

CURRENTS

second quarter twenty-eighteen . baton rouge area foundation



Driven

Matt McKay's powerful
commitment to community



The 31-mile Tammany Trace connects larger cities in St. Tammany Parish. It's an ideal spine for bikeshare. Story on page 44.





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WITH INSPIRING RIVER VIEWS



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*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

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

LETTER



It's fitting that we begin our membership campaign in spring. Our members, numbering more than 550, are hopeful people with high expectations. They believe in rebirth and in accomplishing the otherwise impossible. The bigger the idea, the better. And they're faithful too, renewing their memberships at a high rate each year because they know those big ideas sometimes require generations to transform our region.

Together, members gift about \$700,000 to us each year. That makes up roughly 15% of our annual operating budget. At the Foundation, we continually ask ourselves what benefits we can give back to our members—within the boundaries of IRS rules, of course—to show them how vital and appreciated their support really is. Members receive this magazine and our digital newsletter, for example, and we throw an exceptional party for them after our annual meeting. In surveys, however, our members tell us that the best, most lasting benefit from joining the Foundation has been seeing the good they are accomplishing in the community through us.

All the money from our members is dedicated to our projects for civic good. So it's our members who deserve the credit for being partners in reviving downtown Baton Rouge. Anyone

who's lived in our region for two or more decades remembers that our downtown became a ghost town after 5 p.m. In the 20 years since Plan Baton Rouge, the downtown rebound strategy funded by Foundation members and others, more than \$2.5 billion in public and private dollars has been invested toward rebuilding the beautiful downtown we all now enjoy.

Our members can also congratulate themselves for building hotels and apartments to help revive the downtown population. They can raise their glasses to helping to save coastal Louisiana through the creation of The Water Campus and The Water Institute of the Gulf. They can pat each other on the back for improving autism services, for helping the mentally ill receive treatment instead of jail time, for bringing bikeshare to Baton

Sounds impossible? Not to our members. They've seen what can happen when a few people share an idea, make a case for it to the community, and then find the resources to construct places that inspire the next generation to dream even bigger and to enjoy a better way of life.

Rouge soon, and for creating a master plan for preserving and improving the University/City Park lakes.

In this issue, you'll see another bold project underwritten by our members—so bold, in fact, that some folks might believe it can't be done. But our members know better. Parish government asked the Foundation to write a master plan for the new Health

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

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

Currents is published four times a year by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, 100 North Street, Suite 900, Baton Rouge, LA 70802. If you would like to be added to our distribution list, please contact us at 225.387.6126 or email the Foundation at mverma@braf.org.

District, a corridor in the parish's overall master design.

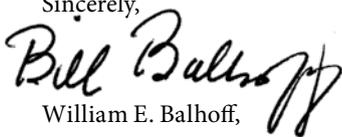
It's a tall order, sure. But with ideas from the community, the Foundation delivered a plan for creating the Baton Rouge Health District—a neighborhood anchored by health care providers working to heal people. Unfortunately, it's in a part of town that causes high blood pressure due to the traffic on Perkins, Bluebonnet, and Essen.

So improving traffic flow, along with creating greenspaces and pathways, is among the top recommendations in our Health District master plan. The Health District, a nonprofit created to implement the plan, hired land planners to fill in the details. At Essen Lane and Perkins Road, concrete would be replaced with gardens and welcoming signs as a gateway to the Health District. Walking and biking the pathways will get people out of their cars and let them move easily among hospitals and clinics, connecting them to surrounding residential neighborhoods. Health care workers and patients would have quiet gathering places, fostering a neighborly community among those who spend time in the District.

Sounds impossible? Not to our members. They've seen what can happen when a few people share an idea, make a case for it to the community, and then find the resources to construct places that inspire the next generation to dream even bigger and to enjoy a better way of life.

And the cost of pursuing that dream starts at only \$200 per year. Join us at BRAf.org/membership

Sincerely,



William E. Balhoff,
Chair

ABOUT US

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

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

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

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

3 We offer strategic consulting services to nonprofits.

KEY CIVIC LEADERSHIP PROJECTS

THE NEW MOBILITY :

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

BATON ROUGE HEALTH DISTRICT

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

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

MISSION :

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

To achieve our mission, we:

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

LEVEE



A RIVER RUNS BY IT The Foundation's new event venue has surpassed expectations. Open for 10 weeks, The Estuary has already booked events that will be attended by nearly 15,000 people this year. The draw: It's on the river side of the levee, and you can watch the river roll by from the old city dock that is connected to the venue's amphitheater. Legislative functions, association dinners, weddings, corporate meetings, press conferences, crawfish boils, cocktail receptions and academic presentations have been held at The Estuary, which is on the top floor of the Center for Coastal and Deltaic Solutions on The Water Campus. The Campus is a project of the Foundation and Commercial Properties Realty Trust. It is located around Terrace Avenue, Nicholson Drive and River Road.



FOUNDATION, DONORS GRANT MILLIONS; NEW BOARD ELECTED

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation's donors contributed \$47 million to their charitable funds in 2017, and the Foundation granted \$46 million to nonprofits last year. Grants were \$9 million more than in 2016.

The Foundation manages charitable funds on behalf of its donors, which includes investing the money, handling the paperwork, providing advice on issues and nonprofits and measuring the impact of grants.

The Foundation shared financial information with donors and members at its annual meeting on Wednesday, April 18, at the Center for Coastal and Deltaic Solutions, the new riverside building on The Water Campus near downtown. At the meeting, members elected new directors and the Foundation announced its nonprofit management award winners. (See Barton award winners in a separate story on page 26)

The Foundation's assets rose 6.5% to an unaudited \$656 million in 2017 from \$616 million the year before. Assets climbed in tandem with the stock market and a growing real estate portfolio.

Elected to their first three-year board terms were Charles W. Lamar III, Todd S. Manuel, Jennifer Eplett Reilly and Nick Speyrer. Donna D. Fraiche was elected to a second three-year term.

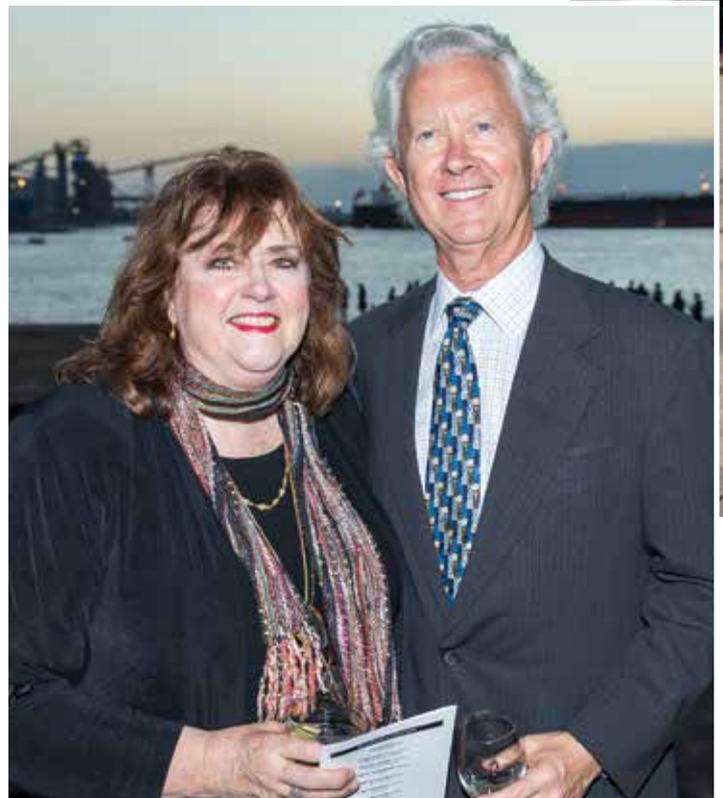
Lamar is chairman and CEO of Woodlawn Investments and president of Charles Lamar Family Foundation. Manuel is director of organizational health and diversity for Entergy Corp. Eplett Reilly is founding chair and board member of New Schools for Baton Rouge and co-founded City Year. Speyrer is founder and president of Emergent Method. Fraiche founded the New Orleans and Baton Rouge offices of Baker Donelson.

Mark C. Drennen was named the third winner of the Marcia Kaplan Kantrow Baton Rouge Visionary Award, which was established independently by friends and family of the late Ms. Kantrow, who was the first director of programs for the Foundation. As chief of the division of administration for Gov. Mike Foster, Drennen led the consolidation of state offices in downtown and helped to build The Shaw Center for the Arts. Both projects were instrumental in the revival of downtown Baton Rouge.

Baton Rouge Visionary Award winners receive a \$5,000 award to grant to a charity. Drennen's charity of choice is the St. Francisville Community Foundation, which has plans to develop a part of the riverfront in West Feliciana.



George Bell, Adam Knapp and Rodney Braxton



Ann Wilkinson and Charlie Lamar



John Gray plays the trumpet at the annual meeting of the Foundation.

Bill Balhoff and Donna Saurage with Abbie and Nick Speyrer



COMPLETE STREET LSU is remaking Nicholson Drive from Burbank Drive to West Chimes Street, the last part of its ambitious Nicholson Gateway Project. Contractors will resurface roads, build new curbs and drainage and improve lighting. Medians, new sidewalk and crossings will calm traffic and enhance pedestrian safety. About 1,500 students will move into new apartments for the fall semester. A 38,000-square-foot retail center anchored by Matherne’s Supermarket will let them shop and dine without getting in a car. LSU is also building new apartments around the corner on Aster Street, the road that links Nicholson with Highland. Private developers have added more than 1,000 units in the area.

READING IN ROUZAN

The library system may have put a stake in the ground for its Southdowns location. The new owners of Rouzan residential—a team led by John Engquist and Charles Landry—are negotiating with the library for a spot at the corner of Glasgow Avenue and Tupello Street. The system has to secure its own appraisal of the land before a contract can be signed. The budget for the proposed 15,000-square-foot branch is \$6.7 million. It could be connected to the large surrounding neighborhoods—Southdowns, Kenilworth, Pollard Estates—by bike and pedestrian paths. BREC has built a path from Olympia Park to near Pollard already.



PARKS ABOUND BREC has opened three new parks. Spain Street Park in Mid City, off Government Street, will serve the neighborhood with a new playground, picnic tables, citrus trees and a refurbished basketball court. BREC also completed improvements to the botanical gardens at the Main Library on Goodwood Boulevard and opened a regional community park. The North Sherwood Forest Community Park (above) has a lake for fishing, playground and splash pad, walking loop, tennis courts and four pavilions. BREC is building out Howell Park (left) as well.

CURL YOUR TOES AROUND COOL GRASS Hot pavers behind the governmental building in downtown have been replaced by a grass plaza. That Downtown Development District project continues the expansion of greenspace at the Town Square and riverfront. Next, the DDD will start the final phase of the Town Square on North Boulevard, around Fourth Street, and from Lafayette Street to the riverfront. Before the end of the year, the parish will begin a \$12 million upgrade of the Raising Cane's River Center Theater nearby.



