



CURRENTS

THE GREAT FLOOD

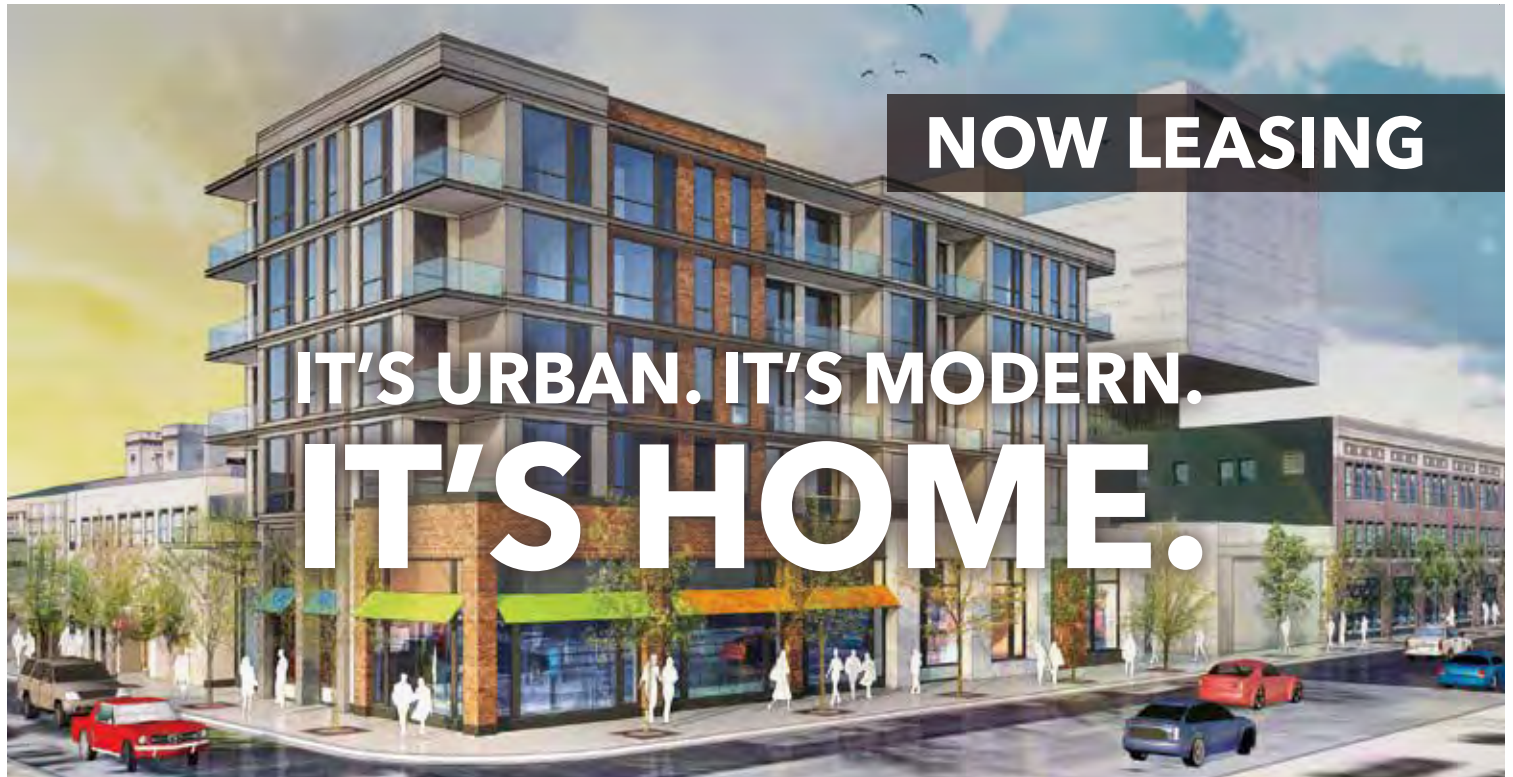
fourth quarter twenty-sixteen . baton rouge area foundation



A work bus seems to float on water Thursday, August 18, 2016 in a flooded field near Nucor Steel in St. James Parish, Louisiana.



Photo by Tim Mueller



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CONTENTS

VOLUME TEN | NUMBER FOUR

6-Letter from the chair

9-*The storm with no name*

22-*Big flood, small farmers*

26-*Reading, writing and rain*

30-*Nowhere to go*

34-*Measure twice, cut once ... faster*

40-*Wired recovery*

44-About us

45-Our work

48-Civic projects

58-Coda

*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

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

LETTER



Elsewhere, the leaves change with the seasons. In Louisiana, we can tell the time of year by the kind of rain falling. Cold drizzle in

winter. Warm showers in spring. Afternoon thunderstorms in summer.

So when it started raining in early August, most of us believed it was just another thunderstorm in an already wet summer. We were wrong. Thunderstorms are violent and quick. This was different, deceptive. It proved to be, in fact, a cyclone stuck over land, pulling up water from the Gulf and dumping it onto 20 south Louisiana parishes for days.

The rain was too much for drain pipes and little rivers to handle. More than 140,000 homes were damaged or swamped altogether. Even people on high ground found themselves afloat.

But south Louisiana residents are industrious and resilient, the kind of people bold enough to build industries and cities on land that doesn't always remain in place for very long. They are also great neighbors, which they showed again after the flood.

People fortunate enough to be out of danger searched social networks for those trapped in their houses. In bass boats, bateaus and pirogues, they cruised across front lawns that had turned into lakes, rescuing people who'd had little reason to ever expect their safe, suburban homes would take on water.

Our people transformed churches, community halls and even a movie studio into shelters for those left homeless by the storm. They rang up their credit cards to buy supplies for people who, suddenly, had lost everything they owned.

When the rivers finally returned to their boundaries, tens of thousands of volunteers swarmed in to help toss out soggy

This issue is dedicated to the Great Flood of 2016.

Because of the enormity of the flood and the generosity of thousands of contributors, we are printing a larger number of copies, which lets us report about our work and how we managed contributions to a greater number of people.

On behalf of the people of South Louisiana, we thank you.

couches, rip up saturated rugs and cut wet sheetrock to just above the waterline. They were readying those waterlogged houses to become homes again, sooner than later.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation, like other community foundations, is an agent of the good in our community. We are only able to help because people here— and around the world— care for each other. And so we activated a charitable fund for flood relief with faith in the notion that we rise together. Over the next few weeks, more than 16,000 people from around the world contributed to the fund and confirmed that faith. Kids set up lemonade stands. People sent in their Social Security checks. Designers created and sold tee-shirts. Benefit concerts called the crowds together to donate.

Thanks to many of you, we raised more than \$5 million for the relief effort. Our goal was to use that money quickly and wisely. We dispatched teams to do a rapid assessment of nonprofits that were providing immediate relief. Our staff returned with information that helped us decide which organizations needed funding right away. We wrote and delivered checks for the most pressing needs within 24 hours.

Our research also showed that another effective use of your contributions was to write grants to nimble nonprofits, agen-

“To us, the best indicator of progress are the children. They’re back in class, even if that means some are studying together in shifts because their schools were flooded out and are now being rebuilt.”

cies and schools that were working to return people to their homes and children to their classrooms. Acting fast gave people hope that their communities would revive, rather than flagging the way some have in other disasters, waiting for aid to come. Getting residents back into their homes and neighborhoods also reduces the chance they will be overcome by trauma that typically appears months after a disaster.

Several months after the flood, there is still much more to do. The devastation was that deep and widespread. Some of the elderly and poor, for example, are living in places that can sicken them with mold. They are optimistic that the federal government will eventually deliver resources to make them somewhat whole, as it did in New York after Superstorm Sandy.

Still, what we’ve done so far with your assistance has been remarkable. To us, the best indicator of progress are the children. They’re back in class, even if that means some are studying together in shifts because their schools were flooded out and are now being rebuilt.

On behalf of the children and all of the people of South Louisiana, we are humbled and grateful that you entrusted us with your funds. Our obligation is to do the best for South Louisiana, to continue the recovery and to make sure that our people are more resilient and prosperous in the future.

Sincerely,



S. Dennis Blunt,
Chair

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

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The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is a community foundation that takes advantage of opportunities to improve the quality of life in South Louisiana. We do so by providing two 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.

For more information, contact Mukul Verma at mverma@braf.org.

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***T**he government did not have a name for the disastrous weather that deluged our region, but the people of south Louisiana did. We came to call it The Great Flood of 2016.*

Here, we know our hurricanes well, of course, and we remember them by name. They come at us with advance warning, identifiable in convenient categories: Cat 1 means no big worries, while Cat 5 means pack up and head inland.

But the August storm was something unfamiliar. At first, it seemed like just one more downpour in a long summer of rainy days. But the skies opened in a way that only happens every 1,000 years; in one place, 30 inches of rain fell in only two days.

The suburbs became unsafe. Storm drains failed to channel water fast enough. Swollen rivers swallowed their own banks. Water, rising suddenly, trapped people in their homes. In pictures shown around the world, drowned ranch houses of Baton Rouge were recognizable only as rows of shingled roofs.

In the next few days, we were reminded of what we already knew: you can't wash the people of Louisiana away. They came together better than ever before. Weekend anglers transformed their bass boats into a makeshift armada, dubbed the "Cajun Navy," to rescue their neighbors in need. Community halls, churches, and even a movie studio turned themselves into shelters. Supplies from throughout the state and around the country poured in almost as fast as the floodwaters had, to feed and clothe evacuees who'd lost everything.

When the water finally subsided about a week later, family, friends and volunteers from all over arrived with their sleeves rolled up, ready to fix up flooded houses and make them habitable again. Working house to house, they quickly learned the routine: shovel up the muck; haul the furniture and appliances to the curb; cut out the waterlogged carpet, back to front. Take a break. Muscle out the moulding and baseboards with pry bars. Drink water, hope for a breeze. Finish by scoring and removing saturated sheet rock. Move on to the next house up the street and repeat. Don't stop until the job is done.





— THE STORM WITH NO NAME —

by Mukul Verma / photos by Tim Mueller

What happened?

The Washington Post perhaps wrote the best explanation of the storm:

“Combine a sopping-wet air mass, featuring record-setting humidity levels, with a peculiar type of cyclonic storm running against the grain of the mid-latitude, westerly air current. You end up with a rogue vortex operating in a near-infinite water supply, creating both hell and high water for many, many thousands of people.”

The storm was an area of low pressure, essentially an inland tropical depression. Above the storm was a massive high pressure cell that drew moist air upward through the center of the storm. Because the storm was too far south from the jet stream, it lingered for many days, dropping more rain than the land could absorb and the manmade systems could drain away. Yet, the winds at the core were never strong enough to earn the storm an official name.

THE RAIN: AUG. 11-14, 2016

a one in one-thousand year event

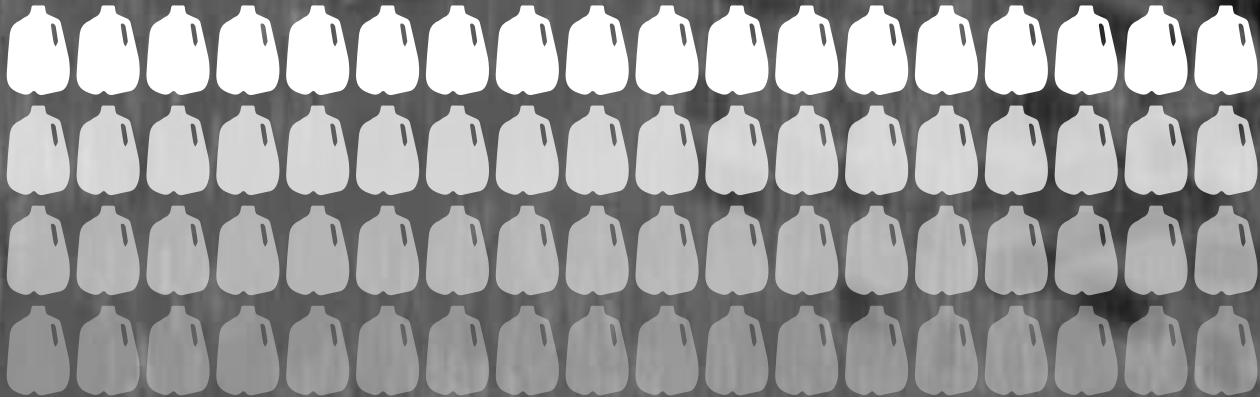
32 HOURS
Longest spell of nonstop rain

2-3 inches/hour
Rain during the worst part of the storm

Total rain that fell across South Louisiana during the storm

20" to 30"

31.39"
Most rain in one place: Watson, northeast of Baton Rouge



Amount of total rain (in gallons)

7.1 trillion

HURRICANE KATRINA :
2.28 TRILLION GALLONS

HURRICANE ISAAC :
5.31 TRILLION GALLONS

7.1 trillion gallons would **fill Lake Pontchartrain four times or 142 billion standard bathtubs.**

Source: WeatherBell Analytics, Foundation calculation, news sources

THE AFTERMATH

the work to be done

20 Number of parishes declared federal disaster areas

Estimated cubic yards of debris in East Baton Rouge Parish

2 million

Cost to East Baton Rouge Parish to pick up **one cubic yard of debris** **\$13.98**



140,000

Estimated number of houses that were damaged



\$11 billion in losses to homes, businesses and automobiles

Source: Baton Rouge Area Chamber, East Baton Rouge Parish government

80% of flooded homes had no flood insurance

50% of flooded houses were not in the 100-year flood plain

HEROES

HAIL TO THE CHIEF Returning from a tour of flooded neighborhoods, Gov. John Bel Edwards smiled for a photo with executives whose business was giving \$250,000 to our Flood Relief Fund. He championed the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's efforts, telling companies and individuals alike that if they wanted to donate, do it through the Foundation's Flood Relief Fund. Thank you, Governor, for trusting us.

