

CURRENTS

Good eats:

A restaurant
at Lori West's
nonprofit serves
up lessons



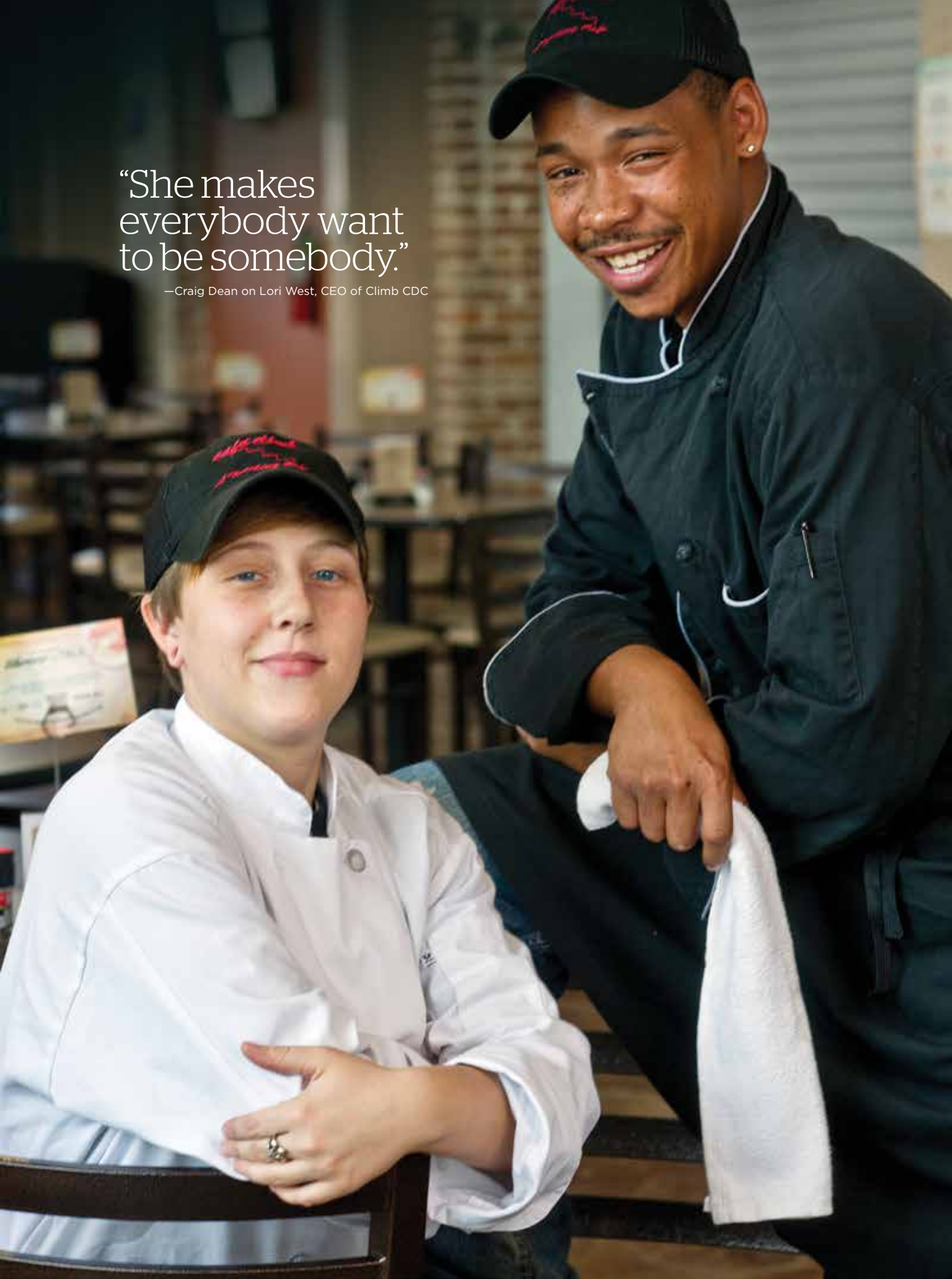
we're
in this
for good.

*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

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

“She makes
everybody want
to be somebody.”

—Craig Dean on Lori West, CEO of Climb CDC





MINDING THE GAP

Already, traffic strangles the roads around Essen Lane and Bluebonnet Boulevard. With more hospitals and clinics going up, eventually that corridor will become entirely choked. What can be done? Community leaders asked us. In reply, our civic leadership group began working to create a \$500,000 master plan to hasten the movement of people and vehicles through the area. Possibilities include a stop for commuter rail to New Orleans and points in between. Sounds nice, you say, but that's a long way off. It's all right, for the Foundation and its members promise to be faithful to South Louisiana across the generations.

WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP, our staff will pursue initiatives like the one here, projects that provide a big return to the community now and for decades to come. **JOIN TODAY AT BRAF.ORG.**

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*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*



When a tide of evacuees rolls in, it brings people of all kinds.

That's what happened in Baton Rouge following Katrina. Tens of thousands had moved here from New Orleans. Some were well off; others were not. Some were well educated; others were not. What they all had in common, however, was the need for a new home.

The Smiley Heights initiative was our response to that need. The Foundation hoped to support the creation of a new kind of neighborhood to house the many who'd come to Baton Rouge for a new start. The idea behind the new development was to accommodate families with new homes built adjacent to stores and offices on 200 acres, owned by nonprofits, in an area once known long ago as Smiley Heights. The houses here would be priced at different levels, allowing people of varying means to live alongside each other as neighbors. It was a good idea. Unfortunately, Katrina relief funds from the federal government went to other projects, and we were forced to shelve our high hopes for a new kind of neighborhood in Smiley Heights.

But good ideas have a way of holding their own.

In September, a final plan for the revival of Smiley Heights was presented by the new developer, the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority. Located off Florida Boulevard and bounded by North Ardenwood and Lobdell, the place was renamed 'Ardendale.' And the concept for the neighborhood has evolved into something that we believe is even better than the original idea.

Ardendale is conceived as a community anchored in education—something valued by people of every kind and every class. At the heart of the new neighborhood will be educational centers where learners can prepare for broader

opportunities and a better way of life. One is an automotive training center funded by the State of Louisiana and equipped by private sector interests, like automobile and tool manufacturers. There, students will learn to repair the new wave of high-tech cars consumers demand. In the past, these technicians would have had to travel to training centers in Texas to learn these skills; now, they'll be able to stay home, keeping their knowledge—and their jobs—here in Louisiana.

Another educational center anchoring Ardendale is the career high school. The curriculum there will be designed to respond to the demands of industry. Students will study in fields where workforce demands are greatest, allowing them to get jobs right out of high school. Because the career high school will also require traditional courses of study, those students will also be prepared for college when they graduate, if that is what they choose.

In keeping with the initiative's original vision, Ardendale will offer homes within a wide range of price points. The hope is to bring together people of different backgrounds, all attracted by the promise of a better community. And the allure of Ardendale are things appreciated by everyone: lush parks, peaceful ponds and open spaces. The advantages of Ardendale will eventually reach beyond its boundaries; experience tells us that when a neighborhood revives, it brings new economic activity to even stagnant surroundings outside the area.

So I'd like to share our optimism and our gratitude with all the people who have worked together on this project through the years. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is pleased and proud to have played some part in guiding the way to Ardendale. We expect the development to begin

construction sometime next year, with the opening date for the automotive training center in 2016. In this issue of *Currents*, we've included renderings of Ardendale, just to give you a glimpse of what visionaries in our community have worked for so long to achieve.

•••

Also in this issue is a story about how even small gestures of generosity can generate great inspiration. At a tournament in San Diego, Baton Rouge-area tennis star Kennan Johnson decided she couldn't stand to see good food go to waste after a luncheon at the competition. So she quietly gathered up the leftovers and distributed it to homeless people in that city. Her act of simple sharing was noticed by the New York Times, which ran a feature article about the good work of this rising tennis star.

Kennan's grandmother, Lynda Johnson, was asked if she was surprised by what the young athlete had done. "The truth is," she said, "I wasn't surprised a bit."

•••

This issue's cover story goes to Climb CDC, a grantee of the Foundation. Located in Gulfport, Miss., the group is among a growing number of non-governmental organizations that are creatively blending commerce into their nonprofit model. Under the direction of ambitious leader named Lori West, Climb operates a restaurant that generates revenue to support its primary mission—training young adults and at-risk youth wavering near the poverty line. Climb's restaurant is a proving ground for these students, who learn to prepare and serve food, such as their famous Sweet Tea Fried Chicken on Wednesdays.

Triumphs like Climb don't go unnoticed for long. Today, nonprofits in other cities are asking Lori West to share her success in their communities by bringing her program there. Soon, Lori may even open a branch of Climb near LSU, her beloved alma mater.

Sincerely,



Matthew G. McKay

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

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The Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAf) is a community foundation that takes advantage of opportunities to improve the quality of life in South Louisiana. We do so by providing two essential functions. One, BRAf 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. Our Plan Baton Rouge initiative spearheaded the downtown revitalization plan and now is working to revive Old South Baton Rouge. For more information, contact Mukul Verma at mverma@braf.org.

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

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation accomplishes its mission in two ways:

>1 We connect fund donors—philanthropists—to worthwhile projects and nonprofits. Over 49 years, our donors have granted more than \$300 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. Donors use these funds to make tax-deductible 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.

Donations to Foundation:

\$30.5 million

Grants to Nonprofits:

\$37.6 million

2012

>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.

Key Civic Leadership Projects:

New Schools for Baton Rouge: Created and underwrote startup costs for a nonprofit that will support turnaround schools in Baton Rouge by recruiting the best charters, teachers and staff.

The Water Institute of the Gulf: Launched the scientific institute to offer solutions for coexisting with rising seas and vanishing coastlines. The independent nonprofit has hired several top scientists and expects to grow in coming years as a worldwide resource.

Smiley Heights: Supported the EBR Redevelopment Authority in advancing a 200-acre community off Florida Boulevard that will include housing, retail and parks—and be anchored by a career high school operated by EBR schools and an automotive training academy operated by Louisiana Community and Technical College System.

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:

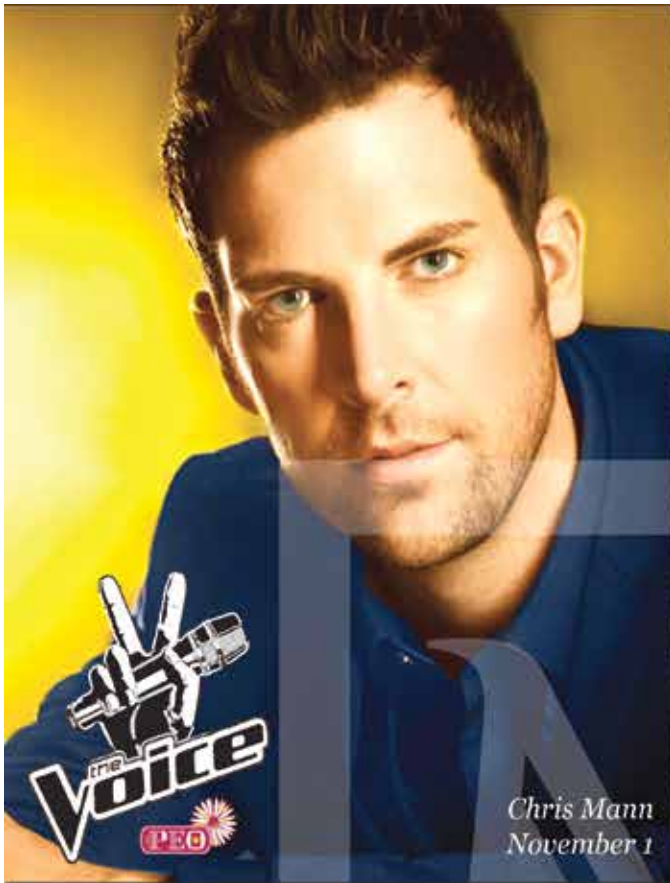
- serve our donors to build the assets that drive initiatives and solutions;
- engage community leaders to develop appropriate responses to emerging opportunities and challenges;
- partner with entities from our service area, as well as with other community foundations, in order to leverage our collective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

Population of Primary Service Area:

2+ million

Population of Secondary Service Area:

7+ billion (world)



