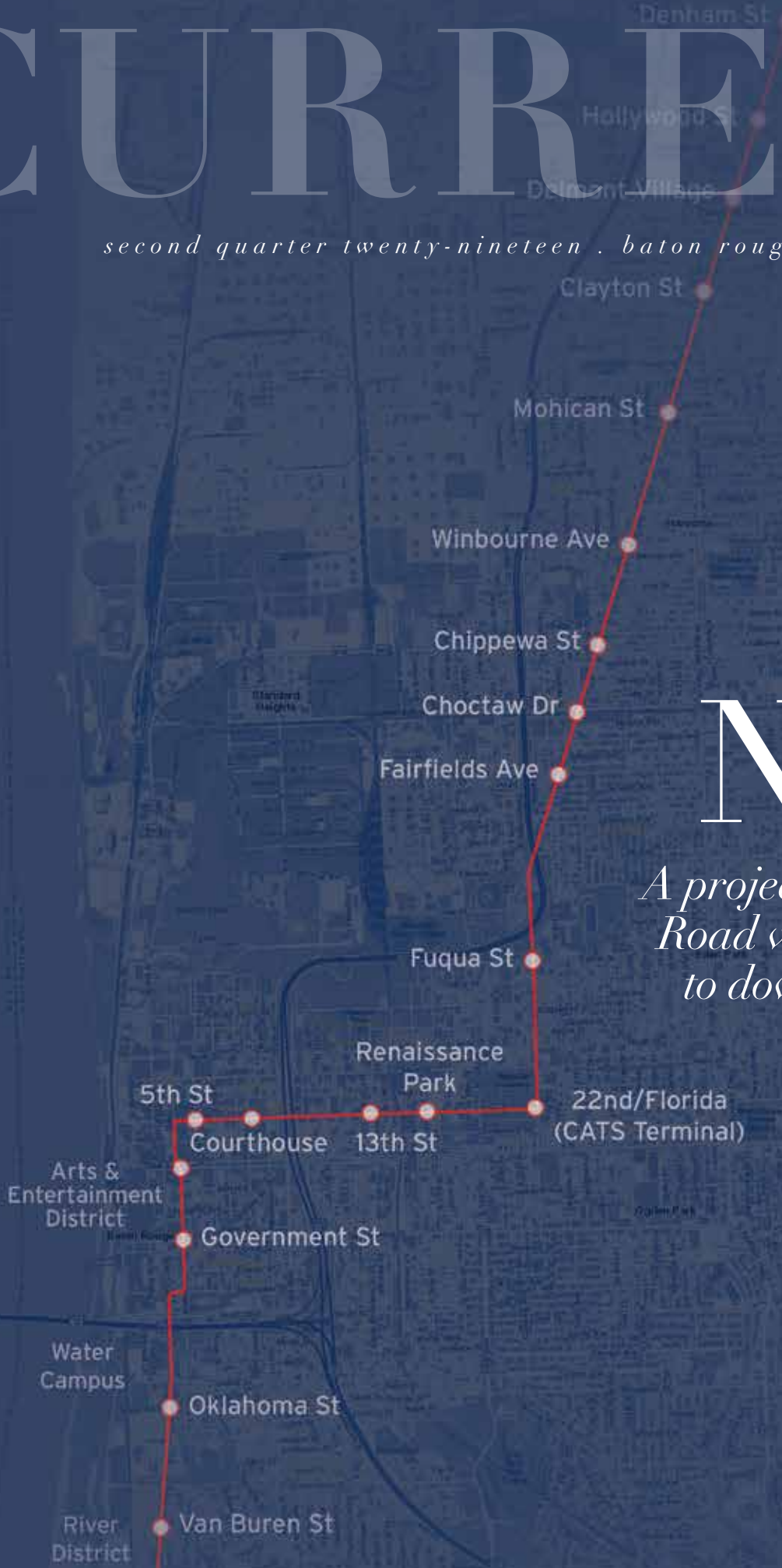


CURRENTS

second quarter twenty-nineteen . baton rouge area foundation

Go North

A project to reclaim Plank Road would link the area to downtown, LSU with rapid transit







Audubon Louisiana Avian Biologist Katie Percy and Audubon Director of Bird Conservation Erik Johnson observe Prothonotary Warblers during a field visit to Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center.

Photo by Tim Mueller



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CONTENTS

VOLUME THIRTEEN | NUMBER TWO

6–Letter from the chair

8–About us

9–Lead in

13–Civic projects

18–BR-NOLA train

22–Grants: *LASM*

24–First quarter grants

28–2019 *John W. Barton Awards*

34–Cover story: *Plank Road*

40–Legacy: *E. J. Ourso*

46–Spark: *Tracking warblers*

52–Spark briefs

54–Coda: *Puppy stills*

LETTER



A milling machine is grinding up Government Street. It spits chunks of asphalt into the back of a dump truck as it chews its way forward. Traffic

backs up on side streets and narrowed lanes, but motorists aren't grumbling as much as you'd expect. Many of them understand this disruption is one more symbol of Baton Rouge's progress on the road toward organizing civic life in a more civil manner.

Government Street is a state road, but it's being turned over to local authorities. For a long time, it has been a deteriorating—and increasingly dangerous—corridor funneling traffic from downtown out to the suburbs; an escape route from the city. But, with funding from the state, Government Street is transforming into a vibrant neighborhood again, and a destination unto itself. It's going to be safer too: Four lanes of traffic will turn into three, with two travel lanes and one turning lane, flanked by bike lanes and proper sidewalks.

This realignment began with a speech 23 years ago.

In 1997, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation launched the Marcia Kaplan Kantrow Lecture Series, named after the Foundation's first Director of Programs. The inaugural presentation was by urban planner Stefanos Polyzoides. Marcia believed in community building, and Polyzoides was sharing a notion about how to rearrange cities so as to rebuild connections between the people who inhabit them.

He told the 200 locals gathered downtown about New Urbanism, a movement that was barely known outside his circle of architects and town planners back then. The Congress for New Urbanism, with Polyzoides among its founders, sought to build new neighborhoods to be walkable—after all, that's how people

Downtown has demonstrated what happens when a city commits to change. Now, other neglected parts of town are hungry for some of the same.

lived before cities started diffusing outward and hollowing out downtowns. Residents should have a choice, New Urbanism insists, to live in a place that is within walking distance of their office and entertainment venues. It also insists that, instead of just building new developments, cities must reclaim and renew their blighted interiors.

His speech roused listeners and galvanized city leadership.

Only eight months later, East Baton Rouge Parish, the State of Louisiana and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation agreed to share the cost of hiring Duany Plater-Zyberk to lead the week-long public workshop that produced a downtown master plan. The result was astonishing.

"I know of no other seven-day period in any American city when so many people from all walks of life came together to consider their city's future," wrote Alexander Garvin, part of Duany's team, in *Planning Magazine* in October 1998. "For once, citizen participation was more than a slogan."

Plan Baton Rouge, the blueprint for renewal, inspired the city and bolstered investor confidence. Since then, more than \$2 billion has been invested in new downtown housing, offices, hotels, public buildings and an Arts Block that was built by the Foundation.

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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.

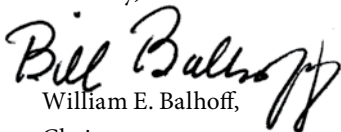
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Clearly, folks thought it was a good idea. And good ideas know no bounds. Like that slow, steady milling machine now crawling up Government Street, the transformation of our town center is advancing outward to Mid City. There, developers and entrepreneurs are taking calculated chances, and their risk is reduced as, increasingly, residents recognize the value in a more connected way of life, as prescribed by Polyzoides and the New Urbanists. Those folks are now stopping on Government Street after work to dine and enjoy both new and established gathering places along the route. Still others are coming back from the suburbs after hours for dinner and conversation.

Less conspicuous now are people who once noisily insisted, “Not in my backyard!” Downtown has demonstrated what happens when a city commits to change. Now, other neglected parts of town are hungry for some of the same. And its what voters want too: With the \$1 billion MovEBR plan approved in December, the majority were willing to dedicate nearly \$300 million worth of sidewalks, bike lanes and other projects designed to make our city more livable.

So when you are caught in construction traffic from time to time over the next decade or so, recall that we are paving the way toward a less congested, more habitable hometown—all thanks to an idea shared with people who wanted better for their community. Now they’re getting it.

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 55 years, our donors have granted more than \$500 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.



WATER CAMPUS The fourth building on the Water Campus will be ready for occupancy in June, and new roads and sidewalks for the science park will be completed in late summer. Named 1200 Brickyard Lane, the 90,000-square-foot building will include the Baton Rouge office of Stantec as its first tenant. More tenants are to be announced soon.

Meanwhile, the Mississippi River above flood stage for months has delayed the start of construction on 200 Water Street, an apartment building, and the Main Square Park until June. They should be ready in late spring 2020.

A project of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Commercial Properties Realty Trust, the Water Campus is rising on 35 river-front acres off Nicholson near downtown. It is a destination for scientists and engineers who are offering solutions for adapting to shifting coasts, where 3 billion people live around the world.

On the campus are The Water Institute of the Gulf, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and LSU Center for River Studies.



200 Water Street will have 20 apartments (below).





Fund donors and members gathered after the annual meeting on the Fourth Floor River Terrace of the Shaw Center for the Arts.



Foundation Director and Treasurer Francis Jumonville and his wife, Robin Jumonville. He told more than 200 who attended the annual meeting that the Foundation granted \$44 million in 2018.



Raymond Jetson, who runs nonprofit MetroMorphosis, and Perry Franklin, right, who owns Franklin Associates and is a Foundation director. Jetson also served on the Foundation board.



FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING, CELEBRATION HELD

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation held its annual meeting in April at the Manship Theatre, with a celebration afterward on the Fourth Floor River Terrace at the Shaw Center for the Arts.

At the meeting, the Foundation shared financial information —assets grew to an unaudited \$658 million at year-end 2018 from \$656 million the year before; the Foundation’s donors contributed \$45 million to their charitable accounts while the Foundation distributed \$44 million in grants.

Members elected Preston J. Castille Jr. of Taylor Porter law firm, Helena R. Cunningham of National Housing Consultant Services and Matthew C. Saurage of Community Coffee to the board. Dr. B. Eugene Berry and Francis C. Jumonville Jr. were elected to second terms. Terms are three years.

Mike Wampold was named the fourth winner of the Marcia Kaplan Kantrow Baton Rouge Visionary Award, which was established by friends and family of the late Ms. Kantrow, who was the first director of programs for the Foundation. Wampold was among pioneers in redeveloping downtown. He purchased and updated City Plaza, built II City Plaza and converted a shuttered state building into the Watermark Hotel.

The Foundation also revealed winners of the John W. Barton Sr. Excellence in Nonprofit Management Award. Read about the winners on page 28.



Directly above: Foundation Chair Bill Balhoff, left, with CEO and President John Davies.

Top of page: Shante Bradford-Webb, second from right, and her family at the reception. She was one of three winners of the John W. Barton Sr. Excellence in Nonprofit Award.

WELCOME SIGNS

BREC parks are getting beautiful new signs. BREC commissioners adopted a signage system that unifies designs across the park system with some variations depending on the greenspace, such as a more rustic sign for a conservation area. Signs will be replaced over time, starting with parks already under construction.



FOUNDATION FACT:

The Foundation manages a charitable fund for LIGO Science Education Center, which has 15,000 to 17,000 visitors annually. Most of the visitors are students on field trips.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

The U.S and United Kingdom have invested nearly \$30 million on equipment so LIGO labs in Livingston Parish and Washington can uncover more secrets of the universe. Better instruments will let researchers understand more about gravity, black holes and neutron stars. LIGO scientists won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2017 for detecting gravitational waves.