COMPETING IN GENEROSITY

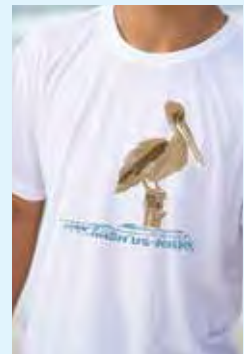
You wouldn't know that this has been a mean political season from the generosity of some politicians. Hillary Clinton asked her followers to donate to the Louisiana Flood Relief Fund. In the following hours, more than \$250,000 in online donations was registered on the Foundation's campaign portal. Soon after, Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Preibus and Democratic strategist Donna Brazile called on their cohorts to give; generosity followed. Within weeks, elected officials in Washington, D.C., came to South Louisiana's aid, authorizing \$500 million to pay for housing and other recovery work, promising more will be delivered next year.



From Capital One Bank are Chris Haskew (left) and Ric Kearny (second from right) with Governor John Bel Edwards and Foundation CEO John Davies (far right).

CAN'T WASH US AWAY

In America, t-shirts are more than clothing. They are brands and banners, and they are a means to raise money for good work. 30A, a company that celebrates small-town beach life along Florida's Scenic Highway 30-A, produced a limited T-shirt to support the Flood Relief Fund. Printed on the shirt was a pelican above the words "Can't Wash Us Away." 30A donated \$40,000 to the fund.



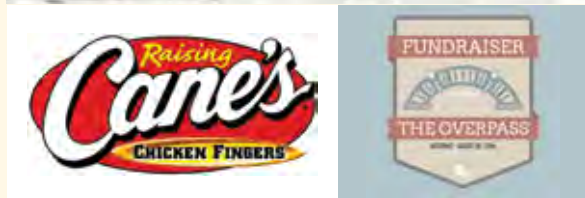
THIS GUY IS GOOD

You may not know Roy Spence, but you've seen what he can do. The firm he founded and later sold, GSD&M Idea City, pioneered purpose-based marketing. Idea City's marketing campaigns have generated tens of billions in sales, and, all the while, doing their share of good in the world. Spence's most visible campaigns are for Southwest Airlines ("You are free to move about the country."); Texas ("A whole other country." and "Don't mess with Texas."); and the PGA Tour ("These guys are good."). After Katrina, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation hired GSD&M to create a marketing plan for the I-10 corridor, the fastest-growing sector of the state. When it was done, Spence didn't forget about Louisiana. Following the Great Flood of 2016, Spence turned his attention to us again, collaborating with the Foundation and others to create a TV ad encouraging people to contribute to flood recovery. You can watch it on the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's YouTube channel, or at BRAF.org.

To whomever opens this,
 I know that not many people will see this, but that's ok. I want to thank the residents of Baton Rouge who took me in, no questions asked, nearly 11 years ago to the day. Given these unfortunate circumstances, I felt it necessary to help those who helped me a decade ago. This donation comes from students at the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine and Michael's bar, Recovery Room. I am so proud of my fellow students for pitching in, and I hope that our contribution serves as a long overdue "thank you" for how you helped New Orleanians in August 2005.

-Andria

Andria Cheramie



GOOD EATS Local restaurants and the diners who love them rallied around flood victims in special fundraising events. Baton Rouge's Raising Cane's and their new competitor in town, Zaxby's, set aside sales from designated days for the relief fund. Under the Overpass, a fundraiser organized by restaurateur Nick Hufft and marketer Kenny Nguyen, was centered around the Merchant at the foot of the Perkins Road Overpass. Franz Borghardt, who started and oversees a group that brunches on Sundays, recruited more than 30 restaurants to share sales from the Sunday brunches they patronize. All the restaurants together handed over a helping of more than \$100,000 for the Relief Fund.

GETTING CLOSER The Baton Rouge Area Foundation raised more than \$45 million for recovery after hurricanes Katrina and Rita. We spent the money on relief first, and then we invested in building a stronger South Louisiana ahead of future disasters. Since then, Baton Rouge and New Orleans have become much closer. For example, the Foundation has worked with Greater New Orleans Inc. and others to form a "super region" encompassing the two cities. What does that mean? For one thing, it means passenger rail will link Louisiana's two biggest population centers. Other super region projects also aim to close the distances that have separated us. After this year's flood, the Crescent City showed its goodwill toward the Capital Region, including donations to our Flood Relief Fund and the creation of a new partnership with our counterpart there, the Greater New Orleans Foundation.

MICHAEL ZOREK

Dear Mr. Verme - August 24, 2010
 After viewing the devastation on the news, my kids, Jeremy (14) and Diana (10) decided to hold a lemonade stand to raise money for Flood Relief in Louisiana. They raised \$450 which was split between 4 classes we found on the Governor's website.
 We are happy to send you a check for \$112.50 and hope that it helps towards the recovery in your area.
 We wish you dry skies and all the best.

Michael Zorek



CHILDREN'S BRIGADE

Kids these days. They're good. Students at a Presbyterian school in Alabama raised money for flood victims, as did ones at a Quaker elementary in Philadelphia. Kids at a karate school in Dothan, Ala., ponied up their birthday money to help their neighbors two states over. A brother and sister in New York sold lemonade on a Manhattan street corner and sent us a check, along with a note from their father: "After viewing the devastation on the news, my kids, Jeremy (14) and Diana (10), decided to hold a lemonade stand to raise money for flood relief in Louisiana. ... We wish you dry skies and all the best. —Michael Zorek."



STARS OVER SOUTH LOUISIANA Stephen Colbert directed his legions of late night fans to donate at BRAF.org. It wasn't the first time Colbert looked out for Louisiana. After the BP oil disaster, Colbert created a charitable fund at the Foundation, raised money for it and gave grants to nonprofits across the Gulf Coast. This time around, he was joined by other charitable celebrities. Taylor Swift used a list of nonprofits compiled by the Foundation to issue her own flood relief grants. And a pop star no less luminous than Swift but who prefers to remain anonymous contributed \$100,000 to our Flood Relief Fund. Meanwhile, JD Scott—older brother of the Drew and Johnathan Scott duo on HGTV's popular *Property Brothers* show—volunteered to gut a home with Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge, a nonprofit that repairs houses for the elderly so they can remain in their own homes as long as possible. JD Scott hosts a number of shows on HGTV.

Left: JD Scott and Rev. Chris Andrews of Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge

GENEROSITY, AMERICA'S OTHER PASTIME

Baseball has been very, very good to flood victims. It started with former LSU baseball players. Anthony Ranaudo, pitcher for the Chicago White Sox, recruited former Tigers now in the major leagues to start raising money for the Flood Relief Fund. On that roster was Louis Coleman of the LA Dodgers, Will Harris and Alex Bregman of the Houston Astros, Aaron Nola of the Philadelphia Phillies, Ryan Schimpf of the San Diego Padres, DJ LeMahieu of the Colorado Rockies, Kevin Gausman of the Baltimore Orioles and Mikie Mahtook of the Tampa Bay Rays. Learning of their efforts, Major League Baseball and its teams wrote checks to the fund. Altogether, baseball pitched in \$54,194.

Right: Kevin Gausman, Taylor North and the Foundation's Elizabeth Hutchison



IN THE SPIRIT Baptists shared sandwiches, chips and iced tea with flood-weary people sweating it out in the suffocating heat as they gutted their houses. The food was better than any provided by the American Red Cross. Mormons from around the country, easy to spot in their yellow shirts, descended on Baton Rouge. Together, they served for more than 100,000 hours, completing more than 1,400 orders for homes in the area. Temples and churches of all kinds in Baton Rouge were transformed into shelters, aid centers and distribution points. Among the largest was Healing Place Church. With drive-thru service for supplies, the church's HP Serve project would have impressed Frederick Winslow Taylor, a Quaker who helped found the industrial Efficiency Movement. Volunteers with HP Serve logged 2,414 hours of work, dished out 19,277 meals and provided supplies to 45,072 people in need after the flood.



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EMPLOYEES 1ST FUNDS

Hurricane Katrina exposed a need: How does a company assist employees that were scattered by the storm. Emeril Restaurants, Oreck Vacuum and McIlhenny Co. opened employee assistance funds at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. They deposited money in their accounts; the Foundation made grants to their workers, letting them recover and return to work sooner.

After the Great Flood of 2016, more than 78 companies and government agencies opened their own employee assistance funds at the Foundation through our Employees 1st program. We launched online campaigns so that workers and vendors could contribute to the fund. We also established a mechanism for making grants, making sure that the need was there and a fair amount was granted to each employee.

All the Employees 1st funds together received more than \$6 million in contributions. More than 2,000 grants totaling more than \$3.5 million had been issued at press time.

Opening a fund has its advantages. Donations to the fund are tax deductible and the people receiving the grants don't have to account for the money as ordinary income in their tax filings. The generosity goes much farther.

employees1st

Employees1st.org

EMPLOYEES 1ST

(as of Oct. 21)

Funds: 80

Gifts to funds:

\$6.2 million

Grants from funds:

\$4.1 million

(2,246 grants)



LOUISIANA FLOOD RELIEF FUND

We learned from Hurricane Katrina.

A severe teacher, that storm showed us that the federal government doesn't rush to the aid of cities that disaster sweeps aside. In that absence, nonprofits must step up immediately and fill the most basic, universal needs that arise after all disasters while remaining nimble enough to alter tactics to match that particular event. We've also learned that no two disasters or responses are alike.

The Great Flood of 2016 proves the point. At the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, we knew that local nonprofits would need resources fast, so we started raising money for the Louisiana Flood Relief Fund—a reserve already in place. The Flood Relief Fund had been launched earlier in the year with a \$100,000 gift from the Foundation to assist victims from a different flood that drowned North Louisiana just months prior.

We created an easy-to-use donation portal. Through it, more than 16,000 donations poured in from around the world. Meanwhile, businesses wrote big checks, community foundations and their donors mailed in their contributions, and ordinary people who just love South Louisiana improvised novel ways to raise money. There were brunches and benefit concerts, for instance, as well as custom T-shirts sales and lemonade stands. Below is an accounting of the gifts that flowed into the Foundation. We are grateful to each person and organization that donated. The money was granted to nonprofits that were providing relief, to school systems that were inundated and stalled at the start of the academic calendar, and to charitable organizations that were themselves flooded out and needed help to restart delivering services. •

BY THE NUMBERS / as of September 30, 2016

Total contributions:

\$4,939,671

Sixty grants made so far totaling:

\$2,710,677

We continue to issue grants from the fund.

The vast majority of individual donations were gifted through an online portal. Here's a quick look at online giving to the relief fund:

Number of online gifts **15,974**

Total amount of the gifts
\$1,557,921

Average gift **\$97.52**



LARGEST ONLINE DONATION

(a pop star who remains anonymous): **\$100,000**

Number of gifts from foreign countries:

118

Most gifts from a single state:

CALIFORNIA: 2,203 contributions totaling

\$277,216

Gifts from Louisiana:

1,279 contributions totaling

\$229,492

Countries represented: Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bahamas, Canada, Curaçao, England, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Poland, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Russia, Singapore, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan

LOUISIANA FLOOD RELIEF FUND GRANTS

In the early morning hours of Friday, August 12, the rain began to fall across southeast Louisiana. Over three days, the deluge dumped three times as much rain on Louisiana as Hurricane Katrina, or the equivalent of seven trillion gallons of water. Over 140,000 homes were damaged or destroyed, and most had no flood insurance. The flooding destroyed tens of thousands of businesses and displaced thousands of residents across 20 parishes.

Immediately, Foundation staff and volunteers visited relief shelters to assess critical needs. We activated the Louisiana Flood Relief Fund to speed support to the nonprofit organizations serving thousands of survivors. Donors from across the country contributed over \$5 million for flood relief. The Foundation has distributed more than half this amount and will continue to invest in the recovery. As long as it takes.