Chris Mann
November 1



An Evening with Pikefny,
Sutton, Bulla, Bales & Cobb
November 4

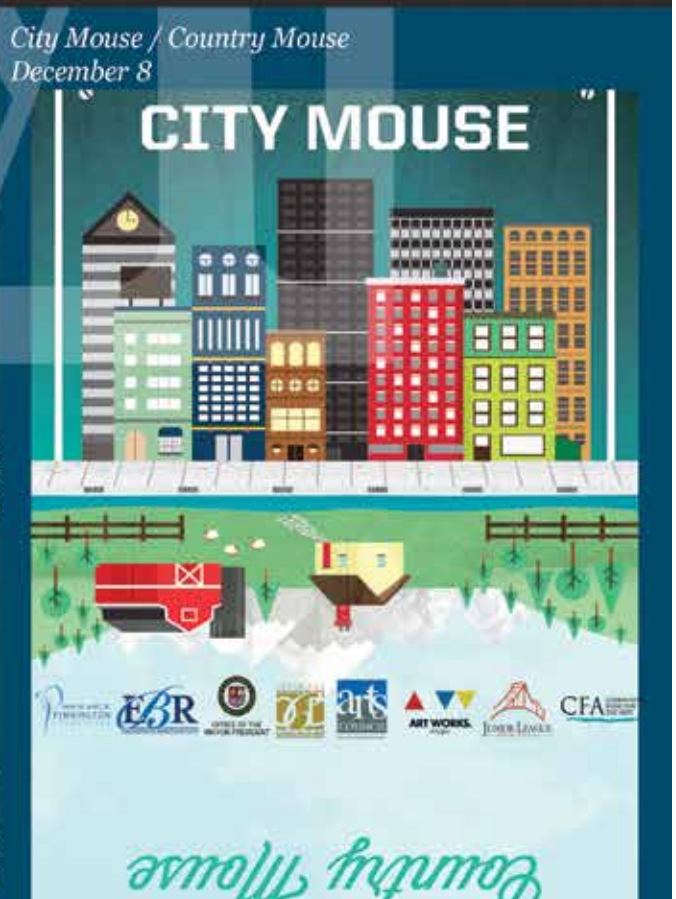


Manship Theatre
2013-2014 SEASON

TICKETS: (225) 344-0334 MANSHIPTHEATRE.ORG



Mary Chapin Carpenter with Shawn Colvin
November 8



City Mouse / Country Mouse
December 8



Country Mouse



FOUNDATION, CPRT BEGIN DOWNTOWN PROJ-

ECTS Commercial Properties Realty Trust, the firm that develops real estate for the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, has nearly completed a redevelopment of an abandoned Wal-Mart and started two large projects that will keep advancing downtown's revival.

Acadian Village, where a small Wal-Mart was shuttered for a larger one on College Drive, has a new shopping center anchored by Trader Joe's, among the best-loved grocers in the nation. Located at the corner of Acadian Thruway and Perkins Road, the \$18 million center includes La Divinia Italian Café, Keans the Cleaners, Nadeau—Furniture with a Soul, Smarter Eyewear, The Keeping Room, Baby Bump Maternity and Air Dry Bar. Pier 1 will open in the center next year.

In downtown, Commercial Properties began construction of a \$55 million riverfront complex in late September. IBM will take one tower, while the other will have apartments and

townhomes with views of the Mississippi River. The buildings are set to open in spring and summer 2015.

Also, CPRT announced the \$6 million redevelopment of the shuttered Onyx building. The building at the corner of Third and Convention streets is being razed for 28 units and 5,600-square-feet of commercial space. The \$6 million redevelopment will complete the Foundation's commitment to remake the area into the Arts Block. One- and two-bedroom apartments in the new Onyx will range from 600 to 1,100 square feet. Each unit will have a balcony or terrace overlooking Third Street, Convention Street or the Shaw Center.

All the properties are assets of the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, a supporting nonprofit of the Foundation. A portion of WMF profits are returned to the community, and it takes on real estate projects that provide a social benefit.

ERNEST J. GAINES AWARD FOR LITERARY EXCELLENCE

*"In the company of master thriller writers...
Locke is a writer wise beyond her years."*

—Los Angeles Times



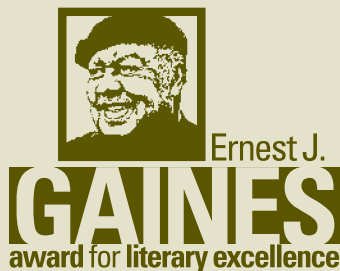
CONGRATULATIONS TO

ATTICA LOCKE for winning the 2014 Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence, which is presented by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

An independent panel of judges chose her novel, *The Cutting Season*, from 10 entries.

Ms. Locke will be honored at a ceremony Jan. 23, 2014. People wishing to attend the free event at the Manship Theatre must send an email to gainesaward@braf.org.

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



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



SHINY METAL OBJECT The reclamation of downtown under Plan Baton Rouge is 14 years old. More than \$2.5 billion has been invested since then, and the amount grew with the latest completed project—The Crest in Town Square. Designed by Trahan Architects and built by Arrighi Construction, the \$900,000 sculpture also functions as a truss for sound equipment. The Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra inaugurated the use of the Crest at Live After Five in September. Other projects ready for construction in downtown include a gateway on Florida Boulevard to the river and a bike path linking North Boulevard to City Park.



LSU MED SCHOOL-BR LSU wants to open a branch of its New Orleans-based medical school in Baton Rouge. The school would start small and expand to 400 students—100 in each class. New Orleans has 800 students. LSU says the branch would meet the expanding demand for doctors. If approved by LSU and accredited, the branch could open in July 2014.

LSU has a new medical education building near Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center.

POP-UP PARKS Small parks popped up in Baton Rouge and around the world in September as part of PARK(ing) Day.

Originally invented in 2005 by Rebar, a San Francisco design firm, PARK(ing) Day challenges people to rethink the way streets are used and reinforces the need for broad-based changes to urban infrastructure.

In Baton Rouge, parking spaces in downtown and Mid City were converted for a day into small parks. The project was a collaboration between Mayor Kip Holden's office and the Center for Planning Excellence.





Enhancements to the Shaw Center of the Arts and its Manship Theater were completed in October. Improvements include an inviting bar, more restrooms and a marquee entrance on North Boulevard for the Hartley/Vey Theaters of the Manship Theatre. The updates will allow the Manship Theatre to offer more performances. The theater is an asset of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and underwritten by the Foundation.

MEDICAL DISTRICT PLANNING SOON The Foundation expects to hire a consulting firm before year end to provide a plan to reduce traffic and improve mobility in the Essen Lane and Bluebonnet Boulevard corridor, and to offer recommendations on how medical and research facilities clustered in the area may work together to offer world-class health care.

The area to be examined includes hospitals, clinics and the Pennington Biomedical Research Center. In the corridor, LSU has announced it would begin a branch of its New Orleans-based medical school, and Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center wants to build a children's hospital.

Growth is expected to jam more traffic in an already congested space. So FutureBR, a comprehensive plan for East Baton Rouge Parish, targets the location for better infrastructure.

An implementation team for FutureBR asked the Foundation to oversee a more detailed strategy for Essen and Bluebonnet, as well as Perkins Road. To do so, the Foundation is seeking the best national consultants to offer solutions, keeping in mind that technology is rapidly changing how health care is delivered in the country. The strategy is expected to look at connecting the broken street grid, adding mass transit to the area and building paths to offer alternative travel means for reducing automobile use.

Consultants will be chosen before the end of the year. Their work is funded by the Foundation's Future of the Gulf Fund, which was seeded with money from a \$100 million donation by BP after the oil leak. Consultants have 15 months to deliver solutions.

WATER INSTITUTE ADDS HUMAN DIMENSIONS STAFF The Water Institute of the Gulf is building a staff to help coastal communities adapt and respond to environmental changes and natural disasters.

Craig Colten is the first director of human dimensions for the Institute, and Scott Hemmerling is the associate director. Both were hired this summer.

Upon request from U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu and state leaders, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation started the Institute last year. The independent nonprofit is advancing water science to take on the double peril of rising seas and disappearing wetlands around the globe.

Using applied research, the Institute's human dimensions staff will examine how regional economies and cultures are affected by environmental disruptions like ongoing storm threats, coastal land loss, and landscape and climate change. The staff also will use the information to develop tools and resources that help coastal communities adapt to these environmental changes.

Along with his primary duties at The Water Institute, Colten also serves as the Carl O. Sauer professor in LSU's Department of Geography and Anthropology. He earned a bachelor's and master's degree in geography from LSU and a doctorate from Syracuse University.

Hemmerling served as geographer with the U.S. Geological Survey, providing technical support for Louisiana's Office of State Lands and assisting with Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts. He earned a master's degree from the University of New Orleans in 1999 and a doctorate in geography from Louisiana State University in 2007.

Civic leadership initiatives

The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority is developing Ardendale, a 200-acre neighborhood anchored by a career high school operated by EBR public schools, and a high-tech automotive training center operated by Baton Rouge Community College. Both projects are funded.

Formerly known as Smiley Heights, the development is located off North Ardenwood and Lobdell Avenue. Ardendale will include 850 residential units, 35,000 square feet of retail space, a Boys and Girls Club site, recreational facilities, walking and biking paths, common greens, a community garden. A cement canal that runs through the property will be demolished part of a wetlands nature preserve.

With a contemporary design, the education facilities will be located on Lobdell Avenue, while homes and retail will be around North Ardenwood, which will be narrowed to two lanes to calm the traffic.

Construction of the infrastructure for Ardendale will begin in 2014 with the education buildings expected to open 2016.

Smiley Heights began as a Baton Rouge Area Foundation project after Katrina, but was put aside when financing didn't become available. With assistance from the Foundation, the RDA restarted the project. For more, visit ebrra.org.



North Ardenwood Drive will be narrowed to two lanes, slowing traffic for the benefit of pedestrians and community.



Condos, single-family dwellings and live-work spaces are to be mixed into the development.



A common area surrounded by housing and retail is expected as a distinguishing draw for Ardendale.

Civic leadership initiatives



With a contemporary design, an automotive training center and a career high school are to be clustered off Lobdell Avenue. An allied health training center may be added in this area.

The Foundation's civic leadership initiatives are underwritten in large part by our members.



Preserved wetlands will include the transformation of a concrete canal into a water feature.

Game fields for use by Baton Rouge Community College, Boys and Girls Club and the area are among amenities.



SPEAKING OF GENEROSITY Parents who talk to their children about charitable giving significantly increase the likelihood that those children will give to charity, according to a 2013 study by the Women's Philanthropy Institute at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.

That finding holds true regardless of the child's sex, age, race and family income. Children whose parents talk to them about giving are 20% more likely to give to charity than children whose parents do not discuss giving with them.

"This research provides a clear, effective path for parents who want to encourage their children to be generous and caring," said Debra J. Mesch, director of the Women's Philanthropy Institute. "The way parents teach their children about giving matters. Talking to children about charity is effective across all types of U.S. households, pointing the way to raising future philanthropists."

Being a role model alone does not appear to be as effective as talking to children about giving, the researchers found. Parents who want to raise charitable children should talk intentionally with them about their own philanthropic values and practices throughout childhood and adolescence in addition to role-modeling, they say.

Children are philanthropic, according to the study. Nearly nine out of 10 children, ages 8 to 19, give to charity. The study also found that girls and boys are equally likely to make monetary gifts to charity; however, girls are more likely than boys to volunteer, a pattern that continues in adulthood.

PROVIDENCE TALKS A program in Providence, Rhode Island, is trying to give babies an earful, thanks to a \$5 million grant won in a contest for new ideas by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Studies have discovered too many poor parents don't talk enough to their babies, causing a lag in brain development. Providence Talks is equipping families eligible for home visitation services with a small recording device capable of measuring the number of words a child hears each day.

This device, developed by the LENA Research Foundation,



filters out television and background noise and develops a comprehensive picture of a child's daily auditory environment, including adult word count and the number of conversational interactions the child engages in during the course of the day.

Families participating in Providence Talks receive these data during a monthly coaching visit along with targeted coaching and information on existing community resources like read-aloud programs at neighborhood libraries or special events at local children's museums.

In a pilot of the program, caretakers presented with data on their child's vocabulary development increased their adult daily word count by an average of 55%.

The goal is to intervene at a critically early age, from birth to age 4, to close the 30-million-word gap at a citywide scale and ensure that every child in Providence enters a kindergarten classroom ready to achieve at extraordinary levels.

If the program is successful, other cities could adopt it.

