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CITYBUSINESS

Health Care Heroes 2008



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Congratulations to

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- 2008 CityBusiness Healthcare Hero
- Head, Southeastern Louisiana University School of Nursing, named the top nursing program in the state three times in the past six years by Louisiana Nurses Foundation
- Louisiana Nurses Foundation Nightingale Award "Nurse Educator of the Year - 2003"
- Recognized as an accomplished teacher and mentor to students



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BOB HAWLEY, JR.
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

In appreciation for all you have done to take Slidell Memorial Hospital to the top of the class in financial stability, technological advancements and in building a culture of compassion for our whole community, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

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commitment

Dr. Mark J. Peters
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Dr. Mark Peters' selfless dedication to the continued well-being of all the hospitals in our region exemplifies what can happen when a leader looks beyond and focuses on the greater good.



innovation

Dr. Michael Brothers
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Dr. Michael Brothers' innovative surgical techniques have grown from an abundant curiosity, tremendous surgical skill but most importantly, the desire to help his patients achieve the greatest possible outcomes as quickly as possible.



compassion

Debbie Schmitz, RN
Cancer Care Navigator

Working one-on-one with cancer patients and their families, Debbie Schmitz helps them through the most trying battle of their lives with a spirit of compassion, joy and empathy that is truly inspirational to her patients, their families and all who work with her.

As we celebrate our Healthcare Hero Honorees, we know they reflect the efforts of so many others.

Commitment, Innovation and Compassion.

You will find it throughout our hospital.



East Jefferson General Hospital

www.EJGH.org

Introduction

CityBusiness honors 56 Health Care Heroes



By **Christian Moises**
Associate Editor

THE AREA'S HEALTH care community has been on life support the past two and a half years.

Post-Hurricane Katrina problems — such as a lack of money, worker shortages, more severe health issues, increased patient loads and challenges recruiting to the area — has driven many health care workers away or made an already demanding field that much more intense for those who stayed.

CityBusiness' 2008 class of Health Care Heroes is varied in age, race, gender, ethnic origin, education and experience. But there's one common thread that brings them together — caring for the people of New Orleans.

The 56 honorees who make up the class have proven their commitment to the region based on their professional accomplishments and perseverance. Health Care Heroes once again was one of the most difficult selection processes CityBusiness has faced, as any health care worker who has remained in the area since the storm is deserving of the honor.

Divided among six categories — animal care, first responders, nursing, physicians, professionals and volunteers — these honorees are the life support of the post-Katrina Gulf Coast.

This year's five animal care heroes showed their commitment to patients who could not defend themselves or communicate when they needed help. Their dedication to the care of animals continues to be felt as the recovery continues.

The five first responders selected represent the best of health care's front line, including firefighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and police.

Ten nurses are honored this year for their dedication to providing care in the face of adversity, serving as a model of professionalism to their peers.

This year's 22 physician heroes have offered a struggling health care industry the expertise to continue providing care for the region. Despite seeing more patients and more serious health issues, they have shown their dedication to staying in the area to help their patients.

The 10 health care professionals honored this year continue to guide the industry back on the right track. They have contributed greatly to rebuilding and returning health care to the region as they fight to fill staff vacancies and seek reimbursement for uncompensated care post-Katrina.

This year's four volunteer honorees have devoted their time and specialized skills to help patients and clinic visitors feel more comfortable.

The 2008 honorees continue to help rebuild the city while rebuilding their own professional and personal lives. CityBusiness thanks each of them for their tireless efforts and the difference they are making throughout the region to bring life back to normal.

Congratulations to the Health Care Heroes Class of 2008. •



Action Heroes aren't just in the movies.

Real life emergencies require men and women of action.

Tulane Medical Center's distinguished medical staff battle at the forefront of medicine every day. It takes speed, courage, intelligence and skill to fight for the life of a critically ill person. Tulane's heroes, Dr. Norman McSwain and Bryan Dean, R.N. fight daily to protect the health of our community.

McSwain, trauma and critical care surgeon, is the official surgeon for the New Orleans Police Department. He donates his services to provide care for wounded police officers 24/7. A medical visionary, McSwain developed a pre-hospital trauma-life support course that has been used in 43 countries to train a half-million people in emergency procedures.

Bryan Dean, director of Tulane Medical Center's Emergency Room, toiled tirelessly post-Katrina to open a specialized pediatric emergency unit to meet the growing needs of the Greater New Orleans area. Dean and his E.R. team work closely with local Emergency Medical Services teams to reduce the time it takes to treat heart attack victims.

**Tulane Medical Center salutes its
Health Care Heroes, Dr. Norman
McSwain and Bryan Dean, R.N.**

**Tulane
Medical Center**

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1415 Tulane Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70112

LSU Health Sciences Center

Salutes our

Health Care Heroes



THOMAS

BROWN

BAZAN

VAN METER

RIGAMER

Geaux Tigers!



Health Care Heroes

Past honorees

2 0 0 7

ANIMAL CARE

Andrew E. Gutter
James M. Riopelle

FIRST RESPONDERS

Steven Brown
Michael Guillot

NURSING

Patricia Berryhill
Lorris J. Bouzigard
Jan Hebert
Ann Kallauner
Alice Craft Kerney
Patrice Kimball
Anna Kokes
Mary MacGregor
Evelyn Randolph
Wayne Rau
Lena Riordan
Joan Rooney
Jennifer Steel
Sally Tusa
Nathalie Walker
Cynthia Warren
Ray Yakelis

PHYSICIANS

Stephen Bardot
Lionel Bourgeois
Roland Bourgeois
Jay Brooks
Gerald Cohen
Joseph T. Crapanzano Jr.
Frank Culicchia
Karen DeSalvo
Raja Dhurandhar
Sander Florman
Juan Gershanik
Joseph Guarisco

Vicky Hebert
Kevin Jordan
Ronald J. Liuzza
Kevin R. Martinez
Richard Meyer
Paul Nathan
Steven Ross
Swati Shah
Charles Thomas
Najeeb Thomas
Gerald Vocke

PROFESSIONALS

James Spencer Campbell
Bruce W. Clement
D. Scott Crabtree
Virginia Davis
Les Hirsch
Lynn Hobbs-Green
Sarah Hoffpauir
Larry Hollier
Corey B. Marvel
William Pinsky
Patrick Quinlan
Warner Thomas
Basil Thoppil
Lynn Witherspoon
Richard E. Zuschlag

VOLUNTEERS

Cheron Brylski
John DeCamp
David Diaz
Barbara Hyland
Curtis Jacob
Lester W. Johnson
Salvador Paz
Rudy Sampey
Shirley Tuero

Congratulations!

