

CURRENTS

first quarter twenty-seventeen . baton rouge area foundation

Roads to *somewhere*

*Developers are turning Nicholson,
Government into destinations,
sparking revitalization*





Custom wood furniture maker Patrick Ricard carves a face from a block of walnut for an angel cabinet he is creating—story on page 50





RISING ON THE RIVER

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*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

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LETTER



More than just the last leaf in the calendar, December 31 offers a useful mark for measuring what's been accomplished in one

year and what is possible in the 365 days to come.

In Baton Rouge, the last trip around the sun was filled with more than its share of troubles, including the worst flood in centuries. But 2016 also reminded us that people are good, and they want to ease the suffering of others.

In a convincing demonstration of this, gifts to the Foundation's First Responders Fund and various flood relief funds totaled more than \$14 million. Grants were made to assist the families of officers who were killed while at work and to support nonprofits in the field, helping people gut and repair their houses so they could be made into homes once more.

The work of recovery slowed progress on projects already underway, but it didn't halt their advance. You'll see surprising results in 2017, particularly along two main corridors that have been subjected to disinvestment for much too long.

Nicholson Drive, between LSU and downtown, is one of them. There, LSU, private developers, and the Foundation are investing hundreds of millions of dollars. The area was the focus of a Foundation effort to revive Old South Baton Rouge and, more recently, was singled out as a corridor for growth in our parish's adopted master plan.

Developers and retailers willing to take a chance have also started to revive Government Street, the main road of Mid City. Several new developments there should accelerate the transformation. The former Entergy buildings on Government will be reinvented as an entertainment destination and mixed-use hous-

You'll see surprising results in 2017, particularly along two main corridors that have been subjected to disinvestment for much too long.

ing. Also on the to-do list is the conversion of Government Street into a three-lane road with bike lanes, making it more inviting to the next wave of businesses willing to bet on Mid City's revival.

Both areas were designated as high-priority corridors in FuturEBR, the parish's master plan. That's because rebuilding along those streets is recognized by planners as a draw to revitalize the blighted neighborhoods that surround them, making the area more welcoming to people of all means—a little dream that provides us with added purpose at the Foundation.

You can read about the two corridors in the cover story of this magazine.

•••

In January, Louisiana's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority updated its master plan for preserving the coast in those places where it can be saved based on the resources available.

Researchers have raised their estimate of sea level rise again. In 2012, the worst-case scenario for rising sea levels was 1.48 feet over five decades. In 2017, that figure has become the most optimistic forecast.

Now, the worst-case estimates have seas rising 2.75 feet above today's levels in 50 years, causing the loss of tens of thousands of homes and businesses—and that's even if the state implements the plan.

These alarming developments make the work being done on the Water Campus more indispensable than ever. The CPRA, the state agency that issued the report, is based there. An iconic building for the Water Institute of the Gulf is under construction on the old city dock. Located on the riverfront, the Water Campus is a project of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, developed in conjunction with our real estate managers at Commercial Properties Realty Trust and state and local governments.

When fully built, the 1.2 million-square-foot facility will be a gathering place for the best scientists and engineers working on solutions for coastal problems, here at home and elsewhere. In this issue, we offer an update on the project, along with a feature story on the LSU Center for River Studies. Housed at the Water Campus, the center has been working to create a physical and computer model of the lower Mississippi River. Among other important tasks, the Center for River Studies will teach children and adults about coastal issues and sea level rise, educating the public about one of the greatest existential threats to seaside populations and communities around the world.

•••

In this issue, we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence. Over the last decade, independent judges have recognized and rewarded the best works of fiction written by contemporary African American authors. Those writers are celebrated annually in a January award presentation that has become our favorite event of the year.

The award continues to achieve its original mission of supporting rising African American authors and promoting their work. Recipients have gone on to write still more award-winning works, including one author who was chosen as a MacArthur Fellow, following in the footsteps of literary giant Ernest Gaines, who was chosen for that prestigious honor in 1993.

Sincerely,



S. Dennis Blunt,
Chair

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, BRAF invests in and manages pivotal projects to improve the region.

For more information, contact Mukul Verma at mverma@braf.org.

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ABOUT US

THE BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION ACCOMPLISHES ITS MISSION IN THREE WAYS :

1 We connect fund donors—philanthropists—to worthwhile projects and nonprofits. Over 52 years, our donors have granted more than \$400 million across South Louisiana and the world.

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

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

3 We offer strategic consulting services to nonprofits.

KEY CIVIC LEADERSHIP PROJECTS

THE NEW MOBILITY:

The Foundation is trying to make it easier for people to get around the parish. We are participating with local and state government on several projects that give residents transportation choices. Engineers say that more choices reduces the burden on roads. The projects include a train connecting Baton Rouge to New Orleans, a bike sharing system that is expected to start in late 2017 and support for car sharing.

BATON ROUGE HEALTH DISTRICT

(BRHEALTHDISTRICT.ORG) : The parish asked the Foundation to pay for a master plan for the Bluebonnet, Perkins and Essen Lane corridor, where most of the health care assets are located. The plan has been adopted by the parish, and an independent nonprofit – the Baton Rouge Health District, has been formed to implement the plan.

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

MISSION :

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

To achieve our mission, we:

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

LEAD IN

THE WATER CAMPUS

From River Road, you can see the foundation of a building that will be an emblem of Baton Rouge, and of Louisiana. Rising on the city's original dock—abandoned decades ago—is the headquarters for The Water Institute of the Gulf. Inside it will be scientists and researchers trying to solve a real-world Rubik's cube—how people who live along coasts and their governments can adapt to the double peril of rising seas and vanishing wetlands.

The building will be a beacon as well for the development around it—the Water Campus. Under construction on 45 acres, the Campus already has two research organizations: Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and LSU Center for River Studies (see related story in this issue).

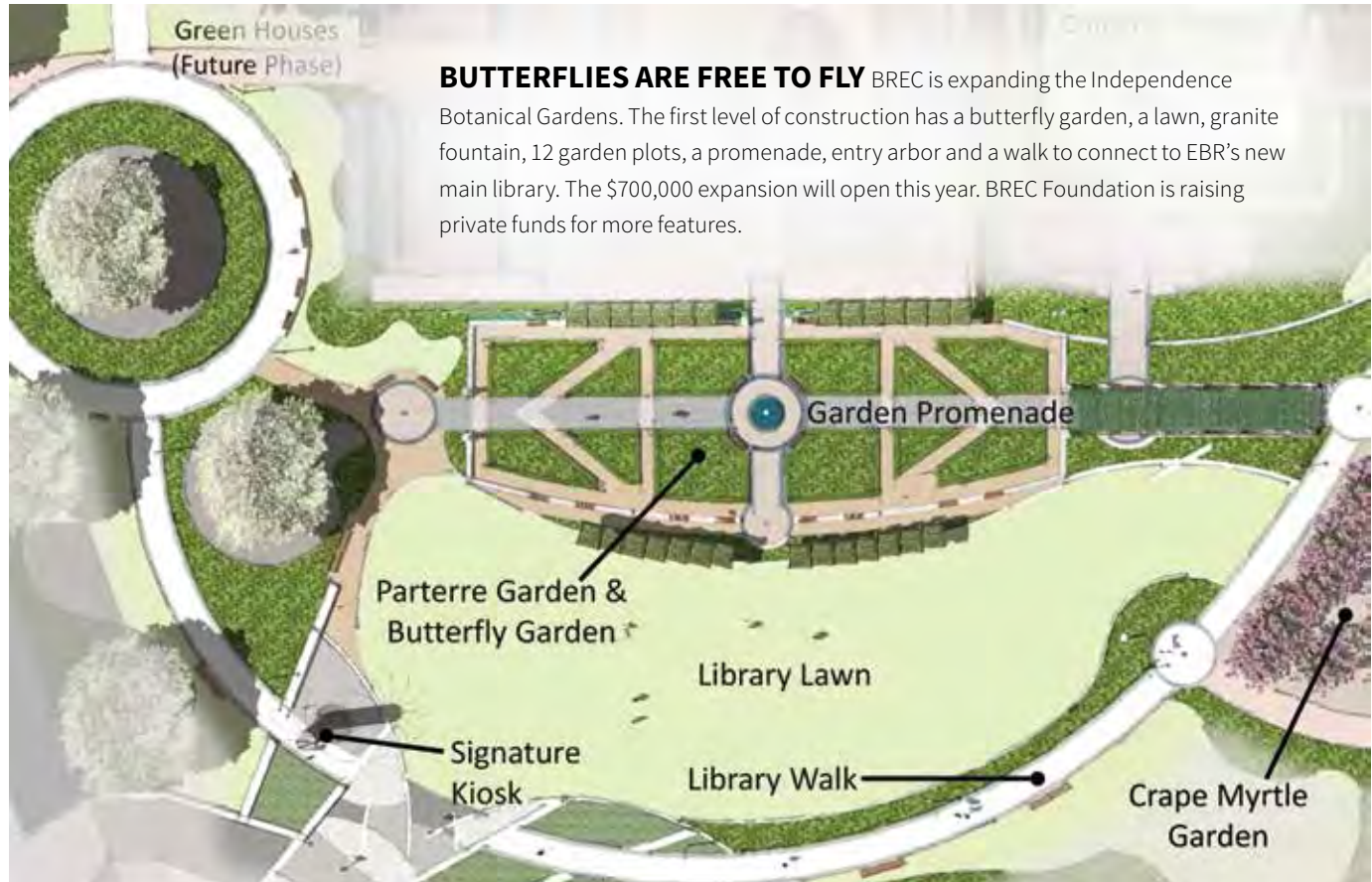
In late 2016, the state of Louisiana started relocating from its warehouses on Nicholson Drive, making space for more Water Campus buildings to begin construction this year: a parking garage to serve the campus and an office building for engineering and other firms.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Commercial Properties Realty Trust, which manages the Foundation's real estate, are building the 1.2 million-square-foot campus. When it's completed in a decade or so, thousands of people will work there.

GOOD THINGS



LOUISIANA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL With support from fund donors of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Louisiana International Film Festival has celebrated movies and videos and supported Louisiana's movie industry. A nonprofit overseen by Executive Director Chesley Heysfield puts on the festival, which will be held April 20-23 at Cinemark Perkins Rowe this year. You can learn more at lifilmfest.org.



BUTTERFLIES ARE FREE TO FLY BREC is expanding the Independence Botanical Gardens. The first level of construction has a butterfly garden, a lawn, granite fountain, 12 garden plots, a promenade, entry arbor and a walk to connect to EBR's new main library. The \$700,000 expansion will open this year. BREC Foundation is raising private funds for more features.



The Lofts @ 6C

DOWNTOWN BATON ROUGE Several projects broke ground or were completed in downtown during the last six months. An \$18 million downtown library is rising on the Town Square. A bike and walking route is finished on North Boulevard and will link eventually to City Park. The Courtyard by Marriott broke ground in fall, just after the Watermark Hotel opened down the street on Third. Associated General Contractors and the Louisiana State Licensing Board for Contractors are putting up a new office building on North Street, next to existing offices, which will be renovated and leased. The biggest private development under construction in downtown is The Lofts @ 6C, a mix of apartments and retail at Florida and North Sixth streets. Developer John O. Hearin is putting up 142 apartments and 3,000 square feet of retail. The Lofts signal development is spreading to a new part of downtown, farther from the riverfront.

Watermark Hotel



Courtyard by Marriot





Among Baton Rouge Area Foundation's projects is one to improve mobility in the region, which is among the most congested in America. Transportation engineers say that offering more transportation choices reduces automotive traffic, as people switch from cars to mass transit, bikes and even walking. Three components of our New Mobility initiative progressed in 2016, and one of them should come on line this year.

THE NEW MOBILITY

AUTOMOBILES

If you live in downtown, you have the option to ditch your automobile. Zipcar has expanded its service to downtown Baton Rouge, adding to service it already had at LSU. Using an app, the car sharing service lets members reserve cars on-demand by the hour and day, up to seven days. The cars are located in four designated spots in downtown. Memberships cost \$7 per month, or \$70 per year. Hourly rates range from \$8 to \$10 and include gasoline, insurance and all other costs.

Cars in downtown are at the corner of North Boulevard and Fourth Street, Third and Florida streets, and Main and Third streets.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation partnered with the Downtown Development District, city-parish government and local officials to expand service in a pilot program for downtown for one year.

TRAINS

The Southern Rail Commission has injected a bit of grease in the wheels for train service. SRC allocated \$2 million in federal funds to cities in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi to plan for train stations. Baton Rouge receives \$250,000 from the SRC to match \$250,000 already committed by EBR City-Parish Government. Planning will be conducted by the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority for stations near downtown and in the suburbs, most likely near the location of hospitals and clinics in and around Bluebonnet Boulevard. Elsewhere in Louisiana, SRC planning money has been allocated to the City of Gonzales and to St. John Parish.

Gov. John Bel Edwards is supporting train service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans on existing lines, a project that has been championed by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and economic development organizations in New Orleans, Baton Rouge and cities in between. New Orleans has a station, while Gonzales has identified land for a station.

“These grants will allow our Louisiana communities to locally plan their stations for the re-establishment of passenger rail connecting the New Orleans to Baton Rouge super region, a project that has tremendous support from the business community and is a priority for Governor Bel Edwards,” said John Spain, executive vice president of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and vice chair of SRC.

As well, the Federal Railroad Administration, SRC and Amtrak are exploring the return of Gulf Coast service from New Orleans to Orlando. A Working Group, designated by the FAST Act and chaired by the Federal Railroad Administration, which includes members from CSX, Amtrak, the SRC, local elected officials, state DOTs, MPOs, businesses and tribes representing interests of communities in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida, has been evaluating the needs in order to reach an agreement on the phasing of capital construction and schedule for the restored passenger rail service.





BIKES

The Foundation has unveiled a plan for bikeshare in Baton Rouge and started and staffed a nonprofit to roll out the service in 2017.

Written by Toole Design Group, the report recommends the first 50 stations be located where demand is greatest: downtown, LSU, City Park, Southern University and surrounding neighborhoods. Five hundred bikes should be available at the stations before the year is over. Within three years, a second phase would add stations in Mid City and the Health District, an area around Essen Lane, Perkins Road and Bluebonnet Boulevard.

Cities, both large and mid-sized, are taking up bikeshare. Where they are located, members can checkout bikes at stations, ride them for a half hour for free (there's usually a cost after the first 30 minutes) and return them to any station they want. Annual memberships typically cost less than \$80.

To start service in Baton Rouge, the Foundation created a nonprofit—Baton Rouge BikeShare. Lindsey Gray West is its first director. She started bikeshare in the Birmingham,

Ala., market. There, members recorded 63,051 check-outs and rode more than 81,000 miles in the first year.

“I have seen the multiple benefits bikeshare brings to a community: traffic is reduced, people are healthier, and bikeshare prompts cities to improve the infrastructure for biking and walking,” said West. “Bikeshare will increase livability and mobility in our city.”

Baton Rouge BikeShare will be governed by a board of community stakeholders and the system will be locally operated. West is securing sponsors to underwrite the launch and operations.

Toole's work follows recommendations from the September 2015 Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities BikeShare Planning Study, which was commissioned by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and concluded the service would be feasible in Baton Rouge.

You can download the bikeshare plan at braf.org/bikeshare, where we will post updates as well. The project is on Facebook and Twitter at [@batonrougebikeshare](https://www.facebook.com/batonrougebikeshare).



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES At the Foundation, we've worked for nearly three years with law enforcement officers and behavioral health experts to improve mental health services. This unusual collaboration was attempting to solve a problem caused by state and federal cuts in mental health services. Police were encountering people with mental health problems breaking minors laws. Having no place to take them for care, they were being transported to the emergency room or jailed, both inhumane options and more expensive as well.

Together, we delivered a solution based on a successful model from San Antonio: a treatment center where people with mental illness or drug abuse issues could sober up, get back on their prescribed medication and be referred for extra treatment, if needed. The center, an economist predicted, would save \$5 million a year for parish taxpayers.