FOUNDATION, PARTNERS TO HOST GLOBAL WATER SUMMIT IN BR

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is among the organizers of 10X Water Summit, the first in a series of gatherings to share ideas and solve problems on the I-10 corridor, and to share those solutions with the world.

The 10X Water Summit will be held in mid-May on The Water Campus in Baton Rouge. A global panel will take on challenges of living with too much water in cities along the Gulf Coast and too little water in drought-prone areas in the West.

Arizona State University and The Water Institute of the Gulf will lead the first summit. The cities of Phoenix and Baton Rouge have provided financial support.

Among the lead speakers is Henry Cisneros, a former HUD secretary and San Antonio mayor. City resilience officers from Los Angeles, Paris and Mexico City will attend, as will water management experts from Deltares, the science organization that advises the Netherlands on living with water. Journalists and scientists will also be panelist.

The 10X initiative is the brainchild of Arizona State University's Wellington "Duke" Reiter. From Los Angeles to the west to Jacksonville, Florida, to the east, the cities on I-10 are the most diverse and rapidly growing in the nation. This corridor's cities present many of the challenges of the 21st century in their highest relief: water, energy, immigration, city building and global commerce.

Wellington "Duke" Reiter



Accordingly, the summit offers a compelling window to the future and can serve as a living laboratory for the country as a whole.

"It is our belief that the Ten Across corridor is where the future is arriving early and in a dramatic fashion," says Reiter, who is senior advisor to ASU's president. "With close observation, one can see the critical issues of our time are being registered on both the built and natural environments. The objective of the 10X initiative is to assemble the evidence in a compelling and coherent format so as to inspire the necessary responses. We are beginning this project with the existential issue of water. The 10X Water Summit will bring together the key people who understand the urgency and who can help to define the problems and the possible solutions."

The subject of water looms especially large in the 10X study area, with climate change and other factors contributing both to drought conditions to the West and flooding to the East. The purposeful pairing of extreme desert and coastal geographies provides a compelling framing device for the summit, capturing the spectrum of water management challenges ahead. While the conditions in the Colorado and Mississippi riversheds are quite different in texture, common pursuits include long-term resilience; multijurisdictional policy matters; revelatory, data-rich forecasting and visualizations; and the skillful navigation of environmental, economic,



and societal adjustments to change.

The summit will be held at the Water Campus, a project of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and its real estate affiliate, Commercial Properties Realty Trust.

The summit is designed to stimulate the creation of key partnerships and shape Ten Across as an essential forum for the exchange of ideas. Intended outcomes of the gathering include providing:

- deeper understanding of the interaction of natural and manmade systems, enabled by powerful computation and visualization tools.
- policy innovation across political boundaries, driven by the parallel demands placed on the Colorado and Mississippi Rivers.
- the necessity of foresight and vision as demonstrated by projects and initiatives from the respective cities and metro regions.
- compelling narratives which catalyze the required resources and the commitment to confront projects of unprecedented scale and urgency. •

BIKE PLAN The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development is funding a \$250,000 bike and pedestrian plan for East Baton Rouge Parish. DOTD has hired Arcadis and Toole Design Group to write and deliver the plan by mid-2019.

In their blueprint, consultants will include best practices, write design standards for new and improved infrastructure and offer an implementation plan. They will identify areas for integrating on-road and off-road bike lanes and walking paths.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation started this project and rallied other organizations to get it rolling. The advisory committee includes the Foundation, Capital Region Planning Commission, city-parish government, BREC, EBR planning commission and Bike Baton Rouge.

BREC is contributing up to \$50,000 to the plan and will manage the design teams with DOTD.

Community meetings were held in early May to gather public input and explain the process for creating a plan.

Baton Rouge has only a few miles of designated bike paths and lanes, but more are under construction by different agencies. The plan will align those efforts.

CIVIC PROJECTS



COMPANION ANIMAL ALLIANCE

In fall, the Companion Animal Alliance will relocate from a decades-old building near the airport to its new shelter on Gourrier Avenue on the LSU Campus.

The new building will be better for animals and CAA employees. Pets will live in quieter and more comfortable surroundings while waiting to be adopted. The shelter is designed to minimize spread of diseases and will be easier to maintain. The location on the LSU campus should boost adoptions and let CAA tap into a large volunteer base of students.

LSU School of Veterinary Medicine students will get to practice and learn new techniques at the shelter.

The \$12 million shelter is funded by Foundation donors, the Foundation itself and philanthropists. The Foundation created CAA with animal enthusiasts and local government. To donate to CAA, visit CAABR.org.

When the rains came, companies were there for their employees.

Nearly 80 of them opened charitable funds at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to write emergency checks to their workers. Our Employees 1st program handled all the work. We made sure employees were qualified and they received assistance as quickly as possible.

Employees 1st is not only for disasters.

More than 40 companies are taking care of their employees who have suffered unexpected hardships, such as a fires and illnesses.



Learn more by contacting Elizabeth Hutchison
(225) 387-6126 or EHutchison@braf.org.

Calcasieu Parish will soon begin making street-level flood forecasts—something only a handful of communities worldwide can do. Its new flood forecasting model is the first of its kind in Louisiana for an inland watershed, where heavy rainfall and storms can create dangerous backwater flooding, endangering people right where they live.

The rural parish on the Texas border was reviewing the flood-alert system this spring as part of its internal forecasting system. Developed by experts at The Water Institute of the Gulf in Baton Rouge with their Dutch Deltares partner, the technology could be available to the public in the form of digital maps or a smartphone app by the end of the year, though that depends on trial runs over the coming weeks.

“The goal is to make this information available to the public when we feel confident about pushing it out there,” says Allen Wainwright, Calcasieu’s director of public works.

Very few cities anywhere can generate street-level flood alerts. In the U.S., pilot projects are underway in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia and also in Texas, where flash flooding along the Blanco River killed 10 people in 2015.

As elsewhere, Calcasieu’s system won’t prevent flooding. Instead, it will predict how high and when floodwater will rise on specific streets in a densely populated area called Contraband Bayou.

Localized flood alerts will blend data from a variety of government weather sources to give residents more time and more detailed information to make decisions about moving everything—from people and pets to cars and valued possessions—to higher, safer ground.

Public officials will use the system to determine road closures, evacuations and where and how to deploy limited government resources like rescue crews during a flood. Beyond weather emergencies, the model will help Wainwright and other engineers identify drainage bottlenecks and other public works priorities.

“It’s a way of taking subjectivity out of decisions about where a project is needed,” Wainwright says.

While National Weather Service forecasts are accurate, they focus on broader regions rather than providing a street-by-street breakdown of likely weather events. Ehab Meselhe, vice president for engineering at The Water Institute and a professor at Tulane University, is the flood alert system’s inventor. He compares the system to a traffic report about Interstate 10 congestion. “Knowing what is happening on the interstate doesn’t tell you what might be happening on your own street,” he says.

Interest in street-level flood alerts is propelled in part by a

Flood alert— *days before*

Water Institute builds model to predict flooding in your neighborhood

By Sara Bongiorno | Photo by Marie Constantin

The Foundation formed The Water Institute of the Gulf to provide solutions to coastal water issues. The Institute is working inland too, developing a forecasting tool after the Great Flood of 2016 to predict flooding neighborhood by neighborhood. The advance alert system will save property and lives.



Ehab Meselhe

recent, milestone improvement in national flood risk monitoring. In 2016, U.S. weather scientists rolled out a forecasting tool that gives hourly forecasts that take into account water movement across the country's full network of waterways, including small streams and rivers that weather scientists call "laterals."

The system has unsurpassed reach. The National Weather Model collects data from 8,000 U.S. Geological Survey gauges

“My feeling is that the state has turned a corner as far as an understanding of how important it is to work together on modeling and watershed management and flood control.”

—Allen Wainwright, Calcasieu Parish DPW

to mimic water levels at 2.7 million sites to give hourly forecasts for the nation's entire network of rivers and streams. Before, U.S. weather scientists relied on just 4,000 gauges to make forecasts every few hours.

The flood alert system built by Meselhe for Calcasieu will bring together information from the model and other sources, including the parish's own land elevation and drainage data.

Localized forecasting isn't entirely new to Louisiana. The Water Institute teamed with Dutch scientists from the Deltares research center to develop seven-day forecasts for the Barataria Bay and Breton Sound basins in the Mississippi River Delta. The technology is planned for use in the future to determine when weather conditions are suitable to operate the proposed sediment diversions.

But there has been no such localized flood alerts for inland watersheds in Louisiana until now.

Calcasieu is a logical starting point for street-level flood forecasting. It has more detailed and fuller information on drainage and land elevations than the rest of the state. For years, it has gathered such data not in response to a specific disaster but as part of a push to identify and fix drainage-related problems.

To that end, its engineers have built a modeling system to predict local flood risks. Over the past decade, Calcasieu also steadily expanded its network of rain gauges along lateral water-

ways to augment federal data on larger water bodies and weather systems.

Meselhe says although there is growing interest in street-level flood forecasting across the state, a plan on how best to proceed has not been established. He notes that The Water Institute already has the technology to make such forecasts—it's what will run the Calcasieu model.

What's missing in most Louisiana communities are detailed land elevation and drainage maps that are essential to understanding—and then forecasting—the movement of water in a network, including factors such as how much rain will be absorbed by the soil and how much will flow into roadside culverts and ditches.

“An effective model needs to capture all of that,” Meselhe says.

Additionally, such data must be continuously updated to make the forecasting tools effective.

“You build a new Walmart or a new subdivision and you have to take that into account,” Meselhe says.

For now, there is no proposal to move forward with gathering such information across the state, although transportation and emergency response leaders are interested in the idea, Meselhe said. It's also too early to say how best to collect that data or how long it would take.

“[It's] not a process that would take a couple of months, but it's not something that would take five or 10 years either,” Meselhe says.

The challenges are familiar: time and money.

Calcasieu does offer an additional example of what might work, if and when the idea of statewide street-level forecasting takes hold. The parish most recently collected high-resolution LIDAR data in 2017. (Light Detection and Ranging is a remote-sensing method that captures detailed 3-D images of the Earth's surface that are used for everything from public works to real estate transactions).

Wainwright says hiring a pilot to collect LIDAR data every five years might be sufficient to keep the parish's information up-to-date for forecasting, but he adds that fast-changing drone technology could make it less expensive and easier to do overhead flights more often.

“My feeling is that the state has turned a corner as far as an understanding of how important it is to work together on modeling and watershed management and flood control,” he says. “There's a growing consensus about the importance of these things, and I believe we will see rapid development of good flood- and water-management in the years ahead.” •



2018
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Baton Rouge serves as the host venue for this three-day, multi-platform conference. Sessions will be led by a diverse line-up of arts and humanities leaders, innovators, community activists, and professional consultants, with participant involvement at every level so that artists and arts organizations are given every opportunity to share knowledge, question, advocate, and inspire.

LEARN MORE ONLINE AT ARTSBR.ORG



GRANTS

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted \$8.6 million in the first quarter of 2018 to nonprofits and to individuals suffering from unforeseen hardships. Philanthropists establish and put money in donor advised funds, which are a kind of investment account for doing good. We manage the money and make grants on their behalf to nonprofits. As well, companies establish grant programs to help their employees suffering from hardships, and we manage those grant programs for them. Grants to nonprofits are listed below. To learn more about establishing a charitable fund at the Foundation, please call Elizabeth Hutchison at (225) 387-6126 or email her at ehutchison@braf.org.

