CURRENTS

fourth quarter 2026 | BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION | *braf.org*



FOCUSED ON COMMUNITY

The Saurage Family Foundation Carries a Legacy Forward

Renderings from Plan Baton Rouge III show a new front porch along the riverfront. See more from the report on page 10.



CONTENTS

FOURTH QUARTER 2026 | VOLUME NINETEEN | NUMBER TWO

02
LETTER
Thomas J. Adamek , Chair

04
ABOUT US

05
LEAD IN
» **2026 Annual Meeting**
» **Fellows Programs**
» **Death Valley Live**
» **19th Annual Gaines Award**
» **Early Childhood Education Funding**
» **Books from Birth Launch**
» **Plan Baton Rouge III**
» **Community Foundation Resilience Network**

13
COMMUNITY
Let there be Light

21
NONPROFITS
Impact Grants

26
COVER STORY
Saurage Family Foundation

31
ANNUAL AWARDS
» **Barton**
» **Kantrow**
» **Champion for Giving**

42
STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

43
EVENT ROUNDUP

44
CODA
Community Kitchen



The future of a community is shaped by the choices people make today. Across South Louisiana, I see people choosing to invest in others, responding to challenges and working together toward something better. That commitment gives me great confidence in what lies ahead.

In this issue of *Currents,* you will meet individuals and organizations turning generosity into action, creating opportunities for others and finding thoughtful ways to strengthen the communities we call home. You will also find updates on the Foundation's work and the projects and partnerships helping move our region forward.

Creating a stronger future means expanding opportunity across our region. It requires us to understand South Louisiana as it is today, listen to those closest to its challenges and remain open to new ideas. Research and data can help us understand where needs and opportunities exist, but progress depends on what we choose to do with what we learn.

Throughout these pages, you will see action take many forms, from families thinking intentionally about the legacy they want to leave, to nonprofits responding to unmet needs, and partners coming together around new possibilities. Each is a reminder of what can happen when the right resources, ideas and relationships come together with purpose.

The Foundation is fortunate to be part of that work, but we know progress is never achieved by one organization alone. Our role is to listen, connect resources and ideas, and help promising efforts move forward. We are grateful for the donors, nonprofit leaders, partners and community members whose generosity, knowledge and persistence continue to make Baton Rouge stronger.

As you read, I hope these stories give you reasons to feel proud of our community and optimistic about what we can continue to build together.

What will we leave to the generations that follow us? Will they inherit greater opportunity, stronger institutions and communities prepared for the challenges ahead?

Those answers are being shaped now, through the choices we make, the causes we support and the ways we show up for one another.

On behalf of BRAF's board of directors, thank you for your continued trust and support. I hope this issue inspires you to see what is possible and to consider the role each of us can play in shaping our region's future.

With gratitude,



Thomas J. Adamek
Chair, Baton Rouge Area Foundation

BRAF
ESTABLISHED 1964

451 FLORIDA STREET
SUITE LL 100
BATON ROUGE
LOUISIANA 70801

BRAF.ORG
225.387.6126

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thomas J. Adamek, CHAIR

Helena R. Cunningham, VICE CHAIR

Matthew C. Saurage, SECRETARY

Daniel A. Gardiner, Jr., TREASURER

Annette D. Barton, AT LARGE

Jeffrey W. Koonce, PAST CHAIR

Christopher J. Meyer, PRESIDENT & CEO

Tim Barfield

Anita M. Byrne

J. Wesley Daniels, Jr.

Rhoman J. Hardy

Scott N. Hensgens

Lucie R. Kantrow

Erin Monroe

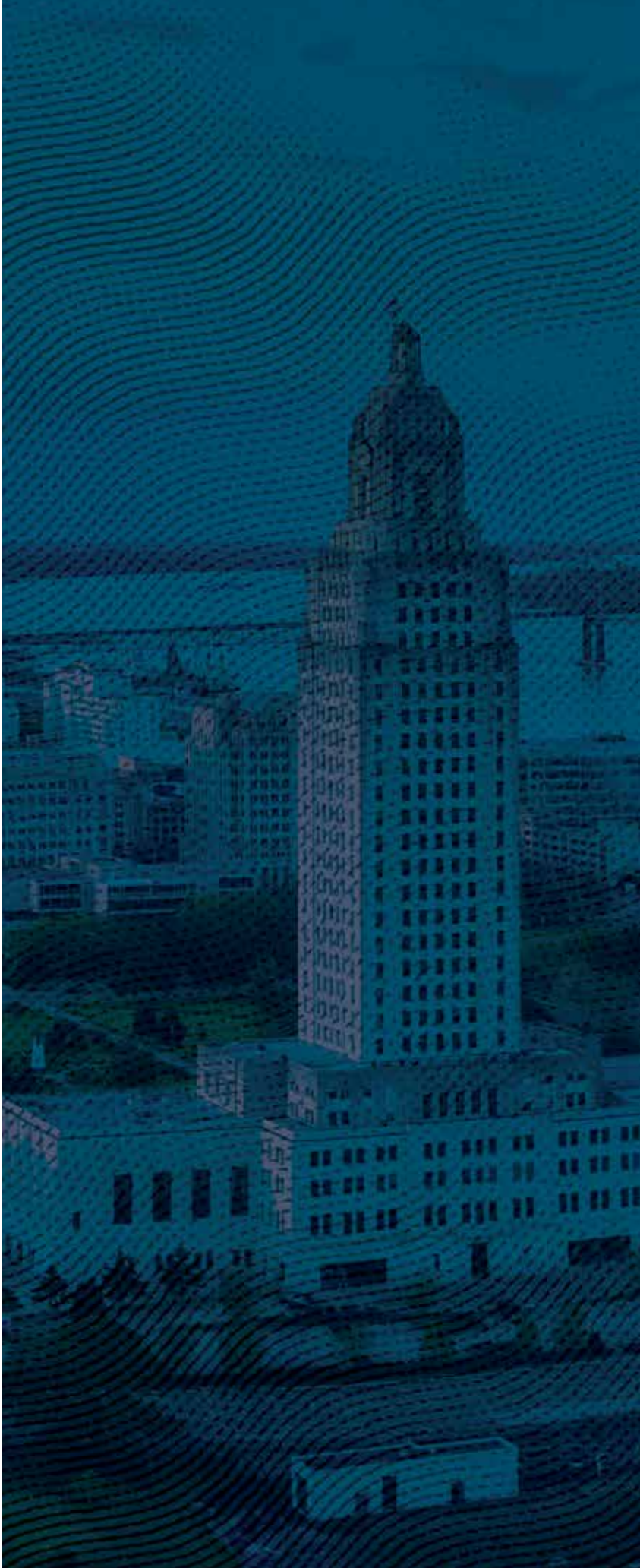
Tatiana Saavedra Patel, M.D.

Dianna R. Payton

Christy O. Reeves

Milford "Mike" Wampold, III

Karen R. Williams, M.D.



About

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation has been dedicated to making a difference in South Louisiana since 1964. With a mission to enhance the quality of life in our region, we unite human and financial resources to drive positive change and foster community growth. Among the largest community foundations in the country, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation seeks to improve the quality of life in greater Baton Rouge and across South Louisiana.

The Foundation pursues its mission by serving donors to build the assets that drive initiatives and solutions, supporting local nonprofits with strategic consulting to ensure overall impact and sustainability, engaging community leaders to develop appropriate responses to emerging opportunities and challenges, and by partnering with others to leverage collective resources and create the capacity to be a stimulus of positive regional change.

Our North Star

Our North Star is clear: We strive to build a thriving and resilient future for all in Baton Rouge and beyond. Through strategic initiatives, collaborative partnerships, and thoughtful philanthropy, we work tirelessly to address emerging challenges and opportunities in our community.