We salute these individuals - the 2008 *Healthcare Heroes* selected for their work at West Jefferson Medical Center. We are pleased to acknowledge these team members honored with this prestigious distinction.



Mark Workman, MD
Physician



Bonnie Arton
Professional



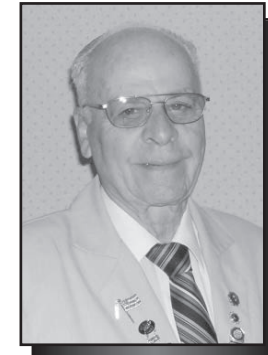
Ryan Brown, EMT-P
First Responder



Kerry Jeanice, RN
Nurse



Elsie Olivier
Volunteer



Philip Olivier
Volunteer

 **West Jefferson
Medical Center**
www.wjmc.org

Robin Beaulieu

Position: shelter director, Animal Rescue New Orleans

Age: 46

Family: three dogs

Education: bachelor's degree, University of New Orleans

ROBIN BEAULIEU RESCUED her first animal at the age of 9, learning how to feed a small, broken-jawed puppy through a feeding tube. Thirty-seven years later, Beaulieu has made rescuing animals a full-time job.

"I see myself as being a voice for the voiceless," said Beaulieu, who serves as the shelter director for Animal Rescue New Orleans.

Beaulieu oversees the shelter's daily operations, including intake and adoptions. The no-kill shelter in Elmwood is home to 40 dogs and 150 cats, all abandoned or neglected and all in need of permanent homes.

Finding homes for these animals can be challenging in the best of times, but in a city short on resources, it can be an insurmountable task.

"In a city that has suffered in all areas, there are so many resources that these animals need and I feel it's part of my mission to provide the things they need. We work with a lot of volunteer and outreach groups and just try to bring their plight to everyone's attention."

And it seems to be working. ARNO works with other no-



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

kill shelters throughout the country to help find permanent homes for dogs and cats. In 2007, ARNO was able to adopt 477 cats to no-kill rescues in other parts of the country.

Before joining ARNO, Beaulieu divided her time between working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's "Blue Roof" program and aggressive dogs.

Beaulieu also worked with the Louisiana SPCA to con-

duct water rescue of animals after Katrina before joining ARNO in February 2006. Beaulieu thinks she has found what she was meant to do and intends to help rescue animals for some time to come.

"This work has ignited a passion in me that I didn't know existed."•

— Abby Kral

Joe Dalgo Jr.

Position: doctor of veterinary medicine, Barataria Animal Hospital

Age: 45

Family: wife, Pam; and daughter, Tabitha, 14

Education: bachelor's degree in medical technology, University of Southwestern Louisiana; doctor of veterinary medicine, Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine

ANY MAGICIAN CAN pull a rabbit out of a hat, but very few can tell you how to take care of the rabbit and treat it when it gets sick.

Dr. Joseph Dalgo Jr., a veterinarian at Barataria Animal Hospital, is known as "Dr. Joe" among local schoolchildren for his entertaining and educational presentations, which combine magic and animal care.

Growing up in the Alexandria area, Dalgo started doing magic in the Cub Scouts when he was about 10 and kept it as a hobby.

"I later developed an act with my daughter to teach kids what veterinarians do and the instruments we use for pet care," Dalgo said.

Each summer Dalgo does a show at the Westbank Regional Library and gets requests for other shows as well.

One of his early challenges was communicating the knowledge he had to pet owners.

"It's the confidence factor. You need to

sound like you know what you're doing, and that comes with experience. You have to be a psychologist in some cases. The case may seem minor to you, but it's not to the client. Some owners feel they should have done more for their pet. You have to ease their mind and not let them beat themselves up."

Dalgo recalled a case where a Bullmastiff puppy came in with a swollen face.

"He had an abscessed tooth. We put him on antibiotics, and he seemed OK, but then the tooth developed a cyst and started to grow internally. He had to have surgery. It was quite unusual."

Of his 15-year career, Dalgo said the most rewarding part is educating clients who have brought their pet to his exam room.

"I tell them how to give their puppy or kitten the best possible life."•

— Lisa Bacques



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Kelly Kreider

Position: owner and veterinarian, Lake Animal Clinic

Age: 36

Family: husband, Scott Mayes; and daughter, Lilly, 17 months

Education: undergraduate, Louisiana State University; doctor of veterinary medicine, LSU School of Veterinary Medicine

IN THE PAST two years, Dr. Kelly Kreider and her staff at Lake Animal Clinic in Metairie have volunteered to treat more than 500 rescued dogs and cats who were displaced from their homes by Hurricane Katrina.

"It's the most rewarding thing we can do for the New Orleans community," said Kreider, who has owned Lake Animal Clinic since 2005. "We treat them for heartworms, spay and neuter them, and provide any medical treatment they may need, with the end-goal being that they can be healthy and fit for a good home."

The success stories are always the most memorable and heartwarming, she said.

"We had a pit bull who came in at 25 pounds and should have been 50 to 60 pounds. She was chained to a fence for two days without food and water. We revived her with fluids and food, and in four months she gained 35 pounds and had a clean bill of health. She was later placed in a home."

Kreider and her staff of two part-time veterinarians and eight employees volunteer mostly for Animal Rescue New Orleans, a post-Katrina grassroots organization formed in October 2005 to rescue and aid abandoned and homeless animals in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Kreider, who also has three rescued cats and two rescued dogs, has been a practicing veterinarian for 11 years. Negotiations to buy the clinic were stalled because of the storm, but everything worked out.

"I am most proud in my career of purchasing this clinic and contributing to the city and economy as I see fit, making the top veterinary care available to our customers and placing an emphasis on volunteer work for the community. People nowadays will do anything for their pets, always seeking the best health care because they are like their children in many cases."•

— Tommy Santora



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Giselle Moises

Position: founder and director, Companion Pet Adoption

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in history, University of New Orleans

FOR GISELLE MOISES, caring for pets is inextricably linked to caring for people.

"It's not just about helping animals. It's about helping people, too," said Moises, founder and director of Companion Pet Adoption, a nonprofit about to celebrate its 20th year of rescuing stray pets from south Louisiana streets and shelters.

From her first rescue in 1989, Moises was inspired to expand her efforts into an organization that has since been responsible for rescuing hundreds of pets primarily in the New Orleans area.