MID CITY'S COMING BACK

Mid City's fortunes continue to improve. As the reworking of Government Street to balance vehicle, bike and pedestrian traffic progresses, more businesses are choosing to land there.

Entertainment venue Red Stick Social opened in early April at Electric Depot, where a coffee shop and ramen restaurant, along with apartments, will be ready in June. The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority owns the property, and Weinstein Nelson is developing it. Next phase includes 100 apartments.

Developer Michael Hogstrom bought a half-acre site across from Calandro's Supermarket to build up to 30 high-end apartments, with two more similar, undisclosed deals in the works. Cypress Coast Brewing is building a brewery and taproom in the former St. Vincent de Paul store space, across from the relatively new Soji and White Star Market. A beer garden near the new Rocca Pizzeria will open in summer, and Solomon Carter will start building apartments in the former Hotel Lincoln near downtown.



CIVIC PROJECTS

FOUNDATION FACT:

New Schools was started by the Foundation with funding from fund donors. The Foundation also provided fundraising advice and our fund donors have contributed to THRIVE BR. NSBR-supported schools and THRIVE are providing high-quality education to children from low-income families.



FOUNDATION WINS MACARTHUR JUSTICE GRANT

The Foundation received a \$350,000 grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation through their Safety + Justice Challenge. To oversee its implementation, the Foundation has hired Chris Csonka, who successfully led MacArthur-funded initiatives in Ohio. Csonka will create a Criminal Justice Coordinating Council for collaboration among local justice officials, behavioral health officials and community organizations. The Council will work to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of case processing, ultimately reducing the local jail population.



In Ohio, Csonka implemented a felony summons program to reduce jail admissions, worked to create a unified criminal justice information system, implemented a court-based diversion program for low-level offenders, coordinated probation practices and implemented a pre-trial risk assessment tool to ensure that people are incarcerated based on their risk and not on the fact they can't afford to pay bail.

SCHOOL ROUNDUP

KIPP wants to open three schools in Baton Rouge. The nonprofit would add to the growing number top charter organizations that have landed here with backing from New Schools for Baton Rouge.

KIPP asked the East Baton Rouge Public School System for authority to operate two K-8 schools and one high school. KIPP has 224 U.S. college-preparatory and public charter schools educating early childhood, elementary, middle and high school students.

BASIS, Community School for Apprenticeship Learning and Mentorship Academy, also supported by New Schools, applied to add more schools.

Meanwhile, construction is advancing on Collegiate Academies, an NSBR-backed project that is rising on land donated by Commercial Properties Realty Trust, which develops real estate with a social purpose for the Foundation and Wilbur Marvin Foundation, a supporting nonprofit. Collegiate's new campus will open in fall on Lobdell Avenue near Florida Boulevard.

Across town, on Brightside Drive, THRIVE is completing a classroom building, and raising money to build a gym. THRIVE is the only public boarding school in Louisiana for at-risk children.

CIVIC PROJECTS



Brice Mohundro,
Opioid Stewardship
Task Force Chair

Health District fights opioid crisis

Collaboration aims to prevent people from using at all

By Maggie Heyn Richardson | Photo by Tim Mueller

The opioid epidemic continues to be a challenge for communities nationwide, including the Capital Region, but an effort among partners of the Baton Rouge Health District is fighting the crisis through prevention. About 18 months ago, the Health District formed the Opioid Stewardship Task Force to identify best practices for both reducing the number of opioids prescribed and for better educating the public about their options as consumers.

“This has been a really innovative project where a group of partners are working collaboratively to promote better health outcomes across the community,” says Health District founding executive director Suzy Sonnier. “By working across organizations, we have a better shot at making a collective impact.”

The Baton Rouge Health District is a nonprofit created to improve health outcomes across the region and to create a unique place in the Essen Lane-Bluebonnet Boulevard corridor. Health District partners share common interests concerning the growth and development of the local health care sector, as well as infrastructure improvements that improve traffic flow. Modeled after other medical districts around the country, the area was defined in the East Baton Rouge Parish Master Plan, FuturEBR.

Its partners include Our Lady of the Lake, Baton Rouge General, Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center, Ochsner, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana, Woman’s Hospital, the Pennington Biomedical Research Center and the Baton Rouge Area

FOUNDATION FACT:

Parish government asked the Foundation to create a master plan for the Baton Rouge Health District. The nonprofit of the same name was established to implement the plan.

Foundation. In addition to its commitment to building a thriving health care corridor, the Health District’s initiatives benefit the whole community. Taking on the opioid crisis is one of them.

One of the challenges of fighting the opioid epidemic in Louisiana has been the sheer number of opioid pain killers that have been legally prescribed over the last several years. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the sale of prescription opioids quadrupled in the United States between

DEADLY LINK

Number of drug-related deaths were correlated with prescribing rates for opioids in 2017.

	Prescriptions (100 residents)	Deaths (100,000 residents)
East Baton Rouge	81.7	19
Ascension	85.1	22.8
Livingston	93.8	42.0
National	58.7	21.6

Source: amFar, U.S. Centers for Disease Control

1999 and 2014, a period when doctors were encouraged to make pain management a major priority.

It wasn't uncommon for physicians and oral surgeons to prescribe drugs such as OxyContin in 30-day supplies for minor procedures, resulting in a nationwide abundance of opioids that often ended up unused in medicine cabinets.

In 2015, Louisiana had more opioid prescriptions than it had residents. The state had the sixth-highest per capita opioid prescription rate in the country that year, with 111 prescriptions per 100 persons. Since then, that rate has fallen. In 2017, Louisiana had a rate of 89.5 prescriptions per 100 persons—still significantly higher than the national average of 58.7 prescriptions per 100, according to the CDC.

Taking steps to reduce the number of new cases of addiction has been a big priority of the Health District.

“We looked at where we could really have the most impact, and preventing people from becoming users was one of them,” says Opioid Stewardship Task Force Chair Brice Mohundro, a clinical pharmacist at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana. “We’ve spent a lot of time looking at best practices for prescribing, including what happens in the ER to what happens after someone has a baby.”

Reducing the number of prescribed opioids in a community is seen as an effective way of preventing new cases, since the majority of opioid addicts first obtained their drugs through unwitting friends and family members, says Mohundro.

The CDC has issued new guidelines for prescribing opioids for three to five days rather than seven days, but it's up to individual health care institutions to implement those guidelines. The Health District's Opioid Stewardship Task Force gives local providers a forum for discussing not only the guidelines, but also best practices in their respective disciplines and how these are

leading to positive outcomes at each of their institutions.

“It's amazing to see everyone working together on a common goal,” says Mohundro.

A lot of progress has been made. The task force has worked hard to solidify best practices for prescribing opiate pain killers. In many cases, post-procedure protocols have been modified to not prescribe an opioid first, but as a last resort. For example, a woman undergoing a normal childbirth today is more likely to be prescribed Tylenol or Advil rather than a 30-day course of an opioid, as had been common in the past.

In addition, the presets for the number of opioids prescribed per patient, if prescribed at all, has also been lowered. Patients are also beginning to be better informed about pain management options that don't put opioids first so that they can make healthier choices.

The Health District and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana have teamed up with *The Advocate* for a public awareness campaign about the basics of pain management, including the

We looked at where we could really have the most impact, and preventing people from becoming users was one of them.

—Brice Mohundro, Opioid Stewardship Task Force Chair

point that patients expecting complete pain relief are going to be let down. Some level of pain is to be expected as the body heals, or deals with ongoing health issues. The public information campaign also gave several alternatives to opiates, including anti-inflammatories, over-the-counter pain remedies, physical therapy and dry needling.

“Education and awareness is something we're keenly attentive to, and helping patients understand their rights is a big part of it,” says Mohundro.

The task force has also worked hard to collect unused prescriptions in drug-take-back days organized by regional law enforcement offices, or in several safe drop-off bins placed throughout the region. Last year, Baton Rouge's drug-take-back day took in 600 pounds of unused drugs. This year, says Mohundro, the goal was 1,000 pounds.

“Getting these drugs out of circulation is a big part of stemming the problem,” says Mohundro. “There are many other factors to fighting this crisis, but this is part of it.” •



2019 LOUISIANA ARTS SUMMIT

JULY 15 & 16, 2019

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Xavier Cortada
Environmental Artist,
Professor of Practice,
and Collaborator

FEATURED SPEAKER:

Randy Cohen
VP of Research
and Policy at
Americans for the Arts

SESSIONS AND ACTIVITIES:

**East Baton Rouge
Parish Main Library**
7711 Goodwood Blvd.

AND

**Independence
Botanical Gardens**
7950 Independence
Park Blvd.

RECEPTION AND KEYNOTE:

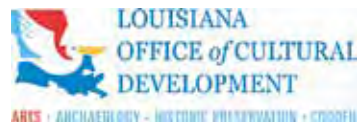
Capitol Park Museum

MORE INFO AND REGISTER:

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of workshops, networking, and mentoring
opportunities for creative professionals.



Y'all aboard!

Poll shows deep support for BR-NOLA inter-city rail

A poll commissioned by the Southern Rail Commission, Baton Rouge Area Chamber and GNO Inc. shows deep support for inter-city passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans with stops in parishes in between.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation counts the proposed train service among its civic projects, and Foundation Executive Vice President John Spain is chair of the Southern Rail Commission.

THE TRAIN PROPOSAL

STATIONS AND STOPS: Baton Rouge downtown, Baton Rouge suburban station in Health District, Gonzales, LaPlace, New Orleans airport, Kenner, Union Passenger Terminal next to Superdome.

TOP SPEED: 80 miles per hour.

TRACKS: Train would travel on upgraded existing rails used for moving freight.

OPERATOR: Amtrak is interested in operating the service.

STARTUP COSTS: \$262 million, with federal government paying half to improve route.

FUNDING SOURCES: Federal government, state government, new tax revenue generated by transit-oriented developments at stations.

BENEFITS: Shift traffic from I-10, evacuation route during storms, reduce traffic accidents and deaths, offer alternative to traveling by car to sports and other entertainment events, commuting to work.

NEXT STEP: Request for Louisiana Department of Transportation to pay for a business plan that would identify sources for startup and operating costs.

THE POLL

The survey of 1,050 registered voters in Ascension, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, Orleans, St. James and St. John parishes was conducted in February and March. It has an error margin of 2.9%

63% Very likely or likely to ride inter-city. (Separate HNTB study in 2014 showed ridership of 210,000 in first year with one-way tickets priced at \$10 to \$15.)

85% Said passenger rail service between New Orleans and Baton Rouge is very important or important.

79% Support state funding if feds match to help improve the rail line.

82% Said train would reduce I-10 traffic

73% Would ride train to New Orleans for sports

64% Would ride to LSU sporting events



A proposal for inter-city rail to New Orleans calls for two stations in Baton Rouge. The suburban station, above, would be in the Baton Rouge Health District in the Bluebonnet Boulevard-Essen Lane corridor. The downtown station, below, would be on Government and 15th streets. Both stations would double as transit-oriented developments that include housing and retail, as shown in the renderings.



SPECIAL REPORT

Bikeshare: *Startup Guide*

By Mukul Verma

HOW IT BEGAN: Bikeshare in Baton Rouge began as a project of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and turned into a collaboration with public agencies and private companies.

Partners on the project are Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Mayor Sharon Weston Broome and the Metro Council, BREC, LSU, Southern University, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana, Baton Rouge General, Downtown Development District and The Charles Lamar Family Foundation.

