

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation

CURRENTS

Q2 | 2007

LOUISIANA SPEAKS

*A regional plan would save
our precious lands—and
build vibrant cities*

NORTHERN LIGHT

*At EKL, a doctor leads a top
program that cures our ills*

BRIDGE TO REVIVAL

*Foundation's idea could
accelerate redevelopment*

Audubon Arrives | Basketball Goddess | Foundation Assets Grow | Be Green | Finding Grants

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On the cover

Golden Meadow, Louisiana, October 20, 2005.

Dead live oak trees remind us that the saltwater marsh that gave the Golden Meadow community its name was once a fresh water habitat. Photographed by Lori Waselchuk.

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FROM THE CHAIR



As I begin my term as chair of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, I'd like to express my gratitude to our members and fund donors for this opportunity to serve our community. I am honored to succeed Thomas Turner, and would like to take this chance to thank him again for his leadership during some very trying times for our community.

In keeping with the tradition of our previous chairs, I will report to you quarterly through this *Currents* format, and I hope that I can give you an inside view of where our Foundation is and where our community is headed. At this time, I would like to review the Foundation's existing strategic plan with you, and tell you a little bit about how it was formed. This is important since that plan is now approaching its conclusion.

In 2003—under the leadership of past-chair Virginia Noland—the Foundation created a Strategic Planning Committee to evaluate our progress and

we have completed many of the tasks set forth by the Strategic Planning Committee in 2003

current state, and create a vision to guide us into the future. Kevin Lyle, then incoming chair of the Foundation, headed that committee, which included many of our current Board members. We met many times over the course of seven months, as we tried to anticipate the rising needs and opportunities in our community and outline strategies to help our Foundation fulfill its mission.

We also visited the Cleveland Foundation and the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation to get

a sense of the strategic planning work being done by innovators and leaders in the community foundation field. Finally, we met with two focus groups—local non-profit leaders and our donor advisors—so that we could craft our plan with the wants and needs of these two key constituencies in mind.

In doing all of this research, we discovered some interesting things about the scope of our work and our relationships with donors, beneficiaries, partners, and competitors. We noticed that our competitors were increasing in number and intensity, and suggested that the Foundation should improve its offerings for prospective donors and work to maintain the loyalty of its donor base. We also recognized the tremendous value that we receive from our partners—the organizations that receive grants from our donors and provide tremendous support for our community.

We classified our beneficiaries into two groups: those who benefit from the grants we give and the donors who we help make good philanthropic decisions that improve the quality of life in our region. We should strive, the committee noted, to continue thinking in terms of the big picture for our community and the community foundation field, especially when undertaking leadership initiatives.

Our research also underscored the importance of our relationships with donors. More than simply processing grant requests, we have a responsibility to provide exemplary customer service, promote patterns of good philanthropy, and provide leadership that effects positive change in our area.

Finally, the committee recommended a set of five strategies to help the Foundation strengthen its operations and maintain its history of success in the community. Those recommendations included growing the donor community—especially through non-traditional assets—and I'm happy to report that the Foundation has more than doubled its assets since that time and is now a leader in the non-profit field when it comes to alternative types of assets.

Another one of the strategies suggested increas-

*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ing donor access by creating real-time computer access from which donors could review the goals and programs of nonprofits and initiate grants electronically. This would make our smaller donor-advised funds more economically viable, and allow donors even greater access to the needs in our community. Kevin Lyle is heading this effort, and has been actively testing a new data system with this capability. By 2008, our donors should be clicking their way to an even better community.

In continuing our practice of taking leadership roles where a clear and positive potential impact can be identified, the committee also requested that the Foundation create a formal marketing strategy—educational at its core—to tell our story. Since that recommendation was issued, our quarterly publication, *Currents*, has been redesigned and expanded to include more coverage than ever before. We have also incorporated more informative events into our membership program under the direction of Alice Greer, past chair of our membership committee. Furthermore, the Foundation is set to launch a brand new website.

I am glad to report that we have completed many of the tasks set forth by the Strategic Planning Committee in 2003—an extremely difficult task considering the complications that arose from Katrina and Rita. Moving forward, we will begin researching and organizing a new plan over the next two years. I look forward to sharing that process with you as we create a vision to carry the Foundation into the next decade.

We are always eager to hear from our stakeholders, so if you have comments or suggestions feel free to send them to our Communications department at Mverma@braf.org.

Sincerely,



Christel C. Slaughter, PhD.

Christel C. Slaughter PhD, Chair
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C. Brent McCoy
Matthew G. McKay
Jennifer Eplett Reilly
Jacqueline D. Vines
Paul S. West

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 13
Mother's Day

May 15
Grant Application Deadlines:
Ourso Family Foundation
Reilly Family Foundation
Asparagus Club Scholarship Fund

May 23
Board Meeting, 4 P.M.

May 28
Memorial Day
Holiday—Office Closed

June 10
Father's Day

June 1
Grant Application Deadline:
The Starbucks Coast Fund

June 15
Grant Application Deadline:
St. James Parish
Educational Fund

June 29
Grant Application Deadlines:
James "Big Fuzz" Brown and
Ellis A. "Little Fuzz" Brown
Scholarship Fund
Grocery Manufacturer
Representatives Association
Neighborhood Initiative Program
Powell Group Fund

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Audubon President Ron Forman:
Stepping out of New Orleans



The Foundation asked for Audubon

On a warm day, cars circle the overflow lot at the Audubon Nature Institute's New Orleans zoo. Across town, the kids and grownups are packed like sardines in Audubon's aquarium and IMAX Theater.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation hopes to bring some of the institute's magic to the capital region. The Foundation's board has provided a grant to the institute, which is using the funds to research ideas for creating a destination education and entertainment attraction in downtown Baton Rouge.

The Foundation's John Spain, who is working with Audubon, says the goal is to create the next great venue for the country. The prospects for building a venue are promising, but uncertain: The project hinges on forming partnerships and whether Audubon's report indicates enough demand for the project.

The institute plans to report to the Foundation in coming months. If a venue is built, it's likely that Audubon's expertise would be relied on to operate it. •

FEEL-GOOD HIT

May 20

Herd cats before they are spayed or neutered at the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine for Spay Day. Just don't tell them about their upcoming fate. 7–10 a.m.; 3:30–6 p.m.

June 7

Draw and paint with the residents of Volunteers of America Drusilla Home, a place for mentally handicapped men and women. Children 5 and older are welcome with adult supervision.

July 24

Serve home-cooked meals to men at the St. Vincent De Paul Men's shelter. Other dates and times are available at the HandsOnBatonRouge.org website.

ANNUAL MEETING

Foundation assets grow

The assets of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation rose by 7.5% to nearly half-billion dollars at year-end 2006, a jump revealed to donors and members at the annual meeting in March. The Foundation's assets were an estimated \$497 million at year-end, and the Foundation ranked No. 24 among more than 600 community foundations the year before.

The more-than-300 donors and members attending the annual meeting cheered the latest winners of the John W. Barton Sr. Excellence in Nonprofit Management Awards, which are named after the founder of the community foundation. The winners are Molly O'Banion Buchmann and Sharon Walker Mathews of the Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre, Beth Veazey of Alzheimer's Services of Baton Rouge and Pat R. Van Burkleo of Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Baton Rouge. Veazey and Van Burkleo each were awarded \$10,000, while Buchman and Mathews shared the \$10,000 for their work with the ballet.

What's more, the donors and members remembered Charles "Chuck" McCoy, who died this year, for his decades of service to the Foundation and Baton Rouge, and elected new board members to lead the Foundation.



2007 Barton Award winners Sharon Mathews, Molly Buchmann, Beth Veazey and Pat Van Burkleo.

New board members are Lee Michael Berg, owner of Lee Michaels Fine Jewelry; Yolanda J. Dixon, first assistant secretary of the Louisiana State Senate; C. Brent McCoy, executive vice president of business development for Lamar Advertising, and Matthew G. McKay, co-founder of All Star Automotive Group. Community activist Alice D. Greer and SSA Consultants' Christel Slaughter were elected to second terms.

Slaughter was selected as new chair. She replaces outgoing chair Thomas Turner of Turner Industries, who shifts to the executive committee with Thomas L. Frazer, vice chair; Brace B. Godfrey Jr., secretary; Candace E. Wright, treasurer; and Greer, At-Large. •

Northshore affiliate makes first grants

Launched in January, the Northshore Community Foundation has awarded its first round of grants from \$1 million available for programs that counter the effects of Katrina.

The Foundation granted \$20,000 to the Food Bank of Covington's dental lab; \$20,000 to OPTIONS Inc., a provider of services to the disabled in Tangipahoa, \$20,000 to the Northlake Nature Center, and \$18,566 to the St. Tammany Association of Retarded Citizens.

The Northshore Community Foundation is a support organization of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, but it's managed by an independent board. It serves the blooming parishes of St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington and St. Helena. To become a member of the Northshore Community Foundation or to start a donor fund, visit NorthshoreFoundation.org. You can also get more information about the grants available at that website.



The Never-Ending Trailer Community

In January, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation hosted a group of nine MBA students from Harvard University to discuss the future of Renaissance Village in Baker. The group studied the trailer community established after hurricanes Katrina and Rita and presented their findings.

Their report stated that “Renaissance Village is unlikely to close soon,” listed short-to-medium term bar-



riers stopping residents from securing employment and permanent housing, and identified several possible options for resolving those hindrances.

Concerning housing, the group found that rental rates in the area are prohibitively high, keeping many residents from securing other—more permanent—accommodations. To resolve this issue, the group suggested that the Foundation support broader initiatives to increase affordable housing stock in the New Orleans and Baton Rouge regions. Additionally, the report suggested establishing a process for helping residents identify and secure affordable housing units as they come available, not limited to deposit guarantees and renter education.

The report noted that transportation and information limitations are making it difficult for residents to find

and maintain jobs, even though there is an ample supply of low-skilled jobs in the region. Participants suggested that the Foundation partner with the private sector to overcome these barriers, including maintaining and improving LA Swift bus routes and increasing the availability of temporary housing in New Orleans.

Finally, the report cited a lack of information flow as a severe hindrance to residents of Renaissance Village. Unfortunately, there is little direct access to low-cost sources of trusted information for residents to rely on, often causing confusion and inaction. This could be resolved, the report suggested, by creating a tool that allows residents better access to social networks and up-to-date information, and by improving data collection and distribution through resident voicemail boxes and improved 211 services.

Renaissance Village is the largest FEMA site in



Louisiana, housing more than 1,700 residents in 500 temporary trailers. About 30% of the households are employed, earning a median income of about \$12,000. Of the occupants, 80% rented their previous residence and are likely to return to rental property upon leaving.

Although FEMA only provides housing for storm victims for 18 months, some of the communities opened after Hurricane Andrew are still open—14 years later. •

We'd like to recognize and thank the following Harvard students for their work in creating this report: David Anderson, Elana Berkowitz, Arti Bhatt, Jack Bonnette, Julie Bonnette, Terry Heymann, Tian Tian, Paul Woody, and David Zipper.



A control structure to stop cars for pedestrians' sake.

Tiger Walkabout

Lace up your sneakers and turn on your iPods—LSU is about to become a walking campus.

This summer, the university will launch Easy Streets, a campaign to reduce the number of vehicles that enter the campus core between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. During these hours, students and visitors will not be allowed to enter the main campus.

The walking campus will be barricaded by gated and manned booths at nine intersections. Access during the specified hours will be exclusive to campus buses, faculty and staff. Restricting vehicles on campus will enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety, alleviate traffic buildup and expedite bus transportation, says Gary Graham, director of parking, traffic and transportation.

The university promises that student access to commuter parking will not change. Students will have to use outlying streets, such as Highland Road and Nicholson Drive, to get to and from the lots and will not be allowed to cut through the center of campus.