Moises, who works as a real estate agent in Lakeview, puts in countless hours and pays out of pocket for vet care for the Companion Pet Adoption.

The organization has no cages or "cells," as Moises puts it. Rather, she depends on a network of foster homes to care for the animals while Moises and two other volunteers, Elizabeth Weiner and

Holly Bourg-Brown, seek permanent homes. Moises also engages potential adopters in a thorough interview process before determining whether the pet and owner make a suitable match.

"I have a very strict screening process. A lot of people say I'm a little too hard, but you know what, I have to be the voice of the animal."

Moises also has the wellbeing of the pet owner in mind, often working closely to help the elderly and terminally ill. In particular, she recalls a young woman with leukemia and her dog. Moises helped find a new home for the dog and drove it from New Orleans to Memphis, Tenn., to its new family.

"I still think of that every day," said Moises, who still keeps in touch with the woman's family, years after her death. "I just want people to respect humans and animals alike. That's my bottom line."•

— Leah Bartos



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Liz Saylor

Position: veterinarian, Banfield: The Pet Hospital

Age: 45

Family: husband, Doug

Education: bachelor's degrees in animal science and agricultural education, Louisiana State University; doctor of veterinary medicine, LSU School of Veterinary Medicine

FOR MANY OF the pet owners who came to Dr. Liz Saylor for help after Hurricane Katrina, their furry family members were among the few things they had left to hold on to.

"I guess what was important to everybody during that time became more evident," Saylor said. "We saw people who had nothing at all, but they had their pets and they were coming to us, sometimes just to ensure their health overall, often with injuries and illnesses. To be able to help them was a big reminder that what we do is important in the community."

Saylor practices at the Banfield pet hospital in Slidell, part of a nationwide chain affiliated with PetSmart retail stores. She specializes in small animals, mainly dogs and cats and an occasional gerbil or iguana.

Saylor took a long and unusual route to becoming a veterinarian. After earning two

bachelor's degrees at Louisiana State University, she worked briefly as a science teacher in East Baton Rouge Parish and at Mandeville High School. She next worked in research at Tulane University for a few years and spent about seven years in medical equipment sales before returning to school to get her degree in veterinary medicine at age 34.

She credits her husband, Doug, as a major source of encouragement in pursuing her lifelong dream of becoming a vet.

"I had finally got the point where I realized that I did not want to be old someday looking back on my life and never have given it a chance. So I decided I was going to apply one time, and if I didn't get in, then I'd move on with my life and put it aside."

She did get in, and she calls her decision to go back for that degree one of the best she's ever made. •

— Sonya Stinson

photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

FIRST RESPONDER

Briana Briscoe

Position: field paramedic, Acadian Ambulance Service

Age: 37

Family: husband, Corey; and sons, Ryan, 7, twins Matthew and Dylan, 4

Education: state instructor for Bureau of Emergency Medical Services

AS AN 18-YEAR-OLD working in a coffee shop, St. Bernard Parish native Briana Briscoe had no particular career goals.

"The paramedics would come in and talk about their day," Briscoe said. "It sounded exciting. One of them gave me information about classes at Nunez (Community College). It was the EMT basic class."

Briscoe became a full-fledged paramedic after taking classes with Medic One, where she worked for 10 years, and is now employed at Acadian Ambulance Service, where she said her main fear was getting lost as she recalled her early days in training.

"I had to learn the city (New Orleans). I was also shy, and the job helped me to open up. I had to ask the patients questions to figure out what was wrong. I spend a lot of time talking to people. It's rewarding to see someone smile, and it's important to stay calm and not to show panic. Sometimes

what they have is obvious, other times it's a mystery. We check blood pressure and glucose levels, put on the monitor, check heart rate, listen to their lungs, take their pulse and check oxygen levels."

Briscoe broke her knee in February but returned to work in a cast and on crutches, filling in for a co-worker who was on maternity leave.

Briscoe is an adult adviser to Acadian's EMS Explorer Post, which teaches medical and leadership skills to high school students interested in becoming a paramedic. The students participate in community service projects, such as rebuilding playgrounds, and also go along to help the paramedics at public gatherings with standby first aid services. •

— Lisa Bacques



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

FIRST RESPONDER

Ryan Brown

Position: paramedic field supervisor, West Jefferson Medical Center
Age: 29
Family: wife, Ashley
Education: associate's degree, Delgado Community College

BEING A PARAMEDIC is in Ryan Brown's blood.

His father was a paramedic, and Brown followed in his father's footsteps, starting at age 18 as an emergency medical technician basic.

In the midst of the chaos after Hurricane Katrina, he received a call to treat a patient with a history of congestive heart failure. He treated the patient to the best of his ability but could not transport her to the hospital because it was at maximum capacity.

"Even though I couldn't take her with me, she was still very thankful and offered me some of her limited supply of water," said Brown, adding that he declined the water. "It still felt great to know that despite the situation some patients were in, they were very appreciative of what we could do for them."

Even outside of events such as Katrina, a paramedic's job is never dull.

Brown recently received a call to assist a suicidal woman. He arrived in time to see her dash across River Road and up the levee when she jumped into the Mississippi River and began to be taken away by the current.



photo by Frank Aymanni

After calling the fire department and Coast Guard, Brown chased her for roughly a quarter of a mile before the woman started to go under. Knowing he had to act immediately, Brown dived into the river and swam her back to shore.

Brown's desire to help people is not limited to his paramedic work. He's also worked as a volunteer firefight-

er with the Luling Fire Department for 10 years and is a hazardous materials technician. But being a paramedic is his calling.

"It's more than just a job; it's a commitment. I'm committed to this field and I'm committed to this city." •

— Fritz Esker

FIRST RESPONDER

Juliette Saussy

Position: Emergency Medical Services director, city of New Orleans; medical director, New Orleans Fire Department; chief medical officer, Office of Homeland Security and Public Safety; and assistant clinical professor of medicine; Louisiana State University Emergency Medicine at Charity Hospital
Age: 43

Family: divorced; daughters, Katherine, 17, Sarah, 14, Elizabeth, 14

Education: bachelor's degree in sociology, Tulane University; doctor of medicine, LSU School of Medicine

DAYS AFTER Hurricane Katrina, Dr. Juliette Saussy found herself in the midst of the most meaningful health care operation she has ever come across in her Emergency Medical Services career.

As director of the city of New Orleans' EMS department, Saussy helped the Army evacuate about 21,000 New Orleans residents in a span of eight hours from the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center to various places nationwide so they could receive proper health care after Katrina.