WHAT IS BIKESHARE: In simplest terms, bikeshare is bike rental for the smartphone age. Riders use apps to unlock bikes and ride them to their destination hub.

WHY BIKESHARE: There are more than 100 bikeshare systems across the country. They have become a popular option for commuting and recreation. Bikeshare's success is attributed to advances in technology, a healthy alternative to driving,

transferring trips from cars to bikes. Bikeshare builds support for cycling as well. BREC and the Louisiana Department of Transportation are financing a bike and pedestrian network master plan, which will be completed in summer.

WHO'S THE OPERATOR:

Parish government chose Gotcha Group of Charleston, South Carolina, to operate bikeshare. Gotcha provides bikeshare and other micro-mobility services, such as scooters and electric trikes. It's also a media firm, generating revenue by selling sponsorships

and advertising on bikes and hubs. The company operates in a dozen Southeast markets. Baton Rouge's system will be its largest.

SPONSORS: Lead sponsors for Baton Rouge Bikeshare are Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana and Baton Rouge General Health System.

Gotcha operates in a dozen Southeast markets. Baton Rouge's system will be its largest.



WHERE HUBS WILL BE LOCATED: Bikeshare starts at LSU, downtown and Southern University, and some surrounding neighborhoods in May. By end of 2020, Gotcha’s blueprint is to add Mid City and the Baton Rouge Health District to its network.

HUB LOCATIONS? To start, Gotcha is installing 50 total hubs, where you’ll be able to pick up and return bikes. There will be 24 in downtown, 12 at LSU, eight at Southern University, and six at BREC parks near LSU and downtown. Hubs will be located at parks in Old South Baton Rouge. For the full list, visit the Baton Rouge Bikeshare website at RideGotcha.com. Hubs will be centrally located and positioned to meet demand. Hubs are from eight to 24 bikes, with the largest ones at LSU.

THE BIKES: Gotcha customizes bikes to fit the environment. The Baton Rouge bikes have LED lights, are three speeds and electric-assist, with batteries giving them a 37-mile range at full charge. Baton Rouge will have Gotcha’s first fully electric fleet. Seats are adjustable, tires are puncture-proof, and a cupholder is available to hold drinks-on-the-go.

AN APP FOR POINT A TO POINT B: Gotcha’s app lets riders unlock bikes with a QR code. All of Gotcha’s mobility services are integrated into one app, though the company is launching with only bikeshare in Baton Rouge. With the app, users can locate a nearby hub, see how many bikes are there and reserve bikes to ride later. People who don’t have a smartphone can purchase a debit card at Gotcha’s rented warehouse at Mid City Redevelopment Alliance.

COST: Annual memberships are typically less than \$100. Monthly memberships are available, as are student discounts for memberships. Membership provides one hour of riding time per day, with additional charge for more time. Cyclists can also rent Gotcha bikes by the hour.

WHAT’S NEXT? Gotcha offers scooters and three-wheeled trikes. It also has electric ride-share, where company drivers offer short on-demand trips in a small van. Services are integrated in the Gotcha app to facilitate micro-mobility. Gotcha may expand other services here in agreements with public institutions and governments. •

GRANTS



Serena Pandos is the new executive director and president of Louisiana Art and Science Museum, replacing Carol Gikas, who retired after 39 years. Pandos was president and executive director of the International Museum of Art and Science in McAllen, Texas. She is a native of Baltimore.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE ARTIST AND WHY?

Da Vinci would rate as my all-time favorite artist. His curiosity—from observation as well as his inventiveness as an engineer and scientist—led to some remarkable and timeless compositions that continue to be relevant today. His way of working and thinking, connecting humanity to STEM-based learning concepts, continues to be a foundation that many artists, scientists and engineers build upon.

WHAT ONE PIECE OF ART WOULD YOU LIKE TO OWN AND DISPLAY IN YOUR HOME AND WHY?

That's a tough question, although I terrifically enjoy "Tree of Life" by Gustav Klimt. The composition strikes me as one of fortitude. I think art has the power to inspire new perspectives, and I find this a hopeful piece that encourages contemplation of all good things.



Gustav Klimt's "Tree of Life"

WHAT ARE YOUR SHORT- AND LONG-TERM PLANS FOR THE LASM?

My short-term plan is to continue conducting a listening tour involving community partners, neighbors, board members, stakeholders and staff toward assessing our next steps in service to our community. This will help inform and shape the long-term plans, which will be revisited later this year.

LASM HAS A PRIME RIVERFRONT SPOT. ANY IDEAS ON HOW TO USE THE LOCATION TO ATTRACT MORE VISITORS?

Lighting the building in the evening, both in the front and back, would significantly increase our presence and visibility from across the river and from within our burgeoning downtown area. Museums are one of the first things visitors look for besides places to eat and shop. There are many artists who work with lights, or perhaps there is a partner or sponsor we can work with to make this happen. The real estate of LASM, on our beautiful riverfront, is a wonderful opportunity for a terrific light display.

-

FOUNDATION FACT:

In the last decade, the Foundation's fund donors have granted more than \$1.2 million to LASM.

CELEBRATE LOCAL FOOD
AND FARMERS AT

FRESH FEST

OUR ANNUAL TEN WEEK
SUMMER FESTIVAL



**FRESH FEST
CELEBRATES
LOCAL FOOD AND
FARMERS IN A TEN WEEK
SUMMER FESTIVAL.**

Each week highlights a different local agricultural product at the Red Stick Farmers Market with thematic cooking demonstrations, food sampling, kids' activities and local music.

FRESH FEST 2019

JUNE 1	Dairy Day
JUNE 8	Blueberry Bash
JUNE 15	Tomato Me Crazy
JUNE 22	Corn & Squash-Tastic
JUNE 29	Star Spangled Saturday
JULY 6	Just Peachy
JULY 13	Cool as a Cucumber
JULY 20	Melon Mania
JULY 27	Salsa Saturday
AUGUST 3	National Farmers Market Week



Find recipes and market updates at www.breada.org.
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GRANTS

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation distributed \$7.7 million to nonprofits and for scholarships and hardship assistance grants in the first quarter of 2019. Fund donors make most of the grants from their donor 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.

Boy Scouts of America - Istrouma Area Council \$50,276
100 Black Men of Metro New Orleans Inc. \$100,000
50CAN Inc. \$16,500
Academic Distinction Fund \$44,369
Academy of the Sacred Heart New Orleans Foundation Inc. \$10,000
Acts of Love Inc. \$3,100
Alcorn State University \$1,500
Alpha Kappa Psi Foundation \$700
Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area \$250
American Cancer Society Inc. - Mid-South Division \$1,500
American Heart Association Inc. - Greater Southeast Affiliate \$2,000
American National Red Cross - Louisiana Capital Area \$184
AmeriCares Foundation Inc. \$250
Animal Grantmakers Inc. \$5,000
Archdiocese of Mobile \$5,000
Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$13,500
Auburn University \$4,500
Auckland Foundation \$10,000
Basket of Hope \$2,500
Baton Rouge Child Advocacy Center \$250
Baton Rouge Christian Education Foundation Inc. -
The Dunham School \$2,680
Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center Inc. \$3,455
Baton Rouge Emergency Aid Coalition \$1,000
Baton Rouge Epicurean Society LLC \$2,500
Baton Rouge First Church of the Nazarene \$350
Baton Rouge Gallery Inc. \$5,000
Baton Rouge Green Association Inc. \$250
Baton Rouge Green Association Inc. \$17,750
Baton Rouge Little Theater Inc. / Theatre Baton Rouge \$5,000
Baton Rouge Opera Guild \$2,924
Baton Rouge Police Department \$75,000
Baton Rouge Youth Coalition Inc. \$11,000

Beth Shalom Synagogue \$750
Bevill State Community College \$5,000
Beyond Batten Disease Foundation \$1,000
Beyond the Badge \$1,000
Big Buddy Program \$1,000
Black Teacher Collaborative Incorporated \$62,250
Boy Scouts of America - Istrouma Area Council \$500
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$100,000
BREADA - Big River Economic & Agricultural Development Alliance \$2,250
Bright School Pre-School for the Hearing Impaired \$1,000
Business Without Borders Inc. \$35,000
C.A. Weis Elementary School \$600
Calcasieu Parish School Board - J. J. Johnson Elementary \$300
Cancer Services Inc. \$3,000
Capital Area Animal Welfare Society \$434
Capital Area CASA Association \$1,000
Capital Area Law Enforcement Foundation \$1,500
Capital Area United Way \$11,000
Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans \$36,791
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Inc. \$20,000
Catholic Foundation of the Archdiocese of Mobile Inc. -
St. Thomas by the Sea \$750
Catholic High School Foundation \$5,154
Catholic High School Foundation \$1,000
Cenikor Foundation - Baton Rouge \$10,000
Center for Planning Excellence Inc. \$2,500
Centre for the Arts \$1,000
Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Baton Rouge Inc./
McMains Children's Develo \$20,000
Change Lives Now \$1,000
Children's Cup \$1,200
Chippin' in for St. Jude \$4,000
Christ Episcopal Church \$35,000
Christ Episcopal School \$30,000
Christ the King Parish and Catholic Center at LSU \$11,281
City Year Inc. - Baton Rouge \$205,500
Committee For A Secure Louisiana \$5,000
Community Center of Pointe Coupee \$500
Companion Animal Alliance \$632,900
Congregation B'nai Israel of Baton Rouge \$3,000
Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere Inc./ CARE \$250
Cornell University - Cornell Lab of Ornithology \$250
Covenant House New Orleans \$500
Crested Butte Land Trust \$100
Cultural Landscape Foundation \$500