How We Fulfill Our Mission

We pursue our mission through three key avenues:

1. **Catalyzing change and positive opportunity in our community.**
The Foundation leads civic projects with annual support from our members. This work seeks to address the most pressing barriers to opportunity and is guided by data and community need.

2. **Fostering a strong philanthropic environment.**
We believe philanthropy is for everyone. The Foundation supports philanthropists at every stage of their journey of giving — providing education, counsel, and tools to help them support nonprofits and the community at large with their time, knowledge, and resources.

3. **Empowering changemakers and nonprofits.**
Our Center for Nonprofit Excellence provides strategic and technical support to nonprofit organizations. We build relationships with and between nonprofits in our area, connect organizations to funding opportunities, offer consulting services for fundraising and planning, and lead educational fellowships.

2026 Annual Meeting

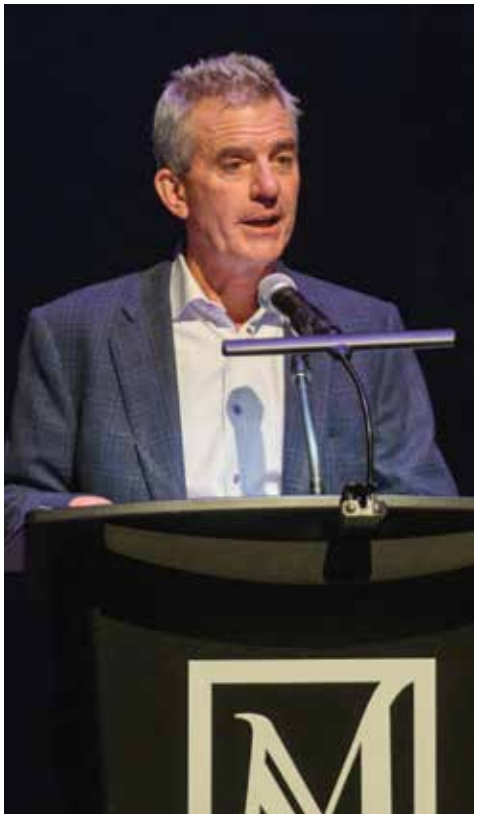
In March, more than 300 members, donors and community partners gathered for the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's Annual Meeting to celebrate the generosity, leadership and collaboration strengthening communities across South Louisiana.

The evening reflected on a record year for the Foundation. In 2025, BRAF received $70 million in charitable contributions and distributed $54 million in grants to nonprofit organizations. A video presentation from president and CEO Chris Meyer shared the progress made possible by donors and partners while outlining priorities for building on that momentum.

The Foundation also welcomed new members to its board of directors and recognized individuals whose leadership continues to make a difference in Baton Rouge and the nonprofit sector. Awards honored excellence in nonprofit management, emerging leadership, charitable advising and dedicated service to the city.

The evening's milestones reflected the many ways BRAF's donors, members and partners are creating opportunities and contributing to a stronger region.

LISTEN TO BRAF'S 2026 PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS







Fellows Programs

Strong nonprofit leadership helps organizations serve their communities with greater purpose and impact. Through its Center for Nonprofit Excellence, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation invests in the professionals and civic leaders who guide local organizations, build meaningful relationships and advance important missions across the region.

In June, 18 current and incoming nonprofit board chairs completed the Foundation's six-session Nonprofit Board Chair Fellows program. Through expert-led sessions, strategic discussions and peer learning, participants explored effective governance, executive leadership and the important role board chairs play in helping organizations navigate growth and change.

In July, 22 Development Fellows completed a workshop series designed for professionals who are new to fundraising and development work. Fellows strengthened their knowledge of fundraising fundamentals, learned from experienced nonprofit leaders and gained practical tools they can bring back to their organizations.

Together, the programs help participants grow their skills, expand their networks and strengthen the nonprofit sector throughout the region.

LEARN MORE ABOUT PROGRAMS OFFERED BY THE CENTER FOR NONPROFIT EXCELLENCE HERE









Nonprofit Board Chair Fellows cohort



Nonprofit Development Fellows cohort

Death Valley Live

For more than a century, Tiger Stadium has brought people together around LSU football. In 2026, the venue welcomed a new kind of gathering with the launch of Death Valley Live, an initiative created to bring concerts and other major entertainment events to one of Louisiana's most recognized landmarks.

The initiative was developed through a partnership among the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, LSU Athletics, Visit Baton Rouge and the Greater Baton Rouge Economic Partnership. By expanding the use of Tiger Stadium beyond football season, the partners aim to attract visitors, support local businesses and strengthen Baton Rouge as a destination for large-scale events.

Death Valley Live began with a concert featuring Grammy Award-winning artist Zach Bryan. Approximately 70,000 people attended, generating an estimated $25.1 million in visitor spending and bringing increased activity to hotels, restaurants, shops and other businesses throughout the area.

The event demonstrated how collaboration and one of Louisiana's most recognizable assets can create new opportunities for economic growth, entertainment and community connection.





Rob Franklin Wins the 19th Annual Gaines Award

In June, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation announced Rob Franklin's debut novel, *Great Black Hope*, as the winner of the 19th annual Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence. A national panel of judges selected the novel from 25 eligible entries.



Presented by BRAF, the award recognizes emerging African American fiction writers and honors the legacy of Ernest J. Gaines. *Great Black Hope* follows Smith, a young Black man navigating race, class, privilege and consequence while confronting grief, uncertainty and questions of belonging.

The novel has received recognition across the literary community, including nominations for several national awards and inclusion on best-of-the-year lists from TIME, Vogue, NPR and Vanity Fair.

Franklin will receive a $15,000 prize to support his continued work and will be honored in October at the Gaines Award ceremony at the Manship Theatre. Through the award, BRAF continues to celebrate new voices in American literature while preserving Gaines' enduring legacy.

VISIT THE WEBSITE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE AWARD

Early Childhood Education Funding

Access to high-quality early learning can shape a child's development while giving parents greater stability as they work, attend school and care for their families. Yet, affordable early childhood education remains out of reach for thousands of young children in East Baton Rouge Parish.



A new public-private partnership is working to help close that gap. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation and the Foundation for East Baton Rouge Parish School System raised more than $550,000 in private donations to expand early childhood education during the 2026-27 school year.

The contributions will be matched dollar for dollar through a state program, bringing the total investment to more than $1.1 million. The funding is expected to help more than 100 families access early care and education during some of the most formative years of a child's life.

By bringing public and private resources together, the partnership is extending the impact of charitable giving and creating opportunities for more children to begin school ready to learn and thrive.

Books from Birth Launch

The earliest years of a child's life are filled with opportunities to learn. Simple moments spent reading, talking, and singing can support language development, strengthen family connections, and help build a foundation for future learning.

In April, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation joined Woman's Hospital and Book Harvest to launch Books from Birth, an early literacy initiative that provides families with books and resources beginning in the first days of a child's life. The partnership brings Book Harvest's early literacy programming to Louisiana for the first time.

Participating families receive a starter home library with 10 new board books, babywear and resources that offer simple ways for parents and caregivers to read, talk and connect with their children. The program will initially serve families in Woman's Hospital's Newborn and Infant Intensive Care Unit, which supports approximately 1,300 families each year. Over the next three years, the program aims to expand to serve all newborns at Woman's.

By helping families make books and conversation part of everyday life, Books from Birth is creating meaningful opportunities for connection and supporting children during an important stage of development.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROGRAM



Plan Baton Rouge III

Thanks in part to the prior successes of Plan Baton Rouge I and II, Downtown Baton Rouge has long served as a center for government, culture, business and community life. Plan Baton Rouge III builds on that foundation with a shared vision for a more connected, welcoming and economically vibrant city center.

Released by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation in May, the comprehensive master plan provides an actionable roadmap for the next decade and beyond. The final plan highlights five key goals.

