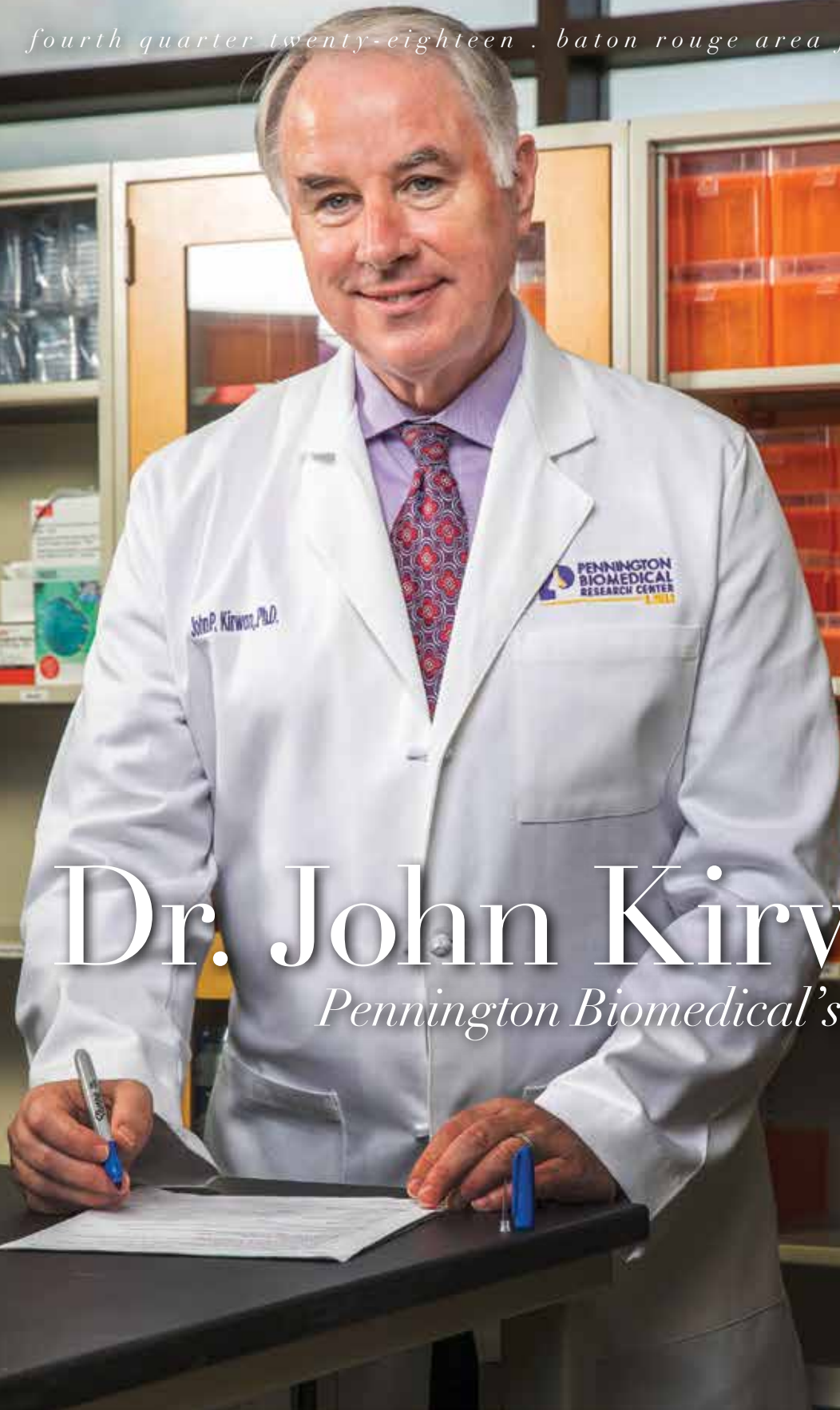


CURRENTS

fourth quarter twenty-eighteen . baton rouge area foundation



Dr. John Kirwan

Pennington Biomedical's next act





McKay Automotive Technology Center graduate Mason Blankenship performs a diagnostics test on a Porsche GT2 RS at Brian Harris Porsche off Airline Highway.

Photo by Tim Mueller

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*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

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

LETTER



In September, the Foundation surpassed the half-billion-dollar mark. That's the amount of money that we have given in grants since starting in 1964.

What's more, the pace of grant-making has only accelerated, with our donors and the Foundation distributing more than \$275 million—more than half the organization's total—in just the last 10 years.

Our work is made possible by two pillars of support: the donors who open up charitable funds and then make grants to nonprofits, and our members who faithfully contribute to the Foundation each year to support projects that are transforming the region.

So what have our fund donors purchased with a half-billion dollars of generosity?

They have helped families whose children face developmental disabilities. They have improved the care and treatment of people with mental illness and supported hospice so loved ones at the end of their lives can depart with dignity and a little peace. They've invested with us in a cancer drug that could save tens of thousands of lives each year, and they've begun to reform education for children who deserve a better chance in life than what they've been given.

Through civic partnerships, the Foundation has revived our downtown, built the Shaw Center for the Arts, preserved Bluebonnet Swamp, and begun building The Water Campus on what had been a forsaken portion of Baton Rouge's riverfront. Their support underwrote planning that has led to the revitalization of entire sections of the city.

They have literally changed the face of Baton Rouge and, more than that, moved the heart of the community to re-examine its priorities and better ensure that everyone has a bigger stake in this place we call our home.

For example, in ways little known to most, our donors have quietly helped to build hospitals and the children's museum. Without fanfare, they have provided services to people who are sick as well as places of solace for those trying desperately to find their way out of the maze of mental illness. They have given eyeglasses to impoverished children to ensure that they too can read, and helped to build a shelter where abandoned dogs and cats will be treated with kindness until they are adopted. They have paid for public art that we all look to for inspiration, and even reached well beyond our Louisiana borders to do good in the world, such as one philanthropist who has built a clinic in Burkina Faso and has left money so Mercy Ships can provide free health care in African port cities.

Beginning with our neighbors close to home and reaching out from there to the world, you—our members and donors—have purchased a better way of life for everyone in the Baton Rouge area and beyond. We thank our donors and pledge to make sure they continue to get the very best value for their generosity.

• • •

Here's something everyone can agree with: it's better to give sick people medical treatment than to put them in jail.

This is the straightforward reasoning that has led the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's board to endorse a modest tax that would pay for a mental health treatment center in East Baton Rouge Parish.

If the tax passes, the Bridge Center, a nonprofit, would open the center next year. Please vote Dec. 8.

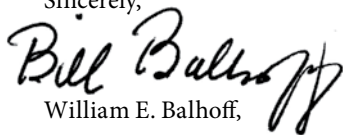
The proposal for this treatment center is a result of a Foundation project. Our research showed that budget cuts to mental health services, coupled with a movement to stop the institutionalization of people with mental illness, have made the prison system our de facto asylums.

In the course of research, our civic projects team found a working solution to this problem in San Antonio. We partnered with law enforcement and mental health experts to learn from San Antonio's successes and to model them here in our own community. Naturally, the matter came down to funding. So the Foundation contracted with a consulting firm to seek out a mechanism for financially supporting the proposed treatment center. Their conclusion was that a tax was the only reliable option.

If the tax passes, the Bridge Center, a nonprofit, would open the center next year. People with mental illness and addictions would get the treatment they need, and the tax would save money—for, as our studies also show, taking care of people is cheaper than imprisoning them.

Please vote Dec. 8.

Sincerely,


William E. Balhoff,
Chair

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

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The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is a community foundation that takes advantage of opportunities to improve the quality of life in South Louisiana. We do so by providing three essential functions. One, the Foundation connects philanthropists with capable nonprofits to make sure the needs of our communities are met. For example, our donors support the Shaw Center for the Arts and education reform. Two, BRAF invests in and manages pivotal projects to improve the region. Three, we provide consulting services to nonprofits. For more information, contact Mukul Verma at mverma@braf.org.

Currents is published four times a year by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, 100 North Street, Suite 900, 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.

ABOUT US

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

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

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

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

3 We offer strategic consulting services to nonprofits.

KEY CIVIC LEADERSHIP PROJECTS

THE NEW MOBILITY :

The Foundation is trying to make it easier for people to get around the parish. We are participating with local and state government on several projects that give residents transportation choices. Engineers say that more choices reduce the burden on roads. The projects include a train connecting Baton Rouge to New Orleans, a bike sharing system that is expected to start in spring 2019 and support for car sharing.

BATON ROUGE HEALTH DISTRICT

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

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

MISSION :

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

To achieve our mission, we:

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

LEAD IN



WATER CAMPUS UPDATE

The Water Campus is becoming a place of its own. Roads on the campus will be completed early next year, including the new Water Street, which will let people travel from Nicholson Drive to the Center for Coastal and Deltaic Solutions, the iconic building on the levee that is home to The Water Institute of the Gulf.

Under construction on Water Street is a 94,000-square-foot, four-story building that will include Stantec among tenants. The engineering firm will occupy most of the fourth floor when the office building opens in summer 2019. A 20-unit apartment building will start across from the offices before year-end. A park with a signature water feature will be between the two.

Commercial Properties Realty Trust, which manages the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's real estate, is developing the Campus on the riverfront. It's designed to be a gathering place for scientists, engineers and others collaborating on the biggest challenge of our time—adapting to rising seas and vanishing wetlands around the world. Current tenants are The Water Institute, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and LSU Center for River Studies.



COMPANION ANIMAL ALLIANCE MOVES INTO NEW SHELTER

In 2011, only two of every 10 animals at the East Baton Rouge Parish Animal Shelter were being adopted. The rest suffered an ugly fate that people didn't want to talk about.

But Companion Animal Alliance couldn't keep silent. The nonprofit was created to save dogs and cats and avoid the misery of waiting in cramped cages at the parish animal shelter. When CAA took over the parish shelter, everything changed.

From a "save rate" of only two in 10, CAA has boosted adoption levels to more than 70% today, seven years later. That works out to 42,000 more dogs and cats that have been given homes and families.