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the charitable arm of New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg. For a complete list of finalists and their ideas to change cities, visit Bloomberg.org.

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

EYE SEE A series of funds at the Foundation, along with a grant from the Rotary Club of Baton Rouge Foundation, purchased two vision screeners for Health Centers in Schools. The nonprofit will use the plusoptiX S09 Vision Screeners to check the eyesight of students in public schools. Health Centers offers medical care in public schools through on-site clinics.

The Rotary Club's grant was for \$10,000, and grants from Foundation donor funds totaled \$34,500. Those grants are Every Kid a King Fund (\$20,000), the Farnbacher Memorial Fund (\$7,500) and E.J. and Marjory Ourso Family Foundation (\$7,000).

With these updated machines, vision screenings can be done much more quickly and accurately, ensuring all students' eye problems are detected and treated.

OUR FUND DONORS AND THE BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION GRANTED \$5.6 MILLION TO NONPROFITS IN THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2013.

Donors recommend grants from their charitable funds, and the board of the Foundation reviews and approves grants.

A list of the third quarter grants follows.

Academic Distinction Fund \$54,290
 Aldersgate United Methodist Church (AUMC) \$2,000
 Alfred M. Barbe High School \$1,500
 Alliance Francaise de la Nouvelle Orleans \$3,000
 Allied Jewish Federation of Colorado \$1,000
 Alma Lee and H. N. Saurage Jr. Fund \$1,000
 ALS Association, Louisiana-Mississippi Chapter \$5,000
 Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area \$6,890
 American Cancer Society \$500
 Ann Ritter Scholarship Endowment Fund \$16,591
 Arkansas State University \$2,000
 Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$8,100
 Arts Council of New Orleans \$21,000
 Ascension Catholic Diocesan Regional School \$15,000
 Auckland Communities Foundation \$33,000
 Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary \$200,000
 Avodah The Jewish Service Corps Inc. \$15,000
 Baton Rouge Amateur Athletic Association \$2,500
 Baton Rouge Blues Foundation \$2,500
 Baton Rouge Community College Foundation \$500
 Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center \$3,481
 Baton Rouge Gallery \$3,000

Baton Rouge Green Association \$2,376
 Baton Rouge High School Foundation \$25,444
 Baton Rouge Opera Guild \$3,079
 Baton Rouge Speech and Hearing Foundation \$1,177
 Baton Rouge Sponsoring Committee \$250
 Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra \$28,369
 Baton Rouge Youth Coalition \$16,000
 Beville State Community College \$2,000
 Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Louisiana \$1,500
 Bishop Ott Works of Mercy Trust/Cath Diocese \$191
 Boy Scouts of America, Istrouma Area Council \$2,000
 Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$400
 Boys Hope Girls Hope of Baton Rouge \$1,000
 Big River Economic & Agricultural Development Alliance \$5,000
 Britton, Wallace H \$10,000
 Cancer Services of Greater Baton Rouge \$42,184
 Capital Area Animal Welfare Society \$314
 Capital Area United Way \$40,000
 Cashiers Glenville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. \$200
 Catholic High School \$6,221
 CCA Louisiana Foundation \$1,500
 Center for Disaster Philanthropy \$50,000
 Center for Planning Excellence Inc. \$4,500
 Center Theater Group of Los Angeles \$100
 Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Baton Rouge \$8,000
 Charles T. Smith Legacy Fund \$10,000
 Chinese Christian Church of Baton Rouge \$293
 Christ the King Parish and Catholic Center at LSU \$11,471
 Cinderella Project of Baton Rouge \$1,000
 City Year Baton Rouge \$250
 Cleveland Clinic Foundation \$100
 Community Foundation of South Alabama \$18,750
 Community Fund for the Arts \$5,500
 Community Opportunities of East Ascension \$750
 Companion Animal Alliance \$93,960
 Congregation B'nai Israel \$25,000
 Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph \$1,000
 Cystic Fibrosis Foundation - Baton Rouge \$350
 Dale Brown Foundation \$500
 David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies \$10,000
 Delgado Community College and Miss Maria Leonard \$1,000
 Delta State University \$2,000
 Dennis Edmon Scholarship Endowment Fund \$16,014
 Dillard University \$1,500
 Doctors Without Borders USA \$1,125
 Douglas Manship Sr. Theatre Complex Holding Inc. \$11,459
 Dream Day Foundation \$1,000
 Dream Teachers LLC \$1,000
 Ducks Unlimited Inc. \$20
 Dyslexia Association of Greater Baton Rouge \$618
 East Baton Rouge Parish Council on Aging \$1,000
 East Central Community College \$500
 East Mississippi Community College \$1,000
 East St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce \$175
 Eatel Educational Fund \$120
 Episcopal High School of Baton Rouge \$89,527
 Ethel Precht HOPE Breast Cancer Foundation Inc. \$1,000

Family And Youth Counseling Agency Inc. \$37,892
 Family Life \$1,000
 Fellowship of Christian Peace Officers \$150
 First Lutheran Church \$300
 First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge \$600
 First United Methodist Church \$100
 Food Bank of Covington, Louisiana, Inc. \$3,000
 Forum 35 \$500
 Foundation for Historical Louisiana, Inc. \$33,250
 Foundation for Science and Math Education Inc. \$1,000
 French Camp Academy \$200
 Friends of Louisiana Public Broadcasting Inc. \$1,000
 Friends of Magnolia Mound \$1,000
 GaitWay Therapeutic Horsemanship \$2,000
 General Health Foundation \$1,000
 Girls First Inc. \$10,000
 Girls on the Run of Greater Baton Rouge \$2,500
 Gonzales City Police Department \$1,200
 Gonzales Soccer Club \$3,000
 Grambling State University \$500
 Greater Baton Rouge Association of REALTORS \$343
 Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank \$3,400
 Greater Baton Rouge Hope Academy \$3,250
 Greater Baton Rouge Literacy Coalition Inc. \$10,000
 Habitat for Humanity of Greater Baton Rouge \$1,500
 Habitat for Humanity, St. Tammany West \$1,000
 Hancock Associate Assistance Foundation \$37,309
 Harding Academy \$5,000
 Harvard Business School \$1,000
 Harvard University \$5,000
 Healing Place Church \$5,000
 HeartGift Foundation \$5,000
 Heritage Ranch \$1,500
 Herzing University \$500
 Highlands Chamber Music Festival Inc. \$250
 Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Foundation \$1,000
 Holy Family Catholic Church \$11,682
 HOPE Ministries of Baton Rouge \$6,000
 Hospice Foundation of Greater Baton Rouge \$100
 Houston Chamber Choir \$1,000
 Iberville Foundation for Academic Excellence \$5,853
 International Hospitality Foundation \$567
 International Rescue Committee \$1,125
 International Teams \$150
 Jefferson Performing Arts Society \$1,000
 Jesuit High School \$5,000
 Jones County Junior College \$2,000
 Junior Achievement of Greater Baton Rouge \$6,491
 Junior Achievement of Southwest Louisiana \$2,500
 Junior League of Baton Rouge Inc. \$2,500
 Kappa Sigma Endowment Fund \$2,500
 Karnival Krewe de Louisiane \$810
 Knock Knock Children's Museum \$10,000
 Legacy Garden Fund \$2,500
 Leukemia and Lymphoma Society \$1,000
 Lighthouse for the Blind in New Orleans Inc. \$5,000
 Links Foundation Inc. \$250
 Louisiana Art and Science Museum \$17,813
 Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations \$100
 Louisiana Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross \$414
 Louisiana CASA Association \$9,000
 Louisiana Culinary Institute \$1,000
 Louisiana Mortgage Lenders Foundation \$125,000
 Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families \$10,000
 Louisiana Public Health Institute \$60,000
 Louisiana Resource Center for Educators \$40,500
 Louisiana Sinfonietta \$250
 Louisiana State University and A&M College \$30,100
 Louisiana State University and Catherine Bollich \$1,000
 Louisiana State University and Christine Schexnayder \$500
 Louisiana State University and Tannye Stewart \$1,000
 Louisiana State University in Shreveport and Emily Christie \$500
 Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation \$500
 Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation \$500
 LSU Foundation \$2,500
 LSU Foundation - E.J. Ourso College of Business \$5,500
 LSU Foundation - LSU Museum of Art \$15,000
 LSU Foundation - LSU Press \$2,500
 LSU Foundation - Manship School of Mass Communication Excellence Fund \$3,500
 LSU Foundation - Patrons of LSU Opera \$1,000
 LSU Foundation - Paul M. Hebert Law Center \$500
 LSU Foundation - School of Music \$2,000
 LSU Foundation - Shreveport \$1,000
 LSU Foundation - T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History \$250
 Mandeville Soccer Club \$20,000
 Manners of the Heart Community Fund \$1,000
 Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center \$77,500
 McNeese State University Foundation \$3,500
 Meridian Community College \$1,000
 MetroMorphosis \$25,000
 Miami Suns Youth Development Inc. \$9,200
 Mid City Redevelopment Alliance \$1,500
 Million Dollar Round Table Foundation \$150
 Mission Aviation Fellowship \$150
 Mississippi University for Women \$1,000
 National Center for Disaster Preparedness \$526,121
 National Film Preserve \$10,960
 National World War II Museum \$25,000
 New Heights Therapy Center \$30,000
 New Schools for Baton Rouge \$334
 Nicholls State University \$2,500
 Nicholls State University and Mercedes Francis \$500
 Nicholls State University and Miss Caitlin C. McFarlain \$2,000
 Northshore Community Foundation \$5,000
 Northwestern State University of Louisiana \$2,000
 O'Brien House Inc \$7,100
 Ochsner Health System \$8,000
 Of Moving Colors Productions \$1,250
 Ollie Steele Burden Manor \$359
 Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church \$36,234
 Our Lady of the Lake College and Nyeisha Philson \$3,000
 Our Lady of the Lake Foundation \$65,000
 Pastoral Center \$25,375
 Payton's Play it Forward Foundation \$9,500
 Pearl River Community College \$3,500
 Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation \$296,000
 Pointe Coupee Historical Society \$1,000
 President & Fellows of Harvard College \$2,000
 Prince of Peace Ministries \$1,200

Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana \$12,000
Ravenscroft School, Incorporated \$5,000
Raymond Wentz Foundation \$1,000
Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge \$2,000
River City Jazz Coalition Fund \$2,500
River Parishes Community College \$990
Rocky Mountain Multiple Sclerosis Center \$1,000
Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge \$105,213
Rust College \$1,000
Sacred Heart Catholic Church \$1,000
Saint Jean Vianney Catholic Church \$2,446
Saint Joseph's University \$6,500
Salvation Army \$4,000
Salvation Army Lake Charles \$1,000
Single Stop USA Inc. \$499,500
Sisters Servants of Mary \$20,000
South Central Louisiana Technical College \$500
Southeastern Louisiana University \$7,500
Southeastern Louisiana University and Brooke Rome \$500
Southern Rep \$31,000
Southern University \$1,000
Southern University and La'Zhay McKinley \$500
St Louis Catholic High School \$300
St. Augustine Church \$903
St. Bonaventure Indian Mission & School \$1,500
St. Elizabeth Foundation \$8,400
St. Elizabeth Hospital \$500
St. Elizabeth Inter-Parochial School \$10,000
St. Francisville Area Foundation \$17,300
St. Gerard Majella Church \$10,500
St. James Episcopal Church \$5,400
St. James Episcopal Day School \$1,700
St. Joseph the Worker Church \$5,821
St. Joseph's Academy \$2,500
St. Jude Catholic Church \$1,000
St. Jude Children's Research Hospital \$1,250
St. Labre Indian School \$400
St. Luke's Episcopal Church \$35,414
St. Philip Parish \$3,553
St. Scholastica Academy \$5,000
St. Tammany Hospital Foundation \$5,000
St. Tammany Parish School Board \$3,000
St. Tammany Parish School Board-Mandeville High School \$180
St. Tammany Parish School Board-Marigny Elementary School \$100
St. Tammany West Chamber of Commerce \$250
St. Theresa of Avila School \$1,428
St. Thomas Aquinas Regional Catholic High School \$15,423
Starkville MSU Symphony \$100
Susan G. Komen for the Cure - Baton Rouge \$310
Sweet Briar College \$3,500
Swine Palace Productions Inc. \$1,500
Teach for America—South Louisiana \$70,000
The Arc Baton Rouge \$500
The Ascension Fund \$13,696
The Bridge Over Troubled Waters \$1,000
The Children's Health Fund \$187,500
The Dunham School \$77,260
The Friends of the Rural Life Museum \$1,100
The Glen Big Baby Davis Foundation \$500
The Jason Project \$80,000
The JL Foundation \$5,000
The Louisiana International Film Festival \$10,000
The National Exchange Club Foundation \$500
The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana \$189,266
The Newton B. Thomas Family/Newtron Group Fund \$225,000
The Original Richland Library Restoration Society Inc. \$820
The University of Mississippi \$2,000
The Whistle Stop \$600
Thrive Baton Rouge \$5,000
Tougaloo College \$1,000
Town of Jena \$1,000
Trinity Episcopal Day School \$600
Tulane Cancer Center \$500
Tulane University \$5,000
Tulane University and Jonathan Ortego \$1,000
Tulane University Sponsored Projects Administration \$309,396
Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge \$18,000
United Way of Southeast Louisiana \$25,000
University Lab School Foundation \$1,000
University of Florida \$2,000
University of Louisiana at Lafayette \$9,000
University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Andrew K. Boudreau \$1,000
University of Missouri \$9,000
University of New Orleans Foundation \$26,500
University of North Alabama \$2,000
University of Southern Mississippi \$10,000
University of Southern Mississippi and Miss Kari Ousterhout \$2,500
University of West Alabama \$1,000
University Presbyterian Church \$20,350
Vision 21 Foundation \$500
Volunteers of America \$5,000
Wallace State Community College \$500
The Water Institute of the Gulf \$557,500
Wellesley College \$5,000
West Baton Rouge Foundation for Academic Excellence \$5,922
Western Michigan University and Garrett Ahlstrom \$1,500
William Carey University \$3,000
Woman's Hospital Foundation \$43,400
Wounded War Heroes of America \$250
WRKF Public Radio Inc. \$2,000
Xavier University and Rose Duchane \$1,000
Xavier University of Louisiana and Jonathan La \$1,000
Yelp BR \$3,300
YMCA of the Capital Area \$1,500
Young Mens Christian Association of New Orleans \$1,000
Youth Build Gulf Coast \$83,333