Unfortunately, a 1.5-mill property tax for operating the center was defeated Dec. 10 by the narrowest of margins, 51%-49%.

We pledge to continue pursuing a mental health treatment center for Baton Rouge because the services are needed and it's the right thing to do.



FREE AND CLEAR The Baton Rouge Area Foundation, with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, has funded a \$550,000 project to help people clear property titles, making them eligible for thousands of dollars in federal grants for repairing their flood-damaged houses.

Thousands of people live in homes that they don't own outright because properties were passed on to family members without successions. This program will find all potential heirs to the properties and ask them to sign over their ownership—typically small amounts—to the person living in the home.

“Our goal over the next year is to secure permanent funding to continue this program as long as it's needed,” said Lauren Crapanzano Jumonville, Baton Rouge Area Foundation project manager. “Turning people into homeowners has proven to be

among the best mechanisms for reclaiming neighborhoods.”

The Foundation has collaborated with the American Bar Association Center for Innovation and Stanford University Law School to create a smartphone app to make the process more efficient. Applicants using the app can get a head start by offering their personal information and gathering some required documents. The app will not only speed up the process but also reduce the amount of time spent with attorneys and other professionals, letting them clear even more property titles in the next year.

Southeast Louisiana Legal Services is on point for the work. SLLS is partnering with other organizations: Baton Rouge Bar Foundation, Southern University Law Center, LSU Law Clinic, Baton Rouge Bar Association, Louisiana Appleseed, Equal Justice Works, Louisiana State Bar Association, Louisiana Bar Foundation and East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority.



COMPANION ANIMAL ALLIANCE Dogs and cats are about to get the temporary home they deserve. In February, Companion Animal Alliance started building a 30,000-square-foot animal sanctuary on the LSU campus to replace a dog-eared, five-decades-old shelter near the Baton Rouge airport.

The shelter will be better located to serve its main purpose: place dogs and cats with families that want them. Created by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation with animal enthusiasts, CAA has already done an exceptional job at that. Since assuming control of the shelter five years ago, the percentage of dogs and cats saved has soared to about 70% from 20%.

LSU's School of Veterinary Medicine will be within walking distance of the shelter on Gourrier Avenue near the Mississippi River. Vet students will learn and practice techniques at the shelter. Because it will be among the best in the country, the shelter will be efficient to operate, more comfortable to the animals and more welcoming to people who want to adopt them.

Groundbreaking for the shelter was in November. Buquet & Leblanc is the contractor and Antunovich Associates is the architect.



EBR REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY Ardendale is progressing in accordance with its unique plan: a community anchored by education institutions.

The Baton Rouge Community College opened at Ardendale in 2016. Its automotive training center began with an inaugural class of 50 students who are learning to be mechanics. This year, the local school system will start building a \$19 million career high school (above). Graduates can get jobs soon after they get their diplomas, or they can continue to college. BRCC will start to build a second education building in Ardendale, the location for its East Campus.

Ardendale is situated on 200 acres north of Florida Boulevard surrounding North Lobdell and North Ardenwood Drive. Housing and retail will be included in the project. The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority is the developer. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is providing staff support.

GRANTS

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation's fund donors make thousands of grants from their charitable accounts. Grants for the fourth quarter of 2016 are listed below. They total \$15.6 million.

If you wish to learn more about opening a charitable fund at the Foundation, please call our donor services department at (225) 387-6126. You can open a charitable fund for a minimum of \$10,000. The Foundation will manage the fund and make grants on your behalf. Contributions to charitable funds are tax deductible.

A Call to the Heart Ministry, \$100
Academic Distinction Fund, \$45,775
Acadia Parish Schools -Crowley High School, \$5,000
Acts of Love Inc., \$1,000
AFS Intercultural Programs Inc., \$250
AFS-USA Inc., \$250
Agenda for Children Inc.—New Orleans, \$72,500
Alice N. Boucher Elementary School, \$500
All Hands Volunteers, Inc., \$25,000
Alzheimer's Association, \$100
Alzheimer's Association of Louisiana, \$100
Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area, \$2,500
American Cancer Society Inc., \$275
American Heart Association Greater Southeast Affiliate, \$37,619
Arkansas Baptist College, \$10,000
Ars Lyrica Houston, \$1,000
Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge Inc., \$38,105
Arts Council of New Orleans, \$25,000
Auckland Communities Foundation, \$10,000
Audubon Nature Institute Inc., \$1,650
Autism Pensacola, \$5,000
Baton Rouge Christian Education Foundation /
The Dunham School, \$2,808
Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center, \$3,457
Baton Rouge Green Association Inc., \$1,823
Baton Rouge High School Foundation, \$38,890
Baton Rouge Opera Guild Inc., \$1,834
Baton Rouge Speech and Hearing Foundation Inc. /
The Emerge Center, \$5,154
Baton Rouge Sponsoring Committee, \$208,335
Baton Rouge Youth Coalition, \$590,500
Beth Shalom Synagogue, \$50,650
Bibb County School District, \$3,500
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Louisiana Inc., \$5,000
Bishop Ott Works of Mercy Trust/Cath Diocese, \$188
Blue Ridge Mountains Health Project, \$500

FLOOD RELIEF FUND

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation had raised a little more than \$6 million for flood relief by the end of December. Contributions from around the world—more than 18,000 of them—were distributed to nonprofits, schools and school systems. We've granted more than \$4 million from the Louisiana Flood Relief Fund, and will make more grants in 2017.

EMPLOYEES 1ST

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted more than \$5.5 million to employees of firms that established charitable funds after the Great Flood of 2016. One of the foundation's programs—Employees 1st—offers assistance funds to companies. The companies, employees and vendors make tax-free contributions to the funds; the Foundation makes grants to employees who qualify for help after personal troubles or disasters.

More than 80 firms opened Employees 1st funds after the flood, and those funds raised more than \$7 million with the assistance of the Foundation. We took applications from employees and made 3,500 grants to those who could show losses.

Some of the firms are continuing their employee assistance funds to make grants throughout the year.

To learn more, visit Employees1st.org or call Elizabeth Hutchison at (225) 387-6126.

Boston Youth Moves at the Jeannette Neill Dance Studio, \$200
Boy Scouts of America Istrouma Area Council, \$6,000
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Baton Rouge Inc., \$11,910
BREADA (Big River Economic & Agricultural Development Alliance), \$10,750
Breakthrough New Orleans, \$1,000
Broadmoor Presbyterian Church, \$1,000
Broadway Cares-Equity Fights AIDS Inc., \$2,500
Brothers of the Sacred Heart Foundation of the New Orleans Province, \$500
Building Excellent Schools Inc., \$10,000
Calcasieu Parish School System - J. J. Johnson Elementary, \$500
Camp High Hopes, \$5,000
Cancer Research and Life Foundation, \$10,000
Cancer Services of Greater Baton Rouge Inc., \$54,689
Capital Area Agency on Aging District II, \$25,000
Capital Area Animal Welfare Society, \$308
Capital Area United Way, \$116,000
Care Pregnancy Clinic, \$844.38
Career Compass of Louisiana, \$47,500
Cat Haven Inc., \$5,000

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans, \$110,000
 Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge/Bishop's Annual Appeal, \$6,700
 Catholic High School Foundation, \$4,696
 Catholic Relief Services Inc., \$1,000
 Center for Planning Excellence Inc., \$29,500
 Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Baton Rouge Inc./
 McMains Children's Development Center, \$161,000
 Children's Cup, \$2,700
 Chinese Christian Church of Baton Rouge, \$287
 Christ Episcopal Church, \$5,000
 Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church, \$2,000
 Christ the King Parish and Catholic Center at LSU, \$11,311
 Church of the Good Shepherd, \$5,000
 City of Hammond, \$1,000
 City Year Baton Rouge, \$5,800
 Companion Animal Alliance, \$3,057,000
 Congregation B'nai Israel of Baton Rouge, \$2,500
 Congregation B'nai Israel of Baton Rouge Foundation, \$10,000
 Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph Inc., \$500
 Court 13 Arts, \$25,000
 Court Appointed Special Advocates of St. Landry, \$1,000
 Crippled Children Foundation, \$500
 Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, \$250
 CYT Lafayette Inc., \$1,950
 David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, \$10,000
 Delta Delta Delta Foundation, \$1,000
 DEMCO Foundation Inc., \$130,000
 Denham Springs Long-Term Recovery Committee, \$25,000
 Dermott Baptist Church, \$1,000
 Disaster Recovery Fund, \$105,000
 Doctors Without Borders USA Inc., \$2,500
 Domus Pacis Family Respite Inc., \$100
 DonorsChoose.org, \$500
 Douglas Manship Sr. Theatre Complex Holding Inc., \$22,134
 Duke University, \$50,100
 Dyslexia Association of Greater Baton Rouge, \$606
 East Baton Rouge Parish Library, \$2,311
 EBRPSS - Glen Oaks High School, \$1,000
 Elm Grove Baptist Church, \$1,000
 Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion, \$6,000
 Episcopal High School of Baton Rouge, \$421,647
 Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, \$1,200
 Exceptional Lives Inc., \$28,900
 Family And Youth Counseling Agency Inc, \$5,000
 Fifth Avenue Synagogue, \$250
 First Baptist Church of New Roads, \$6,000
 First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge, \$4,000
 First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge, \$1,232
 First United Methodist Church, \$14,300
 Fletcher Community College Foundation Inc., \$80,088
 Food Bank of Siouland Inc., \$5,000
 Food4Kidz, Inc., \$5,000
 Foundation for a Better Louisiana, \$4,110
 Foundation for Excellence in Louisiana Public Broadcasting, \$2,000
 Foundation for Historical Louisiana Inc., \$5,016
 Foundation for Woman's Hospital, \$42,168
 French Camp Academy, \$1,000
 French Heritage Society, \$100
 Friends of Hilltop Arboretum Inc., \$1,450
 Friends of Louisiana Public Broadcasting Inc., \$9,521
 Friends of Magnolia Mound, \$5,444
 Friends of Oakley Community Foundation, \$200
 Friends of Rosedown Inc., \$1,200
 Friends of St. Paul Church Inc., \$500
 Friends of the Baton Rouge Zoo, \$1,000
 Friends of the Louisiana State Archives \$200
 GaitWay Therapeutic Horsemanship, \$30,000
 Gardere Community Christian School, \$5,000
 General Health Foundation, \$1,000
 Good Neighbor Foundation, \$10,000
 Grace Episcopal Church, \$4,000
 Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank Inc., \$127,978
 Greater Mount Canaan Baptist Church, \$500
 Groton School, \$134,050
 Harmony Church of Bartlett, \$15,000
 Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society, \$100
 Hathaway Brown School, \$1,000
 Healing Place Church, \$2,000
 Healing Place Serve, \$15,000
 Heifer International Foundation, \$100
 Heritage Ranch, \$2,000
 Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Foundation, \$1,000
 Holy Family Catholic Church, \$11,582
 Holy Ghost Catholic Church, \$400
 HOPE Ministries of Baton Rouge, \$1,250
 Horizons of Okaloosa County Inc., \$10,000
 Hospice Foundation of Greater Baton Rouge, \$41,662
 Houston Chamber Choir, \$2,500
 Houston Symphony Society, \$2,500
 Iberville Foundation for Academic Excellence, \$5,733
 Iberville Parish School District, \$800
 International Dark Sky Association, \$250
 International Hospitality Foundation LSU, \$1,667
 International Rett Syndrome Foundation, \$150
 International Society for Krishna Consciousness of
 New Orleans, \$3,753
 James Dick Foundation for the Performing Arts, \$1,000
 Jewish Federation of Greater Baton Rouge, \$2,350
 Jubilee Community Inc., \$1,000
 Junior Achievement of Greater Baton Rouge and Acadiana, \$1,951
 Junior Achievement of Southeast Texas, \$5,000
 Just Lifting As We Climb, \$700
 Kappa Alpha Order Educational Foundation, \$100
 Kemper and Leila Williams Foundation/Historic New Orleans
 Collection, \$100
 Kids' Orchestra Inc., \$1,000
 King of Kings Ministries Inc., \$750
 Knock Knock Children's Museum, \$81,320

Krotz Springs Elementary School, \$500
 Kudvumisa Foundation USA Inc., \$1,500
 LA Methodist Childrens Home, \$100
 Lafayette Parish Schools - David Thibodaux STEM Magnet Academy, \$3,734.60
 Lake Dillon Foundation for the Performing Arts, \$2,500
 Lean On Me Inc., \$2,000
 Legal Title Clearing Initiative Fund, \$250,000
 Legion Park Elementary School, \$500
 Living Word Church of Muskegon, \$600
 Livingston Parish School Board, \$4,000
 Livonia High School, \$800
 Louise S. McGehee School, \$500
 Louisiana Art and Science Museum Inc., \$18,262
 Louisiana Baptist Foundation of Alexandria, \$839,276
 Louisiana Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross, \$1,307
 Louisiana Flood Relief Fund, \$6,500
 Louisiana Housing Corporation, \$5,000
 Louisiana International Film Festival, \$3,000
 Louisiana Lemonade Day, \$74,874.90
 Louisiana Public Health Institute, \$121,027.50
 Louisiana Resource Center for Educators, \$1,100
 Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts Foundation, \$500
 Louisiana State Troopers Charities, \$1,500
 Louisiana Superintendents Academy, \$25,000
 Louisiana Symphony Association/Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra, \$50,732
 Louisiana Tech University Foundation, \$1,000
 Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation, \$1,100
 Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation, \$860
 Lower Mississippi River Foundation, \$1,000
 LSU Foundation, \$8,350
 LSU Foundation - Burden Horticultural Society, \$3,000
 LSU Foundation - College of Art & Design, \$1,000
 LSU Foundation - E.J. Ourso College of Business, \$2,500
 LSU Foundation - LSU Museum of Art, \$2,200
 LSU Foundation - Manship School of Mass Communication, \$2,200
 LSU Foundation - Paul M. Hebert Law Center, \$2,000
 LSU Foundation - School of Art Gallery Support Fund, \$15,000
 LSU Foundation - Shreveport, \$1,000
 LSU Foundation - University Lab School Foundation \$2,000
 LSU Foundation-Center for French and Francophone Studies, \$100
 MacDonnell United Methodist Children's Services, \$1,000
 Maddies Footprints, \$5,000
 Maison des Ami of Louisiana Inc., \$6,500
 Manners of the Heart, \$2,500
 Mantle of Mary Inc., \$800
 Map 10 40, \$1,500
 Marigny Opera House Foundation, \$10,000
 Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center, \$219,492
 Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center Foundation, \$1,000
 Mayo Clinic Rochester, \$5,000
 McNeese State University Foundation, \$2,000