The community likes what CAA has been doing. The nonprofit was able to recruit an army of volunteers—families as well as individuals—willing to foster these companion animals until a forever home is found for them. CAA's work has attracted the attention of donors, too, both large and small. Together, they have built a new \$12.75 million shelter on the LSU campus, connected with the university's veterinary medicine program.

The new shelter is set to open in mid-November. Unlike the old one, it is as attractive as it is functional, making the adoption of homeless animals a more pleasant experience for everyone. And its spot on the campus, in a more visible and accessible location, should also help to draw more families looking to adopt a pet. Plus, CAA's close relationship with LSU's School of Veterinary Medicine will mean healthier, happier outcomes for animals as well as better training for students.

Proudly, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation has played its part in turning around our parish's problem with unwanted animals. We started the project to create CAA and then provided thousands of hours of staff support, raising money and operating the shelter organization. In directing this project, the Foundation and its donors have helped to save the lives of thousands of dogs and cats, brought joy to families eager to share their love with a pet and marshaled the good will of people in our community to make East Baton Rouge a more humane place.

Now, instead of dodging the topic, people are proud to talk about what our parish does with homeless animals. And rightly so.



GOOD THINGS



FULL OF PROMISE

In their first year, three schools recruited by nonprofit New Schools for Baton Rouge are at full enrollment with waiting lists.

Based in Arizona, BASIS started the year with 425 students at its campus on Woman's Hospital, and IDEA Public Schools had 900 on two campuses, one on GSRI (Innovation Drive) and the other near Cortana Mall.

EBR Public Schools sanctioned the schools, which are operated by high-performing charter organizations. BASIS, for instance, has several of its schools ranked in the top 10 nationally by U.S News & World Report. All the schools are operating on new campuses.

Started by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and supported by our donors, New Schools recruits and supports the best school organizations and holds them accountable when they fail.

NEW SCHOOL ON LOBDELL

Collegiate Academies has raised test scores of poor children in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Its strategy isn't complex. The school operator provides extra services to about 50% of the students who need it, which is why 98% of seniors are accepted to college.

Next year, the school will have another asset to help students in Baton Rouge, shifting from temporary space to a modern building on Lobdell Avenue. The land for the school was donated by the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, a supporting nonprofit of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation that invests in real estate for profit and to improve communities.



The Wilbur Marvin Foundation saved Bon Carre and purchased land surrounding it for future building and to grow confidence in the area to lure other developers. The strategy is starting to work. Ardendale Oaks, an apartment complex, has opened on Lobdell. The Ardendale project, a mixed-use development by the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, includes Baton Rouge Community College's new McKay Automotive Training Center and a career high school operated by the East Baton Rouge School System.



LEARNING SPACE

THRIVE, the only charter boarding school in Louisiana, started building a new classroom to replace a converted church building. The school has new dorms for students, who live on campus during the week and at their homes during the

weekend. The THRIVE classroom building on Brightside Drive will be a 43,000-square-foot structure.

THRIVE started with financial support from Baton Rouge Area Foundation donors and staff support from the Foundation.

CIVIC PROJECTS



BIKESHARE TO ROLL IN SPRING

Baton Rouge will be the first U.S. city with only electric-assist bikes in its bikeshare fleet. The news comes from Gotcha Group, which was approved by the Metro Council to start and operate the bike-share program.

You have to pedal the bikes, but they also have electric motors to ease longer commutes and to let the less fit ride as well.

Gotcha staff designs bikes to fit the environments of different cities and builds the two-wheelers in the United States. Bikes in Baton Rouge's network will have seven speeds, all aluminum frames to avoid rusting, a carbon-fiber belt drive instead of a chain, puncture-resistant tires and GPS-enabled smart locks. Gotcha will offer scooter-share and other mobility services in Baton Rouge, if there is demand.

Baton Rouge bikeshare will start with 500 bikes at 50 hubs at LSU, Southern and downtown in March, then add 300 bikes and 30 hubs in a second phase in the Baton Rouge Health District, Mid City and North Baton Rouge.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation's civic projects staff started bikeshare and put together a coalition to implement it. Government funding of up to \$840,000 is paying some of the

startup costs, but Gotcha will make money by selling sponsorships and charging for rides.

Annual memberships in bikeshare are typically less than \$100. Members can pick up bikes from hubs, ride for 30 minutes at no charge, and leave the bikes at another hub.

Bikeshare dovetails with other good news for biking in the parish. City-parish hired consultants are writing a bicycle and pedestrian plan for spring release, and parish agencies are building bike lanes on roads and bike paths off them. The projects include:

A downtown greenway linking to the University/City Park Lakes in one direction and to Memorial Park and North Baton Rouge in the other.

Bike lanes on Hyacinth Avenue to connect the lakes with Glasgow Avenue, which will ultimately join up with existing BREC paths behind Pennington Biomedical Research Center and one day reach Siegen Lane.

The extension of the levee path from downtown to L'Auberge Casino.

It's the Season to **START PLANNING**

Host your party at the newest event space in Baton Rouge.

Make your event one to remember.

At the Estuary Conference & Event center, we work closely with you to bring your dream event to life. This time of year is about bringing people together, and it is important to not only offer an event, but create an experience. Let's imagine the possibilities together.

Overlooking the Mississippi River, The Estuary Conference and Event Venue sets the standard for style and sophistication for any special occasion or symposium. The Estuary features over 6,000 square feet of stunning meeting and event space, including a gallery space with breath taking views of the Mississippi River. Our five conference rooms and Riverfront Gallery with a Pre-Function area allow for a variety of setups for meetings, break-out sessions, workshops, or retreats. The outdoor terrace overlooking the Water Campus is a stylish place for al fresco receptions and parties while the Newton B. Thomas Landing brings your guests out over the river to enjoy the beautiful sunset.

Call our Event Team to help you with your:

- Business Meetings, Conferences and Corporate Events
- Fundraisers and Non-Profit Galas
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- Graduation, Anniversary and Birthday Parties
- Private Dinners and Banquets
- Holiday Celebrations
- Reunions and University Events
- Staff Retreats and Board Meetings
- Lunch and Learns
- Training Seminars
- Continuing Education



Save a life or two

*Small tax would open much-needed
mental health treatment center*

By Mukul Verma

Too often, voters are told they have to choose between the good of the community and fiscal responsibility. This December, Baton Rouge voters will have the rare opportunity to embrace both: They can pass a modest property tax to fund a mental health treatment center for people in crisis and save the community money at the same time.

Currently, EBR law enforcement officers have nowhere to take people with mental illness or addiction except to jail or emergency rooms.

The 1.5 mill proposal would generate \$6 million for operating a treatment facility where first responders could divert people with mental illness and addiction instead of imprisoning them for minor infractions. The millage amounts to \$18.50 annually on a \$200,000 home, or \$64 for a \$500,000 home.

Services would be provided by The Bridge Center, a nonprofit formed by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. The Bridge Center is operated independently by a board that includes mental health experts, justice system leaders and health care experts. Kathy Kliebert, former head of the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, is board chair.

The need for mental health care in EBR is as real as our neighbors. Five years ago, Foundation donor Bill O'Quin's son, who had schizophrenia, was off his medication and in crisis. O'Quin

called the police, expecting they would take him to a facility for care and medication. But such a place no longer exists here; Earl K. Long's mental health unit had been shuttered with the closure of the hospital.

Police had no option but to bring him to jail. Within days, O'Quin's son died in prison from a blood infection after being bound to a chair.

Bill O'Quin decided no other parent should have to lose a sick son or daughter this way. He wanted to change the system, and he asked the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to help him.

We were methodical. The Foundation empaneled a group of experts and, together, we learned that jails, here and across the country, have become de-facto asylums, a consequence of cutbacks in mental health care services. Seven of every 10 people in jail suffer from at least one clinical mental illness.

Next, we searched for a better way. Research showed that San Antonio offered the best model for Baton Rouge. There, when law enforcement picks up someone with signs suggesting mental illness, officers have an alternative to the revolving doors on jailhouses and hospital emergency rooms. In San Antonio, treatment is an option for the sick.

The question was whether it could work in Baton Rouge. The Foundation conducted several studies to find an answer before proceeding. We found that not only would a similar diversion program work in our parish, but it would, in fact, produce \$54

million in direct community savings over a decade.

Learning from San Antonio, the Foundation proposed a model where individuals in crisis could be stabilized and provided a long-term treatment plan. A mobile assessment team will respond with and without law enforcement when someone in crisis needs support. If necessary, they will be referred to The Bridge Center, where they will be provided appropriate services that may include sobering, detox, acute psychiatric care, respite and on-going case management. Individuals will stay at The Bridge Center up to 12 days as their ongoing treatment plan is developed.

The Metro Council and then-Mayor Kip Holden agreed to place the 1.5 mill tax on the ballot in 2016 to operate the crisis center. It failed by a small margin, 51-49 percent.

We don't give up easily on a good idea. So the Foundation diligently explored other sources of funding, until a consultant we hired was forced to conclude that public support through a tax was the only reliable revenue stream. Impatient to move forward, the Foundation applied for and won a national grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to establish a pilot pre-trial release program for individuals with mental illness and substance abuse challenges. Mayor Sharon Weston Broome's administration agreed to fund the program once the grant ended.

Operated by The Bridge Center, the pilot is sending one to two people a week to treatment programs instead of having them wait in jail until their trial date, with careful review and approval from parish justice officials. Early results for this pre-trial release program are promising.

Recognizing both the need and fiscal advantages of the Bridge Center program, Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome and Metro councilwomen Barbara Freiberg and Tara Wicker co-sponsored a resolution to return the 1.5 mill property tax to the ballot on Dec. 8. The tax has widespread support among public officials and mental health experts, including the District Attorney, Coroner, Sheriff, and Baton Rouge Heath District.

If the money is forthcoming, The Bridge Center would provide up to 30 beds. Law enforcement officers would take people with mental illness or addiction to the center, allowing cops to return quickly to their beats and reducing the workload on an overburdened justice system. East Baton Rouge residents could also refer family members in crisis to the Center, heading off the kind of escalation that results in arrests. •

MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT CENTER

What: If a small tax on the Dec. 8 ballot is approved, The Bridge Center would use proceeds to operate a mental health treatment center.