Graham says Easy Streets will enforce rules that have been in place for more than 30 years. LSU's parking regulations have banned students and visitors from driving through the interior of campus, but the rules have not been enforced.

The walking campus is part of a five-year traffic plan, which includes the construction of a five-level, 750-car parking garage. Designed by Jerry M. Campbell and Associates, the parking garage, to be located across from the LSU Union near the University Lab School, will most likely open in 2009. •

CALCULUS
\$41 Trillion
 Estimated U.S. wealth transfer by 2052. Figure is from Paul G. Schervish, director of the Center for Wealth and Philanthropy at Boston College. His top-end estimate for the range is \$136 trillion transferred by 2052. Schervish is the speaker for the Marcia Kaplan Kantrow fall lecture series of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Read more about Schervish in the next *Currents*.



FieldHouse Sports Lofts are among hundreds of new units at LSU's North Gates

A good problem

Suddenly, Old South Baton Rouge is attracting a raft of new developments, which are following in the pioneering success of FirstWorthing's apartments at LSU's North Gates at Highland Road. Hundreds of units are under construction and land speculation is spreading on the main Highland and Nicholson corridors.

To make this happy consequence even better, the Foundation and the Neighborhood Partnership Board, which was formed to help revive the community, are working with consultants on a design overlay for Highland and Nicholson. If adopted, the overlay would direct how the area looks and works.

Design overlays are becoming more popular in Baton Rouge. One for Bluebonnet Boulevard between I-10 and Jefferson Highway has provided orderly growth, balancing the rights of property owners to earn a profit with the good design that benefits the rest of the community.

The Old South Baton Rouge overlay should be ready for public comment by summer. •

Golf for good

A golf course anchoring a community usually sparks images of rick folks living on programmed greenspace. But not in a community in Atlanta, and possibly not in New Orleans.

Partnering with the Fore! Kids Foundation and Columbia Residential, Commercial Properties Realty Trust, the company managing the Foundation's real estate portfolio, is remaking the St. Bernard Housing Project in New Orleans. Camm Morton, CEO of Commercial Properties, looks for inspiration to Atlanta, where a declining golf course and public housing were reinvented as a thriving mixed-income community.

"East Lake in Atlanta served as the model for incorporating a golf course in the master plan as it supports tremendous social and economic benefit. We are thrilled to be involved with a development that has the potential to echo that success in New Orleans."

In March, the Housing Authority of New Orleans chose Commercial Properties and its partners to redo the St. Bernard project, which is on City Park golf course. St. Bernard will include up to 1,325 mixed-income units to replace a closed housing project. Fore! Kids, a non-profit that teaches golf to youngsters, will



Market-rate housing is mixed with affordable housing at East Lake, an old Atlanta golf course brought back by redevelopment of the housing and the course.

invest up to \$500,000 annually from golf course profits into the St. Bernard development for service projects, such as job training and after-school care.

Commercial Properties was consulting on the project because of knowledge gained from planning Smiley Heights in Baton Rouge. Smiley Heights, a mixed-income, mixed-use development off Ardenwood and Florida Boulevard, has been rebranded as Arden. Arden is in the funding phase and could begin construction later this year. The project would include up to 1,200 housing units and could be anchored by a neighborhood school. •

She shoots, She scores

She's five foot, two inches standing bolt straight, but Copper Alvarez dunked over millions of competitors in ESPN's March Madness Tourney Challenge.

Alvarez, who heads the organization that runs the Main Street Market and the Farmers Market, picked her way to this long-odds accomplishment: She ranked No. 32 out of more than 3 million nationwide entries in the sports network's basketball pick-em contest. Based on her performance, Copper's entry won the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's pool by a landslide, taking out No. 2 Gwen Hamilton and 39 other wannabes.

The trash-talking Alvarez does know basketball. She follows the sport and was close



LORI WASELCHUK

to winning the Foundation's basketball pool the season before.

This year, in a rush to leave for a vacation to Europe, she relied on advice from ESPN talk shows to choose mostly higher seeds. If she had been given a time for due diligence, Copper concedes she probably would not have done as well. •



Discussions about Traditional Neighborhood Developments used to prompt many developers and residents to twitch and mutter. But the refrain has changed, especially among developers, who have taken to TNDs like shoe lovers to an Imelda's sale.

Now, a month doesn't go by without the announcement of a TND or some look-alike cousin. Among them are Cheval Trails in Zachary, Edenborne in Gonzales, Jamestown at Old Perkins, Juban Crossing on Juban Road; Longwood Village at Bluebonnet Boulevard and Rouzon on Perkins Road near College Drive. Land is being gobbled up for more of them. One is under construction: Developer Richard Carmouche's Willow Grove on Perkins near Bluebonnet.

Why have TNDs – a blend of homes, offices and shops in a walkable neighborhood – become fashionable in development? We posed that question and others to Rachel DiResto, vice president for the Center for Planning Excellence, which began as Plan Baton Rouge, a Foundation initiative that sparked smart growth and TND discussions in the 1990s.

Why were residents battling TNDs?

DiResto: I don't think they were fighting TNDs. They were fighting what they fight with each new development, which is a perceived increase in traffic. But TNDs actually do a better job of reducing traffic, eliminating some automobile trips because people have the option to walk to the corner store or work in an office below their home.

Are there other benefits of TNDs that residents are becoming more aware of?

Well-designed TNDs can increase property values for surrounding neighborhoods. When the TND is connected to those neighborhoods, it provides more options for moving about the area, reducing traffic on all streets, including main roads. Plus, the people who live in the other neighborhoods benefit from some of the TNDs amenities, such as the neighborhood store and shared green spaces.

Why the sudden surge of interest in TNDs by developers?

They are seeing considerable demand for high-quality developments, where people live in a community and want the small neighborhood character with nearby conveniences.



They are recognizing that a market exists and that TNDs are financially successful, proven models. One reason for the demand is the aging population, which is asking for an alternative to the auto-oriented lifestyle. And more people understand that living in a community where they can walk, find a variety of housing and take their children to a neighborhood park is better than living on a street in which every house looks like theirs and they have to get in the car to go anywhere.

TND TNT

There are a lot of developers proposing TNDs. Are some of them just using the "TND" label to sell houses?

Any attempt to build a TND versus a cookie-cutter suburban neighborhood is a higher standard. In fact, the new ordinance just adopted in East Baton Rouge Parish has guidelines built in that assure quality TNDs. Some of the projects currently in the planning stages may be including a mix of uses, but would not be considered a TND because they may not incorporate some of the essential elements that define a TND.

If I'm searching for a TND, what elements should be on my checklist?

In a TND, a design code is in place at the beginning that ensures better design of streets and houses, such as making sure garages don't front the street. A TND should have a mix of housing types to provide choices for buyers of all ages and incomes. It should have streets and sidewalks designed for walking. It should have a variety of streets, from alleys to main thoroughfares. It should have open space and amenities, such as a library, school, grocery store, walking trails and town center. It definitely should have a mix of uses – shops, offices and houses – to create a community.

Some developers are proposing TNDs in greenfields—new areas of development that will cause sprawl.

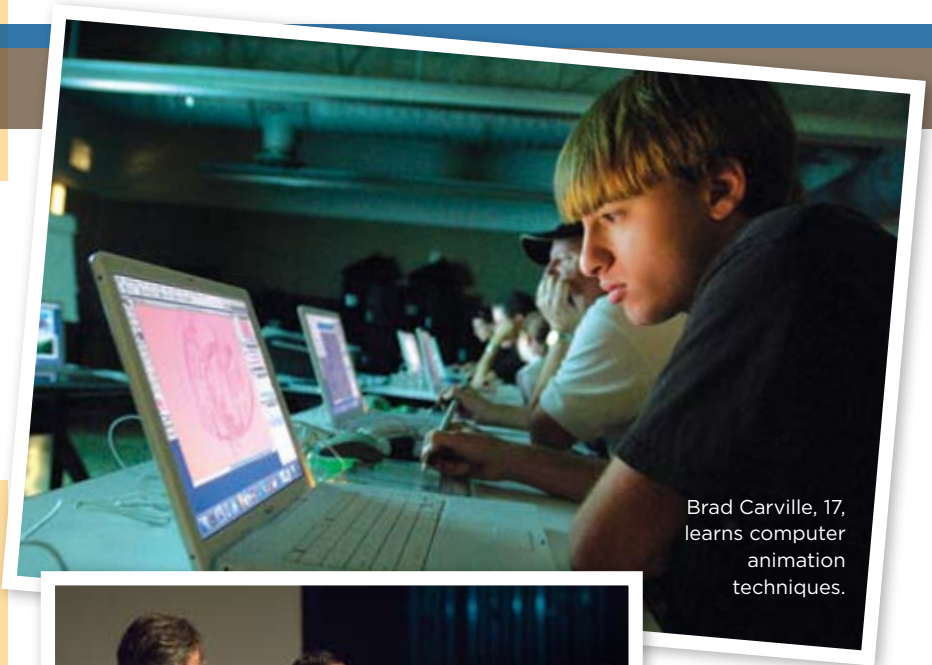
We don't have an urban growth boundary. If developers build in greenfields, then it's better they choose to build a TND than a conventional subdivision design so that some of the daily trips can be accommodated within the development. TNDs also consume less land because they use space more efficiently. •

LEAD IN

RED STICK INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION FESTIVAL

www.redstickfestival.org

Baton Rouge continues to transform into a more urban city. The Red Stick Animation Festival counted 4,166 attendees—a 70% jump. The goal is to turn the festival into an international event. In its third year, the event has been supported by a \$100,000 annual grant from donors of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.



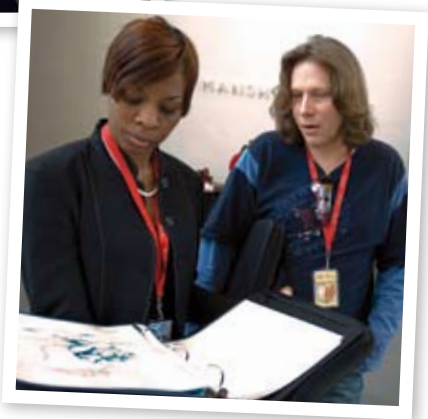
Brad Carville, 17, learns computer animation techniques.



Jackie Beauchamp, co-founder and CEO of Nerjyzed Entertainment, answers questions about the future of video games.



Karen de Jong, (center, left), an assistant art director at Disney Feature Animation, teaches Leah and Nathan Velasquez during the workshop.



Sidni L. James of Nergzyed Entertainment (left) looks at Glenn Bourgeois' portfolio outside the Manship Theatre. Bourgeois is a New Orleans artist displaced by the floods after Hurricane Katrina.

Cartoon-A-Palooza showed features and shorts in the Old State Capitol for general audiences.



RED STICK ANIMATION FESTIVAL PHOTOS
BY LORI WASELCHUK.



Louisiana Purchase Blue Grass Band



Lil Ray Neal Blues Band



On four spring days, the Foundation partnered to sponsor Sundays in the Park, an event that featured music in Lafayette Park across from the Shaw Center for the Arts. More than 500 people each Sunday gathered to hear music, get their faces painted, eat local fare and relish the mild weather. The Foundation provided a \$7,500 grant for the event. Partners were Arts Council of Baton Rouge, Mayor Kip Holden, Downtown Development District, 225 Magazine, Capital City Grill, Shaw Center for the Arts and the Manship Theatre.



Louisiana Purchase Blue Grass Band



Field of Interest Funds

If you'd like to become a donor, you'll be interested in learning about the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's second fund type: Field of Interest Funds.

Unlike Donor Advised Funds, highlighted in the first quarter issue of *Currents*, Field of Interest Funds are managed by the Foundation and its Board. However, each fund is dedicated to an area—such as education, health care, or community service—specified by the donor.

