Where do high school seniors of vanishing Cameron Parish go from here?
Nonprofits we rely on were able to feed and shelter the people of Louisiana, who showed yet again they know how to rebound after storms, ready to rebuild stronger and smarter.

With Ida came the sobering realization that we need to normalize disasters and recovery. They are here to stay and will be considered a regular part of what we do every year. We’ll continue our day-to-day work, of course, serving our fund donors and nonprofits as well as running projects for the civic good—all the while ready to respond to the needs of our neighbors when disaster strikes.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Epblett Reilly, Chair
The Baton Rouge Area Foundation accomplishes its mission in three ways:

1. We connect fund donors—philanthropists—to worthwhile projects and nonprofits. Over 55 years, our donors have granted more than $600 million across South Louisiana and the world.

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

3. We offer strategic consulting services to nonprofits.

Key Civic Leadership Projects

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

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

RESPONDING TO IDA

ONLY ONE HURRICANE struck Louisiana, but it was with a punishing force. Landing near Houma, Hurricane Ida hit the most populated parts of Louisiana. Winds gusting to 150 miles per hour toppled main power lines, leaving more than 1 million people in the dark in the middle of a heat wave.

At the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, we began watching for hurricanes in June, earlier than usual because warmer Gulf of Mexico waters are extending storm season. The foundation took several steps right away.

We raised more than $1.4 million for our main Disaster Relief and Recovery Fund, and millions more with community foundation partners across Southeast Louisiana for the Ida Response and Relief Fund.

As is customary after hurricanes, the Foundation met with nonprofits and government leaders to assess the need for relief supplies and manpower. Ida’s destruction made this more difficult than usual, as communications networks were quieted by power disruption and cell phone tower damage. Our staff review of damaged communities was also slower than usual, hamstrung by...
About two weeks after Ida, the Foundation started issuing grants to nonprofits that were working regionally, many of them providing food, shelter and other necessities to people who were without homes or power in the Houma-Thibodaux region, and communities on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain.

We thank people and businesses who donated to Hurricane Ida relief, as well as the many who aided people after the Category 4 storm.

We thank people and businesses who donated to Hurricane Ida relief, as well as the many who aided people after the Category 4 storm.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation contracted with Exceptional Lives to build the website and has an ongoing project to serve children and adults on the autism spectrum.

A WEB RESOURCE for Louisiana parents to find services for their children with disabilities has surpassed 1 million views. “We take pride in our work offering resources and support for Louisiana families caring for children with disabilities,” said Marisa Howard-Karp of Exceptional Lives. “Thank you to the families, caregivers and providers who use our resources and tools.”

How it works: Exceptional Lives provides custom, easy-to-understand information to help caregivers find appropriate, nearby services for their children with developmental disabilities. ExceptionalLives.org

### DISASTER RELIEF AND RECOVERY FUND GRANTS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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### LA. AUTISM RESOURCE REACHES MILESTONE

A WEB RESOURCE for Louisiana parents to find services for their children with disabilities has surpassed 1 million views. “We take pride in our work offering resources and support for Louisiana families caring for children with disabilities,” said Marisa Howard-Karp of Exceptional Lives. “Thank you to the families, caregivers and providers who use our resources and tools.”

How it works: Exceptional Lives provides custom, easy-to-understand information to help caregivers find appropriate, nearby services for their children with developmental disabilities. ExceptionalLives.org

### RECORD ENTRIES FOR GAINES BOOK AWARD

A RECORDED NUMBER of books have been nominated for the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence. An independent panel of judges will select the winner from 36 eligible submissions. The annual $15,000 book award will be presented to the winner in a ceremony at the Manship Theatre in January. The award is presented by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to an African American writer of fiction. The Foundation started the award to honor the late Mr. Gaines, a native of Oscar, Louisiana, who was among the greatest writers of his generation.

### TRAIN PROJECT ADVANCES

A CANADIAN RAILROAD has signaled a willingness to cooperate on passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

Canadian Pacific has won the hand of Kansas City Southern with a $27 billion proposed merger. If regulators approve the deal, CP will eventually own the preferred route for passenger service between Louisiana’s two largest cities.

The U.S. government requires railroads to allow passenger service on their lines, but railroads sometimes don’t play nice. That’s not the case for CP. It already has a friendly relationship with Amtrak, which has included Baton Rouge to New Orleans on its list for future service.

What’s next: The federal government must approve the merger, and that’s not certain because of competition worries. If approved, the combination will create the first direct railway linking Canada, the United States and Mexico.
READING ON PLANK ROAD

A library branch hidden off Plank Road could shift to the main thoroughfare. The East Baton Rouge Public Library system is thinking of moving the Delmont Gardens branch to a new building on Plank at Mohican Street. Residents were enthusiastic about the potential move at a public meeting.

What’s next:
More public meetings before the Library Board of Control considers the option to relocate. The system says a modern new branch on Plank would reduce disruption of service and be less expensive to maintain.

Bigger picture:
Open land at Plank and Mohican is owned by Build Baton Rouge, the redevelopment agency that is responsible for bringing commerce and housing back to the disinvested area. BBR’s master plan has reserved the land for a civic space. Its blueprint shows a food incubator across Plank; toward downtown, BBR will construct a building with housing, its offices and civic spaces. The area will be linked to Mid City and LSU with a Bus Rapid Transit line.

HEALTH CARE FOR THE FUTURE

Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University, known as FranU, started building St. Francis Hall, the $28 million, 75,000-square-foot centerpiece of its consolidated campus in the Baton Rouge Health District. Classrooms and offices will be located within the building.

Opened in 1923, FranU has grown from a school for nursing to a university that educates professionals in a broad array of high-demand fields. FranU has 1,200 students. It is affiliated with Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center.

HAPPY DOGS AND CATS

Companion Animal Alliance continues to adopt out more dogs and cats than ever before. The organization has cut the euthanasia rate by 90% since taking over the East Baton Rouge Parish animal shelter in 2012. It’s now finding families to take in 90% of homeless pets, compared to just 20% when parish government ran the shelter. CAA started as a civic project of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.
## Grants / 3rd Quarter 2021

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<tr>
<td>LSU Foundation - Department of Libraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSU Foundation - E.J. Ourso College of Business</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSU Foundation - Museum of Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSU Foundation - School of Music</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSU Foundation - College of the Coast and Environment</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSU Foundation - Department of Libraries</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The above list is not exhaustive and may not include all grants made by the Batson Rouge Area Foundation during the third quarter of 2021. For more information, visit the Foundation’s website at braf.org.
## GRANTS

