a solution – a beautiful one. In Denver, the coffee chain is opening a tiny café that will only serve customers at walk-up and drive-up windows. The 500-square model is LEED certified and made of Wyoming snow fencing.



IP everywhere

The Internet is taking over appliances and household devices. Nest has an internet-enabled thermostat that learns your life's patterns and adjusts temperatures accordingly, and now Locktron is offering a lock that can be controlled from an app on a smartphone.

Unlike other digital locks, the \$149 Lockitron installs on top of existing deadbolts, making it very simple to put in use—a key the company says will be the reason for its success. The app is as easy to use, letting owners tap an icon to lock or unlock a door. Like many innovations, Lockitron raised money on Kickstarter.





Batteries included

The Faraday Porteur is an electric bike with the design sensibilities of an Apple product.

The bike was designed by IDEO and frame builder Rock Lobster for the Oregon Manifest Challenge, where it was chosen for the People's Choice Award. Adam Vollner left his design job at IDEO to produce the bike, funding startup with \$100,000 raised on Kickstarter with deliveries due next year. The bike costs \$4,000.

The Faraday's lithium-ion batteries, which are hidden in the frame, provide 15 hours of assistance. Recharge time is 45 minutes. The bike is calibrated to provide a boost that is correlated to exertion by the pedaler. Automated LED lights turn on at dusk. The bike has a removable rack that holds up to 30 pounds.

Bike superhighway

Given time, the Danes may park their cars for good. Feverish about bicycles, more than half of Copenhagen residents ride a bike to work. To grow that number, Denmark has opened an 11-mile superhighway for bikes that is part of a \$47 million expansion of cycling networks.

The exclusive bike road has air pumps, angled trash cans, water stations. Bikers pedaling 20 kilometers per hour (12.4 mph) are synced with green lights.



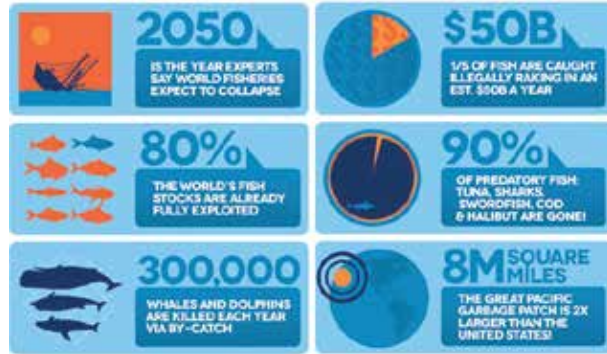
Coming through

"We never projected when we'd hit our 10 millionth rider, but certainly we weren't expecting it to happen that quickly," says Ron Kilcoyne, mass transit system general manager in Eugene, quoted on *Governing.com* about the Oregon city's Bus Rapid Transit line surpassing the milestone in only five years.

A BRT line has been discussed for Florida Boulevard between Livingston Parish and downtown. BRT is growing in popularity for its speed. Buses have fewer stops, get dedicated lanes during peak hours and get to zoom through traffic signals that sense their arrival and turn green. According to *Governing* magazine, more transit systems are adding BRT lines because they are one-third the cost of light rail.

60

Percent of experts in a Pew Internet poll who believe there will be substantial change in higher education by 2020 because of an expected increase in online learning. Pew's description of what the 60% expect: "There will be mass adoption of teleconferencing and distance learning to leverage expert resources. Significant numbers of learning activities will move to individualized, just-in-time learning approaches. There will be a transition to hybrid classes that combine online learning components with less-frequent on-campus, in-person class meetings. Most universities' assessment of learning will take into account more individually-oriented outcomes and capacities that are relevant to subject mastery. Requirements for graduation will be significantly shifted to customized outcomes."



Waterworld

No one owns two-thirds of the world's oceans. No ownership means no incentive to do what's right.

An online project offers a novel means to occupy the oceans. Nonprofit conservation groups have joined to launch TerraMar, an imaginary world that is comprised of the unclaimed open seas. They are recruiting citizens to join the watery country and become advocates for preservation.

"Forty-five percent of our planet is abused, overlooked and not preserved for future generations," the founders of TerraMar write. "Just because the high seas are out of sight does not mean they should be out of mind. The TerraMar Project's number one goal is to change attitudes and governance as it relates to the world's largest ecosystem."

You can become a citizen at TerraMarProject.org.

Sit and spin

For poor people in developing countries, time is precious. Each untaken moment is an opportunity to earn. Knowing this, students at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Calif., invented a foot-powered washing machine, freeing people from hours of toting water and washing clothes by hand.

Called GiraDora, the invention is a blue bucket with a spinning mechanism, somewhat like a salad spinner. People sit on the device and pump a foot pedal, letting them do other chores while they wash clothes. Washing takes a fraction of the time and uses less water.

The creators, who are part of the Innovation Matters program at the design school, received a \$19,500 grant for field testing. A pilot product could be introduced next year.