We also convened key nonprofit, philanthropic and government officials to discuss a framework for long-term recovery. So that employers could provide immediate financial assistance to impacted workers, we worked with them to quickly establish over 75 employee assistance funds through our Employees 1st program, raising \$6 million and distributing over 2,000 grants to date so employees could provide for their families.

As we did after the devastating storms of 2005, we focused first on supporting organizations providing relief. At the same time, we made grant investments in those organizations—such as the school systems in impacted parishes—that were critical to retaining residents and setting communities on the path toward normalcy. Longer-term recovery efforts, particularly in the areas of housing and responding to the mental health needs of flood survivors, will continue to be a priority in the months and years ahead.

In short, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation—powered by generous donors—stepped into the breach to help hurting communities begin the long, difficult road toward recovery.

—John Carpenter, Director of Donor Services

IMMEDIATE RELIEF AND HUMAN SERVICES

Ascension Parish Council on Aging - \$25,000 to feed the elderly.

ARC of Greater Baton Rouge - \$50,000 for services to disabled clients impacted by the flooding and facility repairs to the flood-damaged Respite & Emergency Center for special needs clients.

East Baton Rouge Council on Aging - \$25,000 to feed the elderly and provide household goods. The council provides meals to more than 10,000 needy seniors each week.



Nearly a month after 4 feet of water swept through the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank warehouse, staff works to restock the 170,000-square-foot facilities.

Greater Baton Rouge Area Food Bank - \$63,235 to help the nonprofit relocate because its main building had four feet of flooding.

Healing Place Serve - \$75,000 to support food, clothing and supply distribution. HPS operated distribution centers in Denham Springs, South Baton Rouge and North Baton Rouge.

HOPE Ministry of Pointe Coupee - \$10,000 to provide food, rental assistance and other aid to low-income families in Pointe Coupee Parish.

HOPE Ministries - \$10,000 to provide food and other aid to low-income families impacted by the flooding in East Baton Rouge Parish. HOPE Ministries is also helping residents whose homes were damaged by the floods and who qualify for the Disaster Supplemental Assistance Program and it's assisting clients in registering for FEMA assistance.

Lighthouse Christian Church - \$2,500 for food and clothing distribution

Livingston Parish Council on Aging - \$25,000 to feed the elderly.

Manship Theatre - \$2,813.25 to cover costs of screening movies to flood survivors who were housed at the nearby shelter.

Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church Foundation - \$25,000 to support meals for those impacted by the floods.

St. Joseph Catholic Church, French Settlement - \$25,000 to support meals for those impacted by the floods; help connect survivors to recovery resources and manage volunteers for house cleanups.

St. Mark Catholic Church, Prairieville - \$10,000 to feed people impacted by the floods and to connect victims to recovery resources.

St. Vincent DePaul - \$50,000 to support the Community Pharmacy, which provides free and reduced medication to low-income clients. Before the flooding, Community Pharmacy filled over 30,000 prescriptions in the past 12 months.

Unlocking Autism Baton Rouge - \$50,000 to find temporary housing for children on the autistic spectrum who were suffering from extreme stress in the shelters.

MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING AND WELLNESS

Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area - \$25,000 to provide services to clients and their caregivers impacted by the floods. Alzheimer's Services' respite services provide a safe environment for clients to receive care while their caregivers attend to home repairs and other recovery activities.

Baton Rouge Bridge Center for Hope - \$200,000 for around-the-clock suicide and crisis prevention hotline for all people in the flood zone.

Life of a Single Mom - \$25,000 to serve client families, including counseling and referrals to community resources.

ASSISTING AT-RISK CHILDREN

100 Black Men - \$25,000 to work with at-risk youth impacted by the floods through certified counselors and volunteers.

AMI Kids - \$25,000 to assist the organization recover as it repairs its facilities. The nonprofit offers services and treatment to at-risk children.

Big Buddy - \$25,000 to provide services to low-income, predominantly African-American youth, including after-school programming, counseling as needed and referral of client families to community resources.

Boys & Girls Club of Greater Baton Rouge - \$25,000 sustainability grant to enable the organization to provide services to low-income



Healing Place Church volunteer Melissa Bailey distributes food at the Baton Rouge Dream Center in Baton Rouge. The volunteers served nearly 1,000 hot lunches in the days following the flood.

youth, including after-school programming, counseling as needed and referral of client families to community resources.

MetroMorphosis - \$50,000 through the Urban Congress to engage young men and their families throughout the recovery process, connect them to resources and help stabilize families.

Young Leaders Academy - \$25,000 to provide services to low-income, predominantly African-American youth, including after-school programming, counseling as needed and referral of client families to community resources.

EDUCATION

Baton Rouge Community College Foundation - \$60,000 to support BRCC's Disaster Resource Center, which links faculty, staff and students to recovery resources. The grant will also help replace student textbooks and supplies lost during the floods.

Baton Rouge Youth Coalition - \$5,000 to replace school supplies and materials lost by program participants. BRYC helps under served high schoolers enter college and win scholarships.

City Year Baton Rouge - \$25,000 to provide mentoring and tutoring services in EBR Public Schools.

Cristo Rey Franciscan High School - \$100,000 to help the school recover and relocate. *(see story in this issue)*

Foundation for East Baton Rouge Parish Schools - \$60,000 to assist in the recovery of the Baton Rouge School System. Grant provided help to purchase school uniforms for disadvantaged students.

Livingston Parish Public Schools, Ascension Parish Public Schools, City of Baker Public Schools, Central Community Public Schools - \$50,000 to each of the listed systems to assist in recovery so children can return to learning.

Livingston Parish School Board - \$1,500 for student uniforms

New Schools for Baton Rouge - \$50,000 to help charter schools respond to student needs. NSBR was organized to recruit top charter operators to East Baton Rouge Parish.

THRIVE Academy - \$10,000 to support buying clothing and personal effects for students who live on campus during the week. *(see the Lead In section for an update on THRIVE)*

YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge - \$50,000 for repairs to the Early Headstart Program in the Glen Oaks area, heavily impacted by the flooding.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Baton Rouge - \$25,000 to help rebuild homes lost by low-income families.

Louisiana Housing Corp. - \$5,000 for rental deposits and assistance to people displaced.

Mid City Redevelopment Alliance - \$25,000 to respond to the housing needs of low-income families. Mid City provided warehouse space to the Capital Area United Way and accepted donated materials on its behalf.

Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge - \$50,000 to repair flooded homes of elderly and disabled low-income homeowners. **SBP** - \$100,000 to support of the opening of a rebuilding and training center in Baton Rouge that will provide ongoing resources and technical assistance to Southeast Louisiana communities impacted by the flood. *(see related story in this issue)*

Together Baton Rouge - \$290,000 to underwrite volunteer-led efforts to connect victims with community resources and to repair homes. TBR had a brigade of volunteers and paid workers who gutted homes and coordinated the efforts of other organizations that were doing the same work. The groups focused on homes of the poor and elderly.



Together Baton Rouge volunteer Leah Conquorgood reviews Geanne Petsch's FEMA application during a visit. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted \$250,000 to Together Baton Rouge. Together Baton Rouge is gutting the homes of families with the greatest need: the elderly, disabled and families with children.

REGIONAL GRANTS

Community Foundation of Acadiana - \$250,000 to support nonprofit organizations and efforts addressing the impact of the recent floods in the eight parishes (counties) it serves. All were declared disaster areas.

Northshore Community Foundation - \$200,000. NCF serves the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, where Tangipahoa and St. Helena were struck by the floods.

BREDA Small Farm Survival Fund - \$50,000 to help small farmers recover their farms. (*see story in this issue*)

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Inc. - \$50,000 to support Spanish-speaking outreach to families, helping them access resources. As the FEMA-designated case management nonprofit, Catholic Charities will engage tens of thousands of families with recovery needs, including immigrant communities.

OTHER

Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge - \$50,000 for arts enrichment programs to children and families in area shelters; engage artists in outreach to children and families through arts therapy programs during the recovery.

City of Baton Rouge - \$25,000 for general assistance to low-income residents impacted by the floods.

Urban League of Greater New Orleans - \$100,000 to support an expansion to Baton Rouge. The group is providing recovery resources; the Baton Rouge affiliate will assist in the creation of the Center for Education and Youth Development, the Center for Economic and Workforce Development and the Center for Policy and Social Justice.



The Baton Rouge Area Foundation's Flood Relief Fund granted \$50,000 to BREADA Louisiana Small Farm Survival Fund. The money was used to assist small farmers after the floods. Because of them, more people in Louisiana are eating food that is grown near them.



Big flood, small farmers

Farmers get by with a little help from the mouths they feed

by Maggie Heyn Richardson / photos by Tim Mueller

This August started out like it did every year for Ponchatoula strawberry farmer William Fletcher. His summer crops had long been harvested, their decaying roots yanked from the soil. Working in the punishing south Louisiana heat, Fletcher began transitioning to the fall and winter season, preparing his fields for tiny strawberry plants as well as the many other specialty produce items he routinely sells at the Red Stick Farmers Market in Baton Rouge.

About 10 days into the month, Fletcher was ahead of schedule. His rows were perfectly cut and fertilizer was in the ground. The soil was fine, clean and free of debris, so much so that Fletcher says it resembled the texture of cake mix. He had met his goal of completing this phase of preparation in advance of Labor Day, a personal challenge he issues to himself annually.

“We were starting to slowly stand up again only to have our legs taken out from underneath us.”

—William Fletcher, Fletcher Farms

“For a farmer, every year is a little different,” recalls Fletcher, who left a career in mortgage banking in Florida several years ago to return to the family farm; he is a fifth generation strawberry farmer. “You do the same things to get ready, but every year is unique. I remember thinking that this year, I was really satisfied.”

Within a few days, his satisfaction gave way to horror. Fletcher’s farm and house went under during historic flooding that began Aug. 12. A low pressure system that seemed to come out of nowhere situated itself over parts of south Louisiana, including Ponchatoula, and dumped as much as 31 inches of rain on some areas.

Fletcher’s land is situated west of the Tangipahoa River, and when the river failed to hold back the epic rain, a wall of water rushed toward his property in dramatic fashion. In addition to his house taking on water, one of the most tragic consequences was that most of Fletcher’s grainy topsoil was washed away. The water had cut a diagonal gouge in the earth about three acres wide. It would be impossible to replant—and get back to work—without restoring the topsoil first.

Louisiana’s historic August floods killed 13 people and left thousands displaced. Twenty parishes were declared disaster zones and a moving target of homes, as much as 140,000, suffered serious damage. Large numbers of businesses and some schools were also shuttered.

Farmers also took a big beating.



According to LSU AgCenter economist Kurt Guidry, the damages suffered by Louisiana farmers after the August floods totaled nearly \$277 million, more than double the amount of Guidry’s earlier estimate of \$110 million. Large commodities farmers have better access to federal aid, but small farmers like Fletcher are not eligible. Even when they can apply for federal aid, they are often so financially stretched they can’t afford to wait.

One of the only forms of financial relief for regional farmers in times of disaster has been the Louisiana Small Farm Survival Fund, established by the Big River Economic and Agricultural Development Alliance (BREADA) after hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. The fund is managed by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

The fund specifically targets independent farmers in the state who are unlikely to receive federal loans or grants under the requirements of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The fund helps farmers stem the financial bleeding. Disasters require significant financial outlay at the very time a farmer has no revenue coming in.

“We recognized that when disaster hits, the agricultural story can be just as devastating as the urban one,” says BREADA Executive Director Copper Alvarez. “Small farmers, especially, are hard hit since funding is not always available to meet their needs fast. They are small businesses who have great risk but not always the capacity to meet recovery needs in an expedient manner.”

“We want people to hang in there with us. The farmers are the foundation of the market and without them, there is no market.”

—Copper Alvarez, BREADA Executive Director

By the end of September, BREADA had issued grants to 22 farmers, affected not only by the August flooding but also by flooding in March that impacted parts of north and south Louisiana. The spring floods caused \$90 million in losses to farms, according to the AgCenter. In fact, Fletcher lost most of his 95,000-plant strawberry crop in March right before it was to be harvested. He was able to get a limited number of plants in the ground when it dried out, but he saw no profits in the spring strawberry season. That made the August event even more devastating, says Fletcher.

“We were starting to slowly stand up again only to have our legs taken out from underneath us,” he says.

Next door to Fletcher’s land lies the farm of his cousin, Eric Morrow, who sells a wide variety of produce at the Red Stick Farmers Market and through a workplace produce delivery program called Farm to Work, in partnership with the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System.

Morrow says the August flood drowned all his planted early fall crops. Gone were tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, corn, green beans. He also lost several blueberry trees, 350 flats of picked blueberries, plastic mulch, several irrigation pumps and other equipment.