- **Baton Rouge Area Foundation**

- **Operation Blessing International** $6,500
- **Ollie Steele Burden Manor Inc.** $400
- **NWEA** $250,000
- **Northwestern University** $1,000
- **Nicholls State University Foundation** $125,000
- **Nicholls State University** $500
- **New York University** $500
- **New Schools for New Orleans Inc.** $875,000
- **New Schools for Baton Rouge** $15,000
- **New Orleans Museum of Art** $10,000
- **New Orleans Career Center** $133,334
- **New Beginning Word Fellowship Evangelistic Ministry/Crossway New Beginnings** $500
- **New Orleans Center for Creative Arts** $133,334
- **New Orleans Museum of Art** $10,000
- **New Schools for Baton Rouge** $15,000
- **New Schools for New Orleans Inc.** $875,000
- **New York University** $500
- **Nicholas State University** $500
- **Nicholls State University Foundation** $125,000
- **Northeastern State University of Louisiana** $1,000
- **Northwestern University** $1,000
- **NWEA** $250,000
- **Off Moving Colors Productions** $100
- **Olle Steil Swedish Manor Inc.** $400
- **Operation Blessing International** $6,500
- **Opportunity Labs Foundation Inc.** $15,000
- **Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church** $43,470
- **Our Lady of Prompt Success School** $250
- **Our Lady of the Lake Foundation** $3,000
- **Pohara Institute** $111,111
- **Park County Environmental Council** $200
- **Partners in Health** $10,000
- **Patriot Center** $31,886
- **Patron's of the East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library** $100
- **PCBIP - STEM Magnet Academy of Pointe Coupee** $1,000
- **Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation** $1,500
- **Planned Parenthood of the Gulf Coast** $1,750
- **Pointe Coupee Parish Police Jury** $250
- **Pointe Coupee Parish School Board - Rognon Elementary School** $2,500
- **Pointe Coupee Private School System Inc.** $1,000
- **Policy Institute for the Children of Louisiana Inc.** $5,000
- **President and Fellows of Harvard College** $10,000
- **Propel America** $250,000
- **ProPublica Inc.** $2,500
- **Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana** $1,500
- **Rapides Parish School Board - Alexandria Middle Magnet School** $1,000
- **Rebuilding Together Baton Rouge Inc.** $6,274
- **Red Shoes Inc.** $16,200
- **Reliant Mission Inc.** $1,500
- **Reno Pop Warner Football League Association** $1,000
- **Reno-Sparks Pop Warner** $2,500
- **Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge** $133,422
- **Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge - Bishop Oil Works of Mercy Trust** $205
- **Roy Mann Youth Alternatives Inc.** $20,000
- **Russel Domingue Ministries Inc.** $3,000
- **Russel Simmons Ministries Inc.** $750
- **Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana** $3,000
- **Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response Center** $25,000
- **SIA Foundation** $200
- **Southern New Orleans Institute** $15,000
- **Southeastern Louisiana University** $7,750
- **Southern Garden Symposium** $900
- **Southern University and A&M College** $6,500
- **Southern University System Foundation** $1,000
- **St. Andrew Catholic Church** $1,500
- **St. Augustine Church** $1,083
- **St. Gaudens Catholic Church** $3,000
- **St. James Episcopal Church** $500
- **St. Jean Vianney Catholic Church** $15,200
- **St. John The Baptist Parish School System - Fifth Ward Elementary School** $1,000
- **St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church** $10,709
- **St. Joseph Cathedral** $2,000
- **St. Joseph the Worker Church** $717
- **St. Joseph's Academy** $500
- **St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Inc.** $717
- **St. Jude the Apostle Catholic School** $1,399
- **St. Luke's Episcopal Church** $208,675
- **St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church / St. Thomas Chapel** $12,500
- **St. Mary's Catholic School** $100
- **St. Paul's Holy Trinity Episcopal Church** $100
- **St. Philip Parish** $4,292
- **St. Sharbel Maronite Foundation Inc.** $1,000
- **St. Tammany Parish School Board - E. E. Lyon Elementary School** $1,000
- **St. Theresa of Avila Middle School** $7,429
- **St. Thomas Aquinas Regional Catholic High School** $16,694
- **Stude B. York Inc.** $1,000
- **Swarm Palace Productions Inc.** $200
- **Tank Proof Inc.** $2,500
- **Teach For America Inc. - South Louisiana** $10,000
- **Tennillebrook Parish School District - Acadian Elementary School** $1,000
- **Texas A&M University** $1,500
- **The Ascension Fund Inc.** $19,241
- **The Center for Mind-Body Medicine** $250,507
- **The Fairmont School Inc.** $5,000
- **The Clothing at 840** $13,998
- **The Greater New Orleans Foundation** $10,000
- **The Mental Health Association for Greater Baton Rouge** $100
- **The Original Richmond Library Restoration Society Inc.** $913
- **The Red Cross and Visitors of the University of Virginia** $350,000
- **The Roman Catholic Church of the Diocese of Houma - Thibodaux** $7,000
- **The Salvation Army - Baton Rouge** $55,250
- **The University of Texas at Austin** $1,500
- **The Writing Revolution Inc.** $12,500
- **Three O’Clock Project** $52,500
- **Thrive Foundation** $125,000
- **Trinity Episcopal Church - Baton Rouge** $6,500
- **Trinity Episcopal Church - New Orleans** $31,000
- **Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania** $2,000
- **Union for Reformed Judaism - Henry S. Jacobs Camp** $100
- **United Methodist Committee on Relief** $250
- **United States Holocaust Memorial Council** $100
- **University of Southeast Louisiana** $50,000
- **University of Houston** $1,000
- **University of Louisiana at Lafayette** $1,000
- **University of Louisiana at Monroe** $2,000
- **University Presbyterian Church** $30,250
- **Urban League of Louisiana** $30,000
- **US Bereavement Inc.** $50,000
- **Vermilion Parish School Board - Grouse Elementary School** $1,000
- **Volunteers in Public Schools Inc.** $50,600
- **Wadey Sims Foundation** $5,000
- **Wellsville College** $10,000
- **West Baton Rouge Foundation for Academic Excellence** $6,952
- **West Baton Rouge Parish School Board - Carencro K-8 School** $1,000
- **West Feliciana Education Foundation Inc.** $1,000
- **Wesley Parish School Board - Calhoun High School** $1,000
- **Women for Women International** $500
- **World Central Kitchen** $50,000
- **World Central Kitchen Incorporated** $2,500
- **WRKF Public Radio Inc.** $50,000
- **YMCA of the Capital Area** $5,000
- **YMCA of the Capital Area - A.C. Lewis Branch** $150
- **Young Leaders’ Academy of Baton Rouge** $100
- **Youth Oasis** $5,100
What do residents of East Baton Rouge want? They want the sheriff and the police department combined into one. They wish the government would do more to combat greenhouse gases. They want marijuana legalized for personal use. They support more representative government. For instance, they back an independent group drawing legislative districts instead of leaving it up to Louisiana lawmakers.

These are some of the findings of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation’s annual poll for our CityStats project, which measures the quality of life in the parish. LSU’s Public Policy Research Lab conducted the poll for the Foundation from June 28-Aug. 10. The survey of 549 residents is representative of the parish, and has an error margin of plus or minus 4.2%.

The poll uncovered some alarming opinions. Too many parents want their children to leave the parish, primarily to seek better opportunities elsewhere. A majority believe the parish is going in the wrong direction, and a record percentage believe Baton Rouge has a serious litter problem.