Toilets for everyone

Don't pooch pooch the need for toilets. Diseases that arise for lack of sanitation kill more than 1.5 million children under 5 each year. Nearly 2.6 billion worldwide lack toilets because the infrastructure to support them is expensive.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation offered a reward to solve this predicament. Taking the \$100,000 prize was Michael Hoffman of the California Institute of Technology. Powered by solar panels, his toilet produces hydrogen and a compound that oxidizes salts in urine to produce chlorine. The chlorine solution flushes the toilet; the hydrogen can be used to power fuel cells. What remains is fertilizer.

The Gates Foundation plans to develop and distribute the winning toilet in two to four years.



Living word

Harvard University researchers have converted the text of a genomic engineering book into the genetic molecules of DNA. When perfected, the method could be used to encode large amounts of information into a small space. A billion copies of the book, for instance, could live inside a test tube for centuries. Researchers have encoded smaller texts inside living cells before.

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Public data

Are you interested in checking code inspections in New Orleans? You can do so through Data.gov, a federal site at which 17 cities across the country are posting public data in an effort to be accountable to residents. Data for Chicago, Seattle, New York and San Francisco are on the site.

City leaders hope that people will use the data to take on civic problems. Cities have posted permit and inspection information, salaries of public officials, budgets, crime statistics, fire department dispatches, parking violations and more on the data warehouse.

THE LISTENING ROOM

presented by



JOHN HEBERT
(JAZZ BASSIST) - WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5



CLAUDIA ACUNA
(CHILEAN JAZZ VOCALIST) - THURSDAY, JANUARY 24



AMINA FIGAROVA
(JAZZ PIANIST) - FRIDAY, MARCH 1



BEN WILLIAMS
(JAZZ BASSIST) - WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

All Listening Room events are at 7:30pm.
Reservations \$10 from the Arts Council at artsbr.org or 225-344-8558.

HVT Hartley/Vey Theatres
at *Manship Theatre*



These performances are presented at a nominal fee thanks in part to a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, which helps artists and arts organizations bring the arts to all Americans.



We gladly accept



Tuesday Market (seasonally)—8am-12pm

8470 Goodwood Blvd.

Thursday Market—8am-12pm

6400 Perkins Road—Enter off Kennilworth

(Pennington Biomedical Research Center)

Saturday Market—8am-12pm

5th and Main Streets

Downtown Baton Rouge

Free parking inside the adjoining Galvez Garage

If raining, market is held inside the garage

www.BREDA.org | facebook.com/BREDA

market@breada.org or 225.267.5060



JOHN BALLANCE

Derek Gordon 1954-2012

You can go home again. After succeeding in New York—he was CEO of Jazz at Lincoln Center—Derek Gordon returned to his hometown of Baton Rouge in 2006, where he operated the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge. The Foundation helped to recruit him to Baton Rouge; he did the rest.

Using his wisdom and peaceful touch, he enlisted a small band of arts fanatics to grow the Community Fund for the Arts and begin new programs—Sunday in the Park, the Listening Room Series at the Manship Theatre, the River City Jazz Coalition. FestForAll returned under him as an annual downtown arts festival.

Following an extended illness, Derek died Sept. 10, 2012. He was surrounded by people who loved him.

We offer memories of Derek from an interview that ran in *Currents* when he won the Foundation's John W. Barton Sr. Excellence in Nonprofit Management Award.

What is your favorite place in Baton Rouge?

The campus of LSU is definitely my favorite place in

Baton Rouge. I feel like I grew up there, being associated with the university since I was in the eighth grade through receiving my master's degree in music! It is certainly a beautiful spot, but it was also the place where I was introduced to so many people and ideas that have helped shape my future and my heart.

What is your idea of earthly happiness?

Real community and let's stress the "unity" in community. People living, working and playing with respect and compassion for one another. Wouldn't that make you happy?

What is your perfect day in Baton Rouge?

Waking up to public radio, enjoying a cup of coffee at CC's, a productive day at the office and an exciting arts event along with a great meal to share with family and friends. If time permits, preparing the meal would make it even more perfect.

What is your first memory of life?

Growing up on McKinley Street and singing in my backyard. •

RIVER CITY JAZZ MASTERS

2012/2013
SEASON



Jason Moran and the Bandwagon

TUES., 10/30 7PM & 9PM
This jazz pianist, bandleader and composer uses elements of stride piano, avant-garde jazz, classical music, hip hop and spoken word.



Chucho Valdés and the Afro-Cuban Messengers

TUES., 11/20 7PM & 9PM
Eight-time Grammy-winning Cuban pianist, composer and arranger Chucho Valdés is credited with revolutionizing Latin music.



The James Carter Organ Trio

THURS., 2/7 7PM & 9PM
Jazz saxophonist James Carter showcases his Organ Trio and performs rollicking swing, moving ballads, gospel and blues.



Featuring Dee Dee Bridgewater, Christian McBride, Benny Green, Lewis Nash, Chris Potter and Ambrose Akinmusire

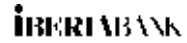
SUN., 3/24 5PM & 7PM
Celebrate the longest consecutively running jazz festival in the world capturing the joyful fun that is the festival's hallmark.



