

# CURRENTS

*first quarter twenty-nineteen . baton rouge area foundation*



## The nation is watching

*A Baton Rouge nonprofit  
has raised millions to recruit  
top schools and hold them  
accountable with data*





The Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge paid for a mural at O'Neil's Barber Shop, where the owners operate Line 4 Line, a nonprofit that gives free haircuts to children who read a book.  
Story on page 42.

Photo by Jeffrey Roedel



# 1200 Brickyard Lane RISING ON THE RIVER

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*Baton Rouge  
Area Foundation*

100 North Street, Suite 900 | Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802 | braf.org

# LETTER



**I**t rained all that cold December day. But people who are committed to the idea of democracy put on an extra layer of clothing, unfurled

their umbrellas, and headed to the polls as 2018 was drawing to a close. When the counting was done, voters in the parish had approved a small property tax to pay for a mental health treatment center, a project that was started and shepherded by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. That's when we knew to expect good things in 2019.

The vote reaffirmed our fundamental faith in the residents of our parish: When presented with the facts and a cause that is just, they will share their earnings to make life better for all their neighbors. That they voted in a landslide—2 to 1—made the victory sweeter still.

For the Foundation, the vote marked a new beginning.

We had worked for more than half the decade to research, evaluate and promote the idea of a treatment center as a better alternative for the mentally ill, instead of jail cells or emergency rooms.

As 2018 ended with a big success, 2019 opened with the promise of more to come. In April, bikeshare will roll out. The program was initiated by the Foundation to offer alternatives to driving and to ease some of the traffic congestion that paralyzes parts of the city at rush hour. Gotcha Group will run bikeshare under a contract with city-parish government. This summer, the parish will release a bike-and-pedestrian plan, providing a thoughtful and orderly progression to safer riding and walking in the parish.

In late summer, a new office building, 20 residential lofts and

*The vote reaffirmed our fundamental faith in the residents of our parish:*

*When presented with the facts and a cause that is just, they will share their earnings to make life better for all their neighbors. That they voted in a landslide—2 to 1—made the victory sweeter still.*

a park sporting a spectacular fountain will be completed on The Water Campus, a development on the riverfront created by the Foundation and Commercial Properties Realty Trust, which develops real estate with impact for the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, a supporting nonprofit of the Foundation.

Other development projects will come to fruition this year, beginning with the Electric Depot on Government Street. Opening in March and expanding over the course of the year, the Electric Depot will be an entertainment destination that includes new housing as well as restaurants. It's a project of Weinstein Nelson Development under contract with the complex's owner, East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, which was formed by the Foundation and city-parish government to reclaim blighted parts of town. The hope is that the

## 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 three 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. Three, we provide consulting services to nonprofits. For more information, contact Mukul Verma at [mverma@braf.org](mailto:mverma@braf.org).

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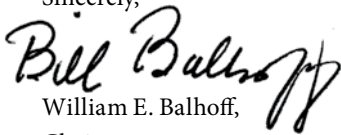
Electric Depot will serve to reassure cautious investors that a good return can be earned in a part of town that is primed for a rebound.

With support from various sources, we may have money to begin the City Park/University Lakes project. It's the first step in implementing a master plan created by the community and the Foundation about six years ago. Not only will the project save the lakes from the critical threat of sedimentation, it will also create new recreational opportunities on their shores.

These projects portend a year rich with new beginnings. But perhaps the most important initiative for our community's future is New Schools for Baton Rouge. We offer an update in our cover package in this issue. Because of this project, in several years, thousands of children in Baton Rouge will be getting the kind of education that every kid deserves.

It represents a new beginning for those children, too, in a year when good projects will move from possibility and planning to realization.

Sincerely,



William E. Balhoff,  
Chair

# 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 reduce the burden on roads. The projects include a train connecting Baton Rouge to New Orleans, a bike sharing system that is launching in April 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



**PLANK ROAD PLAN** The Baton Rouge Area Foundation board has approved a \$75,000 grant to the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, which the RDA will use with \$100,000 from a Chase nonprofit to create a master plan for Plank Road. The blueprint will guide the RDA's work in the corridor as it collaborates with CATS and city-parish government to spur investment along Plank, ultimately reinvigorating other North Baton Rouge neighborhoods. The RDA picked Asakura Robinson as lead planner. Designers will have public meetings to inform the plan, which is due to the RDA before year-end.

The Foundation and state and local government created the RDA, which is operated by an independent board with John Noland as the Foundation's representative.

**WATER CAMPUS PARK** The Water Campus will have a gathering place. Main Square Park will be built between offices and apartments on the Campus. The park's centerpiece will be a bubbling fountain inspired by the Lady Diana Memorial Fountain in London. Reich Associates of Baton Rouge designed the park, which will be completed later this year.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Commercial Properties Realty Trust are jointly developing The Water Campus, a gathering place for scientists and science organizations that are providing the best coastal and inland water science in the world.

Located on Nicholson Drive near downtown, the Campus' first three tenants are The Water Institute of the Gulf, LSU Center for River Studies and Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority.

A fourth building, 1200 Brickyard Lane, is under construction with Stantec as the first announced tenant. It will open this summer on the Main Square Park. On the other side of the park will be 20 loft apartments, named 200 Water Street. The park and lofts, new roads and sidewalks will be finished this year.

The Campus will be future-ready, beginning with four charging stations for up to eight cars and a bikeshare hub.

# GOOD THINGS

## LOVE DOWNTOWN. LIVE DOWNTOWN.

Mike Wampold is expected to begin reworking his Chase North Tower in downtown in 2019. He wants to turn the top 10 floors of the building on Main and Fourth streets into 150 luxury apartments, with a rooftop pool and fitness center as amenities for tenants. The developer will construct ground floor retail on the plaza. Wampold knows the downtown market. His holdings include the Watermark Hotel and City Plaza office buildings.



## MORE PLACES TO PLAY

BREC continued to implement its Imagine Your Parks II program, investing \$12 million in 2018 to complete 14 projects and plan 15 more. Money was spent to build or improve 10 playgrounds, add splash pads, install sail shades and ziplines. The parks system also added more outdoor fitness equipment, built walking paths and loops, renovated tennis courts and improved basketball courts. In 2019, BREC is seeking community input for the future of the zoo and Greenwood Community Park.





**WILSON FOUNDATION GRANT EXPANDS SERVICES** Soon, more children with disabilities will be able to find the services they need. The Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation has invested \$20,000 in Exceptional Lives Louisiana to translate the online resource into Spanish. A project of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Exceptional Lives Louisiana provides parents and caregivers with a directory to locate therapists, programs and support organizations near them, and personalized guides to access services for children and young adults with disabilities.

## MACARTHUR GRANT TO REDUCE INCARCERATION

A \$350,000 grant won by the Foundation from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation will help the Baton Rouge Area Foundation work with law enforcement to reduce the jail population. The grant will establish a strategy to reduce the number of people held for lengthy periods in the parish jail before their court hearings, focusing on those who can safely and productively remain in the community while their cases are being processed.

The project is among prison reform efforts in the parish and statewide. Louisiana passed legislation aimed at reducing the prison population. A local tax passed in December will be used to operate a mental health treatment center. A project of the Foundation, the treatment center will be an alternative to jail for many residents with mental illness and addictions who are in crisis.



**BUILDING A GRID** The parish will spend \$900 million on roads, bridges and sidewalks. Some of the spending will provide extra benefits. New roads in the Perkins/Essen/Bluebonnet corridor will create a street grid where none exists, improving traffic flow while also providing the infrastructure for the Baton Rouge Health District, a project of the Foundation and health care leaders.

Some roads in the Health District will have sidewalks and bike lanes that link to wider networks for traveling by foot and bikes, which is healthier.

Funded by a half-penny sales tax approved in December, the MovEBR plan will also pay for a \$3 million connector to link North Ardenwood to Lobdell, reducing peak traffic on Florida Boulevard while opening Ardendale for development. The Foundation started and supports Ardendale. Overseen by the EBR Redevelopment Authority, the 200-acre mixed-use project in North Baton Rouge is anchored by education institutions: an EBR school system career high school and the McKay Automotive Technology Center for training mechanics.

More than 60% of voters approved the MovEBR road tax, which will build infrastructure recommended in FuturEBR, the parish's master plan for economic growth. MovEBR also includes funding for sidewalks, bike lanes and pedestrian paths, which will improve safety in the parish while providing alternative methods to travel. Parish government will hire a management firm to oversee projects, as it did with the Green Light road program.

## Lanes of their own

*Under a new plan, BR could build extensive bike, pedestrian network*

By Sara Bongiorno

The draft of a master plan for developing a parishwide network of bike and pedestrian paths recommends 140 miles of new bike lanes and other on-road features, including 50 miles of new bike lanes separated from car traffic by curbs or other physical barriers.

The draft plan also recommends 265 miles of new off-road paths for bikers, pedestrians and others, about four times what the parish has now.

The EBR Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan being developed for the Department of Transportation and Development and BREC will lay out a doable, cost-effective approach to creating a bike and pedestrian network for parish residents of all ages, whether commuters or recreational users.

The plan also will include cost estimates and project priorities for a parish bogged down by road congestion and plagued by a rate of pedestrian and cyclist deaths that rivals the biggest U.S. cities.

“It’s a very robust network; everything’s on the table,” said project manager Daniel Helms of Arcadis, the Dutch-based consulting firm that is overseeing the master plan and a related safety-action plan to reduce bike and pedestrian deaths and injuries in Baton Rouge. The community will get a look at full details of the draft plan at public meetings in late February or early March.

Completion and release of the final version of the master plan in early summer coincides with a series of significant, tangible improvements for walkers and bike riders in Baton Rouge.

Newly completed projects or those planned for 2019 include:

- The arrival of 500 GPS-equipped Gotcha Group bikes at bikeshare hubs that will be operating by April at 50 sites at LSU, downtown, Southern and nearby neighborhoods, with an expansion to Mid City and the Baton Rouge Health District down the path. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation started bikeshare and advanced it with partners, including state and local government.
- Completion of a bike/pedestrian bridge over Wards Creek has for years been a missing link in BREC’s first big bike and walking trails project. The 10-foot-wide lane was added to a vehicle bridge being built by Ochsner for its new campus south of I-10. “It’s huge,” Reed Richard, BREC’s assistant superintendent of engineering, said of the bike/pedestrian crossing.
- BREC, by March, also will open another half-mile of trail to connect the new bridge to existing trail that now ends near the Morning Glen subdivision, so residents can bike, run or walk from Siegen Marketplace to Bluebonnet Boulevard.
- BREC is likely to get started this year on the segment of trail that runs from Bluebonnet to Essen Lane in the Baton Rouge Health District. That will eventually link to the path next to Pennington Biomedical Research Center.
- Gardere Lane will be vastly improved by 6,000 feet of side-



## FOUNDATION FACT:

Our New Mobility project included an emphasis on alternative transportation, including bike and pedestrian paths. The Foundation has provided staff support to the bike and pedestrian plan and started and guided the bikeshare system that will be launched by Gotcha Group in April.

walk on its east side to move pedestrians out of the narrow two-lane roadway and roadside ditches.

- Bike lanes on Government Street from I-110 to Independence Park, except for the Foster Drive intersection. The project should be finished by year-end.

The master plan for the bike-and-pedestrian network will create a long-term vision for nonvehicular transit options as those projects move forward.

While stressing that it is a work in progress, consulting firms Arcadis and Toole Design Group shared key aspects of the plan with *Currents* in advance of public meetings in the weeks ahead. Feedback from those meetings and a public-comment period will be used to shape the final version of the master plan.

Jeff Ciabotti of Toole Design said East Baton Rouge has the advantages of flat topography, warm weather and “good bones” in terms of a roadway system that can support modifications for an effective bike and walking network.

The path that now runs atop the Mississippi River levee will serve as a backbone of the proposed network that will knit together existing roads and new pathways in a way that is “safe, connected and comfortable,” Ciabotti said.

Bike boulevards on broad residential streets with little car traffic are likely to feature prominently in the network, Ciabotti said.

## BIKESHARE LAUNCH

Bikeshare will launch in Baton Rouge with 50 stations and 500 electric-assist bikes in April. Gotcha Group won the contract to implement bikeshare in town. People will pay to ride the bikes, and Gotcha will also earn money through sponsorships.

The stations will start where demand is greatest—Southern University, LSU and downtown, and nearby neighborhoods. The second phase will include the Baton Rouge Health District and Mid City, where the state is paying to include bike lanes on Government Street.

Bikeshare started as a Baton Rouge Area Foundation project and we provided money and staff support to move the project along. The goal was to provide other means of transportation, reducing the reliance on automobiles.