Community input shaped the plan throughout its development. Thousands of residents, business owners, institutions and civic leaders participated through public meetings, stakeholder interviews and online surveys, helping create a vision grounded in the needs, aspirations and identity of Baton Rouge. Building on more than 25 years of collaborative downtown planning, Plan Baton Rouge III offers a path for attracting investment, supporting local businesses and strengthening downtown as both a neighborhood and a gathering place for the region.

REVIEW THE FULL PLAN AND DISCOVER THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN BATON ROUGE

FIVE KEY GOALS OF PLAN BR III:

1. **A NEW FRONT PORCH**
   Establish a front porch mentality along the riverfront with destination park spaces and complementary land uses.
2. **MARKET DIVERSITY**
   Introduce new economic anchors to diversify downtown's economy and catalyze public and private investment with a suite of easy to access economic tools.
3. **NEIGHBORHOOD PLACES**
   Create a network of neighborhood nodes that provide daily life amenities, other active uses, and enhanced public realm to establish a more blended land use pattern and increased residential population.
4. **CIVIC + CULTURAL SPINE**
   Create a unifying network within downtown to tie all historic and cultural amenities together through improved connectivity and intentional storytelling.
5. **CLEAR CONNECTIONS, INSIDE + OUT**
   Connect to nearby neighborhoods, amenities, and institutions while creating a clear mobility network within downtown.







Community Foundation Resilience Network

Communities across the Gulf Coast face many of the same challenges, including severe weather, flooding, aging infrastructure and changing environmental conditions. Preparing for those challenges requires long-term planning, local knowledge and collaboration across parish and state lines.

In May, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation hosted an in-person convening of the Community Foundation Resilience Network. The network brings together BRAF, the Greater New Orleans Foundation, the Greater Houston Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of South Alabama.

During the two-day meeting, participants reflected on their first year of work, discussed potential future projects and explored resilience efforts underway in Baton Rouge. A bus tour highlighted local stormwater infrastructure and public-private redevelopment projects, while a visit to The Water Institute offered a closer look at its physical model of the Mississippi River.

The convening gave the foundations an opportunity to exchange ideas, strengthen relationships and identify ways their shared experience can help Gulf Coast communities prepare for future challenges.





Let there be LIGHT

A NEW COMMUNITY SOLAR FARM IN NEW ORLEANS EAST CHARTS A PATH TO REGIONAL RESILIENCE

BY LUCIE MONK CARTER | PHOTOS BY DARLENE AGUILLARD AND BRETT DUKE

In the Book of Genesis, God could just say, "Let there be light." The rest of us have come to rely on electricity to keep our homes humming and our busy, technology-rich lives on track.

We are dependent on power, even as utility costs rise year after year. "Energy burden in Louisiana is one of the highest in the nation," said John O'Donnell, community resilience officer for the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and vice president of development at Pelican Community Capital (PCC). "A lot of that is because the housing stock is so old. We lose more energy because the buildings are old, and it's hot here, so we use more energy just to cool buildings down."

For a growing number of Louisiana families, monthly bills are barely possible to pay. "We've got people that are working full-time, 40 or more hours a week, but they're not making enough money to pay for the expenses that they need to survive," said O'Donnell. "They're going to have to choose between their prescriptions and their electric bill, or between pencils and notebooks to send their kids to school or their air conditioning."

The difference can be deadly. When Hurricane Ida struck southeast Louisiana in August 2021, many of its fatalities were owed to excessive heat during power outages. In this crisis, the Sisters of the Holy Family saw a moment to be of service.

Now, after five years of collaborative effort, the Sisters' 22-acre property on Dwyer Road in New Orleans East is under construction to become the State's first community solar project. Community solar farms allow area residents to subscribe to a shared set of solar panels, with a credit posted to their individual utility bills. When finished, the Dwyer Road site will offer up to 20% savings for low-income households and 10-15% for other subscribers.

The initiative aligns with the Sisters of the Holy Family's historic mission of serving the elderly, the poor, and the powerless as well as educating youth. The Dwyer Road property abuts the Sisters' K-12 school, St. Mary's Academy.

The Sisters are New Orleans' oldest order of Black nuns and the second oldest in the country, established in 1842 by Sister Henriette Delille. Today, they are among the members of Together Louisiana, a statewide network of community groups and congregations. The members may differ in religious and political affiliations, but they share a common goal of better understanding their civic power on the path to making positive impact in their cities.

For the Sisters, Together Louisiana — particularly its Together New Orleans chapter — helps expand their capacity to minister to the community. "There are very few sisters left. So they've been thinking, 'how do we continue this mission without the

woman power of lots of nuns?' " said Broderick Bagert, an organizer and climate resilience leader with Together Louisiana. "They got the idea of using their land in a way that was going to help people into the future."

The Sisters hoped to join Together Louisiana's Community Lighthouse project in New Orleans, an effort to establish a microgrid of 85 solar-powered resilience hubs throughout the city to serve residents during extended power outages.

But the large, open acreage on their site allowed for a more ambitious approach.

The New Orleans City Council enacted its Community Solar program in 2018; policy barriers, however, slowed momentum. "Up until recently, the program existed on paper, but not a single solar project had been created in New Orleans," said Bagert. The primary hurdle was the value attached to the energy produced by the solar panels.

"We had our development team run a model basically to say 'okay, let's try to build this community solar farm.' And it just had losses until kingdom come. It would never be able to break even. And it all had to do with how much a unit of energy was worth. It was established so artificially low that it meant it was financially impossible for a project to succeed."

Together New Orleans and its broad, non-partisan coalition petitioned the City Council to address the rate issue and commissioned two outside valuations in support. In October 2025, the council passed a rule to raise the reimbursable rate from 7 cents to its full retail rate, 11.5 cents, with an extra 2 cents credited to low-income participants.



As with the policy changes, funding for the development has taken commitment and collaboration. The Dwyer Road solar farm was initially awarded an affordable loan through the state's Solar for Y'all program, but passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill legislation in July 2025 froze the federal funding. "We had to completely do a strategic pivot," said O'Donnell.

Now Pelican Community Capital is leveraging $5 million in National Clean Investment Fund dollars secured through the Coalition for Green Capital. "That is affordable capital that allows a nonprofit, mission-oriented developer to use it to bridge the tax credit and increase affordability of the overall project," added Brenna Benson Lamb, COO of



Sister Judith Therese Barial, left, and Sister Alicia Christina Costa look over the construction site where the Sisters of the Holy Family and Together New Orleans are developing a 22-acre community solar farm

the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

PCC, a supporting organization of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, serves as a mission-aligned lender, providing access to capital to projects that traditional banks might view as too risky or difficult to underwrite. For pilot projects like Dwyer Road, PCC bridges funding gaps and de-risks the development. With renewable capital in place and policies favorable, the pipeline for Community Solar projects in New Orleans has risen from zero to 18.

Benson Lamb says this community-oriented funding strategy aligns with findings from BRAF's 2022 strategic planning process. "One of the things we heard clearly from our donors, from the community, and from our board was that there was an appetite and an

DWYER ROAD COMMUNITY SOLAR PROJECT TIMELINE

SUMMER 2025

The project lands its first construction loan, orders American-made solar panels, and applies to connect to the Entergy New Orleans grid.

FALL 2025

Pelican Community Capital commits to the project, signing a term sheet in December.