Why: Over several decades, state-supported hospitals for individuals with mental illness have been closed, while community resources have not been adequately

bolstered to provide needed services. As a consequence, people in crisis now end up in jail or emergency

rooms. In each case, individuals are not provided the appropriate care and support they need. The mental health treatment center would provide an alternative.

How much: 1.5 mill property tax would generate \$6 million annually to operate the center. A person with a \$200,000 home would pay \$1.50 per month, and a person with a \$500,000 home would pay about \$5 per month.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation board has endorsed this tax, and this project was started by the Foundation.



GRANTS



Water meter

Foundation grant seeds global conservation efforts

By Sara Bongiorno | Photo by Tim Mueller

Mapping technology developed for The Nature Conservancy in Louisiana with a grant from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation is vital to the organization's accelerating role in conservation and humanitarian efforts worldwide.

Originally developed to protect freshwater resources in Louisiana and Mississippi, the predictive-modeling technology has given rise to spin-off applications to help scientists prevent urban water shortages, understand flood risk and improve seafood production.

The software is still used to protect Louisiana natural resources like wetlands, rivers and the oyster beds of Sabine Lake. But nowadays it also helps researchers visualize the migratory "bluewaves" of marine life such as Bluefin tuna and calculate the annual global impact of tourism resources like coral reefs.

The technology is also essential to The Nature Conservancy's growing role in protecting human communities.

In Mexico, for instance, tourism officials and financial giant Swiss Re are using it to find nature-based ways to protect beachfront hotels and other infrastructure. A reef-restoration project in Grenada is tied to work to improve the well-being of vulnerable nearby residents.

"This was a local investment by the Foundation that's been leveraged globally to help communities become more resilient through natural and green infrastructure," said Bryan Piazza, director of freshwater and marine science for the state chapter of The Nature Conservancy.

The Foundation's investments in the technology date to 2012. A grant from the Foundation's Future of the Gulf Fund, created with BP seed money after the 2010 oil-rig disaster, paid for development of a framework for the software that Piazza compared to

the foundation of a house.

Researchers across the country began modifying and using the technology after it proved effective in mapping freshwater resources in Louisiana.

In the years since, the technology has come to play a core role in work done by The Nature Conservancy and its partners. In 2015, the nonprofit introduced a "toolkit" of mapping applications built around the framework developed for use in Louisiana.

Mapping applications in what the organization calls its Natural Solutions Toolkit identify nature-based solutions to the world's biggest environmental threats, including flood risk and habitat loss.

The technology received a 2018 special-achievement award from mapping firm ESRI in recognizing its role in mitigating such threats.

It is fostering new partnerships between The Nature Conservancy and entities such as Microsoft AI for Earth. In Louisiana, the state office is exploring ways to collaborate with The Water Institute of the Gulf and the mapping tool's role in such work, Piazza said.

"It's not just the technology itself that's valuable, but the expanded network of people who are using it," said Piazza. "It is creating opportunities for people to work together."

Flexibility is key to technology that continues to evolve. For example, the Louisiana office of The Nature Conservancy developed a wetlands-comparison app that is now being used by the organization's Alabama office in water-protection work.

But Alabama researchers aren't just using the application—they are making improvements that will benefit projects in Louisiana and elsewhere, Piazza said.

"We're able to repurpose improved technology without having to build it from the ground up," he said. •

GRANTS

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation distributed \$6.7 million to nonprofits and for hardship assistance grants in the third quarter. Fund donors make most of the grants from their door advised funds, which are like investment accounts for doing good. The Foundation manages the money in the funds. If you want to know more about opening a donor advised fund, please call Elizabeth Hutchison or Francisca Comeaux at (225) 387-6126.

100 Black Men of Metro New Orleans Inc. \$75,000
50CAN Inc. \$75,000
Academic Distinction Fund \$46,129
Acts of Love Inc. \$8,000
Adaptive Sports Center of Crested Butte Inc. \$5,000
Adaptive Sports Foundation \$100
Affordable Cremation Solution \$750
Agenda for Children Inc. - New Orleans \$61,250
Alcorn State University \$1,500
Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area \$2,600
America Achieves Inc. \$143,750
American Cancer Society Inc. - Mid-South Division \$500
American Civil Liberties Union Foundation \$100
American Heart Association Inc. -
Greater Southeast Affiliate \$50,000
American National Red Cross - Louisiana Capital Area \$1,809
AMIKids \$1,000
AMIKids Foundation Inc. \$200
Arkabutla Rescue Rehabilitation and Foster \$1,010
Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$16,127
Arts Council of New Orleans \$15,000
Ascension Episcopal School \$10,000
Assumption Parish School Board -
Napoleonville Middle School \$1,000
Atchafalaya Basinkeeper Inc. \$500
Auburn University \$1,500
Auckland Foundation \$25,000
Baton Rouge Amateur Athletic Association \$5,000
Baton Rouge Area Foundation \$164,502
Baton Rouge Area Kids Fore Golf Foundation \$1,000
Baton Rouge Area Violence Elimination Inc. \$75,000
Baton Rouge Bikeshare \$100,000
Baton Rouge Christian Education Foundation Inc. -

The Dunham School \$36,802
Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center Inc. \$3,729
Baton Rouge Green Association Inc. \$824
Baton Rouge Health District \$2,750
Baton Rouge High School Foundation \$1,000
Baton Rouge Little Theater Inc. / Theatre Baton Rouge \$11,000
Baton Rouge Opera Guild \$1,868
Baton Rouge Youth Coalition Inc. \$107,500
Bevill State Community College \$4,500
Boy Scouts of America - Istrouma Area Council \$102,500
Boy Scouts of America - Stonewall Jackson Area Council \$1,000
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$2,500
BREADA - Big River Economic & Agricultural
Development Alliance \$1,000
Bridgedale Elementary School \$600
Broussard Middle School \$1,550
C.A. Weis Elementary School \$600
Calcasieu Parish School Board -
Oak Park Elementary School \$1,000
Cancer Services of Greater Baton Rouge \$25,250
Capital Area Agency on Aging District II \$2,085
Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless \$4,000
Capital Area Animal Welfare Society \$310
Capital Area CASA Association \$100
Capital Area Corporate Recycling Council \$2,500
Capital Area Law Enforcement Foundation \$3,000
Capital Area United Way \$2,500
Care Funeral Home \$750
CASA of St. Landry Inc. \$1,000
Casper Funeral & Cremation \$1,500
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Inc. \$5,000
Catholic High School Foundation \$3,202
Catholic of Pointe Coupee \$1,000
Cecilia Junior High School \$1,750
Center for Planning Excellence Inc. \$3,750
Center for the Arts - Crested Butte \$5,000
Centre for the Arts \$1,000
Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$28,000
Children's Cup \$1,200
Children's Education Foundation - Vietnam \$10,000
Chinese Christian Church of Baton Rouge \$288
Christ School Inc. \$10,000
Christ the King Parish and Catholic Center at LSU \$11,826
City of Baton Rouge, Parish of East Baton Rouge \$10,500

City Year Inc. \$60,000
 Clinch Mountain Crematory \$750
 College Entrance Examination Board \$8,500
 College Foundation of the University of Virginia \$1,500
 Companion Animal Alliance \$11,100
 Congregation B'nai Israel of Baton Rouge \$2,290
 Contemporary Arts Center \$10,000
 Cool Cooperative Inc. \$25,000
 Cotuit Center for the Arts \$1,000
 Crested Butte Mountain Educational Radio Inc. \$1,000
 Cristo Rey Baton Rouge \$31,000
 Delta Upsilon Lambda Foundation Inc. \$1,500
 Dillard University \$1,500
 Doctors Without Borders USA Inc. \$5,000
 Douglas Manship Sr. Theatre Complex Holding Inc. \$11,735
 Downstream Project \$250
 Dream Teachers \$250
 Dress for Success Charity - New Orleans \$500
 Ducks Unlimited Inc. Headquarters \$315
 Dutchtown Middle School \$2,500
 Dyslexia Association of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$609
 East Baton Rouge Parish School System \$1,000
 East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office \$208,486
 EBRPSS - Baton Rouge Magnet High School \$2,400
 EBRPSS - Capitol Elementary School \$1,000
 EBRPSS - Crestworth Elementary School \$1,000
 EBRPSS - Dufrocq Elementary School \$2,500
 EBRPSS - Greenbrier Elementary School \$795
 EBRPSS - Magnolia Woods Elementary School \$1,970
 EBRPSS - McKinley High School \$1,000
 EBRPSS - Park Elementary School \$2,141
 EBRPSS - Tara High School \$2,500
 Edisto Electric Cooperative \$300
 EdNavigator Inc. \$175,000
 Education Resource Strategies Inc. \$75,000
 Education's Next Horizon \$2,500
 Emerge Center Inc. \$1,263
 Emerge School for Autism Inc \$2,500
 Episcopal Church of the Ascension \$11,000
 Episcopal High School of Baton Rouge \$536,525
 Excelth Inc. \$24,800
 First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge Foundation \$100
 First United Methodist Church \$4,500
 Forest High School \$2,500
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We're all in a hurry to make the world better. Some ideas, however, require much time and commitment; they span generations.

The Foundation's ongoing mental health initiative is a young project by our standards. On the other hand, The Water Institute spans more than a decade, and downtown's rebirth has required no less than 20 years of unwavering determination.

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Safe at home

Catholic Charities has settled 25,000 immigrants over 50 years

By Ed Cullen | Photo by Tim Mueller

As Dauda Sesay drives to pick up a child at soccer practice or to work at Dow Chemical, he feels like a man who's lived at least two lives. Born in Sierra Leone, Sesay saw some of his family and friends murdered or mutilated, lived the better part of 10 years in refugee camps and then started over with his wife and five children in Baton Rouge.

Sesay, 40, cites the help of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge and the people here for the decision he made with his wife to make the capital city home for their family. Alima Sesay works at St. James Place as a certified nurse's assistant.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge was for Sesay, like thousands of other immigrants and refugees, the starting place for learning a new culture, the nuances of American English (Sesay studied English in school in Sierra Leone) and how to live in an entirely new place.

