

CURRENTS

first quarter 2021

BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION

braf.org

A portrait of Dr. Philip Schauer, a middle-aged man with short brown hair and blue eyes, smiling. He is wearing a grey plaid suit jacket, a white dress shirt, and a patterned tie. A small American flag pin is visible on his lapel. The background is a blurred interior space with white structural beams.

BIG DEAL

*Dr. Philip Schauer perfected bariatric surgery.
Now he's putting Pennington on the global map.*



The Foundation and partners are restoring Arthur Silverman's memorial to Martin Luther King Jr. in City Plaza.

TIM MUELLER



CONTENTS

FIRST QUARTER 2021 | VOLUME FIFTEEN | NUMBER ONE

06

LETTER

William E. Balhoff, Chair

08

ABOUT US

09

LEAD IN

- » Lakes Project
- » 225 Gives
- » Water Campus
- » Baton Rouge to New Orleans train
- » Cancer Focus Fund
- » Line4Line
- » Baton Rouge Green

20

4Q GRANTS

26

CIVIC PROJECTS

Monumental change

Baton Rouge's little understood MLK Jr. memorial to have its day

30

CIVIC PROJECTS

Q&A with Lysha Best, RI International Louisiana director

Baton Rouge's first crisis stabilization center opened in February

36

COVER STORY

Big deal

Dr. Philip Schauer perfected bariatric surgery. Now he's

putting Pennington on the global map

44

NONPROFITS

New kids on the block

'Angel Coalition' collaborates on innovative youth center

48

SPARK

The first plank

In north Baton Rouge, a small park with many purposes

52

SPARK BRIEFS

54

CODA



when Build Baton Rouge revealed it had won a \$5 million Chase grant to launch a long-range rescue of Plank Road.

But the redevelopment authority for East Baton Rouge Parish had not pulled a rabbit from a top hat. The grant was the result of decades of faith the Foundation and our partners had placed in good ideas—and then doing the work needed to make it real.

More sweat than magic, this new start for Plank Road came from hard-nosed persistence. It meant bringing Local Initiatives Support Corp. to our parish to seed community development corporations; researching the best methods for restarting declining neighborhoods; failing and then succeeding in offering better nonprofit schools; and finally learning from those failures and successes to form Build Baton Rouge with local government.

The Foundation’s fund donors and members provided the early support to seed the idea for a redevelopment authority, and the Foundation has one representative on the independent agency’s board.

BBR’s board and staff know that rebuilding communities will be no quick trick or sleight of hand. Rather, it will be a feat that takes decades working with devoted partners, both public and private. That’s beginning to happen on Plank.

Our parish government, with Mayor Sharon Weston Broome championing the cause, has provided BBR with a reli-

The grant was the result of decades of faith the Foundation and our partners had placed in good ideas—and then doing the work needed to make it real.

able source of revenue to hire skilled project managers. BREC is now working with BBR, as are nonprofits, on initiatives as well.

In this issue, we provide an update about one of them: a new pocket park on Plank. It’s the fruit of collaboration between BBR, LSU Landscape Architecture students, BREC, and a new group, Co-City Baton Rouge. The park is just one part of BBR’s master plan for Plank Road, and the agency will start an \$8 million mixed-use building nearby this spring.

You have to start somewhere.

* * *

The Foundation began last year with an optimistic annual plan that was fit into a five-year strategy. Big projects were underway and others were ready to go. Then disaster struck: the coronavirus swept through South Louisiana, along with big hurricanes compounding the misery.

Our staff responded with agility, dividing their time between disaster relief and our planned initiatives. South Louisiana and the nation rose to the occasion as well, contributing more than \$10 million to the Foundation and our affiliate in Lake Charles.

Nonprofits across South Louisiana stepped into the breach and did not falter. Now, with the end of the pandemic in sight this summer, South Louisiana has begun to recover and is readying to move forward again.

I want to thank the Foundation’s staff for serving admirably during the pandemic. Our fund donors and our members—they provide annual support—stood with us the entire time. I’m grateful to them for believing in the idea that caring for others is the noblest thing we can do with our lives.

Sincerely,

William E. Balhoff,
Chair

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

100 NORTH STREET, SUITE 900
BATON ROUGE LOUISIANA 70802

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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

mission

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

To achieve our mission, we:

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

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

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

1 We connect fund donors—philanthropists—to worthwhile projects and nonprofits. Over 55 years, our donors have granted more than \$500 million across South Louisiana and the world.

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

local knowledge about issues and nonprofits, and manages all the necessary paperwork.

2 We conduct civic leadership initiatives that change the direction of the Baton Rouge region and South Louisiana. Members support these projects, which solve fundamental problems. Tax-deductible memberships range from \$200 to \$25,000.

3 We offer strategic consulting services to nonprofits.

Key Civic Leadership Projects

THE NEW MOBILITY: The Foundation is trying to make it easier for people to get around the parish. We are participating with local and state government on several projects that give residents transportation choices. Engineers say that more choices reduce the burden on roads. The projects include a train connecting Baton Rouge to New Orleans and a bike sharing system that launched in 2018.

BATON ROUGE HEALTH DISTRICT (BRHealthDistrict.org): The parish asked the Foundation to pay for a master plan for the Bluebonnet, Perkins and Essen Lane corridor, where most of the health care assets are located. The plan has been adopted by the parish, and an independent nonprofit—the Baton Rouge Health District—is implementing the plan.



TIM MUELLER

LAKES PROJECT A STEP FROM CONSTRUCTION

IN 2014, UPON BATON ROUGE Area Foundation’s 50th anniversary, CEO John Davies announced a gift to thank the community. The Foundation would raise funds and lead a master plan for the University/City Park lakes, which were turning into mud flats.

Seven years later, the project is one step away from implementation. In November 2020, a panel that is overseeing lakes restoration selected design and engineering firms that will be guided by the \$1 million Foundation master plan to dredge the six-lake system.

Massachusetts-based Sasaki was selected as master design firm. It will work with GeoEngineers, which was chosen to collect geotechnical data and to sample sediment; and Fenstermaker, the company that will conduct a

bathymetric survey and identify where thousands of cypress stumps are just below the shallow water. Stumps were left in place when the lakes were converted from swamp in the 1920s and 1930s.

Physical work should begin this fall. In sections and by lake, water will be diverted so that stumps can be pulled out. Then the lakes will be dredged from less than 3 feet, on average, to a depth at which the water quality can sustain fish and other animals.

The master plan recommends dredged materials be scooped to the shore. On the new land will be safer bike and pedestrian paths, a new park on Dalrymple Drive, a larger park on Stanford Avenue, and promenades on Sorority Row and Dalrymple Drive. University and City Park lakes will be

connected by a bridge on May Street, allowing people to take a boat between them for the first time.

Dredging and building the first amenities are expected to cost \$50 million. BREC, local government and the state have put up \$15 million so far to begin the first phase, which should include deepening most of the lakes and building paths and the connecting bridge.

Collaborators on the lakes initiative are the State of Louisiana, the City of Baton Rouge and Parish of East Baton Rouge, BREC, LSU, and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. A joint venture of Brailsford & Dunlavey and CSRS is advising the group. The project is being implemented by University Lakes LLC, which was established by the LSU Real Estate and Facilities Foundation, an affiliate of the LSU Foundation.



BATON ROUGE GIVES

THE HALLMARKS OF A SUCCESSFUL fundraising event were there—music, food, swag. When the counting was completed, the 225 Gives campaign raised more than \$3 million for nonprofits across the region, a welcome lift during a challenging 2020. The event, Baton Rouge’s first Giving Tuesday, was in November.

Nonprofits sent email and video requests to secure contributions that would help them win prizes from an incentive pool. Baton Rouge Youth Coalition raised the most money (\$476,000), followed by City Year Baton Rouge (\$106,332), Our Lady of the Lake Foundation (\$95,792), Companion Animal Alliance (\$94,683) and Teach For America - South Louisiana (\$77,223).

Twenty-one Baton Rouge Area Foundation donors granted \$752,633 from their donor advised funds to nonprofits participating in 225 Gives. We thank them for their generosity. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Capital Area United Way presented 225 Gives, with startup funding and staff support from the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation.

Above: Supporters of Kids' Orchestra rallied for the nonprofit that teaches music to schoolchildren.

Opposite (L-R): Mayor Sharon Weston Broome gave a pep talk about halfway through the event. // George Bell of Capital Area United Way talks with Renee Chatelain of the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge about the first Giving Day for Baton Rouge. // John Gray and his band performed during 225 Gives; free jambalaya was served.



PHOTOS BY TIM MUELLER



The Water Campus

AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA FLOODED New Orleans and killed hundreds of residents, Mary Landrieu, our U.S. senator at that time, wanted Louisiana to respond better to such calamities. She asked the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to form an organization that would improve water management practices in a state that was losing its coastal lands and getting struck by fierce storms more often.

Our research verified that the senator was onto something big. We formed The Water Institute of the Gulf. It now works around the world, providing anxious policyholders with solid science to help their coastal communities adapt to shifting shores.

The Institute needed a place to land, so the Foundation partnered with Commercial Properties Realty Trust to start building The Water Campus, a place where scientists and engineers could share ideas to deliver solutions they might not have come up with alone.

In 2021, The first phase of The Water Campus has been completed. Rising on 35 acres between River Road and Nicholson Drive, it now has five buildings—four for science, one for apartment living.

Campus tenants include the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, The Water Institute of the Gulf, Stantec, the Louisiana Cyber Coordination Center, LSU's Center for River Studies.

The street grid at the campus has been upgraded, thanks to city-parish government. A railroad crossing will open this spring to let motorists, pedestrians and cyclists travel from River Road to Nicholson Drive via Water Street, the main road of the campus. More at TheWaterCampus.org.

CENTER FOR COASTAL AND DELTAIC SOLUTIONS

The Water Institute is headquartered at the center, which is among a few local buildings that sits on the river side of the levee. On the top floor is the Estuary, a rentable venue for meetings, weddings, conferences. The building is connected to the city's original commercial dock.