Here are three examples of Field of Interest Funds at work:

Farrnbacher Memorial Fund

The last issue of *Currents* included an article on *The Eyes Have It*, a non-profit that provides ophthalmologic care and eyeglasses to underprivileged students in New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Baker schools. The Farrnbacher Memorial Fund, a Field of Interest Fund dedicated to providing eye care for the needy, has granted \$18,000 to *The Eyes Have It*. Since 1988, the fund has provided \$218,988 total in grants. Established in 1943, the Farrnbacher Memorial Fund moved to the Foundation in 1988, illustrating how an invested fund grows to provide grants for necessary services. More than half a century after the fund was started, it's still serving the community's population in its intended field.

Academic Distinction Fund (ADF)

Launched in 1989, ADF works to raise and invest private funds to support innovative actions that lead to academic excellence for students in East Baton Rouge Parish public schools. The fund

gives small grants to teachers in the Greater Baton Rouge Area who are spending money out of their own pockets for classroom resources and supplies. Over the years, ADF has awarded 741 grants totaling \$2,493,591. For 2006-2007, ADF awarded grants to 41 teachers. Today, the ADF endowment stands at \$4.6 million. ADF has numerous donors, investors and sub-funds, allowing several organizations and philanthropists around town to come together for the betterment of the Baton Rouge education system.

Marcia Kaplan Kantrow Lecture Series Fund

Simple and specific, this fund inspired the redevelopment of downtown Baton Rouge. In April of 1997 the Marcia Kaplan Kantrow Lecture Series Fund sponsored Stefanos Polyzoides as its inaugural speaker. Polyzoides and his partner, Elizabeth Moule, were among the founders of the Congress of New Urbanism. After his speech, a New Urbanism Committee was formed in Baton Rouge to undertake a plan for the redevelopment of downtown. This work has led to the amazing Shaw Center for the Arts and the redeveloped Hilton Capitol Center, as well as downtown's revitalized nightlife.

These examples show how diversely Field of Interest Funds affect and support the community. This type of fund allows donors to create long-lasting legacies in the fields of their choice. Also, under the direction of the Foundation and its Board, Field of Interest Funds are nurtured and guided by experts who ensure that they will continue to benefit Baton Rouge for years to come.

If you'd like to find out more about our field of interest funds, please call Jessica Stuart at (225) 387-6126. •

Field of Interest funds allow donors to create long-lasting legacies in the fields of their choice.

For thousands, Katrina is still churning.

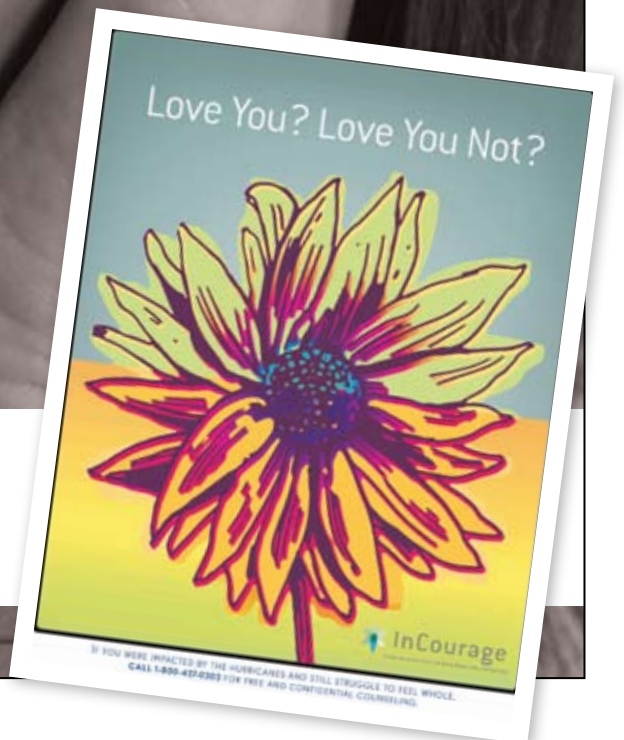
They toss at night in their beds. They are sad but don't know why. They move in a daze. You may be among them, suffering mental strain because Katrina won't go away. InCourage, a new program from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, can help. Call (225) 924-3900 or (800) 437-0303 for up to 10 free counseling sessions.

A new day awaits you.



InCourage

A HEALING INITIATIVE BY THE BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION



BY MUKUL VERMA | PHOTOS BY LORI WASELCHUK

Northern Light

At EKL, George Karam draws top medical minds to a falling-down hospital

Donors of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation have granted \$110,500 to the Earl K. Long internal medicine program since 1991. The donations have paid for a variety of efforts, including classroom equipment and a visiting lecture series.

During her fourth year at LSU medical school, Ann Long applied to the nation's top internal medicine residency programs. She toured hospitals, interviewed with well-known clinicians, and integrated month-long rotations at three schools: Duke, Vanderbilt and Johns Hopkins. All signs pointed to the star student's ability to attend any top program. Plus, as a lifelong Louisiana resident, she liked the idea of living somewhere new.

But something changed that winter. Long kept comparing the programs in her crosshairs to small, poorly-funded Earl K. Long Memorial Hospital in the northern part of Baton Rouge, where she'd done clinical work during her third and fourth years. Remarkably, "the Earl," as it's called among students, won out. Long wasn't alone. Nine other top-notch classmates passed on other programs both in Louisiana and around the country to accept positions at EKL.

To the man on the street, Earl K. Long is a "charity" hospital in need of updating—or leveling. It's where the poorest are crammed four to a room. But to Louisiana's internal medicine

community, the residency program has become a powerhouse of hands-on learning and critical thought. Since the early '90s, it has attracted a growing number of LSU medical school graduates, numbers which have increased since Hurricane Katrina.

"It's a diamond in the rough," says Long. "I'll put the faculty against anyone I met around the country. They're brilliant, excellent clinicians. And they're compassionate. They're the kind of physicians you see yourself being when you're in medical school."

Long, like other champions of Earl K. Long, credits Dr. George Karam for developing an unusual, highly-personal training ground. Since he arrived in 1990, Karam, the Paula Garvey Manship Professor of Medicine, has built a team of big-brained faculty members, all of whom buy into a pedagogy that trains residents to diagnose by possibilities rather than probabilities.

He deflects credit, saying his role as an orchestra leader is tiny when compared to the heavy lifting by teaching physicians and staff. >>



THE DOCTOR IS IN

George Karam's office at Earl K. Long Memorial Hospital is a window into his personality. A neatly framed copy of the Hippocratic Oath is surrounded by dozens of crisp family photos and credentials. He writes with a fountain pen. Next to academic journals on his bookshelves are works of classic literature. It's an inspiring oasis amid the broken concrete and free clinics outside his door, not unlike the internal medicine residency program itself.

"This program brings out talents in you that you didn't know you had," says Dr. Guido DeJesus, professor of medicine and former Earl K. Long resident. "I had never thought about teaching, but Dr. Karam suggested I give it a try and I absolutely love it."

Karam was born in Oakdale. He graduated from LSU Medical School in 1977, then joined the residency program at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, where he rose to chief resident.

Inspired by teachers, he chose to become an instructor at LSU Medical School in New Orleans after his residency. Karam believed he would burn out after a couple of years and join a private practice, but he was inspired by his students and continued to pass along the lessons he had learned to future doctors.

In 1990, he was recruited by private hospitals in Baton Rouge to take over the struggling EKL program. The private hospitals wanted to ensure EKL had a strong program so it could continue treating the uninsured.

At 54, he lifts students, just as the teachers at UAB inspired him to pursue medical education with a circumspect mind.

"Dr. Karam has this knack for making you realize you can be more than you thought you could be," says Dr. Jennifer Szurgot, an internist at the Baton Rouge Clinic who was Karam's student from 1997-2000.

On Szurgot's desk is a lamp given to her by Karam after she stayed on as chief resident. It's made from a brass candlestick. When chief Residents move on, Karam, a collector, picks out antique candlesticks, transforms them into desk lamps, and gives them in appreciation. Each one is different, selected on the basis of its recipient's traits.

"I just talked to a fellow chief resident," Szurgot said. "We were both commenting on how much our lamps still mean to us."

Karam has made Earl K. Long's disadvantages his leg up. With its low debt burden, the program's faculty is hired exclusively to teach. Conversely, at sleek academic institutions with high overhead, teaching is eclipsed by research or treating private patients.

"Students choose to come here because they're excited about being in a place that focuses on them," said Karam. "If you're a resident that's very appealing."

Karam's colleagues call his approach liberal arts-like or humanistic, valuing thought and problem-solving rather than knee-jerk medicine. Every day starts with a dose of his style. At the 7:30 a.m. Morning Report, Karam and his faculty review a case from the last 24 hours. But the point of the session is not rudimentary diagnosis, says Dr. Guido DeJesus, an instructor. It's to use the case as a starting point for discussing the latest research, the less obvious conditions occurring in the body and rare occurrences that escape rushed examinations.

"When you see certain symptoms, 90% of the time you know it's going to be a certain diagnosis, but 10% of the time, it's not and you can do a lot of damage if you mistreat it."

It means thinking beyond classic examples, adds DeJesus. "Dr. Karam is fond of saying, 'don't just do something, stand there,' instead of the reverse."

Dr. Jennifer Szurgot, an internist at the Baton Rouge Clinic who trained at EKL from 1997-2000, agrees. She recalls another Karam axiom: "the most important thing is a failure to consider." It's not unlike internal medicine itself, she says, which requires an awareness of the interdependence of the body's functions.

In winning over residents to study in Baton Rouge, Karam has unwittingly lured them to remain in the area for a long time. Nationwide, about 70 percent of residents ultimately practice

within one hundred miles of their training programs. It's slightly higher for graduates of EKL.

More than two-thirds of Szurgot's 34 colleagues at the Baton Rouge Clinic trained at the hospital. Many of them were sold after brief rotations here while attending LSU Medical School in New Orleans.

"I never thought I would do my residency in Baton Rouge, but after one month of being here I changed my mind," said Szurgot, a Mandeville native. "I just can't say enough about how much it helped me feel prepared for private practice."

Long says if the Earl K. Long program hadn't been available, there's no question she would have left the state. And she's likely not the only one in her class. "It's an incredible group of people, many of whom could have gone anywhere," says DeJesus. "All of them are brilliant."

And all of them are natives. "We're keeping 10 Louisiana kids in the state," Karam said. "We're fighting brain drain."

It's a point Karam likes to make when discussing the future of the public hospital system. Unlike private systems, he says, the public system is a perfect fit for graduate medical education.

"If we want to have an educational system in Louisiana that can compete with even Arkansas and Mississippi in terms of keeping students, then we need to address the lack of funding," says Karam. "If we don't pay attention now, then we will have essentially persecuted our students through our inactivity."

It is students, former and current, who are Earl K. Long's greatest champions. Ann Long says once she decided to pass on big-name programs, she never looked back.

"When I started med school, I wouldn't have imagined I'd be doing my residency in Baton Rouge, but I can't imagine now it would have turned out any better." •



Dr. Ann Long (right) checks J.C. Williams' lungs at Earl K. Long Hospital. Long chose to do her residency at Earl K. Long despite having offers from top-ranked hospitals around the country. Looking on are Dr. John Godke, faculty member, Dr. Mary Raven, resident.



Dr. Vic Vyas, an LSU intern, talks about a case study during a morning briefing for the residents and intern medical students at the hospital.



BY MUKUL VERMA | PHOTOS BY LORI WASELCHUK

Louisiana Speaks

The first plan crossing boundaries offers a boundless future for South Louisiana

People speed between Louisiana cities on an intercity train. On their travels, preserved wetlands and wilderness zoom outside their windows. When they arrive, the destination cities and towns are thriving, blight replaced by livable communities.

That snapshot of a vibrant future emerges from recommendations of the first land use and economic development plan that encompasses all of South Louisiana, a blueprint for linking parishes, cities and small towns with a set of rules and goals to guide development for five decades.