*“What we hear over and over is that it’s unsafe to bike or walk. But people will do more biking and walking if they feel it is safe.”*

—Daniel Helms of Arcadis, lead planning firm for the bike and pedestrian plan

Recommended projects will be as simple as painted bike lanes in some cases to potentially as complex as pedestrian/bike bridges across multi-lane roadways.

The plan will provide guidance to local and state officials about whether it makes sense to add bike and pedestrian crossings or other safety features to dangerous roadways like Florida Boulevard or direct bikers and walkers to alternate routes.

Both the proposed bike and pedestrian network and the more immediate safety-action plan pair best practices in transit design with analysis of local crash data and the conditions of local infrastructure.

There were 1,303 crashes involving bikes or pedestrians in the parish that caused 118 severe injuries and 62 deaths between 2011 and 2015, the period looked at most closely by planners.

Across the five-year span, pedestrians were at greatest danger, accounting for 52 of 62 fatalities.

## DANGER ZONE

Baton Rouge is among the most dangerous cities of any size for cyclists and pedestrians. From 2011 to 2015, motorists crashed into 303 cyclists or pedestrians, severely injuring 118 and killing 62.

The crash numbers put Baton Rouge in a grim category. In 2015, the city was designated a “focus city” by federal transportation officials for its high rate of pedestrian and biking deaths, lumping it in a category that includes New York, San Jose, Atlanta and other large cities.

Baton Rouge “heat zones” with high numbers of bike and pedestrian crashes include neighborhoods near the LSU campus, Florida Boulevard and arteries between downtown and Mid City. Other parts of town with high crash rates include Ogden Park, Eden Park and the Istrouma neighborhood.

Analysis for the master plan highlights the extent to which biking and walking function as basic transportation in the parish. In some 2.1% of households—about 1 in 50 homes—walking

is the principal mode of getting to work or school, buying groceries or doing other basic errands.

That compares to 0.4% of parish households that commute by bike and 1.5% that rely on public transit, according to American Community Survey figures compiled by the

consultants.

Their analysis noted a lack of bike or pedestrian accommodations, including crosswalks, at key multi-lane roadways. At the intersection of Florida Boulevard and Sherwood Forest Boulevard, for instance, there is no crosswalk or pedestrian signal despite existing bike lanes on Sherwood that terminate at Florida.

The connectivity of existing bike lanes was also a significant issue noted by planners, who will recommend ways to extend or modify bike lanes that abruptly terminate at narrow two-lane streets—the Goodwood bike lanes that end to the east at South Flannery Road, for example.

BREC, which has been planning and building trails for recreational and commuter use for years, has collaborated closely with consultants on the bike-and-pedestrian master plan since they began their work in mid-2018.

The master plan brings together planning by BREC and other local agencies that have worked to expand bike-and-pedestrian trails for years, BREC’s Richard said. “This approach brings everybody together and takes all these efforts into account.”

Richard noted that the planned widening of I-10 will present additional opportunities for new trails on top of those BREC has in the works. Planned work includes its biggest segment of its Capital Area Pathways Project: a 6-mile pathway from BREC’s Memorial Stadium to Scotlandville Parkway that could break ground in a year.

A \$3.7 million federal grant is funding the project.

The city’s designation as a federal “focus city” means local projects to reduce roadway deaths and injuries will be prioritized for federal funding once the final network plan is in place, Kathy Stites, BREC trails director, explained.

“That will be important as we move forward,” Stites said.

Arcadis’ Helms said the parish will be able to take meaningful short-term steps toward building the bike-and-pedestrian network, even if completion of the entire network is a long-term goal.

“What we hear over and over is that it’s unsafe to bike or walk,” Helms said. “But people will do more biking and walking if they feel it is safe.” •



# Two locations of **Red Stick** Farmers Market during winter months



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# GRANTS

## Puerto Rico Now

*Post Maria, graduate students in Harvard's Puerto Rico Winter Institute look deeply at the U.S. territory's fragile future*

By Maggie Heyn Richardson

Pummeled by Hurricane Maria in 2017, wracked by bankruptcy and without representation in the United States Congress, the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico finds itself at a critical juncture. Never has the need for a deeper understanding of the island's past, present and future been more important as it grapples with recovery and resolution.

That troubling backdrop was fertile ground for 20 graduate students and a team of noted scholars who participated in the Harvard Puerto Rico Winter Institute January 4-13, 2019, at the University of Puerto Rico at Rio Piedras. Selected from Harvard University and the University of Puerto Rico, the students came from a variety of academic interests, including law, design, education, psychology and government, but each with a common passion for understanding more about Puerto Rico's people and culture.

"Being there in person gave a new dimension to topics that are usually presented in the abstract," says Pedro Reina-Pérez, Wilbur Marvin Visiting Scholar in Harvard's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies and director of the Winter Institute. "We are extremely satisfied about the outcomes this year."

The Winter Institute first started in 2002 with support from the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, which was created by the late Wilbur Marvin. He donated his real estate assets to his namesake foundation, which is a supporting nonprofit of the Baton

### FOUNDATION FACT:

Wilbur Marvin left his real estate assets to the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, which is a supporting nonprofit of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. BRAF and the Marvin Foundation underwrite nonprofits and projects in Puerto Rico, including long-term support for the Harvard Puerto Rico Winter Institute. Our Puerto Rico grants total \$3.8 million.

Rouge Area Foundation.

Marvin's personal interest in Puerto Rico sparked a longtime relationship between BRAF and the island, including a recent investment in the Puerto Rican nonpartisan think tank, Center for a New Economy.

The Winter Institute functioned until 2010. Reina, appointed as Harvard's Wilbur Marvin Visiting Scholar in 2013, restarted the institute in January 2017. The reboot was wildly successful. As plans were underway for a conference the following year, Hurricane Maria made landfall. Widespread damage from the storm, the worst ever to hit Puerto Rico, caused the cancellation of the 2018 conference, adding to the importance of the 2019 gathering, says Reina.

Reina amassed a team of scholars from Harvard and UPR with expertise in design, transnationalism and citizenship who could help the group of graduate students, all proficient in the Spanish





Students from Harvard and University of Puerto Rico gathered at the Harvard Puerto Rico Winter Institute in January.



language, sift through a historic moment that includes disaster recovery, political inequity and cultural disruption. Reina's own research focuses on the study of public cultural institutions in the Hispanic Caribbean, the study of entrepreneurship and the analysis of public policies and social innovation with arts and humanities.

"A major theme of this conference was transnationalism," says Reina, referring to the social phenomenon in which cultural, political and economic boundaries take on new meaning in a global society. "But this year, we also shifted focus somewhat to devote more time to looking at issues of landscape, memory and citizenship, and who has the right to own and look after a given place."

The 10-day seminar included lectures, discussions and numerous field trips to cultural and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) throughout the island. A major component was the one-on-one exchanges that took place between the graduate students themselves.

While Puerto Rico counts itself among communities across the globe that have faced devastating natural disasters and all that comes with them—the island's problems are significantly compounded by its relationship to the U.S. Officially, the island has been a U.S. territory since 1898, when Spain ceded control to America after the Spanish American War. At that point, Puerto Rico became an unincorporated U.S. territory with no path to statehood.

In 1917, Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship, which enabled them to be drafted in large numbers when America entered World War I the following year. However, the U.S. did not grant them the right to vote or to send voting members to Congress. Puerto Ricans still cannot vote in U.S. elections, and their only representative in Washington, D.C., is a nonvoting resident commissioner.

This ambiguous relationship with the U.S., and the painful realization that the island would not receive the same level of disaster relief seen by other American cities, has had an enormous impact on Puerto Rico's psyche, says Reina, who is a resident of the island and faculty member at the University of Puerto Rico. The hurricane caused an estimated 2,975 deaths (a figure that took nearly a year to confirm) and more than \$90 billion in damage. As if this weren't enough, the territory had already declared bankruptcy a few months before the storm hit.

*"The Winter Institute was intended to set the table. It absolutely accomplished that and more."*

—Pedro Reina-Pérez, Wilbur Marvin Visiting Scholar

But what has occurred in Puerto Rico, and what the Winter Institute took time to examine, was the way many citizens have led the recovery of their own neighborhoods. With money short, recovery slow and the U.S. ambivalent, some Puerto Ricans have simply picked up the mantle.

"We visited sites including different NGOs, a community

garden, a neighborhood association, group of students who are attempting to take over a condemned building and create a theater company and others," says Reina. "We looked at all sorts of dimensions of living, including what does it mean to be a citizen not only from a legal perspective, but also from a human and moral one, and what kind of agency does one have in enacting change."

A close look at the way in which the built environment is reordered after a disaster was also a major focus of the conference, says Reina. Noted Harvard scholar Charles Waldheim, John E. Irving Professor of Landscape Architecture and Director of the Office for Urbanization, led a session on design and architecture that included themes on landscape, ecology and contemporary urbanism.

In another session, Deepak Lamba-Nieves, Center for a New Economy Research Director and Churchill G. Carey Jr. Chair in Economic Development Research, created a forum for analyzing past disasters around the globe and what they might portend for Puerto Rico's recovery. Cases included Mexico City's 1985 earthquake, 9-11 in New York City, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Indonesia's 2004 Sumatra earthquake and tsunamis, and others.

"There is much to discuss and learn, from climate change and the topic of rising seas, to the transformation of a community after a disaster, to disaster capitalism, emigration, poverty and political inequities," says Reina.

For the students, the Winter Institute marked the beginning of a new period of study and analysis. They're now charged with completing original creative or scholarly projects which they will conduct as teams across different academic disciplines. Reina predicts rich collaborations among students as they bring new ideas and modes of thinking to a complex set of problems.

"The Winter Institute was intended to set the table," he says. "It absolutely accomplished that and more." •

# GRANTS

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation distributed \$8.5 million to nonprofits, scholarships and for hardship assistance grants in the fourth quarter of 2018. Fund donors make most of the grants from their door advised funds, which are like investment accounts for doing good. The Foundation manages the money in the funds. If you want to know more about opening a donor advised fund, please call Elizabeth Hutchison or Francisca Comeaux at (225) 387-6126.

100 Black Men of Metro New Orleans Inc. \$75,000  
100 Black Men of Metropolitan Baton Rouge \$50,000  
100 Women in Gold \$3,000  
50CAN Inc. \$25,000  
A Bed 4 Me Foundation \$5,000  
A House Unbuilt \$2,500  
AARP Foundation \$100  
Academic Distinction Fund \$47,325  
Academy of the Sacred Heart New Orleans Foundation Inc. \$3,000  
Acadiana Animal Aid \$5,000  
Acts of Love Inc. \$3,500  
Acus Foundation \$10,000  
Adult Congenital Heart Association Inc. \$500  
AFS Intercultural Programs Inc. \$250  
Agenda for Children Inc. - New Orleans \$61,250  
ALS Association Louisiana-Mississippi Chapter \$250  
Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Association \$100  
Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area \$35,960  
America Achieves Inc. \$143,750  
American Association of University Women Inc \$100  
American Cancer Society Inc. - Mid-South Division \$3,275  
American Friends Service Committee \$200  
American Heart Association Inc. - Greater Southeast Affiliate \$34,394  
American Indian College Fund \$100  
American National Red Cross - Headquarters \$5,000  
American National Red Cross - Louisiana Capital Area \$9,618  
American Shakespeare Center \$10,000  
AMIkids Inc \$5,000  
Amnesty International of the USA Inc. \$200  
Angels Place Inc. \$3,100  
Arizona State University \$25,000  
Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$17,213  
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Arts Council of Pointe Coupee \$500  
Assets School \$200  
ASSIST Agency \$2,000  
Association for Research and Enlightenment Inc \$100  
Auckland Foundation \$25,000

Baton Rouge Area Violence Elimination Inc./TRUCE \$1,000  
Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre Inc. \$1,000  
Baton Rouge Child Advocacy Center \$200  
Baton Rouge Christian Education Foundation Inc. -  
The Dunham School \$2,883  
Baton Rouge Community College Foundation \$10,000  
Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center Inc. \$3,726  
Baton Rouge Gallery Inc. \$3,500  
Baton Rouge Green Association Inc. \$2,977  
Baton Rouge High School Foundation \$21,804  
Baton Rouge Opera Guild \$1,919  
Baton Rouge Regional Eye Bank Inc. \$20,000  
Baton Rouge Sponsoring Committee \$10,000  
Baton Rouge Veterans Foundation \$1,000  
Baton Rouge Youth Coalition Inc. \$162,175  
Bayou Playhouse Inc. \$5,000  
Bella Bowman Foundation Inc. \$1,000  
Beth Shalom Synagogue \$15,000  
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Louisiana Inc. \$9,000  
Big Buddy Program \$2,750  
Big Class Inc. \$5,000  
Blue Ridge Mountains Health Project Inc. \$1,000  
Book Harvest \$5,000  
Boy Scouts of America - Evangeline Area Council \$1,000  
Boy Scouts of America - Istrouma Area Council \$13,500  
Boy Scouts of America - Southeast Louisiana Council \$10,000  
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$50,000  
Bread for the World Institute Inc. \$500  
BREADA - Big River Economic & Agricultural  
Development Alliance \$17,650  
Brothers of the Sacred Heart Foundation of the  
New Orleans Province \$1,000  
Calcasieu Parish School Board - J. J. Johnson Elementary \$500  
Cancer Services Inc. \$63,394  
Capital Area Agency on Aging District II - Ascension \$1,000  
Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless \$5,000  
Capital Area Animal Welfare Society \$318  
Capital Area CASA Association \$2,000  
Capital Area United Way \$172,000  
Capitol City Family Health Center Inc. / CareSouth \$16,200  
CASA of St. Landry Inc. \$1,500  
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Inc. \$6,500  
Catholic Foundation of the Archdiocese of Mobile Inc. -  
St. Thomas by the Sea \$500  
Catholic High School Foundation \$37,236  
Catholic Relief Services Inc. \$200  
Cenikor Foundation - Baton Rouge \$5,000  
Center for Action and Contemplation Inc. \$100  
Center for Planning Excellence Inc. \$16,750  
Center For Science In The Public Interest \$200  
Centre for the Arts \$15,198  
CEO Mind Org \$1,000

Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$5,500  
 Child Advocacy Services Inc. \$2,500  
 Children's Cup \$3,200  
 Chinese Christian Church of Baton Rouge \$297  
 Christ the King Parish and Catholic Center at LSU \$21,660  
 City of Port Allen \$1,000  
 City Year Inc. - Baton Rouge \$13,250  
 Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority \$4,800  
 College for Social Innovation Inc. \$5,000  
 Community Foundation of Greater Jackson Inc. \$500  
 Community Foundation of North Florida Inc \$1,500  
 Community School For Apprenticeship Learning Inc. \$1,000  
 Companion Animal Alliance \$23,900  
 Congregation B'nai Israel of Baton Rouge Foundation \$275  
 Congregation B'nai Israel of Baton Rouge \$57,668  
 Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere Inc./ CARE \$100  
 Council of French Societies of Greater New Orleans \$1,000  
 Court 13 Arts \$15,000  
 Covenant Hospice Foundation Inc \$5,000  
 Covenant House New Orleans \$4,500  
 Crippled Children Foundation \$500  
 Cristo Rey Baton Rouge \$3,000  
 Cultural Landscape Foundation \$500  
 Cystic Fibrosis Foundation - Baton Rouge \$250  
 Democracy Prep Public Schools \$5,000  
 Diocese of Houma - Thibodaux \$10,000  
 Division of Administration \$5,000  
 Doctors Without Borders USA Inc. \$2,250  
 Domus Pacis Family Respite Inc. \$100  
 Douglas Manship Sr. Theatre Complex Holding Inc. \$14,733  
 Ducks Unlimited Inc. - Headquarters \$1,000  
 Duke University - Sanford School of Public Policy \$50,000  
 Duke University \$100  
 Dyslexia Association of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$627  
 East Baton Rouge Parish Council on Aging Inc. \$300  
 East Baton Rouge Parish Library \$2,803  
 EBRPSS - Bernard Terrace Elementary School \$1,000  
 EBRPSS - Woodlawn Middle School \$1,000  
 EdNavigator Inc. \$175,000  
 Education Resource Strategies Inc. \$75,000  
 Emerge Center Inc. \$18,646  
 English Speaking Union of the United States \$200  
 Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion \$7,000  
 Episcopal High School of Baton Rouge \$690,500  
 Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre \$1,200  
 Even Ground Inc. \$9,000  
 Face to Face Health & Counseling Service Inc. \$5,000  
 Famcore Foundation Inc. \$1,000  
 Family Service of Greater Baton Rouge \$10,000  
 Feeding America \$100  
 Fellowship of Christian Athletes \$1,000  
 Film Forum Inc. \$40,000

## OVER \$500 MILLION GRANTED SINCE 1964

In December, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation surpassed more than \$508 million in total grants since we started in 1964. The grants have accelerated in the past decade, when the Foundation granted \$275 million. We thank our fund donors, who chose us to assist them with their philanthropy.

FINCA International Inc. \$500  
 First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge \$1,345  
 First United Methodist Church \$19,000  
 Fletcher Technical Community College Foundation Inc. \$45,750  
 Fondren Renaissance Foundation \$500  
 Forward Arts Inc. \$5,000  
 Foundation for a Better Louisiana \$3,300  
 Foundation for Excellence in Louisiana Public Broadcasting \$402,000  
 Foundation for Historical Louisiana Inc. / Preserve Louisiana \$4,105  
 Foundation for Woman's \$64,394  
 Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University \$1,500  
 Franciscan Poor Clares \$100  
 Fresh Start for Children and Families Inc. \$5,000  
 Friends of Cantera Inc. \$10,000  
 Friends of Hilltop Arboretum Inc. \$2,350  
 Friends of Louisiana Public Broadcasting Inc. \$15,724  
 Friends of Magnolia Mound Plantation Inc. \$3,250  
 Friends of Oakley Community Foundation \$100  
 Friends of Rosedown Inc. \$250  
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 Friends of the Baton Rouge Zoo \$1,250  
 Friends of the Louisiana State Archives \$100  
 Friends of the Murrell Home Foundation \$10,000  
 Front Yard Bikes \$1,250  
 GaitWay Therapeutic Horsemanship \$40,000  
 Galloway United Methodist Church \$1,000  
 Gardner-Webb University \$2,000  
 General Health System Foundation \$11,500  
 Georgia Tech Foundation Inc. \$10,000  
 Girl Scouts - Audubon Council Inc. \$500  
 Girl Scouts Louisiana East Inc. \$2,500

Girl Scouts of Greater Mississippi Inc. \$500  
 Global Hunger Project \$150  
 Good Neighbor Foundation \$1,500  
 Grace at the Green Light Inc. \$3,100  
 Grace Episcopal Church \$700  
 Greater Baton Rouge Economic Partnership Inc. \$2,500  
 Greater Baton Rouge Economic Partnership Inc./YEA \$5,000  
 Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank Inc. \$74,533  
 Greater Baton Rouge Hope Academy Inc. \$13,000  
 Greater Starlight Baptist Church \$1,000  
 Habitat for Humanity of Greater Baton Rouge \$1,000  
 Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society \$100  
 Healing Place Church \$5,200  
 Healing Place Serve \$1,000  
 Healthnetwork Foundation \$500  
 Heart of Georgia Hospice Inc. \$1,000  
 Heart of Hope Ministries Inc. \$1,000  
 Heifer Project International \$200  
 Heritage Ranch \$18,500  
 Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Foundation Inc. \$2,000  
 HIV/AIDS Alliance for Region Two (HAART) \$16,200  
 Holy Family Catholic Church \$12,347  
 HOPE Ministries of Baton Rouge \$3,750  
 Hospice Foundation of Greater Baton Rouge \$41,941  
 Iberia Parish School System - Westgate High School \$1,000  
 Iberville Foundation for Academic Excellence \$5,937  
 Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy \$50,000  
 Institute of Southern Jewish Life Inc. \$1,500  
 Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$2,100  
 International Campaign for Tibet \$100  
 International Center for Journalists Inc. \$25,000  
 International Hospitality Foundation LSU \$1,690  
 International Rescue Committee Inc. \$13,050  
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 Jewish Federation of Greater Baton Rouge \$12,000  
 Jubilee Pioneers \$2,250  
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 Kemper and Leila Williams Foundation -  
 Historic New Orleans Collection \$5,900  
 Kind Inc. \$250  
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 Kings Daughters Foundation \$250  
 Knock Knock Children's Museum Inc. \$26,500  
 Kudvumisa Foundation USA Inc. \$1,500  
 Lambda Kappa Kappa Foundation Inc. \$1,000  
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 Lighthouse for the Blind in New Orleans \$10,000  
 Lighthouse for the Blind in New Orleans \$1,000  
 Living Water Christian Fellowship of Springfield \$2,000  
 Living Word Church of Muskegon \$600  
 Lorian Association \$100  
 Louis Childrens Crisis Center \$1,000  
 Louise S. McGehee School \$500  
 Louisiana 4-H Foundation \$1,000  
 Louisiana 4-H Foundation \$1,100  
 Louisiana Architectural Foundation \$1,210  
 Louisiana Art and Science Museum Inc. \$14,506  
 Louisiana Children's Museum \$25,000  
 Louisiana Industries for the Disabled Inc. \$3,990  
 Louisiana International Film Festival \$13,000  
 Louisiana Key Academy \$3,000  
 Louisiana Leadership Institute \$50,000  
 Louisiana Lupus Foundation Inc. \$400  
 Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra \$700  
 Louisiana Preservation Alliance Inc. \$1,000  
 Louisiana Resource Center for Educators \$2,500  
 Louisiana State University and Agricultural &  
 Mechanical College \$50,000  
 Louisiana Superintendents Academy \$25,000  
 Louisiana Symphony Association / Baton Rouge Symphony  
 Orchestra \$39,095  
 Louisiana Tech University Foundation Inc. \$2,000  
 Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services Inc. \$100  
 Louisiana Wildlife Federation Inc. \$100  
 Lower Mississippi River Foundation Inc. \$500  
 Loyola Educational Corporation of Shreveport \$1,000  
 Loyola University \$2,000  
 LSU Alumni Association \$2,500  
 LSU Foundation - Center for French and Francophone Studies \$562  
 LSU Foundation - College of Art and Design \$1,000  
 LSU Foundation - Department of Libraries \$1,300  
 LSU Foundation - E. J. Ourso College of Business \$55,000  
 LSU Foundation - LSU Ag Center Botanic Gardens at Burden \$6,960  
 LSU Foundation - LSU Museum of Art \$56,750  
 LSU Foundation - Manship School of Mass Communication \$3,000  
 LSU Foundation - Patrons of LSU Opera \$500  
 LSU Foundation - Paul M. Hebert Law Center \$6,000  
 LSU Foundation - School of Music \$250  
 LSU Foundation - School of Social Work \$300  
 LSU Foundation - Shreveport \$1,000  
 LSU Foundation - University Lab School Foundation \$1,500  
 LSU Foundation \$10,950  
 Luke's House - A Clinic for Healing and Hope \$3,100  
 Maison des Ami of Louisiana Inc. \$2,550  
 Manners of the Heart \$5,000  
 Mantle of Mary Inc. \$1,300  
 Map 1040 \$1,500  
 Marine Toys for Tots Foundation \$1,000  
 Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center \$129,750  
 Mary's Pence \$500  
 McMains Foundation \$5,163  
 McNeese State University Foundation \$5,000  
 Mercy Corps \$100

Mercy Ships \$4,002  
 Metanoia Inc. \$5,000  
 MetroMorphosis \$96,500  
 Metropolitan Opera Guild Inc. \$1,000  
 Miami Suns Youth Development Inc. \$28,205  
 Mid City Redevelopment Alliance Inc. \$250  
 Mighty Moms \$2,500  
 Mississippi Children's Home Society -  
   Canopy Children's Solutions \$2,000  
 Ms. Wheelchair America \$500  
 Murphy Education & Sports Foundation \$3,100  
 National Audubon Society Inc. - Audubon Louisiana \$4,500  
 National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company \$200  
 National Redistricting Foundation \$50,000  
 National World War II Museum Inc. \$8,500  
 Natural Resources Defense Council Inc. \$2,000  
 Nature Conservancy - Louisiana \$6,000  
 Nature Conservancy \$100  
 New Orleans Airlift \$25,000  
 New Orleans Ballet Association \$15,000  
 New Orleans Musicians Assistance Foundation \$20,000  
 New Orleans Opera Association \$3,700  
 New Schools for New Orleans Inc. \$73,750  
 New York Theatre Workshop Inc. \$5,000  
 Next Level Community Development Center \$1,000  
 Nicholls State University Foundation \$2,500  
 Nine Gates Programs Inc. \$200  
 Northern Star Council - Boy Scouts of America \$2,000  
 O'Brien House Inc. \$9,750  
 Ochsner Health System \$3,000  
 Odyssey House Louisiana \$3,100  
 Of Moving Colors Productions \$4,450  
 Oglala Lakota College \$200  
 Old State Capitol Foundation Inc. \$400  
 Ollie Steele Burden Manor Inc. \$364  
 Omicron Delta Kappa Foundation Inc. \$100  
 Opera Louisiane Inc. \$42,178  
 Options Inc. \$2,500  
 Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church \$12,000  
 Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church \$38,444  
 Our Lady of the Lake Foundation \$33,700  
 Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church \$500  
 Our Voice Nuestra Voz \$25,000  
 Ozanam Inn \$5,000  
 Pace Center for Girls Inc \$2,700  
 Pahara Institute \$62,500  
 Park County Environmental Council \$1,000  
 Particular Council of St. Vincent de Paul of  
   Baton Rouge, Louisiana \$8,402  
 Partners in Health \$200  
 Partnerships with Native Americans \$200  
 Pat's Coats for Kids \$1,000  
 Peggy Crosby Community Service Center \$500  
 Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation \$36,106