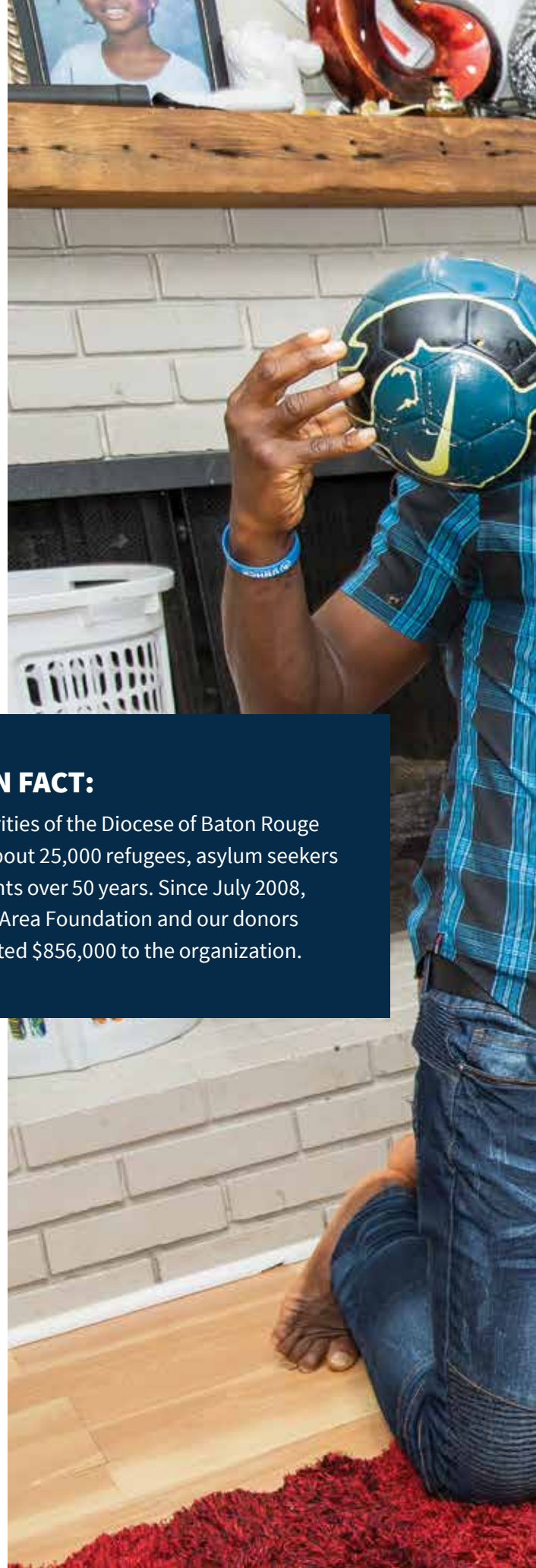
About 25,000 refugees, asylees and immigrants, for whom a case file was opened, have been served by CCDBR over the last 50 years, said David Aguillard, CCDBR's executive director. Another 25,000 received a one-time consultation, he said.

CCDBR's services checklist is two pages of small type covering, among other things, how to grocery shop, applying for a Social Security card, sign-

After a forced exile from Sierra Leone, Dauda Sesay, left, and his wife, Alima, finally have the whole family together after 16 years of separation. Their son Bai, 17 and daughter Mariama, 20, were recently reunited when they arrived in Louisiana in early October. Seated center is Alusine, 8, and to the right is 9-year-old Adama.

FOUNDATION FACT:

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge has served about 25,000 refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants over 50 years. Since July 2008, Baton Rouge Area Foundation and our donors have distributed \$856,000 to the organization.





EVERYBODY HERE IS FROM SOMEPLACE ELSE

Refugees born in Russia, Vietnam, Iraq, Burma, Congo, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda. They live among us, thanks to the benevolence of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Greater Baton Rouge, which has resettled 25,000 refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants over 50 years. The work done by Catholic Charities can be seen in Census Bureau data. East Baton Rouge Parish's foreign-born population has grown more than 750% over 50 years, while the overall population has only risen a little more than 56%.

ing up for health care, getting immunizations, receiving home visits, qualifying for welfare, registering children for school, learning to navigate a new city, transportation to job interviews, job training and learning English.

“And little things,” Sesay laughed. “Like turning on the light switch. It’s different here.”

One of Sesay’s children was born in Sierra Leone, two in refugee camps in Africa and two at Woman’s Hospital. “The hospitals in the refugee camps were adequate, not as good as Woman’s Hospital,” he said.

Sesay had talked to his mother by phone that morning. She’s still in Sierra Leone, safe for the time being.

He calls his memories “bittersweet, running from the civil war, the challenges of refugee camps, no privacy, no public toilets—you go in the bush. You shower in the dark so no one sees you.”

When he landed in Baton Rouge, Catholic Charities helped Sesay get work as a dishwasher at a Jack in the Box restaurant and, later, as a custodial worker at LSU. He got a job at Dow Chemical Company as a process technician four years ago, after earning an associate degree at Baton Rouge Community College and interning at Dow.

MOUNTAINS OF THE LION

Sailing down the coast of West Africa in 1462, a Portuguese explorer looked at the mountains rising behind modern day Freetown and saw the shape of a lion. He named the place Serra de Leao, meaning mountains of the lion. Sesay grew up in Sierra Leone fearing violence, not from wild animals, but soldiers and marauders at war with the government and each other.

Sesay last saw Sierra Leone in late 1998. “During the war, my

family would go to neighboring Guinea, then come back,” he said.

Sesay’s first 12 or 13 years were relatively peaceful. His father was a Temme chief, like a mayor. The Temme are one of 12 official tribes of Sierra Leone.

“But the civil war had been going on since 1991,” Sesay said, beginning in the south near the Liberian border, eventually reaching Sesay’s town in the north.

One day, the rumors and threats of violence became real when Sesay’s family and friends were attacked. “It was a violence-laden day, filled with unspeakable horror and tragedy,” Sesay wrote in a letter to the editor of The Baton Rouge Advocate. He wanted to remind

newspaper readers of his adopted city that restrictive immigration and refugee policies mean little hope for people like him.

Sesay, who is president of the Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants, is the Louisiana delegate to the Refugee Congress in Washington, D.C. Despite a fulltime job and driving from Sherwood Forest subdivision to Plaquemine every day, he works as a volunteer with displaced people as many as 30 hours a week.

“It’s like another fulltime job,” he said. “I get calls in the middle of the night. I say, ‘Call the hospital or the paramedics or the police.’ I meet people at the hospital. Sometimes, people have trouble with the law.”

Sesay answers these calls for help because he was once a newcomer in a wonderful, strange, scary land.

“One of the biggest problems is learning the language,” he said. “My wife’s mother is 76. She can’t read or write English.”

Sesay has no idea how long it will take his own mother to win refugee status. It took Sesay 10 years to make it to the United States though he was badly wounded in the attack that killed his father and 7-year-old sister.

A healed, ugly wound on one hand reminds Sesay that he almost lost the hand in the attack on his home. He has a lump in his leg from a bullet wound the same day. The family’s house was set afire with his mother, brother and other relatives inside. His mother escaped through the basement, but Sesay’s little sister was burned alive. Five of Sesay’s childhood friends had their hands amputated by the attackers.

At first, it was thought President Trump’s immigration and refugee policies would make displaced persons reluctant to draw attention to themselves, said Catholic Charities’ Aguiard. “But

panic and fear among refugees and immigrants have increased calls to us for help.”

The number of calls with questions about immigration began increasing in July of this year, until they reached almost 800 a month. At most, the staff can work with 125 clients a month.

Catholic Charities was calling for immigration reform before Trump and Obama, who was known in legal circles as “The Deporter in Chief.” Neither Democrats nor Republicans have come up with an efficient, fair or humane refugee policy, Aguillard said. “It’s divisive,” he said, “even within the Catholic Church.”

“Most immigration attorneys feel some form of immigration reform is needed,” said Glenda Regnart, Catholic Charities Greater Baton Rouge managing attorney for Immigration Legal Services. “The system was last overhauled in 1996. There are new labor trends.” The present system is “clunky and Draconian,” she said. The process needs speeding up, she said, “but not without due process.”

STARTING WITH CUBA

CCDBR’s work with refugees and immigrants began with Cubans fleeing Castro in the 1960s. Over the years, Catholic Charities, which serves 12 parishes in the Baton Rouge area, has resettled refugees from Russia, South Vietnam, Iraq, Burma, Congo, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Iran, Liberia, Venezuela, Myanmar, Columbia, Syria and Honduras.

The organization’s representatives currently visit two detention centers in the state, Aguillard said. The centers receive immigrants from a five-state area.

News headlines are predictors of the next wave of refugees. “Refugees come from countries where war, persecution and sometimes natural disasters hit the headlines, or the United States has a strategic foreign policy objective,” Aguillard said. “Many refugees have assisted the U.S. military or have been persecuted for their Christianity or have other connections with the U.S. that make it dangerous for them to stay in their home countries.”

With a staff of 16, which includes five lawyers, and an annual budget of \$1.2 million for refugee and immigration cases, Catholic Charities has resources sufficient to work with a refugee for four months. With a total budget of about \$6 million, Catholic Charities attempts to fill the gaps in assistance for the poor in the 12-parish area.

“There are only so many lawyers and support staff,” said Regnart. “We hold ourselves to a high standard. We do it because it’s rewarding to watch fearful newcomers learn to navigate our

complicated culture and daily life.”

“Immigration accounts for most of the volume,” Aguillard said. “Refugees require the most service.”

CCDBR estimates that 75% of their refugee clients become U.S. citizens. Some move to other cities where they have family or better job opportunities or where there may be a large population of people from their home countries.

Presidential declarations and the nightly news don’t present a true picture of immigrants and refugees, Catholic Charities’ Aguillard said.

“We hold ourselves to a high standard. We do it because it’s rewarding to watch fearful newcomers learn to navigate our complicated culture and daily life.”

—Glenda Regnart

Most immigrants come to work, he said. Most refugees are so well-vetted they don’t pose a threat to this country, Aguillard said.

“We and Australia,” Aguillard said, “integrate our refugees in a structured program. Unlike some European countries that end up with concentrations of alienated refugees.”

Most undocumented residents currently in the United States arrived by air with a valid visa and let it expire, he explained.