Impatient philanthropist

Noland pushing for continuation of progress in Baton Rouge

By Maggie Heyn Richardson | Photo by Marie Constantin

John Noland's association with the Baton Rouge Area Foundation started in the early 80s, when, as a young attorney at Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson, he was asked by senior lawyer Gordon Pugh to serve on the Foundation's board of directors. Noland agreed, beginning what would become decades of community involvement both with the Foundation and many other causes. Noland has been instrumental in shaping the Foundation's growth, and in supporting and guiding other organizations, including St. James Place, the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and, most recently, the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority. Noland can look back on one of Baton Rouge's most fruitful periods of progress, but he remains characteristically impatient about the work that remains, including sustained funding of LSU, affordable housing across the community and, most important to him, solving the corrosive problem of racism.

What sparked your interest in philanthropy?

My father was an Episcopal clergyman, and we believed strongly that stewardship is one of the binding obligations of Christian life. "To whom much is given, much is required." My wife Virginia and I have had more than our share, and when you get more than the average bear, you should give more than the average bear.

You were appointed chair of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation board of directors in 1986. What were your priorities then?

The Foundation had been founded by John Barton and some other selfless community leaders, but back then it was this tiny thing and not known by many. I woke up one day as chair, and I realized it was time to get a leader who could normalize the investments, make some noise and raise the



public profile so that we could grow into a community gem. We hired John Davies. Looking back on what John has done and the things this foundation has been a part of, it has completely surpassed my expectations. If you had asked me then what we would have in assets at John's 25th anniversary at the foundation, I would have chosen a number far, far lower than \$600 million.

What are some of the big moments you remember over the course of your involvement with the Foundation?

Downtown revitalization, absolutely. It's not hard for me to recall when we had abandoned hotels downtown that were drug magnets, and now we have restored hotels, the Shaw Center for the Arts and new businesses and restaurants. And when Hurricane Katrina happened, Baton Rouge became the hub for organizing and staging, and the Foundation stepped up and became the most credible institution in the state.

What would you say are your causes?

The one that I've wept more about than any other is the issue of community revitalization and the racial divide. I believe that racism in particular is the greatest challenge we still face. So many of our communities are not healthy places to live, and we have so many people living in poverty. Until we can change that, we won't be able to make substantial headway.

In the late eighties, I was involved in bringing a LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation) chapter to Baton Rouge to address community revitalization. It got some work done—we built 1,000 rooftops. But the community development corporations that LISC started were run by volunteers with little experience, who were suddenly expected to be powerful real estate developers.

Ultimately, we needed a greater scale and a different approach, so we fell back, reassessed and came up with a more top-down response. That led to the next hope, the Redevelopment Authority—which I'm really excited about. It's been able to get on top of this issue of adjudicated prop-

erties, which was an incredible impediment to the CDCs, an absolute stumbling block and barrier to their progress. The RDA just held planning charrettes for the new Smiley Heights (now Ardendale) housing development near Baton Rouge Community College, which is very exciting.

Are you encouraged by the progress you've seen in Baton Rouge over the last 30 years?

Absolutely. When I hear about all these new companies coming to town and bringing jobs, I know that this will weave a fabric of progress that's going to impact all levels of the community. New employees in town mean new business and restaurants, and good housing. And when I look at projects like SMILE and THRIVE, which are residen-

tial schools that can help promising students perhaps break the cycle of generational poverty, I'm encouraged. These are great, new ideas. There's a lot of intellectual energy in town right now, and a lot of people trying hard to push progress.

What still needs to be done?

We're still trying to make sense of some complicated problems, like public education. There's plenty of room for outrage there—and we need to get rid of the allowance of mediocrity. We've also got to find better ways of supporting entities like LSU and the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, which are major economic drivers in our community. We still have a lot of work to do in planning, both in continuing the work of Plan Baton Rouge—we're about halfway there—and in getting on top of our parish plan. Yes, we've done a lot in this community, but there's a lot left to be done, and I'm a hothead. I'm impatient to see things through. •

“When you get more than the average bear, you should give more than the average bear.”

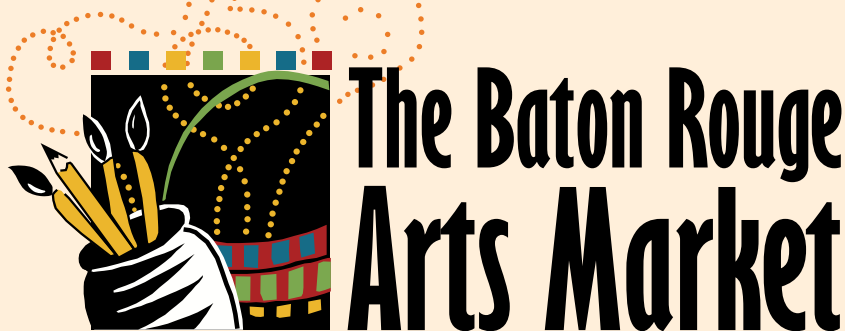
—John Noland

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Good eats

Climb CDC includes commerce in its model to give children a chance

By Mukul Verma | Photos by Connor Tarter

Craig Dean longed for his mother. His family packed his bags and the 11-year-old traveled from St. Louis to be with her in Gulfport. He brought trouble with him.

There is no telltale sign of his wayward youth now. His head swings back-and-forth with joy when he speaks of what he has become. Gone are days of violence that led to a felony at 14 and a life that spun between lawyers, judges, jailors. One day—just like that—Dean was done with breaking the law.

“I got tired of being in the same situation—going to court, going to jail. It was time for me to grow up.”

Twenty-two was Craig Dean’s year to become something else. Out of jail, he was kicking around town, looking for what to do next. Tagging along with a friend, Dean stumbled upon Climb CDC, a program Lori West founded and runs to provide restaurant and construction skills to troubled children and young adults living near the poverty line.

Dean signed up for the restaurant program. So did Jess Morgan. She had taken a different path at the crossroad. Dean went home to his mother; Morgan left her home in Gulfport at 16 after fights with her family. She rode down the interstate to New Orleans, taking on odd jobs in restaurants to feed herself.

Jess Morgan clearly knew what she wanted her life to be. She was raised as a cook and found comfort in the noise of her family’s Gulf Coast restaurant, Capitan Morgan Steak and Seafood. Given time, she reconciled with her relatives and returned to the coast in her early 20s, choosing an education at Climb CDC instead of a junior college. Climb was free; junior college cost money she didn’t have.

Nine months later, Jess Morgan graduated as the top student in her class. “I’m ready to move forward; I’m so excited,” says Morgan, whose goal is to own a food truck that sells fusion cuisine—Thai, Cajun, French—cooked with classical techniques. A truck will satisfy her wanderlust for seeing new places, while also letting her cook for a living.







Café Climb, the restaurant at Climb CDC.

“These programs
are our answer to
successful charter
schools.”

—Lori West, Climb CDC CEO



The Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted \$1 million to Climb Community Development Corp. of Gulfport in support of the culinary arts training program. The grant was from our Future of the Gulf Fund, which was seeded with \$100 million from BP after the oil leak. Money from BP first helped deep-water rig workers who were harmed by the leak. After that, the Foundation granted money to assist nonprofits helping people affected by the disaster, as well as organizations monitoring and preserving the Gulf Coast ecosystem.

At graduation, Craig Dean was close behind. Lori West picked him as salutatorian. “I learned to take responsibility for my actions, how not to blame someone else,” says Dean, now 24. “My big goals are a TV show and my own restaurant.”

Lunch has just finished at the restaurant linked to Climb CDC, the first teaching café in Mississippi. Inside a rustic space warmed by sunlight, trainers are teaching students how to cook meals, how to take orders from customers and how to clean up now that breakfast and lunch are completed. The floor is stained concrete; a series of garage doors can be opened to expand the restaurant into a vast space for functions.

Attached to a training center, Café Climb is a novel enterprise. Customers who dine here each day—80 on average—are partly underwriting the programs of Climb CDC, which, like a growing cadre of nonprofits in the country, is discovering that adding commerce to nonprofit operations can further the mission of improving lives. Café Climb should generate more than \$300,000 this year. Climb, meanwhile, puts tips aside to reward top graduates at the end of the nine-month program.

Wednesday is Dean’s favorite day here, not because it begins the downward slide to the end of the work week. No, it’s the featured menu item that makes him

happy: Sweet Tea Fried Chicken. The dish, his specialty, takes more than a day to prepare. Dean cuts the chicken in same-sized pieces on Tuesday, brews gallons of sweet tea with herbs and spices, steeps the chicken overnight, dredges it in light batter before frying it just in time for customers on Wednesday. “I like to see smiles on their faces,” says Dean. “It feels so good.”

At the center of this expanding nonprofit enterprise is West, an LSU mass communication graduate who has more than her share of charm. The distance Dean and Morgan traveled during their training was so extraordinary that West hired them as Climb trainers.

“She makes everybody want to be somebody,” Dean says.

Katrina brought West back home to Gulfport, where she was hired by International Relief and Development to lead its Gulf Coast recovery efforts. In the first chaotic month after the storm, IRD rolled into town with nine tractor-trailers to deliver food, water, clothing and health supplies to people who were living on the margins along the Mississippi Coast.

From there, West turned the IRD relief effort into Climb. In her office—calmed by a looped birdsong recording—West doodles on a CDC program chart. Recently printed, the one-pager is out of date, such is her ambition to expand the work even more.

Climb CDC now offers four programs.

A Micro Business Center crams business education into nine weeks so graduates can expand their businesses or start one to stand on their own. A microlending program will offer startup financing.

The Housing Resource Center teaches life skills to the working poor, and leads them to improve their housing situation through rehabs and house purchases. Climb and its partners have rebuilt and rehabbed more than 750



houses for low- to moderate-income families since the storm in 2005. Underserved senior citizens and the disabled are among clients benefiting from Climb.

The Workforce Training Institute teaches restaurant and construction skills. Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and now in its sixth year, Climb YouthBuild provides a construction-based curriculum for disadvantaged youth ages 16-24 that leads to nationally recognized certification.

Social Enterprises includes Café Climb, partly funded by the the Baton Rouge Area Foundation via a \$1 million grant from the Future of the Gulf Fund, which was seeded from a \$100 million BP grant for coastal recovery and resiliency after the Gulf of Mexico oil leak.