Phi Beta Kappa Society \$135  
 Phillips Exeter Academy \$2,000  
 Pinkney, Zena \$600  
 Planned Parenthood Federation of America \$100  
 Planned Parenthood of the Gulf Coast Inc. \$2,000  
 Pointe Coupee Early Childhood Coalition Inc. \$31,000  
 Pointe Coupee Parish Police Jury \$250  
 Policy Institute for the Children of Louisiana Inc. \$5,000  
 Presbytery of the Mid Atlantic \$500  
 President and Fellows of Harvard College -  
   David Rockefeller Center for Latin Am \$10,000  
 President and Fellows of Harvard College \$45,000  
 Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana Inc. \$250  
 Prison Inmate Chapels of Louisiana Inc. \$1,000  
 Project HOPE the People to People Health Foundation Inc. \$550  
 ProPublica Inc. \$4,500  
 Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana Inc. \$6,000  
 Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge Inc. \$10,000  
 Rebuilding Together \$1,000  
 Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of  
   East Baton Rouge \$2,600  
 Red Shoes Inc. \$8,000  
 Revelation and Wisdom Ministries Inc. \$1,000  
 Richard Murphy Hospice House Inc. \$2,500  
 Ripples of Hope Inc. \$6,000  
 Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation \$500  
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge -  
   Bishop Ott Works of Mercy Trust \$197  
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge -  
   Bishop's Annual Appeal \$8,700  
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge \$134,160  
 Roots of Music Inc. \$15,000  
 Rotary Club of Baton Rouge Inc. Foundation \$10,715  
 Russell Domingue Ministries Inc. / Blue Flames Ministries \$750  
 S S C Progression Corp - St. Stanislaus College \$1,000  
 Sacred Heart Church \$5,000  
 Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church \$1,000  
 Saint Joseph's Abbey and Seminary College \$1,500  
 Samaritan's Purse \$500  
 Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church \$100  
 Shotgun Cinema \$10,000  
 Shriners Hospital for Children \$5,500  
 Sierra Club Foundation \$100  
 Singleton, Tammy \$4,087  
 Sioux City Public Schools Foundation \$4,000  
 SJA Foundation \$3,000  
 Society of Saint John the Evangelist \$500  
 South Africa Development Fund Inc. \$10,000  
 Southern Poverty Law Center Inc. \$200  
 Southwest Louisiana Alliance Foundation Inc \$5,000  
 SportsBR Foundation \$2,000  
 SSVM Missions Inc. \$200  
 St. Alban's Chapel \$5,000  
 St. Albans School - School of Public Service \$5,000

St. Aloysius Catholic Church \$19,000  
 St. Aloysius Catholic School \$8,000  
 St. Andrew Catholic Church \$500  
 St. Andrew's - Sewanee School \$500  
 St. Anne Catholic Church \$2,010  
 St. Augustine Church \$958  
 St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School \$1,000  
 St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church \$3,000  
 St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church \$1,000  
 St. Francisville Area Foundation Inc. \$600  
 St. George Catholic Church \$10,500  
 St. George's Episcopal School \$250  
 St. Gerard Majella Church \$10,500  
 St. James Episcopal Church \$18,200  
 St. James Episcopal Day School \$19,000  
 St. James Place of Baton Rouge Foundation Inc. \$250  
 St. Jean Vianney Catholic Church \$2,662  
 St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church \$4,552  
 St. Joseph Cathedral \$800  
 St. Joseph Spirituality Center \$500  
 St. Joseph the Worker Church \$6,209  
 St. Joseph's Academy \$9,050  
 St. Joseph's Indian School \$500  
 St. Jude Catholic Church \$9,000  
 St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Inc. \$2,300  
 St. Jude the Apostle Catholic School \$1,000  
 St. Labre Indian School \$100  
 St. Lillian Academy \$1,000  
 St. Luke Baptist Church \$500  
 St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church/ St. Thomas Chapel \$1,000  
 St. Mary's Church \$1,100  
 St. Mary's Episcopal Church and Cemetery Association Inc. \$100  
 St. Mary's Episcopal Church \$100  
 St. Mary's Nativity School \$5,000  
 St. Thomas Aquinas Regional Catholic High School \$14,764  
 Stelly, Kenneth J. \$20,000  
 STREB Inc. \$5,000  
 Strength for Today \$2,500  
 Stuart Hall School Foundation \$100  
 Studio By The Tracks Inc. \$3,000  
 Sufi Order International / The Inayati Order \$100  
 Summit Public Schools \$31,250  
 Swine Palace Productions Inc. \$1,000  
 Tate, Maranda \$3,478  
 Teach for America Inc. - South Louisiana \$216,500  
 Teacher Prep Inspection - US Inc. \$175,000  
 The Administrators of the Tulane Educational Fund -  
 Tulane Cancer Center \$500  
 The Administrators of the Tulane Educational Fund -  
 Tulane University Law School \$500  
 The Administrators of the Tulane Educational Fund \$18,100  
 The Amazing Grace Christian Fellowship Church \$1,000  
 The Arc of East Ascension \$3,500

The Ascension Fund Inc. \$13,690  
 The Breakthrough Collaborative Inc. \$1,000  
 The Chapel / The Chapel on the Campus \$1,500  
 The Christian Outreach Center of Baton Rouge Inc. \$1,345  
 The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta Inc. \$20,302  
 The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina Inc. \$2,000  
 The Cotuit Library Association \$1,000  
 The Foundation for Outdoor Advertising Research and  
 Education \$5,000  
 The Friends of the Rural Life Museum Inc. \$4,845  
 The Hargrove Foundation \$10,000  
 The Maxine Giardina Charter School Inc. \$5,000  
 The Mental Health Association for Greater Baton Rouge \$4,600  
 The Ogden Museum of Southern Art Inc. \$5,360  
 The Original Richland Library Restoration Society Inc. \$833  
 The Regents of the University of California Los Angeles \$4,057  
 The Salvation Army - Baton Rouge \$4,000  
 The Salvation Army Del Oro Division \$250  
 The Salvation Army of Lafayette \$2,000  
 The Salvation Army South Division \$250  
 The Suffolk Community Foundation \$7,000  
 The Vision 21 Foundation \$1,000  
 The Water Institute of the Gulfs Delta \$12,000  
 Three Peaks Scholarship Fund \$250  
 Thrive Foundation \$10,000  
 Tiger Athletic Foundation \$260,000  
 Trinity Episcopal Church - Baton Rouge \$27,408  
 Trinity Episcopal Church - New Orleans \$1,500  
 Trinity Episcopal Day School \$3,750  
 Trinity Sober Homes \$1,000  
 Tulane Alumni Association \$1,158  
 Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge \$70,000  
 United States Association for UNHCR \$200  
 United States Fund for UNICEF \$5,100  
 United Way of Beaumont and North Jefferson County \$10,000  
 United Way of Brazoria County \$5,000  
 United Way of Escambia County Inc \$3,500  
 United Way of Greater Houston \$15,000  
 United Way of Lamar County \$15,000  
 United Way of Marion Co Inc \$5,000  
 United Way of Mid and South Jefferson County \$5,000  
 United Way of Morgan County \$7,500  
 United Way of Southeast Louisiana \$7,500  
 United Way of Southwest Louisiana Inc. \$15,000  
 United Way of the Coastal Bend Inc. \$7,500  
 University of Connecticut Foundation Inc. \$100  
 University Of Georgia Foundation \$100  
 University of Louisiana at Lafayette Foundation \$500  
 University of New Mexico Foundation Inc. \$200  
 University of New Orleans Foundation \$300  
 University of Richmond \$250  
 University of Texas Foundation \$1,000  
 University of the Cumberland Inc. \$500



University of the South \$22,000  
University Presbyterian Church \$24,200  
UpStage Inc. \$1,000  
Urban League of Greater New Orleans Co Inc. \$38,333  
Urban League of Palm Beach County Inc. \$250  
US Biennial Inc. \$15,000  
Vandebilt Catholic High School \$3,000  
Video Veracity Inc. \$7,500  
Volunteers In Public Schools Inc. \$2,150  
Volunteers of America Inc. \$5,500  
Wellesley College \$10,000  
West Baton Rouge Foundation for Academic Excellence \$6,357  
West Feliciana Historical Society \$125  
Wikimedia Foundation Inc. \$100  
Winston-Salem Foundation \$20,302  
Women for Women International \$200  
Wounded Warrior Project Inc. \$625  
WRKF Public Radio Inc. \$19,824  
Yale University \$1,000  
YMCA of the Capital Area - Paula G. Manship YMCA \$1,000  
YMCA of the Capital Area \$175,500  
Young Aspirations-Young Artists Inc. \$12,500  
Young Life - Baton Rouge \$5,000  
Young Life - New Orleans \$25,000  
YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge \$60,000



# Jamel Brinkley

*Gaines book award winner*

Interview by Mukul Verma | Photo by Tim Mueller

Jamel Brinkley won the 2018 Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence for his debut collection of short stories, *A Lucky Man*. An independent panel of judges picked the winning book and Brinkley's win was celebrated Jan. 24 at the Manship Theatre at the Shaw Center for the Arts.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation initiated and oversees the award, which this year was underwritten by the Foundation and the McMains family.

The Gaines book award recognizes the best work of fiction by an African-American writer. The award also honors Louisiana native Ernest Gaines' extraordinary contribution to the literary world.

Brinkley's writing has appeared in *The Best American Short Stories 2018*, *Ploughshares*, *Gulf Coast*, *The Threepenny Review*, *Glimmer Train*, *American Short Fiction*, and *Tin House*. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, he was also a Carol Houck Smith Fiction Fellow at the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing. He is currently a Wallace Stegner Fellow in Fiction at Stanford University. He lives in Oakland.

## **CURRENTS: WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE CHILDHOOD BOOK AND WHY DID YOU LIKE IT?**

**BRINKLEY:** As a kid, I liked the *Encyclopedia Brown* series and the *Choose Your Own Adventure* gamebooks. There were others, but those are the ones that come to mind right now. I think I liked the mystery aspect, the intelligence of the protagonist, and the feeling of being an active reader. When I was a teenager, my favorite book was probably Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, which even then I knew was incredibly ambitious and important. I read it over and over.

## **WHO ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE WRITERS AND BOOKS?**

Some of my favorite works of fiction include *Song of Solomon* and *Sula* by Toni Morrison, *Lost in the City* and *All Aunt Hagar's Children* by Edward P. Jones, *Corregidora* by Gayl Jones, *Gold Boy*, *Emerald Girl* by Yiyun Li, *The Point* and *The Dead Fish Museum* by Charles D'Ambrosio, *Notes of a Native Son* by James Baldwin, *So Long*, *See You Tomorrow* by William Maxwell, and *Stoner* by John Williams. Other writers I love include William Trevor, Anton Chekhov, Virginia Woolf, Denis Johnson, Gina Berriault, Gwendolyn Brooks, James Alan McPherson, Toni Cade Bambara, Danielle Evans and Jamaica Kincaid. This list could go on for a very long time.

**WHEN DID YOU START WANTING TO WRITE FOR A LIVING?**

I didn't decide to try putting writing at the center of my life until five or six years ago. Before that writing was something that I tried to fit into the cracks and margins of my life.

**IN TERMS OF YOUR PROCESS, DO YOU START WITH AN IDEA, A CHARACTER? DO YOU START WITH THE FINAL PASSAGES IN MIND, OR DO YOU START WRITING AND LET THE STORY GO WHERE IT TAKES YOU?**

I never start with the final passages in mind. In some ways, I wish I could see an entire story before I started writing, but my mind doesn't work that way. I usually start with something small—not an idea, per se, but an image, a character, a place, a voice—and then I follow that thing as patiently as I can until a story starts to develop.

**WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW?**

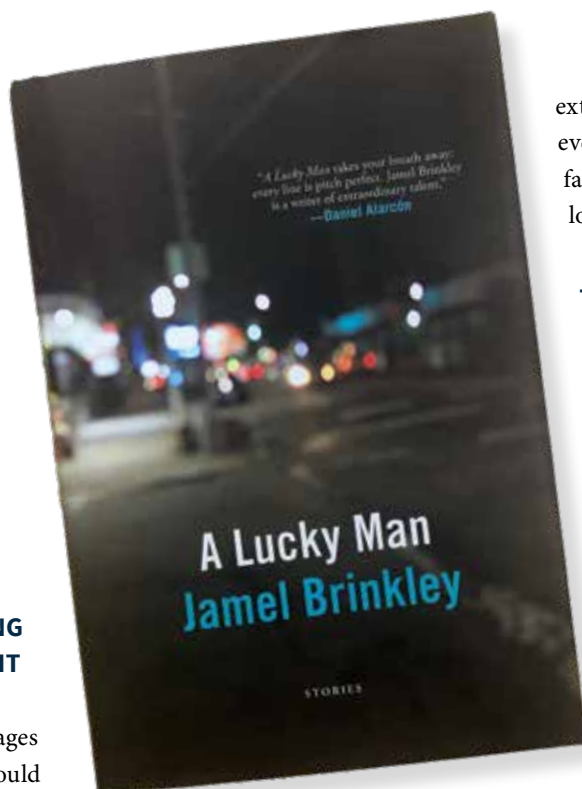
I'm working on new stories and on what might be a novel. We'll see...