The plan was created after the destruction caused by Katrina, and it's the fourth and final leg of planning under the Louisiana Speaks project, a \$10 million initiative privately funded by donations to the LRA Support Foundation, which was created by and is part of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. The plan was created in partnership with the Louisiana Recovery Authority, the independent agency charged with rebuilding after the storm.

The outlines of the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan is derived from town meetings across South Louisiana. A thousand people across the state pored >>

BIG PICTURE

What: A regional plan for rebuilding and growing across South Louisiana after Katrina and Rita. It's the first regional plan for the state and among the first of its kind in the nation.

Players: Leaders are Calthorpe Associates and Fregonese Calthorpe Associates. The firms have done regional plans for Chicago, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake City. The Center for Planning Excellence, an offshoot of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, handled project management and coordination, and C-PEX—aligned closely with Louisiana Recovery Authority staff—worked with countless Louisiana elected officials, agency staffs, and civic leaders to ground the recommendations in Louisiana soil.

Who paid: The LRA Support Foundation, created by and a support organization of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, paid for the plan, which is for the Louisiana Recovery Authority. The LRA Support Foundation is funded with private donations.

What's next: The plan recommends a state planning office be created to implement the plan, which covers transportation, community growth, and economic development, and meshes with the state's plans for coastal protection and restoration.

over maps of the coast and told planners, led by Calthorpe Associates, where they wanted transportation links, where they believed levees should be built, what land they wanted preserved for public use, and more.

The planners mulled over the input, gathered additional information from a public survey of more than 23,000 residents, and in early May delivered a blueprint for building a stronger South Louisiana with a higher quality of life for all.

The regional plan gives a Louisiana spin to “smart growth” principles, which call for rebuilding and expanding within existing cities and towns. In Louisiana, those are also the areas that are better able to withstand storms, so smart growth is also smart risk-management. Growing in-town also keeps us out of wetlands, flood zones, and fragile habitats.

The plan contains broad strategies and specific actions describing how Louisiana can recover sustainably, grow smarter, and think on a regional scale. And it provides concrete guidance for how the state can work with local leadership and metro areas to integrate planning for coastal protection and restoration, transportation, economic development, land use and more.

The next step is for the plan to be implemented by the state, which could create a state planning office that would work with local governments, metropolitan planning groups, and state agencies to execute the strategies. A state planning office would be able to shepherd the resources to turn the plan into action.

With billions flowing into Louisiana after Katrina and Rita, the planners believe an opportunity exists to marshal resources to remake Louisiana into a thriving state in the coming decade.

Here are the highlights of the plan:

Recover Sustainably

Katrina exposed the vulnerability of the coast, especially homes and businesses built in areas that are flood-prone or insufficiently protected from storms. As a counter, the plan calls for improving coastal protection, raising properties, re-



RECOVER SUSTAINABLY

Stick to the knitting

The Louisiana Speaks report recommends rebuilding inner cities with existing infrastructure. Maryland did this with several programs. One program expedited development plans in targeted areas by providing funding and technical support from the Office of Smart Growth and 10 other state agencies that have special smart growth departments. The town of Poppleton in Maryland is a focus of this program. In Baton Rouge, redevelopment of downtown and Old South Baton Rouge fits into the recommendations of the report.

A CERTAIN FUTURE

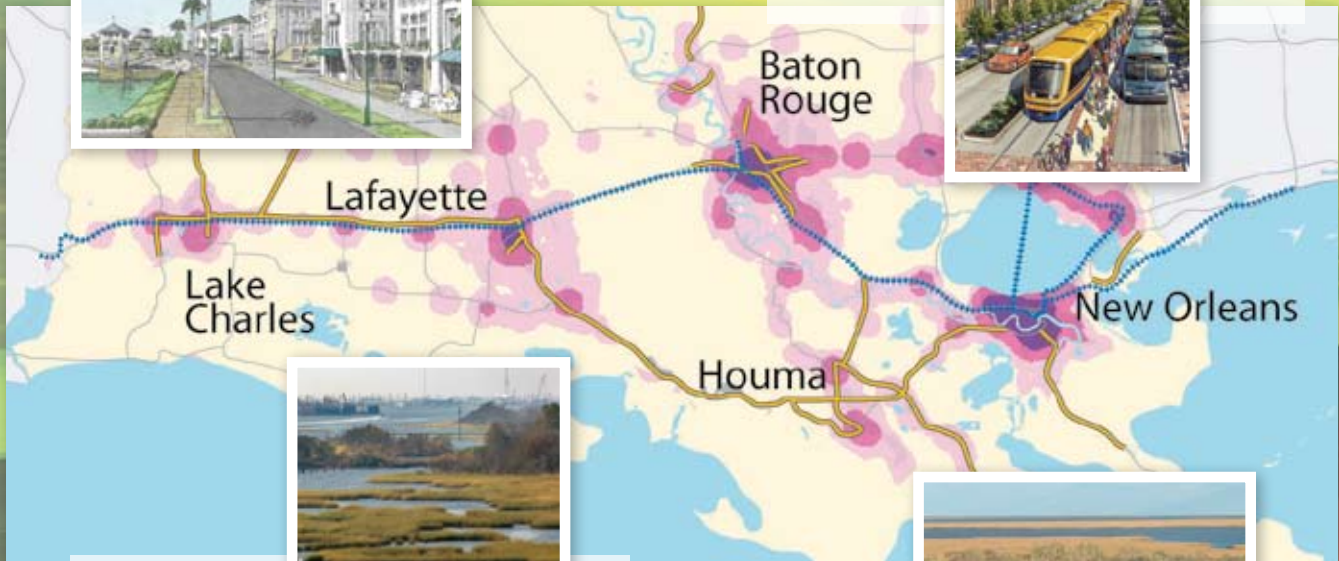
REINVEST

The plan calls for repopulating cities by focusing infrastructure and development, reducing financial and regulatory hurdles to infill development and creating local capacity for spurring reinvestment. Shown here is a plan for redeveloping the Lake Charles riverfront. In Baton Rouge, the area between LSU and downtown would be an ideal target for reinvestment.



BUILD A TRANSPORTATION NETWORK FOR TOMORROW

The plan calls for a robust transportation network to boost the economy and provide evacuation routes. This includes a rail line between Baton Rouge and New Orleans and the completion of the I-49 corridor from New Orleans to Lafayette.



RESTORE THE COAST

The state should adopt the Louisiana Coastal Restoration Authority Master Plan and annual plans, which require the acceleration of hurricane protection around key population centers and river diversion projects to rebuild the coast.



MANAGE STORM RISK

Protection from storms must come from many fronts. Among the recommendation is restoring the wetlands, focusing new developments in low-risk areas, enforcing tough building codes and creating new coastal zoning. At right, houses are elevated to keep them high and dry.

INVEST AND DEVELOP SMARTER

One strategy is for the state and local government to direct infrastructure—such as new buildings—to existing areas in cities and towns. By doing so, the government would preserve sensitive lands and use public money more efficiently. In Baton Rouge, the state already has consolidated operations in downtown in several public buildings, making it easier for departments to work together and eliminating rental payments for private buildings.

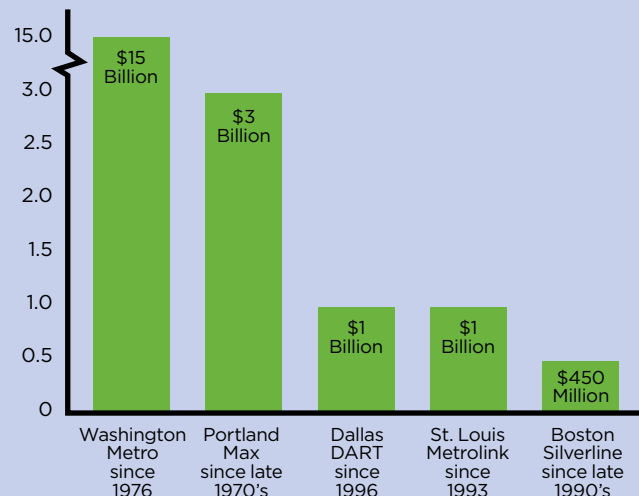
solving to sustain building codes for stronger structures, making it easier for insurers to create an affordable market, and more.

- To ensure coastal areas are sustainable, the regional plan recommends the state adopt the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority's master plan and its annual plans. The CPRA was created in late 2005 after Katrina to guide levee building and coastal restoration. The agency adopted a general master plan and annual plan in April, and lawmakers are visiting it this session.
- The state must enforce new building codes that aim to protect structures from storms and use government grants to raise houses and key infrastructure, such as raising pumps and generators above flood level. Katrina put some flood pumps and generators underwater, causing a worsening of flooding and property damage.
- Because businesses are hampered without a viable insurance market, risk can be mitigated by providing incentives or rules to improve housing to the new codes, while giving a state certificate to properties that meet the code. What's more, the state should eliminate unreasonable insurance regulation to foster the private insurance market, a move that could include letting insurance companies set prices without government control. (Louisiana lawmakers recently have talked about eliminating the state Insurance Rate Commission, which oversees rate increases and is the last such state agency in the country.)
- Dovetail the short-term recovery plans into the regional plan. It's important to rank projects by highest recovery value while immediately funding regional projects that are

GROW SMARTER

Trains are fun, but they spark more than pleasure. Across the nation, new train stations are magnets for investments in housing and shops. That's because people want the convenience of living near a train depot.

REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT AROUND NEW TRANSIT



Source: American Public Transit Association 2004

already a priority, such as passenger rail service between New Orleans and Baton Rouge to move workers and as an evacuation route, and completing the I-49 corridor between the Crescent City and Lafayette.

- Reinvest in existing communities to create vibrant urban centers, healthy neighborhoods, lively commercial corridors and independent

PLAN AND IMPLEMENT REGIONALLY

Act locally

The report recommends comprehensive local plans, a tactic to produce blueprints consistent with state goals. A Washington State law passed in 1990 has sparked most of the counties there to produce comprehensive plans. A state office in Washington helps to create and reviews the local plans.

small towns. The plan says this can be accomplished by focusing government buildings and infrastructure within existing cities and towns, creating a grants program to back projects in existing downtowns and other commercial corridors and making it simple to invest in urban centers. Also, governments should provide tax incentives for building in reinvestment areas and the state should pass legislation to encourage local governments to do master plans.

Grow Smarter

→ Louisiana must grow where it can be protected from flooding, and avoid areas that are prone to go under during storms. Doing that is smart because it eliminates the headaches caused by storms and it saves money. Governments, for instance, don't have to spend as much money to protect towns and denser growth also reduces municipal costs.

Meanwhile, governments should build transportation networks of roads and cargo shipping for connecting communities and economies, and to provide hurricane evacuation routes. What's more, cities can build resilient economies, partly by pursuing emerging opportunities from Katrina and Rita.

→ Manage future risk to property in several ways. One means is to direct funding of utilities and transportation infrastructure to low-risk areas, while paying for projects in unprotected areas only if they are justified for economic development. Another recommendation is to implement zoning along the coast to guide where to build and to avoid building. Also, the state should enforce the raising of buildings above the 100-year flood mark, provide information on construction methods that shield against bad weather, and purchase the highest-risk properties.

→ Develop and invest smarter by gathering experts and stakeholders to classify land based on sustainability, then link the developed rules to a map database for identifying appropriate locations for conservation, re-investment and future development. Also, government should create model development and zoning codes and connect them to the map database system for use by planners and residents. Areas identified as high-risk in the database should require a special state permit before development. Developers should also have resources to learn about environmentally-sustainable construction.

Think Regionally

The regional plan should be overseen and moved forward by the State Planning Office, which would provide help and work with regional planning offices and parish planning departments.

→ The regional plan should be extended across the center and northern parts of the state. The project will follow a similar path taken by the regional plan, from creating a comprehensive process to getting public input into the plan.