The Foundation also provided a \$1.9 million grant from the same fund to Climb and its nonprofit partners in the Mississippi Oil Spill Case Management Collaborative, which assisted neighbors sideswiped by the oil leak. The

collaborative has served more than 800 residents with financial and home counseling and workforce training.

In total, West has raised more than \$35 million from government grants and private foundations to turn Climb into a regional nonprofit. Climb has more than 30 employees—program managers, development staff, accountants, a communications director and a counselor for the clients are among them.

In September, a new headquarters in downtown Gulfport was being readied for Climb across the street from its rented office. The renovated warehouse and office space includes Café Climb, administrative offices, training space for the construction and restaurant programs, and an 8,000-square-foot event hall in a converted garage. West says the hall will produce income for Climb CDC, while doubling as an outlet for training. She can already see weddings and a food festival filling the space, which has a



well-worn industrial look. Outside, students have planted a garden that will supply fresh produce and herbs to Café Climb.

Before students are accepted to training programs, they have to attend boot camp. Tests, essays and respectful behavior are among the challenges of the trials. Prospects have to be ready to start learning when the doors open at 8 a.m. They must be properly dressed, including wearing the obligatory belt. No smoking is allowed.

“We only take students who are ready to make a change,” said West.

A rigorous selection procedure leads to a high success rate. Nearly 90% of accepted students graduate from training programs. Ninety-five percent are high school dropouts when entering programs; nearly 75% of them earn high school degrees during restaurant and construction training.

More than 700 people have been trained. Moreover,


Climb helps the students get jobs. Nearly every graduate from the first restaurant program is working, while 87% of the recently completed second class have found jobs.

Climb’s employees work at casinos, restaurants, hospital cafeterias, catering services. YouthBuild graduates are in construction jobs, including at Kessler Air Force Base, Ingalls and Chevron. One of the first grads from the construction program has been promoted to a management position. Some graduates have advanced to college.

“These programs are our answer to successful charter schools,” says West.

And more of them could be on the way, as she has been asked to expand Climb to other Mississippi cities. Her program chart is about to become obsolete again. •





Love-love

Off court, a local tennis player's generous act gets national notice

By Sara Bongiorni | Photos by Tim Mueller

Kennan Johnson worked as hard off the tennis court as on it. With others, she cooked and delivered 450 spaghetti dinners. She held a garage sale. Her efforts produced enough money for Kennan to travel with her mother, local teaching pro Natalie Johnson, to compete in the United States Tennis Association's Hard Court Nationals in San Diego in August.

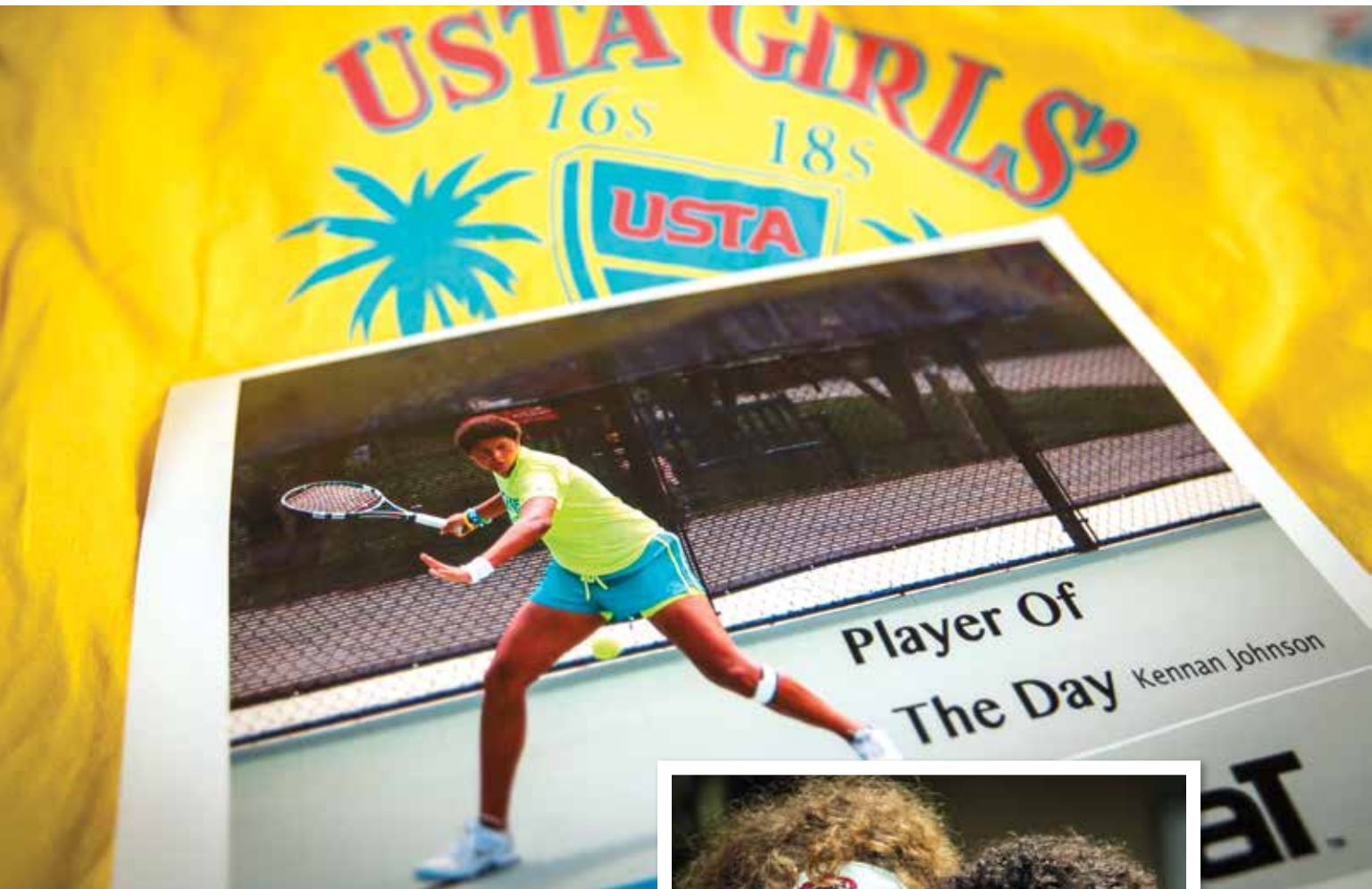
The 5-foot, 11-inch teen lost in the first round, but won four straight consolation matches at the high-stakes tourney, where college coaches from across the U.S. search for the next big talent.

What she did off the court in San Diego, though, got her bigger notice—an article online in *The New York Times*.

The story, “An Act of Kindness Wins Over a Tournament,” chronicled what happened after Kennan jumped up to help a group of older women cleaning up after an outdoor dinner organized by event officials at the Barnes Tennis Center.

When Kennan noticed stacks of uneaten food—estimated at 400 untouched burritos—she asked if she could take some to share with homeless people in the city's parks and along its beaches.

Organizers were delighted by her request, and Kennan and her mother distributed the food to several homeless men as they drove to their hotel that night.



Kennan and Natalie Johnson won the mother-daughter title at the Family Tennis Nationals.

Their generosity was informal. They saw several hungry-looking homeless men, rolled down the window of the car and extended an offer of dinner. Nobody turned them down. “You can tell when someone is hungry,” said Kennan. “It’s not hard to see.”

The story captured what tournament officials said they rarely see: A player focused on the hardships of strangers during the high-stress atmosphere of a national competition, where self-absorption is standard preparation.

In the Aug. 9 story, one event organizer said she had “never seen anything” like Kennan’s spontaneous kindness during the tournament.

The story caught the eye of tennis insiders like Katrina Adams. The former pro and tennis commentator recognized the Johnsons among the spectators at the U.S. Open,



where Kennan and Natalie took part in—and won—the mother-daughter title at the Family Tennis Nationals.

“(Katrina Adams) wanted to introduce herself and shake Kennan’s hand after she read about what she had done in San Diego,” said Natalie.

Those who know Kennan best weren’t surprised by her act of compassion there.

“That’s Kennan being Kennan,” said her grandmother,

Lynda Johnson, who like Natalie Johnson teaches tennis at BREC's Highland Road Park Tennis Center.

"It touched her heart to see so many homeless people because that's not something we see as much in Baton Rouge. She wanted to do something for them if she could. People have asked me if I was surprised by what she did, and the truth is I wasn't surprised a bit."

Acts of compassion aren't new for Kennan. After a competition in Las Vegas, for instance, Kennan and Natalie handed out leftover water bottles to homeless people under the scorching Nevada sun. Kennan recalls leaving water next to a man sleeping on a bench in 110-degree-plus heat.

For the Johnsons, the logic of such actions is simple. "You see somebody in a bad spot and you help them if you can," said Natalie. "She was raised as a Christian and that's about caring for others. It's just treating people right."

Kennan began playing tennis when she was 3. Natalie, 40, was her main coach until Kennan turned 10. The mother-daughter coaching arrangement is a family tradition: Lynda began teaching Natalie, who played tennis at Louisiana State University, when Natalie was 5.

Success at the Family Tennis Nationals is another Johnson-family tradition. Lynda and Natalie Johnson also won the mother-daughter title in the 1980s.

Kennan wears her curly hair cropped short. She likes to sing around the house and with her school choir. Adele and Angie Miller are favorites.

She is laid-back and smiles easily, but she has a competitive streak a mile deep. When the family went through a Monopoly phase, she won five straight games of the marathon board game. The Johnsons once owned a ping pong table, and Natalie won most matches against her daughter.

"I would get so mad," Kennan recalled.

The bond between Kennan and Natalie seems as much like sisters as parent and child. They finish each other's sentences. Both are laid-back, plain spoken and funny. Kennan was home-schooled for her first three years of high school, in part to accommodate frequent travel for tennis tournaments.

"We're pretty silly most of the time," said Natalie.

Kennan's serve is the standout component of her game.

"It touched her heart to see so many homeless people because that's not something we see as much in Baton Rouge. She wanted to do something for them if she could. People have asked me if I was surprised by what she did, and the truth is I wasn't surprised a bit."

—Lynda Johnson, Kennan Johnson's grandmother

Walker Sahag, her Mandeville-based coach, credits Kennan's mother, grandmother and longtime coach Johnny Wahlborg for helping her develop a world-class serve motion.

"She has a God-given talent that is astounding," Sahag said. "She's going to get better and better as she further develops her game."

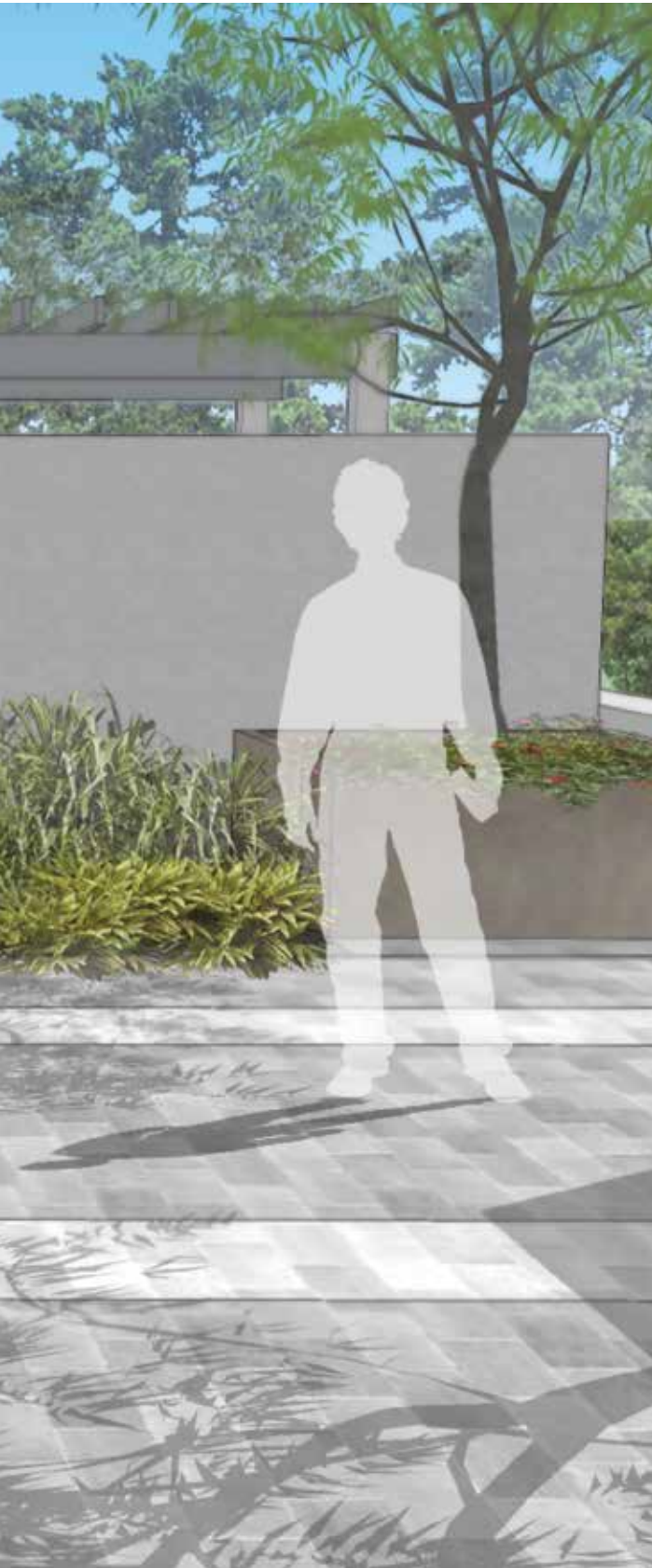
College plans have been a central focus in recent months. Kennan wants to play tennis professionally, but she is equally committed to her education. Her top schools this fall were Iowa State University and Central Florida University. Both schools had offered scholarships.