Mercy Ships, \$4,749.63
 MetroMorphosis, \$175,000
 Mississippi College, \$1,000
 National Audubon Society Inc., \$1,000
 National Repertory Orchestra Inc. Colorado Philharmonic, \$500
 National World War II Museum Inc., \$1,000
 Natural Resources Defense Council, \$5,000
 Nature Conservancy of Louisiana, \$101,892
 New Life United Pentecostal Church of Bogalusa, \$600
 New Orleans Airlift, \$25,000
 New Orleans Mission Inc., \$100
 New Orleans Musicians Assistance Foundation, \$25,000
 New Orleans Musuem of Art, \$20,000
 New Schools for Baton Rouge, \$82,500
 New Schools for New Orleans Inc., \$72,500
 North Carolina Baptist Men, \$4,000
 Northern Star Council - Boy Scouts of America, \$2,000
 Northshore Community Foundation, \$10,000
 O'Brien House Inc., \$6,250
 Ochsner Health System, \$2,500
 Odyssey House Louisiana, \$1,000
 Of Moving Colors Productions, \$450
 Old State Capitol Foundation Inc., \$100
 Ollie Steele Burden Manor Inc., \$351
 Opelousas Senior High School, \$500
 Opera Louisiane Inc., \$200
 Our House Inc., \$15,000
 Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, \$21,894
 Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church \$35,674
 Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital \$26,300
 Our Lady of the Lake College, \$1,000
 Our Lady of the Lake Foundation, \$15,500
 Particular Council of St. Vincent de Paul of Baton Rouge Louisiana, \$2,600
 Pat's Coats for Kids, \$500
 Peggy Crosby Community Service Center, \$300
 Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation, \$55,850
 Piedmont Orthopedic Foundation, \$1,000
 Planned Parenthood of the Gulf Coast, \$1,000
 Pointe Coupee Early Childhood Coalition Inc., \$54,000
 Pointe Coupee Historical Society Inc., \$100
 Pointe Coupee Parish Police Jury, \$250
 PolitiCraft Inc., \$2,500
 Port Allen Educational Broadcasting Foundation, \$100
 Port Barre Elementary School, \$500
 Powell Group Fund/Baton Rouge Subfund, \$8,839
 Prevailing Word Christian Center, \$4,100
 Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana Inc., \$1,000
 Pro Publica Inc., \$2,000
 Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana Inc., \$5,000
 Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge, \$105,000
 Red Shoes Inc., \$1,000
 Rock Springs Young at Heart Foundation, \$1,000

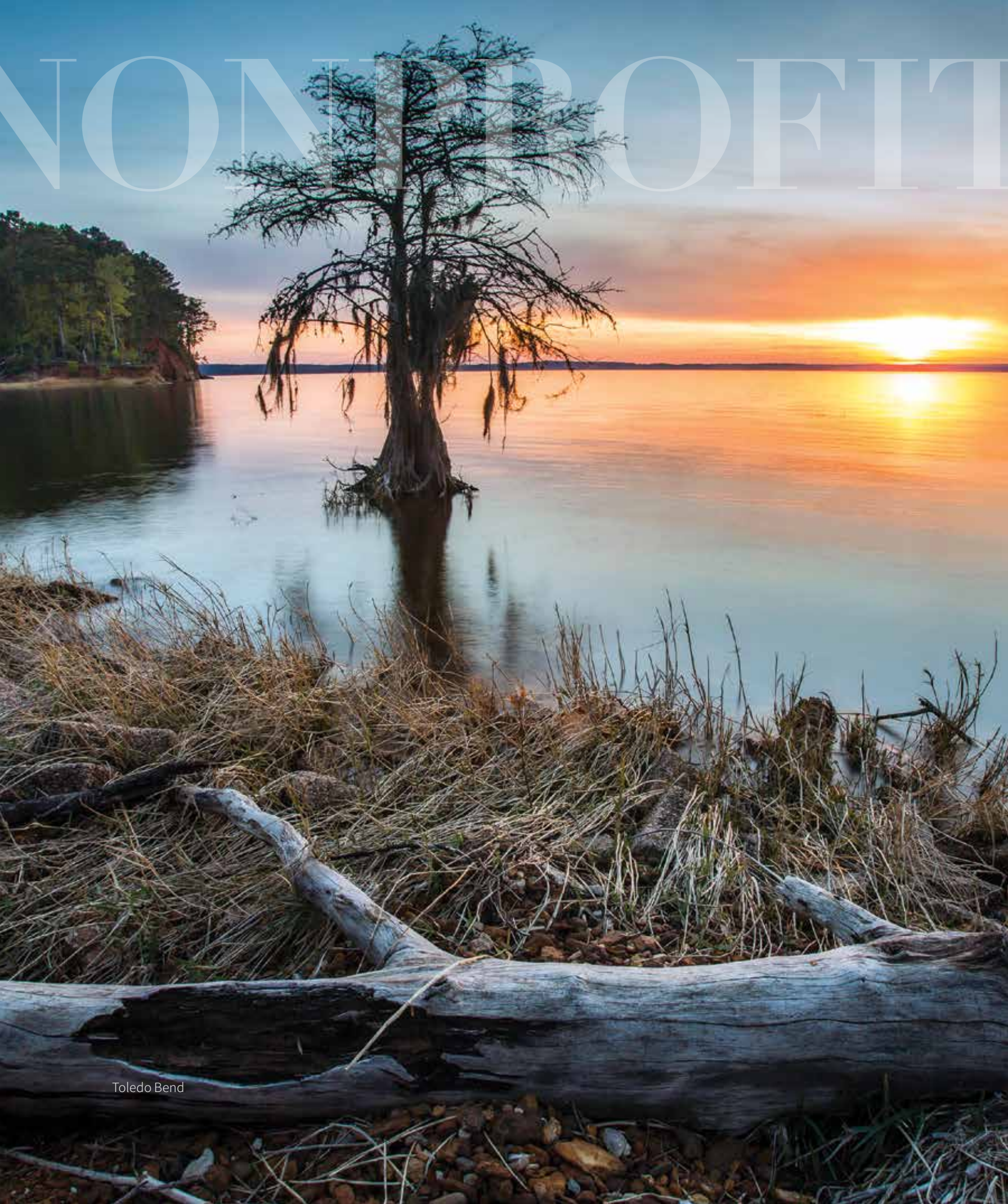
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, \$500
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge, \$111,032
 Roots of Music Inc., \$20,000
 Rotary Club of Baton Rouge Inc. Foundation, \$100
 Russell Domingue Ministries Inc., \$750
 Sacred Heart School, \$1,000
 Saint Jean Vianney Catholic Church, \$2,497
 Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee, \$500
 Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response Center, \$11,200
 Shriners Hospital for Children, \$5,000
 Sigma Chi Foundation, \$1,000
 Silence Is Violence, \$7,500
 Single Stop USA Inc., \$62,500
 Society of Saint John the Evangelist, \$500
 South Africa Development Fund Inc., \$10,000
 Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, \$137,500
 Southern University Law Center, \$50,000
 St. Aloysius Church, \$7,500
 St. Andrew's - Sewanee School, \$250
 St. Anne Catholic Church, \$1,853.87
 St. Augustine Church, \$889.13
 St. Bernard Project Inc., \$102,500
 St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School, \$2,000
 St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, \$3,000
 St. Francisville Area Foundation Inc., \$100
 St. George Catholic Church, \$12,000
 St. George Episcopal School, \$250
 St. Gerard Majella Church, \$10,500
 St. James Episcopal Church, \$19,000
 St. James Episcopal Day School, \$6,000
 St. James Place of Baton Rouge Foundation Inc., \$250
 St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church, \$4,000
 St. Joseph Cathedral, \$3,200
 St. Joseph Seminary College, \$500
 St. Joseph Spirituality Center, \$500
 St. Joseph the Worker Church, \$5,746
 St. Joseph's Academy Foundation, \$7,700
 St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Inc., \$700
 St. Mary's Episcopal Church and Cemetery Association Inc., \$200
 St. Paul Adult Learning Center, \$3,000
 St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church, \$1,000
 St. Paul's Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, \$14,584
 St. Thomas Aquinas Regional Catholic High School, \$13,700
 Stacy's Stone Ground Meals, \$2,500
 Stuart Hall School for Boys, \$2,000
 Stuart Hall School Foundation, \$100
 Swine Palace Productions Inc., \$3,000
 T.H. Watkins Elementary School, \$500
 Teach for America - South Louisiana, \$80,000
 Teacher Prep Inspection - US, \$145,000
 The Administrators of the Tulane Educational Fund, \$19,600
 The Ascension Fund Inc., \$11,602
 The Baddour Center Inc., \$1,000

HOW WE ISSUE GRANTS

Philanthropists establish charitable funds at the Foundation and deposit money in those accounts. The Foundation manages the money in these donor-advised funds. Donors recommend grants to nonprofits; the Foundation board reviews and approves the grants. Our staff manages all the paperwork, including issuing checks and sending acknowledgement letters. Contributions to donor advised funds are tax-deductible.

The Bascom Corporation, \$5,000
 The Bridge Center for Hope, \$145,000
 The Cahoon Museum of American Art Inc., \$1,000
 The Christian Outreach Center of Baton Rouge, Inc., \$1,232
 The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, \$500
 The Cotuit Library, \$1,000
 The Friends of the Rural Life Museum Inc., \$4,725
 The Louisiana Architectural Foundation, \$1,000
 The Original Richland Library Restoration Society Inc., \$803
 The Salvation Army, \$24,629
 The State of Louisiana, \$24,710
 The Summit Foundation, \$4,000
 THRIVE Baton Rouge, \$19,500
 Tiger Athletic Foundation, \$10,000
 Trinity Episcopal Church, \$6,000
 Trinity Episcopal School Endowment Trust II, \$500
 Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York, \$70,000
 Tulane Alumni Association, \$1,079
 Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge, \$700
 University of New Mexico Foundation Inc., \$200
 University of New Orleans Foundation, \$500
 University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, \$1,000
 University of Richmond, \$250
 University of South Alabama, \$145,246
 University of Texas Foundation, \$1,000
 University of the South, \$15,000
 University Presbyterian Church, \$22,250
 University School, \$1,000
 Urban League of Greater New Orleans Inc., \$85,000
 Ursuline Nuns Parish of New Orleans, \$25,000
 Vanderbilt Catholic High School, \$3,000
 Video Veracity, \$20,000
 Vision 21 Foundation, \$2,000
 Volunteers In Public Schools Inc., \$2,150
 Volunteers of America Inc., \$25,000
 Water Institute of the Gulfs Delta, \$200,000
 West Baton Rouge Foundation for Academic Excellence, \$5,986
 Women Donors Network, \$69,400
 Women Make Movies, \$5,000
 Wounded Warrior Project Inc., \$425
 WRKF Public Radio Inc., \$11,521
 Young Life New Orleans, \$20,000
 Youth Empowerment Project, \$72,500

NON-PROFIT



Toledo Bend



S

Water rules

*Developed in Louisiana,
Nature Conservancy
software is preserving life's
precious resource*

By Sara Bongiorno | Photo by Tim Mueller

Predictive-modeling tools developed with Baton Rouge Area Foundation support are helping The Nature Conservancy protect freshwater and coastal resources in Louisiana and Mississippi, across the nation, and around the world.

The Foundation granted nearly \$3.8 million to the Nature Conservancy from 2012 to 2014. The state chapter of the nonprofit used the grants to conduct the first thorough survey of Louisiana water resources, then created digital tools to let researchers model how decisions would impact freshwater here.

The grants from the Foundation's Future of the Gulf Fund, seeded by BP after the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill, resulted in faster, more flexible technology that is now being used across the globe to reduce hazards to waterways critical to the environmental and economic well-being of local communities.

The tools are giving stakeholders from Louisiana rice farmers to Wisconsin wetlands-protection groups and Central American reef experts better insights into the impact of proposed water uses.

Interest in improving The Nature Conservancy's early version of the mapping technology was spearheaded by the organization's Louisiana chapter in Baton Rouge, which recognized its potential in protecting water resources in the state and elsewhere. In effect, the Louisiana office understood the technology's potential and sought to make it better with the Foundation's help.

The state chapter's chief focus was protecting a state treasure: oyster habitat in Sabine Lake and other marshy waterways. Its push for a better tool to do that helped to create technology flexible enough to help protect chemical plants on the Texas coast from storm surge and improve the health of shellfish in the Chesapeake Bay.

"The BRAF funding was foundational to developing a software platform that makes all of that possible," said Bryan Piazza, director of freshwater and marine science for The Nature Conservancy's Louisiana operations.

The technology represents a true breakthrough, and it is garnering international accolades. The United Nations Office of Disaster Risk Reduction in 2014 recognized a spin-off application as a "life-saving" tool that reduces "the impact of extreme weather events on cities and coastal communities."

The underlying mapping technology can be quickly expanded to new geographies as a result of improvements funded by the Foundation grants.

"You don't need to rebuild the technology from scratch in order to expand it to more places," said Seth Blitch, director of coastal and marine operations for The Nature Conservancy in Louisiana. "Additional funding allowed us to really innovate and extend the reach of this technology."

Water-use decisions often are made without a full understanding of how proposed projects would affect other waterways. The idea of water management akin to land-use planning is still a fledgling concept.

But The Nature Conservancy's mapping tools provide a means to make better water-use decisions now. The technology takes into account continuously updated information on surface water flows, groundwater levels, existing water uses and other factors from government agencies and other data sources.

In Louisiana, the technology considers factors from rules on oyster-reef construction to water flow in the Sabine River and other waterways to identify the health of shellfish beds and determine which coastal initiatives hold the best promise of success.

It is fitting that such water-planning technology should develop in Louisiana. The state's 125,000 miles of rivers, bayous and streams are vital to its culture and economy. Commercial fishing accounts for 1 in 70 jobs in the state and contributes \$2.5 billion to its economy. Louisiana's massive petrochemical industry, transportation infrastructure and tourism industry likewise depend on an abundant water supply.

But such so-called "water wealth" can't be taken for granted, as diminishing aquifers and the continuing loss of coastal marshes illustrate.

The Nature Conservancy's mapping tools—all free and available to the public—are at work in two broad areas of concern for the organization: coastal resilience and freshwater assessment.

Its Coastal Resilience Tool is being deployed around the world to help communities understand and reduce hazards to coastal resources, including rising seas.

The focus of its Freshwater Assessment Tool is inland watersheds, including their connections to coastal waterways. It is used in seven states so far.

Both tools are being used to create additional "apps" that home in on specific areas of focus.

For instance, an Ecosystem Effects of Sea Level Change app allows users to project the effect of changing sea levels on specific ecosystems. The Coastal Defense "app" recognized by the United Nations, by comparison, quantifies how natural habitats can help to protect eroding coastal areas through an improved understanding of wave energy.

Fittingly, another recent app circles back to the early focus on oyster-reef protection. The OysterFlows app, tied to the Freshwater Assessment Tool, enables users to visualize the impact of "upstream" decisions on the coastal shellfish.

The focus on the beloved shellfish makes sense. Oysters are important to the seafood industry, but they also play a vital role in coastal protection. Oyster reefs in coastal waters create wave breaks that buffer coastal wetlands and protect them from erosion. The reefs also provide essential habitat for other marine animals, including shrimp and crabs.

But reefs only thrive in water that is the right balance of fresh and salt. Upstream decisions that reduce the amount of freshwater flowing into coastal marshes, such as a city's water use, can increase salinity, creating healthy conditions for organisms that are harmful to oysters. Too much freshwater is likewise harmful to oysters.

OysterFlows takes into account a massive amount of information about water flow—all the estimates of daily water flow in every canal, river and bayou in both Louisiana and Mississippi—in generating projections about how proposed water projects will affect water in the coastal waters that are prime oyster habitat.

As with The Nature Conservancy's other mapping tools, OysterFlows doesn't tell decision-makers what steps to take, only the expected impact of various water-use decisions.

"This is about creating the tools to make the best possible decisions about water resources," Piazza said. •



**MEMBERS OF THE BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION
SUPPORT PROJECTS THAT MAKE LIVES A LITTLE BETTER EACH DAY.**

BE ONE WITH THEM AT BRAF.ORG/MEMBERSHIP.

*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

Need to know

Data project set to match Baton Rouge health care resources with needs

By David Jacobs

Organizing a Health District along the Bluebonnet Boulevard and Essen Lane corridor was a key piece of the FuturEBR comprehensive plan unanimously approved by the East Baton Rouge Metro Council in 2011. While the concept wasn't controversial at the time, it became a sore subject for some residents who feared it would draw attention away from medical needs outside the district's borders, particularly in north Baton Rouge.

But organizers say collaboration among health care providers will benefit the region, not just the district. And in recent months, they've launched a data-gathering project that they say will help identify the entire community's health care deficiencies, in hopes of focusing investment and public dollars in the right directions.

"Right after the flood, we knew there were a lot of people focused on housing and infrastructure concerns," says Suzy Sonnier, executive director of the Baton Rouge Health District. "As a health district, we wanted to look at what would the health care needs be?"