→ The state should pass legislation to create the

statewide planning office. The legislation should require municipalities above a certain population or growth rate to produce a 20-year comprehensive plan and coordinate plans that include transportation, coastal protection, housing, economic development. The state planning office should be governed by members from the governor's cabinet, regional entities and residents who have technical expertise. The planning office would be responsible for coordinating many of the details of the regional plan.

You can download the entire plan at www.louisianaspeaks.org •



DID YOU KNOW--?

The LSU Museum of Art—housed in the Shaw Center for the Arts—offers membership at several levels so that you can both support the arts and tour the galleries free of charge during regular hours.

With general admission at \$8 for adults, it makes sense for students to invest \$15 for Student Membership so they can tour the galleries year round. Individual Memberships are only \$40, and Dual/Family Memberships cost \$60 and admit two adults and children under 18. Of course, higher levels of giving are available and you can find more information by visiting www.lsumoa.com or contacting charr24@lsu.edu.

SUPPORT THE SHAW CENTER FOR THE ARTS AND CHECK OUT THE LSU MUSEUM OF ART'S GALLERIES—IT'S AN EASY WAY TO ADD A LITTLE ART TO YOUR LIFE.





Sing out loud: Accompanied by a Mariachi band, six-year-old Lisette Mesa belted out tunes for visitors, then got a deep, joyful hug from her grandfather, a band guitarist. Here, she speaks with Principal Linda Harvison of St. Joseph's Academy, which has provided staff and students for prepping computers and setting them up in labs. Foundation former director Norman Saurage is pictured behind Principal Harvison.

FLATTENING THE WORLD

A PARTNERSHIP USES OLD COMPUTERS TO BUILD
A NEW ECONOMY FOR A MEXICAN TOWN

Not much was expected of Verónica Jazmin Castro. But then no one expected the mother to discover a computer at her child's school in Cordoba. Overcoming an initial hesitation, she began to peck at the keys. She learned enough to tutor others, and now, Castro is on a path to become a teacher.

She tells her story in a packed cinder block school-room in this Mexican town, computers flickering around her, children learning English and playing games on the machines.

And Verónica Jazmin Castro begins to weep.

The tales continue around the room at Cuitalhuac School, where parents have gathered with their children to talk about how the computers – from Baton Rouge – have changed their lives. One mother mastered a computer, not only overcoming taunting from her daughter but also beating a fear of the new technology. Another was able to use her fresh computer skills to fill in for a sick restaurant cashier, elevating her from dishwasher to the higher-paying job.

About 20 computers are humming in this room. Nearly 100 more are in 11 schools and in two orphanages in Cordoba. They were intended as tools for the children, but they are having a wider impact, giving parents new skills that provide opportunities for prosperity and for building their own communities instead of scampering across the border for illegal work in the United States.

The second life for the computers in Cordoba is from a unique partnership. They are recycled by the Capital Area Computer Recycling Center. Then, the girls and staff at St. Joseph's Academy (SJA) prepare them for Cordoba, a sister city of Baton Rouge that is about a three-hour jet ride and one-hour car trip from here. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation, an anonymous donor advisor, and their Mexican partner, Fondo Cordoba, the first community foundation in Mexico, cover part of the expenses of the project.

Representatives of the partnership visited Cordoba in winter, a step to gather intelligence for planning an expansion of the initiative.

A blueprint that includes Internet connections for Cordoba's schools is in the works. Internet connections, says Mark Richardson, technology officer at SJA, will not only give Cordoba's schoolchildren access to knowledge but also provide regular links to SJA students.

Before they were shipped to Cordoba, the computers and monitors sat for about a year in a warehouse operated by the Capital Area Computer Recycling Center. Executive Director Nancy Jo Craig watched over the computers in Baton Rouge and wondered what would become of them in Cordoba.

"It's very emotional for me, that these computers are doing this for these kids," Craig said on the trip, pledging another 500 computers ready for delivery to Cordoba this year. •

CAPSULE

What: A partnership that recycles computers for use in schools and orphanages in Cordoba, a Mexican town in Veracruz state.

Why: Cordoba is a sister city of Baton Rouge. Donors of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and partners in the project want to help neighbors in Cordoba so they can improve their economies and stay to build their communities. The project also benefits students at St. Joseph's Academy, who get to use their computer skills, do service, and learn from their counterparts in Cordoba.

Who: Partners are St. Joseph's Academy, the Capital Area Computer Recycling Center, the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation, an anonymous donor advisor, Fondo Cordoba and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

How to help: Partners are developing a plan to expand the efforts, with a goal to connect Cordoba's kids to the Internet. You can donate to the project by calling Jessica Stuart at 225-387-6126.



Investing in Mexico: Mary Ann Sternberg (above), a Baton Rouge Area Foundation donor and former board chair, looks on as John Richardson, who has spearheaded the project on behalf of SJA, checks out instructional programming on a recycled computer. Richardson says the SJA students can enhance their Spanish skills by connecting via computer with their Cordoban counterparts. His team is researching how to connect computers at Cordoba schools to the Internet.

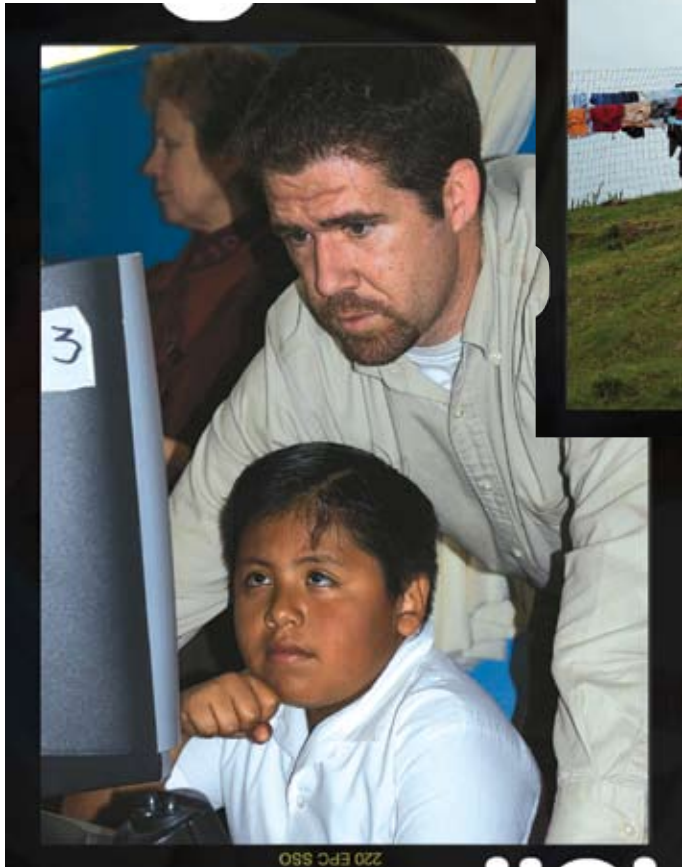
Se habla Español: SJA graduate Courtney Borne (inset circle) uses her high-school Spanish education to teach at Guadalupe Victoria school on a winter visit. Students at SJA, among the most technologically advanced schools in the country, are trained to repair and upgrade computers, a skill that is used to prepare the gadgets for use in Cordoba.

No Luddite: Verónica Jazmin Castro (above) shadowboxed with fear of technology before learning the computer at her child's school. She is now passing on her skills to others and wants to become a formal teacher. Other parents also have become accomplished at computer skills, which they plan to use to get better jobs in Cordoba.



Computers and games: Children swing at hillside orphanage Casa Hogar II Dios, which is partly funded by a benefactor in California. The orphanage can house up to 70 children. The kids grow fruits, vegetables and flowers, providing some of the income to run the place. They live in spacious dorms and, in their spare time, play soccer on a makeshift field. They use a handful of recycled computers to boost their education.

Digital router: Each weekday, college student Juan Mendez Rojas (inset circle) does a mad dash around town with a tiny zip drive. Traveling from school to school, he downloads information on the hard drive, bringing it back to share with up to 70 orphans who are cared for by his father. With Internet access, Juan wouldn't have to make the trips and could devote more time to his studies.



Tool time: Children at Casa Hogar Cordoba, an orphanage, use the salvaged computers for the first time after a ribbon cutting ceremony. The computers offer instruction, including English and math, as well as game playing during downtime. The next step is to provide Internet connections, a pipeline to knowledge from around the world and quick communications with SJA students. Francisco Nieto (above), an SJA Spanish teacher who has been involved in the project since its 2004 inception, helps a student maneuver a computer for the first time.





Future certain: SJA tech guru John Richardson, holding flower, celebrates a job well done. Richardson, SJA staffers and students set up the computer labs that provided the parents seen here with opportunities to learn a new skill and improve their job prospects. The parents of children at Cuitahuac School wave graduation certificates.



BY MUKUL VERMA

Holding Pattern

*Foundation study:
Luring discounters to local airport
will save passengers millions*

Katrina continues to turn up in unexpected ways.

Before the hurricane, Crescent City leaders were talking up a new airport in New Orleans, hoping to shift closer to the French Quarter so tourists could be whisked quickly to their destinations. There was also a low-level debate about building a new airport to serve both the Baton Rouge and New Orleans markets.

But an independent study released last month says the existing airports in Baton Rouge and New Orleans have enough capacity to serve their markets for at least two decades.

What's more, the study recommends Baton Rouge improve its airport and provide incentives

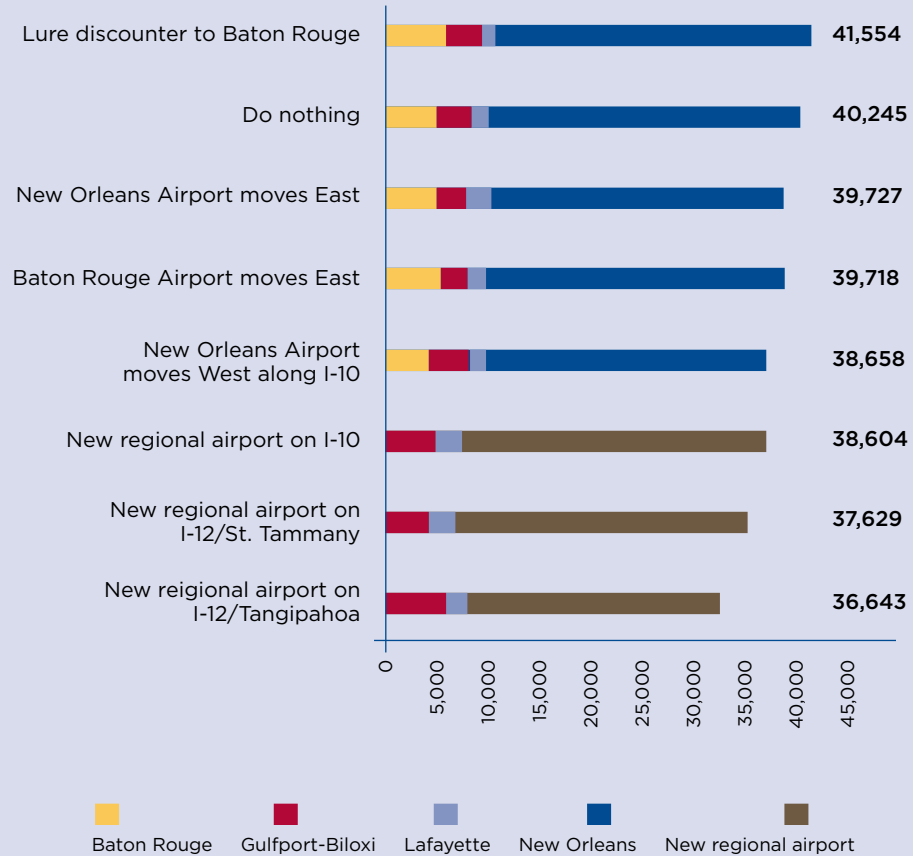
to lure discount airlines, a tactic that would eventually save passengers flying BTR millions of dollars a year.