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation - Baton Rouge \$2,000
 Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans Foundation \$1,000
 Delta Upsilon Lambda Foundation Inc. \$1,000
 Dillard University \$1,500
 Doctors Without Borders USA Inc. \$250
 Double Angel Inc. \$100
 Douglas Manship Sr. Theatre Complex Holding Inc. \$17,424
 Dream Teachers \$1,000
 Dress for Success Charity - New Orleans \$1,500
 Ducks Unlimited Inc. - Headquarters \$6,000
 Dyslexia Association of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$585
 Earthjustice \$250
 East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority \$75,000
 East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office \$9,500
 EBRPSS - Glasgow Middle School \$1,000
 EBRPSS - Glen Oaks Park Elementary School \$1,000
 EBRPSS - Lee Magnet High School \$350
 EBRPSS - McKinley High School \$1,000
 EdNavigator Inc. \$174,750
 Elm Grove Baptist Church \$1,500
 Emerge Center Inc. \$2,117
 Engineers Wwithout Borders USA Inc. \$1,000
 Episcopal Church of the Holy Nativity \$100
 Episcopal High School of Baton Rouge \$34,100
 Even Ground Inc. \$25,000
 Family Life Federation \$500
 First Baptist Church Ruston \$100
 First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge Foundation \$10,000
 First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge \$20,500
 First United Methodist Church \$108,000
 Forward Arts Inc. \$3,000
 Foundation for Historical Louisiana Inc. / Preserve Louisiana \$4,786
 Foundation for Woman's \$7,240
 Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University \$11,000
 Friends of Hilltop Arboretum Inc. \$1,000
 Friends of Louisiana Public Broadcasting Inc. \$14,370
 Friends of Magnolia Mound Plantation Inc. \$1,250
 Friends of the Alexandria Museum of Art \$500
 Friends of the Animals BR Inc. \$1,250
 Friends of the Baton Rouge Zoo \$1,250
 GaitWay Therapeutic Horsemanship \$21,000
 General Health System Foundation \$25,500
 Georgia Institute of Technology \$500
 Georgia Southern University \$1,500
 Georgia State University \$500
 Global Hunger Project \$150
 Grace Baptist Church \$700
 Grace Episcopal Church \$5,000
 Greater Baton Rouge Economic Partnership Inc. \$65,500
 Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank Inc. \$3,000
 Greater Baton Rouge Hope Academy Inc. \$1,500
 Greater Louisiana Baptist Convention Inc \$2,500
 Greater New Orleans Educational Television Foundation \$1,000
 Habitat for Humanity of Greater Baton Rouge \$250
 Healing Place Serve / Empower 225 \$12,750
 Healthnetwork Foundation \$25,000
 Heritage Ranch \$1,000
 Holy Family Catholic Church \$11,469
 HOPE Ministries of Baton Rouge \$500
 Hospice Foundation of Greater Baton Rouge \$1,200
 House of Refuge Ministries \$700
 Humanities Amped \$15,000
 Iberville Foundation for Academic Excellence \$5,542
 Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy \$50,000
 Inner-City Arts \$2,500
 International Center for Journalists Inc. \$10,000
 International Community Foundation \$250
 International Hospitality Foundation LSU \$1,304
 International Rescue Committee Inc. \$150
 International Society for Krishna Consciousness of New Orleans \$3,753
 Isidore Newman School \$2,500
 Issue One \$50,000
 Jacksonville State University \$1,500
 Jane Goodall Institute for Wildlife Research Education and Conservation \$250
 JDRF International - Georgia Chapter \$1,000
 JDRF International - Louisiana \$1,750
 Jefferson Performing Arts Society \$5,000
 Julius Freyhan Foundation \$500
 Kappa Kappa Gamma Foundation \$500
 Karnival Krewe de Louisiane Inc. \$1,000
 Kids' Orchestra Inc. \$750
 King of Kings Ministries Inc. / King of Kings Community Jerusalem \$3,250
 Knock Knock Children's Museum Inc. \$7,000
 Kudvumisa Foundation USA Inc. \$1,500
 La Fondation Rose Et Verte De Louisiane \$1,000
 Le Bonheur Children's Hospital Foundation \$500
 Life of a Single Mom \$1,000
 Lighthouse for the Blind in New Orleans \$9,000
 LINE 4 LINE \$500
 Live 2 Serve \$500
 Living Water Christian Fellowship of Springfield \$1,500

Living Word Church of Muskegon \$600
 Livingston Parish School Board - Denham Springs High School \$350
 Loranger United Methodist Church \$1,000
 Louisiana Americana and Folk Society \$500
 Louisiana Art and Science Museum Inc. \$21,915
 Louisiana Children's Museum \$26,000
 Louisiana International Film Festival \$15,000
 Louisiana Naval War Memorial Commission \$1,200
 Louisiana Parole Project Inc. \$10,000
 Louisiana Preservation Alliance Inc. \$500
 Louisiana State Police \$67,595
 Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College \$11,900
 Louisiana Superintendents Academy \$33,000
 Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services Inc. \$100
 LSU Alumni Association \$500
 LSU Foundation - College of Engineering \$850
 LSU Foundation - College of the Coast and Environment \$3,000
 LSU Foundation - E.J. Ourso College of Business \$30,000
 LSU Foundation - Friends of French Studies \$1,000
 LSU Foundation - LSU Ag Center Botanic Gardens at Burden \$1,000
 LSU Foundation - LSU Museum of Art \$10,000
 LSU Foundation - LSU Press \$15,000
 LSU Foundation - Manship School of Mass Communication Excellence Fund \$500
 LSU Foundation - Manship School of Mass Communication \$20,000
 LSU Foundation - Manship School of Mass Communication \$1,000
 LSU Foundation - Manship School of Mass Communication \$20,000
 LSU Foundation - Paul M. Hebert Law Center \$1,000
 LSU Foundation - Paul M. Hebert Law Center \$100
 LSU Foundation - University Lab School Foundation \$525
 LSU Foundation - University Lab School Foundation \$350
 LSU Foundation \$1,210,700
 Lycee Francais de la Nouvelle-Orleans \$10,000
 Manners of the Heart \$3,600
 Map 1040 \$1,500
 Marigny Opera House Foundation \$10,000
 Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center Foundation \$27,073
 Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center \$41,049
 MAZON Inc. a Jewish Response to Hunger \$250
 Memory Project Productions Inc. \$17,300
 Mercy Corps \$5,000
 Mercy Ships \$850
 MetroMorphosis \$292,250
 Middle Georgia State University \$500
 Millsaps College \$500
 Mims Family Matters Foundation Inc. \$1,000
 Missionaries of Charity Inc. \$5,000
 Mississippi State University \$500
 Mt. Olive Lutheran Church \$402
 Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience \$5,000
 National Multiple Sclerosis Society - Houston \$1,000
 National Park Foundation \$25,250
 National Redistricting Foundation \$50,000
 Nature Conservancy - Louisiana \$20,754
 New Orleans Career Center \$49,500
 New Orleans Museum of Art \$2,150
 New Orleans Opera Association \$10,000
 New Pathways NOLA INC \$75,000
 New Schools for Baton Rouge \$445,640
 New Schools for New Orleans Inc. \$343,125
 New Subiaco Abbey and Academy \$1,500
 New York Institute of Technology \$1,500
 NUNU Arts and Culture Collective Inc. \$5,000
 O'Brien House Inc. \$1,600
 Ochsner Clinic Foundation \$5,000
 Ochsner Clinic Foundation \$1,000
 Of Moving Colors Productions \$4,000
 Ollie Steele Burden Manor Inc. \$271
 Omicron Beta Foundation Inc. \$1,000
 Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church \$10,333
 Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church \$35,652
 Our Lady of the Lake Foundation \$45,500
 Our Voice Nuestra Voz \$24,750
 Pahara Institute \$62,250
 Parkview Baptist School Inc. \$700
 Particular Council of St. Vincent de Paul of Baton Rouge Louisiana \$7,850
 Pastoral Center \$27,226
 Pearl River Community College \$1,500
 Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation \$23,750
 Planned Parenthood of the Gulf Coast Inc. \$2,900
 Pointe Coupee Historical Society Inc. \$1,200
 Pointe Coupee Parish School Board - Rosenwald Elementary School \$3,340
 Pointe Coupee Parish School Board - Rougon Elementary School \$800
 Pointe Coupee Parish School Board - Upper Pointe Coupee Elementary School \$500
 PolitiCraft Inc. \$7,000
 Pro Bono Publico Foundation \$1,500
 Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana Inc. \$3,000
 Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge Inc. \$5,500
 Red Shoes Inc. \$4,000
 Reliant Mission Inc. \$1,000
 River Oaks Baptist Church \$500
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge - Bishop's Annual Appeal \$750

Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge \$117,837
 Rosa's Child Development Center \$1,500
 Rotary Club of Baton Rouge Inc. Foundation \$400
 Rotary Foundation of Rotary International \$100
 Russell Domingue Ministries Inc. / Blue Flames Ministries \$750
 S S C Progression Corp - St. Stanislaus College \$750
 Second Chance Dog Rescue \$350
 Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana \$5,000
 Sierra Club Foundation \$250
 Sight Savers America \$5,000
 SJA Foundation \$1,500
 Southeastern Louisiana University \$3,500
 Southern Methodist University \$1,000
 Southern University and A&M College \$1,250
 Southwestern University \$1,500
 Spay Baton Rouge \$250
 Special Olympics Louisiana Inc. \$250
 St. Aloysius Catholic Church \$9,000
 St. Augustine Church \$889
 St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church \$12,000
 St. Gerard Majella Church \$10,500
 St. James Place of Baton Rouge Foundation Inc. \$3,000
 St. Jean Vianney Catholic Church \$7,544
 St. John Interparochial School \$1,012
 St. Joseph Cathedral \$800
 St. Joseph Hospice Foundation Inc. \$500
 St. Joseph the Worker Church \$5,758
 St. Joseph's Academy \$11,100
 St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Inc. \$1,500
 St. Philip Parish \$3,694
 St. Stephen's Episcopal Church \$100
 St. Thomas Aquinas Regional Catholic High School \$13,691
 Strength for Today \$3,000
 Teach for America Inc. - South Louisiana \$106,000
 Team Gleason Foundation \$500
 Terrebonne Parish Library \$1,000
 Terrebonne Parish School Board - Pointe-Aux-Chenes
 Elementary School \$1,000
 The Administrators of the Tulane Educational Fund -
 Tulane University Law School \$100
 The Administrators of the Tulane Educational Fund \$27,500
 The Ascension Fund Inc. \$12,887
 The Brighton School \$500
 The Chapel / The Chapel on the Campus \$500
 The Friends of the Rural Life Museum Inc. \$1,250
 The Ogden Museum of Southern Art Inc. \$500
 The Original Richland Library Restoration Society Inc. \$638
 The Salvation Army - Baton Rouge \$1,250
 The University of Tennessee Knoxville \$500
 The University of Texas at Austin \$1,500
 The Vision 21 Foundation \$500
 The Walls Project \$2,500
 The Water Institute of the Gulfs Delta \$700,000
 Tiger Athletic Foundation \$5,000
 Todd Allen Family Ministries \$500
 Trinity Episcopal Church - New Orleans \$15,000
 Union Congregational Church Crested Butte \$5,000
 United Southern Express Track Club \$350
 University of Louisiana at Lafayette Foundation \$500
 University of Louisiana at Lafayette \$2,000
 University of Louisiana at Monroe \$2,500
 University of Mississippi \$2,000
 University of North Alabama \$1,500
 University of Southern Mississippi \$4,500
 University of Texas Foundation \$1,000
 University of West Florida \$1,500
 University of West Georgia \$500
 University Presbyterian Church \$25,250
 UpStage Inc. \$1,000
 Urban League of Louisiana \$24,750
 Veritas Counseling Center \$500
 Volunteers In Public Schools Inc. \$250
 Volunteers of America Inc. \$364,849
 Washington & Lee University \$100
 West Baton Rouge Foundation for Academic Excellence \$5,746
 West Baton Rouge Historical Association \$17,521
 West Baton Rouge Parish School Board - Port Allen Middle School \$1,000
 Woman's Club Inc. \$15,000
 Woodlawn Foundation \$1,000
 WRKF Public Radio Inc. \$6,250
 Xavier University of Louisiana \$1,250
 Yale University \$1,000
 YMCA of the Capital Area - A.C. Lewis Branch YMCA \$150
 Yosemite Foundation \$250
 Youth for Christ USA Inc. - Mississippi Gulf Coast \$2,100
 YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge \$1,000

2019 John W. Barton Awards

*Winners answer a
few questions*

By Mukul Verma | Photos by Tim Mueller

Three nonprofit leaders won the 2019 John W. Barton Nonprofit Management awards, which are given annually by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. The award is named for the late Mr. Barton, who led a group that created the Foundation in 1964. Barton winners were honored in April at the Foundation's annual meeting of members at the Manship Theatre.

People who have charitable funds at the Foundation nominate nonprofit executives for the recognition. Past chairs choose winners from the list.

Shante Bradford-Webb and Melanie Couvillon won the John W. Barton Sr. Excellence in Nonprofit Management Awards, while Laura Vinsant won the Rising Star Award.

We asked the winners a few questions, offering a glimpse of who they are outside of their professional life.



Shante Bradford-Webb

Shante Bradford-Webb

Maison des Amis

Bradford-Webb has dedicated more than a decade of her life to care for people with chronic mental illness. Maison des Amis is a home for 46 people who can't manage their lives without the nonprofit's assistance.