“They arrive at airports on visits, medical and student visas,” Aguillard said. “When they overstay their visas, they come to us or they’re picked up by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). Contrary to popular opinion, most of them didn’t sneak across the border from Mexico and Central America.”

Dauda Sesay looked out on LSU-Ole Miss game-day traffic on Lee Drive. A breeze came through the open bay of Light House Coffee. Sesay checked his watch. He was expecting a call to pick up his son at soccer practice.

“I’m so grateful to this country for a second chance at life after growing up in a Third World country with constant fighting, then living in camps,” he said. “We stayed in Baton Rouge because of the welcome I got here.”

Dauda and Alima, and their children, now are American citizens. •

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COVER



Christopher Axelrod, Director of Translational Services (left), and Executive Director John P. Kirwan, Ph.D., recently established the Integrated Physiology and Molecular Medicine Laboratory at the Pennington Biomedical Research Center.

Pennington's next act

Acclaimed diabetes researcher takes the helm and sets a new vision

By Maggie Heyn Richardson | Photos by Tim Mueller

Few public health problems are as complex as obesity. Forty percent of adults in the United States now struggle with the condition, the highest rate on record. Its causes are many, its cures little understood and its ripple effects undeniable. Obesity is the

spark that ignites a litany of costly diseases, including diabetes, heart, kidney and liver disease and many forms of cancers.

It's within this complex cycle of causes and effects that Pennington Biomedical Research Center's newest executive director, John P. Kirwan, Ph.D., finds endless professional inspiration. With an impressive body of active research in obesity and diabetes trailing him, Kirwan's acceptance of the Pennington helm earlier this year signals a new era of innovation and discovery for the center.

Kirwan has devoted his career to understanding what has caused the world's dramatic uptick in obesity, and learning how to curb the impact of its comorbidities, especially type 2 diabetes. He spent 19 years building a broad body of research at the Cleveland Clinic, most recently serving as director of its Metabolic Translational Research Center and professor of molecular medicine, as well as professor of physiology and nutrition at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine,

also in Cleveland.

Currently, Kirwan is the principal investigator, or co-investigator, on nine National Institutes of Health grants. He's generated more than \$35 million in research funding from the NIH and the food, pharmaceutical and medical device industries. In Cleveland, he led a 24-person research team that discov-

FOUNDATION FACT:

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation has long supported the work of Pennington Biomedical Research Center, including paying the salary of its first executive director, George Bray. **Since 2005, the Foundation's fund donors have granted \$4.1 million to Pennington.**

ered bariatric surgery can reverse type 2 diabetes by restoring the gut's protein-making system. That research continues. He's involved in finding ways to break the transgenerational obesity cycle through a lifestyle intervention model for overweight women who could become pregnant. And he's looking closely at how to replicate the physiological benefits of exercise in pill form for diabetics.

If it sounds like a battle happening on multiple fronts, that's because it is. The complexity of obesity, with its multi-factorial causes, calls for diverse research, believes Kirwan. That includes drug therapy, medical interventions and lifestyle changes. The

“We have something no one else has. We have this research infrastructure dedicated to metabolism and obesity. We have scale. And we have the benefit of our reputation.”

—John P. Kirwan, Pennington’s newest executive director

last thing that will reverse the tide of obesity is the thought that overweight people need to push away from the table, he says.

“There are so many angles to obesity—it’s physiological, psychological and environmental—that reducing it to a matter of will power is a gross exaggeration,” says Kirwan.

Over the course of its 30-year history, Pennington has built a global reputation for contributions in understanding the causes of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer and dementia through basic science and clinical and population research. Its research disciplines include the study of diabetes, nutrition and military performance, cancer and obesity, brain health, women’s health and pediatric obesity.

“This was really an opportunity I couldn’t pass up,” Kirwan says. “In terms of research around the issues that matter most to me—obesity, chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, and many, many cancers—the research environment that can support that best actually exists here at Pennington. While the Cleveland Clinic is a world-renowned hospital, Pennington is a world-renowned research center and a hub for obesity-related work.”

Ten of Kirwan’s research scientists from his Cleveland Clinic lab also relocated to Baton Rouge and are continuing their work in Kirwan’s newly established Integrated Physiology and Molecular Medicine laboratory at Pennington.

Kirwan’s larger vision for Pennington is to continue to grow the center’s reputation as a hub for broad research on the obesity pandemic. The problem doesn’t only exist in the U.S. Worldwide rates of obesity have tripled since 1975, according to the World Health Organization.

Kirwan has launched a strategic planning process to set the center on a focused path for growth over the next five to 10 years. It starts with looking closely at Pennington’s strengths and weaknesses, he says.

“We have multiple strengths,” he says. “Our physical infrastructure is outstanding. The campus is tremendous. There are great facilities here. We have the right clinical and basic science infrastructure.”

But Pennington is also clawing its way back from a human capital drain that started 10 years ago, says Kirwan. The downturn in the national economy that started in 2008 created uncertainty in scientific research funding that lasted for several years. Scientists at Pennington saw a decline in NIH grants, as well as support from the state of Louisiana, prompting many to leave for other research centers in the U.S. and abroad, says Kirwan.

“Anytime you have uncertainty of funding, it’s not conducive to bringing in young talent,” he says. “Over the last 10 years, we’ve had investigators attracted to other institutions.”

But, says Kirwan, things are looking up. Pennington is now in a rebuilding phase, and he’s intent on developing strategies to recruit the best talent he can find.

“We have an opportunity now to attract those people back and recruit others,” he says. “We have to build out our workforce.”

Pennington’s 222-acre campus on Perkins Road in Baton Rouge has the physical capacity to support about 900 positions, says Kirwan. Currently, it employs about 450.

Growing staff in a research center, however, is different from scaling up in sectors like business and industry, which are driven by output and annual revenue. Seasoned scientists are expected to have attracted public or private investment in their work, and younger ones need to be promising enough to garner research dollars in the future. Kirwan intends to attract both, but he says it’s harder to land those with established labs.

“To those researchers who have built programs out, produced new discoveries and made contributions to science, you have to be able to offer them something more,” says Kirwan.

That means generous start-up packages so that researchers can re-establish their work in Baton Rouge with minimal interruption. Scientists are usually hesitant to relocate because moving a lab is costly and it breaks momentum.

Kirwan knows this first hand. He spent nearly two decades building his research in Cleveland, which took time, thought and relationship-building. That makes him a powerful advocate for showcasing Pennington’s proven research environment.

“We have something no one else has,” Kirwan says. “We have this research infrastructure dedicated to metabolism and obesity. We have scale. And we have the benefit of our reputation.” •



Dr. John Kirwan brought 10 research scientists from his Cleveland Clinic research lab. They work at his Pennington lab—Integrated Physiology and Molecular Medicine. The team includes (from left to right) Chris Axelrod, Wagner Dantas, Jacob Mey, John Kirwan, Shayna Goldfeder, Melissa Erickson, Hanna Zhang, William King and Sandra Lopez.

A PILL TO CURE OBESITY?

As a worldwide leader in obesity and diabetes research, John Kirwan brings a trove of active research to his new post as Pennington's executive director. The newly established Integrated Physiology and Molecular Medicine lab on the Pennington campus will house Kirwan's active research projects, as well as many members of his former Cleveland Clinic team.

Kirwan is known for searching for answers to the global pandemic of obesity and diabetes across disciplines, including surgical and biomedical approaches and lifestyle interventions. He led groundbreaking research that found bariatric surgery can push type 2 diabetes into remission, even several years after surgery. Those studies are continuing from his new base at Pennington along with research partners across the country.

Another of Kirwan's projects is an ongoing NIH-funded study called Lifestyle Intervention in Preparation for Pregnancy. Kirwan and his team are finding ways to break the transgenerational obesity cycle by helping obese women adjust diet and exercise *before* conception, not after. Still another project is focused on recreating the positive impact of exercise in pill form. Kirwan and his team have discovered how exercise encourages the secretion of proteins from the skeletal muscles, which then triggers pancreatic beta cells to produce insulin more effectively. Replicating this natural process in pill form could give homebound or immobile diabetics a shot at improved health.





PENN STATE
PERI-MEDICAL
RESEARCH CENTER

In gear

First McKay automotive center grads are in demand

By Sara Bongiorno | Photos by Tim Mueller

The first graduates of BRCC's McKay Automotive Technology Center at the Ardendale mixed-use development have gone to work at regional dealerships keen to hire them in their service departments.

Recent grads of the \$25 million center include Mason Blankenship, 22, of Denham Springs, who landed a job at Brian Harris Porsche on Airline Highway within weeks of completing his associate's degree in May 2018.

His supervisor at the dealership was impressed enough with Blankenship that he tasked him with disassembling the engine and transmission of a diesel Cayenne to sort out an oil leak after a few weeks into the job.

The dealership is investing in Blankenship, too. It will send him to Atlanta for specialized certification in the German-made car later this year.

Blankenship is also investing in himself. He paid off his student loans in September. He is saving for a trip to Germany and buying tools he will need as he works toward becoming a master technician with the skills and expertise to earn \$100,000 or more.

Blankenship said BRCC's five-semester program, which includes 240 hours of paid internship at local dealers, set him up for success on the job. "The program makes sure you know what front-to-back every part of a car does," said Blankenship, who spent a year studying mechanical engineering at Louisiana Tech before realizing what he really wanted to do was work on cars.

The training center is a big deal for students like Blankenship, but also for the region and state. The facility includes two fully-equipped diesel labs, three industry-standard diagnostic labs, six high-tech classrooms and a 100-seat auditorium.

There is nothing else like it across the Gulf Coast, Texas included, on several counts. It is the centerpiece of the EBR

Redevelopment Authority's 200-acre Ardendale mixed-use development, where a public career high school opened this fall and whose students already take basic automotive classes at the BRCC facility. The McKay center is already expanding: a \$6 million collision center opened this fall and will begin offering classes in January.

The paid-internship component appears to be one-of-a-kind. Graduates of private programs elsewhere that cost upwards of \$30,000 might walk into an automotive shop for the first time

FOUNDATION FACT:

The McKay Automotive Technology Center is a civic project of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. With automobile dealer Matt McKay, the Foundation shepherded the project over a decade. Named after McKay's father, who was an educator, the center is operated by BRCC. **All our civic projects are supported by our members.**

when they are hired.