The airport market and economic evaluation study by Booz Allen Hamilton was paid for by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and commissioned by the Baton Rouge Area Chamber. The Foundation and Chamber wanted to understand how passenger airline markets in Baton Rouge, New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast had been changed by Katrina.

The report reveals that Louis Armstrong International, serving the New Orleans region, has enough capacity to meet demand until at least 2025, in large part because Katrina cut pas-

DISCOUNT DRAW

Consultants modeled different scenarios to determine demand for airline seats in 2032. Luring a discount airline to Baton Rouge was the winning model.



SOURCE: BOOZ ALLEN HAMILTON

senger traffic by two-thirds. The airport has rebounded a bit in recent months but consultants predict it will take at least another three years to return to pre-Katrina demand, and 15 more years before New Orleans' capacity is exceeded.

Besides slack demand, replacing the New

Orleans airport would be difficult now because the Federal Aviation Administration's tight resources are focused where money is needed, such as relieving congestion in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York, and building a new air traffic system.

Upriver, the Baton Rouge airport has enough capacity and expansion room to support demand for 30 years.

Baton Rouge's airport is a below average in demand compared to markets its size. The reason: It's in the shadow of the New Orleans airport, which siphons passengers with lower fares and non-stop service.

The consultants say the best strategy for now is for Baton Rouge to invest in its existing airport. But the Capital City should also keep an eye on market changes, such as the potential for cost-effective, high-speed rail between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, the level of rebound for the New Orleans tourist and convention business, and whether Ascension, Livingston, and

Tangipahoa parishes continue growing rapidly.

Because it takes more than a decade to study, permit and build a new airport, the region should study the market again in 10 years to determine the level of demand and where to build an airport.

So what should Baton Rouge do now?

The consultants assert that a low-cost carrier flying BTR would benefit the community. Once an airport recruits a discount carrier, existing carriers match prices, lowering overall cost and increasing demand, says W. Evert Meyer of Booz Allen Hamilton.

The Baton Rouge airport has been negotiating with a number of discount airlines. In January, the Metro Council set aside \$1 million for the airport to lure a low-cost air carrier with nonstop flights to Denver. In April, the airport closed a deal with

Frontier Airlines, which is based in Denver and provides service to western markets. It's negotiating with additional undisclosed air carriers.

For its conclusions, Booz Allen Hamilton modeled the regional market under different scenarios. What if the New Orleans Airport moved east or west? What if Baton Rouge and New Orleans were replaced by either an airport between the

cities on I-10 or one that was on I-12? What if a low-cost carrier was given an incentive to fly to Baton Rouge?

The greatest gain in passenger demand for the entire region was related to that last question, which also yielded the cheapest option except for changing nothing. By 2032, an incentive to bring a discount carrier to Baton Rouge would produce 41,554 daily pas-

sengers for all the airports—Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Lafayette and Gulfport-Biloxi. Daily passengers from Baton Rouge would increase to 5,386 in 2032, an increase from about 3,400 now.

The low-cost carrier does more than generate the most passengers for the entire region. It also produces the lowest average trip cost for the Baton Rouge traveler. Competition from a discount carrier would save Baton Rouge passengers \$134,650 each day in 2032, or nearly \$50 million per year.

The \$50 million figure easily surpasses the incentive to lure a discount carrier, which the consultants peg in their model at \$10 million over five years. •

Competition from a discounter would save Baton Rouge passengers ...nearly \$50 million per year.

FOR NONPROFITS



Mother's milk to fund your work

Our company is asked to find grants for non-profit organizations. Over the years we have learned a thing or two about procedures, found out how to avoid pitfalls, and happened upon some basic strategies

that have proven successful in obtaining funding from government agencies and foundations. Here is a basic process for finding appropriate grant opportunities.

Before I begin, there is one caveat that is worth heeding. Grants, contrary to a persistent belief and the breathless exhortations of that guy on late night TV, are not free money. The foundations and agencies that fund programming often have very specific policy goals in mind when they offer grants. Increasingly funding entities stipulate that programs demonstrate specific program outcomes. Often a long list of obligations, requirements and restrictions are attached to funding and can overwhelm all

but those organizations that are committed to the same goal.

On the other hand, nonprofits' goals often align well with the policy goals of granting agencies, so the challenge becomes finding the right source of funding for your programming objectives.

The first step in locating grant funds is to understand the variety of grantmaking entities that exist. Grants are awarded through public and pri-

ivate funders. Private sources include local and national foundations. Often foundations focus on a specific topic area; for example, the Lance Armstrong Foundation only supports projects concerned with cancer. Public funding sources include the city, the state and the federal government. With federal funding, it is a matter of determining which federal agency awards grants in your program area. Some examples of federal departments include the Department of Justice, the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Once you have a grasp on the private and public funding sources that are of interest, the next step is to obtain information about their current funding interests. The best way to do this is to go online and peruse the many informational websites constructed for this purpose. Although the potential sources are too numerous to list here, some key sites to begin your search are the Foundation Center (for private funding), Vendor Link LA (for state funding) and Grants.gov (for federal funding).

One way to keep up with funding opportunities is to sign up for email notifications, such as those listed in the box on page 39. Sometimes a Request for Proposal (RFP in grantwriting lingo) is released with a specific deadline. Sometimes the deadline is rolling so that applications can be submitted at any time.

If you would prefer to talk with a person, you can contact the Louisiana State Grants Management section. It offers free training as well as individual assistance to track down grant opportunities. Another option is to contact the grants specialist at your local library. Many libraries have a designated grant resources area where

so the challenge becomes finding the right source of funding for your programming objectives

you can look through various newsletters and databases of grant notices.

Once you have located a promising opportunity, you should carefully determine if it is a good fit for your organization. First be sure you meet the eligibility criteria. Next, consider if the program aligns with the mission of your organization, if you have experience providing the services and if you have the staff and capacity to do a good job with the funds. If all these criteria are met, then you have a match. You are now ready to respond to the RFP and apply for the grant.

LYNNE JENNER is director of projects for the Policy and Research Group—a public policy consulting firm for government and nonprofits. Her firm's website is policyandresearch.com.

GRANTS IN YOUR INBOX

Foundation Center RFP bulletin

<http://foundationcenter.org/search/>

Louisiana state RFPs notification

<http://wwwsrch2.doa.state.la.us/osp/lapac/vendor/Vndrmess.asp>

Federal Grants Center

<http://grants.gov>

Louisiana State Grants Management Section

<http://www.doa.louisiana.gov/cdbg/SGMSabout.htm>

Downtown Baton Rouge Library Grants Collection

(225) 389-4967



Get Tested!

800-99AIDS9 (800-992-4379)

WE
N'S

Solar energy enthusiasts mean it this time. Energy from the sun, they assert, should be competitive with electric-grid prices in less than a decade, maybe even much sooner.

Researchers have been reducing the cost of solar energy for decades, but power from the sun still costs at least three times more than U.S. electric utility prices.

The U.S. Energy Department's goal is to reduce the average installed cost of solar energy to the end user to a competitive rate by 2015.

But a few companies say they have new technologies that will cut solar cell manufacturing costs and make solar energy competitive in three years. Venture capitalists, believing them, are pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into the potential breakthroughs.

The companies are touting breakthroughs in thin film solar cells, which are cheaper to manufacture because they use

less silicon. The firms, though, must overcome the difficulties of manufacturing thin film cells. Ultimately, the thin cells could be rolled out and installed on roofs.

Nanosolar is among companies that claim to have the solution. The firm's technology prints solar cells, dramatically reducing the cost and complexity of thin-film solar cells. Its first manufacturing facility is expected to deliver solar cells this year.

—MUKUL VERMA

Solar is hot

The New Cool

Does global warming have you fretting, but you don't know what to do? Here is a 10-point plan to reduce your carbon footprint. If you don't believe in global warming, remember that Baton Rouge's temperature already breaks 100 degrees in the summer. So, just in case, make some changes. At worst, your efforts will reduce pollution.

Get motivated. You can calculate your carbon footprint at ClimateCrisis.net. The survey asks for your energy use, the car you drive and other factors to calculate the amount of carbon you generate per year. The average American produces 7.5 tons of carbon dioxide per year.

Replace your incandescent bulbs. Switching to compact fluorescent lighting will cost you about three times more per bulb, but the new-fangled lights based on old technology use one-fourth the energy and live longer, saving \$30 or more in energy per bulb. Just deploying one fluorescent bulb in each American home would save enough energy to light up 2.5 million homes.

Eat less meat. Going vegetarian is not an option for most Louisiana residents, but eating greens instead of meat once a week would help to reduce your carbon footprint. That's because the meat industry worldwide produces 18% of the global greenhouse gases, reckons a United Nations panel. Eating vegetables, fruit and beans for protein will also make your body happy.

Act locally. The Federal government has ignored global warming, prompting cities and states into action. Cities, for instance, are replacing light bulbs with LED bulbs that use about half the energy. Baton Rouge's street lights are being converted to LED lights. Raleigh, N.C., is experimenting with LED lights in parking garages

and plans to deploy them in other public venues. In some states including Louisiana, people who generate their own energy from solar and wind can get credit in power back from the electricity company. You can step up by advocating for energy conservation in Baton Rouge and across Louisiana.

Move smart. Cars are becoming more efficient, but they still account for about 10,000 pounds of carbon dioxide per year. Reduce your car's emissions by getting tune ups, making sure the tires are at the correct pressure, carpooling and consolidating trips. Consider a hybrid for your next car to reduce gasoline consumption and for a possible government tax credit. If you feel generous, buy a TerraPass, which start at \$30 per year at TerraPass.com. The group will use the money for renewable energy projects to offset your carbon emissions.

Hoof it. One of every four car trips is less than two miles, a reason you should use your feet or a bike to get around the city. And consider buying your next home in a traditional neighborhood development, a community built for pedestrians first. While you are making the changes, buy a bike and advocate for more bike lanes.

Live better. A few upgrades to your home can benefit the world. Wrap your water heater in a thermal blanket to reduce your carbon emissions by 1,000 pounds, and set the heater's thermostat to 120 degrees to reduce energy use. Next time your refrigerator or other appliance must be replaced, buy an energy efficient appliance. Raise your thermostat in summer and lower it in winter to reduce carbon emissions. Dry your clothes on a line. >>

WHAT'S NEXT?

Make groceries at the Red Stick Farmers Market.

Not only is the food fresher at the farmers market, but it saves on emissions because it's not trucked across the country. And you keep money in the community by helping your local farmer.

Buy a reel mower. A Swedish study says an hour of lawn mowing spews nearly the same amount of pollution as a 100-mile car trip. Reason: Cars have anti-pollution controls; lawn-mowers don't. Since retrofitting your lawn mower

with a catalytic converter is no weekend project, switch instead to a reel mower. Reel mowers, which have improved dramatically, are perfect for cutting smaller yards, and the grass looks better because it's sheared instead of whacked.

Buy less. The mushrooming of mini-warehouses is evidence that Americans have too much cargo. Before you buy, ask yourself if you really need another item in your already cluttered life. Better still, remove your clutter and donate it to charity or put it in the recycling bin.

—MUKUL VERMA



GOOD TO BE GREEN

People wanting to put up a green building can look at the Foundation for an example, particularly now that oil prices are above \$60 per barrel and global warming is widely accepted as a problem.

The building that houses the Foundation is considered the greenest in the region. Designed by Robert M. Coleman and Partners Architects, it was occupied by the Foundation in February 2003, when oil prices were moderate and global warming was a ping pong ball batted among scientists.

Earlier in the century, the Foundation gave marching orders to architect Buddy Ragland: Use green design and material that are not too pricey, permitting others to replicate the idea.