"Going to college will help my game, but it will also help me with life in general," Kennan said. She is not sure what she would like to study, although law is a possibility.

The *Times'* story may help other young tennis players from families of modest means. A USTA official who read about the Johnson's homegrown fundraising efforts to afford the San Diego trip told Lynda Johnson it made him think the association could do more to help junior players shoulder the cost of travel.

"So it could have that larger impact on other junior players," Lynda Johnson said. "You do something small and you never know where it could lead." •





A fine balance

High tech, high art focus of LSU medical education center

By Mukul Verma

It had never happened here before.

From 1998-2000, every student in LSU's Internal Medicine Residency Program had passed the certification exam for the American Board of Internal Medicine.

With that perfect score, the program rocketed to the No. 1 ranking in the country. Topping all the usual powerhouse programs, LSU outperformed Duke University School of Medicine, University of Alabama Birmingham, and even The Mayo Clinic.

It was a remarkable achievement under any circumstances, but all the more noteworthy because the university's medical teaching program had only recently been restarted.

Every school tries to attract the best and the brightest among student recruits, of course; Dr. George Karam and his fellow educators at LSU are no different in that respect. Rather, the difference then lied in the one priority shared in common by all their promising young doctors: to heal the sick who relied on a charity hospital.

The medical professionals who come to work and study at LSU's Internal Residency Program in Baton Rouge continue to be distinguished by their willingness to help those who have few options. But the students themselves continue to have plenty of choices when it comes to their future, and the program faces stiff competition when it comes to recruiting top candidates. Each year, resi-

The terrace at LSU's new medical education building will include a Chihuly glass sculpture.

gency programs around the country vie to improve their sales pitches, and the stakes rise. Winning the top students is about much more than just earning prestige for the medical school they attend. That's because, these new graduates often stay to become the top doctors in their communities.

In this escalating rivalry, Baton Rouge has something new to offer: LSU's Medical Education and Innovation Center. Opening this year, the \$25 million facility near Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center is focused squarely on the student.

Inside, intriguing opportunities abound for those eager to learn, such as the Center's pioneering labs that allow medical students to operate on "virtual patients," or to develop their bedside manner through video cameras and a screening center.

Dr. Karam says the best doctors balance knowledge and practice of medicine with compassion and humanity. To nurture the soft skills—and to inspire the students—the Center has art, sculpture and guiding quotes throughout the building.

The Center's most special place may be the terrace. Overlooking lush Louisiana treetops, it's a space where

LSU's \$25 million medical education center is an important recruiting tool in the competition for America's best students.

students can gather to talk, trade ideas, or simply sit and reflect in quiet. Medicine is a unique vocation, and it demands much of those who aspire to it—intellectually, socially, spiritually. For students, the terrace is a unique recognition of those needs. Landscape architect Suzanne Turner designed the space to recall the comforts of a traditional Louisiana back porch. The centerpiece of this terrace will be a contemporary art piece that's genuinely reflective of Baton Rouge—a Dale Chihuly sculpture in glass.

"We are creating a sense that something special is happening here," said Karam. •





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“I’m not surprised by what’s happened. When he puts his hand on something, he usually finishes it. I am surprised by how fast it’s happened.”

—Rita Marks on son, George Marks, creator of NUNU



Arnaudville, je t'aime

A collective uses French to draw a crowd

By Ed Cullen | Photos by Tim Mueller

People are drawn to this small town because of NUNU, a rising arts and culture collective. NUNU's has grown so rapidly that its envisioned European visitors soon enough will be able to convert their euros to dollars at the Washington State Bank here and the local Fire and Water Festival could be as well-known as Festival International in Lafayette.

What will remain unwavering if NUNU's continues along its trajectory is George Marks' commitment to the original idea that has inspired this place. "We will still be about French."

In 2005, Marks, an Arnaudville native who'd been painting and selling his work in Baton Rouge, and his mother, Rita, opened a gathering place for artists, musicians and patrons in a vacant auto store on La. 31. Eight years and a fire later, the gathering place is known as NUNU Arts and Culture Collective.

NUNU's is on La. 93, west of its original location. A fire

on July 11, 2010, gutted NUNU's cafe, bar, music stage and art gallery. When the fire struck, Marks had put around \$200,000 of his own money into NUNU's. The smoking ruins of the building sent a signal to the town of 1,600: Marks' efforts to wed nonprofit and profit was worth continuing.

One of the oldest towns in Louisiana, Arnaudville was settled by the French in the late 18th century.

The town is down I-10 about an hour from Baton Rouge, and it sits on the line that divides St. Landry and St. Martin parishes. Incorporated in 1870 at the confluence of bayous Teche and Fuselier, French-speaking townspeople call Arnaudville by its old name, La Junction.

Marks, whose work sold at Ann Connelly Fine Art gallery in Baton Rouge, was on the verge of moving to New York when his father, Elridge "Nunu" Marks became ill in 2002.

"I realized that everything that inspires my work is in Arnaudville," said Marks about going home 11 years ago.



Area musician Freddie Hanks, center, gathers in the front room during a recent Sunday afternoon at Tom's Fiddle and Bow. On the first Sunday of the month the little music and repair shop opens for the JAMBalaya Acoustic Music Jam. The violin repair shop is an example of Marks' finding locations for people interested in moving to Arnaudville.

"Family and community have become very important to me."

He was born in the hospital he hopes will become a dormitory for artists and students.

Marks returned home to help his mother take care of his dad. Elridge Marks died that same year. Three years later, George gave his father's nickname to the fledgling artists' cooperative. "Nunu" is the Cajun version of the French word for teddy bear.

From the start, Rita Marks and her friends were the glue in NUNU. French speakers in a town where 35% of the residents are fluent in French and many more knew, as children, when aunts and uncles were talking about them, Rita and her contemporaries conduct the business of their lives en française.

At the first NUNU's, Rita and her friends cooked, cleaned, swabbed the bathrooms and, if necessary, set up sound for the music stage. They're still relied upon for the

daily chores.

"I'd just lost my husband," Rita Marks said. "It was good to be needed."

She never doubted her son's ideas for NUNU's. "I'm not surprised by what's happened. When he puts his hand on something, he usually finishes it. I am surprised by how fast it's happened."

George Marks guesses \$600,000 has gone into NUNU's since 2005, a third of that out of his pocket, the rest from the French government, local and state government, other grants, private donations, and in-kind contributions from carpenters, electricians and plumbers—and some loans. "Not much in loans," Marks said.

Gaye Hamilton, the state's Cultural District Program manager, helped the town win designation as a cultural district. The designation excuses the payment of sales tax on original works of visual art sold in the district. There's a tax credit available to property owners who renovate historic



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Baton Rouge artist and NUNU member Lisa di Stefano displays her recent work at NUNU's in Arnaudville. NUNU's plan to use her work for a poster promoting the upcoming Fire and Water, LeFeu et L'Eau arts celebration December 7, 2013, in Arnaudville.

buildings and houses that are at least 50 years old.

"They've coalesced a working relationship among parish and city governments, tourism, the residents and local businesses," Hamilton said.

She keeps adding to her PowerPoint presentations on Arnaudville. "I've watched George sell a painting and add lights or build a stage," she said.

He uses food, art, music and French to bring people together, she said. "You go to Arnaudville and you hear French spoken at the post office and the grocery store."

Hamilton's example is a relationship between people in Arnaudville and Radon, France, who've visited each other to compare notes. A French partnership called Les Articulteurs uses the arts to spur the economy and assist education in Radon.

The New Orleans French consulate also liked what it saw in Arnaudville, said Jacqui Cochran, Marks' studio assistant and NUNU Arts and Culture Collective worker.

"For me, the turning point was Semaine Française (French Week) last April. It was like all the work, all the promotion, all the talking up what the collective was about was at last there for everyone to see and experience."

For three days, 450 first-time visitors to Arnaudville, from both sides of the Atlantic, met to exchange ideas, Cochran said. "Ninety-two were educators and musicians."

After Semaine Française, LSU hosted five days of French immersion studies at NUNU's. Two months later, Louisiana Poet Laureate Darrell Bourque started a monthly Cinema Française at the collective.

A "French table" where speakers of different dialects meet to converse has flourished since Mavis Frugé, a retired Arnaudville banker, began making breakfast for anyone who showed up. The breakfast clubbers chip in to pay for breakfast the last Saturday of the month.

"George was one of my customers," Frugé said. "I started going to art shows at George's. I asked if I could start a

'French table' at the first NUNU's.'

"What Mavis does," Marks said, "is show that all French is good French," whether it's Creole spoken by some residents of Cecilia, the Cajun French of Arnaudville, French spoken by visitors from France, Canada or Africa, French learned at Baton Rouge High years ago or the French spoken by middle schoolers in today's French immersion classes.

"They're people of all ages," Marks said. "They skip in, hobble in, roll in."

"Through our efforts with regional arts councils, Louisiana Citizens for the Arts, Americans for the Arts, Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL), St. Landry Parish Tourism, St. Martin Parish Tourism, LA Walls, Corridor des Arts and more, we focus on cultural immersion, arts funding, public art and eco-tourism," Marks said.

A potluck dinner the third Friday of the month at NUNU's; art shows; music; French, dance, cooking and sewing classes draw visitors from the I-10/I-49 corridors, as well as other parts of the United States, Canada and Europe. It's a chance to talk French, network and observe the Arnaudville experiment.

As Marks' ambitions for NUNU grew, not everyone in Arnaudville liked the idea of an influx of outsiders disturbing the quiet, little town named for the brothers Arnaud. There are still residents who'd rather see Arnaudville stay off the beaten path, but Marks said the once thriving agricultural center for growing sweet potatoes, cotton and sugar cane was dying. The center of town, where farmers' wagons once rumbled, had become a market place for drug dealing, he said.

Marks and artists turned deputy sheriffs, unlimbered their cell phones and started dialing 911 to report alleged drug transactions in progress. The 911 operator, Marks said, distributed the calls among the Arnaudville Police Department, St. Landry and St. Martin sheriffs' offices, depending on where in town the transactions were going on.

Russell's Supermarket at the corner of Main and Fuselier gets 900 to 1,200 customers a day. With no big box stores for competition, Russell's is the hub of Arnaudville commerce. The Marks gang found drug dealers operating catty corner from Russell's, where fiddle maker Tom Pierce today has a

shop in a former meat market next door to a former crack house. The drug house was renovated as a residence for visiting artists.

One morning, Pierce, a retired shipyard worker from Maine, was showing Marks the view of Bayou Fuselier through the back windows of his shop. The fiddle maker had put donated plants to good use as stream bank stabilizers.

He and wife Lori, an artist, moved to South Louisiana so

Lori could be close to the origins of zydeco music, Pierce said. Driving around the countryside east of Lafayette, the couple got lost. "We ended up in Arnaudville," Pierce said.

Baton Rouge artist Jill Hackney and Marks met in art school at LSU in the late 1990's. She heads development and funding at NUNU's as a volunteer. "George had this idea of getting nonprofits and businesses to work together," she said.

The result was the start of a gathering place for the arts. But a fire destroyed it all three years ago in July.