TIM MUELLER





200 WATER STREET

The building has 20 lofts—18 two-bedroom units, two one-bedroom units. The apartments have balconies and outdoor spaces on the Main Square Park, which has a fountain as its centerpiece. 200 Water Street has a dog washing room and a gated area for bikes that includes tools and tire pumps. Tenants can use a fitness center next door.

TIM MUELLER





LSU CENTER FOR RIVER STUDIES

The university's new scale model of the lower Mississippi River is inside the building. Scientists use the model to test results from computer models. They can, for instance, pinpoint where to divert the silty river to build up new land on the Gulf Coast.

EDDY PEREZ / LSU STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

1200 BRICKYARD LANE

Engineering firm Stantec, Lemoine Cos. and Louisiana Cyber Coordination Center are the tenants. It includes a fitness center that is available to tenants of 200 Water Street.

TIM MUELLER



CPRA

A building to house the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is on the campus. CPRA does research and implements the state's coastal restoration plan. The Water Institute provides independent science to the CPRA.

MICHAEL PALUMBO





TIM MUELLER

CIVIC PROJECT: BATON ROUGE TO NEW ORLEANS TRAIN

President Joe Biden loves trains, which could be excellent news for the proposed Baton Rouge to New Orleans passenger train. Biden's pledge of more resources to passenger rail will be particularly welcomed by people who live in one city but work in another. In the Baton Rouge-New Orleans region, the number of potential cross-commuters is about 60,000. The Metro area breakdowns are:

- 29,520 workers have home addresses in Baton Rouge but work addresses in New Orleans;
- 30,144 workers have home addresses in New Orleans but work

addresses in Baton Rouge.

Starting passenger train service in the BR-NOLA corridor is among civic projects of the Foundation. We are collaborating with state, city and economic development leaders. The proposed train would run on an upgraded, existing line with stops in downtown and the Baton Rouge Health District, Gonzales and LaPlace, the New Orleans airport, and the mass transit terminal next to the Superdome.

Biden has pledged trillions of dollars to repair roads, bridges, rail lines and more, with substantial money available for new infrastructure projects.

INVESTING WITH A PURPOSE

The Foundation has invested in a \$50 million venture capital fund that backs cancer-fighting technology. The Cancer Focus Fund was created in partnership with The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, considered among the best cancer research and treatment centers in the world. Other investors in the fund are Rice University Endowment, LSU Health Shreveport Foundation, Ochsner Health and private investors.

Small to midsize biopharmaceutical companies often face challenges in conducting effective early-stage clinical studies as a result of a lack of funding, as well as access to oncologists, clinical facilities and eligible patients seeking to participate in cancer trials. Cancer Focus Fund aims to address this unmet need by providing investments for promising cancer therapeutics together with the clinical trials expertise and infrastructure of MD Anderson.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation invests a portion of its portfolio in technologies that can improve the world. Our venture capital investments have targeted innovations and inventions by Louisiana researchers and companies.



BOOKS FOR OUR TIMES

EBR public and charter elementary schools will soon receive a collection of books that focus on and celebrate diversity. Line4Line, a Baton Rouge literacy program that works through barbershops to change the narrative around reading outcomes and success for African American boys, along with Knock Knock Children's Museum, the East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library, and the East Baton Rouge Parish School System are working together on this initiative. Books are curated by The Conscious Kid.

SHARING AN ABUNDANCE

Baton Rouge Green harvested more than 6,000 pounds of citrus for the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. More than 50 residents signed up to let BR Green's 230 volunteers pick oranges, satsumas and other citrus fruits. Lamar Corp. has sponsored the program since its inception, and Bofinger's Tree Service helps with equipment and manpower. Cox Charities provided a grant this year to promote the Pick Event, which boosted the harvest from 4,600 pounds in 2019.



THE BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION

GRANTED \$7.5 million in fourth quarter 2020.

Grants are listed below by organizations. We publish all grants in our annual report. The Foundation makes grants on behalf of people who open and put assets in charitable accounts with us. We also make grants from a pool of unrestricted assets. If you are interested in learning more about opening a charitable fund at the Foundation, please contact Edmund Giering at (225) 387-6126 or egiering@braf.org.

GRANTS / 4TH QUARTER 2020

A Bed 4 Me Foundation \$3,500
 Academic Distinction Fund \$45,187
 Academy of the Sacred Heart New Orleans Foundation Inc. \$4,000
 Acts of Love Inc. \$10,500
 Adaptive Sports Center of Crested Butte Inc. \$5,000
 Adult Literacy Advocates of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$5,000
 AFS Intercultural Programs Inc. \$250
 Agenda for Children Inc. - New Orleans \$11,111
 Alameda County Community Food Bank \$200
 Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area \$8,000
 American Cancer Society Inc. - Mid-South Division \$7,500
 American Heart Association Inc. - Greater Southeast Affiliate \$32,258
 American National Red Cross - Louisiana Capital Area \$803.73
 American Public Media Group \$200
 American Shakespeare Center \$5,000
 Arc of Louisiana \$500
 Ars Lyrica Houston \$4,700
 Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$35,802
 Arts Council of New Orleans \$25,000
 Auckland Foundation \$30,000
 Autism Fund \$13,715.30
 Bail Project Inc. \$200
 Barnstable Land Trust Inc. \$2,500
 Baton Rouge Area Foundation \$106,500
 Baton Rouge Area Kids Fore Golf Foundation \$1,000
 Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre Inc. \$2,500
 Baton Rouge Basketball and Volleyball Association \$1,500
 Baton Rouge Christian Education Foundation Inc. - The Dunham School \$52,885
 Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center Inc. \$3,650
 Baton Rouge Gallery Inc. \$3,000
 Baton Rouge Green Association Inc. \$41,518
 Baton Rouge High School Foundation \$3,000
 Baton Rouge Opera Guild \$3,355.29
 Baton Rouge Regional Eye Bank Inc. \$20,000

Baton Rouge Youth Coalition Inc. \$293,250
 BENOLA / Black Education for New Orleans \$200,000
 Beth Shalom Synagogue \$15,000
 Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Heart of Georgia \$2,750
 Black Teacher Collaborative Incorporated \$167,000
 Blue Ridge Mountains Health Project Inc. \$500
 Book Harvest \$5,000
 Boy Scouts of America - Istrouma Area Council \$13,500
 Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$61,250
 Boys and Girls Club of the Plateau \$500
 BRAF Foundation Operating Fund \$5,000
 Brain Injury Association - Louisiana Chapter \$5,000
 BREADA - Big River Economic & Agricultural Development Alliance \$10,650
 Bridge Center for Hope \$20,063
 Brothers of the Sacred Heart Foundation Inc. \$1,250
 Cambiar Education \$88,889
 Camelback Ventures Inc. \$22,222
 Cancer Services Inc. \$48,508.05
 Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless \$2,500
 Capital Area Animal Welfare Society \$303.73
 Capital Area CASA Association \$2,500
 Capital Area United Way \$105,500
 Capital Area United Way - 225 Gives \$62,835.08
 Capstone Adaptive Learning and Therapy Centers Inc. \$3,500
 Carolina Youth Coalition \$5,000
 CASA of St. Landry Inc. \$1,000
 Cat Haven Inc. \$5,000
 Catholic Foundation of the Archdiocese of Mobile Inc. - St. Thomas by the Sea \$1,000
 Catholic High School Foundation \$2,229.13
 Catholic Relief Services Inc. \$750
 Cenikor Foundation - Baton Rouge \$5,000
 Center for Planning Excellence Inc. \$17,000
 Center for the Arts - Crested Butte \$2,500

Centre for the Arts \$12,349.76
 Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Baton Rouge Inc./McMains Children's Development Center \$5,000
 Chez Hope Inc. \$1,500
 Child Advocacy Center Inc. \$2,500
 Child Advocacy Services Inc. \$2,500
 Children's Cup \$1,700
 Chinese Christian Church of Baton Rouge \$280.68
 Christ School Inc. \$100
 Christ the King Parish and Catholic Center at LSU \$12,994
 Church of the Good Shepherd \$6,000
 City of Baton Rouge, Parish of East Baton Rouge \$21,671
 City Year Inc. - Baton Rouge \$121,000
 College for Social Innovation Inc. \$5,000
 Community Foundation of Henderson County Inc. \$1,500
 Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin Inc. \$100
 Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana \$500
 Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana Hurricane Relief and Recovery Fund \$37,376
 Companion Animal Alliance \$76,000
 Congregation B'nai Israel of Baton Rouge \$39,000
 Connections for Life \$25,000
 Cool Cooperative Inc. \$25,000
 Cotuit Center for the Arts \$2,500
 Covenant House New Orleans \$2,000
 Crested Butte Film Festival \$2,500
 Crested Butte Mountain Educational Radio Inc. \$1,000
 Crippled Children's Foundation \$500
 Cristo Rey Baton Rouge \$2,500
 Cristo Rey Dallas High School \$1,750
 Cultural Landscape Foundation \$1,000
 Dallas Holocaust Museum \$5,000
 Delta Waterfowl Foundation \$12,500
 Dillard University National Alumni Association Inc. \$2,000

Doctors Without Borders USA Inc. \$2,500
 Douglas Manship Sr. Theatre Complex Holding Inc. \$17,585
 Duke University - Sanford School of Public Policy \$50,000
 Dyslexia Association of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$602
 East Baton Rouge District Attorney's Office \$40,423
 East Baton Rouge Office of the Public Defender \$36,920
 East Baton Rouge Parish Council on Aging Inc. \$400
 East Baton Rouge Parish Library \$2,971
 EBRPSS - Capitol Middle School \$2,700
 EBRPSS - Magnolia Woods Elementary School \$1,000
 EBRPSS - Tara High School \$1,000
 EdNavigator Inc. \$155,555
 Educare New Orleans \$5,000
 Education Trust Inc. \$66,667
 EHS - Academic Excellence Futures Fund Endowment IHO Hugh McIntosh \$5,000
 Emerge Center Inc. \$11,846
 Emerge School for Autism Inc \$10,000
 Empower 225 \$3,500
 En-Hacore Community Center and Orientations ECCO \$5,000
 Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion \$7,000
 Episcopal Church of the Holy Nativity \$250
 Episcopal High School of Baton Rouge \$45,563
 Face to Face Health & Counseling Service Inc. \$5,000
 Family Road of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$500
 Fellowship of Catholic University Students / FOCUS \$1,000
 Film Forum Inc. \$30,000
 First Baptist Church of Picayune \$500
 First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge \$16,837
 First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge Foundation \$100
 First United Methodist Church \$5,600