There is hope, too, in the poll. By an overwhelming number, they want pre-kindergarten and childcare for all children funded by the federal government. Worried about global warming, half of them say they are interested in buying an electric vehicle in the next decade.

In exchange, they want government to curb greenhouse emissions by offering more bike lanes and transit options, and by shifting tax incentives to renewable energy. Residents would also pay a fee to clean and maintain Baton Rouge waterways.

The Foundation will mail a copy of the full CityStats report to fund donors and members. The project is underwritten by the Newton B. Thomas Support Foundation, a supporting organization of the Foundation.
**LITTER AS A PROBLEM**
How would you rate litter as a problem in the parish, where 5 is a serious problem and 1 is not a problem at all?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GLOBAL WARMING**
Residents are more worried about global warming. They want government to do more to curb emissions, including offering more mobility options and shifting tax incentives to renewables. To do their part, more than half are considering buying an electric vehicle in the next decade.

**HOW IMPORTANT IS GLOBAL WARMING AS AN ISSUE TO YOU?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GREENHOUSE GAS REGULATIONS**
Because CityStats focused on the pandemic last year, we didn’t include this question. Before then, more than 70% wanted the government to do more to curb greenhouse gases. That number dropped to 52% in this year’s poll, perhaps because governments are doing more. As an example, Gov. John Bel Edwards has a climate task force and is encouraging renewables and carbon capture.

**SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT DO MORE TO REGULATE EMISSIONS THAT CAUSE GLOBAL WARMING?**

- More: 52%
- Somewhat: 29%
- Less: 14%
- No answer: 6%

**IS THE WEATHER BECOMING MORE EXTREME, LESS EXTREME, OR IS IT STAYING ABOUT THE SAME?**

- More extreme: 68%
- Less extreme: 1%
- Same: 28%
- No answer: 3%

**WHAT IS THE MAIN CAUSE FOR EXTREME WEATHER?**

- Natural variations: 5%
- Natural variations: 10%
- Global warming: 26%
- Both: 32%

**HOw GOVERNMENTS Should RESPOND TO GLOBAL WARMING**
What should local and state governments do to address global warming, natural disasters and flooding? The level of support for each proposal is below.

- **More biking, walking and mass transit options**
  - 77% Support
  - 18% Oppose
  - 5% No answer

- **Build a network of fast-charging stations for electric vehicles**
  - 59% Support
  - 34% Oppose
  - 7% No answer

- **Shift tax incentives to encourage jobs in renewable energy**
  - 73% Support
  - 20% Oppose
  - 7% No answer

- **End subsidies for flood insurance**
  - 43% Support
  - 40% Oppose
  - 17% No answer

- **Change zoning to encourage building denser communities to reduce vehicle trips**
  - 44% Support
  - 46% Oppose
  - 10% No answer

**SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT DO MORE TO REGULATE EMISSIONS THAT CAUSE GLOBAL WARMING?**

- 14% More
- 28% Less
- 52% About the same
- 7% No answer

**IS THE WEATHER BECOMING MORE EXTREME, LESS EXTREME, OR IS IT STAYING ABOUT THE SAME?**

- 7% More extreme
- 28% Less extreme
- 46% About the same
- 18% No answer

**WHAT IS THE MAIN CAUSE FOR EXTREME WEATHER?**

- 32% Global warming
- 5% Natural variations
- 5% Both
- 26% Natural variations
PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVED ACCESS TO CHILDCARE & PRE-K

PROPOSALS AND SUPPORT:

- Ensuring people who work in childcare earn a living wage: 89%
- Guaranteeing childcare assistance to low- and middle-income families based on household income: 82%
- Making universal, free childcare and pre-K available from birth to age 5: 64%

HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO CONSIDER BUYING OR LEASING AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE IN THE NEXT DECADE?

- Very: 24%
- Somewhat: 27%
- Not very: 17%
- Not at all: 30%
- No answer: 2%

EDUCATION

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Electric vehicles seem to be everywhere, and our survey indicates you'll see tens of thousands on local roads in a decade. In our poll of EBR, 5.5% said they own an electric or hybrid vehicle, such as a Prius. In a national Pew poll, 7% said they own an EV or hybrid. We wondered what's next.

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- Very: 27%
- Somewhat: 24%
- Not very: 17%
- Not at all: 30%
- No answer: 2%

MERGING BR POLICE & SHERIFF

Do you support or oppose combining the Baton Rouge Police Department and the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's office into one organization that serves all parts of the parish?

- Support: 57%
- Oppose: 32%
- No answer: 11%

A majority of Republicans (55%), Democrats (60%) and independents (54%) are for a merger.

REDISTRICTING

Do you support or oppose the creation of an independent commission in Louisiana for drawing voting districts?

- Support: 54%
- Oppose: 32%
- No answer: 14%

VOTE BY MAIL

Should the state of Louisiana allow any voter to vote by mail if they want to?

- Support: 65%
- Oppose: 32%
- No answer: 6%

Nine states have independent commissions draw up voting districts after the U.S. Census every 10 years. As in most other states, Louisiana lawmakers draw districts.

GOVERNMENT & CIVIC PARTICIPATION

FOR OR AGAINST INCREASING FEDERAL FUNDING OF CHILDCARE ASSISTANCE AND EXPANDING PRE-K

- Support: 81%
- Oppose: 14%
- Don't know: 5%

14% Oppose

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MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION

In 2020, the state of Louisiana decriminalized marijuana possession. No more jail time for possession of small amounts and the fine is only $100. A bill to legalize marijuana for personal use cleared a House committee but died on the House floor. A Republican sponsored the bill, and the issue is now under study, meaning it’s likely to pass in a few years. Meanwhile, our poll found a strong majority support legalization for personal use. Medical use is legal in Louisiana.

WHICH COMES CLOSER TO YOUR VIEW ABOUT LEGAL USES OF MARIJUANA BY ADULTS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>For Recreational &amp; Medical Use</th>
<th>For Medical Use Only</th>
<th>Against Legalization For Any Use</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For Recreational &amp; Medical Use</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Affiliation</th>
<th>For Recreational &amp; Medical Use</th>
<th>For Medical Use Only</th>
<th>Against Legalization For Any Use</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SUPPORT FOR LEGALIZATION FOR RECREATIONAL & MEDICAL USE BY AGE GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Support for Legalization for Recreational &amp; Medical Use</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>31%</td>
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</table>

Under the Baton Rouge Area Foundation’s new program, you can open a charitable account with us while keeping your own financial advisor. Your advisor manages all your funds, and you can make grants to nonprofits through the Foundation. Find out how the Foundation has simplified giving to the causes you care about. Please contact Edmund Giering at (225) 387-6126 or egiering@braf.org for more information.
District attorneys once plotted against the accused in the confines of this downtown building.

It’s a piece of art now. Beckoning light peeks from inside the new home of the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge.

