

# Currents

Fall 2006

A publication of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation



## Queen of the River

The Capitol House's magic returns  
as a Hilton for the community

## Letter from the Chair



Thomas H. Turner  
Board Chair

*“The Foundation has been, for decades now, the place where local advocates and philanthropists go to create programs that will enhance the quality of life for residents of our region.”*

At the anniversaries of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, I am reminded of the great ability that community foundations have to engage in projects that create *social value* for the people and regions they serve. Unlike typical businesses, community foundations are not focused solely upon profit and loss. We can act when others cannot—to improve health care, advocate for effective public education, or provide emergency care to victims of tragedy.

Over the years, the Foundation has done just that—used its resources to promote positive change in our community. The Foundation has been, for decades now, the place where local advocates and philanthropists go to create programs that will enhance the quality of life for residents of our region. Few people remember it today, but the Foundation’s very first project, in 1964, was to provide property to the Gulf South Research Institute so that it would relocate to the area. Another venture and important part of our community today, the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, received \$700,000 in critical funding during the late 1980s.

In recent months, the Foundation has continued this tradition of building up our community. For instance, the newly renovated Hilton Capitol Center was welcomed back with a gala celebrating Huey Long’s birthday and benefiting the Foundation for a Historical Louisiana. The hotel is a \$65 million project of Commercial Properties Development Corporation, a Baton Rouge Area Foundation asset. It features 290 elegantly decorated guest rooms, two river-view ballrooms, and three restaurants. As part of the ongoing effort to revitalize downtown Baton Rouge, the hotel is providing new employment and career opportunities for our residents—an especially important feat as we try to absorb the economic impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The hotel officially opened September 15.

On the hurricane-related front, the Foundation is moving forward with a mental health initiative that will provide much needed care to people still suffer-

ing from the mental and emotional effects of those tragic circumstances. According to estimates, as many as 15,000 residents in our area—including first responders, those displaced, and host families—have experienced ongoing instances of stress, anxiety, and depression stemming from Katrina and Rita. Spearheaded by April Naturale, former director of New York’s 9/11 mental health response, *Project Liberty*, the Foundation is working with local and national experts to implement an initiative that will serve people suffering from crisis-related stress. Ultimately, we hope that this project will be used as a model for crisis response on a national scale.

Both of those projects, examples of the critical work community foundations can pursue, are featured in this issue of *Currents*. Over the next months and years, I look forward to seeing the benefits of these and other projects for our community. Also in this edition of our newsletter, you’ll read about several other ongoing activities, such as the development of a regional vision for South Louisiana being created by Calthorpe Associates as part of the *Louisiana Speaks* planning process. The final plan is due for release early next year.

Finally, I am pleased to report that the Foundation has raised more than \$41 million for Hurricane Katrina and Rita relief, and already disbursed nearly \$26 million. From programs that help children return to school, to the best planners and consultants in the world in the areas of urban planning and health care, our grants are helping the people of Louisiana recover, and, in the end, will help our state and community implement better standards across the board.

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to sharing more of our work with you in the coming months.

Sincerely,

## In this Issue

### 3 • Quick Takes

Foundation assistance lands arts honcho; McMains Foundation provides learning through theater; New idealist kids on the block.



### 5 • Wordsmiths

Meet the kids who could become the next T.S. Eliot. WordPlay challenges them to try the difficult art of poetry.

### 7 • Going South

St. Joseph’s Academy, teamed with the Foundation, is adding computers to schools and orphanages in a Mexican village.

### 9 • Civil Lines

A professor and author who specializes in the words of civility will speak here in October. How does he handle a bad restaurant meal?

### 11 • I’m OK, You’re OK

The Foundation is launching a mental health initiative to help people who are still suffering anxiety, depression, and other mental maladies caused by Katrina.



### 13 • Ready for a Closeup

The Capitol House Hotel, a Foundation asset, has become the hottest hotel in the region.

### 17 • Future Perfect

Planners gather with influential people across Louisiana to devise a new future for the state.

### 19 • Tool Time

A project provides the tools to build houses and businesses stronger and smarter, a means to better weather hurricanes and the daily environment.



### 21 • Hotlanta Housing

An innovative public housing project in Atlanta blends the working poor with people of means. Baton Rouge visitors to the project take notice.



**Arts Honcho Hired**

Derek Gordon, among the national stars in arts administration, has returned to Baton Rouge, thanks partly to the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. The

Foundation's board agreed this summer to develop a compensation package with the Arts Council that would be attractive enough to bring Gordon back to his hometown. He is expected to be among the leaders of a blossoming arts scene.

Gordon, who has a bachelor and master's degree in music from LSU, previously was the CEO of Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York, the premier venue for the music style born in New Orleans.



Derek Gordon

Gordon knows his hometown's arts community has changed in the more than 15 years he has been outside the state. "I'm really touched by all that is happening in Baton Rouge, the new Shaw Center for the Arts among them," he says. "I think it's a good time to apply some of my experiences to my hometown."

**City Year Expands**

The kids are coming back, and in greater numbers. A response to Katrina was City Year Louisiana, a new branch of a national program in which teens and twenty-somethings work a year to mentor and tutor children, particularly in elementary and middle school. Now in its second year, City Year Louisiana has grown to 62 young adults, 20 more than the initial set.

The expansion, says Sheila Brumfield, co-project director, means two more Baton Rouge schools will be served and a pilot program of about a dozen volunteers has been launched in New Orleans schools. Brumfield, like much of the other City Year staff, is not from around here. She moved to the Louisiana program after two years in Johannesburg, South Africa, where she helped set up a City Year branch.

So what has City Year accomplished in Louisiana so far? With \$361,000 in donations from contributors to the Baton Rouge Area Foundation coupled with grants from other sources, City Year Louisiana completed more than 38,000 hours of service and reached more than 4,000 children. The 42 participants tutored kids at local schools and at the trailer community in Baker; they painted murals and repaired basketball courts; they worked with local businesses to plant flowers and gardens.



In its second year, Brumfield expects even more service, as City Year continues to focus on the kids displaced by Katrina who are now calling Baton Rouge home.