**SOME WAKE UP EARLY IN THE MORNING TO WRITE. OTHERS PREFER THE EVENING. SOME WRITE FOR HOURS, OTHERS COUNT THE WORDS THEY HAVE WRITTEN AND STOP TO EDIT. WHEN AND HOW DO YOU WRITE?**

In the past five years or so, because of generous and fortuitous institutional support, I've been able to write without having a full-time job. So I am typically a morning writer. I don't wake up incredibly early. I'm happy if I can write from mid- or late morning until early or mid-afternoon most days of the week.

**TELL US ABOUT A LUCKY MAN.**

The collection is set in Brooklyn and the Bronx, where I grew up. Each story has a protagonist who is a black boy or a black man. Many people have talked about the collection as having masculinity as its central theme. Perhaps this is true, to some



extent, but I think the book is also or even more concerned with intimacy, family, friendship, brotherhood and love.

**THE SHORT STORIES IN A LUCKY MAN ARE MUCH LONGER THAN TYPICAL SHORT STORIES. IS THERE A REASON FOR THIS?**

I love very short, tight short stories, but it has been difficult for me to write them. I like the lifelike, more novelistic quality a slightly shaggier story makes possible, and since a number of my stories are shaped by journeys, I think longer stories help me engage with and take advantage of the possibilities, such as random encounters and detours, that are inherent to

that narrative shape. Longer stories also enable me to play with time in ways that aren't strictly limited to a central present story and a subordinate backstory. Finally, I like that my "minor" characters are given more room to emerge.

**DO YOU PREFER THE SHORT STORY FORM? OR IS IT A STEPPINGSTONE TO LONGER STORIES, A NOVEL?**

I fell in love with the short story form while I was a student in my MFA program. I have aspirations to write stories and novels, but I don't see the story as inferior to the novel, or as a steppingstone to the novel.

**AND WHAT ARE YOU READING NOW THAT YOU WOULD RECOMMEND TO PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO READ?**

I'm reading a number of books in galley form. I recently finished *Lot*, a story collection by Bryan Washington, and I'm currently reading three novels: *In West Mills* by De'Shawn Charles Winslow, *The Travelers* by Regina M. Porter, and *The Unpassing* by Chia-Chia Lin. •

innovation, intrigue  
and inspiration  
merge into one,  
and our river runs  
through it...

APRIL 4-7  
louisianafilmfoundation.org



Live5  
AFTER

APRIL/MAY  
downtownbr.org

EBB & FLOW  
APRIL 5-7  
thirdstreetsongwritersfestival.com



ART FLOW: MARCH 1 – APRIL 15

RS  
Digital  
Festival

MARCH/APRIL  
redstickfestival.org

YOUNG  
ENTREPRENEURS  
Academy  
yeabr.org

APRIL 6  
yeabr.org

EBB &  
FLOW  
FESTIVAL

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# COVER

## Leap test

*Will millions from the Arnolds produce a new education model that works?*

**H**urricane Katrina upended New Orleans. Years after, the school system, once one of the worst in the country, was producing results, thanks to charter operators. In Houston, Laura and John Arnold noticed the transformation. Using their fund, Arnold Ventures, they boosted their investments in high-performing charter schools that were transforming education, particularly by investing in New Schools for Baton Rouge. Thanks to grants from Baton Rouge Area Foundation donors, NSBR was recruiting and supporting the best school operators in the country and—*the key—holding them accountable*. Which dovetails into John Arnold's belief: invest resources for measurable results only. What's happening in New Orleans and Baton Rouge education, through the New Schools model, is being replicated in more places. That's because the Arnolds have partnered with other philanthropists to create a \$200 million nonprofit named The City Fund, which is working with school systems in more than a dozen cities that want to provide high-quality education to children of low-income families. *Currents* interviewed John Arnold, a billionaire who made a fortune from investing, about his foundation's work.



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## **LAURA AND JOHN ARNOLD**

Laura Arnold is a Harvard- and Yale-educated attorney. She worked as an oil company executive. John Arnold made a fortune by opening a hedge fund for oil trading after Enron collapsed. They established the Laura and John Arnold Foundation in 2010, and it was renamed Arnold Ventures this year. They believe philanthropy should be transformational and should solve persistent societal problems through innovation. Their foundation distributes hundreds of millions of dollars each year.

**CURRENTS: YOU GREW UP IN DALLAS AND WERE EDUCATED THERE BEFORE HEADING TO VANDERBILT, WHERE YOU EARNED DEGREES IN MATH AND ECONOMICS. DID YOUR EDUCATION INFLUENCE HOW YOU MANAGE YOUR PHILANTHROPY?**

*John Arnold:* I think the principles of economics, which is the study of how society allocates scarce resources, have been very relevant to our grantmaking. Advocates for particular issues often are asking for more resources. More money for homelessness. More money for health care access. More money for education. There is nothing wrong with that; in most cases more

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and our fund donors, with backing from Louisiana Superintendent of Education John White, started New Schools for Baton Rouge, a nonprofit that has recruited top charter school operators to East Baton Rouge Parish. New Schools is different—it supports the schools while also holding them accountable for results. Laura and John Arnold and their Arnold Ventures, a foundation, has invested millions in the New Schools model and is replicating it in other cities. IDEA Schools is among charter operators recruited and supported by New Schools. Its challenge—teaching children who grow up in low-income households.

resources would be better. We approach these issues using the constraint of how can we get better outcomes using the same amount of resources. Those solutions, though harder to find, are much more scalable. Every state also has the capacity to implement those ideas.

**LOOKING AT THE WORK OF ARNOLD VENTURES, YOU AND YOUR WIFE ARE INTERESTED IN WHAT SEEMS TO BE VARIED CAUSES - K-12 EDUCATION, CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM, INTEGRITY OF SCIENTIFIC DATA, HEALTH CARE AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING OF GOVERNMENTS. HOW DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CAUSES?**

These issues have many common elements. First, we look for big problems. Finding better answers that can be successfully

implemented is very hard, so if we are successful we want to have made meaningful impact. The issues are all systems where the government interacts with the public under a complex set of rules and incentives. We are drawn to problems of this nature because the improvements, executed through policy change, are more likely to be scalable and sustainable.

**DO YOUR FOUNDATION'S INITIATIVES HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON?**

Our goal is to invest in lasting solutions across a range of policy areas that have a chance to improve people's lives. We harness objective data, along with the scholars and experts, to tackle inequities in our social, governmental and economic systems. We also try to look for imbalances in power that have led to institutional decline, such as the lobbying power of pharma companies leading to unfair drug pricing. We want to try to help ensure that our public institutions are working for everyone.

**WHAT BROUGHT ARNOLD VENTURES TO FOCUS ON EDUCATION?**

We felt that public education was too important to ignore. If kids don't get access to a rich and rigorous education, it's much harder to have a choice-filled life with great opportunities. We also saw that in Houston, our own backyard, too many students from low-income families were not getting access to the public education they needed. We wanted to help change that. But working in education is humbling. It's a complex system with difficult politics. So while we've stayed with it, we've learned a lot. And over time we've gravitated toward more systems level approaches. There's a lot of bureaucratic barriers that keep great educators from meeting the needs of the kids they work with day in and day out.

**BEFORE YOU CREATED YOUR FOUNDATION, I BELIEVE YOUR FIRST DONATIONS WERE TO KIPP, WHICH IS AMONG THE FIRST CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATORS OF ANY SIZE. WHY KIPP AND DID YOU GET THE RESULTS YOU WERE EXPECTING?**

When I first started making a healthy salary, I was interested in giving back to my community but didn't know where to start.



I was in a grocery store and saw a magazine with the cover story of “Top 100 nonprofits in the U.S.” I bought it and read it that night. I was particularly interested in organizations working in K-12 education and saw that one of those listed in the magazine was local, KIPP Houston. I called them up and set up a tour. I was impressed and sent them a check for \$25,000. A few days later, the head of KIPP, Mike Feinberg, called me up to thank me and set up a meeting. Not long thereafter, I joined the board. The question I have grappled with ever since is how to scale the pockets of great success that exist in K-12 education.

**NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC SCHOOLS WERE AMONG THE WORST IN THE NATION BEFORE KATRINA. WHAT OPPORTUNITY DID YOU SEE IN NEW ORLEANS POST-KATRINA THAT LED YOU TO MAKE ONE OF THE LARGEST GIFTS TO THE EDUCATION SECTOR THERE?**

In New Orleans we saw a community that, coming out of really tragic circumstances, was galvanized around improving the lives of children in their community. The amount of local leadership was truly incredible. We also thought their strategy made sense: they wanted to give more power to educators to meet the needs of the students they worked with every day, and they wanted to help families find a school that met the needs of their children. We hoped that the changes in governance structures they were making could empower educators and parents and lead to great results for students. So far, it’s turned out to be true.

**YOUR FOUNDATION HAS A DISTINCT MODEL FOR IMPROVING EDUCATION. IT SEEMS TO BE VERY RIGOROUS AND DRIVEN BY DATA. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE MODEL AND HOW IT WORKS?**

We try to be data-driven in our work, but it can be hard to draw firm conclusions from education research and social science more broadly, so we must be very humble and continue to learn. Some of the biggest questions in education, such as whether or not increases in test scores lead to better life outcomes, remain unanswered. We balance our research focus with also trying to better understand how parents are making choices on the ground. If a lot of parents want to attend a school, we take that as evidence that the school is probably doing something good.

**NATIONALLY, THE RESULTS ON CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE MIXED. THEY HAVE PERFORMED BETTER AND WORSE THAN COMPARABLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. WHAT DO YOU**

**THINK DIFFERENTIATES A SUCCESSFUL CHARTER OPERATOR FROM ONE THAT IS NOT?**

It’s fair to say that charter school results nationally are mixed when compared to all schools in America, but when you look at the data on urban charter schools the research shows that these schools are producing promising results for students.

The most recent research is showing that the charter school sector is getting even better over time.

As for what makes a great charter school operator, they come in all shapes and sizes. There’s no exact type of school that works for every kid. But the best operators, not surprisingly, are led by educators who have learned to become great executives while still keeping their passion for what got them to become educators in the first place. This is mission-driven work and you have to be in it for the right reasons.

**YOU HAVE INVESTED IN NEW SCHOOLS FOR BATON ROUGE. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO SUPPORT THE NONPROFIT?**

As national philanthropists, we consider it our role to provide extra resources to strong local efforts that have promise. It’s vital to have local organizations leading the work. NSBR has a strong management team and is partnering with a civic coalition with a long-term commitment to the city and an entrepreneurial spirit to get hard things done that help students.

NSBR also has a great strategy. They’re investing in the expansion of the best schools and selectively working to replace struggling schools. They’ve done a good job investing in educators that have had success with students who are reflective of those most in need in Baton Rouge. They’ve helped local educators open great schools, and they’ve recruited some of the highest performing charter school organizations from across the country to serve students in Baton Rouge.

**THE CITY FUND CAME ABOUT AFTER YOU ORIGINALLY SUPPORTED NEW SCHOOLS FOR NEW ORLEANS. CAN YOU TELL US HOW IT WAS FORMED?**

We were seeing positive results from the local efforts we’d supported, such as New Orleans and Washington, D.C. And we were interested in understanding if the same strategies could work at greater scale, whether or not additional cities would want to partner with us, and whether or not other philanthropists would want to do the work with us.

The creation of The City Fund is allowing us to test all of this. It’s a team of leaders from across the country who’ve come

together to work with a select group of cities to see if there's a way to improve all public schools. We've been fortunate to partner with a few other foundations and cities to do the work, so we'll spend the next couple of years seeing whether or not additional cities can make the kind of sustainable improvements that we've seen in New Orleans and Washington, D.C.

#### **WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF THE CITY FUND MODEL AND WHY DO YOU BELIEVE IT CAN BE REPLICATED ELSEWHERE?**

The City Fund approach will be driven by local leaders and will look different in every city, but there are a few common strategies that have worked in the cities where we've seen the most success.

These cities increased the number of public schools that are governed by nonprofit organizations, where educators have the freedom to build great schools that are tailored to the needs of the students they serve.