“Our goal is to always have something planted, something growing and something being harvested so we can have something for the market all the time,” Morrow says. “When everything is wiped out, you find yourself with nothing coming in and

having to spend a lot to recover.”

Unlike Fletcher, Morrow was able to begin replanting within a week of the flood and the estimated produce would be ready for the market in early October. Thanks to 18-hour days, he anticipates his variety of produce will continue to expand as the season progresses—barring anything unforeseen.

The August flood also beat down small farmers west of Baton Rouge. Opelousas-based farmers John and Betty Chenier experienced 17 inches of flooding in their fields and had the added challenge of constant rain after the flood. The couple has been a fixture at the Saturday Red Stick Farmers Market since it opened 20 years ago, selling eggs, honey, sweet potatoes, gourds and other seasonal produce.

“It took a long, long time for the fields to dry out,” says Betty Chenier. “I kept thinking, ‘Hey, the water is going to be leaving in a few days, but we had standing water for what seemed like forever.’”

Crops that the couple had already planted and were nearly ready for harvest were lost, including purple hull peas, several varieties of squash, eggplant and about 35% of the sweet potato crop, says Chenier.

Moreover, 4,500 starter plants that were ready for planting died when the ground was too wet to plant them. Chenier tried to keep them alive in the farm’s recently installed hoop houses, but they burned up in the unrelenting August heat.

As soon as it was possible to work the soil again, the Cheniers did so, working from dawn until dark to get crops in the ground. By late September, they were able to bring a few things back to the Red Stick Farmers Market.

While the Farmers market itself suffered no damage, it has felt the long tail of the flood. In the weekends immediately following the event, sales dropped dramatically as many farmers were unable to bring goods, and consumers who normally shop at the market had either experienced flooding or were helping those who did, says Alvarez.

Now, Alvarez adds, it’s time to re-educate the public on the true nature of the public market and how important it is to continue to support it.

“When you walk into a grocery, it’s full of produce from a gazillion places. But when you walk into a producer-only farmers market, the integrity of the market requires that farmers bring only what they produce,” says Alvarez. “We want people to hang in there with us. The farmers are the foundation of the market and without them, there is no market.” •



The Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted \$100,000 from the Flood Relief Fund to help Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School relocate and reopen in a new location. The school has shifted temporarily to Bon Carre, among real estate holdings of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

Jamone Williams hauls flooring from his uncle's home in Park Forest subdivision. He's back in school, but the school has moved.

Reading, writing *and rain*

*New high school passes surprise test,
opens in new location*

by Sara Bongiorno / photos by Tim Mueller

The first week of Jamone Williams' freshman year was cut short by floodwater that swamped Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School in August. Four feet of water destroyed computers, desks, files and two years of work to open the independent Catholic high school on the former Redemptorist campus in the St. Gerard neighborhood of North Baton Rouge.

Williams, 14, took up a different kind of learning after flooding closed the Gerard Avenue site. He hauled debris to the curb, yanked out subflooring and tore soggy drywall out of his uncle's house in the hard-hit Park Forest neighborhood.

"It was a chance to help, but it was also a chance to see how a house is put together," says Williams, who wants to be an engineer.

The floods shuttered schools across the Capital Region, but the disaster posed special challenges for Cristo Rey, the first Louisiana campus of a Chicago-based network of 32 schools in 21 states and Washington, D.C.

Its inaugural class—80 students from low-income, mostly minority households—is tiny. Its hold on the local community was tenuous by virtue of its short history: Cristo Rey Baton Rouge had operated as a school for all of four days when flooding

prompted its emergency closure. The homes of about one-third of its students and one of its six teachers were damaged in the floods. Families scattered across the region to stay with relatives. A few landed in shelters.

"Many of our students were displaced and struggling, We didn't know if we would get them back."

—Dr. James Llorens, Cristo Rey President

For Cristo Rey, the impact of natural disaster was compounded by tragedy unrelated to the flood. One of its students was discovered dead in her bedroom in the days after flooding closed the school. One of the earliest gatherings of its first group of freshmen was a memorial service for the girl at nearby Baton Rouge Charter Academy, where she had been a student.

"Many of our students were displaced and struggling," says Dr. James Llorens, Cristo Rey president and former chancellor of Southern University. "We didn't know if we would get them back."

Cristo Rey's educational model posed an additional concern.

The school combines rigorous college-prep academics and religion classes with a work-study program. Five school days a month, students ride shuttle buses to off-site corporate partners that subsidize the cost of their school tuition in exchange for their work. Students are held to high standards and can be fired if they fall short of work expectations.

Cristo Rey had cultivated work-study partnerships with 17 Baton Rouge firms by the start of the school year, including the Taylor Porter law firm and Lamar Advertising. Flooding meant the program would be delayed.

The school's recovery effort began within hours of flooding. The campus took on water sometime late Saturday, Aug. 13. By Sunday morning, Llorens had inspected the damage. "It was pretty bad," he says. He then started calls to members of Cristo Rey's local board.

One board member suggested a contact at Commercial Properties Realty Trust, which develops and manages the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's real estate holdings. By the following day, Llorens and a couple of board members were walking into the former Convergys Corp. call center at Bon Carre Technology Center on Florida Boulevard, which is majority-owned by the Foundation through a supporting nonprofit.

The vacant call center turned out to be a good match for the school's needs. It was more or less the size of a small high school, at 46,400 square feet. It had four training rooms that matched Cristo Rey's need for four classrooms. There were offices for school administrators, a large lunch room and a massive open space—the call center's main operations room was about 15,000 square feet—that could host assemblies, art shows and other gatherings.

Commercial Properties even had office furniture in storage that it could let school officials use.

By Monday, a little more than a day after the flood, Cristo Rey had found a temporary home.

The site's first function was as a command center to help families and students cope with the aftermath of the flooding. Teachers gathered in the big open space to make calls to students and their families to find out where and how they were. They drove around town and tacked notes on doors of families they could not reach by cell phone, asking them to call.

The big open room became a makeshift distribution center for clothing, uniforms and other supplies for families hurt by the flood. The school's IT director returned to the empty Redemptorist campus to retrieve network technology—the only Cristo Rey equipment spared by the flood—and installed it at the Bon Carre site. School officials rented desks, tables and

chairs and purchased replacement laptops. Donations poured in from supporters near and far. They included Cristo Rey schools across the country that held fundraisers to benefit the Baton Rouge campus, and a \$100,000 grant from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to assist the school in recovering from the loss of its facility at the former Redemptorist High School.

"There was tremendous support," Llorens says.

About two weeks after floods closed the school, Cristo Rey was back in business. It held onto all but three of its students, including one who was still living in a shelter when the school reopened. It did not lose any work-study partners. Piccadilly and Subway were contracted to deliver student lunches while workers scrambled to make electrical and other repairs that would permit the diocese to prepare and deliver school lunches to Bon Carre.

There is more change ahead for Cristo Rey in the not-so-distant future. The Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge will demolish the damaged high school building and gymnasium at the former Redemptorist site, possibly before the close of 2016. It will donate the land to Cristo Rey, which will rebuild there, close to the undamaged Redemptorist K-8 elementary campus.

Modular buildings could allow Cristo Rey to return to the former Redemptorist site before the end of the 2016-17 academic year, but that will depend on the demolition schedule and other factors. Construction of a new campus for about 400 students will take 18 to 24 months, but big questions, including how to finance the project, are yet to be tackled.

For now, the school is settling into a comforting sense of normalcy at its unconventional, temporary home. Students have begun to talk about what clubs they would like to start, Llorens says. The wide-open call center space—everybody calls it the Big Room—is perfect for students to burn energy kicking balls and chasing each other during breaks in classroom instruction.

Jamone Williams is back at work, too, these days in Lamar's building on Corporate Boulevard. On a recent Friday, he was busy filing and organizing papers for scanning inside a cubicle. He wore a tie, button-down shirt and dress shoes—office attire that is standard for Cristo Rey students on both school and work-study days.

Williams likes the clothes—even the dress shoes. More than anything, he says he likes the people around him and the chance he is getting through the work-study partnership.

"It's a nice environment, and the people like to keep me happy and focused on my work to prepare me for what I will do in the future," he says. •

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The Baton Rouge Area Foundation had its most productive year yet, thanks to backing from our members. We completed a master plan for the Baton Rouge Lakes and another for a Health District in the city. The Water Campus is taking shape. So is the Ardendale development. We made a persuasive case for building a mental health treatment center and began a blueprint for better services for people with autism.

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Nowhere to go

*Displaced elderly worry about
losing independence*

by Ed Pratt

Calvin sat down one day recently and pointed to the spot on the wall where floodwater settled about a foot high in his South Baton Rouge apartment. “I got out of bed and stepped right in the water,” he says.

At 81, he gets around mostly in a wheelchair. He walks a few steps across his tiny apartment where some of the furniture that got wet still stands. His landlord has dried out the place, but Calvin is concerned that toxic mold may be growing inside his walls. Adding one more health problem would be tough for Calvin, who already suffers from a long list of breathing and mobility problems.

Calvin didn’t want us to use his real name, afraid that he might

get kicked out of the apartment where he has lived for 18 years.

Interviewed during late September, Calvin remained in his apartment during and after it flooded. “Basically,” Calvin says, “I have nowhere else to go.”

He’s like hundreds of elderly and poor in the Baton Rouge area who can’t afford to leave rental property that was damaged during historic flooding in August. There is another group of elderly who are still holed up in local motels because their landlords have chosen not to repair the flooded houses the elderly once called home.

They are scrambling to find rental property that they can afford.

What’s more, some, like 63-year-old Edward Shaw, who was



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Hunt Slonem, Hutch, oil on canvas, 93 x 132.75 inches, LSUMOA2013.10

washed out of a rental property, have been lucky enough to lock down another house. But there is a problem. “I can’t move in because I don’t have anything to put in a house,” says Shaw. “I lost everything but my life in the flood.”

His former landlord is not planning to repair the old two-bedroom house he called home. Shaw is disabled and does not have clothes, a bed, a refrigerator or stove. He is ready to get out of his motel room. “I feel like I’m smothered in here,” he says, adding that the house that he rented had two bedrooms and lots of space. “I feel like I’m in a matchbox here.”

There are only estimates on the number of elderly in the situations that Shaw and Calvin find themselves. So many of them are invisible because they are just surviving in silence.

Many of them are at the goodwill or ill will of their landlords. Others are displaced because their landlords simply can’t afford to repair the houses.

Some of the elderly, according to several people who work to provide aid to seniors, have remained in flooded houses because they fear losing those last years of independence. “There is a multiplicity of factors,” says Tasha Amar, head of the East Baton Rouge Council on Aging, a local agency that provides meals, counseling and other services to the Baton Rouge area elderly population.

“It’s financial, fear of the unknown and the hesitancy of leaving the home and life they have created,” Amar says.

She says dozens of elderly have shown up at the Council’s main office on Florida Boulevard with no place to go, confused by their new situation or looking for any assistance to figure out their next step.

“They have no family and some have no friends to turn to,” she says. “It’s sad. Some of their situations could negatively affect both their physical and mental health.”

There was a recent call from Catholic Charities of Baton Rouge, a local charitable group asking the Council on Aging to bring food to seniors who were living in a local motel, she says.

Some of the people were living two and three to a room, including a 70-year-old man, his 66-year-old wife and their adult son. The husband is blind. And there was a 66-year-old mother living in a room with her mentally ill son.

Larry Perkins’ parents are in a different situation. His folks,

both retired, own their Garnet Street home. His mother, Irma, is on an oxygen machine around the clock. His father, John, can get around slowly, but he is in the early stages of Alzheimer’s, Perkins says.

Water came past their front door and settled nearby. The water saturated the walls in the front room and an adjacent bedroom. Both of Perkins’ parents receive small retirement benefits, but most of that goes into maintenance of the house and other costs.

There is also a giant air conditioner sitting in the backyard. The son believes a salesman took advantage of his dad when he sold it to him. “That thing is big enough to cool a store if it worked,” Perkins says. It hasn’t cooled anything since the flood waters got into it.

Perkins says he and his parents have talked to the Federal Emergency Management Agency representative who came out to assess the damage. He said FEMA won’t accept the signed and notarized document that he has power of attorney over his parents’ affairs.

“The paperwork is all legal,” Perkins says as he shows the original document.

Perkins says he was laid off from his construction job since the flood and may get another job soon. In the meantime, he is taking care of his parents.

He says they have not been able to raise the money to pay someone to handle the construction work needed to repair the house and to deal with what he believes could be an unhealthy situation for his elderly parents.

Across town, Calvin says it will be hard for him to find an apartment where he will feel comfortable again. “People are telling me, ‘You shouldn’t be staying here. There could be that stuff mold hidden behind the wall,’” he says.