Foundation for a Better Louisiana \$3,200
 Foundation for Excellence in Louisiana Public Broadcasting \$2,000
 Foundation for Historical Louisiana Inc. / Preserve Louisiana \$22,015
 Foundation for Louisiana \$400,000
 Foundation for Woman's \$35,758
 Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University \$7,250
 Fresh Start for Children and Families Inc \$3,500
 Friends of a Studio in the Woods \$5,000
 Friends of Cantera Inc. \$11,000
 Friends of Hilltop Arboretum Inc. \$6,350
 Friends of Lafitte Corridor Inc. \$5,000
 Friends of Louisiana Public Broadcasting Inc. \$12,254
 Friends of Magnolia Mound Plantation Inc. \$2,500
 Friends of Rosedown Inc. \$250
 Friends of the Alexandria Museum of Art \$500
 Friends of the Animals BR Inc. \$500
 Friends of the Baton Rouge Zoo \$1,000
 Friends of the Oakley Plantation Inc. \$200
 Friends of the Old State Capitol \$100
 Front Yard Bikes \$6,491.02
 GaitWay Therapeutic Horsemanship \$28,000
 General Health System Foundation \$35,000
 Georgia Tech Foundation Inc. \$5,000
 Girl Scouts - Audubon Council Inc. \$400
 Global Hunger Project \$150
 Good Shepherd Nativity Mission School Inc. \$12,000
 Govern For America \$11,111
 Governors Mansion Preservation Foundation Inc. \$1,000
 Grace at the Green Light Inc. \$1,000
 Grace Episcopal Church \$350
 Greater Baton Rouge Economic Partnership Inc. \$750
 Greater Baton Rouge Economic Partnership Inc./YEA \$5,000
 Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank Inc. \$49,050
 Greater Mount Canaan Baptist Church \$500

Greg LeBlanc Fund \$400,000
 Habitat for Humanity of Greater Baton Rouge \$500
 Harding Academy \$250
 Healing Hoof Steps Corporation \$3,500
 Healing Place Church \$500
 Hearts of Hope \$3,662
 Heritage Ranch \$12,591
 Holy Family Catholic Church \$14,471
 HOPE Ministries of Baton Rouge \$1,000
 Hospice Foundation of Greater Baton Rouge \$40,067.77
 Houston Haymon and Sonja Bruzauskas Fund \$25,000
 Humanities Amped \$1,000
 Hunters for the Hungry A Non Profit Corporation \$1,000
 Iberville Foundation for Academic Excellence \$5,671
 Innocence Project New Orleans \$200
 Institute of Noetic Sciences \$1,000
 Institute of Southern Jewish Life Inc. \$1,000
 Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$1,500
 International Hospitality Foundation LSU \$1,666.07
 International Phycological Society A California Nonprofit Pub Ben Corp \$1,780
 International Rescue Committee Inc. \$150
 InterVarsity Christian Fellowship - USA \$25,000
 Isidore Newman School \$3,600
 ISKCON of Mississippi Inc. \$6,000
 Jacksonville State University \$500
 JDRF International - Georgia Chapter \$1,000
 Jefferson Parish Public School System - Washington Elementary School \$28,038.93
 Jesuit High School of New Orleans \$1,000
 Jewish Federation of Greater Baton Rouge \$2,900
 Joni and Friends Louisiana \$1,500
 Junior Achievement of Greater Baton Rouge and Acadiana \$10,000
 Junior League of Baton Rouge Inc. \$7,000
 Kappa Kappa Gamma Foundation \$2,100

Kemper and Leila Williams Foundation - Historic New Orleans Collection \$1,100
 Kids' Orchestra Inc. \$11,100
 King of Kings Ministries Inc. / King of Kings Community Jerusalem \$3,250
 Knights of Columbus Charities Inc \$250
 Knock Knock Children's Museum Inc. \$37,100
 Kudvumisa Foundation USA Inc. \$1,500
 Lafayette Ballet Theatre \$1,000
 Leukemia and Lymphoma Society Inc. - Mississippi/Louisiana Chapter \$500
 Life Action Ministries \$300
 Life Outreach International Association of Churches Inc. \$15,800
 Lighthouse for the Blind in New Orleans \$4,940
 Literacy Council of Highlands Inc. \$1,500
 Living Gospel Church \$1,500
 Living Word Church of Muskegon \$600
 Livonia High School \$1,000
 Louise S. McGehee School \$6,500
 Louisiana 4-H Foundation \$100
 Louisiana Art and Science Museum Inc. \$12,619.94
 Louisiana Children's Museum \$25,000
 Louisiana Discovery Museum Inc. \$2,500
 Louisiana Naval War Memorial Commission \$2,500
 Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency \$200
 Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra \$5,000
 Louisiana School for the Deaf Foundation \$1,000
 Louisiana Superintendents Academy \$22,222
 Louisiana Symphony Association / Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra \$10,837.90
 Louisiana Tech University Foundation Inc. \$1,000
 Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services Inc. \$500
 Louisiana Veterans Museum Foundation \$500
 Louisiana Youth Seminar Inc. \$10,000
 Loving Our Communitys Children Inc. - Ascension Affiliate \$5,000
 Loyola University \$21,000
 LSU Foundation \$11,300

LSU Foundation - College of Art and Design \$2,000
 LSU Foundation - Department of Libraries \$1,000
 LSU Foundation - E.J. Ourso College of Business \$5,000
 LSU Foundation - Friends of French Studies \$100
 LSU Foundation - LSU Ag Center Botanic Gardens at Burden \$7,600
 LSU Foundation - LSU Museum of Art \$164,600
 LSU Foundation - LSU Press \$3,500
 LSU Foundation - Manship School of Mass Communication \$3,200
 LSU Foundation - Paul M. Hebert Law Center \$6,000
 LSU Foundation - School of Social Work \$500
 LSU Foundation - Shreveport \$1,000
 LSU Foundation - University Lab School Foundation \$1,600
 Manners of the Heart \$1,100
 Mantle of Mary Inc. \$1,500
 Map 1040 \$1,500
 Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center \$48,000
 Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center Foundation \$110,000
 Mayor's Healthy City Initiative \$1,742.03
 McNeese State University Foundation \$5,000
 Mental Health Association of Okaloosa Walton Counties Inc. \$3,500
 Mental Health Collective Trauma Bereavement Fund \$100,000
 Mercy Ships \$5,233
 Meridian Behavioral Healthcare Inc. \$2,500
 Metairie Park Country Day School \$1,500
 Metanoia Inc. \$1,000
 MetroMorphosis \$47,222
 Mid City Redevelopment Alliance Inc. \$4,000
 Mighty Moms \$4,000
 Miles Perret Cancer Center Services \$3,200
 MLK Memorial Fund \$10,000
 National Audubon Society Inc. - Audubon Louisiana \$12,000
 National World War II Museum Inc. \$3,000

Nature Conservancy - Louisiana \$17,500
 New Beginning Word Fellowship Evangelistic Ministry/Crossway New Beginnings \$1,000
 New Orleans Ballet Association \$5,000
 New Orleans Career Center \$88,889
 New Orleans Center for Creative Arts Institute \$1,000
 New Orleans Museum of Art \$23,500
 New Orleans Musicians Assistance Foundation \$15,000
 New Orleans Opera Association \$19,000
 New Schools for Baton Rouge \$59,500
 New Schools for New Orleans Inc. \$311,111
 New Venture Theatre \$1,000
 New York Theatre Workshop Inc. \$5,000
 NWEA \$222,222
 O'Brien House Inc. \$8,000
 Ochsner Clinic Foundation \$5,000
 Odyssey House Louisiana \$3,500
 Of Moving Colors Productions \$9,750
 Old State Capitol Foundation Inc. \$1,500
 Ollie Steele Burden Manor Inc. \$351
 Omicron Beta Foundation Inc. \$1,000
 Opera Louisiane Inc. \$11,000
 Operation Blessing International \$7,500
 Options Inc. \$2,500
 Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church \$4,500
 Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School \$10,500
 Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church \$500
 Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church \$37,664
 Our Lady of the Lake Foundation \$131,000
 Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church \$500
 Our Voice Nuestra Voz \$33,333
 Ozanam Inn \$4,000
 Pahara Institute \$55,555
 Park County Environmental Council \$2,000
 Parsons Dance Foundation Inc. \$5,000
 Particular Council of St. Vincent de Paul of Baton Rouge Louisiana \$18,350
 Partners in Health \$200
 Pat's Coats for Kids \$1,500
 Paul Quinn College \$35,000
 Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation

\$54,500
 Phillips Exeter Academy \$1,000
 Planned Parenthood of the Gulf Coast Inc. \$1,000
 Planting Justice \$200
 Playwrights Horizons Inc. \$5,000
 Pointe Coupee Early Childhood Coalition Inc. \$1,000
 Pointe Coupee Historical Society Inc. \$600
 Pointe Coupee Parish Police Jury \$200
 Port Allen Educational Broadcasting Foundation / Sound Radio \$100
 Presbyterian Children's Homes And Services \$4,000
 President and Fellows of Harvard College \$10,000
 President and Fellows of Harvard College - David Rockefeller Center for Latin Am \$10,000
 Propel America \$150,801
 Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana Inc. \$2,000
 Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge Inc. \$34,338.75
 Red Shoes Inc. \$7,500
 Redemptorist St. Gerard Majella School \$1,000
 Reliant Mission Inc. \$1,500
 Research Park Corporation \$10,000
 Rev Broadband Emploueyees 1st Fund \$20,000
 River Road African American Museum and Gallery \$1,000
 Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation \$1,000
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge \$116,072
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge - Bishop Ott Works of Mercy Trust \$183
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge - Bishop's Annual Appeal \$5,500
 Roots of Music Inc. \$15,000
 Rotary Club of Baton Rouge Inc. Foundation \$200
 Rotary District 6200 Foundation \$24,075
 Russell Domingue Ministries Inc. / Blue Flames Ministries \$750
 Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church \$5,000
 Saint Joseph's Abbey and Seminary College \$2,000

Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana \$6,500
 Shotgun Cinema \$5,000
 Shriners Hospital for Children \$13,680
 Sisters Servants of Mary Ministers to the Sick \$100
 SJA Foundation \$3,100
 Solomon Episcopal Conference Center \$1,000
 Son of a Saint \$10,000
 South Africa Development Fund Inc. \$10,000
 South Louisiana Community College \$1,500
 Southern Rep \$5,000
 Spanish-Speaking Unity Council of Alameda County Inc \$200
 St. Alban's Chapel \$1,000
 St. Albans School - School of Public Service \$1,000
 St. Aloysius Catholic Church \$17,000
 St. Aloysius Catholic School \$1,850
 St. Andrew's - Sewanee School \$750
 St. Anne Catholic Church \$2,033
 St. Augustine Church \$938.75
 St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church \$2,500
 St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church \$3,000
 St. Francisville Area Foundation Inc. \$300
 St. George Catholic Church \$10,500
 St. George's Episcopal School \$250
 St. Gerard Majella Church \$11,500
 St. James Episcopal Church \$5,500
 St. James Episcopal Day School \$3,750
 St. Joseph Cathedral \$1,000
 St. Joseph the Worker Church \$6,109.13
 St. Joseph's Academy \$13,500
 St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Inc. \$4,100
 St. Jude the Apostle Catholic School \$986
 St. Lillian Academy \$2,000
 St. Luke's Episcopal Church \$18,208
 St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church/ St. Thomas Chapel \$1,000
 St. Martin Parish School Board - Breaux Bridge Jr. High School \$1,000
 St. Mary's Catholic School \$100
 St. Mary's Church \$100

GRANTS

St. Mary's Episcopal Church \$250
 St. Mary's Episcopal Church and Cemetery Association Inc. \$200
 St. Paul's Holy Trinity Episcopal Church \$250
 St. Sharbel Makhlof Foundation Inc. \$2,500
 St. Stephen's Episcopal Church \$100
 St. Theresa of Avila Middle School \$6,403
 St. Thomas Aquinas Regional Catholic High School \$14,464
 St. Thomas More Catholic Church \$1,100
 Steele Boulevard Public Area Fund \$500
 StorageGives Fund \$34,000
 Summits Education \$10,000
 Sunshine Foundation Inc. \$300
 Teach for America Inc. - South Louisiana \$316,000
 The Administrators of the Tulane Educational Fund \$10,750
 The Administrators of the Tulane Educational Fund - Tulane University Law School \$500
 The ARC Baton Rouge \$250
 The Ascension Fund Inc. \$13,804
 The Breakthrough Collaborative Inc. \$1,200
 The Cahoon Museum of American Art Inc. \$2,500
 The Christian Outreach Center of Baton Rouge Inc. \$1,337
 The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta Inc. \$34
 The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina Inc. \$3,000
 The Cotuit Library Association \$2,500
 The Friends of the Rural Life Museum Inc. \$4,000
 The Greater New Orleans Foundation \$47,473
 The Hargrove Foundation \$10,000
 The Lakes Fund \$20,000
 The Mental Health Association for Greater Baton Rouge \$10,000
 The Ogden Museum of Southern Art Inc. \$500
 The Original Richland Library Restoration Society Inc. \$802
 The Rectors and Visitors of the University of Virginia \$98,000
 The Salvation Army - Baton Rouge \$9,810
 The University of Mississippi \$1,500

The Village Green of Cashiers Inc. \$500
 The Vision 21 Foundation \$500
 The Walls Project \$12,500
 The Writing Revolution Inc. \$12,500
 Thomson Memorial Presbyterian Church \$100
 Three Peaks Scholarship Fund \$250
 Thrive Foundation \$100,000
 Tiger Athletic Foundation \$31,500
 Trinity Episcopal Church - Baton Rouge \$8,633
 Trinity Episcopal Day School \$300
 Trinity Sober Homes \$1,500
 Trustees of Princeton University \$250
 Tulane Alumni Association \$1,133.92
 Union for Reformed Judaism - Henry S. Jacobs Camp \$250
 United in Pink Inc. \$2,750
 United Service Organizations Inc. \$100
 United Way of St. Charles \$2,500
 University of Connecticut Foundation Inc. \$200
 University Of Georgia Foundation \$200
 University of Louisiana at Lafayette \$500
 University of Mississippi Foundation \$1,000
 University of Southern Mississippi \$1,500
 University of Texas Foundation \$1,000
 University of the Cumberland Inc. \$1,000
 University of the South \$25,000
 University Presbyterian Church \$26,550
 Urban League of Palm Beach County Inc. \$1,000
 US Biennial Inc. \$50,000
 Vanderbilt Catholic High School \$5,000
 Vieux Carre Commission Foundation \$10,000
 Vogel Alcove \$5,000
 Volunteers In Public Schools Inc. \$3,400
 Volunteers of America Inc. \$5,000
 We the Protesters Inc. \$200
 West Baton Rouge Foundation for Academic Excellence \$6,120
 West Baton Rouge Historical Association \$1,100
 West Feliciana Historical Society \$125
 William Carey University \$500
 Winston-Salem Foundation \$34

Woman's Club Foundation Inc. \$15,000
 World Connect Inc. \$50,000
 Wounded Warrior Project Inc. \$100
 WRKF Public Radio Inc. \$22,404
 Yale University \$1,000
 YMCA of the Capital Area \$10,500
 YMCA of the Capital Area - A.C. Lewis Branch YMCA \$5,000
 Young Aspirations-Young Artists Inc. \$5,000
 Young Life - Baton Rouge \$5,000



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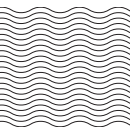
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Monumental change

Baton Rouge's little understood MLK Jr. memorial to have its day

BY MAGGIE HEYN RICHARDSON | PHOTOS BY TIM MUELLER

Baton Rouge's public memorial to Martin Luther King Jr. reaches 21 feet high, an imposing monolith whose sturdy rectangular column blooms into an abstract cross formed by interlocking shapes. The shapes' two original hues, blue and orange, are opposing, yet complementary on the color wheel.

In his original artist's proposal, the late Arthur Silverman wrote this about the work: "One could say about this arrangement, starting at the solid bottom and progressing to the freed-up cross at the top, 'free at last.'"

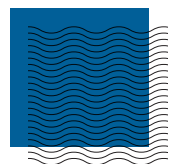
Few memorials to King are like Baton Rouge's, a painted aluminum 1,200-pound contemporary work installed on the River Center Plaza in 1997. The overwhelming majority of monuments to the pioneering civil rights leader across the

United States are realistic depictions—largely busts and statues of a recognizable King in stately form. On the Georgia state capitol grounds, 1 mile from King's birthplace, stands an 8-foot likeness. A similarly sized statue stands on the grounds of the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. In Washington, D.C., the national memorial to King is also a realistic portrayal, a 30-foot statue carved into white granite. There are countless others similarly styled.

Now 24 years after its installation, Baton Rouge's unique King memorial will be restored, creating a timely opportunity for public discussion about racial healing and improved understanding of the work's intention. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Office of Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome and the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge are teaming up to restore the monument

FOUNDATION FACT

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation has raised funds to restore the Martin Luther King Jr. monument in downtown. Virginia Noland chairs a committee to oversee the fundraising and restoration. She led the Foundation's previous art restoration efforts and is a former Foundation board chair.





Arthur Silverman

with private funds, starting in 2021. As an abstract piece, the memorial's artistic meaning may have been lost on the scores of residents and visitors who have walked by it for more than two decades. Reviving its faded colors, repairing its damaged base and creating a more inviting setting for reflection are all goals of the project.

The idea for a Martin Luther King memorial emerged in 1993. Private donors raised \$125,000 to fund the project, which was managed by the Arts Council and approved by the city-parish. Juried artists from around the country were invited to submit proposals, and the winning idea came from New Orleans sculptor Arthur Silverman.

According to his proposal, Silverman's intention was to create an abstract piece with a spiritual quality in a setting "where people will come to be with others as well as to enjoy the visual tribute." Characteristic of his body of work, which includes more than two dozen public commissions in New Orleans and works in other cities and private collections across the United States, Silverman's MLK monument plays with shapes in space.

Silverman worked as a urologist in New Orleans for 30 years before devoting himself to sculpture. He was

particularly fond of the tetrahedron, a three-dimensional form comprised of four triangles.

In his proposal, Silverman described his strategy for the King piece. "The sculpture will rise 21 feet above its base. The basic idea is two columns intersecting each other on perpendicular visual axes. One of the columns has a diamond-shape footprint, and the other is rectangular. The first mentioned column is fenestrated in the upper part by six openings which are actually square, but seem rectangular because of the oblique plane of one of the openings. In the rectangular column, these openings form a complete cruciform at the top."

The cross, intended Silverman, is effectively being released, or freed, at the summit.

As a monolith, the sculpture invites visitors to gather around it. Concrete benches were installed in its viewshed so that individuals could pause and reflect, but organizers hope to improve them for a better experience.