Bradford-Webb and her staff make sure they have a safe place to sleep at night and are productive as they can be during the day.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY FROM CHILDHOOD?

My favorite memory from childhood is spending my free time, weekends, holidays and summers with my siblings and cousins laughing, joking, playing games and traveling.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?

My favorite meal is cornbread dressing and macaroni and cheese, holiday foods.

EXCLUDING BATON ROUGE, WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CITY OR PLACE AND WHY?

Orlando, Florida, is one of the most enjoyable places for me because the weather is almost always great. There is something different to do every day, lots of beaches, resorts and shopping. One of my favorite places in Orlando is the Epcot Theme Park.

SOLVING WHICH PROBLEM WOULD PROVIDE THE GREATEST RETURN FOR OUR REGION?

Providing more job opportunities for college students who obtain degrees from our universities would provide a great return for our region. Retaining great talent that has been educated here would increase entrepreneurship; new businesses would start and grow. Graduates would invest in their schools and provide scholarships to high school students from our region. Lastly, retaining more talent would provide opportunities for major corporations to expand into our region.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE HERO IN FICTION?

My favorite is Catwoman because she exhibits empowerment. Catwoman owned all aspects of being an impactful, fierce and powerful woman.

WHAT DOES BATON ROUGE LACK THAT YOU WISH IT HAD?

I wish we had a local rail system, and Amtrak service to other cities.

WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE AND WHY?

Mary Bradford, my mother. She raised four children as a widow, two of whom were very young when she assumed this solo responsibility. She has encouraged each of us to achieve our goals and dreams. My mother has taught us to give to others while not expecting anything in return. She has opened her home to family, friends and students who have become our extended family. My mother's love for Christ shows in her everyday life, her character, her prayer life and through the special love that she has for each of her grandchildren.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?

My most treasured possession is my heart; it is filled with love and compassion for others, especially for individuals with disabilities.

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE WHAT TO COME BACK AS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I would be a body of water, I would never drown or catch on fire.

IF YOU HAD \$1 BILLION, HOW WOULD YOU SPEND IT TO IMPROVE THE REGION?

I would spend it to improve all schools across the region, assuring that each student had access to technology and STEM programs. I'd pay for access to tutoring and mentorship programs and invest in a collegiate scholarships fund. I'd pay for students to have access to school health clinics for medical, mental health and dental care. In addition, I would spend money to assure all communities were more accessible for the elderly by providing direct transportation services for seniors.

HOW WILL YOU SPEND THE \$10,000 BARTON AWARD?

I would love to spend the Barton award on travel, investments and shopping.

Melanie Couvillon

Manship Theatre

Couvillon has been executive director of the Manship Theatre for five years. She has elevated the caliber of programming and broadened the range of events. She has raised the profile of the organization in the community and enhanced the already stellar reputation of the theater with performing arts professionals. She's done so while vastly improving the financial health and sustainability of the Manship.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY OF CHILDHOOD?

Playing! Anything that used my imagination. I have the best memories of playing with dolls for hours and creating stories and dramas, giving them interesting characters.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?

Filet mignon.

EXCLUDING BATON ROUGE, WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CITY OR PLACE AND WHY?

Any city that is tropical and has a beautiful beach with bright blue water. Best stress reliever there is!

SOLVING WHICH PROBLEM WOULD PROVIDE THE GREATEST RETURN FOR OUR REGION?

Improving our schools and working to pay teachers a higher wage for their hard work. Education is the key for any community to succeed, and arts education is a necessity!

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE HERO IN FICTION?

Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*

WHAT DOES BATON ROUGE LACK THAT YOU WISH IT HAD?

More outdoor opportunities for hiking and exercising.

WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE AND WHY?

Carol Burnett. I watched her when I was a little girl and that was my first acting lesson. She pioneered a successful career in television, which was dominated by men, with her enormous

talent and humor. Her determination and strong work ethic through the years is something I admire and strive to achieve. Her wit and comic timing cannot be beat. I finally got to see her live in New York in 1995 on Broadway in *Moon Over Buffalo*.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?

Friends and family.

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE WHAT TO COME BACK AS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Mike the Tiger.

IF YOU HAD \$1 BILLION, HOW WOULD YOU SPEND IT TO IMPROVE THE REGION?

I would open a performing arts academy in Baton Rouge like NOCCA, New Orleans Center for Creative Arts. High school students would complete their required curriculum at their school of choice, then spend the second half of the day with us studying the performing arts. I cannot take full credit for this idea. A dear friend is my inspiration.

HOW WILL YOU SPEND THE BARTON AWARD MONEY?

A trip to Italy!

Rising Star Award

Laura Vinsant

Teach For America South Louisiana

Vinsant joined Teach for America after graduating from LSU and taught for two years in Baton Rouge public schools. Noticing her abilities, the national office hired her to recruit teachers.

After four years, she returned to TFA South Louisiana, where she has put her recruiting abilities to exceptional use. She makes the case for the children of South Louisiana, drawing about 50 new teachers from around the country to work across our region.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY FROM CHILDHOOD?

Spending summers on the Texas coast with my grandparents and cousins. Life seems to pass slowly there, and these vacations set my foundation for prioritizing family and the precious time we spend together.



Melanie Couvillon



Laura Vinsant

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?

This is a hard choice—we have so much great food here! Digiulio's shrimp alla vodka. If I were back in Arlington, I would respond with a Braum's banana split. There's just nothing like it!

EXCLUDING BATON ROUGE, WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CITY OR PLACE AND WHY?

Key West has become a place I have gravitated to over the years. As I have had the opportunity to travel with friends or spontaneously see a concert, I keep being drawn back to Key West. It is a place that has its own meaning to each person who visits. I cherish each new memory that I make there and look forward to many more.

FAVORITE MEAL:

This is a hard choice—we have so much great food here! Digiulio's shrimp alla vodka. If I were back in Arlington, I would respond with a Braum's banana split. There's just nothing like it!

SOLVING WHICH PROBLEM WOULD PROVIDE THE GREATEST RETURN FOR OUR REGION?

Every child deserves a great early childhood education as a foundation to build on throughout their educational career. Investing in early childhood has a measurable impact on the health, long-term educational attainment and overall quality of life.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE HERO IN FICTION?

Wonder Woman (Lynda Carter)—she has an invisible flying car that would make those cross-town meetings a little easier to get to. Plus, no one would see how many Diet Cokes are always in my cup holder!

WHAT DOES BATON ROUGE LACK THAT YOU WISH IT HAD?

Baton Rouge is evolving before our eyes and I'm proud of the city we are becoming. Infrastructure continues to be an area of growth for our community, and I wish we had the necessary conditions to fund infrastructure in the way that would lead to improved quality of life for all of us.

WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE AND WHY?

My grandfather is a man of integrity, honor and commitment. He teaches me to always keep my word, never back down in a moment of challenge and enjoy the sweet life (his favorite fried pies). The world is a better place for the 95 years he has been here.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?

One of my grandmother's coats—it was a gift to her from my grandfather and I'll cherish it forever.

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE WHAT TO COME BACK AS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

One of my three dogs, most likely! They enjoy the freedom of running through nearby fields and bayous and spending that amount of time outdoors would bring me joy. Plus, they watch more TV than me, so it would be nice to catch up on a few shows.

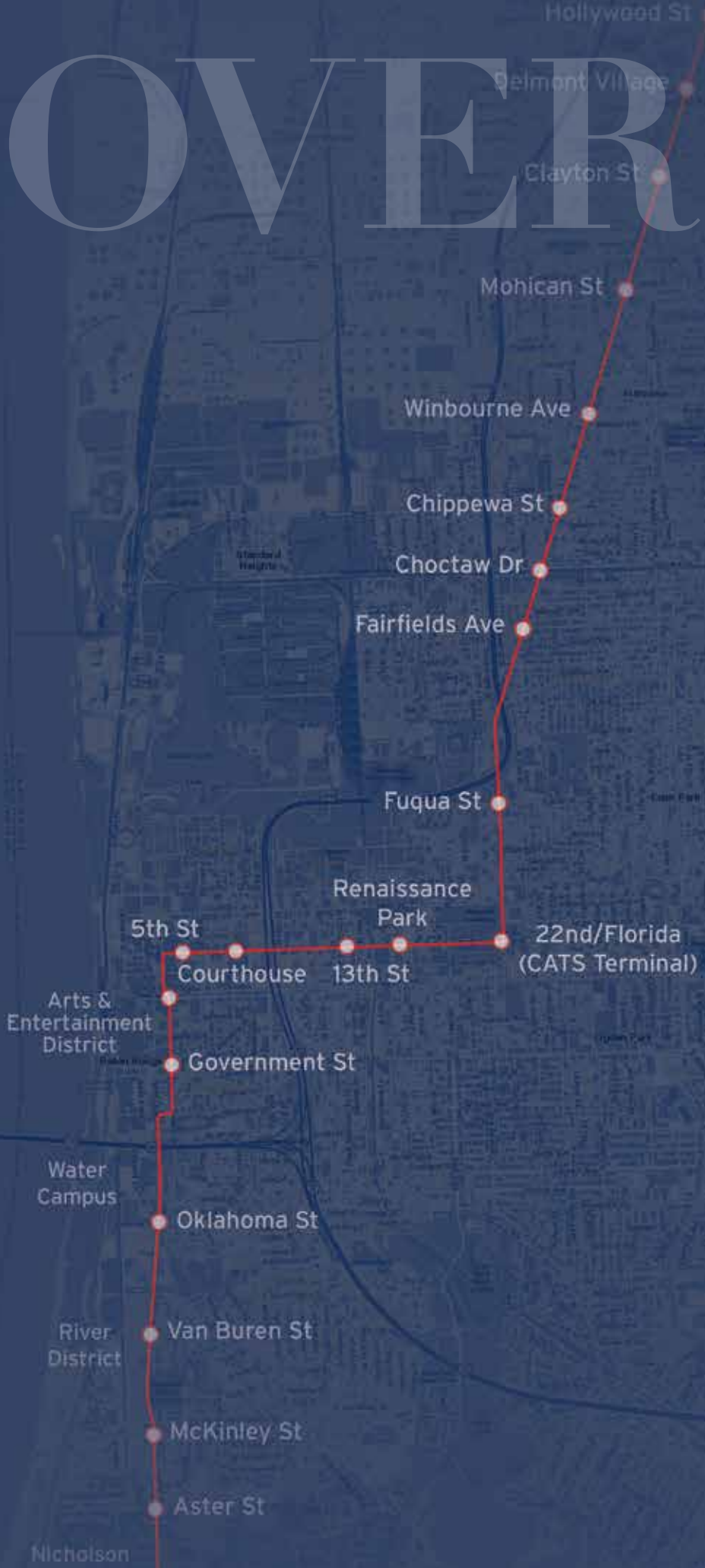
IF YOU HAD \$1 BILLION, HOW WOULD YOU SPEND IT TO IMPROVE THE REGION?

My goal would be to intertwine the infrastructure needs of our region with a strong education and necessary wraparound supports. Think new and updated roads and bridges to the most updated schools that deliver holistic services for children and families. These services range from improved transportation, healthy food access to wraparound services that support students, beginning with early education all the way through to their career. Many students face challenges navigating the transition after high school, and we can do more to ensure they are able to step into the career or college pathway successfully.

HOW WILL YOU SPEND THE \$5,000 RISING STAR AWARD?