Under the leadership of Renee Chatelain, the council has turned a dour building into a playful space for making music, dancing and dramas.

The council relocated from a former fire station on Laurel Street into the renovated space on St. Ferdinand during the late summer and early fall. Private donations paid for the $3 million renovation, including a $1 million gift from the Saurage family in name of Cary Saurage, among the most devoted supporters of local art. Baton Rouge Area Foundation fund donors contributed to this project as well.

The Cary Saurage Community Arts Center opens fully in January. Inside it are kilns, a music studio, a flexible black box theater, galleries and a room with a view of live oaks framing City Court.

The Baton Rouge Symphony, which will perform in the $12 million, renovated Performing Arts Theater a block away, has relocated to an open space in the building.

The most visible feature is on the roof: a deck for entertaining and celebrating local art.}

The Cary Saurage Community Arts Center opened at 233 St. Ferdinand St. in downtown. Ritter Hohe Architects redesigned the 12,000-square-foot building for the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge. The organization raised $3 million from philanthropists, including donors who have charitable funds at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

PHOTOS BY TIM MUELLER
Above: A glass extension was built for the Shell Art Gallery. Rotating works from local artists will be displayed in the soaring space.

Right: The Jan and Bill Grimes recording studio is connected to the black box theater. The theater can serve as studio space, while the recording studio is the engineering room.

Left: Michaelene Walsh custom ceramic objects are featured in the main lobby. They thank donors who contributed to the renovation.

Below: The Charles and Carole Lamar Artist Lounge is on the second floor. The center was designed to be flexible, with each area convertible to class space, a lounge place or a quiet place to write and reflect.
Above: On the third floor, the rooftop terrace is for outdoor meetings, receptions and creative lofing.

Top right: The Winifred and Kevin Reilly Art Studio provides space for studios and has two kilns.

Bottom right: The black box theater on the first floor is flexible. Concerts, dances and dramas can be held within.
A recording studio is attached.
iley Marks, 17, paused to get her bearings, trying to recall where exactly her tall lifeguard chair had stood overlooking the deep end of the public swimming pool.

“We’re not exactly sure where, but it was somewhere over here,” she said, gesturing across a featureless patch of sand and seashells. Already, long runners of grass had begun to creep across the bare ground from the pasture nearby. Before long, it will be hard to tell that there was ever a pool here at all.

Where do high school seniors of vanishing Cameron Parish go from here?

Riley Marks, 17, paused to get her bearings, trying to recall where exactly her tall lifeguard chair had stood overlooking the deep end of the public swimming pool.

“We’re not exactly sure where, but it was somewhere over here,” she said, gesturing across a featureless patch of sand and seashells. Already, long runners of grass had begun to creep across the bare ground from the pasture nearby. Before long, it will be hard to tell that there was ever a pool here at all.
But Riley and her friends, Jancy Lalande and Ceyanna Brown, both 17, retain vivid memories of the place that had once been a boisterous center of community life, especially for the young people of South Cameron Parish. As the head lifeguards, Riley and Jancy had spent many long afternoons keeping watch over their neighbors and teenaged friends splashing in the pool’s sparkling water.

There had been a concession stand here called the Tiki Hut, Jancy remembered, peddling popsicles and ice cream sandwiches to the families that would gather poolside on long summer evenings. She recalled that, in the pasture adjacent to the pool, a pair of horses would charge back and forth along the fence line, intensely curious about the raucous crowds of children playing in the water. The horses are gone, and an unearthly silence hovers over the place now.

Hurricane Laura struck Cameron Parish on August 27 of last year, followed by Hurricane Delta six weeks later. The little village of Creole took the full brunt of it. Nothing here was left standing, and the Creole Pool had been transformed into a filthy hole in the ground, jumbled with dangerous debris. It was clear that it couldn’t be salvaged, and the cherished community swimming pool was filled in with dump truck loads of sand from the nearby beach.

“We don’t have anywheres to hang out now,” Jancy said, standing on the storm-scoured slab where the Knights of Columbus Hall used to be. Situated between the pool and the road, the KC Hall was where locals would come to celebrate graduation parties, baby showers and the other mile-markers of ordinary life.

But little of life in Cameron Parish is ordinary anymore and residents have spent the last year grappling with the same kinds of questions that people in other coastal parishes are now contending with in the wake of Hurricane Ida. Chief among them, “Is there still a future for us here?”

Youthful defiance

At South Cameron High School, there are 18 students in the senior class, seven boys and nine girls. It is a big school, built to accommodate 500 students, but it feels mostly empty; today, there are only 205 enrolled there across grades K-12. Reconstruction and repairs are still ongoing.

On a Friday afternoon six weeks into their senior year, Riley, Jancy and Ceyanna gathered around a big table at the school with seven of their classmates. They unpacked and ate their

FOUNDATION FACT

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation has long been involved with preserving the Louisiana coast. After Katrina, the Foundation created The Water Institute of the Gulf, which provides water management advice to policymakers. With Commercial Properties Realty Trust, the Foundation is developing The Water Campus, a hub for coastal and inland water research in Baton Rouge.
With graduation on the horizon and, beyond that, the wider world of adult life, the question on the minds of these young people is, what comes next? The official motto of the Cameron Parish School System is “Building the future of Cameron Parish one student at a time.” What kind of future awaits them in a place that, increasingly, the grown-ups around them regard as uninhabitable?

For nearly eight years, T-Wayne Smith’s family owned a small seafood restaurant called Anchors Up, located a few miles down the road from the high school. Like most everything else, it was destroyed by Hurricane Laura. However, his parents didn’t give up on their family business; instead, they adapted.

Now Anchors Up is on wheels, operating as a food truck parked on the slab lunches, sharing stories about their lives since Laura upended everything a year earlier.

“Driving back down here was probably the worst feeling ever,” Riley said. All the familiar places that she and her friends knew were gone. Passionate about athletics, Riley said that the hardest part of all was seeing their school’s beautiful new gymnasium, built less than a year earlier, reduced to a pile of rubble. “I could cry right now, thinking about it.”

The hurricanes of 2020 had scattered the senior class across Texas and Louisiana. Some students bounced between homes for a while, staying with relatives and friends. Jancy and her classmates, Heaven and Brenlee, tried attending Bell City High School in Calcasieu Parish, but they were there for less than a month. “People would ask me, ‘Why didn’t you stay?’” Jancy said. “And I was like, ‘It’s a good environment there, but it wasn’t home.’”

Home is a much lonelier place now that so many of their storm-worn neighbors have packed up and moved away. “Down Little Chenier is where all my family was— cousins, aunts and uncles, grandparents,” Riley recalled. “Now, the only real family I have down here is my aunt and Heaven.”

“We were going to move too, but I begged my mom to stay,” Riley continued. “After Laura, I relocated to Grand Lake and I stayed there maybe a week because I cried every day to come back here. My mom finally said we wouldn’t leave so I could keep going to school here.”