In September, not long after record-setting rain and flooding devastated much of the greater Baton Rouge area, Sonnier and other local health care stakeholders visited Washington, D.C., where they met with Dr. Karen DeSalvo. DeSalvo, who was named acting U.S. assistant secretary of health in

August, is best known to locals for her recovery work in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, and health district representatives were interested in best practices and lessons learned from that experience.

"As we talked to Dr. DeSalvo, one of the things that was evident was the need to ensure and focus on community-based primary and preventive care, as well as behavioral health," Sonnier recalls.

Health district members had two main goals for their trip to the nation's capital, says Edgardo Tenreiro, acting CEO of the Baton Rouge General: telling federal decision-makers the story of the flood's devastating effect on the region, and asking for money. But to have a chance at federal funding, they discovered, they needed to present a detailed, data-driven assessment of local needs.

"What we heard from everybody who we were asking was, 'Show me the data,'" Tenreiro says.

In their meeting with DeSalvo, they learned about a database created by the national Blue Cross Blue Shield Association that includes health care-related and demographic information "down to the block level," he says, which is far more granular than the ZIP code level information that stakeholders usually work with.

DeSalvo helped set up a meeting with the association, so district members could see a demonstration of how the program works and how it might be useful to health care providers, insurers and policymakers.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation aligned with health care leaders to create the Baton Rouge Health District, which was called for in the parish's long-term comprehensive growth plan. The Health District, a stand-alone nonprofit, is collaborating on a data project to understand health care demand and appropriate solutions.

ers. The software allows for discovery and easy display of such data, which can be combined with additional information from providers and payers like Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana.

After returning from Washington, D.C., Sonnier got on the phone with the Blue Cross Blue Shield Institute, which she says is the entity created to manage the association's data project and help communities and organizations study the social determinants of health and identify solutions. They walked her through a web-based demonstration of the tools. Some of the institute's team of analysts, economists and experts, who help analyze the data and come up with recommendations, visited Baton Rouge and met with community and health care stakeholders, Sonnier says.

"When we design health policy and health strategy," Tenreiro says, "we come with this assumption that people are unhealthy because of lack of access to health care." But he says research shows that other factors—income level, education, access to insurance, race, age—can be more important than, for example, how close you live to a hospital.

For example, everyone knows diabetes and obesity are major causes of sickness—and major drivers of health care costs—throughout the region. It could be that living in a "food desert," where healthy foods are hard to find, is strongly correlated with diabetes, but we don't yet have the data to say for sure.

"It helps us prove or disprove a particular hypothesis about what we need to do in order to affect people's behavior," Tenreiro says.

The General hopes to collaborate with local Federally Qualified Health Centers that provide health services in north Baton Rouge, and he expects the new data to help determine the area's needs.

Tenreiro says the Health District was never meant to only benefit providers in the Bluebonnet/Essen area, noting the General still has its campus in Mid City.

"We hope that data will be used to guide the activities of the Health District as it relates to other areas of town that are in need of providers," he says.

Coletta Barrett is vice president of mission with Our Lady of the Lake, a Health District member, and chairwoman of the

Mayor's Healthy City Initiative. She describes the data project as a marriage of public information collected by the city-parish to the Blue Cross Institute's analytical muscle, with the goal of figuring out what sorts of health care investments need to be made, and where.

"If we believe that there is inequitable distribution of access points for health care across our community, let's not build the same thing across the entire community," she says. "Let's build to what the need is."

"We hope that data will be used to guide the activities of the Health District as it relates to other areas of town that are in need of providers."

—Edgardo Tenreiro, acting CEO of the Baton Rouge General

Together Baton Rouge is working on a proposal for what is known in state law as a "hospital services district." Despite the name, the focus is not a new hospital; it would be focused on providing primary and preventive care in underserved north Baton Rouge through collaboration among the Federally Qualified Health Centers.

The "fantastic data set" provided by the Blue Cross association will inform that proposal, says TBR's Broderick Bagert, in terms of how many clinics are needed and which specialties need to be offered in which areas. He says the new analysis will be used to identify specific gaps and lead to a process "where we're using analysis and studies to solve problems, not just highlight them."

While the district Together Baton Rouge wants to create is a distinct entity from the Baton Rouge Health District, the latter does not detract from the former, Bagert says.

"Whether what the Baton Rouge Health District is doing will totally answer the things we need answered for our [project], we don't know," he says. "But it will certainly help."

Sonnier says the process of navigating the system and adding in local data has just begun. Types of information available will include general household demographics, like income, education, employment and insurance types; health factors, like the prevalence of high blood pressure or diabetes; nutritional information, based on purchasing patterns and the number of fast food restaurants and grocery stores in an area; and levels of physical activity and the locations of parks and walking trails.

As the information is analyzed, new recommendations and best practices for the Health District, other providers, and state and local policymakers could emerge. Sonnier says the analysis will include "greater Baton Rouge," and will not be limited by district, city or parish boundaries. •



arts council
GREATER BATON ROUGE

EBB & FLOW FESTIVAL

APRIL 1 & 2, 2017
BATON ROUGE RIVER FRONT

The Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge, along with a growing number of artists, creatives, engineers, and architects are creating a new festival for Baton Rouge. The Ebb and Flow Festival, to take place April 1 and 2, 2017, is one that will invite innovation, intrigue, and inspiration to visitors through unique artistic offerings, makerspaces, and culinary delights.

In true Louisiana fashion, the festival will include a flavorful music lineup, representing local,

national, and international talent. Look for two days of performances on multiple stages: the Headliner Stage at Repentance Park, the Cox International Music Stage at Riverfront Plaza, and a Buskers Stage at the Baton Rouge Dock – also known as the Paperclips. The festival will also feature performances by flamenco dancers, singer songwriters, and slam poets, all set against the backdrop of the country's grandest waterway – the Mississippi River. Full lineup to be announced in March 2016.

With creative experiences ranging from yarn bombing and bubble art to creative makerspaces and an interactive sculpture garden, this festival on the Baton Rouge Riverfront is not to be missed. Temporary sculptural installations from Icelandic artist Steinun Thorarinsdottir will dot the walking path along the levee. Activities and stations for interactive play will offer opportunities for visitors of all ages to enjoy and learn more about the history of the Mississippi River. They include: "Kidd's Corner" at the USS Kidd, theatre performances at Louisiana's Old State Capitol, storytelling booths, a "human library," and an exhibition by the West Baton Rouge Museum highlighting the river's connection to Creole culture.

Why Here?

Studies have shown that exciting cultural identities transform a city economically and educationally and improve quality of life. Austin, Memphis, and Nashville are a few prominent examples among many. Baton Rouge, with the introduction of the Water Institute of the Gulf, the continued development of downtown, and the bustling river industry is ready to be the next exciting place to live, work, and play.

Historically, Baton Rouge has served as a conduit for other culturally rich locations throughout the state, but has

not claimed a clear cultural identity of its own. Enter: The River. This festival will showcase the city's meaningful location on the Mighty Mississippi River with an annual celebration of arts and culture tied to themes associated with the concept of Ebb and Flow.



Why Now?

Taking place on the first weekend of April, Ebb and Flow serves as an anchor event for Louisiana's festival season, with the Baton Rouge Blues Festival, Festival International, and New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, among others, to follow. With Baton Rouge celebrating the bicentennial of its incorporation in 2017, there is no better time to brand the Capital City as a cultural hub.

Arts Council President and CEO Renee Chatelain sees the 2017 Ebb and Flow Festival as the first chapter in an exciting story that connects the river's past with the creative future of Baton Rouge. "With additional

financial investment from individuals and businesses, we plan to grow the festival in the next 3-5 years to include the addition of offerings onto barges that will serve as exhibition spaces, and expanding the footprint to include the completed Water Campus as a focal point," said Chatelain. "Also included will be an internationally-juried design festival, with the winners exhibiting on the barges."

Chatelain credits the idea of a river festival for Baton Rouge to conversations she had with many stakeholders about the need to create an appealing cultural brand for the Capital City, especially those ideas spawned in conversations with Alkis Tsolakis, the Dean of the LSU College of Art and Design.

The joyful, generosity of spirit and willingness of so many to share their talents and creative ideas reflects the essence of all that is great about living in Baton Rouge.

Ebb and Flow Festival – April 1 and 2 at the Mississippi Riverfront in Downtown Baton Rouge.

More information at artsbr.org

COVER



Roads to
somewhere

N

icholson Drive and Government Streets were roads to nowhere. Every day at 4:30 p.m., workers would clock out at their downtown offices, point their cars toward the suburbs and, eyes fixed straight ahead, shoot straight down the two main thoroughfares to motor home as quickly as they could.

In the past five years, that monotonous pattern has been altered. Now there are things to see and do on Government Street and Nicholson Drive, thanks to developers and architects and leaders—young and young at heart—willing to bet on business ventures along the two main corridors.

“It’s just the beginning,” Josh Hoffpauir says of the reclamation of Government Street. This summer, he’ll open a new complex that includes apartments, restaurants, offices and retail space on an entire block of Government near Foster Drive.

Projects started last year, along with others beginning in 2017, will inject hundreds of millions of dollars, mostly from the private sector, along Government and Nicholson.

Reclaiming the two roads is important for many reasons. Decades of capital flight will be reversed. New developments will prove to other developers that there’s money to be made in the city. The projects should improve the property values of homes in the area and draw more people to live there, creating communities where, before, there was mostly blight.

New developments will also generate new tax dollars for the parish government while providing an added benefit to taxpayers: The construction is happening in areas where we’ve already paid for infrastructure, unlike building in greenfields outside the city, which requires expensive new roads, water lines, sewers.

How did these areas end up so neglected in the first place? The answer can be traced back to the town of Euclid, Ohio. In the 1920s, residents of the Ohio hamlet saw the polluting factories of Cleveland creeping outward toward them. Hoping to keep their town as it was, Euclid built a legal fence at its edges. It passed rules to stop a realty company from converting 68 acres in the town into a new factory.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the constitution permitted Euclid’s restrictions, now known as zoning codes. Leaders in cities across America passed their own restrictions. But what began as a good idea ended in unforeseen results.

Zoning regulations isolated uses. Keeping factories together in one place was fine, but soon retailers and service businesses were separated from the neighborhoods that needed them. This, coupled with the rise of the automobile, led to the disintegra-

*Nicholson,
Government
will turn into
destinations,
sparking
revitalization*



A state projects will reduce Government Street to three lanes – two lanes for driving, a center lane for turning – flanked by bike lanes, with medians along the way for safety. The “road diet” will reconfigure Government from I-110 to Independence Park, where a roundabout (above) will reduce wait times.

tion of communities. Americans could no longer walk to work or to the shops where they did business with their neighbors. Workplaces were cut off from living spaces, with only cars to connect them via interstate arteries, and soon cities decomposed into sprawl, starting at their core and spreading outward. Left behind were places like Government Street and the neighborhoods that surrounded it.

But cities have started a comeback. First, downtowns, like our own in Baton Rouge, were reclaimed. The renewed prosperity began to spread outward, beginning with people who were willing to invest in downtown dreams and the grand architecture that had been left to crumble.

Danny McGlynn—a lawyer, not a developer—was among the first to take a chance, turning a shuttered drugstore on Government into Circa 1857, which had space for retailers selling items for homes and gardens.

Hoffpauir says Government Street was set for the next phase of redevelopment because of its location next to the Capital Heights neighborhood. Probably more than any other community in Baton Rouge, the people who live there want to be able to walk and bike to shops and services. Similarly, Ogden Park, on the north side of Government near Baton Rouge Magnet High

School, is populated by folks who want to frequent restaurants and clubs close to home, evident from Radio Bar’s success as a neighborhood hangout.

Just like Government Street, Nicholson is well-positioned for revival. It runs between downtown and Louisiana State University, the two biggest employment destinations in the parish.

Here’s a look at all the new developments we know about on the two main roads, which are targeted as important corridors in FuturEBR, the parish’s comprehensive master plan for growth. As these roads transform, so will the neighborhoods that surround them.

GOVERNMENT STREET

Perhaps no other street offers more promise for redevelopment. Less expensive properties located near middle-income and wealthier neighborhoods are pulling entrepreneurs to take a chance.

Radio Bar is an example. It anchors Ogden Market, which got a makeover with assistance from the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority.

Before David Remmeter and Brian Baiamonte invested in



Weinstein Nelson Development will invest up to \$50 million on Electric Depot. Apartments, retail and an entertainment destination should pull more development into the area, which is on Government near downtown.

Radio Bar, they canvassed the surrounding neighborhood, searching for possible opposition in a parish where residents usually don't want bars and shops near houses. They found only one contrarian, a teetotaler who said he wouldn't sign their petition but wouldn't object either. The bar has become a gathering place for neighbors and a destination for the wider community.

Encouraged by their success, others have opened shops, restaurants and service businesses on Government within the last five years. The list includes Twine, Gouter, Simple Joe Café, Curbside Burgers, Anthony's Italian Deli. Set to open this year are French Truck Coffee, Elsie's Kitchen and Bar and a number of restaurants within Hoffpauir's mixed-use development near Foster Drive.

Remmeter, Baiamonte and another partner will build a second bar down the street. Mid City Beer Garden on the corner of Steele Boulevard should begin construction in spring. "We want a beer garden in our neighborhood," says Baiamonte, a Mid City resident.

"Government Street will be *the* place to be in five years," adds Hoffpauir.

Road Reworked

A state project will be the first of its kind in Baton Rouge, and some of the existing business owners on Government say the announcement is one reason there has been more interest in opening businesses along the street.

Before turning the road over to the city-parish government, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development will convert it from four lanes to three lanes that are flanked by bike paths. The three-lane road will have two travel lanes with a center turn lane. The \$12 million state investment will include planted medians.

Converting to three lanes is not expected to reduce travel times much, while reducing accidents that are sometimes caused by drivers whipsawing to outside lanes when they see a car ahead of them stop to make a turn.

More important, developers who are building on the road say it will bring more people to spend money, while shifting some of the through traffic to other roads on the grid.

"At this time, we expect to put the project out to bid in summer 2017, with construction time estimated at one or two years," says Anna Hanks, DOTD project manager.



When Square 46 is completed this summer, it will have retail, apartments and the White Star Market, a number of small restaurants in the configuration of a food market. Square 46 is on Government near Foster Drive.

Electric Depot

When an improbable idea succeeds, the world rushes to it. There's a good chance that will happen at the former Entergy buildings on Government Street. Rebranded Electric Depot, the red brick buildings with the patina and texture of industry will become an entertainment destination with apartments and a health food store.

Architect/developer Dyke Nelson and his partners have leased the largest of the buildings to a group that will unveil their plans soon. He can only reveal that the biggest structure will include vintage bowling lanes, a music venue, a restaurant and a cocktail bar.

Nelson, of Weinstein Nelson Development, will convert the building next door into a first-floor retail space with 16 one-bedroom apartments on the second floor. A third building that fronts Government is being leased for a health food store. Construction begins by March and the first phase is to be completed in 2018. A second phase will include 120 apartments and retail behind the existing buildings.

Nelson says 20% of the apartments will be for low- to moderate-income households. The property will have electric car charging stations, a bike repair area and a cutout for CATS buses

so traffic flow won't be impeded.

Nelson knows the area. His office is in a converted warehouse next door, and his firm has bought additional properties nearby for redevelopment.

Weinstein Nelson won the right to redevelop the buildings from the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, which received the buildings in a donation from Entergy Corp. (More to come about the project in the next issue of *Currents*.)

Square 46

Hoffpauir saw what is possible on Government Street in his last year at LSU's School of Architecture. He learned that the residents of Capital Heights preferred walking to driving. So he sketched a mixed-use development to meet that demand. In the past few months, Hoffpauir has gone from paper to construction on a block of Government near South Foster Drive. He's building where Giamanco's Restaurant once served Italian food.