**McMains Grant Teaches History**

"The air is cleaner when you are free. The grass is greener when you are free. And you walk with a step when you are free. And there ain't no turnin' around." That's the joy of freedom expressed by Una Judge, President George Washington's runaway slave.

Her celebratory words came alive in July through the voice of Sheila Arnold, an actress who related Una's freedom struggle to local teachers at the Louisiana Resource Center for Educators.



Sheila Arnold teaches through theater.

The program, produced by the Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute in Early American History, was provided to area teachers by the McMains Foundation, a donor advised fund managed by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. The teachers will relay what they learned to students.

Appearing in a play as the foil to Judge was President Washington, who tried through government channels in his second term to secure the return of his slave on demands from his wife, Martha.

Una was not captured; she got married, had children and lived as a fugitive. Washington, meanwhile, softened his position on slavery, setting his slaves free upon his death in Dec. 14, 1799. On that day, Una spoke fondly of Washington and declared it "a day to rejoice" for her freedom and his as well.

**New Funds**

- Alexander General Fund
- Alexander General Fund - Jeanne P. Alexander Scholarship Fund
- Avon Foundation Hurricane Katrina Domestic Violence Relief Fund
- Paul B. Landry, Jr. Trust for Holy Family Church
- Barbara Womack Fund
- Phyllis Moberley Rispone Memorial Fund
- Santa Apolonia Fund
- St. Gerard Majella Church Fund
- Schumann Chiang Memorial Fund
- Chi Omega Community Fund - 100th Anniversary
- EBRPSS Foundation Fund
- The Donald A. and Felicia Lipscomb Fitzgerald Family Fund
- Friends of New Orleans Fund
- Gates Autonomous School Zone Fund
- Gates Katrina Literacy Impact Project Fund
- Emily Lou and Frank Kean Fund
- Mr. and Mrs. Anthony S. Kurlas Family Foundation Fund
- LSUSM - New Orleans Employee Disaster Relief Fund
- Leah Hipple McKay Memorial Fund
- Claude Morton Jr. Fund
- Music for Tomorrow Fund
- Pointe Coupee Enrichment Fund - NRG/AMPS Program
- Pete and Paige Stewart Family Fund
- Elan Vitale Montessori School Fund

# Mouths of Babes

WordPlay lets teens get their poetry game on

“You can be the biggest man on stage, but if the poem you’re presenting is about something that’s difficult for you to deal with, then you’re going to cry,” says Christopher Davis, a displaced senior who now attends Scotlandville High School.

He’s pacing the back of a room, practicing his poem, mouthing over and over the words scribbled in his notebook. It’s 7 p.m. on July 13, and the Manship YMCA’s Highland Club is packed with high school students for the midsummer edition of ‘Freshhhh Heat,’ WordPlay’s monthly open-mic.

*“Yesterday I was living in the inner city, my mom can’t stop thinking ‘bout the hurricane really. ...Stepping up to meet my goals and Hurricane Katrina didn’t take those.”*

—DARELLE’ JONES, 15, SCOTLANDVILLE

A local literacy-through-poetry program, WordPlay goes into seven Baton Rouge high schools, offering 35 poetry workshops a month during the school year. Freshhhh Heat is the culmination of each month’s work, an opportunity for the braver students to present the poems they’ve written. WordPlay was partly funded by a \$10,000 grant from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, which relies on its donors to provide millions each year to improve the community.

Anna West, WordPlay’s founder, describes the benefits of the program for our community’s high school students. “Our students need safe spaces to share stories and celebrate their abilities,” she says. “WordPlay creates a community where this is possible, where students can be articulate and cool at the same time.

They can create a new identity that is supported by both teachers and peers.”

Though West grew up in Baton Rouge, she spent the past nine years in Chicago, serving as program director of Young Chicago Authors from 2000-2005, and co-founder of the group’s *Say What Magazine* and *Louder Than a Bomb*, the highly acclaimed Chicago Teen Poetry Slam. In August 2004, West was featured in *UR*

*Magazine* as one of thirty Chicagoans under the age of thirty who has shaped the city’s cultural life.

A year ago, West decided to move back home and implement a literacy-through-poetry program in Baton Rouge schools. Having spent much of her youth involved in our community’s Big Buddy Program, she contacted Gaylynn M. Mack, the program’s executive director, and under Mack’s direction, created WordPlay.

Working with West as WordPlay’s program coordinator is Chancellor “Xero” Skidmore, a wordsmith who has been ranked among the top five poets in the United States through the National Poetry Slam. He is also the artistic director of Baton Rouge’s City at Peace teen theater ensemble, as well as one of the primary organizers of a weekly open-mic and poetry slam, *The Eclectic Truth*.

West and Skidmore stress the importance of a program like WordPlay in our community. Louisiana was ranked No. 49 on ten key indicators of child well-being, based on rates of high school dropouts, teenage pregnancies, and children living in poverty.

“In a region of the country that struggles [with education],” says Skidmore, “this is the cure.”

*“Happily ever after is a lie – unless  
The princess in question is blond and blue-eyed  
I’ve never known otherwise”*

—AVANTI YOUNG, 15,  
ISTROUMA HIGH SCHOOL



Enter Hurricane Katrina. When WordPlay launched in September 2005, West and Skidmore wondered whether it was the right time to implement a school poetry program, amid such overwhelming loss and suffering. About 30% of the students involved in WordPlay are displaced. West and Skidmore learned, however, that the program was needed more than ever. The displaced youth have a great need to communicate, says West, and WordPlay offers them a forum to relate through writing.

At the July 13 Freshhhh Heat, the air conditioning is broken, and the room is stifling. The poets are unaffected. Among them is Victoria Fisher, a Glen Oaks High School junior who approaches the microphone to recite an extremely personal poem about the death of her cousin. “It felt good to get it off my chest,” she says afterward.

Meagan Whiten, a junior who transferred to Episcopal this year, presents a creative piece, set at a spelling bee, in which she examines the meaning of the word “beautiful.” Broadmoor Junior Thomas Hinyard’s poem expresses his need for privacy – a very relevant theme for his peer group.

For the students involved, poetry can either be a form of escape or catharsis, helping the creator deal with difficult issues in his or her own way. “If you have problems, it really helps to write about them. Writing about something that’s bothering me gets it out of my system, and keeps me from doing something stupid,” says Taneshia Callagain, a junior at Glen Oaks.