Many of these students had been in class together since pre-K, but their connections to each other run even deeper than that. Just about everyone around the table was related to each other across generations of kinship dating back to the original founding families of Cameron Parish. “We’re all basically cousins,” Riley explained.

Coming back to South Cameron High School was not easy for them. Classes resumed there in December 2020, but little was like it used to be. “When we got back here to school, we were all like, ‘We can’t do this, Ms. Lindsey,’” Riley said, referring to SCHS’s principal, Lindsey Fontenot. “‘We just can’t do it.’”

For the first couple of weeks, the students walked the quiet hallways in shock. “We were just sad about everything. We would cry every day,” Jancy said. “But at least we were back here.”

They’re back, and not without struggle. But with graduation on the horizon and, beyond that, the wider world of adult life, the question on the minds of these young people is, what comes next?” The official motto of the Cameron Parish School System is “Building the future of Cameron Parish one student at a time.” What kind of future awaits them in a place that, increasingly, the grown-ups around them regard as uninhabitable?

Over the hazy horizon

For nearly eight years, T-Wayne Smith’s family owned a small seafood restaurant called Anchors Up, located a few miles down the road from the high school. Like most everything else, it was destroyed by Hurricane Laura. However, his parents didn’t give up on their family business; instead, they adapted.

Now Anchors Up is on wheels, operating as a food truck parked on the slab lunches, sharing stories about their lives since Laura upended everything a year earlier.

“Driving back down here was probably the worst feeling ever,” Riley said. All the familiar places that she and her friends knew were gone. Passionate about athletics, Riley said that the hardest part of all was seeing their school’s beautiful new gymnasium, built less than a year earlier, reduced to a pile of rubble. “I could cry right now, thinking about it.”

The hurricanes of 2020 had scattered the senior class across Texas and Louisiana. Some students bounced between homes for a while, staying with relatives and friends. Jancy and her classmates, Heaven and Brenlee, tried attending Bell City High School in Calcasieu Parish, but they were there for less than a month. “People would ask me, ‘Why didn’t you stay?’” Jancy said. “And I was like, ‘It’s a good environment there, but it wasn’t home.’”

Home is a much lonelier place now that so many of their storm-worn neighbors have packed up and moved away. “Down Little Chenier is where all my family was— cousins, aunts and uncles, grandparents,” Riley recalled. “Now, the only real family I have down here is my aunt and Heaven.”

“We were going to move too, but I begged my mom to stay,” Riley continued. “After Laura, I relocated to Grand Lake and I stayed there maybe a week because I cried every day to come back here. My mom finally said we wouldn’t leave so I could keep going to school here.”

Many of these students had been in class together since pre-K, but their connections to each other run even deeper than that. Just about everyone around the table was related to each other across generations of kinship dating back to the original founding families of Cameron Parish. “We’re all basically cousins,” Riley explained.

Coming back to South Cameron High School was not easy for them. Classes resumed there in December 2020, but little was like it used to be. “When we got back here to school, we were all like, ‘We can’t do this, Ms. Lindsey,’” Riley said, referring to SCHS’s principal, Lindsey Fontenot. “‘We just can’t do it.’”

For the first couple of weeks, the students walked the quiet hallways in shock. “We were just sad about everything. We would cry every day,” Jancy said. “But at least we were back here.”

They’re back, and not without struggle.
where the restaurant used to stand. With outdoor seating at folding tables, it’s one of the only places left where folks in Cameron Parish can still sit down together and eat. T-Wayne’s friend and housemate, Chase James, helps out at Anchors Up. It does a brisk business, selling plate lunches and po-boys to the yellow-vested workers at the nearby Cameron LNG plant. Some of the seniors from SCHS gathered there for lunch on Saturday. Standing in line for their order, the kids recognize Gatlin Welch, whom they knew from school. Gatlin had been a senior at SCHS four years earlier when they were freshmen. He was born and raised in Oak Grove, just a stone’s throw from the high school. When he graduated, he chose to stay, taking a job at Cameron LNG. But like so many people in Cameron Parish, he makes his living in other ways too— alligator farming, crabbing and taking visitors out in the marsh for airboat rides. Whatever it takes to get by in a place of narrowing opportunities.

“The hurricanes definitely put a hurt on us,” Gatlin concedes. “But the ones that did come back and get to stay, it just shows how much heart we have and how much we want to live down here,” he said proudly. “No matter what life throws at us, we’re going to come back stronger.”

Talk to young people in other parts of rural Louisiana and you’ll hear about the insatiable itch to escape the confines of small town life and chase down their dreams in big cities like Houston or Atlanta. Not the seniors at South Cameron High School. Like Gatlin, they know where home is—even if they’re not sure what kind of work they’ll find. One of the girls wants to study to become an RN and work in nearby Lake Charles. Another talked of becoming a psychologist or social worker because, recognizing the trauma she has experienced in her life, she believes that she can help others cope with their own. Still another hopes to go to cosmetology school and come back to open a beauty shop somewhere here in the area. Jancy Lalande knows what she wants to do too. She plans to study agriculture and ranch cattle, the way her family has done here since the days when Cameron Parish was first settled. After lunch at Anchors Up, she brought her friends to the barn where she keeps Drops, her Grand Champion prize-winning Braford bull. It’s a breed of beef cattle that combines the virtues of a red Hereford with the heft and weight of a Brahman, she explained.

Jancy started showing cattle in livestock shows in fourth grade through the 4-H Club, one of the main pastimes for kids at SCHS, along with basketball. Jancy even rode in rodeos for two years, she said.

She coaxed the gentle bull out of the barn on a lead and into the sunlight so her friends could get a better look at her pride and joy. The bull was sleek and clean, brushed and ready for a livestock show the next afternoon on Sunday. Jancy has kept Drops, so named for the

Above: South Cameron High School seniors, from left, Jancy Lalande, Cayanna Brown, Riley Marks, Chase James and Aaliyah Labobe dine at the Anchors Up Grill. Hurricane Laura destroyed the restaurant; the owners opened a food truck in the same spot.

Right: South Cameron High School senior Cayanna Brown cares for Miniature Zebus Casey Shadow, a 7-month-old calf, and Kenna. Brown plans to become a veterinarian and hopes to return to Cameron Parish.
teardrop markings under his eyes, for nearly two years since he was a calf. The enormous bull nuzzled her hand and affectionately pushed his body against hers, apparently unaware that he is no longer a baby.

“He’s fourteen hundred pounds now,” Jancy smiles. “And he’s only going to get bigger.”

Her friend Ceyanna Brown has plans to go to vet school so that she can come back to Cameron Parish and service the cattle industry, which has long been a mainstay of life along the coast. Like Jancy, Ceyanna was active in 4-H from an early age. She started out showing rabbits, which she still raises, but during one of the livestock shows she encountered a Zebus and immediately wanted some of her own.

“It took me about two years of begging my mom before she finally gave in and I got my first Zebu,” said Ceyanna. “I’m the first one in my family to show cattle.”