He has had assistance agency representatives come out suggesting a place he can move. “I don’t know about that,” he says, adding that he is a little apprehensive about moving to a place where he will lose his independence.

“I’d rather stay where I am, like this, than go someplace where other people will be telling me what to do,” he says. •

“It’s financial, fear of the unknown and the hesitancy of leaving the home and life they have created.”

—Tasha Amar, EBR Council on Aging

A man in a white t-shirt is shown in profile, holding a lit candle. The candle's light illuminates his face and the surrounding environment, which appears to be a cluttered room with laundry hanging on lines in the background. The overall atmosphere is warm and intimate.

Measure twice, cut once ... *faster*

*Innovative nonprofit cuts time
to rebuild homes, expands reach*

by Sara Bongiorno | photos by Tim Mueller



Reagan Nguyen used a candle to survey the damage to his duplex. He had never experienced flooding in 18 years at the apartment.

It's dirty and nasty work. Homes that once had the delightful smells of Thanksgiving bread and Christmas trees stink of mold and sewage. The rugs are heavy and sloppy with water. The sheetrock turns into mush under hand. All of it has to be cleaned before the construction can begin.

Making the tasks a lot easier is SBP, a nonprofit that uses efficient methods to prepare homes for reconstruction—the same fundamental methods that let Toyota produce high-quality cars at low production costs. The New Orleans nonprofit has put its nationally recognized best practices to work in flood-stricken communities across the Capital Region.

The pioneering methods developed by SBP—formerly St. Bernard Project—reduce the time between disaster and recovery, meaning it gets homeowners back into safe, rebuilt homes quicker.

The organization is named for the parish that was its first focus after Hurricane Katrina. It has rebuilt 1,150 homes in seven states since Katrina, including 700 in New Orleans—more than any other group.

More than 150,000 volunteers have helped SBP rebuild homes since it was founded in 2006 by a criminal defense lawyer and his wife, a middle-school teacher. They had no construction experience at the time.

President Obama has singled out SBP more than once as a disaster recovery model. *U.S. News & World Report* ranked it among the nation's 10 most innovative nonprofits. It was CNN's Hero of the Year for 2008 for its work on post-Katrina New Orleans.

A warehouse on Old Hammond Highway will function as an operations hub for SBP in Baton Rouge. In September it began

SBP will do five things in the flood-damaged region. With seed funding from UPS, Walmart, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and others, it will:

- Gut, clean and rebuild the homes of military veterans, seniors, disabled individuals and families with young children;
- Train six organizations in its disaster recovery methods. They are Habitat for Humanity, HOPE Ministries, Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge, Together Baton Rouge, Mid City Redevelopment Alliance and AARP;

Shirley Burrell looks over her front room as Together Baton Rouge volunteers help gut her home nearly three weeks after the flooding.



hiring AmeriCorps members who function as site supervisors, volunteer trainers and other key roles as part of its recovery model.

Locals trying to return home will tell SBP when its work in the region is done. In 2013, SBP teams knocked on the doors of 5,867 homes in Joplin, Mo., to determine how many homes still needed repairs or rebuilding after tornado damage. The on-the-ground effort identified about 100 who still needed nonprofit assistance to return home.

“We will know we are done in Baton Rouge when people tell us they don’t need us anymore,” says Zack Rosenburg, CEO and SBP cofounder with his wife, Liz McCartney. “We’re here until the recovery is done.”

- Combat contractor fraud through outreach and education campaigns in flood-impacted areas;
- Push to broaden Louisiana’s Shelter at Home Program to allow homeowner assistance to include the cost of drywall to prevent families from returning to structures with exposed wiring; and
- Propose a privately financed bridge loan program to expedite rebuilding until federal disaster money is available.

Rebuilding is first focused on Denham Springs, Central and Greenwell Springs, the hardest-hit areas of historic August flooding that killed 13 people and damaged or destroyed more than

140,000 homes. SBP serves homeowners without the means to rebuild on their own. It has 80 local homeowners on its list so far.

The home of Linda and Jesse Marcus of Moss Lea Drive in Central was the first local project. Sweethearts at Glen Oaks High School who raised two children in their home of 40 years, their brick ranch took on five feet of water in August.

They lost everything and now live in an RV on their daughter's property in the city of Central. Like many impacted families, they did not have flood insurance and didn't think they needed it.

Money is tight. A loan is out of the question. The Marcuses have faced decades of health problems from Jesse's exposure to Agent Orange while he was in the U.S. Air Force in Vietnam. A high-energy handyman on days when he is feeling well, he has endured two strokes, Hodgkin's disease, diabetes and 34 surgeries over the past two decades. Health problems forced the 68-year-old to retire early from ExxonMobil.

It took Linda Marcus a week to believe that SBP was going to rebuild their home after they received a call from the organization. SBP told the couple their home will be ready for them in early November. "It's miraculous," says Linda, a devoted crafter whose quilts and sewing machines were also lost. "It's nothing short of amazing that this is happening."

SBP's path to disaster recovery expertise has been unconventional. McCartney and Rosenberg first arrived in New Orleans in early 2006, six months after Katrina, to volunteer with rebuilding. They expected to help with the tail end of recovery, thinking most people in St. Bernard Parish and elsewhere would be back in repaired homes. They found people sleeping in cars and garages that served as makeshift homes.

Within weeks, teacher McCartney and lawyer Rosenberg had quit their jobs in D.C. and moved to New Orleans to help full time with rebuilding. They struck up friendships with locals who taught them basic building techniques.

A lack of rebuilding experience did not prevent them from taking a look at recovery efforts and thinking how things might be done better, faster and more cost effectively.

A couple of months after landing in New Orleans, the couple founded the nonprofit on ideas that departed from the traditional model they believed was too slow ... and too painful for desperate homeowners.

To reduce delays and boost accountability, they hired employees who are trained in skilled trades: electrical, carpentry, plumbing. In another departure from widespread practice,

they would not wait for a big "chunk" of homes to get started on rebuilding, instead tackling homes one by one. The work of SBP-trained AmeriCorps members who serve as site supervisors and train volunteers—whose role is also critical to the model—has been crucial from the beginning.

AmeriCorps members are paid \$11,000 for 10-month stints. SBP has worked with AmeriCorps members from teens to retirees in their 70s, and it employs about 140 each year. It hired its first six AmeriCorps members for Baton Rouge recovery in late September.

"Disaster recovery anywhere would not take place without AmeriCorps. Not just our work but work anywhere," says Rosenberg.

The organization's approach proved effective. It rebuilt 88 homes in its first year, far more than any other organization.

By 2009, SBP leaders decided to work even faster. More than 8,000 New Orleans homeowners remained displaced by Katrina damage, including a growing number who had been defrauded by unscrupulous contractors. The organization added the number of volunteers it sent to project sites, thinking that would up the speed of rebuilding. The change made little difference.

It looked to partner with global efficiency leader Toyota for ways to build more efficiently. The end result of the automaker's nine-month assessment of its operations included new ways of tracking critical equipment—most notably, ladders—and a 48% reduction in the time it takes crews to rebuild a house, from 116 to 60 days.

SBP's mission has expanded in recent years, including its geographic reach. Its teams have taken part in disaster recovery in Missouri, New Jersey, New York, South Carolina, Texas and West Virginia. Sharing its practices, likewise, is a growing focus. South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, for instance, hired SBP to train three organizations after devastating floods in Columbia, S.C., in October 2015.

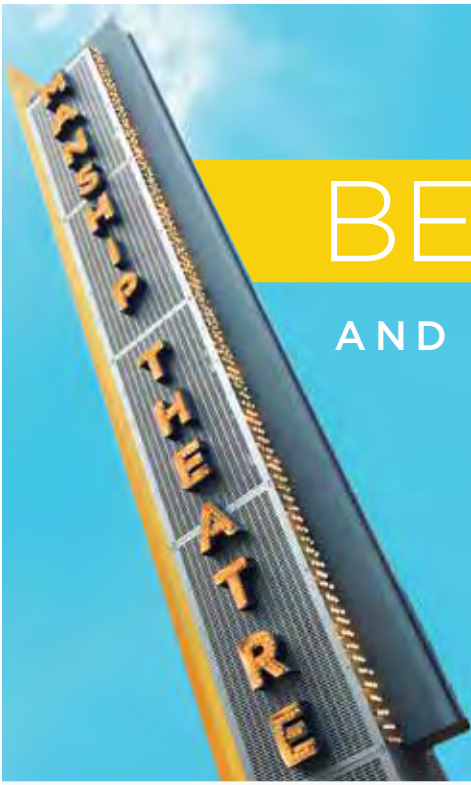
"We found something that works, and we want to share that," Rosenberg says.

Meanwhile, recovery efforts in New Orleans, including St. Bernard Parish, will continue even as SBP ramps up in Baton Rouge. It has at least 100 clients on its waiting list in New Orleans, where several thousand homeowners have been unable to return home.

"We're nowhere close to being done there," Rosenberg says. •

"We're here until the recovery is done."

—Zack Rosenberg, CEO and SBP cofounder



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SHANGHAI ACROBATS



SHANGHAI ACROBATS

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FANCY NANCY SPLENDIFEROUS CHRISTMAS

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FANCY NANCY
SPLENDIFEROUS CHRISTMAS

JAN 31 • 7:30 PM

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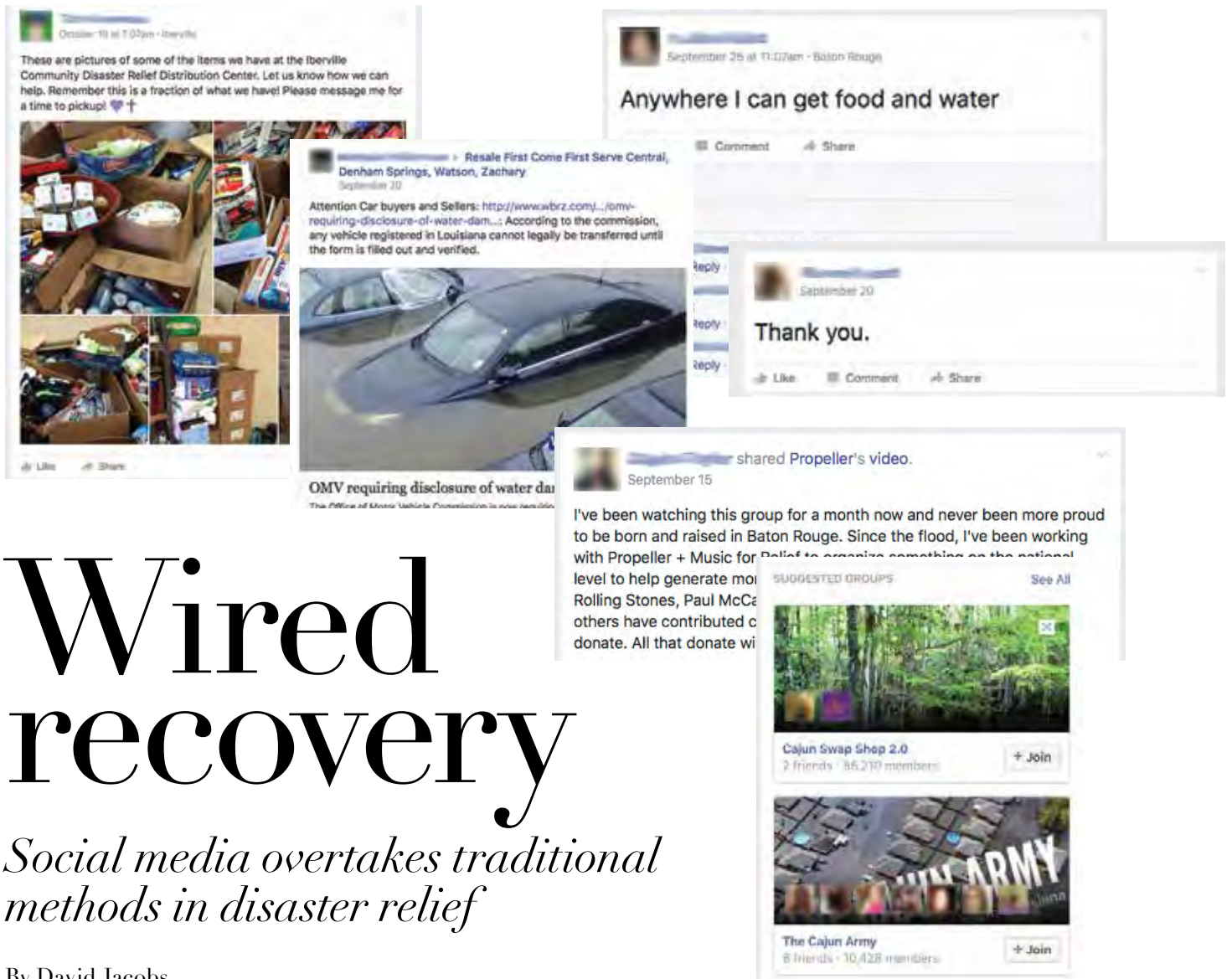
Supported by a grant from the Louisiana State Arts Council through the Louisiana Division of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts as administered by the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge.