Glen Oaks senior Ellanisha McCorkle relies on WordPlay to keep her on track. “I could be somewhere

else, doing something dangerous or even violent, but I can be here instead. It’s good to be in a safe place, around others who love poetry as much as I do.”

Both Callagain and McCorkle are members of WordCrew, a leadership body made up of students who wished to become more involved in WordPlay. WordCrew members become mentors

to their fellow students, taking what they’ve learned back into their schools. On June 29, WordCrew met at the Carver library to discuss poetry and practice for Freshhhh Heat. Three tables of students listened as Dr. Susan Weinstein, an LSU English professor and WordPlay researcher, played a rap song filled with allusions and social commentary. Then students were asked to take what they’d learned and write their own pieces.

After working for a few minutes, the students took turns reading the few lines that they’d written. When one of them launched into a long and well put together rap that he’d obviously been working on for a while, West told him not to be a show off. “Save it for ‘Freshhhh Heat,’” she said, smiling.

West credits WordPlay’s close partnerships with local schools for the program’s inaugural success. “Committed teachers have begun replicating our innovative approaches throughout the school day,” she says.

And WordPlay continues to grow. In February of 2007, WordPlay will host the first Baton Rouge Teen Poetry Slam, which will bring together teams representing schools and community centers from throughout the Greater Baton Rouge area. The top six highest-ranking poets from the Poetry Slam will attend Brave New Voices, the National Team Poetry Slam, in April.

—ERIN PERCY





*A man whose heart belongs to his country of Mexico can use the computer knowledge to work in Cordoba instead of scooting across the border into the blistering deserts of Arizona to find an American job that will*

*are orchestrating the donation of more than 100 computers by the recycling council to arrive in Cordoba this fall. This marks the beginning of several large shipments to the community to advance the program.*

# Mexican Connection

How technology is making our sister city a better place

**A** tiny child, about 6 years old...eyes filled to the brim with curiosity...shyly ducks behind a friend every time the tall leader from St. Joseph's Academy (SJA) speaks directly to her. Her timidity is not that unusual for many of the abused children at the public schools in Cordoba, Mexico.

*John Richardson, of SJA, notices the little girl peering intently at his digital camera. He kneels down on the concrete floor and invites her over to see the camera more closely...he places it into her hands.*

*The little girl begins to take pictures, and quickly becomes adventurous, snapping photos of a new computer lab, the SJA team, her fellow students, and even a few of the school yard.*

*Richardson watches with amazement. The child's fear and shyness have disappeared, replaced by an artist allowing the camera to capture her world.*

*One of the Board members of Fondo Cordoba, the city's community foundation, owns the local newspaper. Richardson motions for her to come over, and while pointing at the little girl, he asks if the newspaper is looking for a guest photojournalist. Thus, several of the child's pictures from the day spent with the SJA team installing a new computer lab at her school are published in the Cordoba paper.*

### Digital opportunity

The little girl – and her friends in the orphanage – are benefiting from a project by SJA and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Together, we are installing full com-

puter labs in schools and training teachers in new skills so they can pass along their knowledge to the students.

To date, four trips to Cordoba have been made, delivering 120 desktop computers and 30 laptops, setting up full computer labs in eight public schools, and training an information technology partner team to ensure the program remains effective and efficient.

The sister city relationship between Cordoba and Baton Rouge began with a small grant from the Ford Foundation in 1992. The money was used to develop a series of informational exchanges with Fondo Cordoba, the city's community foundation. As the relationship grew, we engaged the SJA team, which has created one of the most technologically-advanced schools in the nation.

SJA sets up full computer labs in the select schools, teaching the children, their families, and their teachers how to install, maintain, and operate a computer.

## Want to help?

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and St. Joseph's Academy are providing computers and Internet access to the schoolkids and orphaned children of Cordoba, Mexico. If you would like to donate to this project, call the Foundation's Jessica Foley at 387-6126.



*provide enough money to support his family; a child is given access to learning at the same level as U.S. children; and, as a young mother discovers how to use a mouse for the first time, family members of the school community experience newfound knowledge.*

The core SJA team consists of John Richardson, SJA's IS Implementation Director; Francisco Nieto, SJA Spanish teacher; Sabrina Bates, 2004 SJA graduate; and Josh Fleig, former SJA Multimedia Specialist. SJA also incorporates its students into the Cordoba Education Initiative, blending Spanish language teaching with technology to communicate across cultural divides. Through web blogs and teleconferencing, SJA students are in contact with teachers and students in Cordoba, answering maintenance, software, and hardware questions. Students also volunteer at the Capital Area Corporate Recycling Council, wiping hard drives and taking detailed inventory of the computers to be shipped.

The recycling council became a partner of the Cordoba Education Initiative in 2004, providing the computers, the packaging, as well as arranging for the shipment of the refurbished computers to Mexico. Nancy Jo Craig, Executive Director, and Mauricio Zuleta, CLK Director,

### Thirst for Knowledge

While maintaining sensitivity to cultural differences, the SJA team strives to integrate technology into the public school curriculum in all subject matters. The team works 14 hours a day in Cordoba, finding unexpected rewards.

"You know you do a project like this thinking that you're going to teach them, but, in actuality, they end up teaching you," says Bates.

Richardson adds, "The thing that affected me the most was the thirst for knowledge the students and teachers exhibited. We could have taught all day and all night and filled the seats in the classroom."

Through this program, Cordoba has the opportunity to become the first city in Latin America to complete integration of technology in all public schools. SJA and the Foundation are taking the next step, trying to secure the resources to provide wireless web access to the remote city. This project provides a powerful gateway that allows opportunity for the children of Cordoba.