One of the smallest varieties of cattle in the world, the Zebu originated in India where they are regarded as a holy animal. Ceyanna’s prized cow, Kianna, is fully grown at only 400-lbs and is mother to a beautiful red calf, seven months old now and born no bigger than the family dog.

The frequent hurricanes mean having to move cattle to safety whenever the weather threatens. “It’s always a concern,” Ceyanna said, noting that her animals had to be evacuated ahead of Laura. “So you always have to have a plan.”

Senior year of high school is all about planning and preparing. That’s especially hard for students living in coastal Louisiana, though, where just surviving the challenges of the present make the future much harder to imagine. The kids at South Cameron High School have few places where they can gather with their peers to talk about the lives that lay ahead of them.

More and more, these friends find themselves at the beach, which is separated from their high school by a stretch of marsh a quarter of a mile wide. The school is raised on tall concrete pilings, high above the inward rush of storm surges when hurricanes come. From this lofty perch, the students can gaze out the windows to watch shrimp boats plying the Gulf. No longer congregating around the community pool for carefree days, these young men and women now look out uncertainly on much wider horizons.

There are fewer students like them now than there used to be, but that doesn’t shake their determination.

“Something like half our community has moved away,” Riley Marks said. “But this is still home. And it will always be home.”

— Gatlin Welch

Jancy Lalande hangs out with Drops, an 18-month-old Braford bull.
Forever SWLA
Storm-struck Lake Charles region embraces master planning to solidify its future

WHAT’S $17 BILLION? It’s Netflix’s entire content investment for 2021. Or the cost of Samsung’s advanced semiconductor plant in Central Texas.

For Southwest Louisiana, $17 billion is the cost of reclaiming home. That’s the estimated damages from a four-punch storm combination: Hurricane Laura in August 2020, Hurricane Delta in October 2020, a winter storm in February 2021, and flash floods in May 2021. The 300,000 people who live in and around Lake Charles are tough. Milestone hurricanes like Audrey (1957), Rita (2005), Ike (2008) and Laura have not stopped them. They are motivated to start anew. They’ll get help from hundreds of donations to the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana, including an anonymous donation in a plain envelope from New York of three dollar bills.

“That person, whoever they are and whatever motivated them to send their hard-earned money, will always be appreciated by the people of Southwest Louisiana,” says Sara McLeod Judson, president and CEO of the foundation. “It’s just so heart-warming to me, and that continues to drive us every day in our mission to be better than before: because people care.”

Another interesting donation after Laura found its way to the foundation. California philanthropist David and Angela Filo contributed $2.5 million to underwrite a road map for Southwest Louisiana’s future. David grew up in Moss Bluff before attending Stanford University, where he collaborated with Jerry Yang in the mid-1990s to create Yahoo!, the Internet’s first popular search engine. The Filos want the foundation to partner with regional leaders and residents to create a guiding master plan for Southwest Louisiana. It’s their wish that the blueprint include regional planning for housing, economic development, infrastructure and water management.

“Those who are affected most can create and implement the most lasting change in their communities,” said Angela Filo, expressing the couple’s hope for Southwest Louisiana.

In October 2021, the foundation selected a team led by Pittsburgh-based Urban Design Associates to develop the master plan over 12 months. The plan will set the stage for better living in Southwest Louisiana, equipping the region to retain residents and businesses — and attract new ones — over the long haul.

“This has been very much a team approach in Southwest Louisiana, and we certainly see that continuing as we plan for future generations,” Judson says.

The backdrop for the plan is complex. A deepened shipping channel and abundant natural gas have lured liquified natural gas titans to invest billions in the region, thereby helping to expand the area economy by 130% of its 2014 level within several years. Meanwhile, punishing storms and their tidal surge destroyed communities, even taking out homes that were elevated to guard against rising seas. What’s more, higher flood insurance rates are speeding up a retreat from the coast, particularly from the most vulnerable barrier islands.

Planners from UDA have all that and more to consider. But they won’t be starting with a blank page. Already completed is the 137-page Calcasieu Parish Long-Term Community Recovery Plan, which entailed hundreds of interviews with local stakeholders and recovery experts. The Calcasieu Parish Police Jury engaged Emergent Method, a Baton Rouge consultancy, to guide the process. Parish officials built on existing hazard mitigation plans, institutional knowledge and community input to identify six chief priorities: housing, critical infrastructure, the economy, community planning, community health, and natural and cultural assets.

“We definitely did not start from scratch,” says Alberto Galan, a Calcasieu Parish recovery coordinator. The parish plan focuses on rapid response over the next several years, he said, using supplemental federal disaster aid as the spur.

The foundation’s plan will address longer-term efforts to create more resilient coastal communities. Though chiefly focused on hardest-hit Calcasieu and Cameron parishes, Judson says the plan also will produce tool kits for adjacent Allen, Beauregard and Jefferson Davis parishes.

For both plans, rebuilding safe, affordable housing stock is critical. Half of Calcasieu’s homes were damaged by the hurricanes, with one in four left uninhabitable.

To the south in Cameron Parish, 90% of dwellings were damaged with about half of them destroyed, says Clair Haben Marceaux. She guided parish economic development as director of the Cameron Parish Port, Harbor & Terminal District.

“One of the most painful things I have ever seen as an adult is when someone who was born and raised here and loves this place, comes to the realization that they can’t live here anymore,” Marceaux says. “That’s been really hard for me to see.”

Her own family was paying $7,500 in yearly insurance costs for an 1,800-square-foot home obliterated in yearly insurance costs for an 1,800-square-foot home obliterated in yearly insurance costs for an 1,800-square-foot home obliterated in yearly insurance costs for an 1,800-square-foot home obliterated in yearly insurance costs for an 1,800-square-foot home obliterated in yearly insurance costs for an 1,800-square-foot home. They’re restoring a damaged home about 2 miles away.

“It’s not just a question for us to restore or rebuild,” she says. “It goes back to 90% of the world’s population living within 100 miles of a coastline. And, unfortunately, we are the ones who currently are most having to deal with that question.”

By late 2022, the Foundation-led master plan will marshal federal, state and local recovery resources with private sector strengths to envision a long-term home for all who want to live in Southwest Louisiana.

“I think there is a balance that can be struck between the public and private sectors, with less bureaucracy and more innovation; I think that’s important,” says Marceaux. “I see it as a great opportunity, through two master planning efforts, to really revitalize not only the way we live in Southwest Louisiana, but around the world, and look to the future of how we live with water.”

Adda Galan: “Getting secure water, secure broadband and secure electricity are very immediate needs in terms of effective long-term recovery. We’re fortunate to have a good relationship with the foundation, and we’ll be working with them hand-in-hand on their master plan.”

—Gary Perilloux
The YMCA of the Capital Area will open an early childhood education program at its A.C. Lewis branch in early 2022—a first for the YMCA in Baton Rouge. It’s a notable early step in a wide-ranging effort to expand the YMCA’s role in promoting community health through initiatives to fight hunger, build affordable housing and extend the reach and scope of wellness services for children and adults.