Academic Distinction Fund \$46,971
Alabama State University \$500
Alcorn State University \$1,500
Alliance Francaise de la Nouvelle Orleans \$2,300
Alpha Kappa Psi Foundation \$1,500
Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area \$3,000
American Cancer Society Inc. - Mid-South Division \$500
American National Red Cross - Louisiana Capital Area \$6,616
American Pilgrims of the Camino \$1,000
AMIkids Foundation Inc. \$336,176
Animal Grantmakers Inc. \$5,000
Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$13,000
Assumption Parish School Board - Belle Rose Primary School \$3,000
Auckland Foundation \$12,000
Audubon Nature Institute Inc. \$1,000
Baton Rouge Area Violence Elimination Inc. \$500
Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre Inc. \$300
Baton Rouge Basketball and Volleyball Association \$750
Baton Rouge Christian Education Foundation -
The Dunham School \$52,866
Baton Rouge Crime Stoppers Inc. \$1,500
Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center Inc. \$53,705
Baton Rouge Emergency Aid Coalition \$1,000
Baton Rouge Epicurean Society LLC \$2,500
Baton Rouge First Church of the Nazarene \$350
Baton Rouge Gallery Inc. \$5,000
Baton Rouge Green Association Inc. \$16,616
Baton Rouge Health District \$2,750
Baton Rouge Opera Guild \$4,616
Baton Rouge Regional Eye Bank Inc. \$20,000
Baton Rouge Youth Coalition Inc. \$21,200

Bayou Playhouse Inc. \$5,000
Beth Shalom Synagogue \$12,242
Bevill State Community College \$3,500
Big Buddy Program \$3,500
Boys & Girls Club of the Mississippi Delta \$1,000
BREADA (Big River Economic & Agricultural Development Alliance) \$1,000
Briarwood Baptist Church \$800
Cancer Services of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$1,000
Capital Area Animal Welfare Society \$316
Capital Area United Way \$12,000
Capitol City Family Health Center Inc. \$16,200
Cashiers Cares Inc. \$250
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Inc. \$50,000
Catholic Foundation of the Archdiocese of Mobile Inc. -
St. Thomas by the Sea \$500
Catholic High School Foundation \$4,227
Catholic of Pointe Coupee \$1,000
CBSD - Baker High School \$1,000
Center for Planning Excellence Inc. \$158,500
Centre for the Arts \$1,000
Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Baton Rouge Inc./
McMains Children's Developmental Center \$35,248
Change Lives Now \$1,000
Children's Cup \$1,200
Chinese Christian Church of Baton Rouge \$172
Chippin' in for St. Jude \$4,000
Chosen Generation Community Outreach \$2,500
Christ Child Society of South Bend Inc. \$5,000
Christ the King Parish and Catholic Center at LSU \$12,074
City of Hammond \$300
City Year Inc. \$10,000
City Year Inc. - Baton Rouge \$205,750
CLIMB Community Development Corporation \$200,000
Community Center of Pointe Coupee \$500
Companion Animal Alliance \$613,150
Congregation B'nai Israel of Baton Rouge \$2,500
Congregation B'nai Israel of Baton Rouge Foundation \$3,800
CPSB - Washington-Marion Magnet High School \$1,000
Cristo Rey Baton Rouge \$5,000
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation - Baton Rouge \$2,000
Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans Foundation \$250
Davidson College \$33,704
Deck House School Inc. \$25,000
Delta Upsilon Lambda Foundation Inc. \$1,000
Dermott Baptist Church \$1,000
Dillard University \$1,500
Diocese of Houma - Thibodaux \$12,000
Douglas Manship Sr. Theatre Complex Holding Inc. \$14,125
Dress for Success Charity - New Orleans \$700
Ducks Unlimited Inc. \$6,207
Dyslexia Association of Greater Baton Rouge Inc. \$622

East Baton Rouge Parish Council on Aging Inc. \$300
 East Baton Rouge Parish Library \$300
 EBRPSS - Baton Rouge Magnet High School \$350
 EBRPSS - Lee Magnet High School \$1,200
 EBRPSS - McKinley High School \$1,000
 Eljay Foundation for Parkinson Syndrome Awareness Inc. \$1,000
 Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion \$6,500
 Episcopal High School of Baton Rouge \$836,642
 Excelth Inc. \$12,400
 Family Life Federation \$500
 Family Services of Greater New Orleans \$250
 Fickinger, Gregory \$10,000
 First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge \$20,000
 First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge Foundation \$10,600
 First United Methodist Church \$12,000
 Forward Arts Inc. \$1,000
 Foundation for East Baton Rouge School System \$1,620
 Foundation for Historical Louisiana Inc./ Preserve Louisiana \$4,158
 Foundation for Science and Math Education Inc. \$1,000
 Foundation for Woman's \$8,773
 Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University \$11,000
 Franciscan Monastery of St. Clare \$38,194
 Friends of Cantera Inc. \$10,000
 Friends of City Park \$10,000
 Friends of Louisiana Public Broadcasting Inc. \$2,870
 Friends of Magnolia Mound \$1,000
 Friends of Rosedown Inc. \$250
 Friends of the Animals BR Inc. \$1,000
 Friends of the Atchafalaya \$1,000
 Friends of the Baton Rouge Zoo \$1,000
 Friends of the Baytown Nature Center Inc. \$1,000
 Friends of the Oakley Plantation \$250
 Front Yard Bikes \$9,088
 GaitWay Therapeutic Horsemanship \$17,500
 General Health Foundation \$11,000
 Georgia Southern University \$500
 Girl Scouts - Audubon Council Inc. \$300
 Global Hunger Project \$150
 Good Work Network \$32,500
 Grace Baptist Church \$700
 Greater Baton Rouge Economic Partnership Inc. \$50,000
 Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank Inc. \$500
 Greater Baton Rouge Hope Academy \$1,000
 Greater Houston Community Foundation \$500
 Harmony Church of Bartlett \$25,000
 Heritage Ranch \$1,000
 HIV/AIDS Alliance for Region Two (HAART) \$16,950
 Hogs for the Cause \$50,000
 Holy Family Catholic Church \$12,440
 Honor Flight Louisiana Inc. \$2,500
 Hospice Foundation of Greater Baton Rouge \$1,000
 Houston Chamber Choir \$2,000

FANNIE FARNBACHER COHN HAD FORESIGHT

Through her will, she created an endowment to help people who are visually impaired. Her money was invested in the Farnbacher Memorial Fund, which is managed by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. The fund was transferred to the Foundation in 1988, when it was valued at \$190,000. More than \$360,000 have been granted since then. Grants have purchased eyeglasses for people who couldn't afford them, large-print books for the library system, a device that guides the blind when they swim. This year, the doctors who oversee the fund for the Foundation granted \$25,800 to purchase an IOL Master for LSU Surgery Center. The machine replaced one that was outdated 20 years ago, says Dr. Thomas Heigle, who is on the Farnbacher committee and teaches at the LSU Surgery Center. With the new IOL, doctors can more precisely pick intraocular lenses, which are implanted to replace the eye's natural lens when it's removed during cataract surgery.

Iberville Foundation for Academic Excellence \$5,894
 International Hospitality Foundation LSU \$1,586
 International Rescue Committee Inc. \$150
 International Society for Krishna Consciousness of New Orleans \$3,753
 James Dick Foundation for the Performing Arts \$1,000
 Jesuit High School \$1,000
 Jubilee Pioneers \$6,000
 Julius Freyhan Foundation \$2,500
 Junior Achievement of Greater Baton Rouge and Acadiana \$2,012
 Junior League of Lake Charles Inc. \$1,000
 Karnival Krewe de Louisiane Inc. \$1,000
 King of Kings Ministries Inc. \$750
 Knock Knock Children's Museum Inc. \$5,000
 Kudvumisa Foundation USA Inc. \$1,500
 La Casa de Amistad Inc. \$5,500
 Lafayette General Foundation Inc. \$150,000
 Lafourche Parish Public Schools - Golden Meadow Lower Elementary \$500
 Lake Charles Softball \$1,000
 Lambda Kappa Kappa Foundation Inc. \$500
 Life of a Single Mom \$1,000
 Living Word Church of Muskegon \$600
 Livingston Parish School Board - Denham Springs High School \$350
 Louisiana Art and Science Museum Inc. \$129,851
 Louisiana Association of Substance Abuse Counselors and Trainers Education Foundation Inc. \$5,000
 Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations Inc. \$1,000
 Louisiana High School Athletic Association \$3,000

Louisiana International Film Festival \$40,000
 Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College \$8,900
 Louisiana Symphony Association/Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra \$23,750
 Louisiana Tech University \$2,500
 LSU Alumni Association \$500
 LSU Foundation \$27,950
 LSU Foundation - Center for French and Francophone Studies \$5,000
 LSU Foundation - Centre Pluridisciplinaire \$10,000
 LSU Foundation - LSU Museum of Art \$10,150
 LSU Foundation - Manship School of Mass Communication \$1,000
 LSU Foundation - Manship School of Mass Communication Excellence Fund \$1,000
 LSU Foundation - School of Social Work \$300
 LSU Foundation - University Lab School Foundation \$350
 LSU Health Sciences Center - New Orleans \$9,924
 LSU Health Sciences Foundation in Shreveport \$250
 Manners of the Heart \$500
 Map 10 40 \$1,500
 Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center \$168,516
 Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center Foundation \$22,073
 Mercy Corps \$3,000
 Metanoia Inc. \$500
 MetroMorphosis \$277,500
 Metropolitan Crime Commission of New Orleans Inc. \$5,000
 Milton Academy \$200,000
 Missionaries of Charity Inc. \$3,000
 Mississippi College \$1,500
 Mississippi State University \$3,000
 National Federation of the Blind Inc. \$10,000
 New Ark Baptist Church \$350
 New Orleans Ballet Association \$7,000
 New Orleans Video Access Center Inc. (NOVAC) \$5,000
 New Schools for Baton Rouge \$225,000
 New York Institute of Technology \$500
 Newton ISD High School \$1,000
 O'Brien House Inc. \$1,500
 Of Moving Colors Productions \$2,000
 Old State Capitol Foundation Inc. \$300
 Ollie Steele Burden Manor Inc. \$361
 Omicron Beta Foundation Inc. \$1,000
 Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church \$8,334
 Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church \$38,231
 Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital \$18,250
 Our Lady of the Lake Foundation \$301,100
 Parkview Baptist School Inc. \$350
 Particular Council of St. Vincent de Paul of Baton Rouge Louisiana \$5,800
 Pastoral Center \$27,613
 Pearl River Community College \$500
 Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation \$22,500
 Planned Parenthood of the Gulf Coast Inc. \$6,500
 Pointe Coupee Early Childhood Coalition Inc. \$30,000