This program is supported in part by a Decentralized Arts Funding Grant from the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge in cooperation with the Louisiana Division of the Arts, Office of Cultural Development, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, and Louisiana State Arts Council.



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Wired recovery

Social media overtakes traditional methods in disaster relief

By David Jacobs

As a historic flood that would kill 13 people devastated huge swaths of south Louisiana, Kris Clark cut short a business trip to return home to Denham Springs, only to find the roads into town impassable. Two of his children, ages 4 and 6, were with friends in one of the hardest-hit areas. He hadn't been able to reach them by phone, and he knew they weren't strong enough swimmers to make it out if they were trapped by rising water.

"I was truly scared," Clark recalls. "I pulled into Home Depot to try to regroup and think about stuff before I did something stupid."

Damien Callais was at that same Home Depot on Coursey Boulevard, expecting to meet up with some boat owners to go out and rescue flood victims. Callais invited Clark to come along so they could save his kids. But the boats didn't show up.

Not knowing what else to do, Callais decided to tell his sizable social media following about Clark's plight. "I told his story via Facebook Live," Callais says. "The call to action on top of that was, 'We need boats.'"

Callais made two mobile-phone videos with Clark that together were viewed well over two million times. At one point, he called 911 and recommended the dispatcher monitor the comments on his Facebook videos to find people who needed help.

Callais and Clark eventually met some good Samaritans with boats and joined a spontaneous, ad hoc rescue effort. That night, hoping to bring some order to the chaos, Callais asked a friend to start a "Cajun Navy" Facebook page. (At the time, Callais says, he thought they originated the term "Cajun Navy," but later learned it had been used after Hurricane Katrina.)

The Facebook group was an important tool for organizing the search-and-rescue effort. And well after the floodwaters receded, potential donors and volunteers kept posting, looking for ways to help the region recover. Clearly, social media has become an indispensable part of how we communicate during a crisis and its aftermath.

As it turned out, Clark's children were safe and didn't need rescuing, but he realizes it very easily could have gone a different way.

"If it wasn't for social media," Clark says, "the death toll would have never been as low as it was."

THE FIRST FLICKER

Disaster sociologist Jeannette Sutton was living in New York City in 2001. After the World Trade Center attacks, she says people were tacking up pictures of missing friends and family all over the city as a sort of analog precursor to social media.

"We weren't digital yet," says Sutton, who studies the use of social media in crises and directs the Risk and Disaster Communications Center at the University of Kentucky.

In 2005, when Facebook was new and Twitter was still a year away, people affected by Hurricane Katrina used Craigslist to look for resources and share information, Sutton says. In 2007, Facebook was widely used after the Virginia Tech shooting, as was Twitter during the California wildfires, and those two platforms remain the most important social media outlets for disaster response and recovery.

Today, most government agencies, first responders and disaster-related nonprofits are on social media, although some are better at it than others. For social media to be useful during an emergency, it's important to have cultivated the organization's network before disaster strikes.

Twitter is great for broadcasting short messages to people with mobile devices, Sutton says, while Facebook is more interactive.

"But agencies have to be willing to actually interact," Sutton says. Not everyone is on social media, she adds, so it has to be part of a larger communication strategy.

Mike Steele, communications director with the Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, says the office has ramped up its use of social media since he was hired three-and-a-half years ago, posting on Facebook and Twitter at least once a day. Often, he's sending out bits of information the public might find useful but that don't warrant a full press release.

Unlike some organizations, GOHSEP doesn't have enough staff to dedicate someone to social media, Steele says. He mostly

uses it to disseminate information rather than interact with the public. During the March flooding in north Louisiana, he says a few of GOHSEP's posts racked up well over a million views.

"It's kind of been remarkable seeing how fast it's grown over the past couple of emergencies," Steele says.

If you're in trouble, you should never tweet or post on Facebook instead of calling 911, he says. But when Hurricane Isaac hit the state in 2012, some of the first alerts about flooding in LaPlace came through social media. During a crisis, GOHSEP brings in extra help to monitor its social media feeds and look for information that can be passed along to responding agencies.

Humanity Road, a Virginia-based nonprofit, is a force multiplier for agencies like GOHSEP, employing a global team of volunteers to help organizations monitor online chatter during a disaster. Finding the signal in the noise depends on the science of being able to collect the information and the art of knowing what to look for, says co-founder Cat Graham. For example, if a hurricane is imminent, "beer" and "ice" are keywords indicating people are staying put rather than evacuating.

Twitter, where breaking news can go viral very quickly, often is the most useful platform in the midst of a crisis, Graham says, while Facebook generally is more suited for the recovery phase.

"Facebook is mainly used for collaboration and cooperation," agrees Chris Oxner, knowledge manager with IEM, a North Carolina-based disaster preparation and recovery consulting firm that was founded in Baton Rouge and has an outpost in the city. "Twitter is used for in-the-moment communication."

Posting video on YouTube and then calling attention to it on Twitter can be a particularly effective way to spread breaking news in real time, he says.

While Steele would not want to encourage this sort of behavior from the public, Oxner says the Los Angeles Fire Department has been known to respond to emergency requests made via Twitter. Perhaps a tweeter didn't have a phone, Oxner suggests, or maybe going on Twitter was their first instinct.

For many people in the Baton Rouge area who lost mobile phone service during the August flood but still had Internet access, social media was the only way to communicate. And as the national media largely ignored the crisis for the first few days, social media was one of the few sources of information about the flood for those outside of Louisiana.

NETWORK FOR GOOD

Kirsten Crawford lives in Seattle, but she went to high school in Baton Rouge and has friends and family here. In the early days of the August flood, she learned about the scope of the disaster

through social media.

She wanted to help, but she wanted to make an immediate, tangible impact rather than donate to a bureaucratic aid agency. So she reached out to a Facebook friend, Baton Rouge resident John Zachary, for advice.

Zachary asked his social media network for help providing hard-hit schools with supplies. Thanks to his Facebook friends, and their Facebook friends, and their friends, between \$7,500 and \$10,000 worth of back-to-school necessities were distributed, he says.

“This was a crowdsourced, viral phenomenon,” Zachary says. “Facebook was great for communication but also for organization.”

Patty Jones Grimball, a second grade teacher at Galvez Primary, didn't know Zachary before the flood, but his network helped Grimball's grade get started at their temporary classroom at Lakeside Primary. “Local people can't help us because everybody in our area, their homes are flooded, so no one has money to contribute. John was able to reach farther and get help outside of Louisiana,” says Grimball.

When Zachary met Grimball to drop off the donated supplies, photos were taken and shared on Facebook. So donors like Crawford not only saw exactly where their donations went, they got to “meet” the recipients, an experience you don't get from cutting a check to the Red Cross.

Zachary's home was a staging area for supplies, but he also directed donors to teachers' wish lists at Amazon.com and DonorsChoose.org. For the Celtic Media Centre, which became a massive makeshift shelter after the flood, something like an Amazon wish list might have been useful.

Celtic Studios Executive Director Patrick Mulhearn had offered to host a shelter before the flood. Just after 3 a.m. on Aug. 14, he got the call: Other shelters were flooded, and two bus loads of evacuees were on the way. (More than 2,000 people had evacuated to Celtic by the end of the day.) Mulhearn didn't even have cots.

His AT&T phone service went out, Mulhearn says, but Celtic's guard house had Wi-Fi, so he started posting on Facebook and Twitter and tagging local media and government agencies.

Before long, people were showing up with supplies.

“I think WAFB read my Facebook post on the air,” he says. “Within hours, there were dozens if not hundreds of volunteers.”

Mulhearn tweeted and posted often about his needs. An Aug. 15 tweet mentions hygiene products, cleaning supplies, phone chargers, kids' clothes and dog pooper scoopers. People responded quickly—it helped that there's a Costco across the street—but sometimes duplicated each other's efforts so that Celtic ended up with 14,000 bottles of water or 1,000 boxes of tampons. Facebook and Twitter were great for putting out requests but less useful for keeping track of everything.

“It would be great if it was almost like a wedding registry, where a shelter could say what its needs are,” he says.

Brandi Bostic Tabor volunteered after the flood with the large animal rescue center at the Lamar Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales. Feed, hay and shavings for the animals' bedding were the chief needs, but most of the nearby stores that sold that kind of thing had been flooded. The center also needed volunteers with experience taking care of animals.

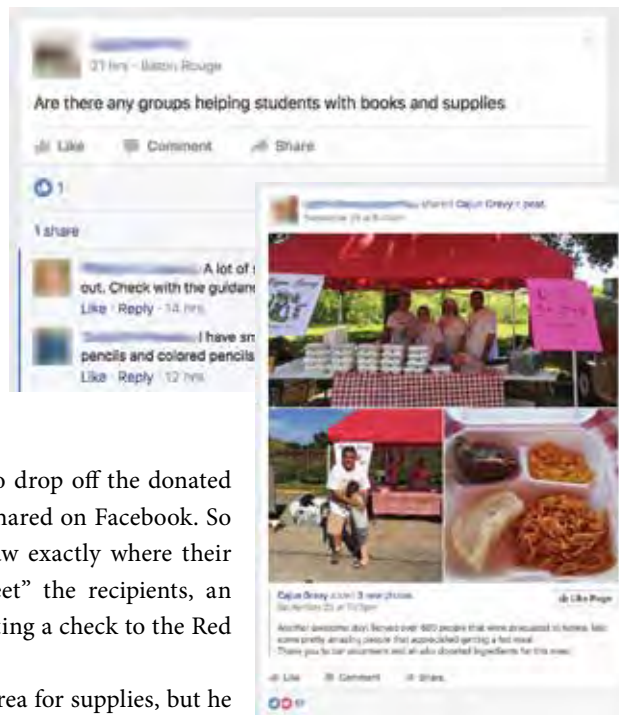
Tabor issued frequent calls for help on her own Facebook page, the Cajun Navy's page and a Facebook group called “Louisiana Flood-Volunteers and Needed Supplies.” Tabor recalls posting a Facebook Live video one night asking for pitchforks. The next morning,

there were 60 donated pitchforks waiting for her.

“It was beautiful and amazing,” she says. “People from all over the United States were able to get resources in to us faster than our local resources, because we didn't have any local resources at the time.”

Like most tools, social media can be used to help or harm. It's often a source of rumors and lies, or a forum to trash those who disagree with our political views.

But we can also use it to connect with others when we need them most, during the worst of a disaster and on the long road to recovery. For better or worse, it's now a part of our lives, so we might as well learn to use it wisely. •



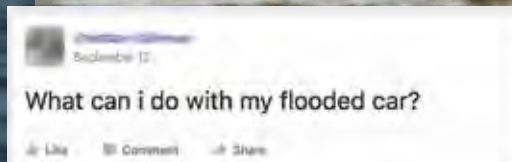
TIPS FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA DURING AND AFTER A DISASTER

FOR ORGANIZATIONS:

- Use your social media accounts often before disaster strikes to build your network and establish credibility. You're better off not having a social media account if you're not posting to it regularly.
- Before a disaster, connect with your partners—government services, business and agency stakeholders, trusted members of the public, etc.—and amplify them on social media.
- If possible, have a dedicated staff member managing your social media feeds and interacting with the public.
- Twitter is great for short bursts of one-way communication, while Facebook is better for interaction and collaboration.
- During an emergency, be on the lookout for misinformation. But don't try to shoot down every rumor; worry about the stuff that's under your organization's purview.
- Make sure your website is linked to your social media accounts and vice versa. That helps the public confirm you are who you say you are.
- Most people don't turn on the location feature on their accounts, so it can be hard to tell where many tweets and posts are coming from.
- Tell the public what time you will update them and stick to it. Even if you have nothing new to say, let them know there is no new information.
- Searching an event name or hashtag plus a question mark can be a simple way to find out what questions the public is asking.

FOR THE PUBLIC:

- Be wary of rumors and misinformation. Verify before sharing.
- Find the most useful, trustworthy accounts and follow them, so you're not scrambling to figure out which ones to follow during an emergency.
- Turn off nonessential apps to save battery life on your phone.
- Create a communications plan with your neighbors. Most rescues are done by neighbors and volunteers.
- Social media is a possible communication option, but don't plan to rely on it exclusively. You might not have Internet access during a disaster.



ABOUT US

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

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

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

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

3 We offer strategic consulting services to nonprofits.

KEY CIVIC LEADERSHIP PROJECTS JUST TREATMENT OF THE MENTALLY ILL :

The Foundation is partnering with Mayor Kip Holden, EBR council members, EBR District Attorney Hillar Moore, EBR Sheriff Sid Gautreaux, Baton Rouge Police Chief Carl Dabadie Jr. and behavioral health specialists to design a center for treating people with mental illnesses and substance abuse problems. Because of mental illnesses, people in crisis sometimes commit minor, nonviolent crimes and are incarcerated. The center will offer a less expensive and more humane alternative.