— JESSICA B. FOLEY

# Be Gracious

Professor's civil lines advocate for better world

**P**.M. Forni chooses his words carefully. The expert on civility is meticulous because well-mannered conversation is a means to treat people in a gracious manner. He is also a keen listener. In a conversation with this publication, the professor of Romance Languages and the co-founder of the Civility Project at Johns Hopkins University offers some useful advice for handling life's daily hurdles and explains the value of civility in our lives. Dr. Forni will speak about civility and manners as part of the Marcia Kaplan Kantrow lecture series of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

## When did you take up the idea of civility and why?

**Dr. Forni:** I started working on the connections among civility, ethics, and quality of life in the mid-1990s. For about 25 years, I had been a straight literary scholar researching and writing about 14th century Italian literature and my work was being read by about 12 people. In retrospect, I needed to rededicate myself to an endeavor that had more direct relevance to everyday life. I chose to show that civility, manners, and politeness are not shallow superficial codes. They are about how we treat each other in everyday life and thus are far from trivial.

## Is there a decline in civility in the U.S.?

Americans strongly believe they are witnessing a decline. About 80% believe the decline in civility is a national problem. About the same percentage believe the decline has increased in the past 10 to 20 years. There is a decline in deference and respect. But when we talk about a decline in deference and respect, we don't consider that every generation creates new versions of respect that take the place of those that are becoming obsolete. For example, the pregnant woman who now doesn't get a seat on the public bus steps into a workplace where the number of men who take her seriously and treat her professionally is higher than in my father's generation. There remains a half-empty glass. The empty part are the forms of deference and



P. M. Forni

respect that become obsolete and the filled part are the new forms taking their place.

## Why do people kill each other over ideas instead of agreeing to disagree?

I think there are certain struggles that have been going on for decades and centuries that, from time to time, flare up for a number of reasons. But if we are talking about wars, if we are talking about events of that magnitude and judging and pronouncing judgment on those events, then we are in the realm of ethics and not in the realm of civility and good manners.

## In Baton Rouge and around the country, NIMBYs – the Not In My Backyard crowd – fight projects that would usually benefit the greater good. Is that uncivil?

Any person should have the right to voice his or her endorsement or opposition to any project, even projects that seem to be for the greater good. That is the nature of Democracy. The issue: Are they raising their objections in a civil way? Are they using tactics of smear or contempt or underhandedness or obfuscation to reach their end? Are they fighting a fair battle or are they not? That is the gauge of whether they are civil or not.

## Katrina has resulted in a ballooning of our population, which has caused traffic problems, including more motorists running red lights. How should individuals handle this situation?

You have to reprogram yourself and think of a stop light as more of an opportunity than a liability. Think of it as a moment of calm, a moment to recover from stress. I know it's counterintuitive because usually we perceive stopping at a red light as increasing the level of stress. We should think of it as an opportunity for tranquility and sanity and a break from everyday multi-tasking.

## If a friend is wearing something unflattering to a job interview, do you alert him?

This is a delicate question. I would say no. You were not asked for your opinion and you did not have a moral obligation to furnish it in this case.

## How does one return a restaurant meal that is unsatisfactory without causing a ruckus?

The first important thing is to adopt a tone of information rather than one of complaining. Do not sound indignant, do not raise your voice. Just inform the waiter and, if necessary, the maitre d'. Say, 'I would like to bring to your attention that this dish is not cooked. Would you cook it a little more?' If the waiter's response is unsatisfactory, you go up the ladder and talk with the manager.

## Your boss is a screamer. How do you handle it?

You have to consider if you can live with it. Does it mean to you that, in order to appease him, you have to sell your soul? You have to live with yourself. If you find out you cannot live with yourself because it entails working with this boss, then it's time to consider an alternative.

## Are you ever uncivil?

Let me put it this way. I think my message is good, but the messenger is flawed. Although I don't think I tend to lose my patience very easily, sometimes I am all too human and I cannot claim I am perfectly civil all the time.

## Do you have final advice for the rest of us?

My book attempts to bring together many people to consider a very elementary fact: That social skills strengthen social bonds. We need social bonds to survive and thrive. So social skills and relational competence are far from being trivial. They are about quality of life and are ethical agents of everyday life. They are how we treat each other and, therefore, it's difficult to imagine something more important than that.

~ MUKUL VERMA

## Now Hear This

Marcia Kaplan Kantrow Lecture Series

**P.M. Forni on civility**

Oct. 25, 6 p.m.

Manship Theatre

Shaw Center for the Arts

# Mental Health Initiative

The next piece of the hurricane response puzzle

Immediately following Hurricane Katrina, staff of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation spoke with colleagues at the New York Community Trust and Oklahoma City Community Foundation, who warned us that—more than ten years after the Oklahoma City bombing and nearing the fifth anniversary of the September 11 attacks—health care professionals are still experiencing an influx of new patients for stress-related behaviors stemming from those tragic events.

Aware this important issue is often overlooked, the Foundation designated mental health as one of its long-term priorities for issuing relief grants to organi-

zations providing critical care to impacted people.

Now, the Foundation is leading an initiative to provide counseling for thousands of people suffering mental maladies from Katrina. To do so, the Foundation has hired April Naturale, former director of New York's 9/11 mental health response, Project Liberty, and is partnering with local and regional mental health care agencies.

## The challenge

As many as 15,000 people impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita—including first responders, host families, and those displaced—are currently living in the greater Baton Rouge area and experiencing significant instances of stress, anxiety, depression, and other symptoms triggered by the storms, says Naturale. Statewide, that number is estimated roughly at 500,000 by the federal Centers for Disease Control.

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals' Office of Mental Health offers a crisis counseling program, *Louisiana Spirit*; but the federally-funded program must adhere to strict guidelines that may limit its ability to reach those in need.

Over the next few months, the need for mental health services related to the traumas of Katrina and Rita will strain our existing providers. Additionally, the opportunity exists to implement proven new methods that have shown effective in helping people re-stabilize their lives and cope with dramatic instances of loss.

## Our plan

With the help of partners and colleagues at the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation, the Foundation began organizing the mental health program over the last year to create a model that could be replicated statewide, then as a response to future disasters anywhere in the country.



## Can't shake Katrina?

### What?

A mental health initiative to help people suffering mental maladies from Katrina and Rita.

### Who's at risk?

High-exposure survivors, victim's families, host families and communities, first responders.

### What are some symptoms?

Irritability, sadness, confusion, nightmares, decreased self-esteem, fatigue, headaches, decreased appetite, increased conflicts with others, withdrawal, distrust, abandonment issues.