Pointe Coupee Private School System Inc. \$1,000
 Press Street \$30,000
 Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana Inc. \$700
 Primary Care Providers for Healthy Feliciana \$16,200
 Pro Bono Publico Foundation \$1,500
 Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana Inc. \$3,000
 Purple Songs Can Fly \$1,000
 Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge \$500
 Resurrection Missionary Baptist Church \$50,000
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge \$118,296
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge - Bishop's Annual Appeal \$750
 Rosa's Child Development Center \$1,000
 Rotary Club of Baton Rouge Inc. Foundation \$1,000
 Rotary Foundation of Rotary International \$100
 Russell Domingue Ministries Inc. \$750
 SSC Progression Corp. - St. Stanislaus College \$750
 Saint Elizabeth Foundation \$750
 Saint Jean Vianney Catholic Church \$2,657
 Saint Landry Parish School Board - Grolee Elementary School \$500
 Soles 4 Souls \$500
 Southeastern Louisiana Area Health Education Center Foundation \$5,000
 Southeastern Louisiana University \$1,750
 Southern Methodist University \$1,000
 Southern University and A&M College \$2,500
 Southwestern University \$1,500
 Spring Hill College \$30,000
 St. Aloysius Catholic Church \$1,500
 St. Aloysius Catholic School \$1,000
 St. Andrew's - Sewanee School \$500
 St. Anna's Episcopal Church \$3,000
 St. Augustine Church \$953
 St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church \$12,000
 St. Francis Chapel \$500
 St. Francis Episcopal Church \$25,000
 St. Francis Xavier Catholic School \$500
 St. Gabriel Catholic Church \$1,000
 St. Gerard Majella Church \$10,500
 St. Jean Vianney Catholic School \$4,855
 St. John Interparochial School \$1,009
 St. Joseph Cathedral \$6,049
 St. Joseph Spirituality Center \$500
 St. Joseph the Worker Church \$6,157
 St. Joseph's Academy \$2,000
 St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Inc. \$1,500
 St. Luke's Episcopal Church \$7,198
 St. Mary African Methodist Episcopal Church \$1,500
 St. Philip Parish \$3,732
 St. Thomas Aquinas Regional Catholic High School \$14,682
 STEM Magnet Academy of Pointe Coupee \$1,000
 Strength for Today \$1,000
 Stuart Hall School for Boys \$5,000
 Student Action with Farmworkers \$1,000
 Super Hero Kids Foundation \$2,000

Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation - Baton Rouge \$1,000
 Teach for America - South Louisiana \$30,000
 Teacher Prep Inspection - US Inc. \$200,000
 The Administrators of the Tulane Educational Fund \$55,043
 The Administrators of the Tulane Educational Fund -
 Tulane University Law School \$100
 The Ascension Fund Inc. \$13,443
 The Bascom Corp. \$5,000
 The Brighton School \$1,200
 The Chapel \$1,000
 The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana \$5,000
 The Emerge Center Inc. \$1,002,187
 The Friends of the Rural Life Museum Inc. \$1,000
 The Maxine Giardina Charter School Inc. \$5,000
 The Nature Conservancy - Louisiana \$19,092
 The Original Richland Library Restoration Society Inc. \$827
 The Regents of the University of California Los Angeles \$19,852
 The Salvation Army South Bend \$5,000
 The Suffolk Community Foundation \$6,000
 The Walls Project \$3,500
 The Water Institute of the Gulf's Delta \$700,000
 The Wilbur Marvin Foundation \$2,500
 Thrive Foundation \$200,000
 Trinity Episcopal Church \$5,000
 Union Congregational Church Crested Butte \$2,500
 United Southern Express Track Club \$700
 University of Alabama at Birmingham \$1,500
 University of Louisiana at Lafayette \$5,500
 University of Louisiana at Monroe \$2,500
 University of Mississippi \$2,000
 University of North Alabama \$1,500
 University of Southern Mississippi \$9,000
 University of West Alabama \$500
 University of West Florida \$500
 University Presbyterian Church \$74,750
 US Biennial Inc. \$42,800
 Volunteers In Public Schools Inc. \$300
 Volunteers of America Inc. \$1,000
 VWH Racing \$2,000
 Washington & Lee University \$100
 We Heart Veterans Corp. \$500
 West Baton Rouge Foundation for Academic Excellence \$6,441
 West Baton Rouge Parish School Board - Port Allen Middle School \$500
 Women Donors Network \$18,000
 Woodlawn Foundation \$1,000
 World Connect Inc. \$35,000
 Xavier University of Louisiana \$1,250
 YMCA of the Capital Area \$300
 YMCA of the Capital Area - Charles W. Lamar Jr. \$500
 Young Life New Orleans \$7,500
 YWCA North Central Indiana Inc. \$5,000
 YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge \$1,000





2018 *John W. Barton Awards*

*Winners answer a
few questions*

By Mukul Verma | Photos by Tim Mueller

Three nonprofit leaders have won the 2018 John W. Barton nonprofit management awards, which are given each year by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Myrtle David and Chris Meyer each won the Barton Excellence in Nonprofit Management Award, while Dustin LaFont won the Barton Rising Star Award.

David and Meyer each received \$10,000, while LaFont won \$5,000.

The award is named for the late Mr. Barton, who led a group that created the Foundation in 1964. Barton winners were honored in April at the Foundation's annual meeting of members held at the Center for Coastal and Deltaic Solutions, the leveetop building on The Water Campus.

Donors with charitable funds at the Foundation nominate nonprofit executives for the recognition; former Foundation chairs choose winners each year. We asked the winners a few questions, offering a glimpse of who they are outside of their professional life.

Myrtle David

DeBose Foundation

David is a founding member and executive director of the DeBose Foundation, which she has been involved with for more than four decades. It provides music education and hosts the DeBose Fine Arts Festival Series—National Piano Competition, which brings musicians from around the world to compete in Baton Rouge.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY FROM CHILDHOOD?

Going to my first symphonic performance by the Longine Symphonette.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?

Anything French; anything Cajun/Creole.

EXCLUDING BATON ROUGE, WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CITY OR PLACE AND WHY?

Boston, Massachusetts, the home of America's first and most historic and dynamic music centers.

SOLVING WHICH PROBLEM WOULD PROVIDE THE GREATEST RETURN FOR OUR REGION?

Promoting and investing in the pursuit of artistic excellence by students and professionals.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE HERO IN FICTION?

I don't have one.

WHAT DOES BATON ROUGE LACK THAT YOU WISH IT HAD?

Economic and educational investment in the arts.

WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE AND WHY?

Mrs. Doveal Austin Essex. She possesses the most objective philosophy about life and people.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?

My mother's pearl necklace.

IF YOU HAD \$1 BILLION, HOW WOULD YOU SPEND IT TO IMPROVE THE REGION?

I would provide monitored supplemental funding for organizations that serve humanitarian, social service needs, such as the Food Bank; and for family services and resources for the suffering.

HOW WILL YOU SPEND THE \$10,000 BARTON AWARD?

To improve my residence and my neighborhood environment.

Dustin LaFont

Front Yard Bikes

LaFont founded Front Yard Bikes, a nonprofit that teaches self-reliance and life skills to disadvantaged youth by making them responsible for repairing bicycles. LaFont's nonprofit also provides tutoring and other services to the children of Old South Baton Rouge.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY FROM CHILDHOOD?

My favorite memory as a 7-year-old boy growing up on Bayou Black in Houma was wandering in the mornings with my little brother. We wore our boots, carried minnow nets and pulled a red wagon. We would go searching for any crawfish, minnows, salamanders or frogs we could catch. After hours of searching, we would come home to show our mom how successful we were.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?

My favorite meal would be redfish, speckled trout or drum that I have caught, either blackened, fried or in a coubion.

EXCLUDING BATON ROUGE, WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CITY OR PLACE AND WHY?

My favorite places to visit are Grand Isle or West Palm Beach, Florida. Both areas have family that I love to visit, great food, a nice beach to relax and good fishing. I could see myself retiring in 30 years to either location.

SOLVING WHICH PROBLEM WOULD PROVIDE THE GREATEST RETURN FOR OUR REGION?

I believe investing in education, mobility and workforce development would equip our kids. Children are our greatest resource, and as we invest in them we will get great returns.



WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE HERO IN FICTION?

Ghost Rider or Finn the Human.

WHAT DOES BATON ROUGE LACK THAT YOU WISH IT HAD?

Aside from better bike infrastructure, I wish we had more access to waterways, a boardwalk along the river and access to bayous.

WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE AND WHY?

I have long admired my mother. She has always been a hard worker and believes that every child is a wonderful person. She enjoys every moment of her work and firmly believes God has a plan for everyone to live a beautiful life.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?

I think my most treasured possession would be my family and students. Everything else can be replaced, but relationships with good people are rare.

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE WHAT TO COME BACK AS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I'd come back as an oak tree to provide shade or a nice swing at a museum or park.

IF YOU HAD \$1 BILLION, HOW WOULD YOU SPEND IT TO IMPROVE THE REGION?

That's a very difficult question. I think I would build a business and trade skills high school in North Baton Rouge. We would develop an elective curriculum that enhanced trade skills, and high-performing students would be paid compensation for their work through scholarships and stipends.

HOW WILL YOU SPEND THE \$5,000 BARTON AWARD?

My wife and I are having our second child in April. I'm thankful we have extra money for medical bills and baby clothes!

Chris Meyer

New Schools for Baton Rouge

Meyer is CEO of New Schools for Baton Rouge, a nonprofit created to recruit the best charter school operators to our region and to support public school education. Meyer started his career as a teacher for Teach for America in New Orleans. He led Louisiana's Recovery School District's Office of Portfolio.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY FROM CHILDHOOD?

One summer during my middle school years, I had the opportunity to travel to Australia by myself and spend the summer with my cousin who serves as a missionary there and in the Solomon Islands. This was a life-changing experience and opened my eyes to a greater world and purpose. I didn't realize at the time how formative this was to my sense of adventure, devotion to causes bigger than myself, and my confidence. Looking back, I also realize the sacrifice my family made, particularly my late grandmother, who was a pillar of faith in our family and used part of her savings to purchase my plane ticket for the trip.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?

It's not one particular meal but any Sunday lunch cooked back home by my mother. It will include at least two casseroles made from cream of something, with a broccoli version being my favorite. To cap it off, my grandmother usually contributes her famous chocolate pie. If I've been dutiful in calling regularly, I usually get an extra to bring back to Baton Rouge.

EXCLUDING BATON ROUGE, WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CITY OR PLACE, AND WHY?

New Orleans. This is where I first experienced independence away from home in Shreveport during college. It's where I developed deeper empathy through teaching in a struggling public high school pre-Katrina, where I learned that I cared more about improving the lives of others than my own, and where I found a lifelong passion to fight for strengthening Louisiana. The city moves with a rhythm that seems to emphasize a set of priorities different from the demands of the modern professional world, and I think we all need a little more of this type of button-downedness in our lives. I also think it's a city that is embracing a unique opportunity to preserve the beautiful aspects of its culture and heritage while transforming its institutions to more effectively tackle long-standing challenges of underperforming K-12 education, poverty and limited economic opportunity.



SOLVING WHICH PROBLEM WOULD PROVIDE THE GREATEST RETURN FOR OUR REGION?