EARLY 2026

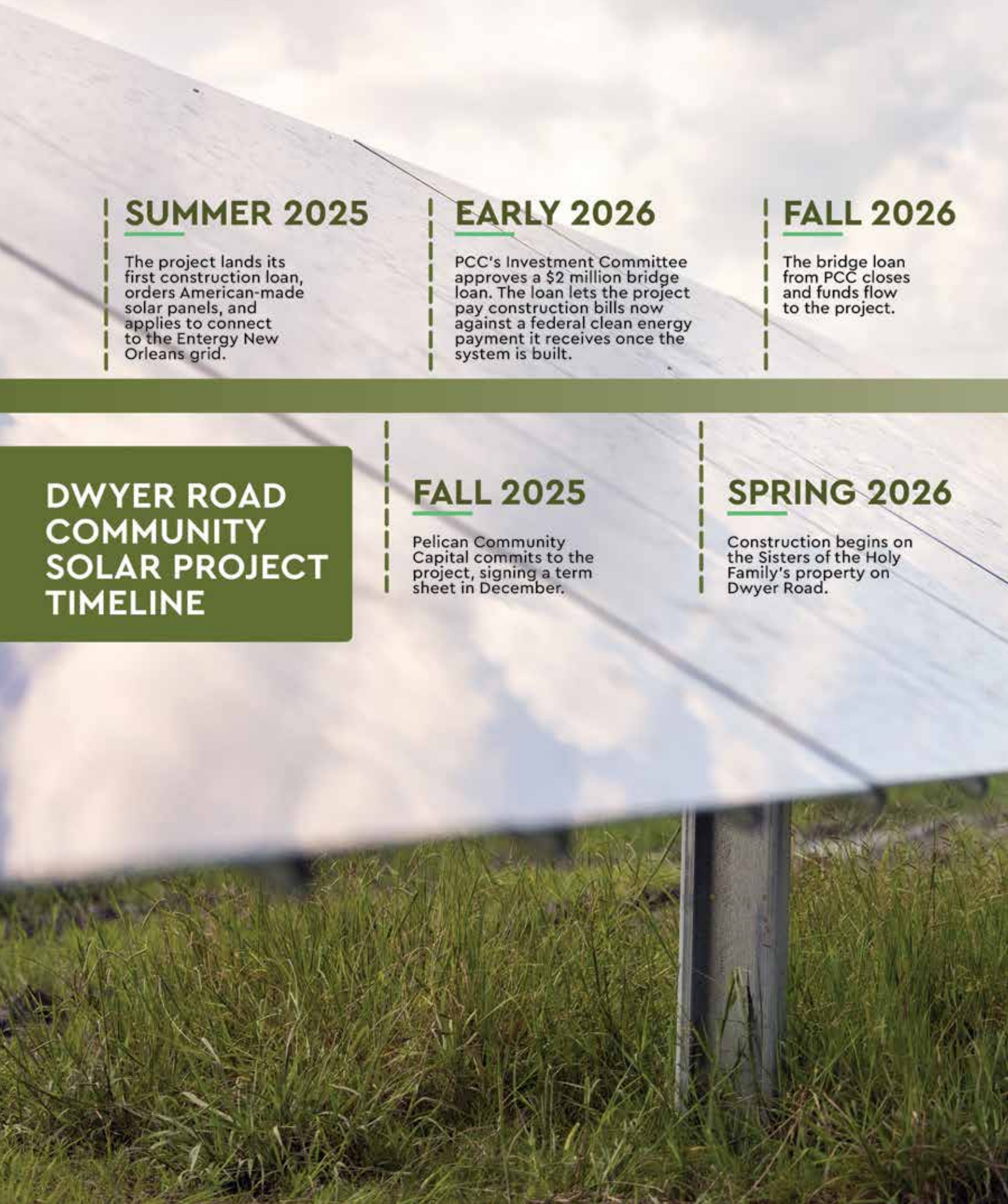
PCC's Investment Committee approves a $2 million bridge loan. The loan lets the project pay construction bills now against a federal clean energy payment it receives once the system is built.

SPRING 2026

Construction begins on the Sisters of the Holy Family's property on Dwyer Road.

FALL 2026

The bridge loan from PCC closes and funds flow to the project.



MID TO LATE 2027

New Orleans households can start subscribing and seeing savings on their bills.

2027

Construction wraps up and the panels are connected to the grid.



PHOTO BY BRETT DUKE | COURTESY OF THE TIMES PICAYUNE | ADVOCATE

interest in thinking more creatively about how BRAF's balance sheet could unleash more of the power of our collective assets to be able to invest in impactful projects that maybe needed just a little bit of catalytic capital."

"We've started to appreciate the ways in which flexible capital is a critical component of community development," said Benson Lamb, "and how institutions like ours have access to the type of capital that can really help unblock these transformative projects for communities.

Benson Lamb sees these projects as building regional resilience, from addressing vulnerabilities in the power grid to fortifying household balance sheets through utility savings, padding an economic cushion for when the next storm comes down. In this model of investment, loan repayments are backed by clean-energy tax credits and can be recycled back into the fund as a source of evergreen capital.

One project begets another. A policy change opens a door. A loan is a bridge to a better community.

In September 2023, Bagert traveled to Vatican City with Sister Alicia Costa of the Sisters of the Holy Family to meet with Pope Francis and share on their advocacy for civic engagement and climate resilience. "He said to us, 'Your work is atomic.' Meaning it's like atom by atom, piece by piece. We're not trying to solve things all at once, but it's going somewhere," said Bagert.

"It was meaningful to me. He discerned in what we were saying something that got to the heart of it: it's about these initiatives, but it's also about a model of change that is patient, but not too patient. It's understanding that it's probably not going to be in our lifetimes, but that doesn't mean it's then some fantastical future. There's a sort of real effort to be building things that are continually making a difference."



Brenna Benson Lamb and John O'Donnell, Baton Rouge Area Foundation employees

DID YOU KNOW?

The first solar cell was invented in 1883 in New York.

Solar energy is the Earth's most abundant resource.

The cost of solar panels has decreased 80% in the last two decades.

The International Space Station, a large space station in low Earth orbit, is fully powered by solar energy.

Modern solar panels can work efficiently for 25 or more years.



Behind every successful nonprofit is a strong network.



Launched in 2023, the **Center for Nonprofit Excellence** at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation supports the nonprofit community through leadership training, professional fellowships, and membership opportunities. Plus, for over a decade we've offered consulting services focused on board governance, strategic planning, and fundraising to nonprofit organizations in the capital region.

Join us and experience all that our network has to offer.

Center *for* Nonprofit Excellence

A Division of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation

225.387.6126 | braf.org/nonprofits | nonprofits@braf.org

IMPACT GRANTS

By BAILEY BROOME

Across our region, local nonprofits are doing essential work to help children, families and neighborhoods thrive. By working directly with the communities they serve, these organizations are helping address barriers, expand opportunity and create stronger pathways forward.

Through its Opportunity Data Project, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation examined challenges affecting families across the region and identified areas where focused investment could make a difference. In response to these findings, the Foundation awarded $300,000 in Impact Grants to 19 local nonprofits working to strengthen early childhood education and community safety.

The grants represent a critical investment in organizations helping advance two important goals: ensuring more children enter kindergarten ready to succeed and fostering safer, stronger communities.

The following stories highlight several of the organizations supported through the Impact Grants and offer a closer look at their work and progress during the first six months of 2026.



POINTE COUPÉE EARLY CHILDHOOD COALITION

Bringing Resources Closer to Home

The Resource Roadshow is bringing early childhood support closer to families across Pointe Coupée Parish. By setting up at libraries, schools, community events and other familiar places, the Pointe Coupée Early Childhood Coalition is making it easier for parents and caregivers to connect with resources for their children.

During the first half of 2026, the Roadshow expanded its reach across the parish, connecting families with information about child care, developmental resources, kindergarten readiness and other support services. Activities also encouraged early literacy, social-emotional development and positive parent-child interactions.