"It's the most proud moment of my career for what our EMS team was able to handle and how they performed during the most trying and heartbreaking times I have ever seen," Saussy said. "I remember a little old lady who asked us to help somebody else out before we helped her, then we came back for the lady, and she was clapping because she was so appreciative."

"Those were the most gracious people I have ever met on the job. It made what we were doing mean so much."

Saussy has been a paramedic and board-certified emergency medicine physician with the city's EMS department for 18 years. In 2004, she took over as the department's director and medical director. Her administrative position, in which she is responsible for 100 workers, calls for less field work, but she still tries to get out in the field as much as she can.

The 43-year-old said that task has become tougher, since August, when Saussy was diagnosed with uterine cancer. She began chemotherapy in January of this year.

"I am working as hard as ever to continue to make our unit one of the best in the nation, and my treatments are going well to help me continue that push." •

— Tommy Santora



photo by Tracee Morris Schaefer

FIRST RESPONDER

Cecile Watters Tebo

Position: crisis unit administrator, New Orleans Police Department
Age: 48

Family: husband, Balad; and children, Will, 18, Chris, 14, Alex, 12

Education: bachelor's degree in human development, Mount Vernon College; master's degree in social work, licensed clinical social worker, Tulane University

THE MURDER OF New Orleans police officer Nicola Cotton — reportedly by a man suffering from schizophrenia — shook the entire city, but for Cecile Watters Tebo, the incident hit particularly close to home.

Tebo, who is the administrator of the New Orleans Police Department's Crisis Unit, spends her days dealing with the city's mentally ill, working to prevent mental illness cases from developing into criminal cases.

For Tebo, Cotton's murder epitomizes New Orleans' mental health crisis, where many people — particularly those who are uninsured — receive mental health care only upon incarceration.

"Bernel Johnson, who killed our officer, his family had been trying for 19 years (to get treatment.) He now has a safe, secure place and is medicated every day," Tebo said. "But he had to kill this precious, beautiful, wonderful police officer; he had to kill her for him to get what he needed. That has got to stop."



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

About 355 people with mental illness are incarcerated in Orleans Parish Prison, said Tebo, adding that relying on the criminal justice system to take care of the city's mentally ill is inappropriate and ineffective.

"Mental illness is a medical disorder, and for whatever reason, it is not being given the same respect as other medical illnesses. So I became this big voice and this big advocate for people with mental illness, because often they don't have a voice."

Though Tebo primarily works with people suffering with

chronic mental illness, she said mental wellbeing is a concern for the entire post-Hurricane Katrina population. Tebo, who dealt with her own depression after the storm, said coping with mental illness is particularly tricky for those with no prior mental health history.

"That's not necessarily the group that I'm picking up until it gets chronic. So my thing is, don't let it get chronic, because, guess what, your resources are limited."•

— Leah Bartos

FIRST RESPONDER

Chris Wilt

Position: fireman, Naval Air Station-Belle Chasse; Motorist Assistance Patrol operator
Age: 37

Family: wife Paula; son Chase, 14; and stepson Christopher, 12

Education: Louisiana State University Fire and Emergency Training Institute

AS A LOUISIANA Motorist Assistance Patrol operator, Chris Wilt has pulled injured car accident victims from wreckage, moved stranded motorists off the road and cleaned up truckers' spills.

But one of the most touching incidents for him occurred when he simply changed a flat tire.

"An elderly female ... was broken down on the side of the road on (Interstate) 610," Wilt said. "She was all upset because she had her grandson with her and she was on her way to a birthday party. It touched me because ... she pulled out her last \$15, or whatever she had in her pocket, and she wanted me to have it."

Wilt politely refused the tip.

Being a MAP operator is a part-time job for Wilt. His main gig is as a firefighter for the Naval Air Station, and he believes he was destined for that role from the time he was a kid when he followed fire trucks on his bike.

In 1985, when he was in junior high school, Wilt joined the local Junior Fireman program, which he explained is "a recruiting tool ... like the military and ROTC," and by 18 he was fighting fires.

The Department of Transportation and Development's MAP program contracts many firefighters like Wilt, who with his partner patrols an area stretching from Loyola Avenue to Interstate 510.

"The reason why they hire off-duty firemen is because we're basically trained (in) everything that can happen: hazardous materials, car accidents."

The biggest hazard MAP operators face on the job is getting hit by passing drivers who might be impaired by alcohol or a variety of distractions.

"We are right next to the flow of traffic when we're on the side helping someone," Wilt said. "One of our guys is disabled because he was struck by a drunk driver."•

— Sonya Stinson



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

NURSE

Lillian Agnelly

Position: emergency department manager, Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans
Age: 52
Family: husband, Keith, 38; and children, Tara, 25, David, 19, Alexis, 12
Education: associate's degree in nursing, Bergen Community College, New Jersey

AS A YOUNG woman in search of a career, Lillian Agnelly took a job at a hospital just to see how she liked it.

"From the very beginning, I was enamored by watching experienced nurses care for people with such compassion," Agnelly said. "There's just built-in gratification in taking care of the sick."

After graduating from nursing school in 1978, Agnelly was recruited to work at Charity Hospital in New Orleans, where she served patients for nearly 28 years. Then Hurricane Katrina presented her with an entirely new challenge. Placed in a management position at Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans, she soon found herself building a makeshift emergency department in military tents on South Johnson Street.

"That was real nursing. People were being so unselfish in giving their time, and patients were really appreciative."

Back home at the University Hospital campus, re-named Louisiana State University Interim Hospital, Agnelly has led her staff through hard times, sometimes with limited

resources, to rebuild the hospital's facilities. A far cry from the street tents in 2005, she now oversees a 53-bed emergency department, 20-bed mental health unit and more than 200 staff, employees and educators.

"I loved doing patient care, but now I get the same satisfaction from working with employees who are so dedicated. I'm giving care through them."

Making rounds every morning, managing the flow of busy emergency rooms in close contact with 12 supervisors, physicians, nurses and other professionals, Agnelly exudes the same enthusiasm and drive that started her career, and her long path through New Orleans isn't likely to end soon.

Agnelly tried to leave several times during the past 30 years, but she has always returned to her patients and co-workers in the Crescent City.

"There's something about the community of people in the health care industry here. I love it here."•

— Thomas Leggett



photo by Frank Aymann

Lillian Agnelly, right, emergency department manager at the Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans, reviews a patient chart at University Hospital with registered nurse Angelle Lew.