Each city also worked to ensure that all students have equitable access to the best schools. They did this by improving the information that was available to families, and by making enrollment easier and fairer for their most disadvantaged families.

And lastly, the governments in these cities worked to ensure that no child was forced to attend a consistently underperforming school.

We think all these strategies hold promise, but we don't know if they will work at scale. We're also hopeful that other innovations will be born out of leaders from different cities coming together to collectively solve their hardest problems.

#### **WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO SEE FROM THE INVESTMENTS IN BATON ROUGE AND NEW ORLEANS?**

Ultimately, this is about ensuring children are able to reach their potential. A great public school is one piece of this puzzle. It would be powerful to see the two largest cities in a state succeed in serving students who face a lot of tough challenges that come with poverty.

We hope that the work in Baton Rouge and New Orleans will make life better for tens of thousands of students in Louisiana and, hopefully, inspire the country to make things better for millions more. •





# Something to prove

*New Schools for Baton Rouge offers radical reform model; the country is watching*

By Sara Bongiorno | Photo by Tim Mueller

The stakes were always high for New Schools for Baton Rouge, which set out to give 12,000 students in the parish's worst schools better options by recruiting top charter-school operators to Baton Rouge.

It has opened 15 schools in six years. Three years ago, its schools enrolled 1,000 children. Today, the number is 5,000

*“The idea is giving autonomy to school leaders and then holding them to high results, regardless of what kind of school it is,”*

—Chris Meyer, New Schools' CEO

students in kindergarten through 10th grade, a figure that will swell to 10,000 when its existing schools are fully operational.

New Schools has recruited acclaimed charter school operators to Baton Rouge, including an Arizona-based network whose Scottsdale high school was ranked the No. 2

best high school in the U.S. by *U.S. News & World Report* last year.

Now New Schools will pursue still-higher stakes for children in failing public schools. Education reformers are pushing the

*“The country needs to know  
this is possible.”*

—Ken Bubp, partner in the \$200 million City Fund



New Schools model to disrupt the traditional school-system model nationally.

Those reformers have a transformative aim: Demonstrating the power of the school-management approach used by New Schools to expand its use in school districts nationwide.

The approach, known as the portfolio model, works like this: school systems invest in and expand schools that deliver good results and overhaul or close those that don't, whether they are charter schools, traditional public schools, magnets or some other iteration.

Charter schools are a central feature of a model in which school autonomy and community support are paramount, but it can be applied to traditional districts, too.

“The idea is giving autonomy to school leaders and then holding them to high results, regardless of what kind of school it is,” said Chris Meyer, New Schools’ CEO. “The focus is on outcomes and expanding schools that work for kids.”

Baton Rouge is one of about 10 cities where new nonprofit The City Fund is focusing efforts to expand the model. Its founders included billionaire hedge-fund manager John and Laura Arnold and Netflix CEO Reed Hastings. The City Fund has raised nearly \$200 million to expand the portfolio model in Baton Rouge and elsewhere since its founding last year. Arnold’s foundation alone has given several million dollars to New Schools to speed portfolio-model use in Baton Rouge.

The City Fund initiative has put New Schools, an organization created by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation with startup funding from our donors, on the front lines of work that could

reshape education policy nationwide.

“What happens in Baton Rouge is extremely important to the rest of the country because only a handful of cities have shown how to really serve kids in poverty,” said Ken Bubp, a partner in The City Fund who joined New Schools’ board of directors two years ago.

Expanding the portfolio model in Baton Rouge is tied to New Schools’ most ambitious undertaking so far.

Some 20,000 children in East Baton Rouge Parish still attend D- or F-rated public schools. New Schools wants to give those 20,000 students better school options by 2021 through added school capacity that includes growing its existing schools and building more of them.

The effort will take place against a backdrop of increased urgency. The number of D and F-rated schools in the parish rose from 32 to 43 between the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, in some part because the Louisiana Department of Education raised its grading standards.

“We want to give those kids the chance to attend some of the best schools in the country,” said Meyer.

Portfolio-model advocates say giving power to school leaders—principals, in traditional language—is key to what makes it work for children who live in poverty. Traditional schools in high-poverty areas often have the least-experienced teachers, yet principals have little power over hiring and firing decisions.

By comparison, the portfolio model frees principals to make decisions over everything from faculty, books and budget to the number of hours in the school day or days in the school year and

how many meals students get each day.

Superintendents have little role in day-to-day school operations in the model, instead overseeing the system and helping to identify which schools are working and which are not.

Few cities have put the model to work. Post-Katrina New Orleans is one of them. Nearly all its public schools are now charters, and it closes its worst-performing schools. Portfolio-model backers point to the city as an example of success.

But skeptics argue the disruption of Hurricane Katrina and a massive infusion of recovery funds are more likely indicators of academic gains in the city's public schools in recent years.

For that reason, success in Baton Rouge and cities such as Memphis and Indianapolis where The City Fund is investing is likely to be more meaningful.

As elsewhere, recruiting charter operators is central to New Schools' implementation of the portfolio model in Baton Rouge, as is providing start-up and ongoing support to its schools.

That support can take a variety of forms. In 2017, for instance, it covered the cost of sending 15 to 20 local teachers and principals to Texas for the better part of the school year to get them ready to open two IDEA schools in Baton Rouge.

Also in line with the model, New Schools is mostly hands-off day to day, with an eye on outcomes. It looks at test scores in assessing school performance, but student re-enrollment and teacher retention are other measures. The involvement of community partners is paramount.

Among its school results: two Baton Rouge schools run by Indianapolis-based charter network GEO Academies earned A grades from the state in how well they prepare kids for high school. About half of schools recruited by New Schools earned Top Gains honors from the state in 2018—it has moved some schools from F to C rankings.

All its schools have an A or B for growth. The grade for its schools as a group is C, which compares to a D for parish schools when higher-performing magnet campuses are excluded, the organization notes.

New Schools also has shown it is willing to yank support when a school is not showing adequate progress. Last year, it pulled support for a North Baton Rouge school three years after helping to open it.

"Successful schools show they can change and improve," Meyer said.

New Schools envisions a growing role for the portfolio model in Baton Rouge, not only from its own work but in view of organic changes in school operations across East Baton Rouge.

Charter schools are proliferating. There is no longer one

## FOUNDATION FACT:

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and our fund donors provided startup and operating funds to launch New Schools for Baton Rouge, which has since received tens of millions for its reform work from national funders.

district in the parish, but four. Local school board members have demonstrated growing openness to charter operators and increasingly speak the language of school choice and results, Meyer observes.

He sees an opportunity for New Schools and its community partners to work with the public schools to ramp up models that work, whatever their structure.

"We believe that when a community comes together to form a plan to address under-performing schools that's the best path forward," Meyer said. "We have a shot to show that this can work."

The City Fund's Bubp likewise sees collaboration between New Schools and public schools in years ahead.

"The best version of this is a partnership to support and establish schools that work," he said. "The country needs to know this is possible." •



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WHATEVER IT TAKES

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 2019 - 2020 STUDENT APPLICATION | 2019 - 2020 APLICACION ESTUDIANTE

**BATON ROUGE**

Bridge  
 Innovation

INFORMATION / INFORMACION DE LOS PADRES

Parent Name	Child Name	Grade
Mother	John	10
Legal Guardian	Home Address	Phone
	City/State/Zip	

STATEMENTS / DECLARACION

Kenneth Campbell

Photo by Tim Mueller

# Big ideas

*Successful Texas charter opens two schools, more to come*

By Maggie Heyn Richardson

Walking single file, the kindergarteners in the class nicknamed “Auburn University” stroll calmly, tiny hands stuffed in pants pockets and bright blue shirts tucked into belted waistbands. On their quiet march from the classroom to the cafeteria here at IDEA Bridge Charter School, they pass positive mantras painted neatly in blue and gold on the walls, doors and even trash receptacles. One idea reminds them to stand up for what they believe in, and another tells them to pick up litter when they see it. They’re part of a master list of 55 affirmations embedded in the school’s organizational culture.

“We’re big on ideas around here,” says Kenneth Campbell, executive director of IDEA Baton Rouge, which operates IDEA Bridge near Cortana Mall and IDEA Innovation on Gardere Lane. “We always want to have those positive messages around for our kids.”

Opened in fall 2018, the two new East Baton Rouge Parish-approved charter schools are part of a successful, Texas-based model launched in the early 2000s by former Teach For America corps members who served in the Rio Grande Valley. One of the country’s fastest growing charter school networks, IDEA will grow to 97 schools in 2019. The organization has built a national reputation for helping children excel academically with the end goal of attending college, regardless of background, income level or personal impediments. Baton Rouge was IDEA’s first market outside of Texas.

A persistent problem in East Baton Rouge Parish has been the lack of quality schools in poor and minority communities,

which IDEA Bridge squarely addresses. The school is located just off North Airline Highway, and more than 90% of its student population qualifies for free or reduced lunch. Many parents, says Campbell, have felt let down by their children’s school experiences.

“They’ve been disappointed in the past,” Campbell says. “They want to know you’re sincere about helping their children.”

*“Coaching and developing teachers is a huge part of what we do. We believe in constant improvement.”*

—Kenneth Campbell, IDEA Bridge

Public schools in Baton Rouge have made progress, but there’s no question of a persistent disparity in school performance along racial lines. About 80% of students attending schools rated A or B by the Louisiana Department of Education are white, while about 70% of the students attending C, D or F-rated schools are minorities. In North Baton Rouge, where the population is heavily African American, the vast majority of ninth graders attend a D- or F-rated high school.

Those sorts of statistics have fueled the rise of New Schools for Baton Rouge, a nonprofit charter school facilitator. The organization aims to build a strong network of excellent charter schools, including high-performing models from around the country like IDEA. New Schools helped IDEA get off the ground with private fundraising and construction financing.

For the 2018-2019 school year, 525 students enrolled in IDEA Bridge’s initial four grades. The school opened with kindergar-



ten through third grades for its elementary program, and sixth grade for its forthcoming middle and high school program. It will add fourth grade and seventh grade in fall 2019 and will continue adding grades until it reaches kindergarten through 12th. It will offer K-8 in two years and expand to K-12 in six years. In 2020, the school will break ground on a separate onsite building that will accommodate the middle and high school, says Campbell.

Opened in August, IDEA Bridge's Phase I building pulses with excitement and a clear organizational identity. Students are referred to as "scholars." Bulletin boards in the halls outside each classroom are festooned with writing samples and math exercises that show hard work and positive feedback.

Professionally painted murals of Maya Angelou and Martin Luther King Jr., flanked by some of their most inspiring quotes, emblazon the walls of the cafeteria, where children receive three nutritious meals a day to sustain them through nearly eight

hours of instruction and enrichment.

A full-size gym hosts physical education classes as well as the IDEA Bridge Capitals sixth grade basketball and volleyball teams. Outside, a new playground and outdoor basketball court reinforce the message that IDEA believes in a healthy lifestyle for its students. They take PE daily. Controlled access gates around the periphery and a secure lobby give families a sense of security, while still feeling warm and welcoming.

Several of the teachers here and at the IDEA Innovation site participated in a special year-long training program called the Founding Teacher Fellows Program, during which they trained at other IDEA sites prior to IDEA's opening in Baton Rouge.

One was Debricca Webster, a veteran teacher from Alexandria, Louisiana, who moved to the Rio Grande Valley for a year with her two sons to teach in an IDEA school where she learned the organization's culture and methods. Once she completed the program, she helped open IDEA Bridge in Baton Rouge.





“It really helped me to be able to work and to understand how we want to get things done,” Webster says.

More than anything else, IDEA’s strategy in fostering student success is based on grit, says Campbell.

“There’s no silver bullet to this. In fact, if it were that easy, it would have already been done,” Campbell says. “This is about showing up every day and supporting every child at every moment, coaching teachers to be the best instructors they can be and using data to drive improvement.”

Teaching students from high-poverty backgrounds can be fraught with challenges, says Campbell, but an internal system supports teachers as they find ways to help children succeed. Part of every IDEA school’s organizational chart includes full-time assistant principals of instruction who guide teacher professional development, says Campbell.

“Coaching and developing teachers is a huge part of what we do,” he says. “We believe in constant improvement.”

Assistant Principal of Instruction Melina Sutton says that being supported in the classroom is one of the single biggest factors in helping teachers, and thus students, perform well.

“It just means everything to know that someone is there to help you think through new ideas and strategies,” says Sutton, a former classroom teacher.