Branded as Square 46, the building will have eight apartments, retail and offices within 32,000 square feet of space. About 6,000 of the 10,000 square feet of retail has been leased for White Star Market, a collection of food stalls reminiscent of a European-style market.



LSU's Gateway project will bring nearly 1,500 students to live on Nicholson Drive. Hundreds of other apartments have opened on or near Nicholson at the North Gates of LSU in the last three years, creating a potential demand for retail.

apartments on Nicholson and nearby became popular with students because they hugged the edge of campus, making them a quick walk or bike ride to classes. Another phase of development is underway, and the promise is that the new projects will turn Nicholson into one of the most active corridors in the parish.

“The majority of retail space is leased,” says Hoffpauir. “We are being very selective on what’s remaining to make sure we have synergy there.”

Square 46 is set to open this summer. And like others who are succeeding on Government, “we are looking at a few other pieces of property right now in the area,” he says.

NICHOLSON DRIVE

Nicholson Drive is in the right place. On one end is downtown, the other LSU. The two destinations are the largest employment centers in East Baton Rouge Parish.

Though Nicholson was an enticing draw, developers built apartments and condominiums to the south of LSU. Open land near established and stable neighborhoods was one reason. Safer areas was another.

It took out-of-town developers to prove the market north of the campus. New apartments and shops on Highland Road near the North Gates filled up. Then condos and hundreds of new

LSU's Nicholson Gateway Project

LSU acknowledges that it has overlooked the potential of Nicholson Drive. No longer.

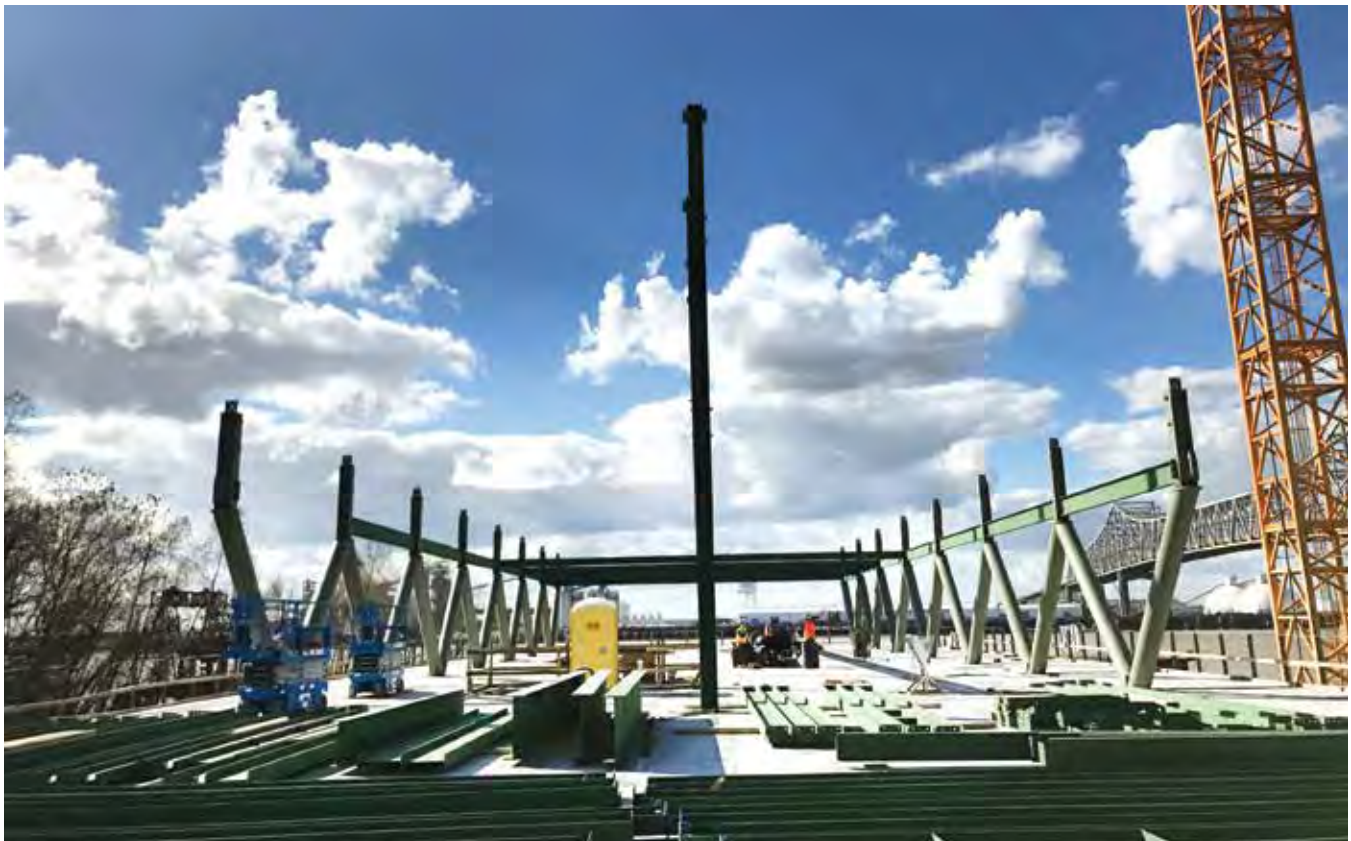
Through an affiliated foundation, the university is putting up a \$235 million development that will spin off profits of \$218 million over 40 years to improve LSU.

To make way for the gateway project, LSU razed outdated student housing on about 28 acres of Nicholson, from East Chimes Street to the former location of the baseball stadium. Replacing the barely used student housing is a denser development that will have retailers as well. Nearly 1,500 beds will be ready for occupancy in 2018, and 38,000 square feet of retail across from Tiger Stadium will serve LSU and nearby neighborhoods.

As for the retail, “there is big demand, but we have not yet



Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Commercial Properties Realty Trust are building a headquarter for The Water Institute of the Gulf on the site of the abandoned city dock. The Water Institute will occupy the first two stories. The third floor will feature conference rooms designed to foster collaboration.





LSU's Center for River Studies and the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority are the first two tenants of The Water Campus, which will be 1.2 million square feet when completed in coming years.

asked for signed commitments,” says Sara Whittaker, senior director of communications and marketing for the LSU Foundation. “We are exploring the viability of a store that will provide groceries and meet other student needs, which is the focus of all of the retail. We do anticipate a restaurant of some sort and several fast-casual food options, such as an ice cream or yogurt shop and a coffee shop.”

The Water Campus

Near downtown, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Commercial Properties is constructing the 1.2 million-square-foot Water Campus. Several thousand scientists and engineers, and staff to support them, will work on the campus when it's completed over a number of years.

Louisiana's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority relocated to the campus late last year. LSU Center for River Studies is completing its physical river model this year (see related story). An iconic building for The Water Institute of the Gulf is under construction on the abandoned city dock. CPRT expects to start building a parking garage and another office building this year and to start leveling existing buildings to build more infrastructure in 2017.

“It’s just the beginning.”

—Josh Hoffpauir, on Government Street, where he’s developing Square 46

The Water Campus is a place for scientists who are offering solutions to the problem of rising seas and vanishing wetlands. The campus is bringing Baton Rouge back to the riverfront, where the city began.

River House

Opening in phases in coming months, the River House will add 34,000 square feet of office and retail space and 224 residential units on Nicholson and Oklahoma Street, right next to the Water Campus. The residential buildings will be ready in spring and the retail in the summer, says Ty Gose of NAI/Latter & Blum. He's leasing the commercial real estate. “We are hoping for a couple of smaller restaurants that fill some of the gaps in the corridor, and some service-oriented retailers, probably a cell phone store,” says Gose.



River House



River South

River District

This project is the wildcard. Lafayette businessman Mike Moreno assembled 40 acres of land on Nicholson about half-way between LSU and downtown. He demolished houses on the property to prepare for 1,800 apartments and condos, a 220-room hotel, and 100,000 square feet for offices and retail, including a 40,000-square-foot neighborhood grocery store. Financial complications have put that plan in limbo.

River South

The River South apartments will be 18 units with two or three bedrooms each on the corner of Glacier and Oklahoma, across from the Water Campus. The East Baton Rouge Housing Authority is partnering on the project. Construction should begin this year. The authority is also building another 28 housing units in adjacent neighborhoods. •



WE TAKE RALEIGH'S ROOTS PERSONALLY

Nestled among the schools and home sites at 5401 North in Raleigh, NC is The Purple Martin Community Farm, a Wilbur Marvin Foundation/LSU AG partnership. The farm's mission is to create a plan to replicate in other communities of similar size and scope to show that even in a small urban area, enough produce can be harvested to support an entire community. Greenhouses will have webcams for distance learning and the farm programming will encourage a passion for eating well, living healthy and nurturing friendships with great food.



PURPLE MARTIN
— COMMUNITY FARM AT 5401 NORTH —

To learn more about 5401 North and The Purple Martin Community Farm, visit 5401North.com.

RALEIGH
5401 NORTH
NORTH CAROLINA

Stand on the catwalk in the soon-to-open LSU Center for River Studies and peer down at the Mississippi River.

It's not the actual river—the muddy one flowing a few blocks away through downtown Baton Rouge—but a massive three-dimensional rendering complete with real water and sediment.

Chiseled out of high density foam, this 90-by-120-foot moving bed physical model is intended to advance the understanding of Louisiana's unique relationship to the Mississippi and the coastal zone along its path.

The LSU Center for River Studies is a \$17.9 million interpretative center developed by the university and the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and funded by the Coastal Impact Assistance Program, a federal program through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that funds projects from federal offshore lease revenues to oil-producing states.

The 45,000-square-foot space is the education and outreach component of the nearby Water Campus complex. It features educational exhibits and kiosks that explain coastal land loss, a theater, classrooms and meeting space. Designed by the Coastal Sustainability Studio at LSU, the displays lead visitors to a large, square-shaped overlook where they take in the Center's cornerstone exhibit, the moving bed physical model.

Clint Willson, Mike N. Dooley Professor of Engineering at LSU and director of the LSU Center for River Studies, says physical models are a key component to major engineering projects like Louisiana's effort to arrest coastal land loss. They round out numerical or computer modeling and field data and analysis. And in terms of public education, physical models are unmatched in their ability to break down a complex problem.

"There is a huge benefit to physical modeling," Willson says. "It's not just a PowerPoint or a graph. In this case, you're actually watching the model do the same thing that the real river does."

The model depicts a 14,000-square-mile portion of the river system between Donaldsonville and the Gulf of Mexico. It is comprised of 216 high-density foam panels sturdy enough to support a human and to host, in total, a relief map of the river and its immediate surroundings.

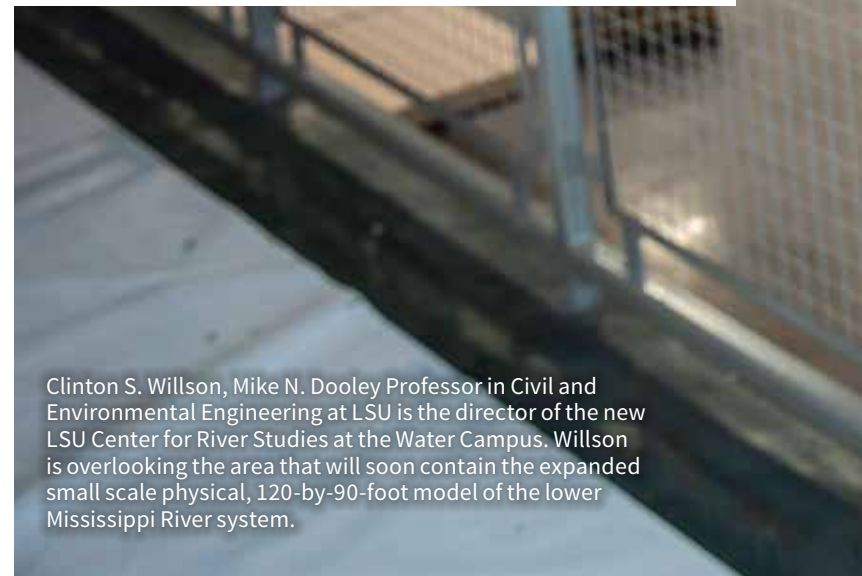
Overhead GIS data was fed into a computer numerical controlled (CNC) router that carved each panel into a specific portion of riverbed and levee system. Assembled like a large puzzle, the panels create a total picture of this swath of the



Super model

A high-tech physical model of the Mississippi River brings coastal protection to life

By Maggie Heyn Richardson | Photo by Tim Mueller



Clinton S. Willson, Mike N. Dooley Professor in Civil and Environmental Engineering at LSU is the director of the new LSU Center for River Studies at the Water Campus. Willson is overlooking the area that will soon contain the expanded small scale physical, 120-by-90-foot model of the lower Mississippi River system.

COVER



Mississippi. Water and sediment are pumped into the model continuously to resemble the actual flow rates that occur throughout a given year.

It takes the model between one and three hours to demonstrate what happens in reality over a 12-month period. “This gives us a chance to demonstrate that the water isn’t flowing at the same rate all year,” says Willson, “and in fact, that our best chance of harnessing its energy and capturing sediment is in the spring.”

While the water in the real river is notoriously opaque due to its muddy water column, the water in the model is clear enough to show visitors that essential factor in rebuilding land: the movement of sediment downriver.

Currently, the state is focused on achieving this in two targeted areas: Barataria Bay to the west of the river’s mouth and Breton Sound to the east.

Louisiana’s coastal land loss is well-documented, but it’s distilled to a phrase so oft-repeated it sounds like a childhood recitation: *The state is losing land at the rate of a football field a minute.*

The intention of the project, says Willson, is to go beyond this one-note understanding and take a deeper dive about what’s being done to save it. The center won’t function like a traditional museum, but will offer pre-planned experiences adjusted according to each audience, says CPRA Engineer Manager Rudy Simoneaux.

Simoneaux has been working with Willson for several years on creating the model and establishing a facility to house it. It’s actually LSU’s second model of the Mississippi River. The first, also managed by Willson, was kept on campus and was significantly smaller. Willson’s students were charged with filling it with the proper amount of water and sediment to demonstrate flow rates during certain times of year. It served its purpose, but its size and location limited its public exposure, says Simoneaux, himself a student of Willson’s in the early 2000s. Willson and Simoneaux believe the scope of the center and its public appeal will create unique opportunities for outreach, advocacy and education.

“One of the things that make coastal engineering so difficult for people to understand is that they can’t see it in action like they can a bridge or a building,” says Simoneaux. “This is a great way to get people up close to what we do and for us to ensure we attract future coastal engineers.”

The target audience for the center and model includes middle and high school STEM classes, lawmakers, visitors to the Water Institute for the Gulf, and researchers and graduate students from LSU and other universities. Numerous classrooms and conference rooms give guests a chance to discuss ideas, evaluate ongoing projects and mull research topics.

Visits to the center can be tailored to zero in on one of the multitude of issues surrounding Louisiana’s coastline and the state’s relationship to the river, says Simoneaux. A high-tech projection system mounted overhead will allow scientists to showcase key points along the river, including cities, levees, hurricane protection controls

and the navigation systems. It will also allow them to project PowerPoint presentations onto the floor on topics like hurricane return frequency, flood controls, and land loss history and projections.

Willson has begun discussions with local secondary educators about enhancing STEM classroom learning with the model. It will also be a hub for LSU coastal engineering undergraduate and graduate students, who can conduct research and run experiments in a controlled environment.

Moreover, Willson says the center could attract interdisciplinary projects concerning the coastal zone in fields like oral history, sociology and others.

Willson says one of the most important aspects of the floor model is its ability to reveal the complexities at play in coastal restoration, not least of which is economic impact to the rest of the nation.

“The world needs the Mississippi River to be flowing through the state of Louisiana at all times,” he says. “This model shows the impact of each action we take.” •

—Clint Willson

“The world needs the Mississippi River to be flowing through the state of Louisiana at all times. This model shows the impact of each action we take.”