NURSE

Sheri Berger

Position: pediatric nurse practitioner, Lakeview Regional Medical Center
Age: 29
Family: single
Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, University of Alabama; master's degree in nursing, Vanderbilt University

WHEN SHERI BERGER was a child, she knew she would be in the medical field.

"I had about seven or eight Cabbage Patch dolls," Berger said. "I would reuse my wraps from gymnastics and put bandages on them."

Now, as a pediatric nurse practitioner, she deals with real children, often in serious situations.

"When I had been working at Lakeview about three months, we had a mildly autistic teenage male come in with a stomach virus. This boy had localized pain in his right lower quadrant, which is a classic symptom of appendicitis. Many times special needs kids can be people pleasers. This boy was grimacing in pain and trying to hide it."

As it turned out, his appendix was about to rupture.

"I had just started developing a relationship with the collaborating physician, so it was a proud moment for me to diagnose the patient correctly."

Last summer Berger contacted a good friend from college, hoping to plan a girls' weekend. Instead, the friend persuaded Berger to join her for a monthlong stay in



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Tanzania, Africa, where they volunteered at a hospital treating HIV/AIDS patients. The experience was eye-opening.

"We take things for granted here. In Africa, when a patient was admitted, usually for malaria, they had to come up with money up front. The family was expected to provide food and stay with the patient. There were open

wards with six or seven patients in a room."

Berger made rounds with the physicians and meant to remain just an observer until she saw a nurse having trouble putting an IV in a child.

"She kept sticking him. I asked if I could try, and once they saw I could do it easily, I became the 'IV girl.'"•

— Lisa Bacques

Shane Brossette

Position: clinical manager of the post-anesthesia care unit, Lakeview Regional Medical Center

Age: 40

Family: wife, Michelle; and children, Erica, 8, Christopher, 5

Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans; master's degree in nursing, University of Southern Mississippi

SHANE BROSSETTE made many trips to Touro Infirmary when he was 11 years old to visit his grandfather who was dying from cancer.

"He was always in a lot of pain because it was real bad, but what I remember the most from that time was the doctors would come in and out with their charts and give you the cold, hard facts, which doctors are supposed to do. But the nurses there would do everything they could to help raise my grandfather's comfort level," Brossette said. "That was just embedded in me, and I just knew I eventually wanted to get in the health care field and become a nurse."

Brossette's childhood memory spurred what is now a 23-year health care and nursing career, as he's risen to the ranks of clinical manager of the post-anesthesia care unit at Lakeview Regional Medical Center, a position he has held for seven years.

Brossette enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1985 as a medic. After eight years in the military, Brossette was commissioned as a Navy nurse officer, which

means for one weekend out of every month, he provides medical care to airmen and sailors at military bases throughout the Southeast, including Belle Chasse Naval Air Station.

"We provide any wellness and care that our military may need. It's both a responsibility and honor to care for our heroes."

Brossette has been a clinical faculty instructor since 1998 at Southeastern Louisiana University, where he teaches classes twice a week.

Brossette also volunteers at Head Start centers and senior centers, provides health and wellness education at schools such as Cedarwood School in Mandeville and works with other nurses at the free Washington Parish Health Fair every October.

"I like giving back to the community any way I can, and I like being experienced enough and trusted enough to give back to the nursing profession through education and by making better future nurses and health care workers."•

— *Tommy Santora*



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Bryan Dean, director of operations in the emergency and nursing departments at Tulane Medical Center, examines William Schumacher.



photo by Frank Aymami

Bryan Dean

Position: director of operations, emergency department and nursing department, Tulane Medical Center

Age: 32

Family: wife, Natalie; and daughter, Sophia, 16 months

Education: associate's degree in nursing, University of Mobile; four classes away from bachelor's degree in nursing, Loyola University

ALTHOUGH IT WASN'T his first career choice, nursing is something that has been built into Bryan Dean's DNA.

"My mom was a nurse, and my grandmother was a nurse, so I guess it is something internal," Dean said. "I was supposed to be a physical therapist, but I changed majors after doing a ride along with EMTs."

Dean said that since moving to New Orleans in 2001, he has climbed the ladder. He began at Tulane Medical Center as an emergency room nurse, then later worked as an intensive care nurse before becoming clinical manager and director of emergency and nursing operations. He is responsible for the emergency rooms at Tulane's Uptown and Lakeside locations.

"It's a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week job. It is a tremendous level of responsibility, but it is something that I could never give up."

Dean said many of his memorable career moments took place in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when he had a hand in rebuilding and re-staffing Tulane's emergency room. He also helped open a walk-in clinic in the immediate days after the storm.

Dean said a perk of his job is the ability to "take his show on the road" — he was part of a group who, along with Volunteers of America, volunteered at the medical tent for French Quarter Fest, as well as the second weekend of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

One of the day-to-day challenges Dean faces at Tulane is patient satisfaction in the emergency room.

"No one likes to go to the ER, and when they do have to go, they don't want to have to wait. I spent most of my day dealing with ways to make the ER experience run fluidly."•

— *Robin Shannon*



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NURSE

Anthony DiGerolamo

Position: assistant administrator of nursing and chief clinical officer, Louisiana Specialty Hospital
Age: 32

Family: wife, Kippy; and daughter, Bella, 2

Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, Our Lady of Holy Cross College; master's degree in nursing, health systems management, Loyola University

WHEN HURRICANE Katrina cut off the Louisiana Specialty Hospital's access to clean water for dialysis, nurse Anthony DiGerolamo's creative resourcefulness saved lives.

"I got patients onto a Navy ship that had water and electricity, and they allowed us to set up clinics on the ship to dialyze patients," DiGerolamo said. "Otherwise they would have expired."

DiGerolamo has worked at the Louisiana Specialty Hospital since 2004, and he was named assistant administrator of nursing and chief clinical officer in late 2005. A long-term, acute care facility, the hospital is housed on the seventh floor of West Jefferson Medical Center.

In a job where the scope is wide-ranging — covering nursing, pharmacy, respiratory, rehab, lab, dietary and more — DiGerolamo supervises an estimated 180 to 200 people.

Much of his time is spent talking with staff physicians about how to improve patient out-

comes. For example, he'll review data with the infectious disease specialist, consult with the pharmacist on ways to move patients off their medications sooner and work with the surgeon who directs critical care to get patients well faster so they can go home. He is able to provide doctors with first-hand feedback on patients' progress.

"I try to make it a point to round on all of the patients every day, to talk with their families and just see what needs they may have and how we can help them."