Along the way, the Coalition strengthened relationships with schools, libraries, health care providers and community organizations, helping the Roadshow grow from a mobile outreach effort into a more connected source of support for families throughout the parish.





pcearlystart.org

230 Roberts Drive Suite A,
New Roads, LA 70760

(225) 618-6688

hello@pcearlystart.org

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY POINTE COUPÉE EARLY CHILDHOOD COALITION





THE WALLS PROJECT

Creating Opportunities Beyond the Classroom

At Culture Club, students are gaining more than a safe place to go after school. The Walls Project's Safe Futures Initiative gives students opportunities to explore careers, learn new skills, connect with mentors and build confidence through hands-on experiences.

During the first half of 2026, 60 students received training in entrepreneurship, digital marketing and business planning. Fifteen students earned ServSafe Food Handler Certifications, while 11 received paid workforce development stipends and four began summer internships with The Walls Project. More than 60 students also participated in weekly leadership, mentorship and social-emotional wellness activities.

That progress reached beyond the classroom at Kids Fest, where more than 1,000 children and family members gathered for performances, educational activities, community resources and opportunities for students to share the skills they had developed through Culture Club.

thewallsproject.org

509 St. Louis Street,
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

(225) 434-0515

support@thewallsproject.org

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY
THE WALLS PROJECT







LAUNCH THERAPY CENTER

Expanding Access to Early Intervention

Launch Therapy Center is preparing to serve more children as demand for pediatric therapy continues to grow across the Capital Region. Plans for a new Early Childhood Development and Therapy Center are moving forward, bringing the organization closer to expanding early intervention services for children and families.

During the first half of 2026, Launch's capital campaign grew to more than $2.5 million toward its $4.5 million goal. Architectural plans were finalized, a general contractor was selected and key pre-construction work was completed, marking important steps toward making the new center a reality.

The expansion will allow Launch to serve more children, particularly from birth to age five, while working to reduce wait times and create a welcoming, family-centered setting for therapy and early intervention.

soarwithlaunch.org

1310 South Range Avenue,
Denham Springs, LA 70726

(225) 380–1894

abigail@launchpeds.com

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY
LAUNCH THERAPY CENTER



SOMEONE ALWAYS CARES FOUNDATION

Supporting a Path Forward

sac4all.org

1765 O'Neal Lane, #138,
Baton Rouge, LA 70816

(225) 592-2774

info@sac4all.org

Someone Always Cares Foundation is providing consistent support for youth navigating complex circumstances. Through intervention, mentoring and skill-building programs, the organization is helping participants stay connected to education, strengthen decision-making and work toward their goals.

During the reporting period, the Foundation served 28 youth, including 18 through its Alternative to Detention Program and eight through its Pre-File Diversion program. Participants took part in life skills, conflict resolution, mentoring, anger management and other programming designed to provide structure and support. None of the 18 youth served through the Alternative to Detention Program were rearrested during the period.

Progress also showed up in individual milestones. Two youth ambassadors completed the requirements for their high school diplomas. One went on to enroll in BRCC's Culinary Program while working full time, continuing to build toward their longer-term career goals.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY
SOMEONE ALWAYS CARES FOUNDATION

SAURAGE FAMILY FOUNDATION

THE NEXT GENERATION OF GIVING

BY SARAH BONGIORNI AND SARAH GARDNER | PHOTOS BY COLLIN RICHIE

Like its beloved coffee, the Saurage family aims to nurture a sense of community through their family philanthropy.

Its legacy of giving back dates to the 1919 founding of Community Coffee by Norman "Cap" Saurage. The Saurage family's storied generosity started with a complimentary cup of coffee in Cap's grocery store in Baton Rouge. More than 100 years later, that generosity has grown to include strategic philanthropy and grants in areas as varied as cancer research, public education, the arts and sustainable coffee farming.

"When the community's good to us, we need to give back," said Donna Saurage, lifelong philanthropist and family matriarch. "If you're a Saurage, it's what you do."

The family has partnered with BRAF for decades on initiatives to make life better in Baton Rouge and bolster the capacity of the region's nonprofit sector. The family takes philanthropy seriously and encourages members to embrace giving to causes

> "When the community's good to us, we need to give back.
> — Donna Saurage

that mean most to them.

Matt, Hank, Donna, and Cary Saurage recently teamed with BRAF on what might be their most personal collaboration to date: development of a consolidated family foundation to continue the legacy of giving and provide opportunity for the youngest members of the family to shape that legacy for generations to come.

To that end, the newly established Saurage Family Foundation will support grantmaking in areas of longstanding interest to individual family members as well as new areas that reflect the interests of children and grandchildren ranging in age from teens to thirty-somethings.

In other words, the new foundation is designed not just for teaching younger members of the Saurage family about philanthropy, but listening to their ideas about giving, too.

Matt Saurage is an active member of BRAF's board and a founding member of World Coffee Research, which supports sustainable coffee farming methods in Brazil and elsewhere, where travel for business is a source of important connection.

Hank Saurage is an emeritus member of Baton Rouge Green's board of directors in recognition of his role in fostering healthy, green spaces across the city. His two hands-on stints on the board included planting trees in parts of town in need of shade and beauty.

Their mother's record of civic leadership is nothing short of staggering. Donna Saurage has served on the boards of 50 local nonprofits over the years, and she's not done giving her time to what she believes in.

Cary Saurage, Donna's brother-in-law, cared deeply about supporting the arts. Before passing away in 2025, he leveraged his fund at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to support nearly 40



"I've learned that philanthropy is not really about giving money. It is ultimately about people. It's about being a good steward of the blessings we've received and helping create opportunities for others. The strongest partnerships are rooted in shared values, mutual respect, and a commitment to making a positive difference for future generations."

— Donna Saurage, third-generation owner, Community Coffee



Hank Saurage, fourth-generation owner, Community Coffee

local arts organizations and museums.

Now, with the creation of the Saurage Family Foundation, Cary's legacy will continue, shepherded by Donna, Hank, Matt, and trusted advisors.

As a supporting organization, the consolidated family foundation will operate in perpetuity to support both the interests of the founders, and those of the future generations of philanthropists in the Saurage family.

"We have this mechanism now to get our kids involved," said Hank Saurage. "This is about what we can do together as a family."

BRAF suggested a supporting organization structure to ensure straightforward grantmaking and facilitate communication about giving within the large and busy family — objectives identified by Matt, Hank, Donna, and Cary Saurage.

> "We have this mechanism now to get our kids involved."
>
> — Hank Saurage

For that reason, the family foundation does not spell out percentages of giving in specific areas, instead allowing grantmaking that responds to evolving community needs and individual interests.

"Nobody's hands are tied," said Donna Saurage. "For me, what's exciting is the grandchildren are being brought into the process."

Grantmaking in new areas will be shaped by the passions of the youngest members of the family and community needs identified by the family foundation's seven-member board.

"We're providing a vehicle for them to express their desires [about giving] where they have deep interests," said Matt Saurage.

In recognition of the mobile nature of many young people, the family foundation permits grantmaking in other communities should the children or grandchildren move out of the region or state.

"We don't know where the children or grandchildren will be in 50 years, but wherever they are they will be able to give in their communities," said Donna Saurage.

The family foundation will facilitate communication about giving among family members to prevent duplication or gaps in giving and provide a structure for educating younger family members about why giving matters.

Better communication within the family will benefit nonprofits by



Matt Saurage, fourth-generation owner, Community Coffee

providing clarity about what support they can expect over a longer time, noted Matt Saurage.

"This gives us a vehicle for consistent, thoughtful and sustainable support to nonprofits to help them achieve real results," he said.

> "This gives us a vehicle for consistent, thoughtful and sustainable support to nonprofits to help them achieve real results.
> — Matt Saurage

Passing on knowledge about philanthropy and the family business has been a focus of interest for the Saurages for years.

A family lunch years ago highlighted the need for more frequent communication about giving when the Saurage brothers and their mother brought printouts of their individual giving from the year before. They discovered both duplicates and gaps in giving.