The project will bring renewed awareness to King's message and work in a time of racial tumult, and it could also undergird Baton Rouge's place among cities with significant public art. A few prominent examples flank it, including renowned sculptor and Southern University professor Frank Hayden's 1979 four-part bronze series memorializing Revolutionary War figure Oliver Pollock, positioned just north of King's memorial. Two works by Croatian sculptor Ivan Mestrovic, *Pieta* and *Migrating People*, which are temporarily relocated due to construction at the River Center's Performing Arts Theater, have long lived a short distance away from the monument near the theater's entrance. And on North Boulevard sits the 1914 recasting of the 1816 Statue of Hebe by Bertel Thorvaldsen, restored in 2006 as part of a larger public art campaign led by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. ■

MLK MONUMENT COLLABORATORS

Donors: Entergy, Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation, Jennifer Eplett and Sean E. Reilly, Baton Rouge Bottling Co., Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation, Capital One, ExxonMobil, Hancock Whitney Bank, McMains Family Foundation, Regions Bank and Baton Rouge Business Report

Partners: Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome, Metropolitan Council of East Baton Rouge Parish, Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge, Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Downtown Development District, East Baton Rouge Art in Public Places Advisory Committee

Restoration Committee: Virginia Noland, *chair*; Alfred Harrell, *Southern University*; Sherreta Harrison, *MetroMorphosis*; Kelvin Hill, *City-Parish*; Megan Manchester, *ExxonMobil*; Dr. Pamela Ravare-Jones, *City-Parish*; Davis Rhorer, *Downtown Development District*; John Spain, *Baton Rouge Area Foundation*

Q&A with

Lysha Best, RI International Louisiana director

Baton Rouge's first crisis stabilization center opened in February

BY SARA BONGIORNI | PHOTOS BY TIM MUELLER

Strangers began calling Charlotte Claiborne in the weeks before the opening of the Bridge Center for Hope, sometimes late at night,

always frantic with worry.

Each caller asked Claiborne the same thing: a family member was in crisis—was the crisis stabilization center open and could it help their loved one? “There was a sense of anticipation,” said Claiborne, executive director of the new Bridge Center for Hope. “It is something people have heard about and something the community needs.”

There is no arguing the need for

the taxpayer-funded crisis stabilization center—the first such facility in Louisiana. There were about 3,000 psychiatric calls to parish emergency responders in 2019, Claiborne said. Baton Rouge police received about 2,400 such calls the same year.

Overdose deaths spiked in 2020 as the pandemic forced existing counseling services to shift from face-to-face visits to telemedicine. “The pandemic has posed an additional challenge for some in need of services,” Claiborne said.

The 24,000-square-foot crisis stabilization center is at 3455 Florida Blvd., near the North Acadian Thruway inter-

section and across the street from the Baton Rouge General. It provides round-the-clock care to all who need it. Its no-wrong-door policy means no one in crisis is turned away.

Arizona-based RI International, a leader in crisis stabilization whose practices are reshaping recovery care in the U.S. and globally, is running the center, which opened in February.

Currents spoke with Lysha Best, Louisiana state director for RI International, about what the opening of the Bridge Center means for Baton Rouge and the services it will provide for up to 5,000 residents each year.

Currents: Can you tell us what happens when a person comes through the doors of the Bridge Center for Hope?

Lysha Best: The first stop after people come through the lobby is our 23-hour observation unit with 16 reclining chairs. That’s where we do clinical assessments, psychiatric evaluations and risk assessments to give us a bigger picture of what each person needs. We also offer everyone a shower, a meal and the opportunity to meet with someone on our staff. We start providing care right away, no matter what brings someone in.

Is there a specific need for care or form of crisis that most often brings people to you?

Individuals who come in are in crisis, but the nature of crisis is different for each person. Maybe they just lost their mom or their job. If you feel you are in crisis and you don’t know what to do, we would be the place you’d want to come. We’d help you by first understanding what brought you in and then connect you to the resources you need.

So grief is something that might bring someone to the Bridge Center? Your services extend beyond substance abuse and mental health?

Yes, absolutely. Behavioral health is very broad, broader than mental health and substance abuse. Anyone can go into crisis at any time. You could be fine and then you lose your job or you lose a loved one and your world falls apart.

What services do you provide?

There is the observation unit with 16 reclining chairs, a 16-bed short-term psychiatric unit where the average stay is three to five days, a 16-bed detox

unit with a stay of up to 28 days and a 16-bed respite unit. The respite unit provides individuals with respite from their daily living situation to prevent them from going into crisis. The average respite stay is seven to 10 days. We also have care-management and mobile-response teams.

How long will most people stay at the Bridge Center based on what you’ve seen elsewhere?

Most people—about 70%—are stabilized in 23 hours and then return safely to the community. Most spend the night, but some people might stay with us just a few hours depending on their needs. There is no minimum time of stay.

What is the “warm handoff” and why is that important to RI International’s care model?

We make out-patient appointments with community providers for all guests before they leave, and note that we use the term guest rather than patient or client. The warm handoff means we make sure guests get to that first community appointment. Our care-management team sets up appointments and then follows individuals for up to 30 days after they leave us. The team can transport people to appointments or even go with them to the first appointment if the person wants that—the idea is to make sure they are safely handed off to the next provider. It works.

You were with RI International in North Carolina before relocating to Baton Rouge. What did you learn about the role of the warm handoff in your work there?

In North Carolina, when we didn’t have a warm handoff, we’d see the same people a lot. They’d come back to us because they’d forget their appointments or lose their paperwork and end



Lysha Best

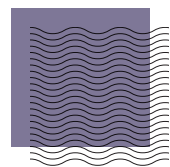
up in crisis again. We saw a dramatic difference when we implemented a Peer Bridger Program similar to a warm handoff. When people made it to that first appointment, they didn’t return to us.

How will the mobile-response team work?

Our 24/7 mobile-response team is made up of two people: a licensed mental health professional and a peer-support specialist who has lived experience with mental health or substance abuse challenges. The team will travel in a van with our logo in response to crisis calls in the community. We will relieve stress on EMS because 911 will dispatch us if they determine there is not a medical need or an imminent threat.

What kind of impact are we likely to see in Baton Rouge after the Bridge Center’s opening? Will we start to see fewer people in crisis in the community?

You will see a difference in the community. Now in Baton Rouge we send people in crisis to jail or the hospital. One impact is that wait times in emergency rooms will go down for everybody because people in crisis won’t be taken there by police officers—they will come to us instead. People with mental health or substance



FOUNDATION FACT

The Bridge Center for Hope is a civic project of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Our members provide annual support for all Foundation projects. If you aren’t a member, you can join at BRAf.org. Memberships start at \$200.

abuse challenges also won't be sitting in jail cells—we offer a safer, better option for them.

Do you have a specific turnaround time for officer drop-offs?

It's 5 minutes. If someone comes to us through the front door of our lobby, it means they've come voluntarily on their own or with a friend, family member or community provider. Individuals who come to us via law enforcement come through an entrance on the side of the building that makes it easier to come in and out quickly. We have a streamlined process that allows officers to quickly return to patrol.

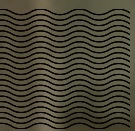
How has the pandemic shaped your operations?

A lot of people are depressed because they've lost someone to COVID. Or maybe they've lost their job as a result of the pandemic and are in crisis for that reason. It's also shaped the process when people come to us. With COVID, we do temperature checks and other screenings outside the door by a registered nurse in full personal protective equipment. Employees are also screened every morning. If we find out someone who is staying with us is COVID-positive, we isolate them and take other safety precautions. ■

RI international is operating The Bridge Center for Hope on Florida Boulevard. The center offers shorter-term crisis counseling and refers guests to extra services if they are needed.







BIG DEAL

Dr. Philip Schauer perfected bariatric surgery. Now he's putting Pennington on the global map.

BY SARA BONGIORNI | COVER PHOTO BY TIM MUELLER

Dr. Philip R. Schauer is kind of a big deal. It says exactly that on a nameplate behind his desk at Pennington Biomedical Research Center, which recruited Schauer from the Cleveland Clinic to develop a world-class bariatric surgery program in partnership with Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center.

The nameplate offers a pretty good snapshot of the pioneering surgeon. The director of Pennington's new Bariatric and Metabolic Institute is a big deal but does not act like one.

You can't get through Dr. Schauer's credentials in one breath. He has completed more than 8,000 surgeries for obesity and diabetes. He is the author of 350 scientific papers, 60 textbook chapters and three textbooks on obesity and bariatric, metabolic and gastrointestinal surgery.

His research has appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. His more than 3,500 research citations and awards include recognition from the *Wall Street Journal* and the Cleveland Clinic, which presented him with the 2015 Sones Award, its highest honor for scientific innovation. Dr. Schauer holds four patents for medical devices. He has trained more than 100 surgical residents.

He revolutionized bariatric surgery at the University of Pittsburgh in developing a laparoscopic approach to it. The use of small incisions and tiny surgical instruments sped recovery time and reduced the risk of complications in obese patients with co-morbidities like heart disease and diabetes.

Schauer and his colleagues at Pittsburgh helped delineate the far-reaching health benefits of

gastric-bypass surgery. Their research showed total resolution of type 2 diabetes in 83% of surgery patients in a study published in 2003 in the journal *Annals of Surgery*.

Subsequent studies prompted the American Diabetes Association to endorse gastric-bypass surgery for treating diabetes in the morbidly obese.

And yet, as the nameplate in his office seems to hint, he does not seem to have let all this go to his head.

Schauer is equal parts towering figure in medicine and down-to-earth regular guy. A November 2020 video on his Twitter account helps make the point. The video on @PSchauerMD shows him with his sleeve rolled up to get the coronavirus vaccine. A masked Schauer shakes his finger at the camera and proclaims, “COVID, you aren’t coming here.” He breaks briefly into the immortal taunt, Na-na-na-na, na-na-na-na, Hey, hey, good-bye.” The video gets shaky as someone off screen starts to laugh.

He uses plain language to explain complex surgical techniques. He points out that a sleeve gastrectomy, for instance, leaves a curved vertical section of stomach that looks like a banana. He is not shy about admitting what researchers and clinicians do not yet know, including exactly why bariatric surgery is effective in treating weight loss and type 2 diabetes.