The continuing shortage of nurses, particularly in intensive care and critical care, is the greatest challenge in DiGerolamo's line of work, he said. But the task of assembling his clinical staff has been one of the most gratifying aspects of his job.

"What I've really enjoyed over the last couple of years is building my team, really strategically picking the people that fit in this environment and can work well together."•

— Sonya Stinson

photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

NURSE

Kerry Jeanice

Position: clinical manager for emergency preparedness, West Jefferson Medical Center

Age: 51

Family: divorced; son, Jonathan, 16

Education: registered nurse, Baton Rouge General School of Nursing

KERRY JEANICE LEARNED a lot during Hurricane Katrina about being ready for a disaster. Under Jeanice's guidance, West Jefferson Medical Center's emergency department is more prepared than ever.

Generators have been moved to avoid potential flooding and supplies have been stockpiled to last the entire hospital for seven to 10 days. Water wells have been drilled so the hospital will have fresh water for 10 days. Jeanice is also a ham radio operator, which he can use as backup communication.

While Katrina provided many memorable stories, Jeanice is particularly proud of one that occurred during Hurricane Ivan. A family of six was stricken with carbon monoxide poisoning because they had been running a generator in their trailer. When people suffer from such poisoning, they are put in a hyperbaric chamber, which pressurizes oxygen to get a higher

delivery into the bloodstream.

Jeanice, who was the only qualified nurse there with hyperbaric training, said that experience was "the best I ever felt."

His work is not limited to hurricane preparedness. He traveled to Israel in 2007 to deliver a speech on disaster preparedness and to learn from Israeli experts on how to prepare for a terrorist attack.

Recently, West Jeff took part in a disaster drill that simulated a terrorist attack with nerve agents that would affect more children than adults, something he takes very seriously as a father.

"When in Israel, I saw video of last year's war and saw children trained to run for bomb shelters and one child who looked a lot like my son at age 10 trapped in a bomb shelter for 36 days. Let's all pray that this never comes to America but plan and train for the possibility."•

— Fritz Esker

photo by Frank Aymami



Brian Mahl

Position: registered nurse, Gulf South Joint Replacement Center at Touro Infirmary

Age: 44

Family: single

Education: associate's degree in allied health, Delgado Community College; nursing degree, Delgado-Charity School of Nursing

BRIAN MAHL IS DEVOTED not just to the care but also the well-being of patients treated at Touro Infirmary's Gulf South Joint Replacement Center.

"I enjoy the hands-on part of nursing," Mahl said. "It means a lot to me if I have been able to do something that in one way or another makes a difference in someone's stay here."

That dedication compliments the mission of the center itself, which offers every incoming patient an orientation program designed to answer all questions and put them at ease.

"They come in, meet the staff and know, after they have talked to everyone, exactly what is going to happen," Mahl said. "They learn about everything from dressing and catheters to tubing and IV pumps, and that knowledge creates a comfort zone in and of itself."

Dedicated as he is to his patients, Mahl has been particularly hard pressed since Katrina.

"It isn't just the typical issue of having a much larger population of new patients with numerous medical issues and no insurance coverage. It is also what happened to these patients as a result of the storm, how Katrina so dramatically impacted their lives.

"Many of our patients, for example, lost their homes and still don't have a permanent place to live. So we try very seriously with our case management and the different social workers to get such patients placed in some type of decent living environment and do everything we can think of to prevent them from ending up living out in the street and sleeping under a bridge."

Despite the additional challenges, Mahl said the typical joint replacement patient "can undergo surgery on a Monday and be discharged four days later. When people realize how easy the whole thing is, they usually say that they wish they had done it earlier."

It is easier because of medical advances, but also because of the post-op care, which is where Mahl comes in.

"The nursing care, the physical therapy, dressing changes, pain control — those are the things that make a huge difference in how quickly a patient recovers. And when someone tells me that I helped make that recovery more enjoyable, it means a lot to me." •

— Garry Boulard



photo by Frank Aymami

Brian Mahl, a registered nurse with the Gulf South Joint Replacement Center at Touro Infirmary, helps knee replacement patient Bernadette Harris prepare for lunch.

Joan Rooney

Position: director of education and staff development, sexual assault nurse examiners, Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans

Age: 40

Family: partner, Melody Pritchard; and son, Jude, 2

Education: associate's degree in nursing, Delgado Charity School of Nursing; bachelor's degree in communication and women's studies, Loyola University; master's degree in nursing, Loyola

WHEN DISCUSSING her work as an educator and director of staff development at Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans, Joan Rooney is reluctant to take all the credit.

"I'm working with a great team of employees," Rooney said. "They make it easy for me."

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Rooney was instrumental in re-establishing forensic nursing services for sexual assault survivors, starting the rebuilding process in makeshift tents in a parking lot. Since then, she's made patient literacy a key aspect of her training curriculum.

"It's a human rights issue, making sure patients understand what's happening to them. As health care providers, we have to honor that right."

Rooney worked as a sexual assault nurse for seven years, responding to calls at all hours, so she knows what her students will face on the

job. The biggest challenge, she said, is the tragic nature of this branch of health care.

"It's never good to be called for this kind of nursing, but it's positive to know the patient's going to get the best possible care so he or she can start the healing process. Nurses can experience secondary trauma, so we have to teach them to take care of themselves as well."

Rooney has contributed her expertise as a presenter and consultant at more than 20 seminars, workshops and other events throughout the southeast since 2005. In moving from hands-on nursing to educating new nurses, Rooney is aware of the impact she still has on patients. As new nurses learn from her in the classroom, they carry her experience with them into the line of duty.

"I'm not physically touching patients anymore, but I know I'm still touching them." •

— Thomas Leggett

photo by Frank Aymami



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NURSE

Debbie Schmitz

Position: cancer care navigator, East Jefferson General Hospital

Age: 56

Family: husband, Henry Schmitz Jr.; and children, Gerard, 30, Ramsey, 29

Education: bachelor's degree in arts education, St. Mary Dominican College; bachelor's degree in nursing, William Carey College School of Nursing

THE MOMENT A physician informs a patient they have been diagnosed with cancer is a life-changing experience. The patient may feel hopeless and lost, not knowing how they will get through the experience.

That's where Debbie Schmitz comes in.

Since 2002, Schmitz has worked with cancer patients and their families, recently accepting the position of Cancer Care Navigator at East Jefferson General Hospital. From the moment patients are diagnosed with cancer, Schmitz works with them, their families and support groups.