There are a few professional development opportunities I am eyeing, and I have not yet confirmed which one is the best fit. I appreciate this award immensely and want to put it to use in a way that will deepen my impact in my organization and broader community. •

COVER



Go North

A project to reclaim Plank Road would link the area to downtown, LSU with rapid transit

By Sara Bongiorno

Planned redevelopment of Plank Road in north Baton Rouge centers on a model of fast, comfortable and reliable bus transit with a record of sparking investment in blighted corridors of big U.S. cities.

Transit-oriented elements of the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority's new Plank Road Project include affordable housing, mixed-use development and walkable streets along Plank's commercial corridor and in surrounding residential streets.

Blight elimination, land banking of vacant structures and a push for big impact investments are additional elements of a historic initiative. The project is the first sweeping, cohesive effort to spur economic activity in North Baton Rouge along Plank from its southern terminus near I-110 north to Zion City identified by the redevelopment agency.

Bringing Bus Rapid Transit to Plank Road in a partnership with local government and the transit system is fundamental to the RDA's push for resilient infrastructure, improved quality of life and new opportunities for one of the poorest areas in the state and nation.

"We want to make sure mobility infrastructure is at the forefront of the initiative," says Chris Tyson, president and CEO of the RDA, whose additional revitalization initiatives include the Ardendale development off Florida Boulevard and the Electric Depot on Government.

Though a master plan for the Plank Road project won't be completed in 2019, the agency is thinking big about Plank Road's future and taking early steps toward its transformation.

It is moving 85 blighted structures on or near Plank into its land bank with the aim of eventually returning them to

FOUNDATION FACT:

The Foundation, with elected officials, started the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority to reclaim blighted areas. John B. Noland is the Foundation's representative on the five-member RDA board.

commerce. It is building community awareness via social media with the hashtag #ImaginePlankRoad and through events like a food-truck round-up and a recent trolley tour of Plank.

Geno McLaughlin heads community engagement for the agency. McLaughlin meets with Plank Road-area churches, neighborhood groups and others to ask residents what they need, want and don't want in their neighborhood. "We don't own Plank Road," McLaughlin says. "We are asking people what is important to them."

Meanwhile, new blight-fighting efforts by the mayor's office and Baton Rouge Area Chamber are in step with the RDA's vision for Plank Road and are poised to offer additional, early momentum.

Mayor Sharon Weston Broome has accelerated demolition of condemned structures across the parish, including in North Baton Rouge, after dedicating an additional \$250,000 to that



Damien Heard



Damien Heard

The EBR Redevelopment Authority led a trolley tour to seek input for a Plank Road master plan. Project partners are Baton Rouge Area Foundation, JP. Morgan Chase & Co., Investar Bank, Coca-Cola, General Informatics, WHPacific, ExxonMobil, Georgia-Pacific, Tony's Seafood and APTIM.

objective last year. City-parish public-works crews dismantled 292 condemned structures in East Baton Rouge in 2018, a jump of more than 200% over 2017.

Blighted structures are magnets for crime, a fact reinforced by a new LSU study that showed nearly half of 943 violent crimes in North Baton Rouge's 70805 ZIP code in 2016 took place within 100 feet of a blighted structure.

Meanwhile, a proposal put forward by the chamber would speed the process of clearing title on tax-delinquent properties with the aim of returning them to productive use. The parish has 6,000 such structures, thousands of them in North Baton Rouge.

But Bus Rapid Transit, or BRT, will be the focal point of any long-term strategy for Plank, and the redevelopment agency is pursuing it with speed.

In partnership with CATS, in late 2019, it will apply for federal transportation funds that could cover up to 60% of the \$40 million to \$50 million it would take to create a BRT line running from Plank on the north to Nicholson Drive to the south.

State road-transfer money could pay for the remaining cost of a system that, if all goes well, could be operating in Baton Rouge

by 2021.

In BRT systems, high-capacity, sometimes reticulated buses transport riders along dedicated or semi-dedicated bus lanes that make fewer stops. On-board technology optimizes traffic-signal timing to give buses priority at intersections.

Platform-level boarding and pre-boarding fare collection streamline boarding to keep buses running on time.

Striking landscaping, distinctive station design, pedestrian features and public art are notable features in the 30 U.S. cities to invest in the model, also sometimes called busways or transitways.

BRT along Plank would give Louisiana its first such system and bring fast, efficient transit to the part of the parish with the greatest need for it by multiple measures. The 70805 ZIP code that includes Plank Road has the highest concentration of zero-car households and second-highest rate of transit use in the region.

It would enhance, rather than replace, existing CATS bus service in Baton Rouge.

The RDA has added good reason to focus on BRT. The tran-

BR BUS RAPID TRANSIT

The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority's initial plans to reclaim Plank Road include an alliance with CATS to build a bus rapid transit line. Engineering firm HNTB is consulting on the project and provided the details here.

LENGTH: 9 miles

ROUTE: The line will link North Baton Rouge, Mid City, downtown, the Nicholson Corridor and LSU.

TECHNOLOGY: Transit signal priority for buses

VEHICLES: 40' all-electric buses

STATIONS: 22 pairs of stations, accessible level-boarding platform with custom shelter and vertical marker along with real-time arrival signs.

BRT BENEFITS: Roads will be turned into complete streets to benefit pedestrians; riders will save time because the bus will travel faster; stations will have seating, shelter and state-of-the-art information systems; traffic signals will make it easier to cross streets on foot, passengers can use free WiFi on the route, busier stations could draw investments in housing and retail.



Proposed BRT stations at LSU's Gateway Project and on Plank Road. Renderings courtesy of HNTB.



In Kansas City, the Troost Max BRT line features art along the route.

sit model is drawing increased attention as a catalyst for new investment in blighted areas.

A 2016 study published in National Institute for Transportation and Communities, for instance, found that multifamily housing construction doubled in areas within half a mile of BRT lines. The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Transit Administration notes that such systems “can become a driving force for city building and design,” and that the longer-term investment BRT requires is tied to economic activity near the busways.

The U.S. transportation agency also says that public investment in BRT signals “strong public commitment to the quality of the corridor, which may, in turn, attract private investment and contribute to the revitalization of existing neighborhoods.”

BRT’s track record in a growing number of cities underscores the point.

In Cleveland, BRT is credited with bringing \$9.5 billion in investments as varied as hospitals and microbreweries to what had been a blighted urban corridor.

Albuquerque is using BRT to combat poverty and kickstart

redevelopment in its aging Central Avenue district. Its fast and reliable ART bus system now forms the backbone of the city’s transit system.

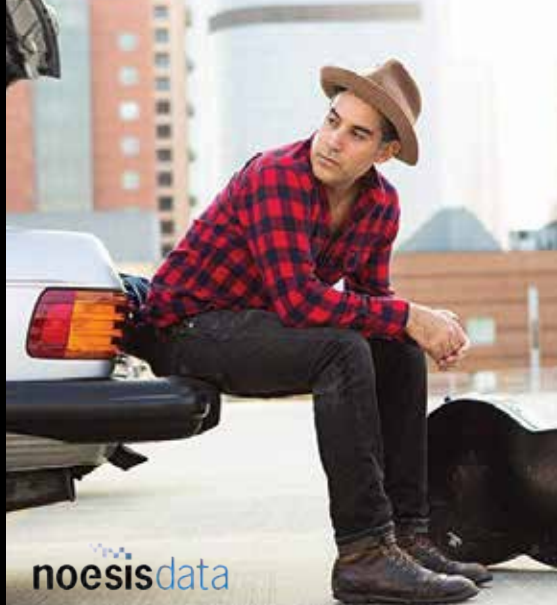
Kansas City is planning its third BRT line. Its new Prospect MAX busway will feature real-time arrival data, signal prioritization, sleek buses with on-board Wi-Fi and distinctive, pedestrian-friendly stations with original neon artwork and other public art.

As McLaughlin sees it, running state-of-the-art bus transit along Plank would bring reliable transportation to a community that needs it while laying the groundwork for something more.

“It’s also the perfect opportunity to be intentional about development in an area that investors have deemed un-investible,” he says. •

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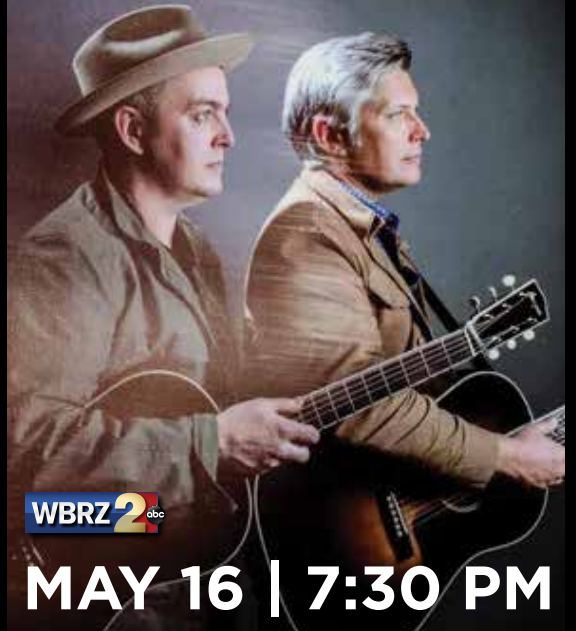
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E.J. Ourso's heart beats on

His foundation pays for surgeries to save children in foreign lands

By Amy Alexander

After he'd made his millions, E.J. Ourso still remembered the feeling of poverty. It lived in his toes, where Donaldsonville's depression-era mud oozed up after summer rainstorms and 10-year-old E.J. pulled a wagon with wooden wheels from door to door asking the neighbors for old newspapers or battered ice boxes he could sell for scrap.

He recalled want. It lived in the same fingers he used as a kid to dig in fields for the bones of dead and forgotten cows or pigs that could be fashioned into buttons. A hundred pounds of bleached elbows, patellas or ribs went for eight cents.

He could still smell hunger. One summer in his youth, his nose filled with the flailing fluff of 700 Rhode Island Reds he sold. He trudged to the back-kitchen doors of country homes, 12 birds at a time flapping on cords that bit into his skin.

Through the screen, he asked cooks if they'd like a plump fresh chicken for their supper tables. A nickel for the bird; ten cents to wring their necks and pluck them clean.

Ourso relied on his heart to pull him up from his humble, small town roots to the stately mansion on St. Charles Avenue he bought after he'd sold his enterprise, Security Industrial Insurance Co., in a deal valued at \$180 million.

"He never forgot his beginnings," said Cathy LeBlanc, who has worked for Ourso and the Ourso Foundation in Donaldsonville for 45 years.

So, in 1997, when Ourso's nurse whispered about a 14-year-old boy from Nicaragua named Augustin Flores-Morales, the sickest and most neglected child uncovered by a medical missionary group, he took interest. A kid who could not breathe or move freely stood no chance at bettering himself or his life.

Doctors at Children's Hospital New Orleans were willing to donate their skills to unblock the boy's heart, but the hospital needed more money to help Flores-Morales. The mechanical valve he needed, for instance, cost \$5,000. Ourso gave the hospital \$10,000.

"It was an easy decision," Ourso told *The Times-Picayune* at the time. "I was reared to share whatever I had. If you do well, you share greatly."





Marjory and E.J. Ourso

That donation sparked a long tradition at the Foundation.

The E.J. and Marjory B. Ourso Family Foundation has given \$230,000 to Children’s Hospital New Orleans and the Louisiana HeartGift Foundation, which facilitates heart surgery for impoverished children from foreign countries.

Though Ourso died in 2005, the Foundation has continued in its mission to provide life-saving heart surgery for disadvantaged children. The patients and their families travel to New Orleans, where they are supported by host families during treatment at Children’s Hospital.