By contrast, students in BRCC's program change oil, do piston jobs, observe veteran mechanics at work and ride along with experienced technicians to interpret noises and vibrations that suggest where a car's problem lies.

"You walk into a shop and you are not going to drown because you have the knowledge you need to get started," said Blankenship.



Mason Blannkenship on his way to earn a salary of more than \$100,000 per year.



Matt McKay with students learning the science and art of auto repair.

Matt McKay, president and CEO of All Star Automotive Group, worked more than a decade with the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to develop the training center for the Baton Rouge region, where automotive technicians, as nationally, are in short supply. His work in developing the program blends personal and professional meaning.

The center is named for his father, whose 30 years with East Baton Rouge public schools began with a teaching job at Melrose Elementary, just down the street from the 83,000-square-foot training center on Lobdell Avenue.

McKay traveled to Virginia and Wisconsin to consider possible models for the school. He provides equipment and used cars to the program and recruited industry partners who are providing equipment and training. His dealerships are among those offering internships to students.

But ask McKay about the center's role in the region's educational landscape and he doesn't wax philosophical about his involvement—or mention it. Instead, he highlights work done by others, including Joe May, the former chancellor of Louisiana's community colleges. He points to the center's larger purpose in creating opportunities.

"This is about job creation," McKay said. "This is about giving young people the opportunity to get started with the latest and greatest technology and the skills they need to take them as far as they want to go in this field."

Ethan Campisi, 18, knew he wanted to work as an automotive technician by the time he was 10.

By his junior year at Kaplan High School south of Lafayette,

Campisi had replaced the engine in his 1996 Chevy Silverado, fixed the body and repainted the truck after an accident and worked on the cars of many of his friends, often with a buddy or his dad helping out.

Campisi might not be working toward his dream job without the training center's opening. He would not have gone out of state for training because he wants to stay close to his family. But before the program opened in Baton Rouge, that might have been his only option.

"I'm getting the training I need not far from home," said Campisi, who spends three days a week at All Star's Chevy North operation as an intern. "I love it. It's awesome."

Blake Rivere, 22, of Central was likewise transfixed by cars at a young age. By his teens, he had modified a Lexus 430 and a Chevy Challenger. He spent hours poring over repair manuals and studying engines to unlock how each part worked.

"Cars are like puzzles. It's satisfying to figure them out and see how one small change can affect everything," said Rivere, who is about halfway through BRCC's program and works as an intern at All Star Chevrolet on Airline.

On a recent afternoon, McKay complimented Rivere on his solid work at the dealership and encouraged him to tell his friends about BRCC's program.

"Our industry can't get enough good technicians," McKay said. "These are very good jobs, and we want people to know they can get the training they need if that is what they are interested in doing." •

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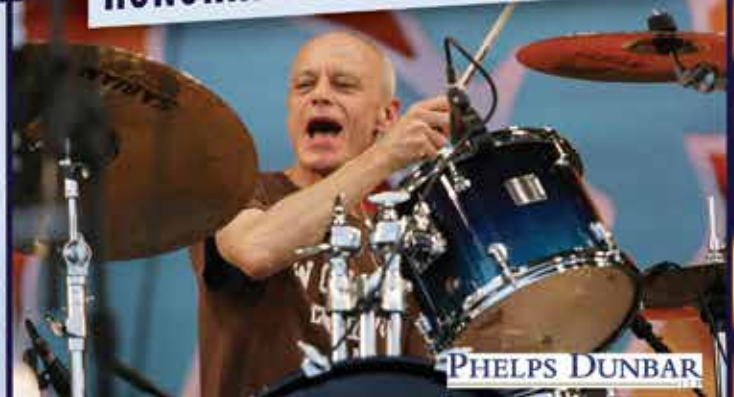


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The G-word

*In Mid City, gentrification
is improving neighborhoods*

By Sara Bongiorno | Photo by Tim Mueller

The *Economist* magazine calls gentrification the dirtiest word in American cities.

Used to describe an influx of middle-class, often white newcomers to depressed, often minority neighborhoods, gentrification has been compared to mass violence, white supremacy and re-colonization. Some critics consider it hate speech. Others use it as a slur.

The idea that gentrification prices out the poor and destroys local culture is so commonplace that most people “accept it as a widespread fact of urban life,” *Slate* magazine observed in a 2015 piece. Merriam-Webster includes displacement of poorer residents in its definition of gentrification. The British sociologist who came up with the word in the early ‘60s to characterize changes in parts of London called it an “invasion” by the middle class “until all or most of the working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed.”

Anyone who’s had a rental house or an apartment sold out from under them in a gentrifying neighborhood understands what displacement feels like. But such upheaval is rare. Less than 10% of neighborhoods in major U.S. cities gentrify, according to a 2015 Cleveland Fed study.

Most gentrification is clustered in a handful of tight real estate markets on the east and west coasts. Media coverage centers on anecdotes about who gets hurt. “As gentrification closes in, immigrants in Lincoln Heights find their American dream slipping away,” was the headline of an April 3, 2018, story in the *Los Angeles Times*.

Mathew Laborde, left, and Nick Miller are building new houses among older ones in Mid City.

A series of studies show a far murkier link between gentrification and displacement. A 2007 study by Columbia University researcher Lance Freeman found that poor households in gentrifying neighborhoods were 15% less likely to move than similar households in neighborhoods that were not gentrifying. Another study put the probability that a low-income household in a gentrifying neighborhood would be forced out by gentrification at just 1.3%.

Gentrification is becoming a topic in Baton Rouge, especially in Mid City, where pockets of new homes are being built in poorer neighborhoods, and businesses are rushing to a revival along Government Street.

A slack real estate market can create opportunities to buy or rehabilitate properties that rapidly shift the make-up of a neighborhood even when no one is driven out by rising rents. As Freeman noted in 2007, “a neighborhood could go from a 30% poverty population to a 12% poverty population in as few as 10 years without any displacement whatsoever.”

Conversely, research identifies benefits of gentrification to low-income households. Findings include improved earnings among residents with high-school diplomas, lower crime rates, improved school scores and greater racial and economic diversity. New business and real estate investment boost the tax base to pay for parks, streets and other government services, meaning improved quality of life for newcomers and long-time residents alike.

None of this has done much to cool the tenor of discussions of gentrification. Further complicating those conversations is that gentrification looks a lot like the revitalization of urban centers with people and investments that cities actively cultivate. As *Governing* magazine noted, “gentrification and urban renewal are essentially the same thing.”

Gentrification’s meaning is increasingly relevant to Baton Rouge. In its Mid City neighborhood east of downtown, millions of dollars in private and public investment are changing the look of the Government Street commercial corridor. Until now inves-

tor interest has centered on Government Street itself. Now small-parcel projects are altering residential streets in a pocket of Mid City where there had not been a new house built in decades.

Eight homes are under construction, completed or planned in McGrath Heights, an 8-block tract south of Government between St. Rose Avenue and South Eugene Street that is a mix of modest homes, run-down structures and blighted or empty lots.

Investor and buyer interest is suddenly keen. A three-bedroom house on McGrath Avenue sold in early September at the full asking price of \$350,000. It was on the market about a week. The house was built on a lot where a burned-out smaller structure had been boarded up years before. The house next door is still empty. Vines threaten to engulf a triplex across the street that is vacant, too.

Around the block on Cork Street, a pair of new shotgun-style houses that would look at home on Magazine Street in New Orleans are for sale at an asking price of more than \$200 per square foot. Two four-bedroom homes are under construction on St. Rose on land that had been vacant. A third large home will go up when those are completed.

What to call such change?

It can certainly, and neutrally, be called in-fill development, a concept the FuturEBR land-use plan identifies as an efficient use of existing infrastructure like lighting, roads and sewer. The plan encourages parcel-by-parcel building, noting in its August 2018 update that infill has the potential to revitalize neighborhoods by creating jobs and opportunities and “filling vacant ‘gaps’ in a streetscape.”

“Blighted properties and empty lots aren’t good for anybody in any neighborhood,” noted Haley Blackman, vice president of the Center for Planning Excellence.

There is much about the flurry of building in McGrath Heights that is suggestive of gentrification. Per-square-foot prices for commercial property along Government have roughly tripled over the past 24 months. Sleek coffee shop French Truck Coffee, purveyor of trendy avocado toast, is a short stroll away. The coming road-diet along Government will make the area more walkable, a key draw for Millennial buyers. A string of mixed-use projects is giving Mid City new energy.

Still, what’s going on in McGrath Heights is a gentler take on gentrification, if the term applies at all. (A caveat: The definition supplied by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control provides prob-

ably the best fit in calling gentrification the transition of an area from low value to higher value.)

Mathew Laborde and Nick Miller have purchased eight properties in 128-lot McGrath Heights since late 2016. The work is a sideline effort for the young men, who both live a few blocks away. The pair is understandably wary of the term gentrification and say it doesn't describe their work, which they hope will improve the quality of housing stock in the neighborhood and help everybody by bringing up values.

"We're taking property that was not in commerce and bringing it back into commerce," Miller said.

They rehabbed an empty house in the Garden District before turning their focus to McGrath Heights two years ago. Its homes were mostly small and often had porches or other details that appeal to buyers in older cities elsewhere. The more expensive Garden District, with its proven popularity, was next door.

Their effort to buy and improve properties is hands on. They knocked on the doors of every house in the neighborhood to introduce themselves. Laborde's younger brother mows the lawns of empty houses and picks up trash each week. They know the names of neighbors who live next door to lots they've acquired.

"One of the things that drew us to the area was here were all these unused properties in a part of town that appeals to a lot of people," Miller said.

They note that the mix of residences in McGrath Heights includes affordable-housing, another element of the area's appeal.

"We're embracing affordable housing and building in a way that we hope brings up values for everybody," Laborde said. "What we want to do is make life in Baton Rouge even better."

They are not interested in pushing out renters. The owner of a house that was rented at below-market rates approached them not long ago about a sale. They passed to avoid bumping the renter. They identified two other houses where owners were more than a decade behind in property taxes. Miller and Laborde had spent several thousand dollars in attorneys' fees and could have legally purchased the properties but dropped their plans after learning that the owners lived in the houses.