“We will start with early childhood education and go from there,” said Christian Engle, president and CEO. “We’re trying to widen understanding of what the YMCA can be.”

Potential projects under discussion include affordable housing that would be co-located with the YMCA so residents have ready access to everything from wellness services to after-school programs.

The nonprofit is exploring construction of a commercial kitchen to prepare and distribute food to children and others in the wake of anti-hunger partnerships that began during the pandemic.

It’s looking for ways to team with hospitals, health clinics, grocery stores, schools and others to form community hubs that might provide services from dentistry to fitness classes to childcare.

Meanwhile, the Y is also expanding its geographic reach. It began operations in Lake Charles and Hammond a year ago and is looking at potential new sites in Denham Springs and Gonzales.

“Our role is to be a conduit for good health. Our message is that we are who we need to be to support the community,” Engle said. “We are a community resource and a charitable organization, and our mission is to have the biggest impact we can on our communities.”

Central to the message: The YMCA is a lot more than the gym down the street. “It’s a component, but it’s not who we are,” Engle said.

Evolving for maximum impact is not just for the Y. Under Engle, the Y is going regional and adding new services in Baton Rouge.

BY SARA BONGIORNI | PHOTO BY TIM MUELLER

Under Christian Engle, the Y is going regional and adding new services in Baton Rouge

Meet Christian Engle
Age: 53
Hometown: Military kid, but I consider Long Beach, Mississippi, as my hometown.
Years with the Y: 31
Exercise regimen: I lift weights, run, bike ride, swim—5 or 6 days a week.
Most surprising thing about Baton Rouge: We didn’t know what to expect when moving here, and it is an underappreciated city. The culture, food and people are amazing.
Hobbies: I am an avid reader and attempt to play golf.
Favorite childhood hero: My father was a retired military vet and schoolteacher. He passed several years ago from Parkinson’s.
Favorite city visited so far: Paris

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BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION | braf.org
In step with those changes, the regional organization has expanded programming to support for Parkinson’s patients and to fight childhood obesity under Engle’s leadership. It has hired a registered dietician to bolster the impact of wellness and nutrition offerings at sites like its Howell Place branch in north Baton Rouge, where BREADA hosts a farmers market.

The pandemic created new community needs and the chance to respond to them. The Y teamed with the Baton Rouge Health District to open daycares and day camps for the children of health care workers and first responders after the pandemic closed schools in spring 2020.

It partnered with public schools to offer space for virtual learning, setting up socially distanced cardboard cubicles for more than 300 children at several branches when schools remained closed in late 2020. When a vaccine became available, its branches served as public vaccination sites.

The expansion into anti-hunger work involved partnerships with local nonprofits like the Three O’Clock Project, which provides after-school snacks and summer meals to children, to distribute and even warehouse food. The Y’s food insecurity efforts continue. During a recent week, the organization distributed about 200 boxes of produce through its branches.

“The pandemic gave us the chance to show what we can do for the community,” said Engle, who got his first job out of college with the YMCA of Santa Barbara and has been with the organization ever since, some 31 years. Engle wants Baton Rouge to think big when it comes to what it wants the Y to do next. He has gathered renderings of about 30 recent iterations of the YMCA in cities from Texas to Canada as real-world examples of what’s possible in Baton Rouge.

The YMCA of Betro in Calgary, Alberta, for instance, includes a 25,000-square-foot branch of the public library inside it. In New York, University of Rochester Medicine has partnered with the Y to co-locate medical clinics and fitness centers. The YMCA in Nashville last month announced a 60-story residential tower with a 100,000-square-foot Y.

At the University of Washington in Seattle, the campus recreation center is a YMCA that is also open to the public. In Colorado Springs, a local YMCA shares a site with an urgent care clinic and physician offices.

There are also real-world examples of YMCAs that combine affordable housing with programming from swim lessons and summer camps to support services for homeless veterans. The Gateway Family YMCA in Elizabeth, New Jersey, owns and operates affordable housing for families, transitional housing for homeless veterans and dormitories for single men and women that connect residents to addiction-recovery programs and job training.

Engle has personal understanding of YMCA housing initiatives. The Central Connecticut Coast YMCA, where he spent eight years before moving to Baton Rouge, owns shelters and affordable housing that make it Connecticut’s largest housing provider.

He sees no reason why community partnerships in Baton Rouge can’t create similar hubs of housing and services—or something entirely different. “In some communities, what’s needed might be a community theater, while in another it might be a fitness center or housing,” Engle said.

He adds that the local Y is positioned for impact: There is a location within 12 minutes of about 95% of the capital region’s population. “The idea is to link healthy opportunities, but conversations about what that will look like will be different in every community,” he said. “These conversations are happening now.”
The art of doctoring

The new home of a renowned residency program reflects its roots in the state’s charity hospitals

BY SARA BONGIORNI | PHOTOS BY TIM MUELLER

Louisiana State University’s internal medicine residency in Baton Rouge has had two homes in its first half-century. It began at Earl K. Long Hospital in the summer of 1971. The program moved in 2013 to the newly built Medical Education and Innovation Center near Our Lady of the Lake, its teaching hospital since Earl K. Long closed that year.

Over 50 years, the program has trained many of the region’s internal medicine physicians and built a reputation as the best program of its kind in the state and among the best in the nation. The residency regimen achieved that success in two places that could hardly be more different. Earl K. Long was rundown and antiquated years before its closure and subsequent demolition. The MEIC is open and light, a tranquil and inviting space where artwork and even trees on an outdoor teaching terrace celebrate the history of medicine.

Nevertheless, the center’s striking sense of place has roots in what happened inside the state-run hospital for the poor. The connection centers on an enduring culture of top-notch science and human-centered instruction that puts a premium on the humanity of patients and young doctors alike. Dr. George Karam, who directed the program for 30 years, believed in nurturing residents at a time when residency programs didn’t put stock in that. Residents were taught—and still are—to diagnose according to both possibility and probability. It’s an approach that prizes collegiality, mentoring and opportunities for humor—even happiness—and residents and medical students loved it from the start.

“Fourth-year medical students would fight for the chance to do the internal medicine program there,” said Dr. Leo Seoane, chief academic officer for Ochsner Health. “You knew they cared about you. It was powerful.”

Dr. Dean Lauret understands the approach from multiple perspectives. Two weeks into a rotation at Earl K. Long, the New Orleans native called his wife and suggested they move to Baton Rouge so he could do his residency there. Lauret never left. He spent three years as a resident, another as chief resident, and then joined the teaching faculty.

“The objective is to create critical thinkers who nurture their patients. I knew right away this is where I wanted to be,” said Lauret, who became program director two years ago when Karam
San Francisco, noted at the time that sor from the University of California, program prepared to transition from a focus about 10 years ago as the cine in a large, modern hospital became moved into the assistant director’s role.

Dr. Catherine Lucey, a visiting profes

Preserving the humanities in medi

“People may not be fully aware of how much medical education goes on here,” said Dr. Venkat Banda, program director of the Baton Rouge General Medical Center’s internal medicine residency program, which is affiliated with Tulane.