Miguel Angel Pavon Perez, among the first to receive heart surgery funded by Ourso through HeartGift in 2011, is now 19 years old and a high school graduate in Nicaragua. Though

Pavon Perez could not be reached for comment due to political unrest in his country, those who met him in New Orleans never forgot him.

“He was so sick when he got off the plane, he was gasping for air,” recalled Stephanie Berault, executive director of HeartGift Louisiana.

By the time he flew back to his dirt-floored home in Nicaragua, he was a healthy boy who had visited Audubon Zoo, the Aquarium of the Americas, and a Mardi Gras Parade.

“His only complaint when he left were that his feet hurt from walk-

ing so much,” says Berault.

Ourso earned his fortune by acquiring funeral homes and selling funeral insurance. He had a saying he liked to repeat whenever he could: “I put my money in the horses, not the stables.”

*“I was reared to share
whatever I had. If you do well,
you share greatly.”*

—the late E.J. Ourso



The Ourso Family Foundation paid to repair Yaszy Fernandez' heart. She wants to be a nurse, says her mother, Dawnie.

Meaning that in building his business and steering his charitable giving, he preferred to invest in people instead of physical architecture.

His \$15 million donation to the LSU School of Business, which bears his name, is set up to fund the college's human capital in the form of hiring top professors and providing scholarships to students who will go on to make a name for themselves.

"They named the college after him," said Jesse Arboneaux, president and CEO of the Ourso Family Foundation, who has worked for Ourso and the Family Foundation for 46 years. "Not the buildings."

Throughout his life, Ourso spent the free time he had taking on projects that would help a few people, a little at a time. Eventually, the impact of small acts becomes monumental and far-reaching.

Among his pursuits was helping people who were not aware that they could get Social Security benefits to sign up.

He hired interns from Harvard to come learn the people side

FOUNDATION FACT:

The E.J and Marjory Ourso Family Foundation is a supporting organization of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

of business with him.

"He'd tell them, 'You may get your degree from Harvard, but you got your education in Donaldsonville.'"

When he wrote a check to to a nonprofit, he'd often challenge its board to go out and raise even more money. Then he'd gumshoe about town to help make that happen.

After Flores-Morales received his life-saving surgery in 1997, Ourso came to the hospital to meet him. The small, shy boy in

a Mardi Gras baseball hat knew little English. But that didn't matter. Ourso, sitting among golden helium balloons in the shape of stars, met the boy with enthusiasm that transcended any language barrier.

"He was a big man, with a big, deep voice," said Arboneaux. "He was beaming. He was so glad that this kid was living, partly, because of what he had done."

Since the start of their partnership, HeartGift often brings the kids whose surgeries are funded by the Foundation to Donaldsonville, where they climb the steep staircase on Railroad Avenue to say hello and thank the Foundation's staff.

"They know we like to see the fruit of our donation," Arboneaux said.

Last spring, Jesie Francisco Jr. came to New Orleans from the Philippines with a hole in his heart. Doctors found the defect

His time in New Orleans concluded with a visit to Donaldsonville and the Ourso Family Foundation. Jesie returned to the Philippines and added basketball to the list of things he could do now that his heart is pumping at full capacity.

"My goal is to finish my studies and to be able to help other kids such as me in the future to repay all the blessings I received," he said.

In 2015, Yaszy Fernandez came to New Orleans from the Philippines a very sick baby with a ventricular septal defect, a condition that causes the oxygen-rich blood in the heart to slosh into oxygen-depleted blood. The Ourso Family Foundation sponsored her surgery to mend the defect.

Now, Yaszy is a vivacious 5-year-old who loves to sing, dance and act. When she grows up, she wants to be a nurse. She keeps a photo collage of her time in New Orleans.

"She's always looking at it hanging on the wall. Everytime we have a visitor, she introduces herself that she's already been to USA," says her mom, Dawnie. "She's always been proud telling all her classmates about her heart journey to America, and as a mother, also, I always remind her of the people we met, the places we went and how lucky we are to have gotten the chance to travel to America. Although it was not a vacation, we had lots of memories and meaningful experiences imparted to us which cannot be enjoyed by others less fortunate."

—E.J. Ourso

If he could sit down and talk with these kids, Ourso would likely tell them the same

thing he taught to business students: Stay rooted in every struggle you face.

"Where you come from is who you are and how you think about yourself," he wrote in his 2001 autobiography. "Carry it with you. Make something good of it. It's your opportunity. Success in business, or any other line of endeavor, is tied up with who you are. Know who you are." •

when he was a baby. At the time, they told his mother, Eva Belen, to start praying. There was nothing they could do.

"Hearing that my baby was sick, I couldn't believe that I would be going through such trials in my life," she said. "It was really hard, considering our circumstances, but I just kept my faith."


The Ourso Family Foundation sponsored Jesie and his mom through HeartGift.

After three days in the hospital, Francisco was cured.

At age 9, he's now grasping something that Ourso lived by: Miracles call for human helping hands. It's the kindness and generosity of others that make them possible.

"No matter how big the challenges you are facing, God will find a way to help you through his instruments and his people," Jesie said. "After the surgery, a lot of things have been possible for me and daily routines that I do became easier."

"Where you come from is who you are and how you think about yourself. Carry it with you. Make something good of it."



“My heart swells when we talk about the mental health project. Baton Rouge is recognizing that it’s up to all of us to make sure that we’re treating the people who need that help—effectively.”

Crowning more than five years of Foundation work, voters approved a tax for a mental health treatment center. The center will open next year, thanks to our members.

Rose Hudson
Member since 2011

Membership

is more than financial support.

It’s a declaration by our members that they *believe in our region* and its future.

In 2019, we’ll use member support to expand justice reforms with local officials, pursue funding to implement the lakes master plan, add more space for scientists on the Water Campus, press efforts to reclaim the city, and expand education opportunities for schoolchildren.

Please renew your membership or join us as a new member at BRAf.org/membership.

Memberships start at \$200.

mental HEALTH

*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

SPARK



Bluebonnet Swamp: *a center of warbler research*

*A charismatic yellow bird
worth saving*

By Sara Bongiorno | Photos by Tim Mueller

GeoDad was more or less standard issue as Prothonotary Warblers go.

Bright-eyed, blunt-tailed and just five inches long, the songbird with a yellow head and a plump body was a confirmed father by his second breeding season at BREC's Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center—all standard stuff for a species also called the Golden Swamp Warbler.

But what happened in GeoDad's second year wasn't customary.

Researchers and volunteers trapped the bird, affixed a tiny tracking device to his back and released him back into the urban forest that bumps up against attorneys offices and surgery centers on busy Bluebonnet Boulevard.



Audubon Louisiana Avian Biologist Katie Percy and Audubon Director of Bird Conservation Erik Johnson take notes as they observe Prothonotary Warbler nesting sites at the Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center.

Their hopes? That GeoDad would return to the BREC park to breed the following year. That the 0.5-gram light-sensitive device on his back would not fall off or malfunction. That capturing the path of his winter migration could help save a species whose declining population has made it a major focus of U.S. conservation efforts.

GeoDad did not disappoint. The bird returned to the BREC park eight months later with the geolocator on his back. The device showed he had flown 4,800 miles since leaving Baton Rouge the previous summer.

The migration data wasn't just a big deal for Louisiana researchers. The journey that began at Bluebonnet Swamp spurred similar Prothonotary-tracking projects across multiple states. That work is shedding light on how to save a bird whose numbers have fallen by 50% over 40 years.

Erik Johnson, director of bird conservation for Audubon Louisiana, describes the warbler as charismatic. It would be hard to argue the point. The bird in 1948 made an appearance of sorts before the House Un-American Activities Committee when

Whittaker Chambers testified that birdwatcher and accused spy Alger Hiss once boasted he had seen one.

Hiss, who had denied knowing Chambers, later mentioned the bird sighting himself, sealing his traitor's place in Cold War history.

"It's an easy bird to like."

—Erik Johnson

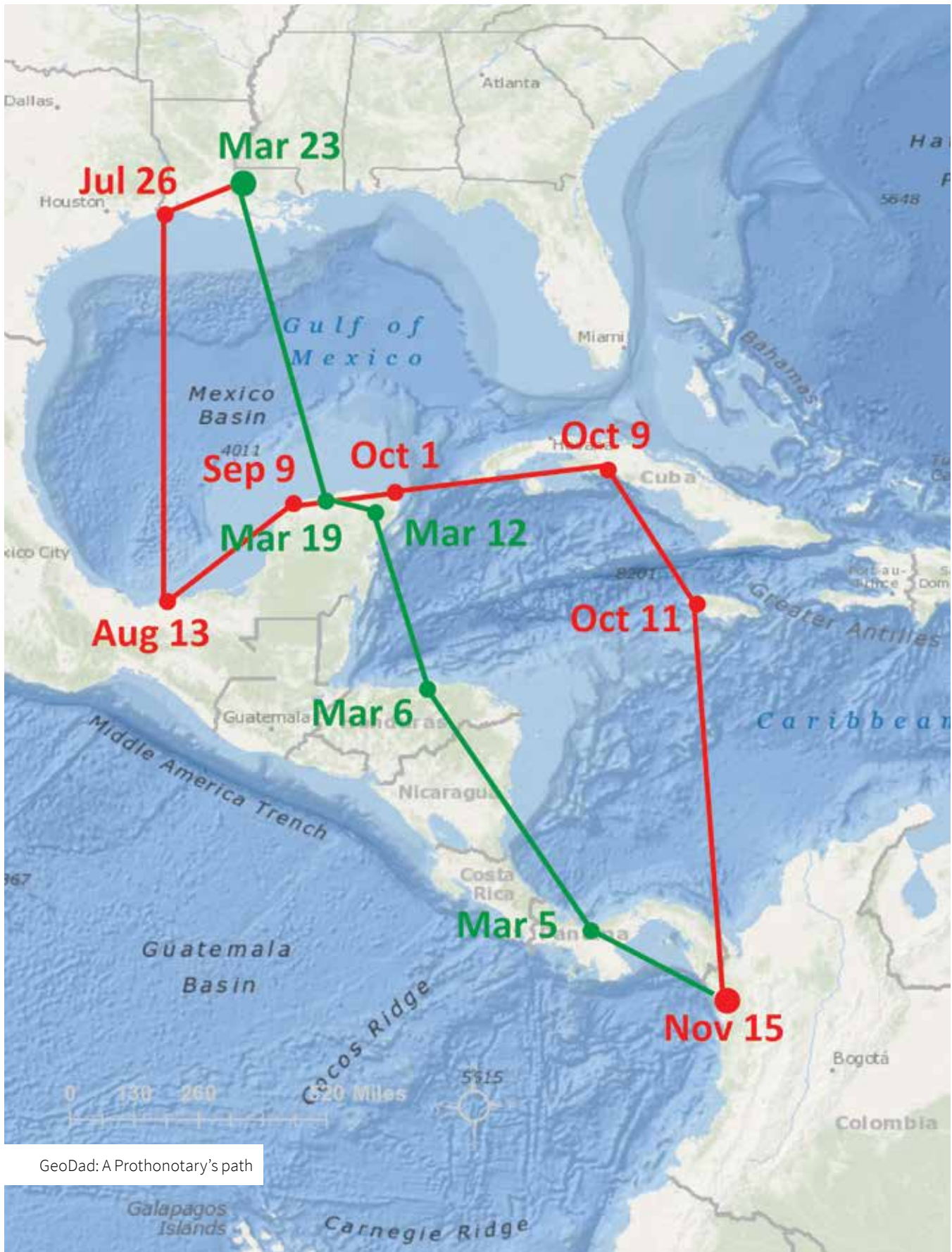
The warbler feeds mostly on swamp insects, spiders and snails. It is one of just two North America cavity-nesting warblers. Its beak is ill-suited for boring holes in tree trunks, so it typically nests in holes vacated by woodpeckers. It will use manmade nesting

boxes, however, like the 26 that are attached to stakes above the water and out of predators' reach at Bluebonnet Swamp. Mating pairs can raise three clutches of chicks in one season.