Giving every child in our region access to a quality public school would do more to transform the long-term prosperity of our city, region and state than any other investment. We would experience waves in increased economic development, improved health and housing outcomes and decreases in crime, poverty and hopelessness. I think this starts with our expectations and willingness to take on entrenched interests and institutions. If we have the courage to expect and demand excellence from our public leaders, the institutions undergirding our community and our citizens, then we can realize Louisiana's jump in national rankings.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE HERO IN FICTION?

Holden Caulfield from *The Catcher in the Rye*. Holden's resentment of hypocrisy in the world around him and rebellion against institutions and structures (while perhaps misguided) have relevance now. I have always been drawn to the voices of youth and their unique perspective on our challenges and solutions. While young in experience, we need to do more to hear the wisdom our community's youth have to share. After all, it's a popular goal to say we want to leave our world better for the next generation. That being true, then we ought to listen to and include that generation more in our decision-making.

WHAT DOES BATON ROUGE LACK THAT YOU WISH IT HAD?

A rail transportation solution connecting it to New Orleans and other regional cities, Houston, Jackson, Gulf Coast towns.

WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE AND WHY?

Robert Gates. I had the privilege to serve as an assistant to him during his tenure as U.S. Secretary of Defense. He represented a true public servant, interested more in impact than ideology, unifying support instead of sowing division, projecting American ideals and values instead of perverting our history. I fear we are at risk of failing to attract intelligent, patriotic and passionate public servants in our governmental institutions, leaving them to those who seek positional and personal authority and glorification. Gates served honorably and in the best interests of troops and the country because he realized he was best prepared and positioned to serve. His selflessness, resolve of mission and ability to involve others in tough decision-making are lessons I try to apply to this day.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?

My college diploma. I was one of the first on both sides of my family and among my childhood friends to attend and graduate college. This changed my personal trajectory, and I realize the impact this opportunity had on encouraging my sister and others to accomplish the same.

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE WHAT TO COME BACK AS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

An Air Force fighter pilot.

IF YOU HAD \$1 BILLION, HOW WOULD YOU SPEND IT TO IMPROVE THE REGION?

I would do three things: (1) invest in a public-private partnership for a new Mississippi River bridge that utilized long-term finance and maintenance solutions such as tolls; (2) focus and expand the research capabilities of LSU and Southern via "action tanks" to tackle challenges that have economic impact on our region and state through public-private investment cooperatives (e.g., coastal and water challenges, next generation oil and natural gas exploration, computer science, and cutting-edge agricultural technologies that can be exported to the world); and (3) endow a permanent universal pre-K fund that harnesses existing public funding streams but empowers families with resources to access any quality-rated child development center, while simultaneously recruiting and expanding access on the provider side so that all children in our parish can access high-quality early learning opportunities regardless of the family's income status. Each of these is possible but requires us to take on entrenched interests and institutions.

HOW WILL YOU SPEND THE \$10,000 BARTON AWARD?

I will expand a trip I am planning to China and Southeast Asia later this year. I think I'll also take the kids to Disney World. •

Think Outside the **Ballroom**

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

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- Holiday Celebrations
- Reunions and University Events
- Staff Retreats and Board Meetings
- Lunch and Learns
- Training Seminars
- Continuing Education





“Set among some of Baton Rouge’s busiest roadways, we’re out to create a culturally vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood for the best in health care; a desirable destination for living, working and playing.”

—Rex Cabaniss, WHLC Architecture



Community spaces are a highlight of the Health District. Design standards envision outdoor plazas, streetscapes, separate bike lanes and sidewalk dining.

Rx retrofit

Health District plan to foster infrastructure improvements

By David Jacobs

When Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center CEO Todd Stevens worked in Houston during the 1990s, he watched Texas Medical Center “really take off.” Other medical districts around the country were growing too, creating a sense of place that made them feel like real communities—not just collections of buildings.

The infrastructure committee for the Baton Rouge Health District, chaired by Stevens, wants to see a similarly cohesive character brought to our medical corridor. “We are working to create a consistent, accessible environment across the district; in what the urban center looks like, how it functions, and how people interact with it,” says Stevens.

District leaders and the committee are collaborating with WHLC Architecture to write an infrastructure implementation plan for filling in gaps between new and existing development and encouraging more integrated, inviting images for buildings, streetscapes, signage and landscape.

The core of the Health District encompasses Perkins Road, Bluebonnet Boulevard and Essen Lane, where health care providers are clustered in Baton Rouge. The District is part of a broader network that includes Baton Rouge General Mid City, Ochsner Medical Center on O’Neal Lane, Our Lady of the Lake North Emergency Room and Woman’s Hospital campus on Airline Highway.

Like much of our city, The District developed without a clear master plan. The core is congested, there are few sidewalks or bike paths, amenities and greenspace are scarce. Working

closely with Mayor Sharon Weston Broome’s office, Metro Council members, the Department of Public Works, DOTD and the EBR Planning Department, the Health District wants to remedy that.

Over the next few years, health care providers, government and private developers are expected to invest \$450 million in the Health District. The investments are an opportunity to integrate existing infrastructure and new developments.

“We chose to stretch the definition of infrastructure,” says Rex Cabaniss, WHLC’s planning and design director, describing the planning approach. “Infrastructure is often thought of as roads and utilities. We define it as not just the physical infrastructure, but how the built environment can best support social, innovation and lifestyle assets.”

The planned and funded Dijon Drive extension from Essen to Bluebonnet could be the first showcase for what planners envision, including a bike and pedestrian trailway, enhanced landscaping and lighting and branded district signage. The Dijon extension could be a model for the planned Midway Boulevard, a road that would run the same direction as Essen and Bluebonnet, about halfway between the two.

“Interstate gateway entries and key roadway intersections have been identified for potential enhancements, helping to establish a distinct sense of arrival, streetscape quality and coordinated image for the district,” Health District Executive Director Suzy Sonnier says.

“At 7.5 miles long, BREC’s partially completed Health Loop trail is a key recreational asset for the Health District,” Sonnier says. Making the district more pedestrian- and bike-friendly would give everyone more options to get around and drive less, while encouraging residents, workers and visitors to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.

The plan also presents examples of how new building designs can best relate to public gathering spaces. It supports inviting streetscapes for a vibrant, walkable, urban center. Guidelines call for open plazas, parks and greenways, healing gardens and public art, all meant to encourage enhanced recreation, relaxation and social interaction.

How would such standards be established? The infrastructure committee, guided by Cabaniss, is developing design guidelines that the Health District members will consider adopting as the first step.

“The objective is to promote high-quality, community-focused development that exemplifies health and wellness, while building upon urban qualities that complement the level of exceptional health care the district provides.” Cabaniss says.

The Baton Rouge Health District is a nonprofit overseen by leaders of Baton Rouge health care providers. City-parish government asked the Foundation to create a master plan for the district, and that plan was adopted by local government. The Health District was created, in part, to implement the plan.

“Over time, following a strategic plan of creative placemaking raises the bar. It becomes a destination of choice for health and wellness, plus commercial and residential quality for the city.”

Sonnier says improvements should become visible in 2019, as Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital, Ochsner’s High Grove location and the Dijon extension could all be open by then. The infrastructure committee has outlined many opportunities to improve the area and anticipates more will be identified as the vision is shared with key stakeholders.

For Stevens, the first step is clear: health care institutions that form the Health District will demonstrate their commitment to improve how the area develops as they enhance and expand their own campuses.

“Each year, there will be steady, value-added progressions,” Cabaniss says.

Mary Bird Perkins—Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center recently completed a \$30 million-plus expansion and renovation, so Stevens is keenly aware of how a well-designed and built environment can improve the experience of patients, visitors and professional caregivers. He says the Health District’s plan can deliver similar results. “If we can get some of these improvements implemented,” Stevens says, “the opportunity here is huge for the city and the region—and for the thousands of people who enter the Health District every day.” •

Top right: The Health District will have welcoming gateways. Seen here, the intersection of Perkins and Essen will be remade with flowers, trees, signage and lighting that’s distinct to the location. The goal is to show that you are entering a special locale.

Bottom right: The extension of Dijon Drive will link Our Lady of the Lake Regional Hospital with the new OLOL Children’s Hospital. Designs call for the road to have flowering medians and be flanked by sidewalks, with a BREC bike and walking trail connecting Siegen Lane to Dijon Drive and Kenilworth, Pollard Estates and Rouzan neighborhoods. BREC has already built sections of the trail. Construction of the Dijon extension should begin this year.



COVER

Driven

The McKays' powerful commitment to community

By Maggie Heyn Richardson | Photos by Tim Mueller

From time to time, Matt McKay wonders about something.

What would have happened back in high school if his American Legion baseball team had won their state championship game?

Because if they had, he muses, the cards might have fallen differently, and he wouldn't have had a chance conversation that led to a part-time job at a car dealership—a fork in the road that has yielded tremendous success and personal satisfaction. It's also allowed McKay to get involved in some of Baton Rouge's most important community projects.

The chairman, president and CEO of All Star Automotive Group, McKay grew up in Baton Rouge's Melrose neighborhood and graduated from Tara High School in 1972. That's about the time he landed in the world of automobile sales. The summer following his senior year, McKay was playing for an Audubon Ford-sponsored baseball team that secured a spot in the state championship. The team lost in a heartbreaking defeat, and as McKay and his teammates sat dejected, Audubon Ford General Manager Bill Gowland approached McKay.

"He said, 'Show up tomorrow morning, and I'll put you to work,'" McKay recalls. "I figured since my baseball career was over, why not? I went to the Monday morning sales meeting, not knowing a thing about the business. Sometimes I think about what would have happened if we'd won that game."

"The key to me with Ardendale, and with other community projects I've been involved with, is that it's a stake in the ground. It's a center point that says, 'Here's what can be done.'"

—Matt McKay

THE MCKAY AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY CENTER
AT BATON ROUGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE





Matt McKay of All Star Automotive visits students at McKay Automotive Technology Center at Baton Rouge Community College. With McKay is, from left, Jonas Guichet, Austin Davis and Micheal Sideboard.

McKay juggled part-time work at Audubon Ford while attending LSU, and he eventually signed on to a full-time car lot career. With an honest demeanor and keen sense of the business, McKay rose through the ranks, eventually becoming a sales manager. Then in the fall of 1987, McKay struck out on his own, going into business with partner John Noland.

The two formed the All Star Automotive Group, and they purchased Lousteau Ford Lincoln Mercury in Gonzales.

The company name, says McKay, stemmed from the region's love of sports and was inspired by Converse's Chuck Taylor All-Star sneakers. All Star Automotive Group would go on to acquire a Baton Rouge Dodge dealership in 1989, followed by an Alexandria Toyota dealership in 1990 and a Chevrolet dealership in 1994. The company continued to flourish, and McKay bought Noland out in 2010. Today, All Star has 11 dealerships representing 13 franchises and nearly 800 employees.