Campbell says that IDEA’s curriculum is aligned with Tier 1 Louisiana state standards. To ensure students are on pace, their progress is constantly measured. And while it may take a few years to demonstrate the kind of success IDEA is expecting, Campbell isn’t bashful about his near-term goal. “We want to be an A-rated school,” he says. “Is it going to be a challenge? Of course. But we’re all about hard work.” •

# The best part

*Community and literacy expand at local barber shop through Line 4 Line*

Photos and story by Jeffrey Roedel

Walking along the vast hyper-colored mural outside of O’Neil’s Barber Shop, Travis Dabney pauses, motioning to the wall and the young boy depicted getting a trim while he reads from a storybook.

“That’s my son,” Dabney says, his voice loaded with a brawny sense of pride, not only in his precocious 5-year-old, but just maybe something bigger. “They surprised me with that, actually. But see, that’s the future right there.”

Dabney oversees security at L’Auberge Casino, and he grew up in this economically challenged neighborhood just north of Mid City. The one from the nightly news. The 70805.

He is dropping off a giant pan of jambalaya he whipped up at home. Once a month he cooks a filling dish that can feed dozens and brings it to O’Neil’s.

“I know what it’s like to come home from school and not have anything to eat,” Dabney says.

Inside the narrow barbershop, a handful of young neighborhood children along with their dutiful moms and aunts and grandmothers are digging into Dabney’s spicy rice and a spread of chicken, fresh fruit, chips and cookies.

Just under the buzz of proprietor O’Neil Curtis’ silver and black clippers comes the soft voice of a young student named Mason Wheeler. As the 37-year-old barber cuts his hair, Wheeler reads from a novelized version of Marvel’s *The Black Panther*.

His voice rises and falls in step with the action-packed adventure. He only pauses once to figure out a word, and smiles broadly when turning the page.

“You really see a change in people when you show them care and love by cutting their hair,” says Curtis, who has owned the shop for 15 years and manages multiple jobs and businesses. “Even if they come in and their heads are hanging down, you can see how uplifted they feel after. It lifts their spirit.”

It’s an unusually warm evening in December, and today’s event marks the start of the fifth year of Line 4 Line. The nonprofit literacy and mentorship program provides children with a free haircut, a meal and a book if they read to their barber while they are sitting in his chair.

Curtis and his colleague Keith Davis, aka Jimi Jump, are trimming, clipping and fading, but while they do, they are giving pep talks about school and life and everything in between. They are

*“O’Neil’s isn’t just a barber shop, it’s a family with an open door.”*

—Cujo Dah, muralist



O'Neil Curtis



O'Neil Curtis and Lucy Perera

listening to problems and hopes. They are being there.

And these children get visibly excited about the stacks of books lying around while they eat, complete art projects and dive into a huge bin of LEGOs.

It was 2014 when Curtis agreed to host and partner with the launch of the program after meeting Lucy Perera, a longtime literacy advocate who was working as coordinator of school and community programs at the LSU Museum of Art at the time, and now serves as director of learning innovation at Knock Knock Children's Museum.

"Lucy was going into the heart of the ghetto already," Curtis recalls of his partner's passion for creating greater access to books. "From another side, another race, straight to the hood, in this area where there's crime and killing, and that really struck me."

Line 4 Line now conducts periodical events at local schools and outreaches for the homeless, too, but once a month, Curtis' shop fills with children who are pulled like gravity to new books. They are a common sight on Saturdays, too, when working parents will drop their children off in the mornings and not pick them up until dinner time.

Books and art supplies, a basketball goal in the parking lot, and banter with "Jimi Jump" and Curtis—himself a devoted father to an 11-year-old daughter—keep the children occupied.

"They are in a place that's not a conventional reading space, and that's exciting for them," Perera says. "They get to associate reading as a cool thing that's not just something to do at school. Lots of these kids grow up in houses that don't have books. Libraries are great, but we have to make kids identify as readers so they don't see it as a burdensome activity."



*“They get to associate reading as a cool thing that’s not just something to do at school.”* —Lucy Perera, literacy advocate



The program has a legion of young students turning a page in their literacy journey to discover not only a real love of the written word, but a safe place where positive adult support and a pursuit of learning are encouraged every day.

But it’s not just the children who are learning from Line 4 Line. Local school teachers have taken notice; they are volunteering monthly and seeing the program impact adults, too.

“Parents look over my shoulder as we work with the students on reading, and they learn how to better read with their own kids,” says teacher Theresa King of White Hills Elementary.

The casual atmosphere of the shop has certainly contributed to the program’s success. “Walk-Ins Welcome” is painted above the entrance, and the greeting has a deeper meaning now.

“O’Neil’s isn’t just a barber shop, it’s a family with an open door,” says Cujo Dah, who the Arts Council of Greater Baton

Rouge recruited, along with Rahmaan Barnes, in early 2018 to create the traffic-stopping murals outside of O’Neil’s.

“We had the opportunity to create an inspirational and colorful backdrop for this growing community.”

Barnes is based in Chicago but has traveled often to paint large public pieces. The instruction and giving he’s seen at O’Neil’s reminds him of what big city and community centers felt like in their early stages. “O’Neil is a good-hearted guy who’s deeply connected to his neighborhood and its people,” Barnes says. “Seeing parents drop their kids off for the day, there’s trust there, and it’ll be amazing to see how this develops and grows.”

Line 4 Line thrives because it is completely nonjudgemental, Perera believes. Reading level and social status don’t matter. Clothing brands don’t either. All are welcome. The only thing students have to do is wait their turn.



**Do you want to help Line 4 Line?**  
You can at [Line4LineBR.org](http://Line4LineBR.org)



“Lucy has a strong arts mind, so her approach really makes this program a success,” King says. “She’s created this space that’s like a book nook, and it’s welcoming and comfortable.”

The latent potential of such a literacy-focused program in the heart of a low-income neighborhood was not lost on Tania Inniss, the photographer who documented the earliest iterations of Line 4 Line.

“I could already tell how successful the program was going to be after the first day,” Inniss says. “You could see a change in the boys from when they first walked in the doors of the barber shop to when they finished reading. They walked out with confidence and joy.”

In its fledgling years, the program has survived with volunteers like Travis Dabney donating their time and a modicum of funding for children’s books and supplies. But as the community has embraced the concept, and O’Neil’s has evolved into a friendly neighborhood hub, Perera believes it is time Line 4 Line expanded with more school programs, and site improvements to Curtis’ empty buildings adjacent to the barber shop into a community center for children. The program is seeking new funding streams.

“We want to go further with schools and in homeless shelters,” Perera says. “We want to help parents be better readers with their children, and having a dedicated space for that will be crucial.”

She envisions the renovated rooms containing a permanent library of children’s books and hosting Saturdays filled by area artists and teachers who volunteer to lead classes and workshops or just show up and hang out with the youth.

“Drug dealing and violence was all I saw when I was a kid,” Curtis recalls. “No one came around and separated us kids from that back then. I’m seeing the problem now, and you can see how much these kids appreciate Line 4 Line as a safe place and positive thing.”

On his way out of O’Neil’s, Dabney stops and says hello to another family walking past the children calling themselves LeBron and Curry beneath the basketball hoop. “This place is positive and brings a great feeling to the community,” he says after the family passes him by. “We aren’t rich, but we can make great things happen.” •



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Supported by a grant from the Louisiana Division of the Arts, Office of Cultural Development, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, in cooperation with the Louisiana State Arts Council. Funding has also been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, Art Works.



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Dr. Sarah Hicks, CAA Interim Executive Director, Lisa Adamek, Vera Olds, Teri Fontenot, F. King Alexander, LSU president, Tom Adamek, Rolfe McCollister, Carole Lamar, Charlie Lamar, Henson Moore, Mayor Sharon Weston Broome, Christel Slaughter, Tara Wicker and Joe Antunovich cut the ceremonial ribbon to open the new shelter.

## COMPANION ANIMAL ALLIANCE

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted \$3 million and helped Companion Animal Alliance raise \$10 million more to build a new animal shelter on LSU's campus. The Foundation started CAA, which finds families to adopt almost every lost pet. Baton Rouge now has among the best shelters in the country, thanks to generous people who care about lost dogs and cats.



At left, Gwen Hamilton, Cathy Coates and Carole Lamar at the new shelter preview party.

At right, move in day for the animals.





In January, the CAA staff had established a routine at the new shelter. The shelter is located on Gourrier Avenue, near the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine. The complex includes a surgery center, adoption counseling area, retail store, dog park. Most important, dogs and cats are treated more humanely while they wait to be adopted.



# SPARK

Robert  
Lay

*Age: 36*

*Sixty West/Red Stick Social*





**BUSINESS:** Tax incentive financing and redevelopment

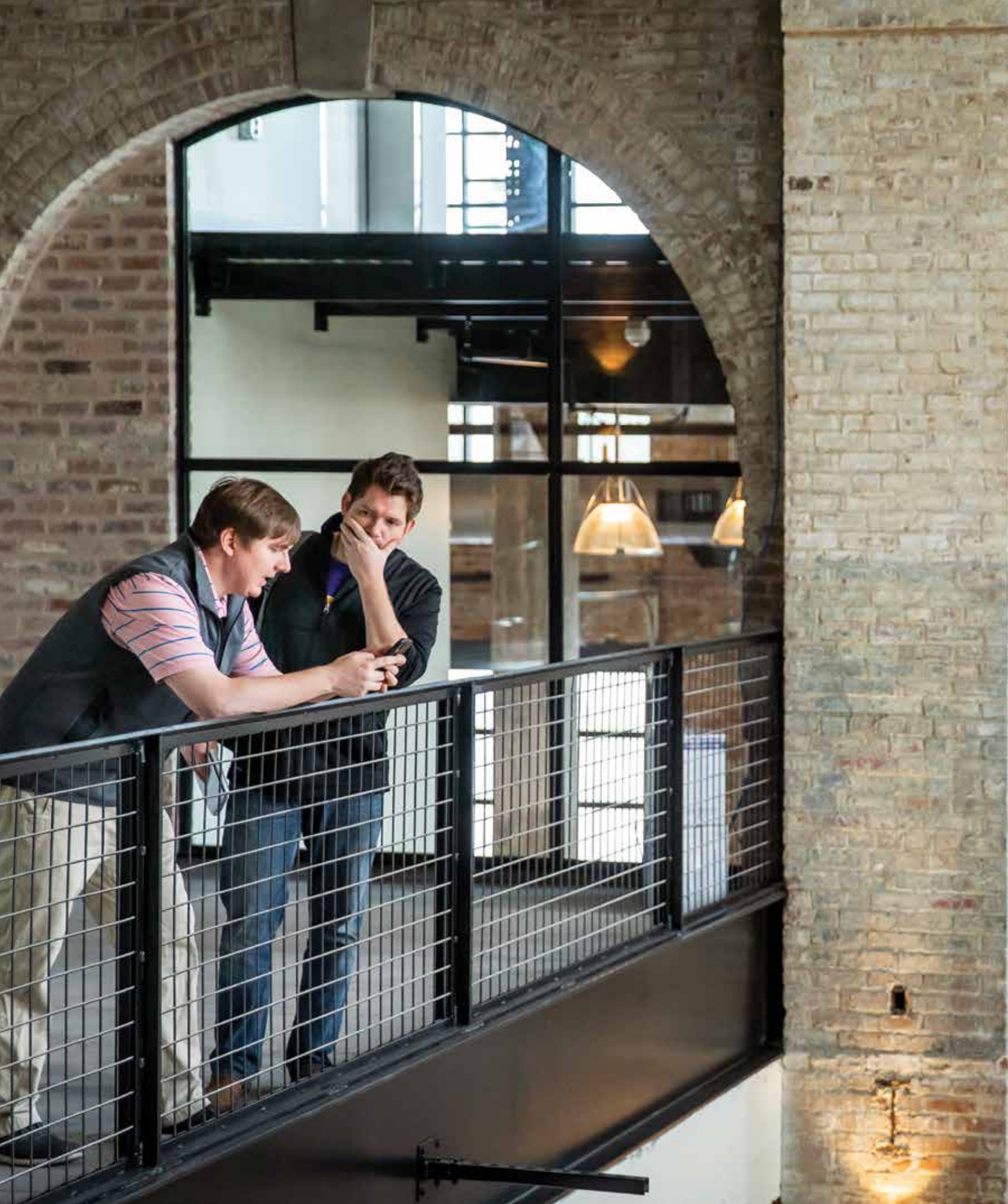
**BACKGROUND:** A native of Shreveport, Lay earned a degree in finance from LSU and worked at Stonehenge Capital for a decade, where he learned about tax credit financing, particularly New Market Tax Credits, which are combined with conventional financing to rehab properties in disinvested neighborhoods.

**CURRENT PROJECT:** Red Stick Social, a gathering place at the Electric Depot redevelopment on Government Street. Opening in March, Red Stick Social will be an entertainment destination, a place to spend a couple of hours, not the 45 minutes or so at a restaurant. Red Stick Social will have 10 bowling lanes, restaurants, bars, a stage for music, outdoor dining and a games area.