Going green cost the Foundation about \$10% more, says Ragland, but high energy prices make it a given that the premium will be more than recouped.

Ragland became a regular on the local lecture set after the building was opened. Since then, others in the region have incorporated green technologies, and Ragland now is working for an undisclosed client on a building that is even greener than the one he designed for the Foundation.

A FEW GREEN FEATURES OF THE FOUNDATION BUILDING:

Energy recovery ventilator—It cools the incoming air, reducing the workload to the air conditioning system. The ERV reduced the total tons of air conditioning needed to cool the building. Savings are estimated at up to \$10,000 per year in energy.

Recycled material—Carpets, furniture, structural steel, metal studs, ceiling tiles and other construction material are manufactured with recycled goods. Ragland says the Foundation gave preference to companies that manufactured with used material.

Open work spaces—The work spaces, substantial cubicles for all workers, let light bathe the building, reducing the use of electric lighting.

Light harvesting—A system monitors the amount of natural light, then adjusts the fluorescent lighting to keep the offices as bright as needed.

Solar shades—The windows are recessed behind solar shades, a design that keeps the sun rays from direct strikes.

Harvest the Wind

There isn't much to see in the West Texas desert except monotony. But on a drive, the trance of endless scrubland is broken here and there by wind turbines, which turn by the hundreds in the near-constant breeze, generating electricity to power millions of homes.

Wind energy is on the rise, growing 22% per year in the last five years and powering an estimated 3 million homes at year-end, says the American Wind Power Association. Now, the turbines are moving from the deserts and prairies into people's backyards.

Smaller wind turbines are powering homes, thanks to companies like Bergey Windpower of Norman, Okla. The personal units cost from \$12,000 to \$50,000, depending on the number of kilowatts generated by them. An inexpensive unit can generate 10% of the demand for a 2,000 square foot home, while the \$50,000 models can free a dwelling from the grid.

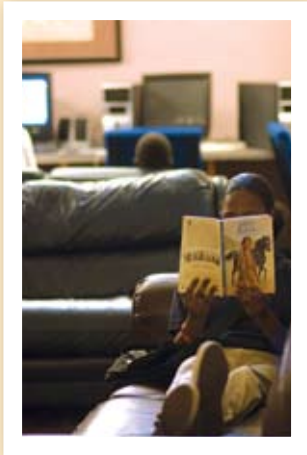
But in Baton Rouge, the payback is too long to make economic sense, says Mike Bergey, company president. He scans wind charts and declares there isn't enough wind in the Capital City region to recoup the investment.

The lack of wind doesn't mean wind turbines won't eventually be used here. Bergey says production costs would drop with a jump in demand, which could rise if the federal government approves tax credits. The federal government is considering a \$3,000 tax credit per kilowatt of capacity to encourage wind energy. One kilowatt of capacity can produce about 10% of an average U.S. home's annual needs.

Louisiana's coast could see some larger wind turbines. Louisiana-based Wind Energy Systems wants to build up to 50 turbines in the Gulf of Mexico to generate up to 300 megawatts of power by 2010.

—MUKUL VERMA





BY ERIN PERCY | PHOTOS BY LORI WASELCHUK

Safe at Home

A nonprofit gives runaways a bright path

“I don’t want to ever see her again,” a mother declared a few years ago, dumping her teen-aged daughter at Youth Oasis emergency shelter and driving away.

The sight was not unusual to Alvin Smith, executive director of the nonprofit. While most children slumber each night in their secure homes, there are about 1,000 youngsters in Baton Rouge living without homes, and 500 more on the run.

Smith’s nonprofit cares for runaways and abandoned children, educating them and teaching them the life skills needed to get a job and live on their own as adults. The abandoned girl, for instance, was placed in Youth Oasis’ transitional living program, which taught her life’s skills, such as washing clothes and cooking food.

This month, she will graduate from high school; in fall, she will begin an even more hopeful journey, enrolling at Baton Rouge Community College.

Youth Oasis is located in Mid City. Each day, from a building that once housed a Jewish temple, Smith and his staff reach out to street kids, giving them a chance to feel safe and then putting them on track to become independent or helping them reconcile with their families.

“We help these youths psychologically, educationally, physically,” says Smith, whose program is one of only four of its kind in Louisiana.

One troubled adolescent entered Youth Oasis reading at third-grade level. The organization took him in, improved his reading skills and helped him find a job he loved at a local restaurant. Because Youth Oasis encourages kids to save 80% of their income, the adolescent had several thousand dollars when he left the shelter, money he used to cover the deposit on an apartment and pay rent for six months.

Youth Oasis was started in 1996 as the Baton Rouge Alliance for Transitional Living (BRATL), a collaboration of state and local agencies formed by Ethel Harris of Casey Family Programs to review housing needs for kids leaving the foster care system.

When Dennis Dillon of Casey Family Programs secured a federal grant to help start a transitional living program in 1998, the organization purchased its first building, a house in Mid City, for office space and living quarters for four kids.

In May 2000, BRATL purchased its second building—a 10-unit apartment com-

Youth Oasis

260 S. ACADIAN THRUW



The common space for residents and staff of Youth Oasis.
The building was once a synagogue and later a church.

Carlie Galloway of Youth Oasis (left) talks with Oneal Isaac, a driver for the Baton Rouge Children's Health Project outside a mobile clinic. The clinics have agreed to be Safe Places, a national network that helps kids in crisis.



Donors of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation have provided \$207,000 in grants to help fund Youth Oasis.

plex on West Drive. Young people began moving into the apartments in August of that year, forming a transitional living program called *Passages*.

In November 2002 the emergency shelter on South Acadian opened its doors to 10- to 17-year-olds. Then, in the summer of 2003, the organization developed a new trademark name for BRATL programs—Youth Oasis.

Today, Youth Oasis offers a number of programs and services.

There's the Kaleidoscope Program, which provides emergency shelter, food, clothing, counseling and referrals for health care.

The Passages Transitional Living Program provides a safe, stable living environment for young adults who may not otherwise have such accommodations. Passages works with homeless youth, ages 16 to 21, to teach them independent living skills. They live in one of the organization's supervised apartments for six months and Youth Oasis continues to work with them as they move to their own apartments and live responsibly on their own.

The center also serves to reunite young people with their families, whenever possible, or to locate appropriate alternative placements. Youth Oasis offers individual, group and family counseling—with an emphasis on family reunification.

To help its clients, the nonprofit focuses heavily on life skills—how to use a computer, how to cook and clean, how to respect other people. The kids learn by cooking and doing their own laundry.

The shelter now has space for up to 12 children, who are supervised around the clock. Partnerships boost Youth Oasis. The full pantry is stocked by the Baton Rouge Food Bank; the Junior League donated the computers.

The group is extending its reach. The Safe Places effort provides temporary haven to runaways, giving them a place to duck and seek help from adults trained to provide protection until Youth Oasis can help them. Safe Places include the Baton



Executive Director Alvin Smith outside a transitional living apartment building.

Rouge General and all YMCA locations. Smith is trying to add libraries and pharmacies around the city to the list of havens.

Most youths who enter Youth Oasis stay for about a week, says Smith. However, the law requires the shelter contact the parents of runaway children and teens after 48 hours.

If the youth are not enrolled in school when they arrive at Youth Oasis, the organization enrolls them in Westdale Middle or Tara High School. School buses provide transport to the shelter. If, however, the children are already enrolled in another school, Youth Oasis provides transportation to that school.

At the shelter, the children are supervised and cared for by social workers; overnight supervisors and counselors are specially trained to deal with the youngsters' problems. Generally, there is one staff person per four children.

Smith and his staff have recorded many success stories.

Several years ago, a young woman entered Youth Oasis' Passages Program, determined to become independent and successful. Now 22 years old, she works at Cox Communications and is a member of Youth Oasis' board.

"It's very exciting to help these kids and make things happen for them," Smith said. "I really enjoy the work, and can tell you that we are building something really positive for the community." •

ON HER WAY

At 17, Courtney Dixon knew she needed a change to get her life on track.

"I had just graduated high school, and I wasn't living in a nurturing environment. I wanted to be able to maintain myself for the rest of my life, and I wasn't going to learn to do that at home," she says.

The Youth Oasis shelter on South Acadian was then undergoing renovations. The red brick structure, which looks like an old-fashioned church, caught Courtney's attention. Learning about the organization, its emergency shelter and life skills programs, she knew Youth Oasis could help her.

"After staying in the shelter, I applied for and was accepted into the Passages transitional living program. Youth Oasis provided me with my own apartment. They helped me gain the life skills necessary to live on my own and helped me become a responsible adult."

While at Youth Oasis, Courtney enrolled in Baton

Rouge Community College. Now 21, she will soon graduate with a degree in criminal justice. She'd like to find a job as a youth advocate, maybe even working with Youth Oasis.

Courtney says she felt at home with Youth Oasis. She stayed with the organization for almost a year. "The staff was so friendly. I didn't have a problem talking to any of them about anything. I know I made the right decision," she says.

Courtney only regrets that more people aren't taking advantage of the services provided by the organization.

"Not many people know it's there. I wish everyone knew about it because there are a lot of kids out there that could really benefit from their programs."

Thanks to Youth Oasis, Courtney believes that she has a bright future ahead of her: "Youth Oasis gave me a foundation for my life. Without it, I wouldn't be where I am today, with a job and about to graduate college." •



NEW FUNDS

Carpenter Family Fund*

Greater Baton Rouge Hope Academy

Capital Campaign Fund

Joe Traigle and Carey Long Fund

Levy-Kantor Fund

Louisiana Governor's Mansion Fund

Powell Good Guy Fund—ADL

RocketKidz Foundation

St. John Interparochial School,

Plaquemine—Ann Bryant Wilbert Arbour

Scholarship Fund

St. Joseph Cathedral Fund

Wayne Reulet Fund

Perpetual Care Funds:

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church

St. George Church

St. Augustine Church

St. Joseph Parish, Paulina

St. Joseph the Worker, Pierre Part

St. Michael the Archangel Parish, Convent

St. Mary Cemetery, Union

St. Philip

*Northshore Community Foundation Funds

THE CORRIDOR

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“The whole point of this is to put people in homes and bring properties back onto the tax rolls.”

—JOHN SPAIN, FOUNDATION
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



BY SARA BONGIORNI | PHOTOS BY LORI WASELCHUK

Bridge to Revival

The Foundation backs a tried method for rehabbing abandoned properties

Urban planners cite Boston and Pittsburgh as high-profile examples of cities that have transformed decaying neighborhoods into vital city centers.

They also often point to the tool those cities have used to revive declining areas: redevelopment authorities with the power to acquire slum properties, raise money, assemble land and make deals with developers for affordable housing projects and a host of other ventures in the public interest.

“This is how cities around the country deal with blight and attract projects that can turn neighborhoods around,” said John Spain, the Foundation’s executive vice president. “The concept is nothing new.”

The Baton Rouge region has never had a redevelopment authority, despite thousands of tax-delinquent, vacant and slum properties on local tax rolls.

But pending legislation spearheaded by the Foundation aims to change that by permitting the creation of the East Baton Rouge Parish Redevelopment Authority, which could have broad powers to fight blight and to spur beneficial projects in downtrodden areas. The legislation is expected to be debated in the current legislative session.

“This would provide the parish with the momentum to really get some things done,” said Spain.

Beyond HOPE VI

If created, the authority would accelerate the revitalization of Old South Baton Rouge, the poor neighborhoods between downtown and the LSU cam-

<< Revival: Old South Baton Rouge is getting 126 new houses, thanks to a federal grant. To speed up the rebound, the Foundation is pushing for a redevelopment authority.

BRIEFING:

Working with local leaders, the Foundation is pursuing legislation that would permit the creation of an agency for buying abandoned properties and putting them back into commerce more quickly. The fate of the effort is up to state lawmakers.



pus. Working with community stakeholders and local officials, the Foundation last year completed a master plan to transform the area into a mixed-income neighborhood.