### Project partners:

American Red Cross  
Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center  
(The Phone)  
Capital Area Human Services District  
The Louisiana Family Recovery Corps  
The LSU School of Social Work  
The National Center for Post-Traumatic  
Stress Disorder

**How will it work?** First, the plan recognizes the tremendous value of the state's crisis counseling program, *Louisiana Spirit*, and the Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center's crisis program, *The Phone*. These programs, it is anticipated, will be the point of first contact for most people seeking assistance, and will play a valuable referral role as crisis counselors identify survivors who exceed their program's capabilities or allocations, and connect them with our initiative. What's more, the initiative will use a media and grassroots campaign to prompt impacted people to call a phone number for referrals.

The referred will meet with mental health professionals who have been trained in *Brief Cognitive Based Interventions for Post Disaster*, as developed by Dr. Jessica Hamblen and colleagues at the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. That program is currently being adjusted to Louisiana's unique population and culture. In the next several weeks, approximately 100 mental health professionals will be trained in the new methods. The best practitioners from the class of 100 will be asked to continue working with our staff until they are certified as trainers.

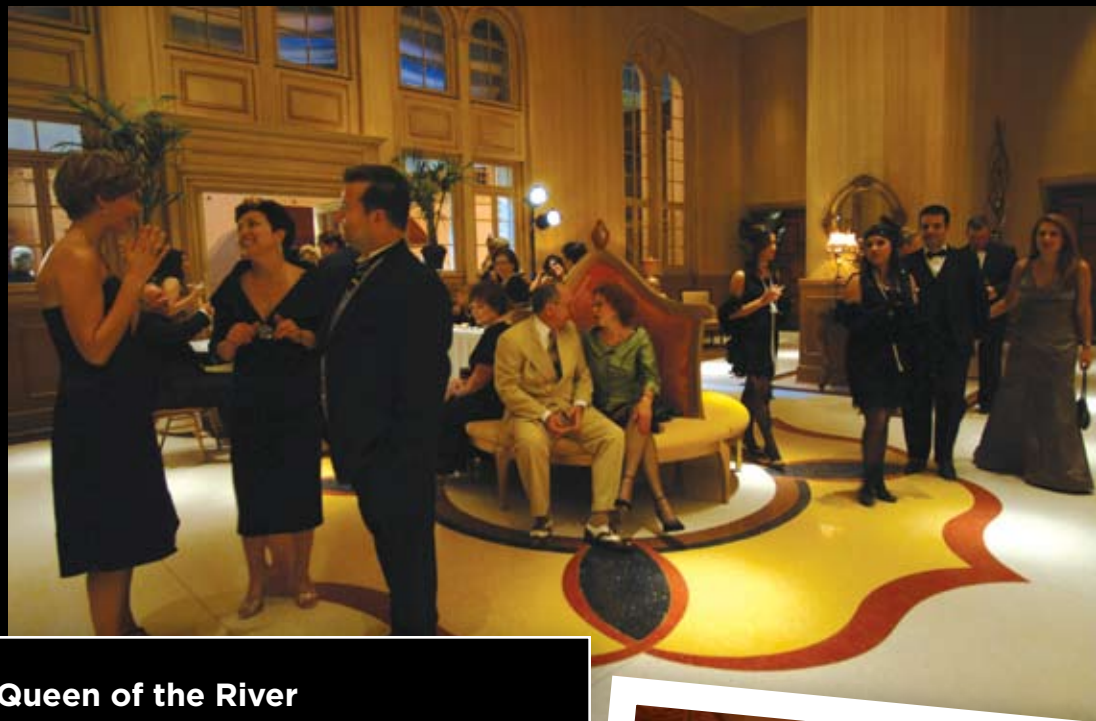
As individuals access crisis counseling through *The Phone* and *Louisiana Spirit* programs, they will participate in an assessment performed by trained crisis counselors. According to that assessment, eligible par-

ticipants will receive a referral for treatment with a mental health professional trained in the new, cognitive-based interventions for disaster. Payment for the treatment will be issued directly from a benefits pool, held by a third-party funding administrator, ensuring that cost is not an obstacle to treatment for impacted people.

Funding this program has required the cooperation of state, local, and federal agencies, and many private partners. From the basic advertising and awareness campaign, to trainings, to the actual delivery of services, many of our partners have maneuvered through very precise limitations on their existing funds to identify portions of the program that they could cover. We are identifying the remaining funds needed to launch this program in the fall.

— NATHAN SELF

If you are experiencing stress or anxiety related to last year's hurricanes, then call the Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center at (225) 924-3900 or 1-800-437-0303 to talk to a trained counselor who understands your situation and can connect you to supportive mental health professionals.



### Queen of the River

More than 20 years of ghosts were scared away by more than 1,500 revelers who attended reopening of the Hilton Capitol Center, the former Capitol House Hotel renovated by Commercial Properties, a for-profit asset of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Commercial Properties combined its own capital with tax credits and bank financing to create a \$65 million hotel that is now the jewel of the region. The opening benefited the Foundation for a Historical Louisiana. The long-term benefit: Future hotel profits will provide funds for the Foundation to improve Louisiana.