BATON ROUGE HEALTH DISTRICT

(BRHEALTHDISTRICT.ORG) : The Foundation hired consultants to engage local health care leaders and the community to deliver a master plan for creating a Health District, including a four-year LSU medical school and a Diabetes and Obesity Center. The plan offers a design and destination for health care in Baton Rouge, with recommendations to improve the flow of cars and people in an area that is set to have more health care services.

*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

MISSION :

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

To achieve our mission, we:

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

OUR WORK



An iconic building on the Water Campus should be completed by December 2017. Construction began this summer for a headquarters for **The Water Institute of the Gulf**. The Water Institute was started by elected officials, universities and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to become a preeminent research institution taking on coastal issues that imperil fragile deltas around the world.

The 34,000-square-foot building is funded by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation in a partnership with state government. It will be located on the abandoned city dock and be visible to thousands of motorists traveling through Baton Rouge each day.

In times past, Baton Rouge residents cherished the refreshing breezes that blew across the river waters and cooled their porches on steamy afternoons. Architects with Perkins+Will and Coleman Partners wanted to recall the region's porches in their design, so the building will be wrapped in a perforated metal screen, reminis-

CPRT

Commercial Properties Realty Trust, which is responsible for managing real estate for the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, reports progress on several projects. The company develops and manages properties for the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, a nonprofit that supports the work of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. A share of profits is invested in community projects and the company undertakes real estate deals in challenged neighborhoods.

cent of the screened porches that once made our homes here so much more comfortable.

On the Water Campus itself, the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and LSU's River Modeling Center opened this year. When completed, the Water Campus, located off Nicholson Drive, will have 1.2 million square feet of labs and offices on 35 riverfront acres.



With the opening of the **Onyx Residences**, top, the Foundation has fulfilled its pledge to build an Arts Block downtown. Onyx welcomed tenants in September to the corner of Third and Convention streets. About half of the 28 residences were leased without any advertising, indicating strong demand for downtown living. Iberia Bank and Regal Nails will be two of three retail tenants on the first floor. The Shaw Center for the Arts is the centerpiece of the Arts Block.

A mixed-use building that will include apartments and a Walk-Ons Restaurant is going up in **Americana**, above, the first traditional neighborhood development in Zachary. Bistro Byronz has signed to open in a second building within the community. Americana is a mix of retail with housing and has a new YMCA. Retail buildings are being developed by Commercial Properties.

GOOD THINGS



ALL ARE WELCOME Nearly two decades ago, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and partners—local government, the Downtown Development District and state government—began a project to reclaim downtown. The goal was to create a common gathering place where all are welcome. More than \$2 billion has been invested in downtown since. The transformation of downtown continued in the last three months. The Baton Rouge Library System demolished its outdated branch on the Town Square to start building a new showcase for books and knowledge. The replacement library costs about \$19 million. The Watermark Hotel, which is part of the Marriott’s exclusive Autograph Collection, will open in October on the corner of Third and Convention streets. That building once housed state offices and was the headquarters of Louisiana National Bank. Across the street from the Watermark, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation completed its Onyx Residences, and Magpie Café opened in the renovated Commerce Building on Third and Laurel streets. As well, the Downtown Development District is building a path in the wide median within North Boulevard that will ultimately link to City Park.

LIVE GOLD

Louisiana State University sees promise in an area that it once considered the back side of the campus. In late summer, cranes and bulldozers began razing student housing that was built back when television stations signed off at night. Across from Tiger Stadium all the way to the North Gates, the LSU Property Foundation, with RISE Real Estate as developer, is constructing new student housing mingled with retail. RISE is building 1,260 apartment-style beds, 410 suite-style beds and up to 50,000 square feet of space for shops on 28 acres. The project will anchor one end of Baton Rouge’s proposed modern tram line. When built, the streetcar would roll in the other direction to the State Capitol with stops at other destinations, including the Baton Rouge Area Foundation’s Water Campus and a dense residential development under construction next to the Water Campus on Nicholson.



ZOOM. ZOOM. BREC, which operates the local parks system, completed a leg of a trail, appropriately, in the Baton Rouge Health District, an area where health care providers are clustered and more are going to open. The segment—called the Pennington Trail—runs behind Pennington Biomedical Research Center to Quail Run, where the library wants to open its Southdowns branch. The 12-foot- wide path should continue to Stuart Avenue and, from there, to the University/City Park lakes. In the other direction, the trail will tie into BREC’s proposed Medical Loop, a 7.4-mile connector to Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center and Baton Rouge General Hospital.



DECRIMINALIZING MENTAL ILLNESS Baton Rouge could have a crisis intervention center in 2018, culminating a project to divert people with mental illness and substance abuse problems to treatment instead of jail. In September, the Metro Council voted 10-2 to place a 1.5 mill property tax on the Dec. 10 ballot to cover operating costs of the center. If approved by voters, the tax would generate about \$5.7 million per year. A person owning a \$200,000 home and taking a homestead exemption would be charged about \$20 per year for the tax.

Research shows that the center would save money because treatment is cheaper than incarceration. That's one reason the center had bipartisan support among Metro Council members. The Bridge Center would solve a problem that has become common around the country: cuts in mental health services have caused authorities to turn prisons into de facto asylums.

Law enforcement officers now have only two choices when people with mental illness or drug problems break minor laws. They take them to expensive emergency rooms or place them in jail. The Foundation's project is offering an effective alternative—a crisis intervention center modeled after a successful San Antonio program. The EBR center would provide appropriate services, depending on the needs. Law enforcement officers could drop off mentally ill people and return much more quickly to protecting the communities.

The center would include a sobering unit, a medical detox program, behavioral health respite beds and a care management team to coordinate care after individuals leave the center.

Overall, the crisis center is expected to save EBR money because treatment costs less than incarceration. In a report by The Perryman Group, the economists say a treatment center would save East Baton Rouge taxpayers \$55 million in the first 10 years, an estimate computed on data from the successful San Antonio model that parish government is replicating here.



ROB REARDON HIRED

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation has hired Rob Reardon to organize and establish the crisis intervention center in partnership with leaders of East Baton Rouge Parish. Reardon is the first executive director of The Bridge Center, a nonprofit created by the Foundation to take better care of people with mental illness and substance abuse problems.

He brings nearly three decades of experience to his new job. That includes the last 15 years in leadership with the Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office. "We picked Rob because of his accomplishments in Lafayette," says John M. Spain, Foundation executive vice president who oversees civic projects. "He created a system that saved money and treated people with mental illness in a humane way, while making the parish a safer place for all."

As director of corrections in Lafayette, Reardon implemented mental health services, increased the number of prisoners incarcerated in their own homes instead of in parish prison, expanded re-entry services to reduce recidivism, and offered services that let troubled kids become productive adults.

"I strongly believe that incarceration, although sometimes necessary, is usually not the best solution to those dealing with mental illness and substance abuse issues," says Reardon.

Reardon received a master's degree in management from Saint Mary's University and graduated with a double major in criminal justice and sociology from Moorhead State University. As an ardent social justice advocate, he chaired the Substance Abuse Re-Entry Committee for the Louisiana State Department of Corrections and was chair of the Children's Youth Planning Board. He's an adjunct professor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.



BR'S ANIMAL SHELTER TO BE AMONG BEST

Only six years after it began, Companion Animal Alliance is preparing to build a new animal shelter for East Baton Rouge Parish. Groundbreaking for the shelter is expected in fall, and the facility should open late next year. The Foundation and its donors are underwriting shelter construction on land that was donated by Louisiana State University.

The shelter will improve CAA's operations. It's efficiently designed so it will be less expensive to operate. The location is easier to reach than the shelter near the Baton Rouge Airport, so adoptions are expected to increase. It is designed to contain diseases and to provide a more humane temporary home for dogs and cats while they await adoption. The location near the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine will give students a place to train. As well, extra capacity will let the shelter temporarily house animals that are evacuated ahead of storms.

Since taking over the shelter, CAA has boosted the number of animals saved and adopted from 20% to more than 70%. With a new shelter, even more lost or homeless dogs and cats can be reunited or placed in happy homes.

CAA was started by animal advocates and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, which has provided financial and staff support.





Seventh-grade students play the hand-clapping game, Slide, in the lounge of their THRIVE Academy dormitory. With the completion of one of two planned dormitories and the renovation of a community center into classrooms, THRIVE Academy started the school year at its campus located at 2585 Brightside Lane. A second dorm and main school building will be built at a later date. THRIVE Academy is a college preparatory, charter boarding school serving at-risk youth.



THRIVE ACADEMY THRIVE Academy relocated to a new dormitory and renovated classroom building on Brightside for the school year. Sarah Broome is the unstoppable force behind THRIVE. She's the reason students get extra learning time by living on campus during the week. They go home on weekends. More space lets THRIVE educate up to 160 students, up from 110 before the move from a Mid City location on Government Street. THRIVE plans to add another dorm and expand to 350 middle and high school students within three years. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation has provided fundraising expertise. With our donors, we've also granted more than \$1 million to THRIVE.

THRIVE Academy students, from left, DeVonte Robertson and Lakeitha Jenkins work together in their 10th-grade biology class.





The Baton Rouge Area Foundation collaborated with Baton Rouge government to establish the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority.

RDA PROJECTS: ARDENDALE, ENTERGY BUILDING, TRAIN STATION PLANNING

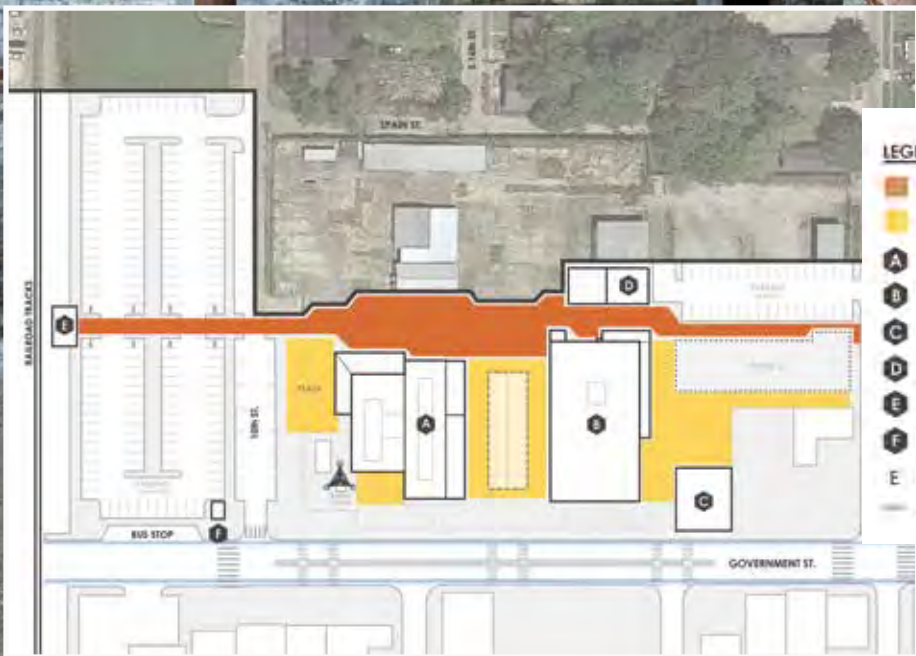
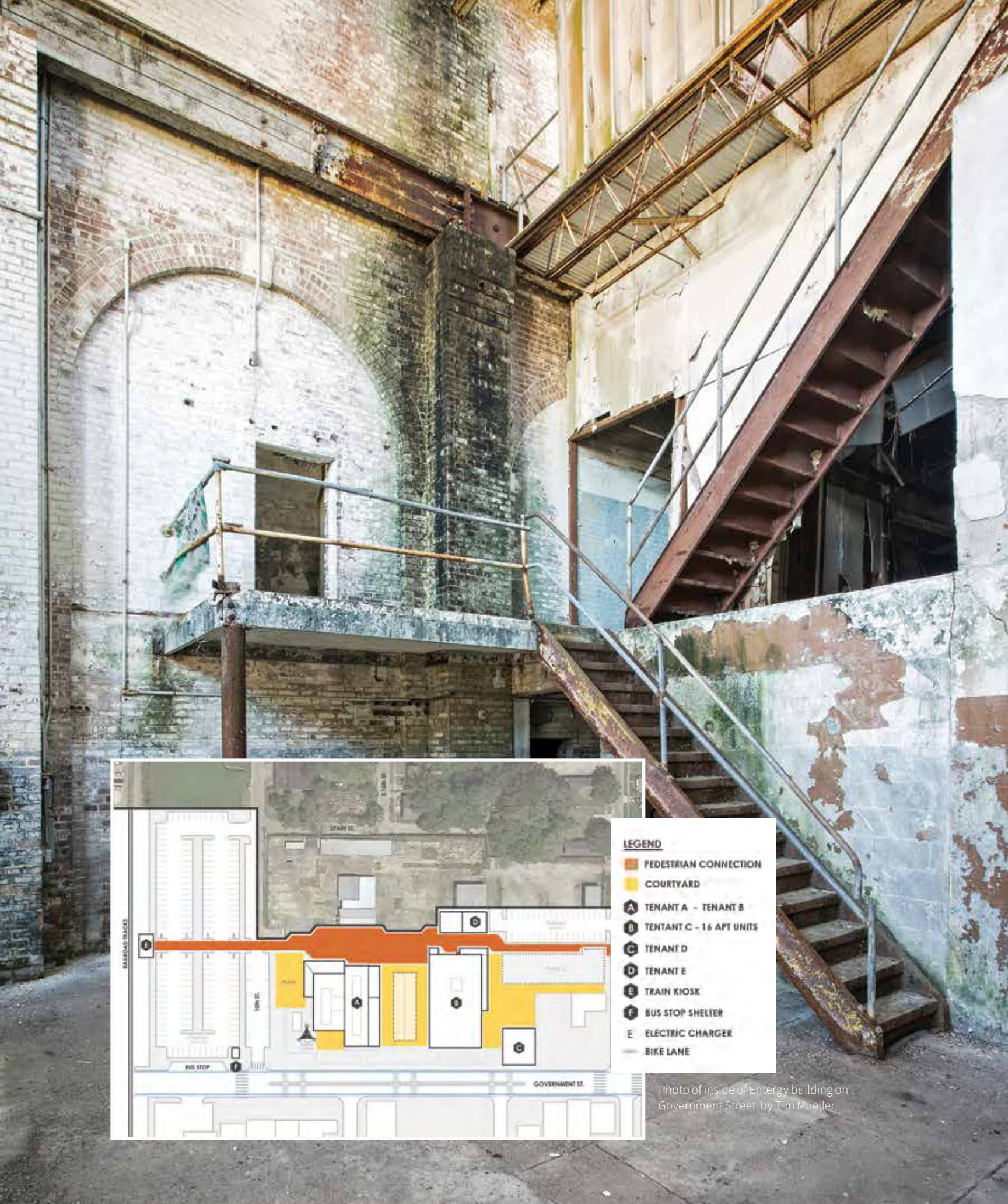
The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority is moving fast on transformational projects—the Entergy buildings in Mid City, developing Ardendale north of Florida Boulevard, planning for a train station on Government Street near downtown.