"It showed the importance of meeting and talking about things that are important in order to bring transparency to what the family is doing and why," said Matt Saurage.

"We were very close, but we didn't know what each branch of the family was doing financially," added Hank Saurage, "so we decided to share and ask each other what we were doing."

Shortly thereafter, the three began weekly calls on Tuesdays to support better communication about the business, charitable giving and how to best prepare the younger generation for those responsibilities, Matt Saurage said.

"The Saurage Family Foundation sort of brings all of this together," he said.

Starting this fall, the family foundation will begin holding whole family meetings at least twice a year. The oldest grandchildren and their spouses will join the weekly Zoom calls in coming months.

Among potential matters for discussion: how the family can support Baton Rouge through large projects or initiatives with big impact — something the consolidated foundation makes possible.

"This allows us to think about new areas to support," Matt Saurage said.

The family foundation's supporting organization design offers advantages beyond perpetuity for some donors.

Supporting organizations are not



Donna Saurage with her grandchildren

required to pay out 5 percent of funds each year, as private foundations must do. And, private foundations often rely on costly overhead structures or family-led administrative support to keep them running compliantly. By contrast, the Saurage Family Foundation will function almost like a turnkey operation, with BRAF providing governance, grantmaking support and other back-office infrastructure on an à la carte basis.

Partnering with the Baton Rouge Area Foundation will enable the Saurage Family Foundation to leverage BRAF's more than 60 years of experience in facilitating philanthropic activity.

The family foundation will have its own name on letterhead and checks sent to grantees by BRAF to help keep its legacy and identity clear.

It also has its own board of directors to oversee grant recommendations, explained Lauren Crapanzano Jumonville, senior vice president of enterprise strategy at BRAF.

"It's a wonderful philanthropic structure," added Crapanzano Jumonville, a member of the Saurage Family Foundation's seven-member board, which includes four external members appointed by BRAF.

The board will help identify needs and opportunities for giving that align with the family's values and legacy, said Scott Hensgens, another BRAF-appointed member of the board.

"We help them focus on areas that interest them and where they can make an impact," Hensgens said.

For Donna Saurage, the new foundation provides a means to pass on giving that's been important to the family for generations and to ensure it has optimal impact, she noted.

Working with BRAF made that possible, she said.

"BRAF is the steady nonprofit that will be here in perpetuity and has the best knowledge of what the needs of the community are," she said. "We have faith in BRAF and its understanding of community needs and have depended on them for many years."



Lauren Crapanzano Jumonville, senior vice president of enterprise, Baton Rouge Area Foundation

2026 ANNUAL AWARDS

By BAILEY BROOME | Photos by COLLIN RICHIE

Each year at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's Annual Meeting, awards are presented to outstanding individuals who have made substantial contributions to improve our beloved community.

For more than two decades, the John W. Barton, Sr. Excellence in Nonprofit Management Award has celebrated some of Baton Rouge's most dedicated nonprofit leaders. Named after John Barton, a founder and true believer of the Foundation, this award reflects his vision and leadership that continues to inspire us. Each year, the Barton Awards honor two established nonprofit leaders and one emerging nonprofit leader.

Since 2016, the Marcia Kaplan Kantrow Baton Rouge Visionary Award has enabled the Foundation to spotlight individuals whose dedication has profoundly shaped Baton Rouge. This award honors the late Marcia Kaplan Kantrow, the Foundation's very first director of programs, who was an extraordinary leader, mentor and inspiration to many.

The Foundation established the Champion for Giving Award in 2025 to recognize professional advisors who inspire their clients to embrace charitable giving by connecting them with the Foundation. This award is presented only when truly deserving recipients emerge, preserving the significance of this special recognition.

We are proud to recognize this year's honorees and the lasting contributions they have made to our region. In the following pages, meet the 2026 award recipients and learn how they are making Baton Rouge a better place every day.



Q&A

GEORGE BELL

BARTON AWARD WINNER

Tell us about your organization.
For over 100 years, Capital Area United Way has supported the Greater Baton Rouge region by mobilizing community resources to improve the lives of everyone in our region, especially the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained and Employed) population so that everyone can thrive.

How did you get started in the nonprofit sector?
I joined Capital Area United Way after a 30-year career in healthcare. I retired from Baton Rouge General as administrator of the BRG Mid City campus in 2015. However, throughout my career, I served on several nonprofit boards, which gave me a deep understanding and appreciation for the important role of United Way in supporting community nonprofit organizations.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learned while leading your organization?
In my 10-year career with CAUW, I've learned how to effectively lead in times of uncertainty and change. Over the years, we experienced a 500-year flood event, an unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, and more recently, a building renovation project which forced our team to work remotely for 17 months instead of the originally projected 5 months. Throughout each challenge, we had to learn as a team how to adapt to a "new normal" so we could eventually thrive as an organization.

Do you have a favorite quote or guiding mantra?
"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). This scripture has allowed me to soar above and beyond my natural abilities in every area of my life.

If you could describe the community you serve in one or two sentences, what would you say?
Our north star is the ALICE population, which represents half of our Capital Area population.

What inspires you to keep serving your community?
I'm inspired by the countless volunteers, donors, corporate partners, and foundations who have supported this mission over the past 100 years. I'm also inspired by the amazingly talented and dedicated staff that I have the privilege of working with daily. It is an honor to serve them.

I'm inspired by the countless volunteers, donors, corporate partners, and foundations who have supported this mission over the past 100 years. I'm also inspired by the amazingly talented and dedicated staff that I have the privilege of working with daily. It is an honor to serve them.

What skill do you consider to be your secret superpower?
My secret superpower is not so much a secret. I believe it starts with genuinely caring about the people I work with and the people I serve. In doing so, I try to understand their gifts and talents so that I can help them reach their full potential. I have used the same approach in business and in my endeavors as a band leader.

When you have guests from out of town, what do you insist they must see or do before leaving South Louisiana?
When I have hosted colleagues from other parts of the country, they have always raved about the food, music, and hospitality. Whether it's a Jambalaya Jam, Mardi Gras, LSU or Southern University football game, or a business meeting or conference, we know how to have a good time!

Success rarely happens in a vacuum; can you share a bit about others who have helped support your work?
I have been blessed with an amazing group of board chairs, board members, and volunteers over the years. Their leadership and support have been instrumental in our success. I have also had the support of an amazingly dedicated and talented team of employees.

What is your hope for the future of your service area?
My hope is that through our continued collective efforts to address the issues and challenges our ALICE population faces, we will begin to see a dramatic reduction in the number of ALICE in our region. I believe this is achievable given the anticipated growth in high wage, high demand jobs projected for our area.



Q&A

DR. MURELLE HARRISON

BARTON AWARD WINNER

Tell us about your organization.
The Gardere Initiative is a community-based organization that provides resources for children, youth and their families to promote personal and community resilience. It was established in 2006 after Hurricane Katrina when folks from the New Orleans area settled in Gardere and there was a clash between the 225s and 504s. We knew that if we really wanted to make a difference in the community, we needed to establish a site directly in the community. We moved into our space in January 2014. Then in 2016, the flood brought new residents and changed the cultural makeup of the community and the Gardere Initiative. We now offer emergency assistance, child abuse prevention sessions, 9-month afterschool programs, and 8-week summer programs for children from 3 years to Grade 12.

How did you start working in the nonprofit sector?
I started as a Sunday School superintendent picking up children for Sunday School at Faith Chapel in 1995. At the same time, I became a certified prevention specialist at Southern University that focused on substance abuse prevention. Eventually the field evolved to include coalitions as strategies to prevention substance use. When I began considering retirement, I became the executive director of the Gardere Initiative and was accepted as a BRAF fellow. That was the beginning of my journey into the nonprofit world. I knew about coalition development, but I had no knowledge of nonprofit management.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learned while leading your organization?
I have learned that this kind of work cannot be done in silos. Partnerships are essential. The Gardere Initiative partners with over 50 organizations.