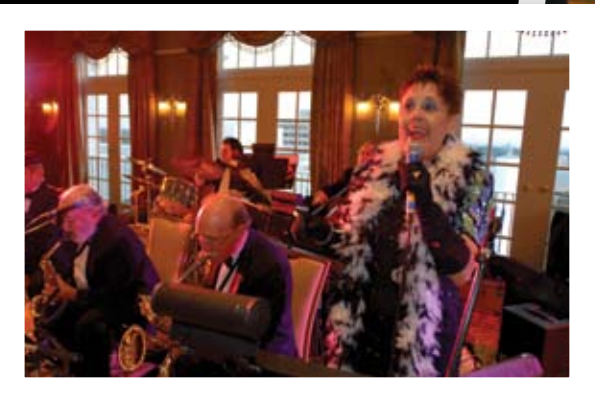
Janet Rhorer, Davis Rhorer



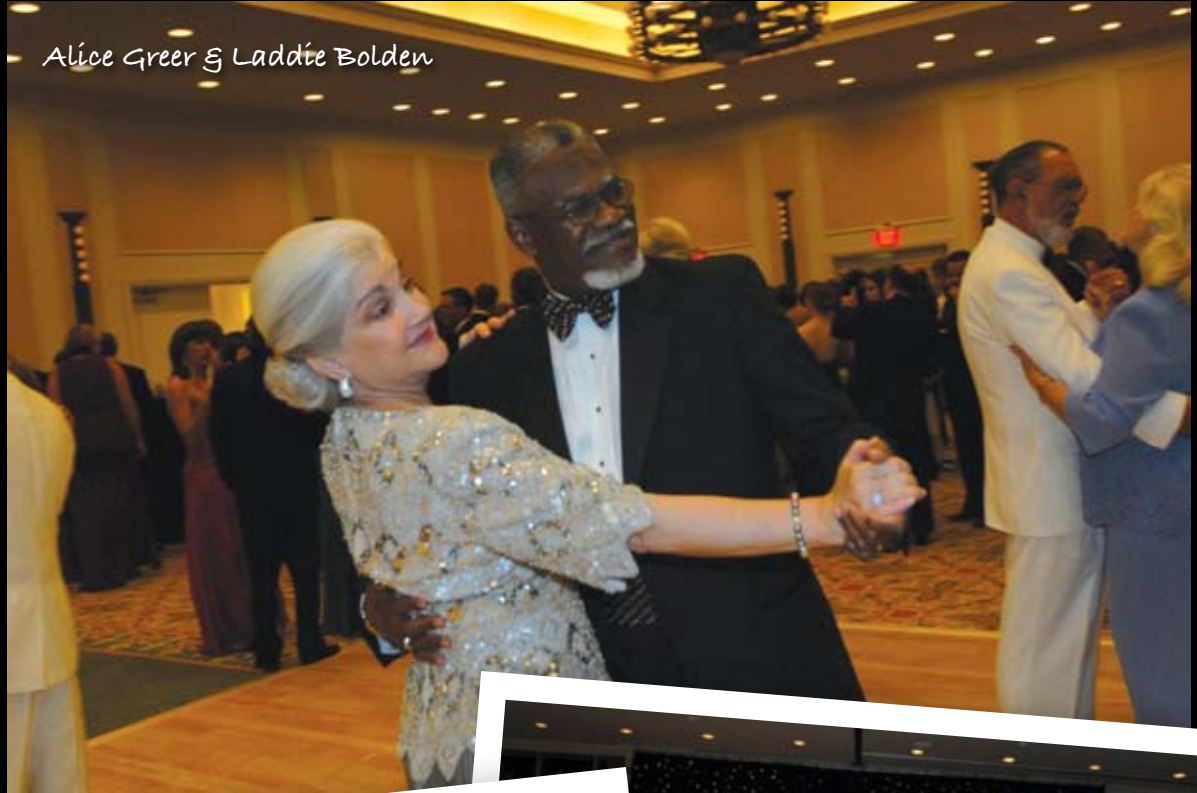
Brian Hales, Cathy Coates



Arminia & Laddie Bolden







Alice Greer & Laddie Bolden



Martha McCrory



Davis Rhorer,  
John Davies,  
Carolyn Martin,  
Camm Morton





# What's Next

Calthorpe works with residents on a new regional plan for South Louisiana

Chris Hightower pretends to slice her wrists, a means to punctuate her declaration that levees bleed the creation of natural gulf barriers. On building new levees where she doesn't believe they would work, Hightower says, "you are selling your soul to the devil."

Some around her roundtable are listening; others are immersed in their own thoughts or trying to inject their own words into the conversation.

And so it goes from table to table in a Mandeville restaurant, where 50 Northshore residents are shoe-horned for an August morning and afternoon of playing God. Their directive: Offer insights on how South Louisiana should be built over the next five decades and come up with a consensus on how to accomplish it.

Overseeing the exercise are staff of the Center for Planning Excellence, a Baton Rouge Area Foundation offshoot that is working with renowned planners Calthorpe Associates on a regional plan for South Louisiana based partly on the ideas circulating that room.

The Calthorpe caravan had already conducted similar workshops in Lake Charles, Lafayette, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans with more than 800 influential people. The participants had offered their two cents to the Center and Calthorpe, which has a \$2.5 million contract to deliver the regional plan next year. The money was raised by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, which created the LRA Support Foundation to hire and pay experts to offer recommendations for rebuilding and improving South Louisiana.

Already, planning firm Urban Design Associates has completed a pattern book and a tool kit to guide Louisiana residents to build stronger structures (see page 19). Also,

Duany Plater-Zyberk has completed plans for Lake Charles, St. Bernard Parish, and South Acadiana.

Separately, the LRA Support Foundation has delivered a health care reform plan by PricewaterhouseCoopers to the Louisiana Recovery Authority, the state government's arm charged with rebuilding after Katrina and Rita. The PWC plan, adopted by the LRA, is expected to underpin health care reform in New Orleans, then possibly rework health care delivery across the state.

## How can we rebuild smarter and stronger?

In the same way, the LRA is expected to adopt the Calthorpe regional plan early next year, using the planning firm's recommendations to reinvent how South Louisiana communities work together.

### The benefits

Calthorpe has used its expertise to devise plans for Austin, Chicago, and the Salt Lake region of Utah. The plans tend to succeed where there is leadership and do little in places where there is not. One noteworthy success story is the Utah plan for Salt Lake City. Known as Envision Utah, the blueprint helped mold more walkable, planned communities and provide support for funding a light rail system to manage an expected tripling of the region's population to 5 million by 2050.

"We have really changed the planning dialogue," says Kevin Fayles, community relations manager for Envision Utah. "People are talking about growth strategies. They didn't do that six or seven years ago."

Calthorpe uses a well-tested process for delivering the regional plans. Its planners fold the local ideas generated at meetings into sophisticated computer models of possible futures. The models produce different growth patterns and calculate their related costs. Then the public votes on its preferred future.



### Back home

In South Louisiana, where Katrina leveled thousands of homes and businesses, workshop participants provided their input by playing a series of planning games on how to rebuild the region smarter and stronger.

For instance, they were offered several options for building the coast: Did they want to redirect portions of the Mississippi River to rebuild the coast or to mechani-

cally move silt to create protective wetlands and barrier islands?