**THE CHALLENGE:** “How do you take something with great structure and make it work? How do you not overdo it?” Robert Lay says.

**HOW THE DEAL FOR RED STICK SOCIAL WAS DONE:** Lay fell in love with the buildings, which originally housed Baton Rouge’s steam plant for powering homes and electric trolleys that rolled between downtown, South Baton Rouge and the Garden District. But he inquired about purchasing the buildings too late. Entergy had already decided to donate the complex to the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, which was formed by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to reclaim blighted areas. Last year, the RDA picked Weinstein Nelson Development to return the property to commerce. Weinstein Nelson, in turn, leased the largest of the buildings to Sixty West, a privately owned firm that employs Lay. Sixty West, which manages federal tax credits for energy, housing and building rehabs, is investing \$6 million to open Red Stick Social.

**WHY:** Redeveloping in the city is more complex and costly, but more rewarding, says Lay. He says infill development is cheaper for the parish and taxpayers; no new roads and additional upkeep are required. “Other parts of Government Street are developing. Our hope is to spur a lot of deals in this last part that needs development.” •







**WHAT ELSE IS IN ELECTRIC DEPOT?** In phase one, Weinstein Nelson is redeveloping two other buildings in the complex. The larger of the two will have ground floor retail with 16 one-bedroom, second-floor apartments. Retailers announced for the complex are Boru and City Roots. A creation by the owners of Ichiban restaurant, Boru will feature ramen and poke. City Roots will be an experimental coffeehouse by Matt Saurage, whose family owns Community Coffee. City Roots will offer onsite roasted coffees, ice-cream based drinks, nitro-coffees, draft lattes. Teas, light food and pastries will also be served.

In phase two, Weinstein Nelson Development will build about 100 new apartments on the site. As well, Dyke Nelson of the firm is working with others to build up the area, including a rehab of Hotel Lincoln into apartments on 12th Street with Solomon Carter, who bought the building last year.



I-110

S. 13th St.

S. 15th St.

S. Acadian Thruway

Steele Blvd.

**HOTEL  
LINCOLN**



**ELECTRIC DEPOT:**  
- RED STICK SOCIAL  
- CITY ROOTS COFFEE  
- BORU



GOVERNMENT STREET

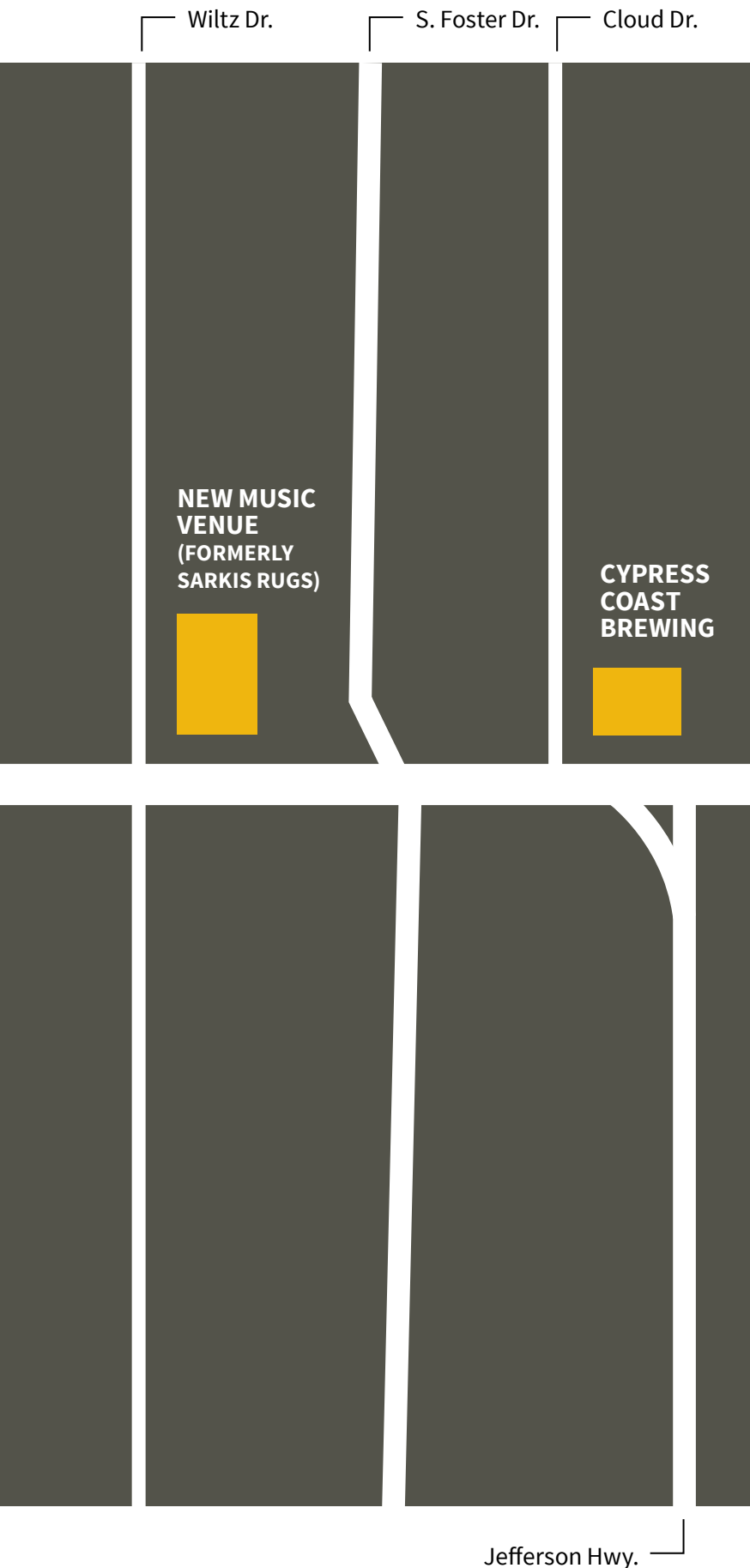


**NEW BEER  
GARDEN  
UNDER  
CONSTRUCTION**

58

Eddie Robinson Sr. Dr.

S. 15th St.



**ROAD DIET** The state agreed to transfer local roads to East Baton Rouge Parish. Under the agreement, the state had to improve roads before turning them over. One of those roads is Government Street, which is being reworked from four lanes to three lanes—two travel lanes and a center turn lane with medians in some places—flanked by bike lanes. The road will be much safer for drivers, bikers and pedestrians. The \$12 million makeover is one reason businesses are flocking to Government, which will be more of a destination.

**HOTEL LINCOLN** Near the corner of Government Street, the former hotel on Eddie Robinson Sr. Drive will be converted into apartments. Solomon Carter, who purchased the building, is working with Dyke Nelson to return the property to commerce. It's two blocks from Electric Depot. The building costs \$400,000. The renovations will be more than \$1 million.

**CYPRESS COAST BREWING** wants to open this year in a 2,500-square-foot space where the St. Vincent de Paul store was located. It's between Superior Grill and Fleur de Lis pizza. The brewery will specialize in small batches. New beers are expected weekly.

**MID CITY BEER GARDEN** At the corner of Government and Steele Boulevard, David Remmetter, Brian Baiamonte and Kelli Paxton will open the beer garden this summer. Remmetter and Baiamonte own the successful Radio Bar on Government.

**FORMER SARKIS ORIENTAL RUGS** Devin Broome, Camille Manning-Broome and Raul Urdiales are turning the former rug store, which began as a church, into a local music and art showplace. The venue is expected to be free to performers, with the owners expecting to turn a profit by selling coffee and cocktails. In the 4000 block of Government, the building is across from the post office.

**RECENT OPENINGS** White Star Market, Soji, Rocca Pizzeria, Curbside Hamburgers, Elsie's Plate and Pie, Simple Joe, GD Barbecue, French Truck Coffee, City Pork.



**FAST, LIKE A TEXAS BULLET** The first U.S. station for a high-speed train could be four hours by car from Baton Rouge. Texas Central, an American company backed by the Japanese government, wants to start bullet train service between Houston and Dallas by 2024. Construction of the \$15 billion line is starting this year. Five million riders per year are expected to travel the 90-minute route with top speeds over 200 miles per hour. Driving takes five hours. Trains would depart every 30 minutes during the day, with hourly service in the evening.

**DIGITAL DREAMS** The city of Stockholm and Clear Channel care for homeless people when the temperatures become too cold. Local churches and shelters open their doors when the temperatures drop below 19 degrees, and the locations of those temporary shelters are displayed on Clear Channel's billboards and kiosks in rotation with regular ads. A local nonprofit helped Clear Channel identify 53 billboards in Stockholm that were near the homeless population.



**GOING SOLID** The race to build solid-state batteries is electric. Solid Power, Ionic Materials and QuantumScape are among young companies that are trying to be the first to market batteries that are cheaper, pack more energy and are safer than lithium-ion batteries. Albemarle, a major lithium supplier once based in Baton Rouge, is among financial backers of Solid Power. Solid-state batteries are not expected to be widely available for a decade.

## MATHEMATICS OF FLOODING

Houston hired a data firm to invent a new model for understanding flooding. The model shows billions of additional losses from Hurricane Harvey, giving Houston evidence to seek more assistance and to rebuild more equitably. Houston paid Civis Analytics \$1.3 million to write the predictive model. Variables include type of construction materials, income by community and the level of flooding by area. The established model used by FEMA undercounts losses because not everyone qualifies for assistance or applies for it.



## HAVING FEWER BABIES

The fertility rate in East Baton Rouge Parish is declining, especially among women living in poverty, with the rate of new births down by half since 2011, according to U.S. Census surveys. Obamacare's Medicaid expansion in Louisiana, which made birth control available to more households, coincides with the drop in the EBR fertility rate, which is the number of births for every 1,000 women. EBR's fertility rate for poor women was 45 per thousand in 2016, down from 90 in 2011. The fertility rate for all women living in EBR was 45 in 2016, down from 58 in 2011.

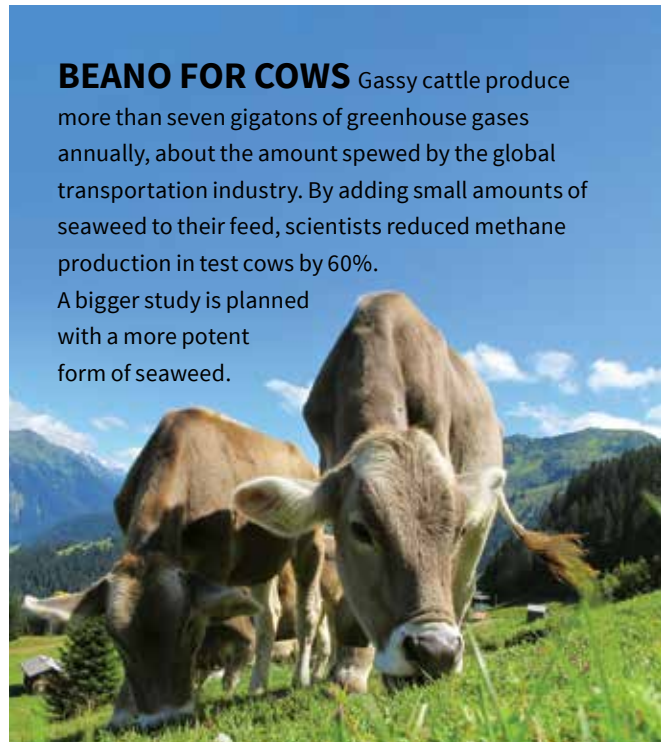
## ANOTHER GREEN REVOLUTION

Scientists with the RIPE project have hacked photosynthesis, boosting the rate at which plants turn sunlight into energy. By inserting thousands of new letters in DNA of a tobacco plant, scientists bypassed an inefficient process within photosynthesis and that led to the plant becoming 40% larger. They are attempting to replicate the process in soybeans, cowpeas and potatoes. Such a big boost in plant growth could significantly reduce the use of arable land, pesticides, fertilizers and scarce water, while making food cheaper in developing countries.



## BEANO FOR COWS

Gassy cattle produce more than seven gigatons of greenhouse gases annually, about the amount spewed by the global transportation industry. By adding small amounts of seaweed to their feed, scientists reduced methane production in test cows by 60%. A bigger study is planned with a more potent form of seaweed.



# CODA



## **SHIMMER**

The centerpiece of the Main Square Park on the Water Campus will be a ribbon of water. Inspired by the Lady Diana memorial water feature in London, the fountain will sparkle as water flows over milled indentations in the granite bed. It will be 5- to 7-feet wide and about 130 feet long, almost the length of the park. The Foundation and Commercial Properties Realty Trust are investing \$1.3 million in the park. The fountain is designed by Reich Associates and will be built by Kusser Fountain Works of Florida. The granite is being milled in Germany.




*Artsplosion! campers at LASM*

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