Fifty students are training at the new Baton Rouge Community College’s John W. McKay, Jr. Automotive Training Center in **Ardendale**. Two more buildings will rise next to the center. BRCC is adding a 20,000-square-foot Collision Repair Technology Center next to the existing automotive training center. As well, East Baton Rouge Parish Schools approved a contract with architects to design a \$19 million high school that teaches trades, offering skills that lets students get in-demand jobs after high school. Ardendale will include housing and retail as well.

In Mid City, Weinstein Nelson Development will **convert historic buildings** donated to the RDA by Entergy Corp. into housing and retail. The RDA has contracted with the developer, which has named the project Electric Depot. Architect and developer Dyke Nelson has wanted to redevelop the site for several years. Nelson already has two potential tenants for the site, but he won’t disclose them yet. He does say a small building fronting Government Street could include a fitness center and a store selling healthy food. The project will include apartments above retail and electric car charging stations. The site is in the 1500 block of Government, a few blocks from I-110.

Fire up the boilers: the RDA has received a total of \$500,000 from the Southern Rail Commission and East Baton Rouge Parish government to **plan a train station** that also could serve as a hub for mass transit, including a future tram line. To be located next to the former Entergy buildings on Government Street, the station would be the departing spot for intercity train service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Meantime, federal money may also pay to design a suburban train station in the Health District, the area around Perkins/Bluebonnet/Essen Lane where health care assets are clustered. That’s a key spot, as train service could double as a route to evacuate New Orleans patients to health care facilities in Baton Rouge ahead of storms. Ascension government purchased a location for a station last year, and New Orleans has an active one next to the Superdome. As planned, the train would stop in LaPlace and at the New Orleans airport.

Meanwhile, Gov. John Bel Edwards, a champion of passenger rail to connect Louisiana’s two largest cities and the towns in between, dedicated \$30 million of a federal grant to begin design and other work that would lead to upgrading existing cargo rails for the envisioned passenger train service. Upgrades would cost an estimated \$260 million, with most of that amount covered by the federal government.



LEGEND

- PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION
- COURTYARD
- TENANT A - TENANT B
- TENANT C - 16 APT UNITS
- TENANT D
- TENANT E
- TRAIN KIOSK
- BUS STOP SHELTER
- ELECTRIC CHARGER
- BIKE LANE

Photo of inside of Entergy building on Government Street by Tim Mueller

green park BATON ROUGE

...the best perk in parking!

THE NEW MOBILITY Electric cars are slowly growing in numbers. To give the segment some juice, Baton Rouge government, in a partnership with corporations and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, has launched Green Park Baton Rouge.

The program will allow drivers of electric cars to charge for free at prime public parking spots, starting in downtown and spreading to private businesses across the parish.

Mayor Kip Holden announced the program at a media event in October. Entergy provided a sponsorship grant of \$75,000 to purchase and install the first 10 charging stations downtown.

The partners are encouraging electric car use to lower carbon emissions and provide motorists with choices.

Drivers can power up free of charge for up to four hours at the Green Park parking spots. The only limit is that they must pay for parking in the designated spaces. The Foundation and city-parish government are seeking other sponsors and partners to help private businesses and large institutions implement the Green Park program at offices throughout the city.

Green Park is a component of the Foundation's project to offer more transportation choices. Another one is bike share, which should be in Baton Rouge within 18 months.

Sales of electric cars grew to 1% of all U.S. new car sales for the first time in June 2016. Though still a niche market, sales of electrics are expected to rise rapidly for several reasons. One, manufacturers are producing cars that can travel farther without a recharge, eliminating driver anxiety that the cars would run out of a charge on longer trips.

Prices are declining as well. And coupled with federal and state incentives, electric cars can cost less than similar gasoline-powered competitors.

For consumers, electric cars are quieter, friendlier to the environment and cheaper to operate. The Nissan Leaf, for instance, gets about 114 miles per gallon of gas equivalent. Electric cars also have fewer parts—no transmissions and simple engines—making them less expensive to service.

Green Park Baton Rouge will also help to overcome another hurdle for electric cars by providing charging stations near where people work. A summer 2016 report by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation—BR CityStats (brcitystats.org)—showed that 39% of East Baton Rouge residents would be interested in purchasing an electric car if their employers offered charging stations. Ultimately, the city-parish and its partners in the Green Park Baton Rouge program hope to add close to 50 new electric vehicle charging stations throughout the parish at popular destinations and local businesses.



“ Following the flood, I was for all intents and purposes, out of business. BREADA provided my farm with funds to help us rebuild. Without their help, I am not sure I would have been able to continue farming. ”

—William Fletcher, 5th generation farmer and Red Stick Farmers Market member for 18 years.

Thanks to our generous donors, BREADA was able to assist over 25 small farmers across the state with flood recovery in 2016 through the Louisiana Small Farm Survival Fund.

The Fund is a lifeline for small farmers who experience devastating loss of crops and equipment due to natural disasters.

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Improving autism services

When something's wrong with your child, you act fast. You take her to the doctor, get a diagnosis, and proceed immediately with treatment. Unless the diagnosis is autism.

Parents hurry to their doctor, desperate to know the reason why their little girl doesn't laugh or their baby boy sits idle and disengaged from his world. But after the shock and sadness of hearing their child diagnosed on the autistic spectrum comes the maddening realization that moving quickly to provide care is not what happens next. Instead, moms and dads of autistic kids are dismayed in the search for adequate services, finding long waits and a disjointed system. They're told how lucky they are to have gotten an early diagnosis because intense therapy can be critical in helping their children grow up more normally. But knowing this only makes it worse when you're waiting and waiting for that therapy to be made available. It's like being put on hold, endlessly listening to elevator music, except you can't hang up and try again.

More than two years ago, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation began learning about the struggles faced by parents whose children are diagnosed on the autism spectrum. In response, the Foundation partnered with the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation to unravel the problem and recommend solutions. We listened to the frustrations shared by parents, and we learned that service providers were no less exasperated by the situation. There simply weren't

enough resources to meet the demand, they said, and things were only getting worse: the number of children diagnosed with autism was climbing year after year.

In a report written by SSA Consultants, the two foundations proposed 25 ways to deliver help more quickly and effectively to families with autistic children. The six main recommendations—crucial starting points—are listed below. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is also underwriting a new website to make it easier for parents and guardians navigating the process of getting services for their children.

1 A single, coordinating nonprofit or consortium of nonprofits is needed to offer support above and beyond what existing organizations are currently providing. This organization should coordinate between providers to better enable referrals; serve as a family navigator resource by leveraging current resource networks, such as Families Helping Families; operate and maintain a robust resource website with guiding information for families; engage in advocacy; coordinate and communicate among state agencies and employers; and fulfill other critical functions.

2 The community as a whole must be better at identifying the symptoms of ASD earlier and encouraging families to seek a diagnosis. The sooner children receive treatment, the better the long-term outcomes for them and their families. Research shows

that ASD can be reliably diagnosed at 18 months, but the median age for diagnosis in the U.S. is four years old. Children in Baton Rouge often are not identified with ASD until they start school. General awareness about ASD within the community and specifically among pediatricians, caregivers, day care centers, parents and others coming into frequent contact with young children must be improved. Physicians must work together to identify and treat the multitude of other symptoms and medical conditions that can accompany ASD. Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital is considering opening a neurodevelopmental treatment center to do just that.

3 Constrained state budgets and demand for services make it difficult for parents to access services from the state. The wait list for the New Opportunities Waiver, for example, is up to 12 years long, if a family should qualify for this program. Many families are unfamiliar with other state programs for children and adults with ASD that could alleviate some of their struggles while waiting for a waiver slot. The Legislature and Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals should continue to analyze its waiver programs and other state-run programs and then immediately implement reforms to improve the quality of services and alleviate the capacity issues.

4 Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a proven treatment for ASD. But there is a shortage of therapists—fewer than 150 in the entire state. Louisiana State University, Southern University, Our Lady of the Lake College and the Louisiana Career and Technical College System should invest in programs to train board certified behavior analysts, board certified assistant behavior analysts and registered line technicians.

5 Few school systems are maximizing the reimbursements available from private and commercial insurance and Medicaid for therapy. Until recently, many opted not to offer ABA therapy or other types of therapeutic interventions in the school setting, even though funding is available. The East Baton Rouge Parish Public School System does not currently offer ABA therapy to students. As an initial step, public school systems should hire a designated ASD specialist devoted to overseeing and implementing broad support for students with ASD. The financial systems in place in Louisiana can also support specialty charter schools designed to serve children on the Autism spectrum by leveraging reimbursements from insurance providers and state and local funding sources for special education students.

6 Parents interviewed in connection with this report repeatedly described their child's transition period after high school as "falling off a services cliff." Support services available to school-

EXCEPTIONALLIVES.COM

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation issued a \$144,000 grant for a new website that guides parents and guardians to services available for their children on the autism spectrum. The need for the service emerged from the autism project we started with parents and caregivers more than two years ago. The site was built by a firm in Boston that already had a successful online service in place.

"The main goal is to provide a centralized service for parents with kids on the autism spectrum," says Hillary Dolinsky of ExceptionalLives.org. "Lots of times, parents can be overwhelmed once they get a diagnosis of autism for their children. They tend not to know what to do next."

The site will lead them through the maze of services. It's simple to read and understand. Parents answer questions about their children and their family situation; the site creates a step-by-step guide to resources.

"Hopefully, it will make the process easier for parents," says Dolinsky.

The original site serves the Boston area. Created by two founders with deep backgrounds in children with disabilities, the Boston site was launched in November 2015. Since then, 14,500 parents and professionals have created personalized guides. "Seventy percent each week are new users, 30% are coming back. They are using the site as a continuous resource," says Dolinsky.

aged children on the autism spectrum end, and parents are faced with having to support their child's needs alone. The Capital Region must develop a comprehensive infrastructure to support young adults with ASD. This infrastructure must include post-secondary educational opportunities, independent and supported housing opportunities, programs to develop independent living skills, a functioning transportation system and job training and placement programs. Existing early intervention and ongoing service providers should work to develop transition plans for connecting clients with adult services and should consider expanding their own services.

—Mukul Verma

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