“We know it works, but the reasons why are not clear,” he says.

Years ago, as president of the American Society for Bariatric Surgery, he proposed adding the word “metabolic” to the organization’s name in view of scientific findings on the health benefits of removing or reducing hormones produced by tissue in the gut.

Dr. Schauer invented safer methods for weight-loss surgery at the Cleveland Clinic.



Dr. Schauer at a press conference October 2019 announcing his appointment to Pennington Biomedical Research Center and director of the new Bariatric and Metabolic Institute.

“**Pennington has created a lot of new knowledge. This is a chance to apply it to direct benefit to people.**”

—Dr. Philip Schauer

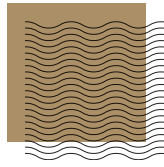
At Cleveland Clinic, Schauer’s patients traveled from as far away as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to see him. He envisions something similar in Baton Rouge, where the Lake is recruiting additional medical experts and acquiring specialized operating tables and other equipment in anticipation of bariatric-surgery patients who weigh as much as 1,000 pounds.

Schauer hopes to have the equipment and medical personnel in place by mid-2021 to begin treating such patients here in Baton Rouge, which will become one of a handful of places in the world capable of such operations. He envisions Baton Rouge as a global destination for such procedures.

“This will be the go-to place for surgery for people like this,” Schauer says.

In time, he hopes the program can complete 1,000 bariatric surgeries each year. The pandemic delayed but did not derail the program. Schauer began seeing patients in January 2020 before the program, but Pennington’s on-campus operations went on hiatus for most of the spring. He began seeing patients again in June.

The clinical partnership with Louisiana’s largest hospital is a sea change for the research institute. After decades as a research powerhouse, Pennington is moving into health care delivery. Schauer sees patients at the



FOUNDATION FACT

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation has granted millions to Pennington Biomedical, all the way back to financial support that let Pennington recruit Dr. George Bray to be the first leader of the research facility.

sprawling Perkins Road complex in a space designated for the Bariatric and Metabolic Institute, or BMI.

The institute this spring will move to a much larger site at Pennington that will house clinical and research offices. Surgeries will take place at the Lake, but pre-surgery consultations with patients and other clinical steps will happen at Pennington.

There is no overstating how big a shift this is. Going forward, new findings at Pennington—whose 200 scientists account for a major portion of global expertise in diabetes and metabolic function—will be used to enhance patient care at the new clinical program,

including through the potential development of new surgical techniques.

The blend of basic science and clinical innovation is called translational research, and Schauer is a veteran of the approach. He is also a longtime collaborator with John Kirwan, Ph.D, a former Cleveland Clinic colleague and diabetes researcher who is spearheading the change as Pennington's president since 2018.

It's no accident the pair reunited in Baton Rouge.

"What John Kirwan was doing at Pennington in adding treatment there was something new, and it caught my eye," Schauer said. "Pennington has

created a lot of new knowledge. This is a chance to apply it to direct benefit to people."

He cites another compelling reason to develop the center in Baton Rouge. Louisiana is No. 1 among states for extreme obesity. His surgery patients here may be interested in taking part in clinical trials at Pennington that expand understanding of obesity and diabetes and further improve treatment options.

"This is where this place should be," he said.

He can't say exactly what drew him to focus on weight-loss surgery. He grew up in northern Virginia in a family of six children before heading west to college at Texas A&M. He discovered he had an aptitude for surgery at Baylor College of Medicine and the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. He did a fellowship in minimally invasive laparoscopic surgery at Duke.

He and his wife, Patsy, a Texas native, have four grown children. Mementoes and photos line the shelves of his office at Pennington.

He wonders if his father's work as an architect and his own years as a high school and college wrestler shaped his interest in surgery.

There are parallels between architecture and surgery, he notes.

"My father took things apart and put them back together," Dr. Schauer says. "He built things. As a surgeon, you use your skills to manipulate a patient's anatomy to solve a medical problem. There are similarities."

He credits wrestling in part for his interest in metabolic function and obesity. He recalls weighing himself every day for months, cutting back on



(L-R): Dr. Schauer educated students about obesity in a Worldwide Classroom presentation in 2016; This patient has maintained her 100-pound weight loss 10 years after Dr. Schauer performed gastric bypass surgery; A patient from Kuwait lost 200 pounds after surgery at Cleveland Clinic, where Schauer worked before being recruited to Pennington.



Dr. Schauer, right, with a colleague.

food and working to lose water weight fast to make his weight class or face disqualification from competition. The process built focus and determination and earned him a college wrestling title. He was Texas college champion in the 150-pound class as a sophomore at Texas A&M.

He developed empathy with his patients through a mid-life battle with extra weight. His weight started creeping up in his 30s and 40s. His 5-foot-9-inch frame carried 200 pounds by his 50s. His blood sugar inched up and his BMI moved toward 30—the point at which someone is officially obese.

His personal physician and colleague at Cleveland Clinic offered a frank message.

"He told me I needed to lose weight," Schauer said. "I thought, 'I need to do what I'm telling my patients to do.' It was

an epiphany."

It took a couple years of diet and exercise to get to 165 pounds and a BMI of 24. He continues to run or bike several times each week on the levee between downtown and L'Auberge Casino, on the Pennington campus or at neighboring Perkins Road Park.

He's also hung onto a better understanding of what his patients face. "I tell my patients that I understand how hard it is."

Science is an important additional element of that understanding. People do not fully control their weight, he says. Research shows a series of complex factors that include genetics and family history. But obese people are widely dismissed as lazy or otherwise blamed for their size.

The pandemic may help to change that view and convince more people of

the health threats of obesity, including the higher risk posed by diabetes.

Data on the impact of COVID-19 show that risk. Patients 50 or younger with obesity were 36% more likely to die of COVID-19 than those with normal-range weight, according to a November study published by the American Heart Association journal *Circulation*.

Another study found that COVID-19 patients of all ages with severe obesity—determined by a BMI of 40 or higher—were 74% more likely to land in intensive care and 48% more likely to die of the virus.

"One thing COVID has done is convince more people that obesity is a disease and needs to be treated as such," he said. "It's not a character trait. It makes people more susceptible to severe COVID and death. That has been made very clear." ■



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New kids *on the* block

**'Angel Coalition' collaborates
on innovative youth center**

BY MAGGIE HEYN RICHARDSON | PHOTO BY TIM MUELLER

In 2017, Dustin LaFont stood in front of the former Sarkis Oriental Rugs building at Government and Wiltz streets and dreamed.

The stately, red-brick former church seemed like the perfect place to expand his Front Yard Bikes, the program he started in 2010 that helps young people earn a bike through skill-building, mentoring and teamwork. By then, the grassroots project—launched in LaFont's front lawn while an LSU student—had grown beyond his wildest expectations, and he needed more space to work with the growing number of children and teens who clamored to participate.

"I took a picture of the building on my phone, and told our kids how great I thought it would be," LaFont says. "So I was really disappointed when someone else bought it and it didn't work out."

But three years later, it did.

Leaders from the nonprofits Front Yard Bikes, Line4Line, Humanities Amped and Big Buddy, from left, Lucy Perera, Maliah Mathis, Anna West, Destiny Cooper, O'Neil Curtis, Gaylynne Mack, and Alex Torres are working together to transform the former Sarkis Rugs store on Government Street into a youth center.



“
We see this new youth lab as a place where we’re going to be able to provide a very high quality of service to our young people, and why not? They’re going to be leading our city before you know it.”

—Gaylynne Mack, Big Buddy



In fall 2020, after the Mid City property had been bought and sold twice by developers who also saw its potential, LaFont convinced then-owner Devin Broome to sell it to him, not just to house FYB, but to fulfill a larger vision. The space will also house programs of three additional nonprofit partners, Big Buddy, Humanities Amped and Line4Line. The leaders of the four youth organizations, committed colleagues whose agencies share many of the same participants, have spent the last year working on creating a center that values and supports Baton Rouge youth. In November, they closed on the building and are now in the process of raising funds to redesign and renovate it.

The 10,000-square-foot “youth lab” will house FYB’s bike repair and skill-building shop, Big Buddy’s workforce readiness classes and mentoring meet-ups, performance and event space for Humanities Amped spoken word open mic nights and a mock barber shop/salon where kids can try their hands at barbering under the direction of Line4Line founder O’Neil Curtis. And that, say the founders, is just the beginning.

“We have to radically believe in our kids—and invest in them,” says LaFont. “A space like this is going to amount to much more meaningful interactions and give us a place to really give these kids our best. It’s just really exciting.”

Each of the four organization’s leaders, LaFont, Gaylynne Mack of Big Buddy, Destiny Cooper of Humanities Amped and Curtis of Line4Line, are past recipients of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana’s Angel Award. They applied for and received a \$250,000 BCBSF Angels of Change grant, a special award that supports collaboration among past honorees. The Baton Rouge General Foundation, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Wilson Foundation and other donors have also supported the project’s start-up.

“I cannot tell you what this means to organizations like ours, which are always, always looking for space for meetings, trainings and events,” says Mack of Big Buddy, an organization that matches adult mentors one-on-one with youth and provides workforce training to high school students. “For us to be able to have a place for our Big Buddies to meet their Little Buddies, and to hold our Level-UP! workforce development classes, it’s a game changer.”

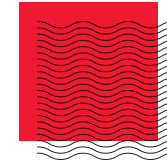
Mack says that a committed youth center devoted to helping young people realize their potential is the hallmark of a strong city.

“The best cities in the country are investing in the leaders of tomorrow,” Mack says. “This will show our kids we truly believe in their potential.”

Once renovated, the youth center will pulse with energy. The front of the building will house the repair shop and administrative offices of Front Yard Bikes, allowing LaFont to consolidate his program’s current locations at BREC’s Terrace Street Park, which he’s outgrown, and at 2560 Government St. The entrepreneurial organization generates revenue by repairing bikes for the public, so expanding this capacity is important. FYB’s free after school program allows kids to earn merit badges as they work on bikes and master different life skills. LaFont is a former Westdale Middle School world history teacher who believes firmly in experiential learning.