Like Noland, McKay has used his success in business to foster social change in the community he loves. He was recently nominated for the 2018 TIME Magazine Dealer of the Year, a national

awards program that singles out accomplished automotive dealers with significant civic involvement. One of the most powerful—and visible—projects McKay has driven is the recently opened McKay Automotive Technology Center, a \$51 million, public-private workforce training facility at Baton Rouge Community College's newly minted Ardentale Campus. Named for McKay's father, the 83,000-square-foot center trains men and women in the high-tech automotive technician field through rigorous classroom work and modern laboratories with the latest equipment. Before the center was built, there was no facility in the region that could provide the kind of sophisticated training necessary to fill modern automotive jobs.

"These are great jobs, and we need local residents to have access to this kind of training," says McKay.

The cause of education has been a constant priority for McKay and his wife, Sherri. It's inspired by Matt McKay's father's 30-year career as a principal, teacher and coach, and his mother's career as an employee of the East Baton Rouge Parish School System.



The McKay family, from left, Taylor, Matt, Sherri and Hays pose earlier this year for a portrait during the National Automobile Dealers Association Show in Las Vegas, Nevada.

“I’ve been incredibly blessed, and I try to live by, “To whom much is given, much is expected,” McKay says.

In 1991, McKay led the establishment of The Ascension Fund, which awards grants to teachers and schools to inspire excellence in public education. The fund is supported by the private sector to give teachers and schools extra resources for innovative projects beyond what the district provides. It’s intended to help teachers dream up new ideas for the classroom. Since it launched, the fund has granted more than \$1.45 million to Ascension Parish educators. It has a \$1.5 million endowment.

During the formation of the fund, Noland introduced McKay to John Davies, president and CEO of the Foundation. Davies, McKay says, taught him the basics about raising money, managing donor funds and making grants.

“John taught me what philanthropy meant,” says McKay. “Every project I’ve been able to do is because of my partnerships with the Foundation.”

From what he learned, McKay also underwrote the Scholastic Read and Rise program to promote literacy in 24 low-income

Baton Rouge area schools, and the McKays are a major contributor to the McKay Academic Center for Excellence at the Dunham School in Baton Rouge for students who learn differently. They have also supported The Emerge Center in Baton Rouge, which is dedicated to therapeutic programs that optimize independent communication and social interaction skills for children and youth with a variety of learning issues and conditions, and THRIVE, a charter boarding school that gives students from underserved areas of Baton Rouge a chance to focus on academics away from troubling home settings. McKay has also supported the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank’s Hunger to Hope campaign.

When their son Taylor got involved in the sport of wrestling, the McKays helped build a wrestling program at the Episcopal School, where both their sons were students. They also converted a warehouse to the nonprofit All Star Wrestling Club, a chartered USA Wrestling club that gives more local young people the chance to learn the sport and compete.

After seeing the impact of autism among friends and family,

the McKays helped the Baton Rouge Area Foundation launch an autism support website that provides resource lists and quick information to families with children and youth with the disorder. More than 15,000 parents and guardians used the site (www.la.exceptionallives.org) within its first year of operation.

“What these families have to think about on a daily basis is overwhelming,” says Matt McKay. “Just basic things, like finding a dentist who knows how to treat a patient with autism is an example of what they have to consider. Compiling all this information in one place makes a big difference to families.”

For a decade, Matt McKay has been at work establishing an automotive training center to bring badly needed workforce training to the Capital Region. The dearth of relevant training opportunities in the quickly changing automotive field has been a nagging issue for employers like McKay. His partner in the project has been the Foundation and its Executive Vice President John Spain.

McKay and Spain have traveled to find the best examples of career high schools that teach trades, and of automotive training centers. They convinced public officials that the automotive training center would provide opportunities for Louisiana residents and boost the economy. And they have been patient; the training center took almost a decade’s worth of determination to build in Ardendale.

“We knew years ago that technician training was a big missing piece,” says McKay. “These are great jobs. An auto tech can make a lot of money.”

McKay believed it was critical that Baton Rouge open a top-notch training facility here in the region. For years, All Star has had to go to Houston to recruit technicians. Despite housing them in on-site apartments and paying them well, the company has consistently fought a 25% retention rate.

“Ultimately, they wanted to go home,” says McKay. “They

wanted to go back to Houston to live and work near friends and family.”

A chance meeting with Joe May, then president of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, provided the initial spark to get the ball rolling. The two men were on a Baton Rouge Area Chamber canvass trip, and they found themselves in agreement on the need for a modern automotive technician training program in Baton Rouge.

The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority got involved, acquiring a 150-acre site in the Ardendale area of North Baton Rouge. Last year, the Baton Rouge Community College opened a branch campus with the McKay Automotive Training Center, and the East Baton Rouge Parish School System will open a career high school this fall with training opportunities for high school students.

“We spent three years traveling around and looking at different training models,” says McKay. “We wanted a model that not only trained high school graduates, but that also showed high school students what kinds of opportunities were out there.”

McKay has been able to use his deep relationships in the field to recruit corporate partners including Toyota, Hunter Engineering, Boyce Machinery and others to donate equipment so that students can train on the latest technologies and graduate job-ready on day one.

“The key to me with Ardendale, and with other community projects I’ve been involved with, is that it’s a stake in the ground,” says McKay. “It’s a center point that says, ‘Here’s what can be done.’” •

“We spent three years traveling around and looking at different training models. We wanted a model that not only trained high school graduates, but that showed high school students what kinds of opportunities were out there.”

—Matt McKay

YOU MAY SAY I'M A DREAMER BUT I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE

We're all in a hurry to make the world better. Some ideas, however, require much time and commitment; they span generations.

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*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*



Bikeshare everywhere

NCF to roll out service in St. Tammany

By David Jacobs

Get on a bike. Drop one foot onto a pedal and push off with the other. Roll to work, or home, or to a restaurant for dinner. Or to a lakefront for a gathering of friends. In many places, this is a dream. But not in St. Tammany, where people ride two-wheelers for fun and to commute.

Soon, you'll see even more people on bikes in St. Tammany, thanks to a partnership between the Northshore Community Foundation and local government. Bikeshare is coming to the parish, and there may be no other place in Louisiana that has infrastructure more suited for it.

The Tammany Trace, an abandoned train line that parish government converted into a paved trail, runs behind houses and businesses and links the largest cities in St. Tammany.

"It's like a spine that links cities in the parish, which makes it ideal for building a bikeshare system," says Lindsey West, whose firm is consulting on bikeshare programs in East Baton Rouge, St. Tammany and Calcasieu parishes.

West's common link to the parishes are three affiliated foundations—Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Northshore Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana. Each foundation is spearheading the introduction of bikeshare with its local government.

The bucolic Trace is 31 miles long. Cities along the route are Covington, Abita Springs, Mandeville, Lacombe and Slidell. Old train depots are repurposed as bike trailheads, and there are more than two dozen bridges on the route. In Covington, the

trailhead has a clock tower, bandstand, grassy area, restrooms, water fountains and a small movie theater. In Abita, there's a museum and the popular Abita Brewpub. Mandeville's trailhead has a pavilion, amphitheater and picnic areas.

BIKESHARE BEGINS

Bikeshare is new to Louisiana. New Orleans is the first city to deploy bikeshare. Baton Rouge's system should start up in early 2019. St. Tammany and Calcasieu should have their own by late 2019.

You can join a bikeshare system for a year or ride for a fee whenever you want. Annual memberships cost less than \$100. Unlock a bike at a hub, ride for an hour or so, lock the bike at another hub.

Bikeshare operators are experimenting with hubless systems, which are cheaper to operate. The bikes don't need hubs because they are outfitted with all the equipment, such as GPS and locking mechanisms. In hubless networks, a rider locates a bike on an app, rides where she wants and leaves the bike. The next rider takes it from there.

The idea of bikeshare in St. Tammany started after West met with Susan Bonnett Bourgeois, Northshore Community Foundation president and CEO. A week later, Bourgeois spoke with St. Tammany Parish President Pat Brister at a meeting. "I said, 'Pat, I want to bring somebody to meet you. I want you to learn about bikeshare,'" Bourgeois recalls.

Coincidentally, Brister had just returned from Washington,

BIKESHARE ELSEWHERE

BATON ROUGE

Bikeshare should start by early 2019 with about 50 hubs and 500 bikes. The system is funded by federal and parish money. The first phase will put bikes where demand is expected to be strongest—downtown, LSU, Southern University, City Park and the lakes. A second phase will add about 300 more bikes to Mid City, where the state is building bike lanes on Government Street, and in the Baton Rouge Health District, which has a master plan that includes bike and pedestrian paths.

CALCASIEU PARISH

Sara Judson, president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana, first learned about bikesharing through the work of the SWLA Economic Development Alliance’s “quality of life team,” which is interested in improving the region’s biking infrastructure and culture. Stakeholders are raising funds for the feasibility and implementation study, which they expect to kick off in spring. The Convention and Visitors Bureau, the City of Lake Charles, Calcasieu Parish and one of the Community Foundation’s donors are already on board, Judson says. Supporters hope to include Lake Charles and Sulphur in the same program. Many McNeese State University students, particularly international students, don’t own vehicles and would appreciate another transportation option, Judson says. A “robust bike culture” can help attract young professionals and their families to southwest Louisiana, Judson says. She hopes a bikeshare program can be part of a broader effort to enhance the quality of life for people who already live there and entice new folks to stay.

D.C., where she was impressed by that city’s bikeshare program and intrigued by the idea of having something similar in St. Tammany.

“She and I had this mind-meld,” Bourgeois says. “I said, ‘We’re going to have a bikeshare here, period. This is completely doable.’”

Bourgeois and Brister believe the Trace is not used enough. Though it’s already a popular tourist attraction, they believe far more people would bike the trail if they didn’t have to strap a

bicycle to their car. They also see bikesharing as an important quality of life enhancement for current and potential residents.

“Millennials will not move to a place if it is not deemed by them to be walkable and bikeable,” Bourgeois says. “They do not want to have to get in their car to go everywhere.”

St. Tammany doesn’t have any other means of alternative transportation, she adds, and that isn’t likely to change any time soon.

Small businessowners in the area who already rent out bikes have raised concerns about unfair competition. But Brister expects the bikeshare program to be a partner for those companies. “It just gets more people out on the Trace, which helps their business,” Brister says.

And not all of the bike stations would be along the Trace, so the program would bring more commerce to nearby towns, says Eric Schouest, vice president of governmental affairs for Cleco, the power company.

NEXT STEPS

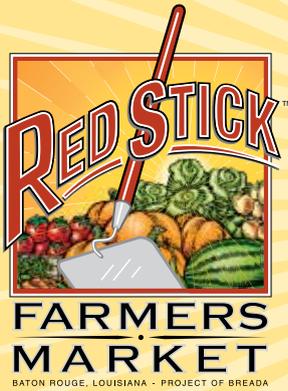
Cleco helped establish the Trace by donating rights-of-way along the former railroad corridor back in the early 1990s. Now the company, which provides power for most of St. Tammany, is the primary backer of the bikeshare feasibility study.

West will be working on the feasibility study over the next several months with Toole Design Group, a national planning, engineering and landscape architecture firm specializing in bicycle and pedestrian transportation. The process will include online surveys and at least three public meetings, she says.

“We’re giving information, and we’re also pulling information from the community,” West says. The data will be used to deliver a plan for bikeshare locations, as well as for marketing and operating a system.