Earlier, the Foundation had helped the parish housing authority win an \$18.6 million federal HOPE VI housing grant to demolish existing public housing in Old South Baton Rouge and replace it with 126 new units. That project is now underway.

What became clear to Foundation officials over the past couple of years is that blighted properties present a formidable obstacle to Old South Baton Rouge's rebirth. Issues such as cloudy ownership records, default mortgages and tax liens make it difficult to assemble tracts of land and scare away developers who might otherwise consider urban infill development, Spain said. And the scope of the problem in just this one neighborhood is mind-numbing: there are roughly 600 such properties in the three-square-mile area of Old South Baton Rouge, each one a magnet for crime, pests and other dangers.

Gwen Hamilton, the Foundation's director of special projects, describes the existing process for gaining control of such properties as agonizingly slow, if not nearly impossible. The area needs an estimated \$200 million to \$300 million in private and public investment over 10 years to bring the master plan to life, but that investment won't happen without a means to clear land of abandoned properties so housing and other projects can proceed, she said.

"We need something to speed the process," Hamilton said. "We've got tax-delinquent properties that just sit there, and meanwhile we have a crisis in affordable housing."

Added Boo Thomas, president of the Center for Planning Excellence: "The legal process for dealing with these properties just isn't there."

Bringing it back

As in places like Boston and Pittsburgh, the East Baton Rouge Parish Redevelopment Authority would acquire slum properties; sell bonds; buy, sell and lease properties; and bring together public and private sector players for a variety of projects.

The authority would be governed by a five-member board—three members appointed by the mayor and one each by the Foundation and the Baton Rouge Area Chamber.

"We have people who want to help us with this," Spain said.

The redevelopment authority would be an entity of the state, but it would need the approval of the mayor and Metro Council to activate it.

Blight is not confined to Baton Rouge, and the bill before lawmakers also would allow Lafayette to establish its first redevelopment authority to better cope with similar barriers to urban renewal.

Gary McGoffin, a Lafayette attorney who helped craft the legislation, said redevelopment authorities are essential to affordable housing and other projects in the public interest.

"People are right to ask why the private sector doesn't step in, but sometimes the private sector doesn't want to pursue projects because the never-ending story of unclear ownership keeps them away," McGoffin said. "This will allow us to make things happen that are essential for public well-being but that might not happen otherwise."

If passed and signed by the governor, the bill would become law on July 1. •



Dirt Bank

A pilot project hopes to revitalize one of Lafayette's oldest neighborhoods, and check sprawl

BY NATHAN STUBBS

Lafayette—In the McComb Veazey neighborhood, hundreds of vacant lots—many overgrown with weeds and brush—dot the narrow streets among the rows of 1940s cottages. Many of the front porches are slanted or collapsing, and a few look abandoned. In stark contrast to other areas of Lafayette, most businesses in McComb are struggling. Some are shuttered with no sign of coming back. The neighborhood bears little resemblance to the bustling social center it was back in the 1960s and '70s. But if a new nonprofit being spearheaded by Lafayette Consolidated Government is successful, the vacant lots in McComb may slowly start filling up, renewing interest in the stagnant community.

In March, the Lafayette Public Trust Finance

Authority committed \$400,000 to a new Lafayette nonprofit dedicated to bringing vacant, abandoned and tax delinquent properties back into use.

The organization, which is yet to be named, plans to have a three-person staff, headed by an attorney that specializes in mortgage or property title issues and three to five members on a governing board. City organizers are also in talks now with the Community Foundation of Acadiana to act as a parent organization.

LCG hired attorney Gary McGoffin last December to research the idea primarily as a way to help relocate the 107 residents who are set to be displaced by the eventual



construction of the I-49 connector—an elevated highway that will run the north-south interstate through the city, along the south end of McComb Veazey.

Because of its approximation to the I-49 connector and its abundance of vacant property, the nonprofit will strictly focus its efforts in the McComb neighborhood in the first year. “We want to be very focused,” McGoffin says. “So that



in the first year we can have a success story and see that it works and how it works.”

Eventually, the nonprofit will operate throughout the city.

Bringing in the old

Known nationally as land banks (Louisiana law prohibits non-financial institutions from using the term bank), the concept for the organization is not new. Land banks began cropping up across the country as early as the 1960s to deal with the problem of inner city property that has fallen out of use, with little prospect of redevelopment. The nonprofits also are used by cities to assist in ac-

quiring and holding land for future roadways and other developments.

In Louisiana, the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority is the only current example of a land bank. NORA was formed in 1968 to help redevelop blighted properties in the city. In addition to purchasing and acquiring donated land, NORA also has expropriation powers—an issue Lafayette officials are shying away from with their venture.

“We have no intention that this land bank will ever expropriate property,” McGoffin says, adding that Lafayette’s conservative population wouldn’t stand for it and that New Orleans has much more serious redevelopment issues on its hands. In Lafayette, McGoffin says there is ample opportunity for redevelopment without expropriation.

According to city records, the McComb Veazey neighborhood alone has 64 tax delinquent—also known as adjudicated—properties. Of these, 54 have been held in tax limbo for at least five years, making it highly unlikely they will ever be

reclaimed. McComb also contains a total of 419 vacant lots, many created by houses and businesses that were torn down over the years.

Giant sucking sound

In a presentation before the LPTFA last week, McGoffin used the analogy of a black hole to describe the state of the city’s adjudicated properties.

“Black holes are a force of nature that suck energy in without allowing any back out,” he says. “We have a similar phenomenon here in Lafayette with adjudicated properties.”

Adjudicated properties are those the govern-

ment has taken over because property taxes have not been paid. To reclaim the property, an owner or buyer must pay off the tax debt. McGoffin notes that often times, adjudicated properties become dilapidated and acquire so much debt that it is not worth it for anyone to come in and purchase them. The result is a piece of property that sits idle and continues to deteriorate, sometimes becoming a haven for homeless wanderers or drug traffickers. In the case of vacant lots, the city often pays a hefty price in an effort to maintain them.

In the McComb neighborhood alone, McGoffin estimates the city is paying approximately \$75,000 a year just to keep the grass cut on vacant lots.

The gears

Land banks acquire property by either purchasing them outright or receiving donations. In the case of adjudicated properties, state law allows the city to donate them to a nonprofit with an approved development plan. In the process, the nonprofit can get all debt on the property's title absolved.

In redistributing property, land banks have the option of either selling to prospective homeowners or commercial developers, or donating to another nonprofit, such as Habitat for Humanity.

McGoffin notes this type of urban redevelopment could go a long way in helping Lafayette manage its compounding growth issues.

"We have an affordable housing crisis in Lafayette," he says. "And we're talking about going into a neighborhood where we already have all of our infrastructure. We've got roads, we've got utilities, we've got grocery stores. All we need to do is put in the affordable housing."

"This is the first step in implementing smart growth," he adds. "If we can do this, we start working on our sprawl program."

For McComb residents, the issue is more about preservation.

Centered around 12th Street just north of the Evangeline Thruway, McComb Veazey is one of Lafayette's oldest neighborhoods. The origins of Lafayette's Black Mardi Gras celebration trace back to the empty lot at the corner of 12th and Apple streets. Clifton Chenier owned two houses in McComb, both bought during the days when he was a regular at the now defunct Blue Angel club on South Orange Street.

Lynne Guy, president of the McComb Veazey Neighborhood Improvement Corporation, says younger generations have lost touch with McComb's rich traditions. She hopes an injection of new homes and businesses in the area will also help bring a stronger sense of community back to the area.

"If people start to see homes and new businesses coming up, it'll bring people back," she says. "It'll boost our economy, it'll put more tax dollars in our area, but most importantly, it'll boost our pride." •



“Black holes are a force of nature that suck energy in without allowing any back out. We have a similar phenomenon here in Lafayette with adjudicated properties.”

—GARY MCGOFFIN



The alliances are being leveraged to expand our region's cultural identity

Winter partnerships flower in spring

The Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge has developed new partnerships that we expect to blossom each spring and summer.

The alliances are being leveraged to expand our region's cultural identity, while adding capacity so arts institutions can align with civic groups and local governments to enhance lives and lift the economy.

One emerging partner is The Baton Rouge Area Chamber. Together, we are planning programs to promote the culture and vitality of our eight-parish metropolitan area.

We are expanding a partnership with the Baton Rouge Convention and Visitors Bureau. With the council, the CVB is promoting Jazz in the Capital and adding more variety to existing cultural offerings. Besides the Jazz series, the CVB and the Council work each year to bring excitement to downtown Baton Rouge, including the 30th Anniversary FestForAll, the area's premier visual and performing arts festival in early May. FestForAll this year featured more than 80 regional and national craftsmen and fine artists, along with a stunning array of musical performers from all genres.

The council also is working with a newly-formed group of local Jazz enthusiasts to present a fall series of world-class Jazz performers in concert on the Manship Theatre stage. The concerts will be marketed broadly to attract regional audiences.

More cultural excitement began in mid-April

with "Sundays in The Park," an Arts Council collaboration with the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, 225 Magazine, The Shaw Center, The Downtown Development District and numerous downtown businesses. The four Sunday brunch-time concerts in Lafayette Park featured jazz, gospel, roots and bluegrass music.

The Council is also assisting in the Downtown Development District's new sign initiative. Our group identified artists and secured permission to include images of their works on new signs, which will add interest and ease to the downtown experience. Artists included in the initial five installations are Paul Dufour, Frank Hayden, Andrew Lytle, Adelaide Brent and Caroline Durieux.

Meanwhile, the Community Fund For the Arts 2007 Campaign is under way. Led by Cabinet Chair Ralph Stephens and new director of the CFA Amanda Haralson, the campaign's goal is \$600,000 this year to fund 14 outstanding Baton Rouge community cultural organizations.

In cooperation with BREADA's Downtown Farmers Market, the Council continues to host the popular Artist Market on the first Saturday every month.

We are planning an expansion of Community School for the Arts, a program with the LSU Museum of Art and The LSU School of Art that currently focuses on children. Plans are underway to add diverse programs for every age group, including seniors, the very young, students and more. Efforts are ongoing to secure scholarship support for deserving young people to attend summer and fall classes free of charge.

DEREK GORDON is new director of the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge



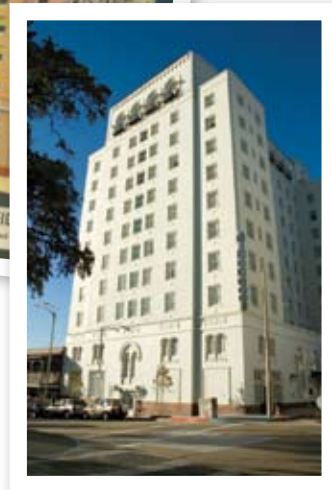
Impossible? ...Done.

They said the Capitol House was history. They didn't expect that dark declaration would be taken as a challenge by the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, a real estate portfolio of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

A savvy mix of financing—tax credits, bank loans, company capital—provided \$70 million to bring back the Queen of the River. Renamed the Hilton Capitol Center, the hotel has become an Art Deco jewel trumpeting downtown's rebirth. Biggest benefit: Hotel profits will be sowed into more community projects.

Become a Foundation Member.

Memberships start at \$100. Call Jessica Stuart at (225) 387-6126.



*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON PHILANTHROPY.

Conventional wisdom is wrong. People don't give to good causes for selfish reasons, such as tax breaks. Scientists have found neurons that glow for love and affection also light up when people give to causes they care about. Our donors already knew that. In more than 40 years, they have provided \$500 million to help the region, including grants to help runaways and money for reinventing downtown.

Join them.

Start a Donor Advised Fund at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.
Call Jessica Stuart at 225-387-6126.

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