“This is not a place where kids hear, ‘no, you just watch,’” LaFont says. “They jump in and learn by doing.”

LaFont envisions the bike shop, a large open space, morphing into a weekend performance space where partner Humanities Amped can hold open mic nights and spoken word events. A school-based program, Humanities Amped develops literacy and problem solving skills in middle and high schoolers by situating the study of humanities



FOUNDATION FACT

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and our fund donors have made grants to nonprofits that are opening the youth center on Government Street. To learn more about opening a charitable fund at the Foundation, please call Edmund Giering at (225) 387-6126.

in a format where students’ emotional well-being is prioritized. The classroom becomes a caring community and the students share and write about their experiences growing up amid intense social challenges. As the class members delve into their life stories, they also discuss the issues that inform their experiences and develop strategies for addressing those challenges.

Humanities Amped was founded in 2014, when English education doctoral student Anna West teamed with then-Northdale Alternative High School teacher Destiny Cooper on a project for West’s dissertation. The two created a special class in which English and creative writing were taught in a transformative environment—one that took into consideration the trauma young people experience regularly. West and Cooper used restorative circles to get kids talking. They created a safe space for sharing and invited students to write about their lived experiences. The kids also discussed community problems, like racism and inequities in education and health care, and developed potential solutions.

“We see young people not as problems to be solved, but as problem solvers,” says West.

Three years of Humanities Amped data showed that students in its classes were 29% more likely to graduate on time than their peers. The program now works in five East Baton Rouge Parish middle and high schools and includes a teacher training component.

West says being part of the

Government Street youth center will give the program badly needed dedicated space and will open up new possibilities for programs and events that allow it to reach more participants and to go deeper with those currently involved.

Another youth center partner, Line4Line, also sees the new space as an opportunity to expand its work with neighborhood youth. Based at O’Neil’s Barber and Beauty Salon at 449 North Acadian Thruway, Line4Line gives kids free Monday haircuts and dinner when they agree to pick up a book and read to their barber. It’s an endearing, simple concept, but one that works, says Lucy Perera, director of learning innovation for the Knock Knock Children’s Museum and Curtis’ partner on the project.

“When you bring books into an important community space like this,” says Perera, “it makes a big difference and changes the narrative about who is a reader.”

The barber shop’s back room is a well-organized reading room filled with engaging books for kids and teens. The program has made it a priority to select a variety of books featuring Black characters and stories.

“There’s a lot of research about how important it is for children to see themselves in books having normal, everyday experiences,” says Perera.

Children pick up a book while they’re waiting for a haircut—itsself a confidence builder—and they read to their barber aloud as they sit in his chair. The kids can also participate in the 449

Book Club, named for the barber shop’s street address, and borrow a book to take home.

Volunteers from Southern University and other organizations spend time at the barber shop to support the kids as they read.

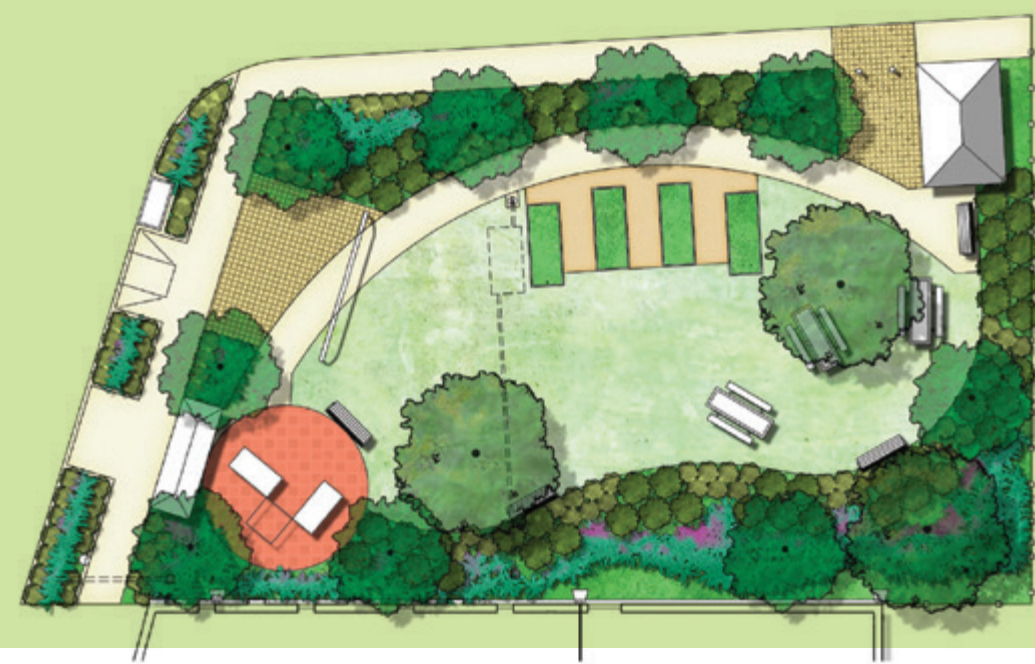
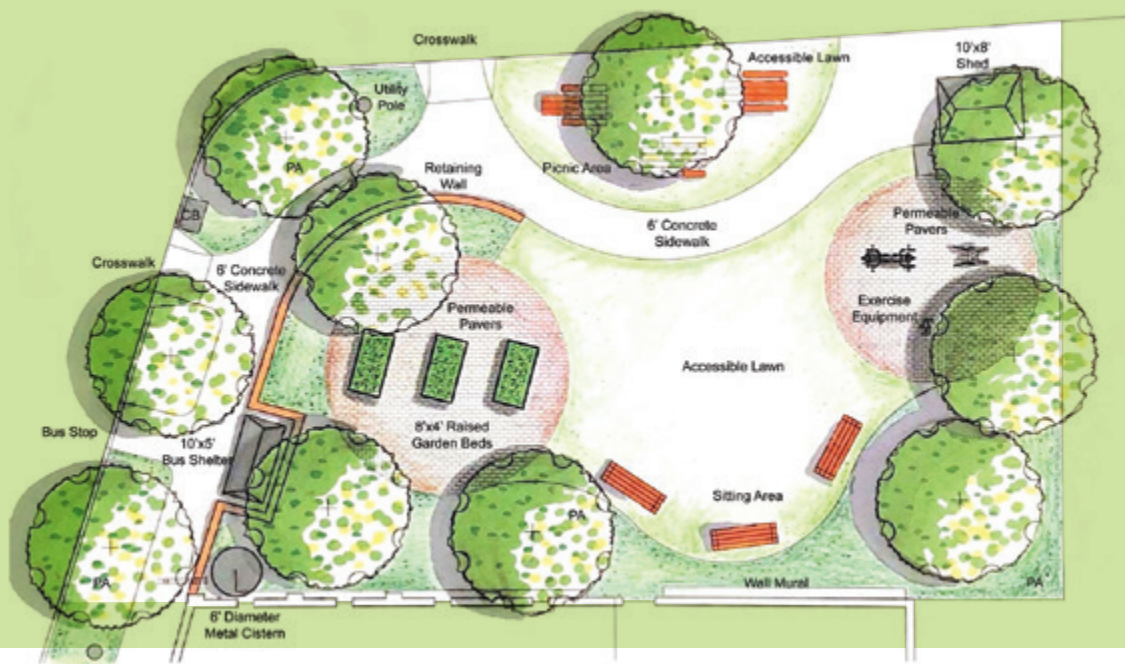
The new youth center will feature an additional Line4Line reading room and a mock salon with a barber chair where kids can learn and practice barbering and salon skills, under Curtis’ direction.

Perera says that the center also presents an opportunity for the organizations to form a craft guild and help kids start micro-enterprises making purposeful art they can sell in Mid City.

The collaborative projects among the organizations, which work with similar constituencies, are limitless, say the founders. Moreover, the youth center also has the potential to streamline important administrative functions that currently weigh down individual operations. For example, each organization must run background checks on adult volunteers, a time-consuming function for which there is no shared process or database.

“The center could become an intermediary that could perform the background checks for all of the organization, as well as a site for training adult volunteers,” says Mack.

“We see this new youth lab as a place where we’re going to be able to provide a very high quality of service to our young people,” Mack continues. “And why not? They’re going to be leading our city before you know it.” ■

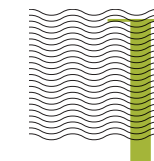


Under the direction of LSU Professional in Residence Kathleen Bogaski, landscape architecture students are finalizing a design for a pocket park on Plank Road. Preliminary designs seen here are, clockwise from upper left, Chad Wilkins, Jiamin Zheng, Justin Malcore and Keeley McCutcheon. The park should open in late 2021.

The first plank

In North Baton Rouge, a small park with many purposes

BY MAGGIE HEYN RICHARDSON



Imagine it: a new park replacing an empty lot—broken concrete and poison ivy exchanged for native shade trees, picnic tables and flower-filled raised beds. A vibrant component of the Imagine Plank Road Master Plan is a neighborhood “pocket” park on a vacant lot at 4258 Plank Road, the corner of Plank and Myrtlelawn Street. With design nearing completion, the park should be built and ready for residents to enjoy by the end of this year.

While the Myrtlelawn Park represents badly needed new greenspace for Plank Road residents, the project is also a window into how Build Baton Rouge is tackling the master plan's projects. Converting the empty lot to a functioning park is an example of BBR activating a parcel of land from its land bank, which was established to return abandoned or blighted lots to commerce or public use.

Moreover, the park is being planned with support from a number of partners, including BREC, which will ultimately maintain it, and LSU's Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture, whose students are designing it.

Build Baton Rouge also recruited an international applied research program called Co-City to help engage the community in the planning of the park and other projects in the master plan. Co-City is part of a Georgetown University-based international research network called LabGov, which studies successful methods of community planning that share decision-making and ownership with neighborhoods that are being planned.