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The Baton Rouge Area Foundation had its most productive year yet, thanks to backing from our members. We completed a master plan for the Baton Rouge Lakes and another for a Health District in the city. The Water Campus is taking shape.

So is the Ardendale development. We made a persuasive case for building a mental health treatment center and began a blueprint for better services for people with autism.

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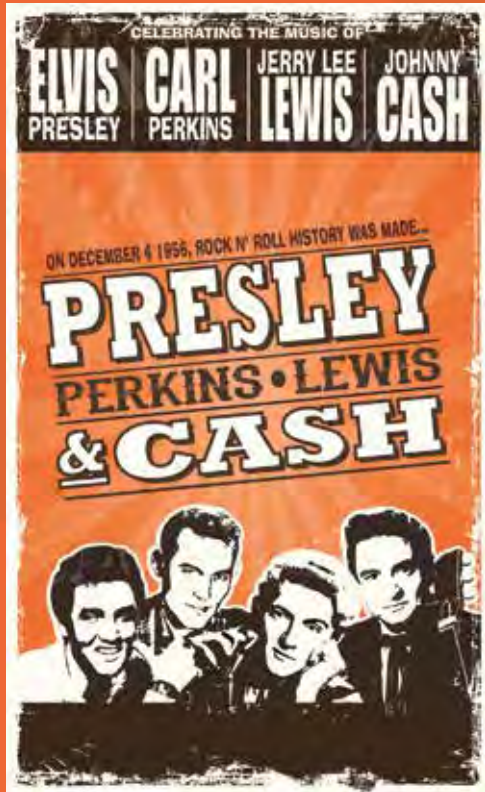
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Crystal Wilkinson

*The 2016 Ernest J. Gaines Award
for Literary Excellence winner*



For ten years, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation has awarded the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence. Named after Mr. Gaines, who is among the greatest writers of his generation, the award supports African American authors who write fiction. Each winner is chosen by an independent panel of judges; the winner receives a \$10,000 cash prize.

All the winners have continued their work, writing novels and short stories and teaching the next generation of writers. This year's winner is Crystal Wilkinson. Her winning book is *The Birds of Opulence*. Wilkinson's other works include *Blackberries*, *Blackberries*, winner of the Chaffin Award for Appalachian Literature, and *Water Street*, a finalist for both the UK's Orange Prize for Fiction and the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award.

Currents contributing writer Greg Langley talked with Wilkinson about writing and her winning novel.

CURRENTS: I UNDERSTAND THE FIELD METAPHOR, YOU ARE GATHERING A CROP IN THE FIELD, SO TO SPEAK. LUCY HAD HER BABY IN THE SQUASH PATCH. IS THAT SOMETHING THAT YOU DREW FROM AN ACTUAL EVENT? DID SOMEONE YOU KNEW HAVE A BABY IN A FIELD?

No, not at all. It's pure fiction as far as that particular incident is concerned. I wanted to get out there how I believe that, for women, African-American women in particular, this sort of going back to the land is healing for us. I guess there is a grain of truth to it, and for me that grain of truth would be how much I miss

it—living in a rural area and how much I had to gain and how much other women can gain by being part of the natural world.

THERE ARE ONLY TWO PROMINENT MALE CHARACTERS, JOE, AND KIKI THE SON. IS THAT INTENTIONAL?

It was always intended to be a woman's book, and when I was writing it, Joe being the outsider. Joe as a character just presented himself forward. I think with each revision, and I spent a lot of time over the years revising this book, Joe just kept presenting himself more and more as a character. Each layer had a bit more of Joe in it.

I WOULD SAY THIS STORY IS CHARACTER DRIVEN. DO YOU JUST FOLLOW WHERE YOU LET THE CHARACTER TAKE YOU?

I do in this particular story. I have other novels that are in various stages; they are more linear and more plot-driven. But this particular book, because it was about memory, lent itself more to being character driven.

AT LEAST ONE OF THE COMPLICATIONS THAT YOUR CHARACTERS DEAL WITH IS THE PROBLEM OF PREGNANCY OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE. AT LEAST THREE OF THEM GET PREGNANT OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE. ONE OF THEM, TOOKIE, GETS PREGNANT OUTSIDE MARRIAGE AND THEN GETS BEATEN BY HER MOTHER, MINNIE.

WHERE DID YOU DRAW THAT FROM?

There were a couple of scenes in there that were really hard to write. That one was one of them. The other one was when Lucy appeared to be contemplating on whether or not she will kill Yolanda (her baby daughter) or not, she holds her nose, sort of playing with her. There was not anything particular that was drawn upon. The idea is sort of the stigma, I think, of what being good means in any particular family, and coming from an Appalachian place, that was one thing that was always emphasized to girls much more than to boys: the idea of abstinence and the idea of being pure outside of marriage. And then what would happen, the shame that would be brought on the families, particularly families that were pillars of the Christian community.

WAS THAT ABOUT THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN PARTICULAR? IT SEEMS LIKE A PROBLEM THAT CROSSES RACIAL LINES.

As far as the African American community, the black community, there are several layers of things I am trying to get at, and it's such a small book that people don't always catch on. I don't always talk about them, but they are there. To me it was a commentary on slavery in some ways. I think that it's why the haunting and horror of slavery—this idea of beating somebody into submission. The punishment was that way in a lot of white families too, but the African American families carried that through from slavery.

IN LIGHT OF YOUR STATEMENT ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY TO FALL OR SIN THAT WAS PRESENT ALL THE TIME, WOULD YOU CONSIDER THIS A KIND OF MORALITY TALE AS WELL?

I think it is, in a contemporary way. I think I was saying, as I do in all my books, what I observed in my own family. The biggest thread of that is in the ways in which mental illness was dealt with. My mother was diagnosed as being a paranoid schizophrenic, and I watched my whole life the way that her condition was dealt with and really not dealt with. If there is a grain of truth in the book, that is probably it. It's more fiction than anything I have ever written.



Ernest J.
GAINES
award for literary excellence

10 years

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and select donors present the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence each January. The award honors Mr. Gaines, a Louisiana native who lives in Oscar. His *Lesson Before Dying* won the 1993 National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction. In addition, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* has become an undisputed classic of twentieth-century American literature and gave rise to the immensely popular, award-winning TV adaptation starring Cicely Tyson. Mr. Gaines is a Guggenheim fellow (1971) and a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellow (1993). For more about the award, visit ErnestJGainesAward.org.

My short stories are probably more close to the bone and harken more to my own experiences that I have observed in my immediate community or in growing up. This book, the plot and characters are fictional, but the real truth, the emotional truth in it is very wise. And I felt that when I was writing it. It felt very autobiographical, and it felt that way when I was revising it, and it feels that way now when I am reading it. Sometimes I make connections to myself that I didn't even think of when I was writing it, and thinking it was so far away from any personal experience.

*“When they called me to tell me I had won this prize, I started crying, and I was crying not only because I had won but because it was connected to Mr. Gaines. I’ve been a longtime admirer of his work and his ability to write the story of black people. My favorite book of his is *A Gathering of Old Men*... I carry that book around like a Bible...”*

—Crystal Wilkinson

YOU MENTIONED IT BEING A SHORT BOOK. THE STYLE, THE LANGUAGE IS REALLY TERSE. HOW HAS BEING A POET INFORMED YOUR PROSE STYLE?

I think this is the first book that I felt that my poet self and my fictional self didn’t live in two separate bodies. This is the first book—I fought a lot of years with this book even though it is very short. Various people have had different opinions about that, but everything in it is very intentional.

At one point this book was a much more traditional novel in narrative strategy. I just decided that that is not the kind of book it wanted to be. I really passed up several opportunities for it to be published by larger presses if I had given in on my narrative strategy and made it more traditional. I just decided that there would be other books that would be traditional, but this one would not.

Even when I revised it—at one point it was up to around 400 pages or so—I realized that it was written sorta falsely, that I had beefed it up because that was what was expected from a novel from me. I just decided that this was what this book demanded. To be a short novel.

When I began cutting it down rather wildly until I got to the point where I was either going to have to plump it back up or cut it down even more. That last year that I worked on it, I ended up,



Winner Crystal Wilkinson with master of ceremonies and 2014 award winner, Mitchell S. Jackson and Ernest Gaines.

I’m going to say to my agent’s dismay, I ended up paring it down even more.

WHO WOULD YOU SAY WAS A LITERARY INFLUENCE ON YOU?

There are so many. When they called me to tell me I had won this prize, I started crying, and I was crying not only because I had won but because it was connected to Mr. Gaines. I’ve been a longtime admirer of his work and his ability to write the story of black people. My favorite book of his is *A Gathering of Old Men*, which I know goes against the grain of what some other peoples’ favorites have been. But that’s my absolute favorite. I carry that book around like the Bible, so winning this was important to me on that level.

This one prize meant more to me than others because of him, and the influence his work has had on me. There so many writers, too many to name. When I think about poets who have written prose, Lucille Clifton comes to mind, Michael Ondaatje come to mind, Toni Morrison comes to mind. If anybody can write poetic prose, it’s Toni Morrison. Gail Jones, who is originally from Kentucky, comes to mind. It’s hard to choose one writer or even one kind of writer. •

THE BIRDS OF OPULENCE BY CRYSTAL WILKINSON

University Press of Kentucky, \$24.95

Crystal Wilkinson holds a bachelor's in journalism from Eastern Kentucky University and a master of fine arts in creative writing from Spalding University in Louisville. She was born in Ohio in 1962 but "I was about five or six weeks old when I moved to Kentucky." *Birds of Opulence* is her first novel.

Opulence, Kentucky, is a little wide place in the road where the Penny rille abuts the Cumberland Mountains along the state's southern reach. It's a nondescript piece of Appalachia, an outpost of every kind of culture but its own. It's not somewhere you'd expect to find a black community, except that is what Opulence is.

Native Kentuckian Wilkinson, poet and pedagogue, drew on her own rural roots to construct the setting for her novel of the Goode family of Opulence. Her book has been named the winner of the 2016 Gaines book award, presented by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

Birds of Opulence is told in episodic style, each chapter alternating from the voice of one woman to another: from wise and sagacious Mama Minnie, clan matriarch, to her fragile and damaged daughter Tookie, to her dreamy and drifting granddaughter, Lucy, who is leaving reality behind even as she inhabits it.

The story begins, however, with the voice of Yolanda, Lucy's unborn daughter who is about to come into the world her mother is pushing away. Minnie knows it's Lucy's time. Like most Appalachian women, she can read the signs.

"But Mama Minnie was sure of the signs when she saw a bird on the window ledge—not a Kentucky bird that she could identify: a rare bird with a breast of red, freckled with yellow dots. She sunk the heavy skillet into the hot water, its weight straining against her wrist. The bird perched on a branch outside the window and ruffled its feathers, then pranced in a full circle before it looked Mama Minnie square in the face and cocked its pretty head like it was listening to what she had to say.

"'Won't be long,' she whispered to the listening bird and to herself."

The women, Minnie, Tookie and Lucy, pack into the family car and head out to the old family homestead to gather squash from the field there, leaving Lucy's husband Joe Brown, the story's strongest male

presence, behind. When Lucy's water breaks, there is no rush to the hospital, no panicked call for a doctor. The older women spread a quilt on the ground, and Lucy delivers Yolanda right there, bloom-laden squash vines curling around her head.

It's Lucy's second child. In fact, her son, Kiki, has tagged along with the women and witnesses the birth. Mama Minnie sees that the new child is female.

"'Girl, girl, girl,' she said.

"She looked to the ridge for help—the wind, the sky, the Lord."

Meanwhile, a city woman named Francine Clark also is pregnant. Francine's husband has been dead for a while. Too long to be the father of baby Mona. Francine is independent both in means and spirit. She doesn't care what the community thinks. Her mother has died after suffering through a long mental decline, possibly Alzheimer's. Francine saw her father walk away, leaving teen-aged Francine to deal with her deranged mother. Then her husband dies. She lives a withdrawn, hermit's life until one day she has Mona and no one knows who the father is.

Mona and Yolanda gravitate to each other until the onset of puberty brings a sexual rivalry that only one of them can negotiate successfully.

Both Mona and Yolanda provide narrative voices in the story.

Wilkinson is a poet, and as such, she practices an economy of expression that is a necessity of that art. When poets turn to prose, they don't waste adjectives and adverbs. It must be the right word. It must fit. There can't be too many. Too many spices spoil the stew. The result is sparse yet lyrical.

In fewer than 200 pages, Wilkinson advances the story of the Goode-Brown family and the Clarks from the '60s to the present, subtly dealing with race, mental illness, family violence, religion and the conflicts between sexuality and morality.

This is a multi-layered book that bears close reading, and it is rewarding on many levels.

—Greg Langley

Hand made

Woodworker uses his craft to tell stories

By Ed Cullen | Photos by Tim Mueller





Custom wood furniture maker Patrick Ricard works in his studio located in the Ridley Building on Highland Road. Ricard carves a face from a block of walnut for an angel cabinet he is creating.

Patrick Ricard's life, from a farm in Pointe Coupee Parish to his woodworking shop and sculpture studio on Baton Rouge's Highland Road, is a journey made by other Creole craftsmen and artisans. His was a circuitous trip—farm boy, sugarcane field hand, utility company worker, house carpenter, yoga instructor, master furniture maker and sculptor.

Pointe Coupee is where the Mississippi River cut through a strip of land in the early 1700s to make a new channel. The resulting horseshoe lake, False River, is in old plantation country where slaves worked in the fields of their white owners.

Some Creoles, people of black and French ancestry, owned large farms and plantations of their own. It wasn't uncommon for blacks, as well as whites, to work for Creoles, calling the female head of the household "madame" and the man of the house "monsieur."

Ricard, a robust 62-year-old who looks like a hip Santa Claus with luxurious moustache and goatee, crossed the Mississippi River many times as a child visiting relatives on Baton Rouge's Christian Street near the Perkins Road Overpass before moving to the capital in his mid-20s.

He met his wife, psychotherapist Linda Kelly, in a class he was teaching at Anahata yoga studio on Perkins Road. He looked at the attractive, somber young woman and thought, "I wonder if I can make that lady smile." They married 13 years later, moving into a wood frame house a few doors down from the yoga studio. "Before that, she had her place, and I had mine. She was teaching in South Texas part of the time before we got married."

Ricard made his first trips to Baton Rouge from Lakeland with his father, Hilary, a farmer with a few cows and pigs. "We'd take meat and vegetables from the family farm to cousins in Baton Rouge," Ricard said.

His Aunt "Bern," short for Bernice, lived on Christian Street.

"We didn't start Christian Street," Larry Darensbourg said in a 2003 interview in *The Advocate*. "We started the Creole tradition of house builders on Christian Street.

Darensbourg, with 400 houses under his carpenter's belt, was building a house at the age of 78.

"Our families came from the country with these building trades," Lillian Domingue said in the same interview. Lillian and husband Henry, who worked at the post office, reared their family on Christian Street.

"One of the things that attracts me to his work is that every design is a piece of sculpture. His altars don't have legs. They have tapering forms from which the altars' tops emerge."

—Marchita Mauck, a retired LSU art history professor



A glassware table custom made by craftsman Patrick Picard is made from maple with an oak top. The piece was created for Dr. Renee Daigle.

There were 15 houses on the street when the Domingue and Darensbourg built their houses. Christian Street runs arrow straight from Perkins Road to Morning Glory Avenue, a block short of the University/City Park lakes.

There was no shortage of skilled Creole carpenters and masons in the early 1950s. They worked on homes for one another when they weren't building houses to feed their families.

"We worked on our houses weekends and didn't pay anyone a quarter," Darensbourg said. "We worked for beer and food."

They had to hire plumbers and electricians to finish their own places. "There were no electricians or plumbers in our families," Domingue said. "We were carpenters, bricklayers and plasterers. The plumbers' and electricians' unions didn't admit blacks."

The café au lait Creoles had skin lighter than some of the white union craftsmen.