If the project goes forward, Cleco has the right of first refusal for advertising on the bikes. Cleco could be the only brand displayed on electric bikes, which are easier to ride for some people and useful for longer commutes, and a partial sponsor of the rest of the system, Schouest says.

Brister is convinced St. Tammany will have bikeshare soon enough. “I’m very, very excited about it. It’s going to be amazing.” •



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SPARK



CURRENTS . *second quarter twenty-eighteen*



River replica

A model of the Mississippi could save coastal Louisiana. And it's cool.

By Sara Bongiorno | Photos by LSU Strategic Communications

A quick take on the new \$18 million Lower Mississippi River Model at the LSU Center for River Studies: It's spectacularly beautiful, weighs as much as a loaded Boeing 737 jet and is of existential importance in rebuilding and sustaining Louisiana's eroding coast.

The model captures the exact parameters of a 14,000-square-mile slice of southeast Louisiana, including 179 river miles from Donaldsonville to the Gulf of Mexico.

It is fittingly big: 90 by 120 square feet of bright white, high-density foam with a carved-out river curling at an angle across it.

The model's primary function is research that, in effect, allows LSU scientists and peers to see the future as it relates to the damaged coast.

Controlled experiments mimic the movement of water and sediment to display the river's response to land-building diversions over five, 10 or even 100 years. Tiny flag-like sensors line the edge of the model's simulated waterway, their 18 points correlating with real-world sensors used by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to measure the river's rise and fall.

Final calibrations this spring showed excellent results when measured against Corps water-level data.

One hour of model time translates into one year of river flow, meaning scientists collect a century's worth of land-building data on a specific sediment diversion scenario when they run the model for 100 hours.

Researchers can alter parameters to show what happens if sea-level rise accelerates, if two diversions are run at once or how reconnecting the river to marshland impacts the depth of the Lower Mississippi, where the Corps spends millions a year on dredging.

The science is paramount, but it's not the model's only mission. It is a one-of-a-kind educational tool for everyone from schoolchildren to politicians on the role of sediment diversion in saving a delta built by sediment in the first place.

The Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority's (CPRA) 50-year plan to save the coast will require at least \$50 billion to execute. The river model, funded by the agency, will help to sustain public and political will to carry out an endeavor without precedent.

"It gives us a way to clearly communicate what's at stake, why sediment diversions are important and why we need to act now," says Clint Willson, the center's director. "It also showcases the ability of people in Louisiana, especially in Baton Rouge, to think boldly and work together on long-term solutions to land loss."

The model was about five years in the making and years long in planning. Experts in river and coastal science, civil engineering, wildlife preservation, museum display modeling, plastic foam and Vegas-style light shows had a hand in its creation. They played their roles from places as close as the LSU campus, New Orleans and Harahan and as far as Massachusetts and France.

How the model's titan parts and pieces came together is a story of its own.

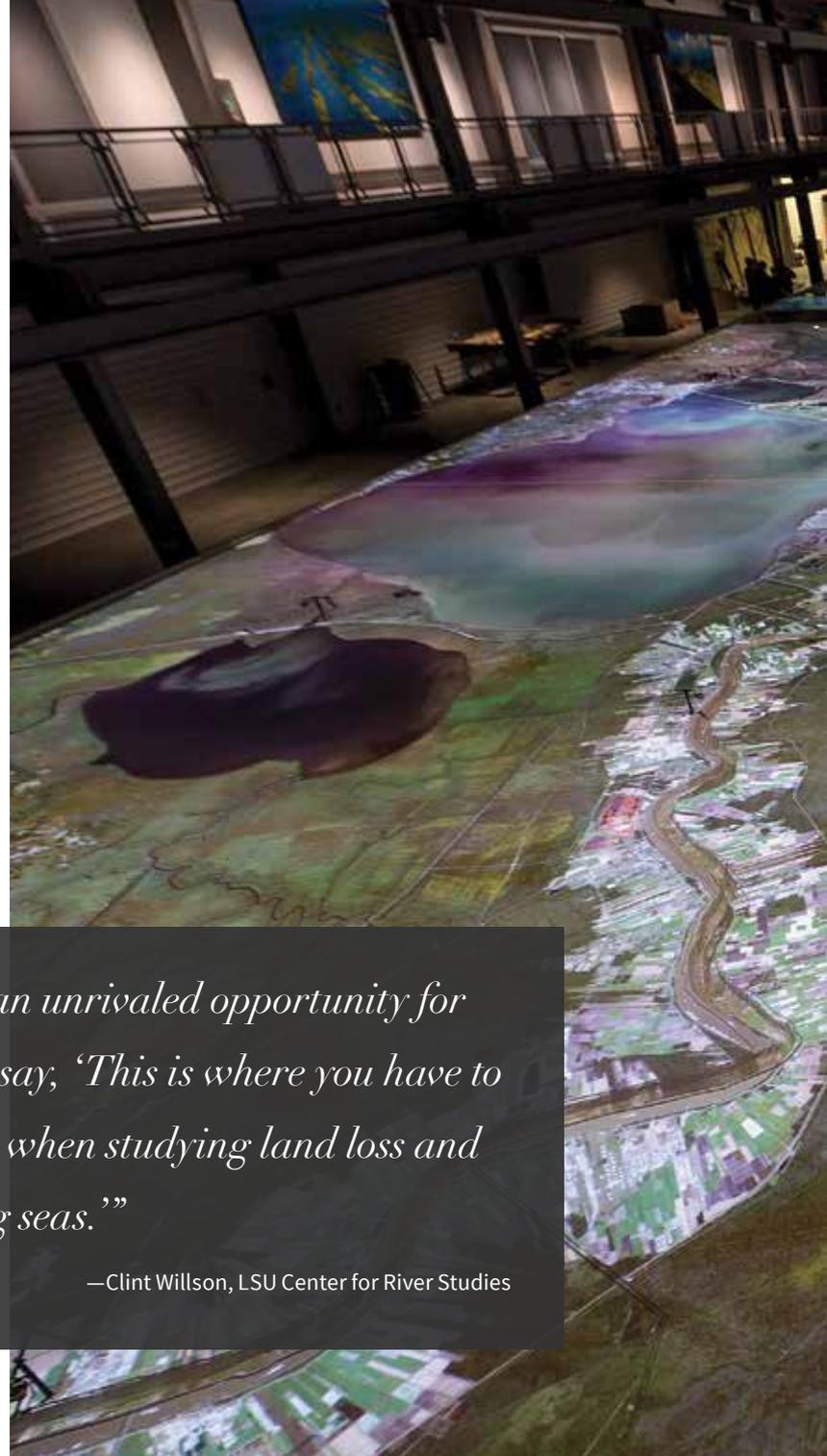
Take the 700-pound foam panels that form the body of the model—all 216 made in Tacoma, Washington. Describing them as foam seems a stretch: They feel like sandstone and are strong enough to walk on without denting, but engineers remove their shoes if they need to do that. A rolling steel bridge extends across the model so researchers can take measurements or clean the model after experiments. A Gentry crane is permanently installed in the display area if a tile needs to be lifted out of place and replaced.

Etching the river, river bottom and surrounding marshscape into the panels took years. A team of on-site builders from Massachusetts began routing the panels on the LSU campus in 2014. A massive computer-controlled router carved the 3-D curls of the river and surrounding topography into the waterproof foam using digital files from 20 different sources, including aerial footage and maps.

It took the router 18 to 24 hours to complete a single 5-by-10-by-1-foot panel.

The assembly team from Massachusetts eventually trucked the panels two at a time on a flatbed truck about a mile down River Road to the new center on The Water Campus, where they were lined up like giant dominoes. It took six months to put them in place atop a 20-inch foundation.

The model's black plastic "silt" isn't real sand but a plas-



"It's an unrivaled opportunity for us to say, 'This is where you have to come when studying land loss and rising seas.'"

—Clint Willson, LSU Center for River Studies

tic mixture made in France by a Grenoble model-making firm. "Real silt was too fine to accurately replicate the movement of riverbed sand in the model," says Project Manager Rudy Simoneaux. The plastic silt does a better job at simulating coarser 'bedload' sand that is critical in land formation.

It's worth noting that when operators describe it as being a "moveable bed model," they aren't talking about the model's moveable-but-very-heavy panels but about the riverbed itself. The river moved its bed of sand downriver to build up the delta



Twenty projectors show cities, the river and streams on the model, which makes it easier for visitors to understand the impact of coastal restoration.

Rudy Simoneaux, engineer manager for the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, uses the river model to find the best places to build barrier islands.



until the Mississippi was sealed off by levees after the 1927 flood.

The 20 high-resolution digital projectors beam down on the model and provide a Vegas-style connection. They were made by a Canadian firm that makes projectors for the NBA Cleveland Cavaliers' pre-game show and digital light shows at sports arenas, hotels and entertainment venues from Dubai to China.

The projectors are essential to the model's role as an educational tool. They combine animation, aerial photography and other coastal imagery to illuminate the big, white model with familiar landmarks, including the City of New Orleans, that give visitors a sense of place, Simoneaux says.

They also allow viewers to speed forward and backward through time to show where land has dissolved into open water and where restoration is already at work. They also project land gains in the years ahead.

An elevated observation deck that encircles the model was likewise designed to help visitors quickly grasp the model and what it shows. "People would not understand what they were looking at without them," Simoneaux says. "This is a working hydraulic lab, but we want visitors to understand what they see."

This is not LSU's or the state's first foray into physical modeling of the river. The university and CPRA ran experiments on a French-made model from 2002 to 2009. In time it began to rot and leak, but not before generating data that determined the best site of the planned \$1 billion mid-Barataria sediment diversion.