She coordinates their care, expediting access to all of the teams in EJGH's Oncology Services department. She helps by explaining tests and treatments, answering questions and simply listening as they express fear, concern and hope.

Schmitz's patients remember her long after they have finished their treatments. She has seen cancer survivors and their families in public, where many have given her a hug or just told her how much she helped them.

But it saddens Schmitz to see patients traveling the cancer journey alone, without family or friends. For those patients, she strives to fill a supporting role.

"I'm determined to make somebody's life a little bit happier and easier while they're going through this process," Schmitz said. "Whatever I can do to help facilitate comfort and peace and bring a smile to everybody. . . . I feel like my life here has partially been fulfilled."

Schmitz, who has been a nurse for 31 years, is able to sympathize. Her mother died of lung and colon cancer, her father had skin cancer, her sister had endometrial cancer, her aunt has survived breast cancer twice and been diagnosed with lung cancer, her cousin was diagnosed with breast cancer and her uncle was diagnosed with metastatic cancer.

These highly personal experiences with cancer have helped shape Schmitz's approach. "I have a much more personal invested interest in helping cancer patients."•

— Christopher Snizik

photo by Frank Aymami

NURSE

Stella Wright

Position: critical care, clinical nurse specialist, Touro Infirmary

Age: 54

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in biology, Tulane University; bachelor's degree in nursing, Louisiana State University Medical Center in New Orleans; master's degree in cardiovascular nursing, University of Alabama at Birmingham

AS A LONGTIME nurse and nurse trainer, Stella Wright thought she had encountered nearly every big-city public health problem imaginable, until Hurricane Katrina pushed through New Orleans and almost obliterated the city's hospital infrastructure.

"Katrina really presented to us a whole mosaic of health care issues that we have never seen before, and those issues were all serious and all needed to be addressed at the same time," said Wright, who besides her nursing duties at Touro Infirmary has taught a critical care course and assisted countless numbers of staff nurses through an Intensive Care Unit internship at Touro.

"The storm caused a great upheaval for us not only in terms of the patient load, which was to be expected, but also with our staffing. Because hundreds of our staff left because of the storm, we ended up with about 1,200 new employees coming in."

And with that many new people coming in, it is essentially like starting a new hospital, she said.

"Each person comes on board with a different experiential background and is accustomed to different processes and procedures, all of which is a great challenge when it comes to trying to create a cohesive functioning unit."

At the same time, Wright has been trying to address the needs of a larger patient population that came to Touro in the days and weeks after Katrina, when most of the city's other hospitals were closed.

"There has been a great concern about providing care for indigent patients. Many area hospitals have not been reimbursed for the services they are providing in this area and are currently appealing to Congress for help."

Meanwhile, Wright is determined to push on.

"A nurse is trained to care, and that's what you do, no matter what the problem is, or, as in the case of our ongoing response to Katrina-related issues, how long the problem lasts."•

— Garry Boulard



photo by Frank Aymami



photo by Frank Aymami

PHYSICIAN

Milton Anderson

Position: section head of child and adolescent psychiatry, Ochsner Medical Center

Age: 45

Education: bachelor's degree in English literature, Washington University; doctor of medicine, Washington University School of Medicine; internship and three-year residency in general psychiatry, Walter Reed Army Medical Center

WHILE WORKING IN Somalia during Operation Restore Hope, Milton Anderson saw things that would forever change his life. As a medical officer supporting the U.S. Marines, he performed medical surveillance of troops and did supportive functions when things went wrong.

Anderson was moved by some of the things troops were dealing with, but he was really affected by the children he saw growing up in a war-ravaged, lawless society.

"I came back (from Somalia) with emotional baggage that I worked through over the next six months and part of that was to try to participate in a solution by getting further training in child and adolescent society," Anderson said.

Anderson has been active in the community since coming to New Orleans in 1998 but has taken an especially hands-on role post-Katrina. With the help of a few other physicians, he began working with the University of New Orleans' charter schools to help students who had experienced trauma from the storm. Anderson helped devel-

op tools to identify students most at risk, educating school personnel and principals in how to manage the affected children and established a link between schools and community resources.

"We tried to develop a model for doing needs-based intervention rather than having a program that was pre-made and delivered to each place with a one-size-fits-all approach."

Growing up in a small town outside of Baltimore, Md., Anderson was always interested in becoming a physician after seeing the role a community doctor played in everyone's lives. Outside of work he enjoys cooking and gardening, which offers fast and concrete results, unlike his work with medicine, which comes gradually.

"My real objective is to have kids who are happy in school and want to go. Success can come naturally from an empathic environment but it can be a 10- to 20-year challenge."•

— Craig Guillot

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New Orleans
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Nicolas Bazan

Position: professor and director, Louisiana State University Neuroscience Center for Excellence

Age: 65

Family: wife, Haydee; and children, Patricia, 40, Andrea, 39, Nicolas III, 38, Hernan, 34, Maria, 29

Education: bachelor's degree in general humanities, College of Salpa, Argentina; doctor of medicine, Pucuman University Medical School, Argentina; post-graduate training, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and Harvard Medical School

AT THE START of the new millennium, Nicolas Bazan, an accomplished research neuroscientist, ventured outside the laboratory to become a business pioneer.

In 2000, Bazan founded St. Charles Pharmaceuticals, New Orleans' first pharmaceutical company, which focuses on developing and marketing pain medications. Working with a group of chemists in Spain, Bazan developed a new analgesic, or painkiller, that is non-addictive and non-toxic to the kidney and liver.

Bazan said his involvement in the pharmaceuticals business follows a new "translational" approach to research, "where you translate discoveries into medicines for the benefit and health of patients."

With the help of new funding from the National Institutes of Health, St. Charles Pharmaceuticals is regrouping from the sudden setback of Katrina. "The last two years have seen a tremendous slowdown in the development of the company," Bazan said.

A native of Argentina who has lived in New Orleans since 1981, Bazan is a full-time researcher,

although he also has a medical degree. His work has resulted in 19 patents for the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center.

"The reason I am in neuroscience is because I believe the greatest challenge for medicine today are the diseases that affect the brain — for example, Alzheimer's, stroke, epilepsy, depression, schizophrenia, Parkinson's disease."

Every one of these ailments, he said, is incurable.

"That's why I believe that the greatest challenge today is to understand the human brain and to be able to conquer brain diseases."

Bazan also is interested in diseases that cause blindness, such as macular degeneration and retinitis pigmentosa.