If you could describe the community you serve in one or two sentences, what would you say?
The Gardere community is like a bowl of gumbo. There are the children, youth, families, the faith-based stakeholders, East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office, City Council, BREC, South Burbank Crime Prevention & Development District and the Homeowners Association. The Gardere Initiative is the roux that holds them together.

What inspires you to keep serving your community?
The needs of the people are foremost the inspiration to continue serving this community. God has blessed me with leadership abilities, wisdom, knowledge and a host of other assets. It gives me immense pleasure to use these attributes to serve those without a voice, those that are marginalized and often overlooked.

"The needs of the people are foremost the inspiration to continue serving this community. God has blessed me with leadership abilities, wisdom, knowledge and a host of other assets. It gives me immense pleasure to use these attributes to serve those without a voice, those that are marginalized and often overlooked.

What skill do you consider to be your secret superpower?
The ability to connect with people; it doesn't matter about age, religion, ethnicity, profession or any artificial barrier. I call them "artificial" barriers because being human is a common bond.

When you have guests from out of town, what do you insist they must see or do before leaving South Louisiana?
My list includes the French Quarter, WWII Museum and Café du Monde in New Orleans, the State Capitol building, Southern University, LSU, and the Whitney Plantation museum. Of course eating – crawfish, boudin balls, and Tsunami.

Success rarely happens in a vacuum; can you share a bit about others who have helped support your work?
My mother was my first role model. She was a community activist that helped to secure HeadStart in the Acadiana area, waterlines in rural communities, and influential in the elementary and high schools that we attended. She taught her children the importance of God first, family and community. Our father taught us about hard work. Jan Ross has guided me through the nonprofit world, and I could not be blessed with a better supporter than Ms. Karen Lee, president of the South Burbank Crime Prevention and Development District.

What is your hope for the future of your service area?
My hope is that other communities will take control of their community. I have seen it work in Hermitage, Sagefield and the 70820 side of Gardere. It's possible! Residents cannot depend on law enforcement or the government to reduce crime in their community – it's the residents themselves and collaboration with these entities. Crime Prevention Districts provide funding that is needed for additional patrols and other relevant resources.



Q&A

JONATHAN GRIMES

RISING STAR WINNER

Tell us about your organization.
The Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge is a nonprofit arts agency, in existence for 53 years, focusing on advocacy, resources, and teaching/training. In essence, our goal is to support artists and arts organizations in our 10-parish region that we serve, while providing free community programming, workforce development, and an enhanced quality of life for our community.

How did you start working in the nonprofit sector? Tell us generally about your journey to your current organization.
I started at the Arts Council in 2007 when Derek Gordon hired me as an events manager. With a background in music and production, I came to learn how important a vibrant arts agency is to a community and really developed a love for this organization and what it does.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learned while leading your organization?
Not everyone understands how much art impacts their lives on a daily occurrence. The music you listen to on the way to work, the landscape surrounding your home, the food you consume for lunch, and so much more, those items all are centered around creativity and art. My goal is to impress upon our community that without creativity, life would be pretty bland.

Not everyone understands how much art impacts their lives on a daily occurrence. The music you listen to on the way to work, the landscape surrounding your home, the food you consume for lunch, and so much more, those items all are centered around creativity and art. My goal is to impress upon our community that without creativity, life would be pretty bland.

Do you have a favorite quote or guiding mantra?
"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once they grow up" (Picasso).

If you could describe the community you serve in one or two sentences, what would you say?
The Greater Baton Rouge community is a diverse, culturally rich region shaped by deep traditions in music, visual arts, food, education, and community connection. We serve residents, artists, families, students, and organizations across the region by expanding access to the arts, supporting creative professionals, and using arts and culture to strengthen quality of life and economic vitality.

What inspires you to keep serving your community?
Every time someone tells me how much they enjoyed a concert, or their child came home and talked about a visual artist, or even someone discovering a new art form that they hadn't tried previously, that makes my heart warm and reminds me of the good work we do.

What skill do you consider to be your secret superpower?
People. I love talking to people, learning about other's interests, and helping. I love connecting with people and being a bridge for creativity and support.

When you have guests from out of town, what do you insist they must see or do before leaving South Louisiana?
I always insist they visit the Mississippi River. It's one thing to see a picture of, but to watch the immense power behind that rushing water is quite an experience. I also encourage them to listen to music, you HAVE to try the food and meet some people. Natives of Baton Rouge love their city and love to tell you about the history and other things they think are special.

Can you share a bit about others who have helped support your work?
Where do I even start!? Being at an organization for almost 20 years, I have met some amazing people, both artists and consumers of art. This organization is where it is today because of supporters over the past 53 years, starting with an idea that the capital city needs an arts council, to us moving into this new facility (Cary Saurage Community Arts Center). All of the leaders that came before me in this position who I still speak with regularly, learning from them how to navigate a nonprofit arts agency has been the best on the job experience I could ask for.

What is your hope for the future of your service area?
My hope for the future is that the Arts Council is equally servicing our 10-parish area with resources for artists and creative outlets for art consumers. The place we call home is better when art is at the forefront of our everyday life.



Q&A

GWEN HAMILTON

KANTROW AWARD WINNER

What first inspired your commitment to civic engagement, and what has kept you going for more than five decades?
My commitment to civic engagement was first inspired by my mother, who encouraged me from an early age to actively participate in church and community activities. Her example instilled in me the importance of caring not just for family and friends, but for the broader community through volunteerism. Over more than five decades, that early encouragement, combined with the fulfillment I find in helping others, has fueled my ongoing dedication to making a positive impact.

What does service mean to you?
To me, service means giving your ALL to help others achieve their immediate and long-term goals while doing what is necessary to make our community a great place.

To me, service means giving your ALL to help others achieve their immediate and long-term goals while doing what is necessary to make our community a great place.

What moment or project best captures the kind of change you've always hoped to see in Baton Rouge?
More than 30 years ago, I had the opportunity to help write and advocate for the passage of Louisiana's first early childhood education legislation. Seeing it become law captured the kind of change I have always hoped to see: people working together to turn a shared commitment to our community into abiding action.

How do you build a shared vision that leads to real, lasting change across sectors?
Building a shared vision begins with bringing people from across sectors, including those most directly affected, to the table and creating space for open, honest and authentic dialogue. It also requires grounding decisions in credible data and research, listening to different perspectives and identifying goals everyone can work toward. When people trust the process, understand the evidence and recognize their role in the solution, a shared vision can become coordinated action that leads to lasting change.

Why have education, families, and opportunities in underserved communities mattered so deeply to you?
Having experienced poverty as a child, I came to understand how access to a high-quality education can open doors and create a path to greater opportunity. That belief led me to serve as the first student representative on the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board, where I advocated for public education and the resources every student deserves. These experiences shaped my lifelong commitment to helping children and families in my community access the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

What gives you the most hope for the future of Baton Rouge?
The ongoing opportunity to unite the community on values and ideas that serve all of us.

What advice would you share with someone just starting their journey of civic impact?
Choose a cause or issue that truly matters to you and consider how your passion, time and resources can help move it forward. Along the way, seek guidance from people whose example inspires you. I was fortunate to have mentors who guided me throughout my journey, and now it is my turn to do the same for others.

What does it mean to you to be recognized in this way by your community?
When I first met Marcia more than two decades ago, I asked her about the Baton Rouge Area Foundation because I was unfamiliar with the organization. She spoke with such passion about BRAF's vision for our community and, more importantly, the strategies for turning that vision into reality. I credit Marcia and John Davies with inspiring me to do my part to make our community the best it can be. To receive an award bearing her name is a profound honor.