The best-known program—it celebrated 50 years in July—is LSU’s internal medicine residency, which began at Earl K. Long Hospital in 1971 with three residents. Dr. George Karam has been instrumental in helping it flourish.

The teaching hospital has been Our Lady of the Lake since the public hospital closed eight years ago.

The Baton Rouge branch of LSU’s New Orleans medical school also offers residencies in emergency medicine, psychiatry and obstetrics/gynecology. Medical students do clinical rotations in Baton Rouge at the Lake’s main hospital, Woman’s, and the Lake’s freestanding children’s hospital.

The Baton Rouge General established residencies in internal and family medicine in partnership with Tulane. It has trained about 1,200 residents since 1990.

People who come out of there look at medicine as a calling,” said Ed Silvey, Baton Rouge Clinic’s chief medical offi-

Among their recommendations: nurturing and expand-

Dr. Karam, longtime director of LSU’s internal medicine residency program, praises the ecumenical nature of regional medical training. “When you train people, they tend to stay, and the quantity and quality of your medical care improves. We’ve got young, bright, inquiring minds affiliated with health care in our community.”

—Sara Bongiorni

A CENTER FOR MEDICAL EDUCATION

BATON ROUGE HAS DEVELOPED into a busy training hub for residents and medical students in a host of medical specialties. Three leading universities—LSU, Tulane and Australia’s University of Queensland—offer residency programs or clinical rotations in partnership with Our Lady of the Lake, Baton Rouge General Medical Center and Ochsner Health.

Most training takes place within the 1,000-acre Baton Rouge Health District in the Essen-Bluebonnet-Perkins Road corridor that contains the region’s large hospitals.

“Baton Rouge is a great center for medical education,” said Dr. Leo Seoane, Ochsner’s chief academic officer.

Residencies hold particular importance to community health because 60% to 70% of residents practice medicine within 100 miles of where they train.

LSU’s internal medicine program has exceptional staying power. About 80% of its residents since 1993 have remained in the region.

The American College of Physicians describes residencies as a public good that also fosters medical innovation and research and speeds technological advances. Their importance wasn’t lost on a 1993 task force of regional government and health leaders studying ways to improve health and health care in Baton Rouge.

Baton Rouge and New Orleans. 
**SAY BYE TO THE SWIPE**

Mastercard may be the first payment network to phase out cards with magnetic stripes. Mastercards will be chip-only worldwide by 2029. In the first quarter of 2021, Mastercard saw 1 billion more contactless transactions compared to the same period in 2020.

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**ROomba for Roads**

Baton Rouge needs a few hundred of these street-sweeping robots by Enway. Says the company in a tweet: “When everybody’s workday is over, our self-driving sweeper’s shift begins. We enable fully autonomous cleaning, charging and dumping operations without human intervention.” Testing of the sweeper is underway in Singapore.

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**Quiet Airplanes**

DHL is the first company to order electric cargo planes from a Seattle company. It will add 12 Alice fully electric planes from Eviation to operate on routes of less than 500 miles, the range of the planes. Alice planes require 30 minutes or less to charge per hour of flighttime and are cheaper to maintain because electric engines have only a few moving parts.

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**Urban Cooling**

A joint report by McKinsey and city network C40 identifies 15 ways that urban areas around the world can adapt to climate risk. The report outlines threats Baton Rouge is already experiencing, including extreme heat and heavy rains.

Four recommendations for all cities: increase awareness through research and risk assessments, incorporate climate risk through city actions and policies like zoning and urban planning, set up early-warning systems, and enhance financing programs like climate insurance.

Recommendations for inland places like our own: plant trees near roads to deflect heat, build cool roofs and pavements, and construct nature-based areas for drainage.

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**Tracing Trash**

One man’s trash is another man’s data. With a federal grant, Tampa Bay Estuary Program is cataloging trash it gathers from water bodies to understand the point of origin. Tampa officials will appeal to businesses that are sources of the rubbish.

Local angle: The upstart Louisiana Stormwater Coalition has been advocating to clean and maintain local waterways. As in Tampa, trash washes into Baton Rouge waterways from urban drains. The coalition has installed a trash catcher on Bayou Fountain and is raising money to expand its efforts.

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**Pennington Goes Global**

Pennington Biomedical’s Steven Heymsfield and Justin C. Brown are on a team competing for millions through the Cancer Grand Challenges. They propose to study cachexia, a state in which cancer patients lose muscle mass. Eleven teams were shortlisted. Four will win up to $25 million each to pursue their ideas.

Also, a story about a Pennington study that upends conventional wisdom about metabolism was picked up by publications around the world. The study suggests human metabolism peaks much earlier and starts its inevitable decline later than you might think.

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**Number >**

Wind Catching Systems says can be produced by its radically different offshore wind turbine. One floating farm of 50 turbines could power 100,000 homes, five times more than the largest turbine in the world.

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**Spark Briefs**

**Currents | Fourth quarter 2021**

**Baton Rouge Area Foundation | braf.org**
Rain and sun are no match for outdoor art in Louisiana. The Martin Luther King Jr. sculpture is an example of how weather can be merciless here. Located near the entrance of city hall, time in the open-air had faded it so much that few remembered the original colors.

The Foundation collaborated with local government, nonprofits, businesses and civic-minded people to renew the sculpture, and celebrated restoration of the spirited orange and blue colors at an event in spring.

We realized more art must be reclaimed. Susie Anders, who restored the MLK monument, surveyed public art in Baton Rouge for the Foundation. She evaluated about 25 pieces and identified about 10 that must be restored within the next five years, including Frank Hayden’s Oliver Pollock pictured above. She also outlined plans for annual upkeep to lengthen the time needed before fuller restorations.

In September, the Foundation board approved a project to restore more public art. The civic projects staff will coordinate with Mayor Sharon Weston Broome’s office, the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge and the Downtown Development District to proceed.

We thank fund donors who have contributed to this project and all our members, whose annual donations underwrite all initiatives for civic good. You can join our members with a minimum gift of $200 at BRAF.org/membership.

ACTS OF RESTORATION

Rain and sun are no match for outdoor art in Louisiana. The Martin Luther King Jr. sculpture is an example of how weather can be merciless here. Located near the entrance of city hall, time in the open-air had faded it so much that few remembered the original colors.

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--- Mukul Verma

“My life after India began with the Arts Council”

Geeta Dave
Visual Artist

Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge provides opportunities to bring our community together through arts and cultural programming. Make an impact in your region by supporting the Arts Council during 225Gives this November 15th - 30th.

#ArtFormsCommunity with your help.

artsbr.org/225gives
Members of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation support all our civic projects. With them, the Foundation is saving and beautifying the University/City Park lakes and leading a movement to bring passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Our members get credit for helping us restore the Martin Luther King, Jr. monument, reducing the jail population by nearly half, and opening a counseling center that calms people who are in the throes of a crisis.

Memberships start at $200. Join us at BRAF.org/membership.