New York-based research fellow Manny Patole serves as project manager for Co-City Baton Rouge, which also includes NYU's Marron Institute of Urban Management as a research partner. He's been working closely with Plank Road residents and community groups since spring 2020.

"My goal has been to come in humble and assume nothing," says Patole, who is charged with community engagement. "I want to learn as much as I can from the people who live here."

Based in New York City, Patole has spent one weekend a month in Baton Rouge since last April getting to know the Plank Road community and better understand its residents' hopes for their neighborhood. Patole also meets weekly with a coalition of partners to address how the master plan's projects can help alleviate food insecurity in the neighborhood.

The Myrtlelawn Park, a corner lot about an eighth of an acre in size, is being designed with residents' input.

In general, pocket parks are smaller, manageable greenspaces that deliver high impact with a relatively affordable price tag, says Patole. They're usually around 5,000 square feet and provide easy respite for the community. In such parks, neighbors might meet for a picnic or casual conversation. They might welcome visiting food trucks or farm stands. They could grow cut flowers or fruits and vegetables, borrowing tools from an onsite community shed stocked with equipment.

The existing conditions of the Myrtlelawn site inspired the LSU landscape architecture students to incorporate another feature—climate mitigation components that would make the park eco-friendly.

Under the direction of LSU Professional in Residence Kathleen Bogaski, fourth-year landscape architecture students are creating the design for the park. The design process, which began last year, has included 17 students working as a group to visit the site, elicit community feedback and come up with an initial design.

Residents responded to the design, providing additional ideas. Last fall, four of the students, Keeley McCutcheon, Justin Malcore, Jiamin Zheng and Chad Wilkins, were chosen to refine the design, working within a \$75,000 budget and following specific constraints. These included designing the park for adult users, not necessarily children or dogs, making it accessible to aging or physically challenged people, providing multiple seating options and other factors.

In December, the four students presented their designs in a community webinar. Their designs will be further refined and finalized by the end of February. The design could incorporate components from each plan, says Patole.

It won't be just the site that's designed, but ancillary features that make it accessible, including a crosswalk that will let pedestrians safely cross Plank Road to reach the park. The design will also incorporate a forthcoming Bus Rapid Transit stop, part of a new BRT line being planned for the neighborhood.

Following design completion, a final budget will be set and a construction firm selected to build the park. The Myrtlelawn Eco Park should welcome users toward the end of 2021. ■



ON PLANK

Build Baton Rouge is wrapping up financing for an anchor project on Plank Road. The new building will signal that a sweeping effort to spur economic activity in North Baton Rouge is truly underway. The building and two other elements—a park and Bus Rapid Transit—are included in BBR's Imagine Plank Road Plan.

BUILD BATON ROUGE MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

The agency will build an \$8.3 million, 30,000-square-foot building on the corner of Plank and Oswego streets. It will contain 15 affordable housing units, a new YWCA-operated childcare center and the new offices of Build Baton Rouge. Construction will begin in spring. The pocket park will be a block away.

Late last year, BBR won a \$5 million grant from JPMorgan Chase's AdvancingCities challenge to help finance the project. With partners, including Co-City Baton Rouge and MetroMorphosis, BBR will invest in other projects, including renovating a 3,500-square-foot historic building into a food incubator, and financial and technical support for 15 minority-owned businesses.

CATS BUS RAPID TRANSIT

In BRT systems, high-capacity buses transport riders along dedicated or semi-dedicated bus lanes that have fewer stops. On-board technology gives buses priority at traffic signals. Platform-level boarding and pre-boarding fare collection keep buses running on time. Striking landscaping, distinctive station design, pedestrian features and public art are features of BRT.

Capital Area Transit System's \$40 million BRT line will link Plank Road through Mid City to LSU. CATS has \$15 million in federal money for the project. The city-parish and CATS are securing the rest. For BRT, CATS will build a new bus transfer center near Our Lady of the Lake's North Emergency Room and 22 pairs of stations. The lines should be running in 2024.

IDEA SCHOOL

IDEA Academy and College Prep is under construction at Howell Place, on Plank Road near the airport. The \$16 million, 75,000-square-foot school will open on 31 acres in August. It will have science and media labs, a football field, a playground and gym. IDEA's other campuses are near Cortana Mall and on the former GSRI Road. The three schools will enroll more than 2,500 students.



Part man, part machine

LSU engineers want to build a bionic worker. They have won a \$150,000 National Science Foundation grant to collaborate with Rutgers researchers on an exoskeleton for construction workers. If the team is selected for the NSF's 10 Big Ideas program, it will receive \$3 million to design and build a prototype. The LSU project has three goals—to develop lightweight, flexible, high-performance, personalized wearable exoskeletons for construction workers; develop machine learning-based human skill modeling and training in construction; and initiate new cross-disciplinary collaboration and foster engagement with industry partners and stakeholders.



REVERSING COGNITIVE DECLINE

Scientists at the University of California San Francisco say an experimental drug has rapidly reversed cognitive decline in mice.

"The data suggest that the aged brain has not permanently lost essential cognitive capacities, as was commonly assumed, but rather that these cognitive resources are still there but have been somehow blocked, trapped by a vicious cycle of cellular stress," said UCSF scientist Peter Walter. "Our work with ISRIB (the drug) demonstrates a way to break that cycle and restore cognitive abilities that had become walled off over time."

ISRIB seems to repair cellular damage underlying many maladies. In animal models, it has restored memory function months after traumatic brain injury, reversed cognitive impairment in Downs, prevented noise-related hearing loss and fought some prostate cancers.

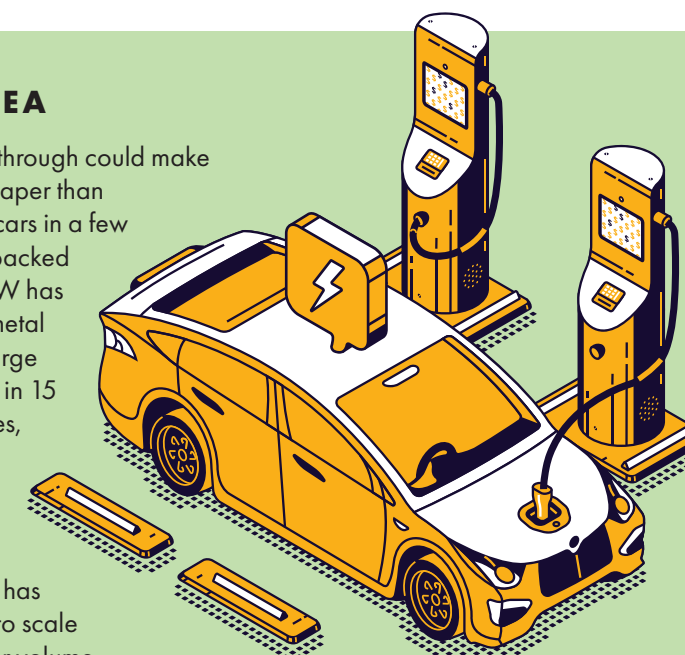
PROTEIN POWER



Programmers at DeepMind have made a breakthrough that wasn't expected for decades. The company announced its researchers have used artificial intelligence to solve the protein folding problem, which could spark big and fast leaps in understanding diseases and discovering new drugs. Named AlphaFold, the program turns data about a string of amino acids into reliable three-dimensional models of the proteins they create, a feat that would take humans months or years.

ELECTRIC IDEA

A big battery breakthrough could make electric vehicles cheaper than gasoline-powered cars in a few years. A company backed by Bill Gates and VW has revealed a lithium-metal battery that can charge up to 80% capacity in 15 instead of 60 minutes, is noncombustible and stores twice as much power as lithium-ion cells. But QuantumScape has to create a process to scale up manufacturing for volume production.



BAGASSE TO THE RESCUE

After sugarcane is squeezed of its juice, which is about 10% of volume, the leftover fibrous material can be burned to power the sugar refinery, a common practice in Louisiana. But a Northeastern University scientist wants to put that material, bagasse, to better use. Researcher Hongli Zhu mixed bagasse with longer bamboo fiber to make inexpensive, biodegradable coffee cups and tableware as an alternative to plastic. The material breaks down in only 60 days, compared to 450 years for plastic. It's also cheaper than compostable plastic.



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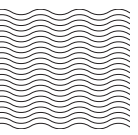


times the energy packed into hydrogen compared to jet fuel. Entrepreneurs are exploring using hydrogen to power airplanes.



LA. GOING GREEN

A plant in West Baton Rouge could manufacture biofuels that produce 80% less carbon than diesel made from crude. Grön Fuels' \$9.2 billion facility would create hundreds of jobs, while also signaling Louisiana is transitioning to cleaner energy. If built, the refinery would use hydrogen in a reaction process that turns soybean, canola oil, tallow and used cooking oil into a diesel substitute. Grön's biofuel will have less particulate and volatile organic emissions than regular diesel.



Liz Harris, left, and Marie Constantin

ONE DAY AT A TIME

It started with a New Year's resolution.

On the morning of January 1, 2020, photographer Marie Constantin set out from her Spanish Town bungalow for a walk around the Capitol Lakes. Loose trash—lots of it—lined the banks, and it rattled Constantin's longtime loathing of pollution and her spiritual commitment to environmental stewardship. Channeling the words of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who she photographed extensively, Constantin vowed to pick up litter every day from the waterbodies for the next year, no matter the outcome of her efforts. "It was the act that mattered," she says.

Her project caught the attention of others. More than 60 people joined Constantin, and together, they managed to remove nearly 470 bags of litter throughout 2020, donning waders, avoiding snakes and suffering fire ants while wearing masks and working several feet apart. Constantin also doggedly pursued why the Capitol Lakes were continually littered, a consequence, she discovered, of unfiltered stormwater repolluting the freshly cleaned shorelines. The movement became a full-throated crusade for better solutions. Now, state-purchased litter grabbers manned by inmate labor will provide additional support for picking up trash around the Capitol Lakes. But it's not enough, says Constantin. She will continue to promote comprehensive stormwater management reform.

—Maggie Heyn Richardson

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