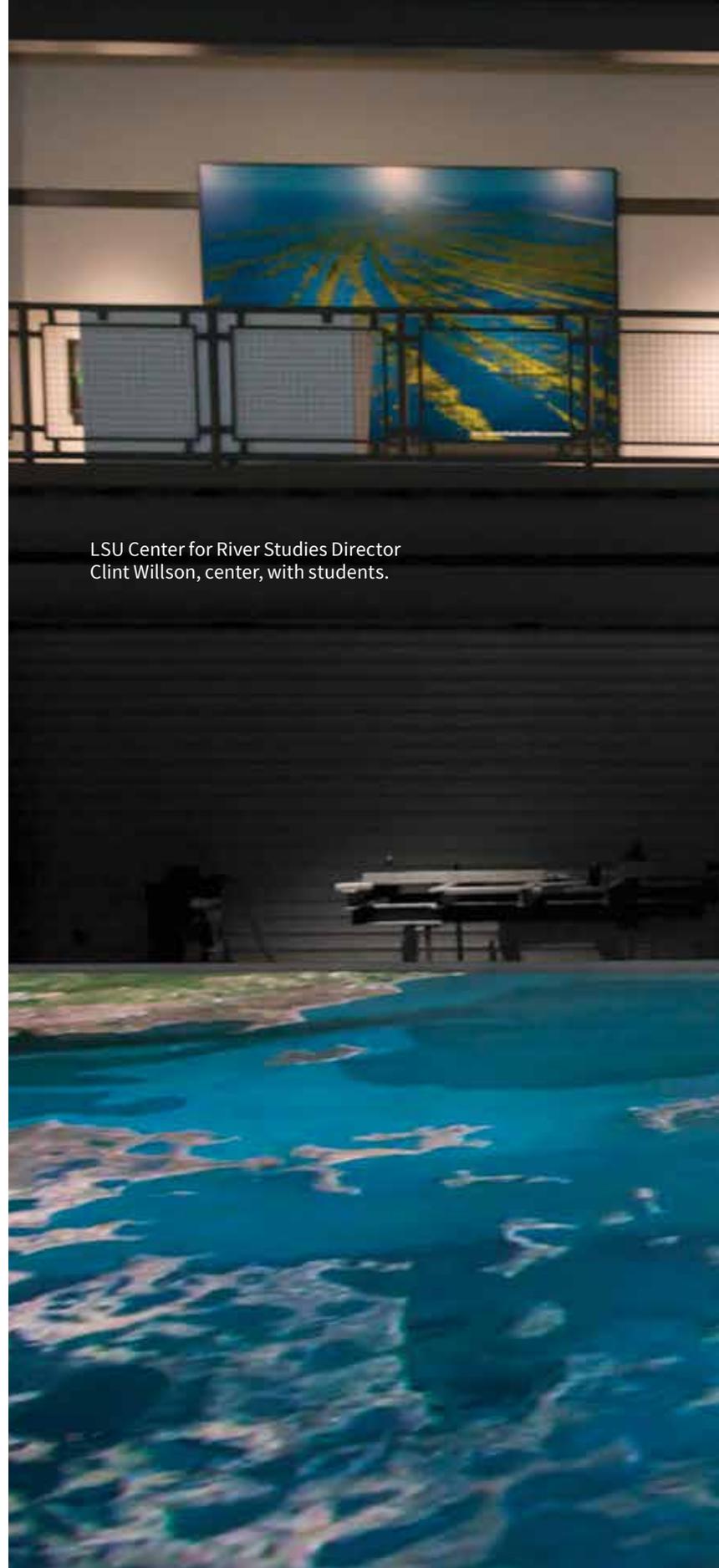
Building a physical model for long-term use is itself groundbreaking. Physical-modeling firms typically create and operate models for large projects—say a port or shipbuilding client—run experiments, collect data and then take the model apart, Simoneaux says.

LSU tasked its model-making partners with designing and building a tool tough enough to be used for many years.

"We were asking them to do something that they hadn't done before," Simoneaux said.

Willson cited another innovation of sorts tied to the model and its smaller predecessor. LSU has developed what he described as a "physical-modeling culture" in its study of coastal land loss, one that it imparts to graduate students and visitors working on coastal issues across the country and around the world.

"It's an unrivaled opportunity for us to say, 'This is where you have to come when studying land loss and rising seas,'" Willson says. "It's a chance to share what LSU is doing with people around the world confronting the same issues." •



LSU Center for River Studies Director Clint Willson, center, with students.



The LSU Center for River Studies is on The Water Campus, a development of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Commercial Properties Realty Trust. It's next door to the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. More at TheWaterCampus.org

SPARK BRIEFS



DETECTING CANCER

Scientists have developed an inexpensive blood test to spot some cancers early. Doctors at Johns Hopkins are trying the blood test on 50,000 retirement-age women with no history of cancer to determine how well it works. The test searches for combinations of eight cancer proteins, as well as 16 cancer-related genetic mutations in blood. It has been best at finding ovarian cancer, detecting it 98% of the time. The test also searches for breast cancer (33% success rate) and pancreatic cancer (70%). Cost is expected to start at \$500, which means the test could be administered routinely with physicals.

activate
CONFERENCE



HACKING BREC Organizers of the Activate Conference challenged programmers to spin Baton Rouge government data into useful software. One group created a business intelligence interface for comparing yearly trends. Another made an app for reserving BREC facilities and organizing games, including inviting friends join in. A third wrote a chatbot that lets residents report blight and automatically boosts blight reports that go unaddressed. More at activateconf.com.



OIL TYCOONS GO SOLAR

Softbank and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed an agreement to build 200 gigawatts of solar power, enough to run 140 million homes. The \$200 billion project will start this year and be completed by 2030. It will create 100,000 jobs and let Saudi Arabia shift to renewables. The solar farm will be built in the Saudi desert. Switching to solar will let Saudi Arabia sell more of its oil to other countries.

JUICE IT UP Big tech is quietly investing in Ionic Materials. The company's battery uses a polymer that is stable, inexpensive to manufacture and produces 30% more energy than lithium ion batteries on the market. "That's why we humbly say this is pretty exciting," Mike Zimmerman, Ionic's founder tells Axios. Dyson and Samsung are lead investors in a \$65 million fundraising period. A battery that includes the polymer could be in cell phones within three years, then automobiles.





THEY ARE (NOT) OUT THERE

Astronomers were puzzled by unique fluctuations in light from a distant star. Some theorized that alien megastructures were causing the unusual dimming. But LSU's Tabettha Boyajian explained away that theory. An assistant professor in the Department of Physics & Astronomy, Boyajian and her team, with \$100,000 from a Kickstarter campaign, paid for the use of a telescope to observe the star for several months. They saw blue light dimming more than red, evidence that shifts were not caused by a planet or a megastructure. A megastructure would dim all wavelengths of light equally. Her theory: "Dust is most likely the reason why the star's light appears to dim and brighten."

REDUCING MURDERS Most gunshot victims die of blood loss. Technology developed for the military is saving them in some cities. A syringe named Xstat is loaded with tiny absorbent sponges. First responders inject the sponges to absorb blood and expand to seal wounds. During surgery, the sponges can be identified and removed because they are tagged to show up in X-rays. Xstat costs about \$90 per syringe.

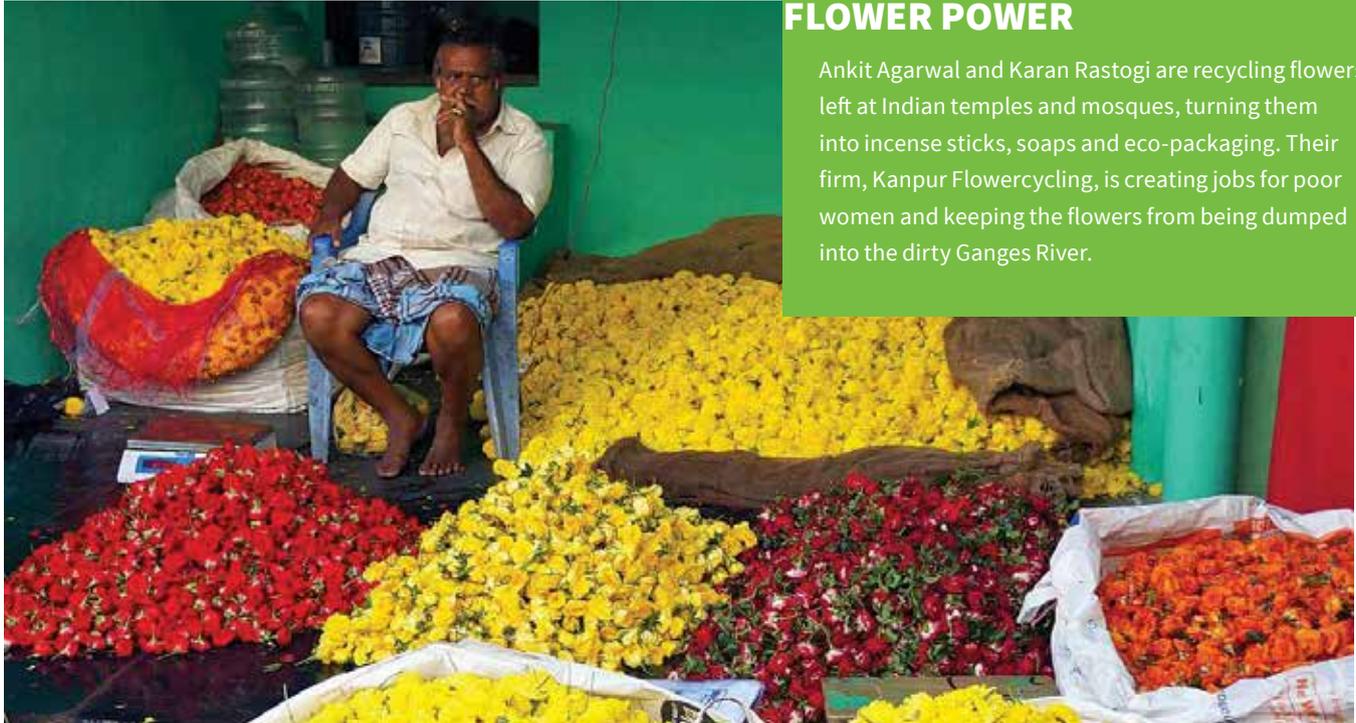


RIDE, BOUDREAUX, RIDE The levee path is rolling downriver. An East Baton Rouge Parish project will pave the levee from Farr Park near Brightside Drive to the L'Auberge Casino within a year. In the other direction, the parish is finishing a sidewalk that links the levee path from downtown to Hollywood Casino. Casino to casino, the path will be about 13.2 miles, the length of a half-marathon. Other projects envision levee-top bike paths from Baton Rouge to New Orleans.



ELECTRIC POWER

Israeli company Eviation is creating an electric plane for short trips. The company says tickets will be cheaper than driving. Called the Alice Commuter, the plane is expected in the skies in 2021. “There is a revolution happening in aviation, and it’s happening because of lightweight materials, energy density of batteries, the power of electric propulsion, and the computer power of managing this together,” Omer Bar-Yohay, co-founder and CEO of Eviation, says in a report. The plane has a range of 650 miles.



FLOWER POWER

Ankit Agarwal and Karan Rastogi are recycling flowers left at Indian temples and mosques, turning them into incense sticks, soaps and eco-packaging. Their firm, Kanpur Flowercycling, is creating jobs for poor women and keeping the flowers from being dumped into the dirty Ganges River.

CODA

[INSERT NAME HERE]

More than 40 generous people have purchased risers to support The Water Campus, a research campus for water issues that impact deltas in Louisiana and around the world. Made of stainless steel, the risers are attached to cypress wood that was pulled from the Mississippi River. The risers are part of an amphitheater that links the Center for Coastal and Deltaic Solutions with the Newton B. Thomas Landing, aka the old city dock. Risers are still available for \$5,500 by calling Elizabeth Hutchison at (225) 387-6126.



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DESIREE DALLAGIACOMO, POET



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MICHAEL FOSTER, JAZZ MUSICIAN



Invited to train at the Jim Henson Institute in Los Angeles alongside puppeteer ing partner Barton Gilley.

CLAY ACHEE, PUPPETEER



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JENNA VANGJEL, TRUMPET PLAYER

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The Arts Ambassadors Program recognizes those local artists who have been invited to perform, speak, or exhibit in their field at significant festivals, conference, and galleries around the nation and the world. The Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge is committed to recognizing the efforts of those professional artists who work to improve and make meaningful connections in the world through their art form.



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