Name one favorite thing about living in Baton Rouge?
I have, by choice, lived in the same zip code all of my life! Living here gives me the unique ability to stay connected to the community I love and continually understand and advocate for the needs to be addressed.



Q&A

KEVIN KNOBLOCH

CHAMPION FOR GIVING WINNER

Was there a moment you realized your financial expertise could be a tool for something bigger than numbers, something that could truly serve people and the community?
My mother's career with the Mississippi Department of Social Services instilled in me a deep empathy for underserved families. Today, I bring those values full circle by pairing my background in wealth management with dedicated community support.

Your nominator says you make philanthropy part of every financial conversation. Why does that matter to you?
I am passionate about raising philanthropic awareness and driving collective action to strengthen our local community.

What does it mean to you to help people feel confident and engaged in both investing and giving?
I'm constantly diving into the latest financial tools and strategies to find options that maximize my clients' outcomes while minimizing financial drag. From there, my goal is simple: translate those tools into clear, practical advice that helps my clients make the best choices for their future, as well as the future of our community.

"I'm constantly diving into the latest financial tools and strategies to find options that maximize my clients' outcomes while minimizing financial drag. From there, my goal is simple: translate those tools into clear, practical advice that helps my clients make the best choices for their future, as well as the future of our community.

What excites you most about the future of Baton Rouge?
Young changemakers who are dedicated to driving positive, lasting impact across the Baton Rouge community.

Looking back on your years as a financial advisor, what impact are you most proud of?
I'm most proud of building personal relationships with dynastic families. I guide first-generation clients in maximizing their financial legacy while preparing the next generation through personalized, family-centered counsel.

What's your secret superpower when it comes to helping people talk about money and values in the same conversation?
In an era dominated by market noise and intense political rhetoric, emotion can be the greatest threat to long-term financial success. Our role is to act as a rational anchor, gently pushing back on headline anxiety and re-centering decisions on cold, hard data.

Where do you see the greatest opportunity right now for philanthropy to make a difference?
The area with the greatest potential for philanthropic impact is early childhood education. The research is clear: the earliest years of a child's life have a profound influence on future educational, economic, and social outcomes. Yet, as a nation, we continue to underprioritize this critical investment. While the rewards may take years to fully materialize, sustained support for early childhood education can help create greater opportunity, reduce inequality, and equip future generations with the tools they need to thrive as productive and engaged citizens.

What advice would you give someone who wants their financial decisions to reflect their values?
I encourage clients to define a personal mission statement and share it openly across generations. Doing so creates a unifying "shield of honor", a guiding framework that preserves, protects, and honors their family's core values. Having walked through this exercise with my own family, I've seen firsthand how powerful it is in fostering a shared understanding of what matters most.

WELLS FARGO DISCLAIMER
2026 Champion for Giving Award was bestowed by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation as a result of community efforts, unrelated to the business of the firm.

Investment products and services are offered through Wells Fargo Advisors Financial Network, LLC (WFAFN), Member SIPC. Longbridge Wealth Management is a separate entity from WFAFN PM-02182028-5850118.

CELEBRATE OUR STAFF!

THE FOUNDATION TAKES PRIDE IN OUR STAFF'S DEDICATION TO PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO CONTINUALLY ENHANCING THEIR SKILLS TO BETTER SERVE OUR COMMUNITY. WE ARE PROUD TO CELEBRATE THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS, WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE BETTERMENT OF THEMSELVES, OUR ORGANIZATION, AND THE BATON ROUGE COMMUNITY WE SERVE.



BAILEY BROOME
Content Manager

Bailey Broome has been promoted to content manager. Since joining our communications team, she has worked to bring the Foundation's story to life through newsletters, social media, event photography, and more. In her expanded role, Bailey will guide content planning and further shape our storytelling across digital, print, and in-person channels.



ALLY RENNHOFF MARTINEZ
Director of Nonprofit Consulting

Ally Rennhoff Martinez has been appointed to represent East Baton Rouge Parish on the Atchafalaya Trace Commission. The commission oversees the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area and works to protect the region's natural, historic and cultural resources while supporting tourism, education and recreation across 15 parishes.



ERIC DEXTER
Vice President of Civic Leadership

Eric Dexter has been named to the 2026 Capital Region 500 by the Baton Rouge Business Report. The annual list recognizes influential leaders who are helping shape progress across the Baton Rouge area. As vice president of civic leadership at BRAF, Eric plays an important role in advancing community initiatives and fostering collaborative partnerships that drive positive change throughout the region.



CHRIS MEYER
President and CEO

Chris Meyer has been named to the 2026 Capital Region 500 by the Baton Rouge Business Report. The annual list recognizes influential leaders who are helping shape progress across the Baton Rouge area. As CEO and president of BRAF, Chris continues to lead the organization with vision and dedication, spearheading innovative projects and championing efforts that strengthen the community and support regional growth.



EMILY GLASCOCK
Director of Philanthropic Impact

Emily Glascock has graduated from the 14th Leadership Livingston class. During the 10-month program, she joined 23 fellow leaders for immersive experiences and collaborative projects designed to deepen their understanding of Livingston Parish and strengthen their ability to serve the community.



LEAH TAYLOR
Director of Civic Leadership Initiatives

Leah Taylor has been selected for the Leadership Baton Rouge Class of 2026. Through the 10-month program, she joins 40 emerging leaders from across the Capital Region for discussions and hands-on experiences focused on the challenges and opportunities shaping the region. The program develops informed and engaged leaders across the civic, nonprofit and business sectors.

ANNUAL MEETING

MARCH 2026







COMMUNITY VISIT TO PENNINGTON BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH CENTER

JUNE 2026





BOOKS FROM BIRTH LAUNCH

APRIL 2026



THE BASICS LAUNCH

AUGUST 2026



Community Kitchen

The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank and the Three O'Clock Project are expanding their longtime partnership to launch a new Community Kitchen that will transform rescued and donated food into nutritious meals for children, families and neighbors across the region. The partnership brings together the Food Bank's regional reach and distribution network with Three O'Clock Project's expertise in food rescue and child nutrition to help address food insecurity and make better use of available resources.

The project will convert 5,000 square feet within the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank's current facility into a hub for food rescue, after-school and summer meals, health-focused programming and culinary workforce development. The space will include a commercial kitchen, culinary classroom and workforce training center. At launch, the kitchen is expected to produce 1,000 meals daily, with plans to scale to 5,000 or more meals a day as food rescue operations grow and new partners come on board.

Through the Community Kitchen, the nonprofit partners aim to reach more people, reduce food waste, create pathways for employment and build a sustainable model that can grow alongside the needs of the community. The initiative is currently in the planning and private fundraising phase, with plans for the kitchen to begin preparing its first meals by fall 2027.



"The Community Kitchen will address some of the most pressing challenges facing children and families in our region. By bringing together food rescue, nutritious meals for children, workforce development and health-focused programming under one roof, we can turn resources into meaningful, measurable impact in our community. We have been incredibly encouraged by the enthusiasm we are seeing from community partners and leaders who recognize the potential of this project."

Liz Pfifer
Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank President and CEO



Volunteers packaging meals at a previous Three O'Clock project event.

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Baton Rouge, LA
Permit 485

PARTNERSHIP *makes it* POSSIBLE

There's more than one way to support our community, and BRAF is generating opportunities at every angle. We connect the right people to the right resources in pursuit of a healthy community that can access excellent education, achieve economic prosperity, sustain a high quality of life, live in safer neighborhoods, and display resilience in our changing world.



BRAF
BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION

YOUR PARTNERSHIP MAKES IT POSSIBLE. JOIN US!

Memberships are available for individuals, businesses, and nonprofit organizations.

BRAF.ORG/MEMBERSHIP