"Initially, it was a setback," Marks said. "But it forced us to look at what worked and what didn't. It made us look at our support. The fire allowed local people to feel they had a stake in it."

Lost to Arnaudville culture was a small music hall called NUNU's Nite Lite.

"Before the fire, you stopped at NUNU's to see George and Miss Rita," said Cheryl Castille, assistant to St. Landry parish president Bill Fontenot. "Now you stop to see the whole group of people who make up NUNU's."

Fontenot cites the investment in a coffee shop and restaurant by Kevin Robin, whose family owns Russell's supermarket, and his partner, Sanjay Maharaj, as an example of businessmen buying into the idea of a resurgent Arnaudville. "Kevin had the confidence that his ideas

Know NUNU

>> Check www.nunucollective.org for film titles, dates and time, along with other events and classes scheduled this fall at NUNU's.

>> Google "Tulane University and Arnaudville" for a YouTube video on the French dialects around Arnaudville. Look for another video on YouTube called *The Jewel on the Teche*.



Little Big Cup co-owner, Sanjay Maharaj, left, joins NUNU board members at the Arnaudville coffeehouse after a recent NUNU board meeting.

would work,” Fontenot said.

“When Kevin moved home from New York City two years ago,” Marks said, “his partner asked, ‘Where’s the Starbucks?’”

Success of Robin’s and Maharaj’s The Little Big Cup coffee shop on Bayou Fuselier begat The Warehouse restaurant next door. The owners hope kayakers will land at the foot of the restaurant’s rear deck this fall.

Some who go to Arnaudville to see the experiment end up working in the lab, like costume artist Karla King, who is teaching “slow sewing” classes at NUNU’s this fall.

“I met George Marks in Baton Rouge 17 years ago costuming a show for Of Moving Colors,” King said. “George was painting during the performance as the dancers danced.”

For King, the potluck dinners are what NUNU’s is about. “What fun! There’s a potluck jam band. A dish gets you in the door. The west portion of NUNU’s is cleared. The band



sets up and people dance. There’s a lot of camaraderie, networking and storytelling about the way things used to be. You might be from Cecilia down the road, and someone says, ‘Well, what was your mother’s name? Oh, you must be related to so and so.’”



NUNU Arts and Culture Collective grew in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Local artists realized the potential of the area's cultural assets—French language, Cajun music and visual art.

An early weekday afternoon found workers at Bayou Teche Biere on break in the shade of an oak tree next to the brewery on the Bushville Highway. The “hommes” and “femmes” signs on the bathroom doors in the tap room are a nod to the “French spoken here” ambiance. Bayou Teche Biere has gotten national recognition for its beer in the four years since the brewery opened—not on Bastille Day but St. Patrick’s Day.

Back at NUNU’s, Marks stood on the front porch of old Singleton’s hardware and lumber company. Next door, a wooden building where sweet potatoes were once dried awaits renovation as part of the arts complex. Across La. 93, long, narrow, open lumber storage sheds bake in the afternoon sun.

“Those will be artists’ studios,” Marks said.

A potluck social at 7 p.m. the third Friday of the month and a ‘French Table’ breakfast from 9 a.m. to noon the last Saturday of the month are good introductions to NUNU Arts and Culture Collective, 1510 Bayou Courtableau Highway. Highway names and numbers around Arnaudville are confusing. Get directions at www.nunucollective.org. Call 337-453-3307 or email info@nunucollective.org.

Next to the studios, convenient to NUNU’s and its offerings, there will be a campground for sojourners who’ve come to see what all the fuss is about. •

Fostering philanthropy in a generous place

Seven years in, Northshore Community Foundation is expanding its work

By Maggie Heyn Richardson

On September 29, 2011, a day after celebrating his 12th birthday, Jeremy Hebert passed out and eventually died in the gymnasium of Pine View Middle School in Covington, the result of sudden heart attack. Jeremy had been diagnosed with a genetic heart disorder at age five, but his death—a tragedy that shook the community—might have been prevented if an automatic external defibrillator was nearby.

More and more, these kiosks are being installed in public places throughout the United States; the equipment inside can shock the heart back into a regular rhythm.

Jeremy's mother Ann Hebert remembers what it was like when she arrived at the scene.

"I knew when I saw them working on him... I knew they weren't going to be able to bring him back," Hebert recalls. "But as soon as we walked out to go home, it came to me so strongly that there should be a defibrillator in every school. I didn't blame anyone, but I wanted to make sure this didn't happen again."

Hebert set out on a mission to raise money for her new cause, installing AEDs in St. Tammany Parish public schools that didn't already have them. (The school system had already begun placing them in local high schools).

Hebert met with an attorney friend in Mandeville to discuss the idea of setting up a nonprofit, but discovered it was a lengthy and cumbersome process. Instead, her friend suggested she meet with Susan Bonnett, president and CEO of the Northshore Community Foundation, about the foundation hosting a fund in Jeremy's name.

"I met with Susan and I liked her immediately," recalls Hebert. "We wanted to make the community better, and she

made it so easy for us."

Jeremy's death had moved the Hebert's friends, family and fellow community members to action, and many of them wanted to donate to the cause. A fund at the Northshore Community Foundation gave the project credibility and structure, and consequently, donations to the Jeremy Hebert Defibrillator Fund poured in.

Within six months, the Heberts had raised more than \$100,000, enough to place AEDs in all public elementary, middle and high schools in St. Tammany Parish, and to train school faculty on their proper use. The fund continues to raise money for maintenance and upkeep on the AEDs.

"Ann Hebert had this incredible idea born out of unimaginable sadness, and we were fortunate to be in a position to make the process simple for her," says Bonnett. "Our role at the Northshore Community Foundation is to make philanthropy work, in whatever way our donors want it to, in our community."

Created in January 2007 with help from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Northshore Community Foundation, says Bonnett, is "elevating the conversation around philanthropy" in a part of the state that is already generous and community-minded.

"There is such a culture of giving here on the Northshore, but as a new community that has grown by leaps and bounds in the last 25 years, there wasn't an organized system of giving and of ensuring that our assets here on the Northshore are taken care of," she says. "We're trying to build that."

The challenge, says Bonnett, is that the Northshore already has so many positive assets, including relatively low



“We make it possible for donors of any size to serve the community in whatever way they find most meaningful.”

—Susan Bonnett, Northshore Community Foundation CEO

crime, good public schools and extensive green space.

“What we must do is demonstrate how philanthropy – how a community foundation – can help us be good stewards of our resources, plan for the future and foster a culture of giving and responding to issues, in the way that Ann Hebert and others have done.”

Since its founding, the Northshore Community Foundation has grown its assets to \$14.2 million and accomplished several significant projects throughout the community. It has granted \$3.8 million to deserving community organizations and has supported master planning projects in key locations throughout the foundation’s four-parish service area, Tangipahoa, St. Tammany, St. Helena and Washington. This includes master plans for the City of Hammond, the City of Mandeville, Amite City, St. Helena Parish and the West 30s neighborhood in Covington, an area flanked by prosperous developments that has experienced disinvestment and decline.

But Bonnett says that the Northshore Community Foundation’s greatest accomplishment is the way it responds to a growing number of companies and donors who want to give back, but don’t want to be bogged down by administrative tasks and tedium.

“We make it possible for donors of any size to serve the community in whatever way they find most meaningful,” Bonnett says. “The thing that is most consistent about our donors is their diversity.”

For example, in 2010, Abita Beer set up a fund through the foundation in which 75 cents of every bottle of their special SOS (Save our Shore) beer was deposited into a fund that supported projects related to the shoreline restoration

after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. This year, a donor approached Bonnett about a major donation of land along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

And Louisiana State Sen. Jack Donahue, a Republican from District 11, notably asked the foundation to be the steward of his Tulane University Legislative Scholarships. The historically controversial program allows state legislators to grant one-year full scholarships to Tulane at their discretion, but Donahue wanted an unbiased third party to decide which deserving young people should have his scholarships. He unsuccessfully encouraged other lawmakers to do the same, says Bonnett. Donahue, and his wife Maura, a foundation board member, have both personal and company donor funds at the foundation.

While grantmaking is a big part of what the Northshore Community Foundation does, it’s not the only way it supports nonprofits. In 2008, with support from entrepreneur Doyle Coatney, the foundation established The Coatney Center, a hub for local nonprofits currently located within the foundation offices. It is a place where organizations can meet at no cost, find technical assistance, training and other resources. The goal, says Bonnett, is to increase the capacity of local nonprofits so that they can develop more sustainable operations. In the next 18 months, the foundation offices and the Coatney Center will move to a permanent location, possibly co-located with public entities in St. Tammany Parish.

“We really want to take our time, and make the right move,” says Bonnett. “We’ve grown quickly over the last almost seven years, and this new location will mark a new era for us.” •

Them, robot

Albemarle Foundation grant underwrites android wars

By Sara Bongiorni | Photos by Ronnie Cole

Where do you look for inspiration when the mechanical arm of your disc-throwing robot snaps off during a timed match against other robots?

Try NASCAR. Speed and pit-crew ingenuity—plus 20 pounds of replacement parts—fired up Woodlawn High School’s robotics team when its 120-pound robot lost its arm during competition this year.

Woodlawn’s Panthrobotics team hauled its immobilized bot to a repair “pit” on the sidelines. Ten minutes later, the student-designed, student-built robot was back on the competition field with new joints.

Woodlawn’s four-year-old robotics team is the city’s oldest high school team, and the only one on a public school campus. Loud, fun robotics competitions give teams like Woodlawn’s real-world skills for work in engineering, science and even marketing.

The competitions are quietly—OK, not so quietly—cultivating innovators whose know-how and creativity will shape the future here and across the world.

“I love everything about it,” said 16-year-old Hunter Evans, the build captain who serves as a roving trouble-shooter for the Panthrobotics team as it designs and builds robots and challenges machines created by other schools.

Building a robot is the short-term goal of robotics competitions. They are also designed to achieve the transformative

mission of For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology, or FIRST, the nonprofit sanctioning organization for high-school robotics competitions worldwide.

FIRST’s Robotics aims to create “a world where science and technology are celebrated and where young people dream of becoming science and technology leaders.” It

“I’ve learned to love something. Now I know what I want to do.”

—Migdalia Serrano, Woodlawn High robotics team

wants to inspire more young people to study and pursue careers in STEM, which stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

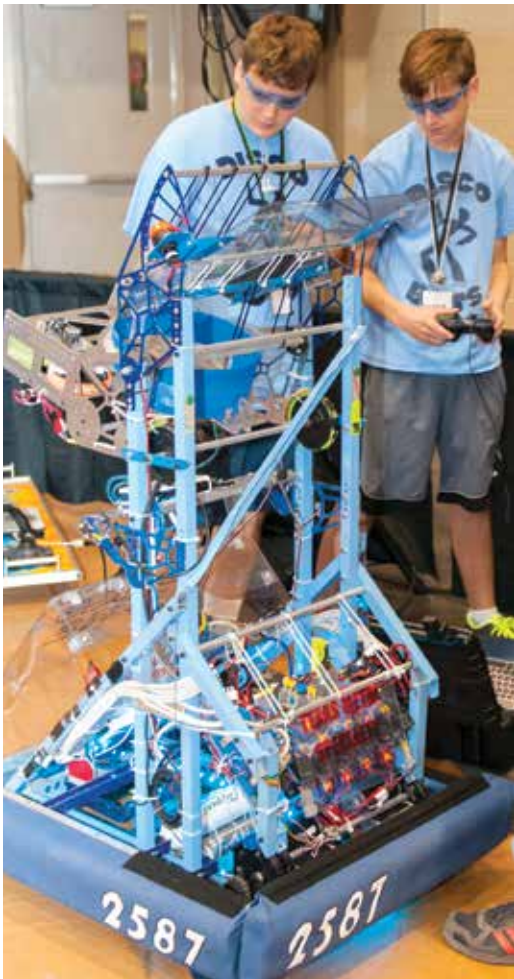
The organization founder is Dean Kamen, the tech wizard whose inventions include the Segway stand-up transporter.

FIRST’s board of directors is drawn from the best-known names in the technology sector, including Google and Microsoft.

FIRST Robotics competitions got started in 1989 in the gymnasium of a New Hampshire high school. FIRST Robotics now has a global reach. There are robotics teams at high schools in Israel, Japan and The Netherlands. Ten thousand teenagers gathered in St. Louis for the 2013 FIRST Robotics Competition international championship. The organization expects more people in 2014.