"We haven't displaced one person, which Nick and I think is the right way to do it," said Laborde, a commercial real estate broker whose office, Elifin Realty, is located on Government a couple blocks from the lots they've purchased.

Gordon Mese, the owner of Garden District Nursery in Mid City and a one-time candidate for mayor, described the recent building in McGrath Heights as "gentrification with caveats."

The caveats, per Mese: Nobody was displaced by any of the new homes. The neighborhood includes affordable housing that functions as a buffer if rents climb. He also pointed out that McGrath Heights borders a commercial corridor that was never wholly abandoned by longtime business owners as in other cities where white flight gutted the core. He points to businesses along Government like Calandro's market and Heroman's floral shop to illustrate the point.

Mese's own family has run a business on a half-acre in McGrath Heights for 90 years. The nursery he opened 30 years ago on Government where his grandparents formerly ran a service-station in Mid City shows that investment in the area isn't all new, he said.

"This has been a long process," he said.

Mese also offered a way to interpret the residential projects in McGrath Heights that avoids the uncomfortable connotations of gentrification or confusion with terms like revitalization.

"It's huge confidence in the neighborhood," Mese said. •

"We're embracing affordable housing and building in a way that we hope brings up values for everybody. What we want to do is make life in Baton Rouge even better."

—Matthew Laborde

Help is on the way

Safe Haven will be the center of mental health services on the Northshore

By Sara Bongiorno

Louisiana's first one-stop shop for the treatment of mental illness and substance abuse—to include the state's first crisis-receiving center for psychiatric emergencies—will open in St. Tammany Parish in 2019.

The opening of the Safe Haven center near Mandeville will cap a years-long, parish-led drive to combat the region's high suicide rate and move those with behavioral-health problems out of jails and emergency rooms and into treatment instead.

Developing the 85-acre Safe Haven campus has taken grit, determination and the backbone for uncharted steps, including

St. Tammany Parish's 2015 purchase of a 294-acre site where the state operated a psychiatric hospital from the '50s until 2012.

The particular sorrow of high rates of suicide and drug use have shaped the work of about 80 government entities, nonprofits and other stakeholders that began working together after a 2010 spike in St. Tammany's already-high suicide rate.

The work has made parish leaders fluent in grim statistics like St. Tammany's top ranking for opioid deaths and the fact that 90% of individuals who die by suicide also have an underlying mental illness.

A broken mental-health system in Louisiana means just 35% of those with mental illness get treatment, according to

the National Alliance for Mental Illness. As nationally, the parish jail ends up warehousing mentally ill inmates because there is no place else for them to go.

"Our communities are clamoring for this because mental illness and substance abuse are problems that touch so many," said Kelly Rabalais, who has been deeply involved in Safe Haven's development first as St. Tammany Parish's legal counsel and more recently as its

FOUNDATION FACT:

The Northshore Community Foundation is an affiliate of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Both have put together coalitions to improve mental health services in the parishes they serve.



chief administrative officer. “We never lose sight of the plagues that touch us.”

Safe Haven’s initial focus will be responding to psychiatric and substance-abuse emergencies by connecting patients with treatment.

Its first phase of operations will include a short-term sobering center, a 72-hour psychiatric-observation unit and a medical-detox site. A single point of entry will include a drop-off point for law-enforcement officers, a place where hospital staff can bring patients from local emergency rooms and walk-in admissions.

“It’s about connecting people with the care they need,” said Jan Robert, the now-retired head of a parish task force on suicide and behavioral health who led much of the work on Safe Haven’s development.

The center’s services will build on behavioral-health resources

already operated by private and nonprofit entities at the site, including a drop-in day center for adults with mental-health disorders operated by NAMI, a 28-day addiction-treatment facility and group homes and other supportive housing.

The parish-owned facility will serve an estimated 7,264 patients with mental illness or substance abuse problems each year by 2021, according to estimates based on anticipated population growth.

Diverting inmates with mental illness or substance-abuse problems to treatment is expected to save the parish between \$3.3 million and \$6.9 million annually. Safe Haven will eliminate 2,160 behavioral-health visits to local emergency rooms by giving police officers and family members a place to bring those experiencing a psychotic episode or other mental-health emergency.

In time, Safe Haven will expand to include resources such as

“I think Safe Haven can become a national superstar to guide communities everywhere facing these problems.”

—Susan Bonnett Bourgeois, Northshore Community Foundation

job training, transportation, education and housing with the aim of helping patients return to productive and independent lives. Rabalais said she hopes to see more nonprofits locate on the campus, along with a satellite location of the 22nd Judicial District Court, which already runs specialty courts for drug violations and other non-violent offenses.

Nick Richard, executive director of NAMI-St. Tammany, said the parish government’s high-profile role in developing Safe Haven is likely to blunt the stigma of mental illness that keeps some from seeking help.

“When the parish leads the charge, that tells people that this issue is important,” said Richard. “People notice when you have a conservative parish looking for innovative ways to make real changes in people’s lives with these issues. It tells them that these lives matter.”

Much of Safe Haven’s development coincides with the push to establish a one-stop Bridge Center for behavioral-health treatment in Baton Rouge. In fact, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation has a direct tie to work in St. Tammany: Through its affiliate the Northshore Community Foundation, the Foundation helped to fund a regional analysis of mental-health needs to guide planning for Safe Haven.

The Foundation also shared what it learned in recommending that St. Tammany look to the groundbreaking center developed by Bexar County, Texas, as a treatment model. Its Restoration Center in San Antonio has diverted 100,000 people into treatment instead of jail and saved taxpayers \$50 million since 2003.

But the trajectory of Safe Haven’s development is fundamentally a confluence of local steps to improve access to mental-health and substance-abuse treatment for residents. St. Tammany’s first formal step in that process was formation of its suicide task force after the jump in such deaths in 2010.

A notable, subsequent move was aimed at keeping existing mental-health resources in place. St. Tammany Parish entered a co-operative agreement with the state to prevent Southeast Louisiana Hospital from shuttering after Gov. Bobby Jindal abruptly announced plans to close it in 2012 as part of a Medicaid cost-cutting move.

The parish bought the hospital grounds and nearly 300 acres in 2015, although not with the express purpose of developing a one-stop shop for behavioral-health treatment, Rabalais

recalled. The idea of creating a place for comprehensive behavioral-health treatment became increasingly compelling in light of existing services at the site and through calls for bold action.

“We had our judges and others telling us we had the opportunity of a lifetime to open up a mental-health campus,” Rabalais said. “We had this chance to truly help those in our community who most needed our help.”

Safe Haven’s first phase, including its crisis-receiving center, will occupy 62,000 square feet of renovated brick structures at the site.

The parish has recouped about half of its \$15.4 million investment through the sale of 35 acres to Northlake Behavioral Health System, the operator of the in-patient hospital. Another 100 acres went to the parish parks and recreation department. Other parts of the mostly wooded site are being used for wetlands mitigation.

Funding for Safe Haven’s operations will come from a variety of sources, including the parish’s public-health millage. Medicaid will be an important source of funding through reimbursement for care provided to a mostly indigent population.

Local officials have big hopes for Safe Haven, and not just when it comes to the wellbeing of those living on the Northshore.

“The reality is the crises of mental illness and substance abuse aren’t going away any time soon,” said Susan Bonnett Bourgeois, president and CEO of the Northshore Community Foundation. “I think Safe Haven can become a national superstar to guide communities everywhere facing these problems.” •



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A tale of two streets

RDA focuses on Plank Road, Nicholson for transit, commerce

By Maggie Heyn Richardson | Photo by Tim Mueller

To the south, there is Nicholson Drive, Louisiana Highway 30, a major corridor that runs from downtown Baton Rouge past Tiger Stadium and continues southward to Ascension Parish. In the last decade, the stretch between downtown and LSU, in particular, has seen a flurry of investment, including new multi-family housing, retail and commercial complexes and the 35-acre

Water Campus.

To the north, there is Plank Road, one of the city's original commercial corridors and a reflection of early suburbanization and industry growth in Baton Rouge. Once home to scores of middle class plant workers, it is riddled today with urban decay, blight and disinvestment. It's also home to one of the most violent zip codes in the nation.

These two significant local roadways do not intersect, but linking them is at the heart of a new project that could create a 10-mile corridor through the city's urban core, supported by Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), a fast, efficient electric-powered express



SPARK



bus system, and a key component in transit-oriented developments across the country.

The project addresses a critical need on Plank Road, which has the second highest level of bus ridership in East Baton Rouge Parish, one of the highest numbers of households without vehicles and one of the highest rates of pedestrian fatalities in the state. The project also picks up the recently sidelined plan for a \$170 million light rail, or tram, system along Nicholson Drive between LSU and downtown. In February, Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome announced Baton Rouge would no longer pursue funding for the tram project, opting for an expansion of BRT throughout the parish instead.

Fusing the two ideas is seen as a cost-effective way to address

that collaboration across silos works,” Tyson says. “A lot of agencies and players sat together and came to the consensus that a BRT line that included Plank and Nicholson in a unified corridor made sense.”

Meanwhile, the RDA has been able to acquire and “land bank” 90 parcels of blighted, adjudicated properties along or near Plank Road. Tyson says this presents a rare opportunity for guiding future land use at the same time a new BRT line will be planned for the area.

“These were vacant, unoccupied and overgrown lots, where illegal dumping and more has been taking place,” says Tyson. “These were properties that no one wanted to buy at auction. We want to bring them back into commerce.”

Over the fall of 2018, the original plan that had been in the works for Nicholson Drive will be redrafted to include the Nicholson-Plank BRT corridor. It will be submitted in September 2019 to the FTA Small Starts Program for federal funding. The program requires a local match, which could be achieved through the forthcoming DOTD Road Transfer Program, says CATS Chief Executive Officer Bill Deville. That program transfers jurisdiction of state-managed roads to local authori-

FOUNDATION FACT:

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation started the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority in a collaboration with EBRP government. The RDA is developing in North Baton Rouge and on Government Street. It’s operated by an independent board that includes John Noland as the Foundation representative.

a swath of planning issues in both north and south Baton Rouge while also leveraging local, state and federal resources, says Chris Tyson, executive director of the East Baton Rouge Parish Redevelopment Authority.