Jane Monheit

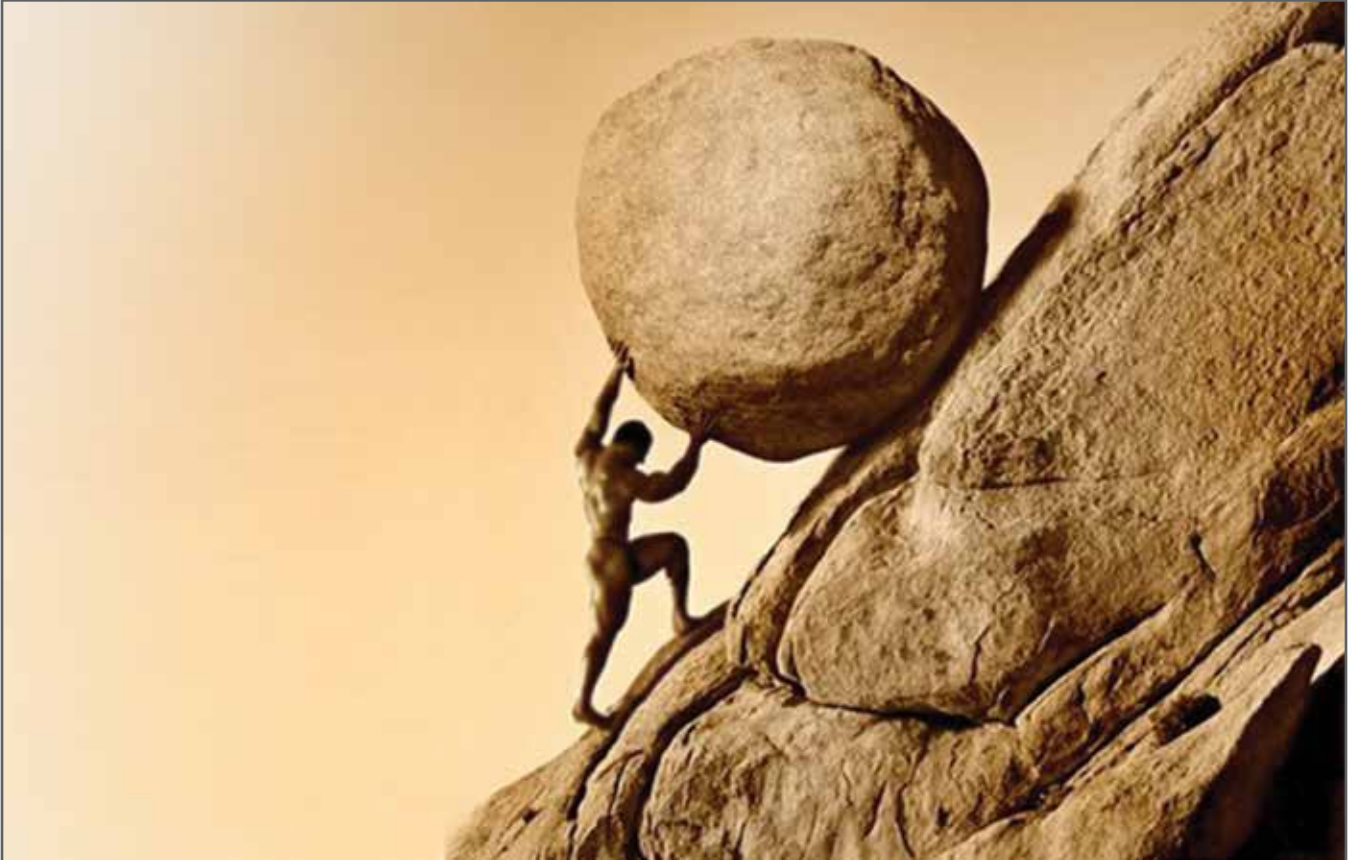
THURS., 4/11 7PM & 9PM
Grammy-nominated jazz vocalist, often compared to Ella Fitzgerald and Diana Krall, while forging her own path with the ability to capture the essence of a song.

TICKET PRICES: \$45 & \$25
225-344-0334/MANSHIPTHEATRE.ORG



The River City Jazz Coalition thanks:
Verge and Cheri Ausberry,
C.J. Blache and Sherri McConnell,
Maria and Brian Despinasse II,
Leo and Gwendolyn Hamilton,
Tim and Stacia Hardy,
Darrell Hunt,
Dr. Antoine Keller and
Allison Chauvin,
Cornelius and Karen Lewis,
Drs. Jamel and Nicolette Martin,
Ronald and Belinda Mason,
John and Virginia Noland Fund,
Albert and Roberta Sam and
Josef Sternberg Memorial Fund.

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Sisyphus should have called us.

Whatever your cause, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation is with you. Offering local knowledge of nonprofits with wise investment of your charitable donations, the Foundation will do the heavy lifting that helps you change the world. Our promise is to make your philanthropy effortless, effective and enduring.

Open a donor-advised fund by calling Ellen Fargason at 225-387-1626.

*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

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