FIRST Robotics organizes events for children as young as 6, including kit-based competitions that use LEGO bricks for robot construction.

The Panthrobotics team represents Woodlawn, but it is



tied to New Hampshire-based FIRST. The school's team patches carry the acronym FRC 3337 to indicate that it was the 3,337th FIRST Robotics Competition team in the world.

FIRST's mission is in line with multi-leveled initiatives to fix the massive shortfall in U.S. knowledge workers, including thousands of vacancies in STEM-related jobs in Louisiana.

Competitive robotics is gaining traction in Baton Rouge. There are FIRST Robotics Competition teams at Episcopal, Catholic High School, Parkview Baptist and University High.

Woodlawn this summer hosted the city's first robotics festival, the Red Stick Rumble. Teams from four states took part in the off-season FIRST Robotics event, which drew 1,000 spectators and participants.

A grant from the Albemarle Foundation allowed East Baton Rouge teachers to take part in robotics training at Carnegie Mellon University's Robot Academy in Pittsburgh. Louisiana State University's STEP program provides mentors in the form of engineering students to area teams. Volunteer engineers provide critical advice during the complex build process.

"There is a national push for STEM education because the 21st century workforce needs these skills," said Ted Firnberg of the Foundation for EBR School System.

That said, competitive robotics feels more like sports than academics.

The programming, wiring and testing of Panthrobotics' robots takes place during late night pizza-and-brainstorming sessions at its "build site" in donated commercial space at a South Sherwood Forest Boulevard shopping center.

FIRST Robotics announces game details and robot guidelines in early January of each year. Teams gather to watch the announcements streamed live from FIRST's Manchester, N.H., headquarters.

"You start thinking about what you need to do on the way home," said Will Heitman, 12, a student in the gifted program at Glasgow Middle School who became an official member of the Woodlawn team last year. "Every year, you think it's going to be impossible."

Teams receive a few parts from FIRST Robotics, such as batteries and motors, as well as budget guidelines.

FIRST Robotics aims to create "a world where science and technology are celebrated and where young people dream of becoming science and technology leaders."

Notably absent from what FIRST provides: how-to instructions.

Teams have until midnight six weeks after the game announcement to build a robot that can be operated remotely from the sidelines

during regional and state matches. They are permitted to make specialized parts, but must conform to guidelines in an official FIRST rulebook.

Many teams build a replica so they can test their design after the competitive robot is sealed inside special packaging until the start of the spring competitive season.

It's an endurance sport. Rookie team members log at least 50 hours at the robot "build site" during the six-week build season. Veterans must put in 60 hours.

Members of the "drive team" that operates the robot in competition devote a minimum of 100 hours to the project over six weeks.

Some Panthrobotics participants have an affinity for technology. Evans said he always "loved anything to do with numbers and logic."

Freshman Brayden Simmons, 14, loves wiring. He participated in FIRST Robotics events for younger children and studied robotics at Sherwood Middle Magnet School before enrolling at Woodlawn. "I've met a lot of cool people."

Participation isn't limited to techie types. FIRST Robotics' most prestigious award isn't even for building the best robot. Its Chairman's Award recognizes the team that does the most to cultivate interest in science and technology in their communities.

Outreach efforts include school presentations, project videos and visits to business and civic groups. The effort draws on talents from time management to public speaking, drawing and computer-assisted design.

"It's about impact," said Daniel Eiland, the Woodlawn robotics and social science teacher who oversees Panthrobotics. Eiland's main role is finding grants and sponsorships and orchestrating fundraising. In one year, he helped raise \$30,000 for materials, competition fees and other costs.

A passion for robotics catches some students by surprise. Woodlawn senior Witni Widmeier, 17, didn't know what robotics was when she popped her head into a Panthrobotics meeting as a freshman. She's been a member since, with

duties ranging from overseeing the budget and working on wiring to heading the essay-writing component of the team's Chairman's Award submission. Cornell University, Tulane University and Louisiana State University are now her possible destinations for college, where she plans to study electrical engineering.

She said robotics taught her what it felt like to be part of a team, an experience she missed due to frequent family moves during her early school years. "This is the best sport you could play. It challenges your mind and your stress levels."

"Plus you get to carry around a 120-pound robot."

Migdalia Serrano, 15, also plans to study engineering. Her focus is electrical systems. Like Widmeier, she had no idea she was an engineer at heart until she joined Panthrobotics.

"I've learned to love something," Serrano said. "Now I know what I want to do." •



Innovation for nonprofits

Y Combinator, which provides seed money and expertise to business startups, is using its model to assist nonprofits with intriguing ideas.

Comprised of hundreds of investors who double as advisors, Y Combinator selects promising companies to assist and fund in exchange for a piece of the business. Airbnb and Dropbox are two of Y Combinator's success stories.

The company won't be taking a stake in the nonprofits, helping them improve their business plans and providing funding as a philanthropic venture instead.

"We don't know how many nonprofits we'll fund, or what type of ideas we'll like," wrote Paul Graham of Y Combinator on his blog. "We like Watsi a lot, because they help people who really need help, and do it in an efficient and transparent way. But fundamentally this is an experiment, just like YC itself was at first. So we don't want to tell people too precisely what we're looking for, because we're not sure yet what we're looking for."

Watsi lets people directly fund low-cost medical care for people in need.

Urban farming scales up

Sole Foods has turned the community garden up to 11. The Vancouver firm has four farm sites in the city that produce 60 tons of food annually for local restaurants and markets.

"'Urban agriculture' is used fairly loosely," co-founder Michael Abelman tells FastCoDesign.com. "A lot of what's been called agriculture is more 'gardening' in scale. That's not a value judgment. It's just saying that it is actually possible to develop a full-scale enterprise in a city, and provide lots of food, and employ significant numbers of people."

The company employs 25 people, many of them recovering addicts.

Some of the farm's trees are planted in large tubs, so they can be moved in case the land under them is put back into development. Sole Foods is producing crops not common for the Vancouver climate—lemons, quinces, plums and cherries.



WELL SAID

"Every time I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race."

—H.G. Wells



“I’LL BE GOVERNOR OF LOUISIANA.”

Today, from studying the spoken word and his own innate gifts, Dominique Ricks knows how to take over the room, how to enthrall a crowd. His will to succeed makes him hard to overlook. A few years ago, he caught the attention of leaders in the Baton Rouge Youth Coalition, which was formed with funding assistance from our donors and staff resources from members. BRYC mentored him, tutored him twice a week, recommended him to the University of Wisconsin and helped him secure \$100,000 in scholarships from the school. One day, he promises, “I’ll be governor of Louisiana. There are a lot of things to fix.”

WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP, our staff will pursue initiatives like the one here, projects that provide a big return to the community now and for decades to come. **JOIN TODAY AT BRAFO.ORG.**

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Area Foundation*



Rolling down our river

The big river that runs through Baton Rouge drains thousands of streams and rivers across the United States, from Idaho in the west to New York in the east. A drop of rain that falls in Chicago drains to the Mississippi River instead of Lake Michigan.

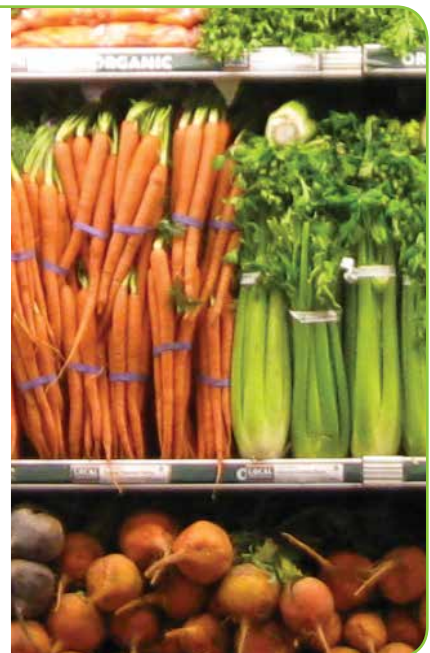
National Atlas, a government group, created the dataset of hydrology over 20 years. The project will be opened to the public for enhancements. <http://nationalatlas.gov/streamer/Streamer/streamer.html>.

Whole Foods tries inner city

The South Side of Chicago seems like an improbable place for a grocery store. Four of every 10 people are poor; 21% are unemployed. Not only is this area getting a new grocer, but that store is Whole Foods, a company that offers organic and high-end goods at premium prices.

Scheduled to open in 2016, the store in Chicago will be the second Whole Foods in the inner city. The first is in an impoverished area of Detroit.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel courted Whole Foods for almost two years, offering the grocer tax increment financing to become part of a development. Still, the grocer might struggle with its existing business model. Knowing this, the firm has said it would modify its product mix to make money, such as including more of its 365 company-branded products that compete at lower price points.



Magic in cell phone data

Her lit bulb moment occurred at University of California, Berkeley. Studying for her doctorate, it struck Laura Schewel that cell phone users were sharing data with their phone providers across cell towers and GPS devices. Getting her hands on the data would let Schewel understand how people were moving about and much more.

It took some time to convince phone providers to share their data. They are doing so after making it anonymous, so the world can't peek at who is going where.

Schewel wrote algorithms that worked over the data to display movements of people, and matching those movements with cell phone owner demographics, a useful combination of information for retailers and urban planners.

She launched StreetLight Data to market the information.

Users of the new service can learn what type of people are in an area, how often they go there and where else they like to go.

MIT's magazine has chosen Schewel among its top young innovators this year. More information is at the firm's website—StreetLightData.com



City in a tower

A building under construction in China will be the second-tallest behind the Burj Khalifa in Dubai. The Shanghai Towers may house up to 30,000 residents in 521,000 square meters of space.

People living in the nearly 2,000 foot high-rise will have access to a park on every 14th floor. Lower-level parks will be 50,000 square feet, enough space for fairs, art openings and other cultural events.

Shanghai Tower includes other green features, such as a transparent second skin for drawing outside air to cool in summer and warm in winter.



25 billion

Number of devices that are expected to be connected to the Internet worldwide in 2015
(Source: Cisco Systems)

Kill bugs dead

Wiping out malaria would save 800,000 lives per year, while also providing a big economic benefit to the poor who contract the disease and survive. Their meager savings too often vanish when the sickness puts them out of work.

Every advance to beat malaria, therefore, is cheered. The latest clapping is for an Australian research team that may have produced a breakthrough in the search for a malaria vaccine. In a small clinical trial, biotech firm Sanaria produced a perfect result: None of the six volunteers contracted the disease, while five of six in a control group were struck when bitten by mosquitoes harboring the virus. Researchers warn that more trials are needed before the vaccine is ready to be deployed. It could be years before the vaccine is scaled up for production and put in common use. That day can't come soon enough.



Fuel cell breakthrough?

Looks like Bloom Energy, a darling of the fuel cell industry, has a challenger. Redox Power System of Maryland claims it will offer less expensive fuel cell generators next year.

Fuel cell generators can run on many different fuels, including waste material, propane, diesel and natural gas. They generate power through electrochemical reactions instead of combustion. Fuel cells are cleaner and quieter than diesel generators.

Redox says its full cells won't cost as much because they are made from cheaper materials. The company says the materials are 90% the cost of competitors, though cost to the consumer has not been published. Bloom's boxes contain more rare earth materials.

An inexpensive fuel cell would be welcome by people in Louisiana, where hurricanes cause power outages too often.



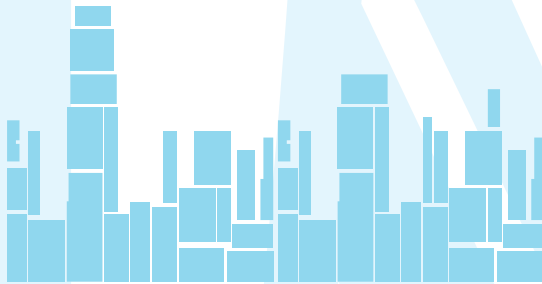


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Stars in your eyes

Photo by David Humphreys

In 1989, the Foundation granted \$18,152 for repairs to the Zeiss Lens that tossed starlight around the Louisiana Art and Science Museum planetarium. LASM has built a new planetarium since then, but the lens remains on display at the riverfront museum. Foundation donors continue to support the LASM. Together they have granted at least \$1.85 million to the museum.

—Mukul Verma

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The River City Jazz Masters Series was co-founded by Derek E. Gordon and the River City Jazz Coalition.

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

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