“It was important that we salvage the work done on Nicholson to date, and hold our place in line with the Federal Transit Association (FTA),” says Tyson. “There is precedent with the FTA for changing an application’s mode and scope midstream, if we moved toward something that would engender consensus.”

The RDA convened a handful of key players, says Tyson, including the Capital Area Transit System, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, the Capital Region Planning Commission, the Center for Planning Excellence, the Department of Public Works and HNTB, the infrastructure planning consultant the city had previously retained to lead the Nicholson tram planning process.

“This represents a special set of opportunities, and is proof

ties. Plank and Nicholson are scheduled for such a transfer.

Deville says the redefined project also takes advantage of momentum underway for improving public transportation on Plank Road. Through separate grants, CATS has been able to order three electric buses that will be incorporated into the fleet by the end of the year.

BRT routes are faster than local bus routes. They are supported by amenities like traffic signal priority, in which a green light could be held longer in order for an oncoming BRT bus to pass. Passengers can pre-pay, reducing boarding time. BRT buses feature wi-fi and stop at larger, modern shelters with a higher level of comfort, digital signage and real-time updates. Stops are usually about a mile apart to speed transportation time.

“We also see stations having a network of local transportation companies like Uber, Lyft and bikeshare stations,” says Deville.

Tyson says that simply running a fast bus line through a distressed neighborhood like Plank Road isn’t enough to reverse

its pattern of decay.

“The RDA takes a holistic view of development that looks at land use, economic development and community development,” says Tyson. “That includes how we address blighted parcels, what we’re doing for local businesses and what you need if you’re a member of this community, in terms of health care, education, public safety.”

So the RDA is coordinating a master planning process for the neighborhood that addresses not only the placement of the bus route, but ideas for how land use can support a range of community needs.

One of those needs is safer street conditions for pedestrians, says Rachel DiResto, vice president of Emergent Method and a member of the Sustainable Transportation Action Committee. The volunteer committee has pushed for safer conditions and multi-modal transportation across the parish.

“Plank is very wide, and yet it’s very commercial,” says DiResto. “DOTD has recognized its high rate of pedestrian fatalities. Neighborhoods and schools flank it, and you have many people regularly crossing the street on foot because they don’t have cars.”

The Nicholson-Plank project will unfold over the next year

in several phases. A new study will look closely at traffic counts, route optimization and other transportation issues.

At the same time, says Tyson, the RDA will coordinate a neighborhood master plan for Plank Road. In early October, the RDA received \$100,000 from JP Morgan Chase and another \$15,000 from ExxonMobil to support the master planning process. Moreover, Tyson says ExxonMobil is taking over the maintenance of the some of the land-banked lots. A request for proposals will be circulated in mid-fall with a planner identified by the end of 2018.

Tyson says one of the most promising components of the project is the idea of connecting one of CATS’ largest riderships to thriving areas of the city – downtown and LSU – that offer employment.

“Connecting Plank is going to be a powerful economic driver in terms of addressing our local workforce development needs,” he says. “That’s a powerful testament to a city that feels divided.”

FASTER CORRIDORS

The Capital Area Transit System plans bus rapid transit lines in two corridors—Nicholson Drive and Plank Road. This service will offer an express route with fewer stops to help people reach their destinations more efficiently. The routes will feature enhanced bus stops and shelters, including landscaping. BRT lines will use new electric buses and will have unique branding. CATS will use buses by Proterra Electric.





MOSQUITO BE GONE A way to fight disease-carrying mosquitoes is to stop propagation. Scientists from Imperial College in London used CRISPR – a revolutionary and inexpensive tool for cutting and pasting DNA – to plant a deadly gene that would spread through future generations of mosquitoes at a rapid rate, leaving them sterilized after seven iterations. Using similar methods, Verily, a life-sciences division of Google’s parent company, reduced the biting mosquito population by 80% in a trial in Far North Queensland, where dangerous mosquitoes thrive during the wet season.



IPHONE OF HEARING AIDS If James Bond was hard of hearing, Q would offer him a Livio AI hearing aid. The device from Starkey Hearings can focus its directional microphone to zone in on a conversation, translate languages on the fly, or measure how many steps taken. Starkey’s CTO Achin Bhowmik says, “What Apple did to the smartphone, we’re going to do to the hearing aid.”



SAFER WALKS Baton Rouge is among the nation’s most dangerous places for pedestrians and New York has a possible solution. The city installed rubber bumps at turning lanes, which forces drivers to slow down and look more closely for pedestrians. The simple innovation produced quick results and is cheap. Adding the bumps cost a few hundred to a few thousand dollars per intersection.



ENERGY MYSTERY Bill Gates is the latest to invest in a stealth battery startup. VW had previously bet \$100 million on QuantumScape, a firm that has a one-page website that declares only “Solid-State Batteries that Work.” Sleuthing offers a keyhole into the company’s technology. Headed by a Stanford researcher with a winning track record, QuantumScape is working on using a material known as perovskite as a key component. If the idea goes into production, the battery is expected to have three times the density of liquid lithium-ion batteries and be safer. What that means: Batteries for electric cars and other industrial uses would be smaller and much cheaper.



LA. INNOVATION Led by Dr. Rebekah Gee, Louisiana’s Department of Health and Hospitals has an innovative idea: guarantee an annual payment—with a monetary sweetener—to a pharmaceutical company for an unlimited supply of an expensive Hepatitis C drug. Under the plan, 34,000 more Louisiana patients would have access to the drug. Gee’s goal is to eliminate the disease in Louisiana. Drug suppliers are keen on the idea. They would receive a predictable revenue stream that is guaranteed for many years. If the experiment works, other states could adopt Louisiana’s innovation. DHH estimates 10,000 of the 34,000 infected residents on Medicaid and in prison would be treated in 2020. More than 90,000 Louisiana residents are infected by the virus.



CRISPR MIRACLE Scientists in Pennsylvania have taken the first step to curing genetic disease in the womb, using the revolutionary CRISPR to edit DNA to eliminate a fatal liver disease in mice. CRISPR is an inexpensive biological tool that can cut and replace sections of DNA. Dr. William Parnateu, a pediatric and fetal surgeon at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia who co-led the study, said more work is required before testing gene alteration on human embryos, but added “I think fetal genome editing may be where fetal surgery [which is now routine] once was, and that one day we’ll use it to treat diseases that cause significant morbidity and mortality.”




AMBITIOUS LSU LSU researchers are road warriors. LSU scientist Guoqiang Li is testing a polymer-based material that is cheaper and longer-lasting as a road sealant. A \$1 million grant is being used to test the sealant, which is two-thirds cheaper than existing products. Meanwhile, a team of LSU engineers is using virtual reality and artificial intelligence to understand how people decide which route to take. The novel model includes dynamic travel time, access to the nearest freeway, traffic incidents and road closures. “We are trying to see if having contextual factors would improve that and give us more robust results,” said LSU Civil Engineering Assistant Professor Ravindra Gudishala. “If we succeed, we want to apply this to hurricane evacuation.”

FAMINE ALERTS TO SAVE LIVES Google, Microsoft and Amazon have jointly created a system to identify food shortages. The early warning system monitors the environment for disasters, agricultural production and violent conflict to alert charities and authorities ahead of deprivation. “This could actually end famines,” World Bank President Jim Kim said. The World Bank says 124 million people currently require food aid to survive.

CODA

LOST ART



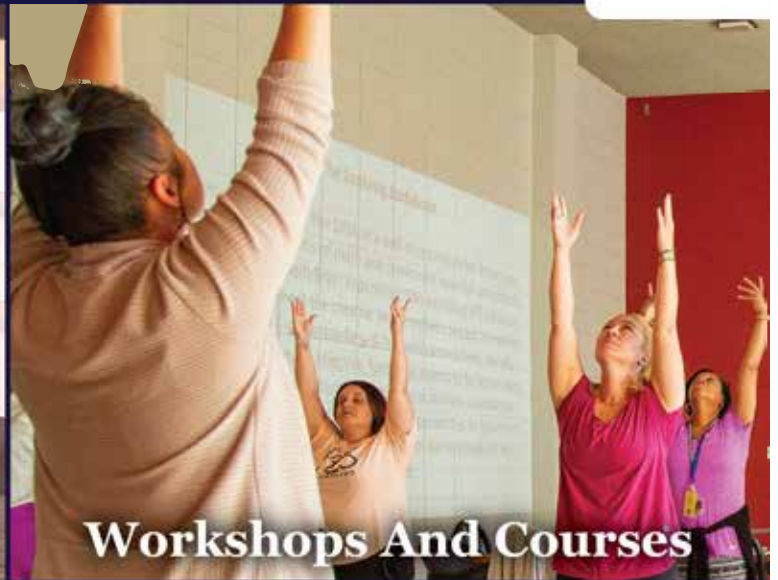
Susan Hendry Tureau could be sour about her fate. Her family was unaware that a painting hanging in their Baton Rouge home on Highland Road was a DaVinci. After her father died, it sold for \$10,000 at auction in New Orleans; the last sale was for \$450 million. Tureau, a retired Baton Rouge librarian, told the Wall Street Journal, “We can’t believe it, that such an incredible piece could have been in our family and we didn’t even know it all this time. It just sort of brings me alive.” Her father’s uncle and aunt—New Orleans furniture dealers—bought the painting in London from St. Francis Cook’s estate for \$120 in 1958, when it was thought to be painted by a DaVinci student. Tureau’s father’s estate sold the painting to dealers for \$10,000. They authenticated it as a DaVinci and sold it for \$80 million. The painting was last sold for \$450 million to a Saudi prince.

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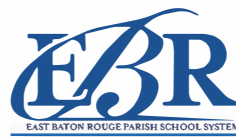


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Just as a building relies on the foundation upon which it is built, our community relies on each and every one of us to grow and prosper. It is both our right and our responsibility to be that strength and foundation from which our community arises. Lemoine is proud to partner with the Baton Rouge Area Foundation in a shared vision to improve the community in which we live and work. Together, we are all constructors of our community, builders of our future.

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