The warbler is also pretty. Johnson compares the bird to a "swamp candle" in reference to the brilliant yellow head that contrasts with a blue-olive body. It likes stagnant water. Its call is a series of loud zweets.

"It's an easy bird to like," Johnson says.

The warbler has ample Louisiana connections. Between 15%



GeoDad: A Prothonotary's path

FOUNDATION FACT:

In 1989, The Baton Rouge Area Foundation made the first pledge - \$25,000 - and assisted the Nature Conservancy in raising additional funding to purchase 165 acres that became BREC's Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center. The Foundation has also made grants to support Audubon Louisiana.

and 20% of its global breeding population is found here, including 5% in the Atchafalaya Basin. The Prothonotary appears on Plate No. 3 of John J. Audubon's *Birds of America*. Bluebonnet Swamp is a microcosm of the still, watery habit the bird likes best.

Volunteers and researchers have banded birds at Bluebonnet Swamp for years, not just Prothonotaries but other species, too, to measure survivor rates in urban-forest habitat.

A volunteer in 2013 recognized a male Prothonotary that had been banded a year before at Bluebonnet. The bird reappeared with its U.S. government-issued aluminum band on one leg and two orange plastic bands on the other, a color combination unique to that bird.

The warbler's return to Bluebonnet meant researchers had a suitable candidate for winter-migration tracking. "We had birds coming back to the swamp to breed," Johnson says.

Simultaneous development in technology gave the research team a way to capitalize on the bird's reappearance at the BREC park.

Geolocators had been used for 20 years to track migration of large birds like albatross and raptors. By 2013, the devices with three components—a battery, a data logger and a light sensor—were small enough to attach to birds like the Prothonotary Warbler, which weighs about half an ounce. "That was a door opening for us," Johnson says.

The team went to work. The bird with the orange leg bands was lured into a finely threaded "mist" net strung between posts near a nesting box at Bluebonnet. The male warbler—around this time acquiring the name GeoDad—was quickly removed from the net once caught, then fitted with the tiny pouch containing the geolocator before being released.

Birds like GeoDad can be caught and released again in about 5 minutes, explained Audubon researcher Katie Percy, who works alongside fellow scientists and volunteers at conservation sites across south Louisiana.

GeoDad left Baton Rouge in mid-summer 2013. Audubon's

team settled in to wait. A question they hoped the bird would answer: Exactly where did it go once it flew south for the winter? A still bigger question: Could the path of its migration help unlock reasons for the species' continuing decline?

Pinpointing where GeoDad went for the winter was of special focus because the warbler's numbers have fallen faster than its U.S. breeding habitat had dwindled. Johnson and other researchers wondered if something taking place during the bird's yearly migration outside the U.S. was impacting its survival.

Johnson got a call from a volunteer checking nesting boxes at Bluebonnet in spring 2014. The man had spotted the male Prothonotary with the orange leg bands. GeoDad was back. Johnson dropped everything and rushed to capture the bird and retrieve the locator.

The geolocator showed it had taken GeoDad 3.5 months to get to his farthest point south, a river valley in northern Colombia. It had taken the bird a day to cross the 500-mile-wide stretch of the Gulf of Mexico after jumping off from Louisiana's coast a few days after leaving Baton Rouge. He had flown across seven countries since leaving Baton Rouge.

The bird's return almost immediately prompted similar use of geotrackers to trace winter migrations across the bird's multi-state breeding territory, mostly in southeastern states. The work that began at Bluebonnet Swamp was the first time a geotracker had been successfully used for this purpose.

Findings from additional deployments of the devices in recent years showed something remarkable. Nearly all the tracked warblers, regardless of where they began their winter migration, spent time in northern Colombia's Magdalena River Valley, where much of its natural habitat has been converted to cattle ranching or farmland.

Elsewhere across the region, hotel construction and other development has destroyed mangrove forests, including on Colombia's Caribbean coast—another critical winter habitat for Prothonotaries.

Researchers found something else, too. The rate of decline in the warbler population is much closer to the rate of habitat loss in Central and South America than in the U.S., something of key importance in shaping conservation efforts.

Those findings will be published later this year in *The Condor*, one of the nation's most important scientific journals on bird research.

"We wanted to see where the birds go to understand what might be happening," Johnson says of his work and that of fellow researchers. Adds Percy, "It's very exciting to see this." •

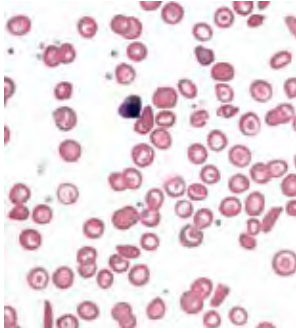


Audubon Louisiana Avian Biologist Katie Percy displays a Prothonotary Warbler for Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center volunteer John Hartgerink and visitors.

ALZHEIMER'S THERAPY

Bathing patients in flashing light and pulsing sounds tuned to 40 hertz might reverse key signs of Alzheimer's in the brain, according to research in mice by MIT's Li-Huei Tsai. In tests on mice, light and sound stimulated the brain's immune cells to clear toxic waste, including the amyloids that are believed to cause Alzheimer's. Human trials are next. Weekly therapy would be required to clear toxins, but could be administered at home.

DATA RULES Three cities in the U.S. have ended chronic homelessness and nine more have ended veteran homelessness. What they have in common is Built for Zero, a program that uses real-time data to track homeless people, matching them with the best local housing resources. The program tracks progress against monthly goals and spreads proven strategies. Built for Zero has 73 participating cities, including nearby Biloxi, Mississippi.



GENE THERAPY BREAKTHROUGH

Sickle cell anemia could be the first common disease cured by gene therapy. Bluebird Bio of Cambridge, Massachusetts, reported that four of nine patients produced enough normal blood cells to no longer have symptoms of sickle cell, a painful disease

that mostly afflicts sub-Saharan Africans and their descendants, including thousands in the United States. Bluebird's therapy turns on a genetic switch to produce fetal hemoglobin, while suppressing artery-clogging, misshapen adult hemoglobin cells. Scientists are using two other genetic methods to take on the disease.



PERFECT LIGHT Here comes the sun, artificially, into your home. Dyson's new task lamp tracks the color, temperature and brightness of local daylight. With an app and GPS, the LightCycle mixes three cool and three warm LED lights to replicate the light outside your window, no matter where you live. The light can also be adjusted to match your task, such as reading, doing homework or watching TV.

RABBIT TRICK Researchers at the University of Washington folded a rabbit gene into Devil's vine, creating a plant that cleans the air of pollutants. In trials, the genetically engineered plant reduced chloroform from 2,000 to 250 milligrams per cubic meter over eight days in a confined space. Next: more tests and then, voila, to market with indoor plants.



CARBON SOLUTION Built by Net Power for \$150 million, a plant near Houston is burning natural gas and capturing carbon dioxide during combustion instead of releasing the earth-warming gas into the atmosphere. Capturing carbon at combustion is inexpensive, so the experimental technology could be used to replace the fossil fuel power plants that now produce 40% of carbon emissions worldwide. The company is developing a commercial-scale 300-megawatt power plant, enough to power more than 225,000 homes.



Tim Mueller

PUPPY STILLS

Elementary schoolchildren who attend St. Luke’s Episcopal School are a dog’s best friend. They crafted handmade toys as gifts to volunteers and fosters who care for dogs at the Companion Animal Alliance shelter on LSU’s Campus. And they painted dog art that was displayed at the shelter this spring. St. Luke’s is among a growing number of partnerships formed by CAA after it moved into a its \$13 million shelter on the LSU campus in 2018.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and animal enthusiasts formed CAA, an independent nonprofit that has raised the animal save rate to more than 70%, up from only 20% when CAA took over shelter operations in 2010.



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1 Harpist

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Visual Artists

10
Tiny Dances

15
Young Entrepreneurs

33
Dancers & Actors

38
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27
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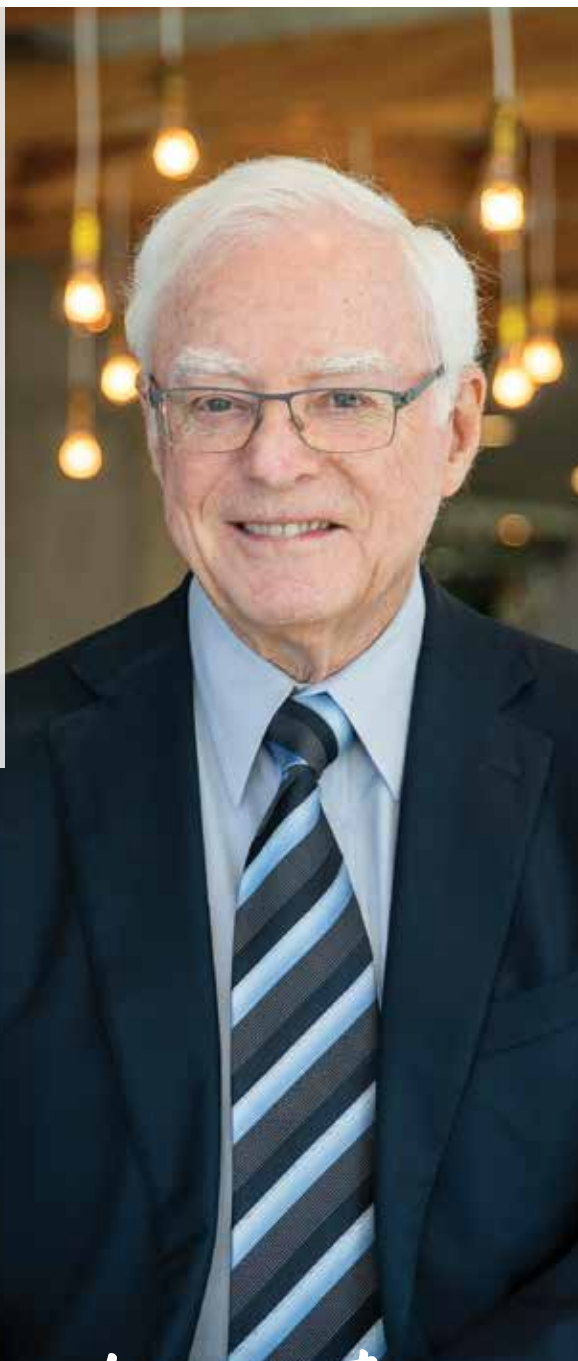


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“Reclaiming downtown has given a lot of hope to our younger generation. The energy is spreading across our parish. You can see it in Mid City and the exciting redevelopment that’s taking place there.”

More than \$2 billion has been invested in downtown since the Foundation underwrote a master plan. The city center is alive again; our members have made it so.

Cordell Haymon
Member since 1989



Membership

is more than financial support.

It’s a declaration by our members that they

*believe in
our region
and its future.*

In 2019, we’ll use member support to expand justice reforms with local officials, pursue funding to implement the lakes master plan, add more space for scientists on the Water Campus, press efforts to reclaim the city, and expand education opportunities for schoolchildren.

Please renew your membership or join us as a new member at BRAf.org/membership.

DOWNTOWN *redevelopment*

*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*