When I went looking for Ricard one hot, early fall afternoon, I found, first, a young woman tending bar at the Spanish Moon, the other business in the big, rambling Joe Ridley building on the town end of Highland Road.

"He's next door," the young woman said. "He's a nice man. He lets me use his tools when I need to fix something over here."

The tools Ricard loans are not the tools he uses to work exotic woods from South America and Africa or cherries and walnuts from Pennsylvania. Ricard's workshop and studio are the operating theater of a wood surgeon. Chisels, mallets, saws, knives and small, sharp hand axes hang in stately order on the walls, along with clamps ranging in size from small enough for a bird house to some worthy of armoires.

Ricard owns the space in which he works inside a building that belonged to an early black Baton Rouge businessmen, a tailor named Ridley. "Joe Ridley 1926," in raised letters and numbers, faces Highland Road near the peak of the roof.

Ricard's way with fine wood did not immediately declare itself.

"In high school, I worked with my dad building barns, chicken coops, hog pens, fences," he said. "I did a little fixing up around the house. After high school, I planted sugarcane for a farmer before I started working for a small utility company digging trenches for water and gas lines. I installed the meters. I did that for two years."

After moving to Baton Rouge, Ricard got carpentry jobs building and remodeling houses for Donald Key, Harvey Honore, August Bajoie and Barry Luke. Luke's wife, Deborah, had a sculpture studio in Joe Ridley's old building.

"That's how I found out about this place," Ricard said. He bought his part of the Ridley Building from the Lukes in 1995.





Working as a house carpenter during the day, Ricard spent nights and weekends on his first pieces of furniture that were inspired by need. His mother wanted a small cabinet. He built her one of walnut. When he needed a coffee table, he made one of Philippine mahogany, “second cousin to Honduran.”

He worked in his sister’s garage on Kenmore Street to fashion the coffee table.

“We still have it at the house,” he said.

Much of his work is liturgical furniture for churches in Louisiana, Colorado and Illinois.

Quick to laugh, Ricard’s sense of humor sometimes shows up in his creations in wood.

In Ricard’s studio, there is what looks like a medieval telephone booth, narrow and roofed, standing next to a wall.

“Sacred broom cabinet,” Ricard deadpanned.

A lowly broom hangs inside the ornate closet where a diminutive, thin priest might stand to hear confession.

The woodworker makes a little ceremony of removing the broom from the cabinet to sweep the floor between projects.

Two summers ago, Ricard gave a muralist permission to paint scenes on the outside, north-facing wall of the Ridley Building. Ricard added some words from writer Kurt Vonnegut to the wall beside the back door. The words are repeated inside a frame on the wall of the woodworking shop.

Vonnegut was probably writing about his sister, Alice, or wife Jane when he wrote: “Any creation which has any wholeness and harmoniousness, I suspect, was made by an artist or inventor with an audience of one in mind.”

“It’s what I think when I’m working,” Ricard said. “My wife found the quotation. But I’m not thinking about a woman. The person who inspired me was my father.” Hilary Ricard was dying as his 31-year-old son fashioned his first piece of furniture. His father never saw the small cabinet, “but I felt his spirit with me as I worked,” Ricard said.

Most of Ricard’s work is furniture, but, seen another way, it’s sculpture with drawers. The wood artist likes drawers.

Ricard has had his supporters over the years. One was the late Cary Long, owner of Goudeau Antiques at the corner of Perkins Road and Terrace Street. Long sold Ricard’s pieces in the store, encouraging him to do more.

Mary Helen Borck bought one of Ricard’s end tables from Long. The table resembles a bongo drum, though open with graceful, curving legs of maple that end in a red African wood called padauk, affixed to the maple with dowels and glue.

“I liked that he used different woods and how he put them together,” Borck said. “You can tell the table was something he’d



thought about. There were two pieces, one taller than the other. I wish I'd bought both of them."

Marchita Mauck, a retired LSU art history professor with a degree in liturgy from Notre Dame, consults on new churches and renovations around the United States. She's been responsible for a number of Ricard's commissions.

"One of the things that attracts me to his work," Mauck said, "is that every design is a piece of sculpture. His altars don't have legs. They have tapering forms from which the altars' tops emerge. He thinks sculpturally."

How does a craftsman go from carpentry to fine furniture that is art?

"When he realized that art was something he could achieve, he looked at everything," Mauck said. "He was thirsty. He and Linda visit museums wherever they go. There are always books open in his studio. There's something about taking in ideas and letting them mellow. I've never seen him copy another artist. He's fascinated by invention."

The first time Mauck visited Ricard's studio she was struck by the cleanliness and order of the place and the condition of his tools. "I felt, 'Here's a person who has a lot of respect for what he does.'"

For Mauck's clients, Ricard crafts altars, tabernacles, presidents' chairs, great, main and processional crosses, cantor stands, deacons' chairs, offertory tables and ambries (oil cabinets).

Renee Daigle first saw Ricard's work at Ariodante Gallery on Julia Street in New Orleans. When she found out Ricard lived in Baton Rouge, Daigle wrangled a dinner invitation at Linda and Patrick's house. Dinner led to Daigle's owning a display table with glass shelves. "He used milk paint," Daigle said, "so it all seems to float. A woman's vanity is in blonde (hard maple) wood, heavy and delicate at the same time," she said. "And I have one of his little spirit houses with a single drawer."

According to artist Kjel Flanagan, Linda and Patrick were early supporters of Baton Rouge Gallery in City Park. They mapped arts strategy and partied together.

"Their house has always been party central on St. Patrick's Day," Flanagan said.

Flanagan and husband Pat own three Ricard pieces—a cabinet that's in a series inspired by the triangular sign of Triple-A Cleaners on Eugene Street, a small mirror and a piece of sculpture from Ricard's "Watchers" series. Pieces in the "Watchers" are four spindle legs wide at the bottom, narrowing at the top. A human figure is suspended in the middle. Supple basket willow is woven around the legs.

"There's a Zen-like call to his pieces," Flanagan said.

"This is what I want to do. I like telling a little story. I want people to ask themselves, 'Where did this idea come from?'"

—Patrick Ricard

Ricard calls himself a woodworker. A speculative piece he's working on is a cabinet on slender legs with six drawers, a cabinet with shark-fin wings and a carved human head.

In a shop without air conditioning, exotic woods from Africa—padauk, bright orange to crimson when cut, oxidizing to a rich, purple brown; wenge, dark brown, almost black with pencil-thin tan lines interspersed with blackish brown stripes (as though scratched by the claws of a jungle cat); ebony, black and dense as stone; bubinga, its heartwood pinkish red to darker, reddish brown with dark purple streaks—wait in patient piles.

"This is what I want to do," Ricard said, drinking from a plastic bottle of water. "I like telling a little story. I want people to ask themselves, 'Where did this idea come from?' I want to see where whatever I'm working on leads me ... which is the next piece." •

SPARK



In a remade park, *hope and a chance*

Cities have used improved parks to help revive neighborhoods. Can it happen for a north Baton Rouge community?

By Sara Bongiorno | Photos by Tim Mueller

The little-used golf course at BREC Howell Community Park in north Baton Rouge will reopen this summer with a lake for fishing, canoeing and kayaking, a sunken amphitheater and an adventure-themed playground.

A walking and jogging loop around the playground will encourage parents to exercise while keeping an eye on their children. Golf-cart paths will become walking trails.

A vestige of the old course will remain: a one-hole putting green and space for the First Tee program that teaches kids the game.

Other new features include outdoor basketball courts, picnic tables and pavilions and lighted sports fields where Baton Rouge Soccer Club will run teams for children for the first time in north Baton Rouge. Fishing piers will give local anglers a place to cast their lines.

BREC's \$2 million renovation is expected to bring hundreds of additional daily visitors to the park for traditional draws like basketball and play equipment to new ones like paddle boarding, movies under the stars and family campouts. A boathouse and challenge fitness course are planned for a later phase, which might also include a community garden.

A park is more than the sum of its parts, and that's especially true in the neighborhood around Howell Community Park. The area struggles with some of the worst poverty in Louisiana, itself among the poorest of the 50 states.

A long list of frightening statistics is tied to that poverty, including violent crime and one of the highest rates of HIV in the U.S. Last summer's flooding dealt a new blow. Many of the area's modest homes remain empty. Rebuilding will be especially challenging in an area with a high share of renters and where homeowners too often don't have money to rebuild.

A MESSAGE FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD

BREC's investment at Howell Community Park is a tangible investment in an area that lacks it. It's an investment that carries a message nearby residents won't miss, say those with long ties to the area.

"A beautiful, expanded park gives people a hope for greater things," says Bishop Charles Wallace, pastor of Oasis Christian Church on East Brookstown Drive, which borders the park.

"It's a manifestation of the idea that things can change for the better," adds Wallace, who grew up nearby and recalls playing in the park as a child. "When that park is in your own neighborhood, when it is yours, it says to you that you matter. We need that—young people especially."

Craig Jones went almost every day to Howell Park, then took his own sons there for years. He's going to miss the golf course, but says a \$2 million remaking will give children and adults new ways to play.

Bishop Raymond W. Johnson of Living Faith Christian Center on Winbourne Avenue says the improvements tell local residents that they are worthy of the same recreational opportunities as elsewhere in the parish.

“The park improvements say to our community that you are valuable and that every citizen should be afforded quality recreation,” Johnson says.

Both ministers say they hope for a positive ripple effect that reaches beyond park boundaries. Johnson says the improved

But until now most of the park’s 114 acres were reserved for a small number of golfers—an average of about 30 a day in recent years. The upshot of that arrangement was park-goers crowded into a small space alongside the lonely expanse of the 18-hole course.

Opening the park to more users seems hard to argue, and not only on the question of equity. For years the course was losing money—taxpayer money.

Also important is the fact that the park’s redesign reflects

*“When that park is in your own neighborhood,
when it is yours, it says to you that you matter.
We need that—young people especially.”*

—Bishop Charles Wallace, Oasis Christian Church

park will be a point of pride that encourages everything from additional community investments to neighborhood cleanup and improved home values.

“It’s a major community rejuvenator,” says Johnson, who plans to hold church picnics and other events there. “Positive influences trigger a similar response in that people will reproduce what they see.”

There is reason to think such optimism is not an idle hope. Cities from Denver to Baltimore have used improved parks and other public spaces as part of successful economic revitalization efforts.

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A PLAN BORN OF DISASTER

The Winbourne Avenue park is one of BREC’s oldest. The golf course had been there for decades when the BREC board voted unanimously to close it in 2015. It already had a recreation center with a gym, a pool (it will reopen in summer 2017), a pool house and a popular playground that BREC built about a decade ago.

what people who live in the area say they want. BREC paid for a third-party survey of 300 nearby homes as a check of its own findings about what residents wanted at Howell. Golf got little interest, and BREC had six more golf courses to meet demand for the game.

BREC has still-bigger hopes for the park beyond repurposing the golf course. In recent months, the agency has begun formulating a plan to build a community center with potentially transformative impact at the park. Its larger ambitions emerged in the aftermath of the deadly August floods that submerged Howell Park under eight feet of water, damaging its existing recreation center.

BREC hasn’t rushed to begin rebuilding the shuttered recreation center and pool house, with good reason. The Federal Emergency Management Agency will reimburse it for most of the cost of rebuilding the structures, so long as BREC complies with flood-mitigation rebuilding standards that might include elevation of the structures.





FEMA has not yet indicated what those standards will be, says Cheryl Michelet, BREC spokeswoman.

The likelihood that the flooded structures will need to be replaced sparked new thinking at BREC about the section of the park that was not slated for renovation. While far from final, the agency has begun crafting a plan to replace the modest recreation center with a larger facility that would offer sports and recreation, after-school programs and academic support for schoolchildren, recreation and classes for seniors, meetings rooms and gathering spaces for community groups.

A plan for how to move forward is likewise still in the works. BREC will need to reach beyond its own resources and FEMA's disaster-recovery role to bring its vision to life. It is actively looking to partner with another agency to offer after-school activities and other programming and a donor to fund a larger, multifaceted building.

"We are looking for a way to build a community center in the truest sense," Michelet says.

BREC has recreation centers across the parish, but like the flood-damaged one at Howell, most are small—typically a basketball court without air conditioning. The best model for what BREC hopes to build at Howell Community Park is probably the Team Automotive Group Sportsplex at Perkins Road Community Park near Kenilworth.

BREC partnered with the nonprofit Baton Rouge Basketball and Volleyball Association, Team Automotive and other corporate sponsors to build the 30,000-square-foot complex used for sports as well as camps, exercise classes and schoolwork support.

Serving as a fun and healthy gathering place is a guiding principle. On weekends and any given evening, the place bustles with kids and adults from across the socioeconomic spectrum in an easy mix that may surpass any other spot in town.

Whatever happens next at Howell Community Park, there will be plenty of folks pinning their hopes on the idea of something new and better.

They include Craig Jones, 49, who more or less grew up in the



park. He rode his bike there from his Geronimo Street home near Plank Road every day starting at age 14, then made the trip by car after he was old enough to drive.

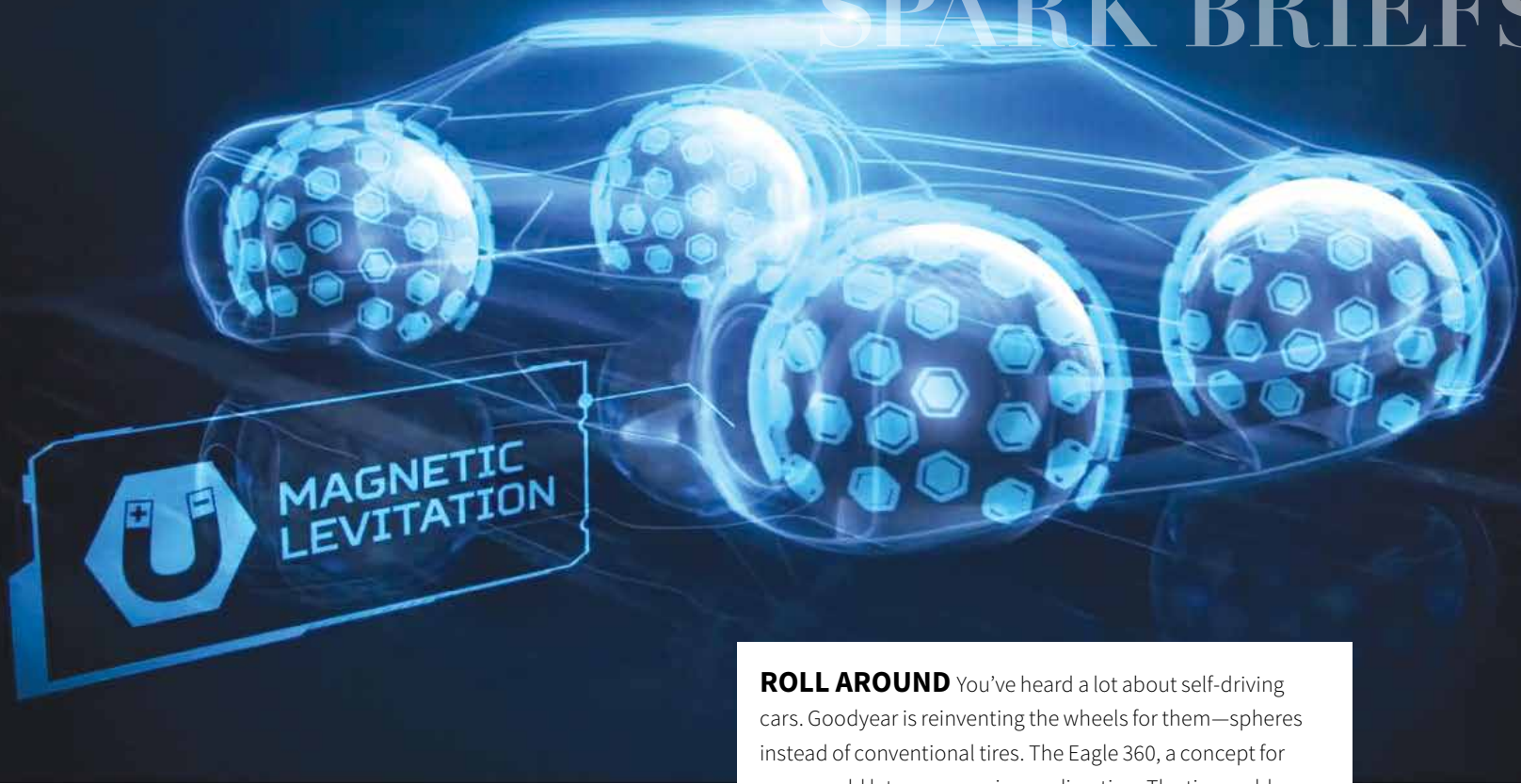
Daily visits to the gym for basketball and camaraderie were a tradition Jones shared with his sons, now 17 and 20.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of Howell Community Park for Jones, or the power of a park to shape lives for the better. He credits Gregory Terrance, known as “T Man,” who ran the Howell recreation center for more than 20 years, for keeping many local boys, through encouragement, in school and in jobs.