The participants were also provided other choices. Where would they concentrate urban areas? Which cities should be connected, and what modes of transit should be used to connect them?

The answers differed by region. People who gathered for the Lake Charles summit, for instance, generally were opposed to building new levees, preferring instead the natural ebb and flow of nature. But the people in the New Orleans region preferred levees as shields from future Katrinas.

One idea most people in New Orleans agreed upon was passenger rail connecting the major cities—New Orleans, Baton Rouge, the Northshore, and Lafayette. That idea was generally popular among participants in other cities as well.

Each town meeting ended with participants giving their choices and tossing out big ideas for South Louisiana. Among the ideas offered in New Orleans: smart growth communities where possible; turning the Crescent City into a true international city; building beaches on Lake Pontchartrain; turning the region into the foremost

expert on construction; and granting free tuition to attend trade schools.

By January, Louisiana residents, through a media campaign, will be briefed on the ideas and possible futures, and vote on a consensus that could result in building a stronger, brighter version of the state.

MUKUL VERMA

# A plan for change

UDA creates tools to help builders and planners

Katrina and Rita gave Louisiana an unexpected chance to rebuild safer, stronger, and smarter. Not to miss the opportunity, the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) created Louisiana Speaks, a three-part planning process to provide a new plan for South Louisiana.

Already completed under the process are local rebuilding plans for St. Bernard, Lake Charles, and parts of Acadiana—thanks to the efforts of Duany Plater-Zyberk, the Miami architects and urban planners. In the works now is a regional plan for all of South Louisiana by Calthorpe Associates (See page 17).

A third initiative entails a regional planning program to develop a long-term vision for Louisiana. Planning firm Urban Design Associates (UDA) has created a *Pattern Book* and *Tool Kit* to form the bridge between the other initiatives. These two documents present

## About UDA

Urban Design Associates is one of three nationally recognized expert planning firms funded in the Louisiana Speaks process by the LRA Support Foundation. UDA's expertise encompasses all types of community landscapes, from downtowns and waterfronts to mixed-income urban neighborhoods and university campuses. The firm has received more than 70 awards for its work in urban design and architecture throughout the United States and Europe, including a Presidential Award for the transformation of a public housing project, two Progressive Architecture Awards for neighborhoods, four National American Institute of Architects Honor Awards, and several national U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Awards for downtown work.

tools and techniques from both the planning charrettes and the regional vision processes in a form that can be used by communities throughout the state for both rehabilitation and new construction.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation created the LRA Support Foundation to pay for the planning, which is being managed by another Foundation arm – the Center for Planning Excellence. So far, the Foundation has assisted in raising more than \$6 million for the effort and continues to seek money to complete the important planning projects.

### A Pattern Book

Released to the public at the beginning of July, the *Louisiana Speaks: Pattern Book* identifies designs and techniques for building housing, neighborhoods, and towns at a greatly accelerated pace while remaining true to the values and traditions of the people of Louisiana. In the pattern book, UDA recognizes and names five Louisiana architectural styles, and then offers a multitude of photographs and design patterns for each. In an effort to protect our state from future storms and damage, the book provides guidance on incorporating hazard resistant design and improved construction techniques to reduce future losses of life and property from floods and winds. It also features green building guidelines, with tips on building energy-efficient houses that will result in long-term cost savings, improved human comfort and health, enhanced durability, and hazard resistance. In addition, the pattern book describes alternatives to conventional construction that will speed up building. Also included is a landscape patterns section, which presents an overview of traditional examples of Louisiana's civic and private landscape designs, and gives ecologically-sensitive design techniques. The pattern book is available free at Lowe's and Stine Lumber and some other locations.



### A Tool Kit

The *Tool Kit* is the *Pattern Book's* partner publication. Scheduled to be released in October 2006, the tool kit will blend UDA's expertise with the input of local planners and officials. On August 16-17, UDA hosted tool kit workshops at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation for Louisiana's developers, policymakers, and other officials to ensure that the tool kit will not only act as a valuable resource to the building industry, but will also be regionally appropriate. A state-of-the-art planning guide, the tool kit will include planning tools for conducting public design processes, understanding urban structure and establishing criteria for making decisions about the location and form

of development, and communicating the results to a broader public. Key issues – such as landscape and conservation of the natural environment, sustainable design, transportation systems, storm and flood management techniques, and development patterns – will be presented at all scales of decision-making: the region, the town, the neighborhood, the individual block or development, and individual building. Above all, the Tool Kit will recognize that the particular environment we are all working on needs to be seen by all of us—in our separate disciplines—as a whole place rather than as a collection of separate technical issues.

— ERIN PERCY

# For richer, for poorer

Snubbing naysayers, incomes are blended in Atlanta housing complex

It's easy to dismiss the idea of mixed-income housing. In a nation that largely segments itself by income, the notion that people of means would share a neighborhood with the working poor seems quaint, even silly.

But it's working in Atlanta, where the working poor get subsidies to live in market-rate housing built by public agencies. "I had read about mixed-income and knew the term, but I did not have the picture in my brain of what it should and could be until the Atlanta trip," says Pam Wall, who toured mixed-income public housing during a trip organized by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

The jaunt to learn about mixed-housing was paid for in large part by a Foundation donor and led by the Foundation's Gwen Hamilton, who is deeply involved in revitalizing Old South Baton Rouge, the neighborhood between downtown and LSU.

Thirty-five people from Baton Rouge made the two-day trip in early July. On board were Wall and other commissioners of the East Baton Rouge Parish Housing Authority, as well officials of its nonprofit, Partners in Progress. Also on the trip were representatives of federal Gulf Coast rebuilding and federal HOPE VI programs, the Old South Baton Rouge Neighborhood Partnership Board, the FannieMae Foundation, FannieMae Corp., LIISC, and the East Baton Rouge Parish Mortgage Finance Authority. The Housing Authority and the Mortgage Finance Authority paid for their representatives to attend.

A key stop on the trip was the East Lake Project, a market-rate public apartment project that arose around East Lake Golf Club, a declining golf club with a storied history that includes golfing legend Bobby Jones playing his first and last round there. By the 1960s, the course and community were falling apart. In the 1970s, a public housing project called East Lake Meadows was built, but the area continued to deteriorate over the

next two decades. Drug trade and other crime consumed the area before the community decided enough was enough.

In 1995, the East Lake Foundation was created to repair the community. The group tore down tenement housing for poor people and replaced it with a mixed-income apartment community with 542 townhouses, duplexes, and garden apartments. An incentive to move into the new community was the Atlanta Public School System's first charter school, which is managed by Edison Schools. It now has 800 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The community also is attractive because it has a YMCA, an early education and family center, and public golf course with an emphasis on teaching the sport.

What's more, the East Lake Foundation is offering programs to break the poverty cycle. They include money for education, recreation and self-sufficiency projects, and funding of amenities that attract mixed-income residents and private community investment.

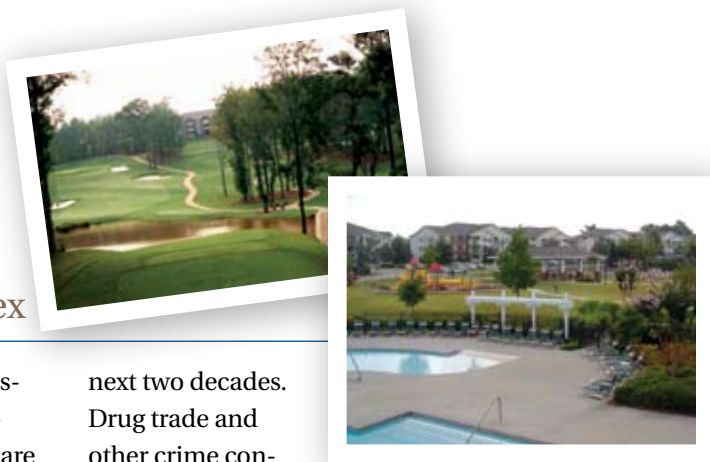
The trip to East Lake, says Hamilton, made Baton Rouge visitors aware that high-quality, market-rate public housing is possible.

Baton Rouge public housing, even the newer buildings, still are designed to look like inferior public housing, whereas East Lake is built to be more desirable for all income segments.

"It's important for us to take the energy that was created by that trip and all the connections that we made and take the next step," says Wall.

The next step for the Foundation and its partners on the trip is to explore how East Lake's successes can be implemented in Old South Baton Rouge, says Hamilton.

— MUKUL VERMA



## FRESH FACES



In August, we said farewell to graphic designer **Doug Carrier**, who moved to Austin, Texas, for new adventures. Doug

started at the Foundation in February 2002 and worked here during its fast-growth period. He will be greatly missed.

**Dennise Reno** is the Foundation's new graphic designer. A native of Baton Rouge, Dennise was most recently production manager for *Baton Rouge Business Report* and *225* magazine. Dennise has two children, Jack, nine, and Coco, six, and has a passion for French culture and promoting the local art scene.



**Chuck Perrodin** is helping the Center for Planning Excellence to plan and coordinate communications for the Louisiana

Speaks program, which is doing long-term community planning for the Louisiana Recovery Authority. Chuck has 20 years of experience in radio, TV and print media, and 21 years of public relations experience at the agency and corporate levels. He is currently doing research for a historical novel he hopes will be published in time for the 200th anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans in 2015.

## New Grants Continue the Foundation's Hurricane Relief Work

**Hurricane Katrina Education Fund:** On July 18, the Hurricane Katrina Education Fund granted \$447,448 to ten local organizations and schools working with displaced students. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation established the Hurricane Katrina Education Fund to support educational projects and organizations that address the academic needs of children that have been impacted by the catastrophic hurricanes. Grants are made from the pooled contributions restricted to educational relief efforts.

<b>Big Buddy Program</b>	\$39,424
<b>Boys and Girls Club of Greater Baton Rouge</b>	\$33,100
<b>Career Compass of Louisiana</b>	\$50,000
<b>The Millennium Fund</b>	\$10,000
<b>State Education Technology Directors Association</b>	\$160,000
<b>Teach for America</b>	\$20,000

### *East Baton Rouge Parish School System:*

<b>Tara High School</b>	\$17,277
<b>Prescott Middle School</b>	\$29,728
<b>McKinley Senior High School</b>	\$27,919

### *City of Baker School System:*

<b>Baker High School</b>	\$60,000
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**Hurricane Katrina Displaced Residents Fund:** On July 20, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation issued the eighth set of grants from the Hurricane Katrina Displaced Residents Fund, totaling \$483,868. To date, nearly \$6.2 million has been issued from the fund to organizations working to assist people impacted by the storm. The eight grants awarded in this round reveal our community's long-term commitment to the Louisiana residents who were displaced because of Katrina and Rita.

<b>Bethel Istrouma A.M.E. Church for Empowerment</b>	\$10,000
<b>BREC</b>	\$50,000
<b>Family Road of Greater Baton Rouge</b>	\$73,368
<b>Health Care Centers in Schools</b>	\$75,000
<b>Louisiana Resource Center for Educators</b>	\$20,000
<b>Options Foundation, Inc.</b>	\$73,000
<b>Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana</b>	\$157,500
<b>Society of St. Vincent de Paul</b>	\$75,000

Visit [www.FOUNDATIONSforRECOVERY.org](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforRECOVERY.org) for more information about these grants and our other hurricane relief activities.

## Membership is easy and affordable!

### It's time to join the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

Across the capital city region, our members are witnessing the powerful effects of their support in the success of projects like the Hilton Capitol Center, the Shaw Center for the Arts, and the Old South Baton Rouge Revitalization effort.

#### Membership supports informed community leadership.

Once you join, you'll stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our community's best and brightest advocates as you help shape the future of our home.

**Membership is affordable**—starting at only \$100 and giving every member of our community the opportunity to make a difference. Our members receive special correspondence and informative updates through the Foundation's publications.

**To learn more or to join online, visit [www.braf.org](http://www.braf.org)**

*Currents* is a publication of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. If you would like to be added to our distribution list, please contact us at (225) 387-6126, or email the Foundation at [mverma@braf.org](mailto:mverma@braf.org).

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