“He gave his life to that park,” Jones says of Terrance, who died last year at 59.

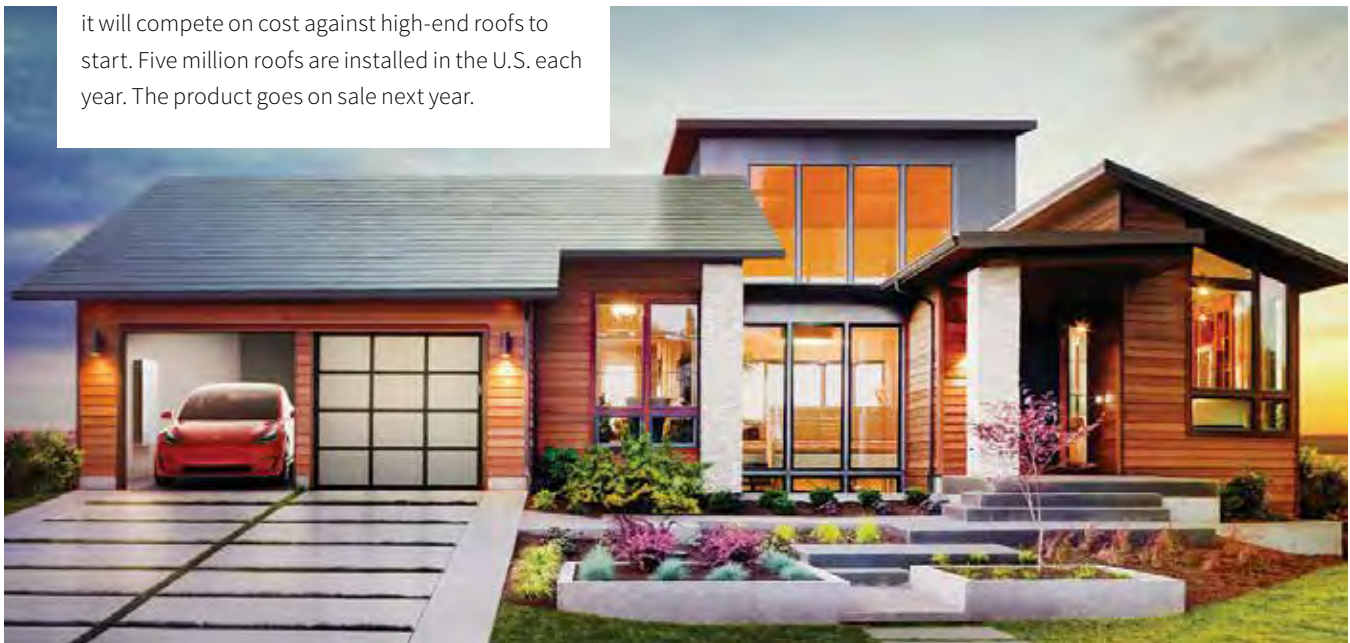
Though not a golfer himself, Jones was proud of the park’s course, and he is nostalgic about its closure. Still, he says the features that are taking its place represent a true expansion of recreational opportunities for young and old alike.

“There are lots of opportunities for football and basketball in the area, but this is opening up new outlets for kids and exposing them to new things—soccer, canoeing, kayaking, fishing—right where they live,” Jones says. “It’s a beautiful plan.” •

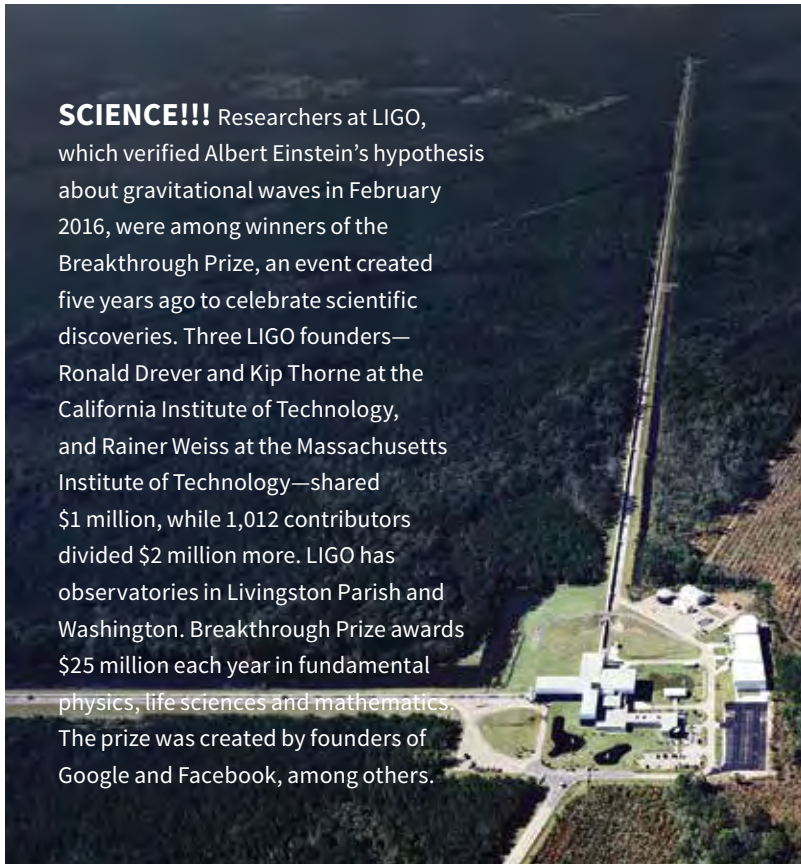


ROLL AROUND You've heard a lot about self-driving cars. Goodyear is reinventing the wheels for them—spheres instead of conventional tires. The Eagle 360, a concept for now, would let cars move in any direction. The tire could roll sideways to maneuver into tight parking spots. The tires would levitate above the cars, a technology that Goodyear is working on with auto manufacturers.

SOLAR CITY In his bid to save the planet, Elon Musk unveiled a solar roof that is beautiful. The roof is a series of glass shingles with embedded solar panels. Musk's Solar City says the roof will be priced competitively when including the electricity it produces for the home. But reports indicate that it will compete on cost against high-end roofs to start. Five million roofs are installed in the U.S. each year. The product goes on sale next year.



SCIENCE!!! Researchers at LIGO, which verified Albert Einstein's hypothesis about gravitational waves in February 2016, were among winners of the Breakthrough Prize, an event created five years ago to celebrate scientific discoveries. Three LIGO founders—Ronald Drever and Kip Thorne at the California Institute of Technology, and Rainer Weiss at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—shared \$1 million, while 1,012 contributors divided \$2 million more. LIGO has observatories in Livingston Parish and Washington. Breakthrough Prize awards \$25 million each year in fundamental physics, life sciences and mathematics. The prize was created by founders of Google and Facebook, among others.



SMART BUY Uber has quietly purchased Geometric Intelligence, a software startup that claims it can train machines with far smaller amounts of data. Not much is known about the purchased firm, but speculation is that Uber will incorporate its code into the self-driving cars project. Uber could also be positioning itself to become as big as Google and Facebook. A founder of Geometric told Wired.com that the software, which is in the research phase, can already understand certain tasks using “half as much data as deep learning.”



FASTER. FASTER. Computers may replace cashiers sooner than you think. In spring, Amazon.com is opening the first Amazon Go convenience store. Located in its headquarters city of Seattle, the store will use sensors to tally up items as they are put in a basket, then automatically charges customers when they leave the store. “Our checkout-free shopping experience is made possible by the same types of technologies used in self-driving cars: computer vision, sensor fusion and deep learning,” says the company’s website, which could have been built by a bot. More than 4.5 million people work as cashiers and salespeople in the United States.



SWEET NEWS FOR DIABETICS

People with Type 1 diabetes check their sugar more often than they like. That will change for diabetics who use Medtronic’s Minimed 760G, a device that gets closer to functioning as an artificial pancreas. A sensor checks for blood-sugar levels every five minutes, signaling how much insulin the pump should deliver. Medtronic says the 760G will reduce insulin shots by up to 90%. About 1.25 million Americans have Type 1 diabetes.

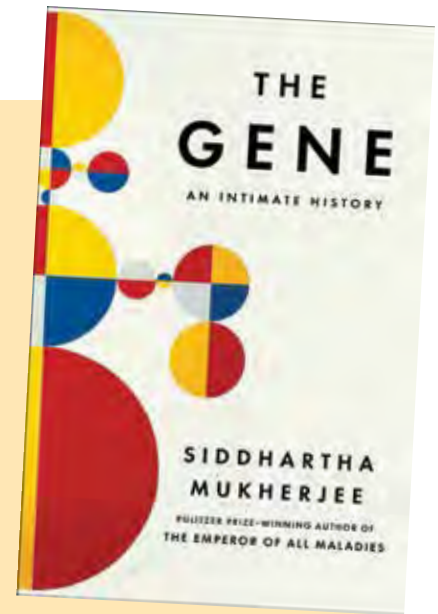
GATES NOTES Oprah has a book club. So does Bill Gates. His list of favorite books—not as nerdy as you think—is followed by millions of people. Here are his top books for 2016.

String Theory, by David Foster Wallace, a compilation of tennis essays from the late author, who Gates says “wielded a pen as skillfully as Roger Federer wields a tennis racket.” Gates plays tennis.

Shoe Dog, a memoir by Phil Knight. A story of the smart and dumb moves by the founder and former CEO of Nike. “He tells his story as honestly as he can. It’s an amazing tale.”

The Gene, by Siddhartha Mukherjee, a medical doctor who also wrote *Emperor of Maladies*, a Pulitzer Prize-winning book about attempts to cure cancer. In *Gene*, we learn that “new genome technologies are at the cusp of affecting us all in profound ways.”

The Myth of the Strong Leader, by Archie Brown. The writer, who has studied political leadership for a half century, shows us the best leaders are the ones who “collaborate, delegate, and negotiate—and recognize that no one person can or should have all the answers.”



GREEN CITY Portland was among 10 cities—and the singular American one—to win the 2016 C40 Cities Award at the C40 Climate Conference in Mexico City. The Oregon city has pledged to cut carbon emissions 80% by 2050 by promoting green jobs, providing incentives to switch to electric cars, and boosting public transit and bike riding.

GO VANCOUVER In North America, Vancouver has been the most successful at getting people to move around without cars. More than half of all trips within the city in 2015 were by foot, bike or transit, five years ahead of the city’s goal. There is no magic behind Vancouver’s triumph. The city said no to an interstate running through it and invested in infrastructure, including dedicated bike lanes and an automated tram, which is getting another \$2 billion to expand to new parts of town.

CODA



CHILD'S PLAY

Squint a bit and look closely. People are the painting, schoolchildren and grownups from Baton Rouge Center for Visual and Performing Art arranged by an artist – and photographed from above – to create a version of *The Accordion Player* by Robert Grieve. Project leader Daniel Dancer travels the world to teach about environmental responsibility through his work. BRCVPA is an elementary school in the EBR School System.

BRCVPA

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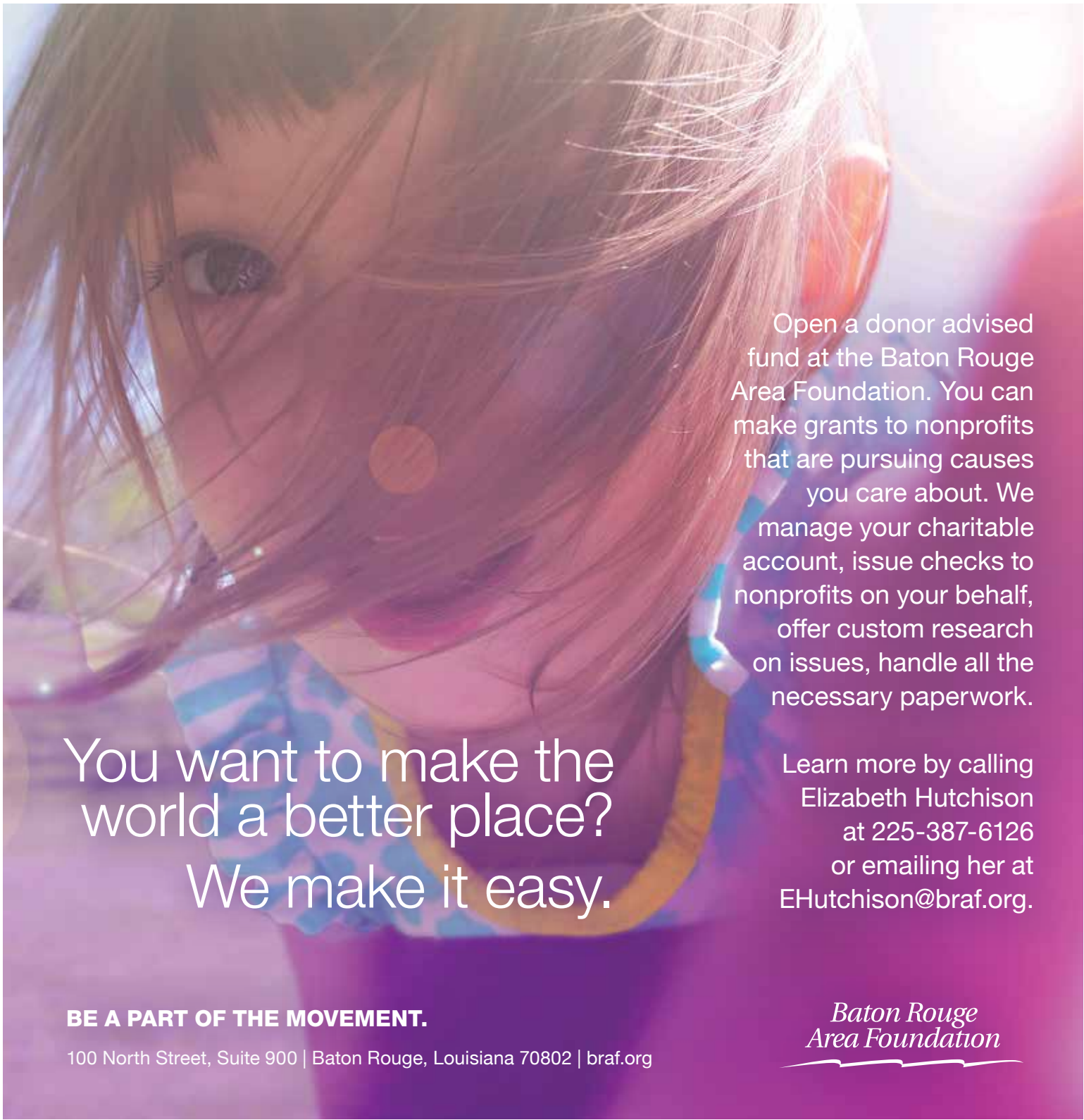
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