One of the most outstanding feats for Bazan and his research team was the 2004 discovery of a new molecule — which they dubbed Neuroprotectin D1 — that helps the brain defend itself against neurological diseases.

"It is an alarm that the brain turns on to counteract the diseases."•

— Sonya Stinson

photo by Traceie Morris Schaefer



Lisa Bazzett

Position: staff and teaching physician, gynecologic oncologist, Ochsner Medical Center

Age: 40

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in biology, University of Michigan; doctor of medicine and training in obstetric gynecology, Wayne State University; gynecologic oncology training, University of Louisville

MANY OUTSIDE THE health care profession believe physicians have depressing jobs because they spend so much time dealing with sickness and death.

As a gynecologic oncologist, Dr. Lisa Bazzett oversees the treatment of women with malignancies of the female reproductive organs, including cancers of the ovary, uterus, vagina and vulva. Dealing with cancer for a living isn't a downer but an exciting job for Bazzett.

"People think of it as a depressing field but to me it is really the opposite. I have an opportunity on a daily basis to meet amazing patients. People who are faced with a life-threatening illness tend to have a different outlook on life and it changes yours as well," Bazzett said.

The 40-year-old joined Ochsner in 2000 and is board certified in obstetrics and gynecologic oncology and is a fellow of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Bazzett is also on the board of directors of the New Orleans Medical

Mission Services and has gone on numerous medical missions to help perform charitable surgeries for patients in Africa and Latin America. She enjoys traveling and has at least five overseas trips planned throughout 2008.

"Every place you go has something so different to offer, but Zambia has been one of my most memorable trips. I worked with an orphanage and got the opportunity to meet a lot of people in the community while I was there."

Bazzett also takes a strong interest in public speaking on health-related topics and has given speeches and presentations at universities and health fairs. By speaking about preventative medicine, she hopes to prevent some patients from coming her way in the future.

"I think people need to know more about preventative medicine and try to avoid the cancers that I treat. I enjoy opportunities to let people know what the warning signs are."•

— Craig Guillot



photo by Frank Aymami

PHYSICIAN

Bryan Bertucci

Position: coroner, St. Bernard Parish

Age: 57

Family: wife, Ruth; children, Theresa, 28, Bryan, 26, Stephen, 23, Nicholas, 22, Matthew, 20; and grandchildren, Brandon, Camille-Claire, Elizabeth-Ruth

Education: bachelor's degree in biology, Springhill College; physician's assistant degree, University of Alabama; doctor of medicine, Louisiana State University School of Medicine

DR. BRYAN BERTUCCI recalls the week he spent caring for patients and evacuees in the parish jail-turned-emergency-hospital, treating everything from dehydration to heart failure, where a baby was born and hundreds of evacuees sought refuge.

St. Bernard Parish has come a long way since the 2005 hurricanes, he said. But Bertucci, the coroner of St. Bernard Parish, said medical resources in his community remain inadequate.

To solve that, he's fighting to open a full-size hospital in the parish, which he believes is essential to bringing back its displaced residents.

"I don't want to wear a white coat again until medicine is well. And medicine won't be well until we get a hospital," Bertucci said.

For now, Bertucci, who is also a family practice physician, operates out of the St. Bernard Health Center — a series of trailers in a Wal-Mart parking lot. Bertucci said that of about 150 doctors before

the storm, the clinic now has eight. He estimates they see 100 to 150 patients per day.

While Bertucci's efforts have exceeded his responsibilities of the elected coroner position, his dedication to improving the community's health is simply "the right thing to do."

"What made me stay was that I had a hospital background. How I got thrown into so many different roles, I have no idea."

Approaching the three-year Katrina anniversary, Bertucci is still in awe of the storm's continuing effects on his personal life.

"Sometimes I look in the mirror and I miss my old self. The skills that you learn are tremendous, but you do miss who you were. I mean, I kinda liked myself back then. I thought I was a nice guy."

He paused and added, "I still think I'm a nice guy, but it's different."•

— Leah Bartos

photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

PHYSICIAN

Daniel Bouchette

Position: family practice physician, Crescent City Physicians Inc. at Touro Infirmary

Age: 53

Family: wife, Louisianne; and children, Phyllis, 22, Daniel, 21, Tonya, 18

Education: medical degree, University of Haiti School of Medicine

WHEN DANIEL BOUCHETTE first established a practice in the Ninth Ward in the early 1990s, he felt an emotional attachment to a part of the city home to many residents living below the poverty line.

That's why he said it was easy for him to decide to return to the Bywater after Hurricane Katrina.

"I just felt that I had to get back and do what I could to help out," Bouchette said.

When Bouchette saw that his former St. Claude offices had been flooded, he set up shop at another Crescent City Physicians' office in Mid-City until his former workplace could be renovated.

"I really cannot imagine working anywhere else. I have known most of my patients for years and years and just feel a need to be there for them. A lot of my older patients were not

able to come back after the storm, while some of the younger ones moved to Texas and only returned to this area of the city when they were checking on their houses."

Bouchette, who is also a long-time family physician in the Army Reserves, has also provided free care at area health fairs for low-income residents.

"It has been a lot of work, mainly because of the shortage of other neighborhood physicians."

And it's been busy, as Bouchette has felt the impact of the shortage of physicians with the more than 50 percent increase in his daily patient load.

"Before Katrina I was seeing about 20 patients a day. Now it is more like 30 a day. So obviously there is very much a need."•

— Garry Boulard

photo by Frank Aymami



PHYSICIAN

Michael Brothers

Position: physician and cardiothoracic surgeon, East Jefferson General Hospital

Age: 58

Family: wife, Suzanne

Education: bachelor's degree in nuclear engineering, North Carolina State University; doctor of medicine, University of North Carolina; residency in cardiothoracic surgery, University of Texas Southwestern and Parkland Memorial Affiliated Hospitals

DESPITE CLOSING in on his fourth decade in private practice, Dr. Michael Brothers is not overly concerned about his eventual retirement.

Instead, he anticipates the future of video-assisted thoracic surgery, or VATS, and the evolving ways minimally invasive surgeries can help patients.

With the enthusiasm of a new medical student who is just beginning to realize his hands, eyes and mind can heal others, Brothers is breaking new ground with VATS.

"A patient coming to me today could ask, 'What's in it for me?'" Brothers said. "First of all, less pain. Secondly, your survival rate improves with this type of surgery. Also, you'll be able to go back to work sooner, to resume your life."

Brothers regularly uses video-assisted surgeries to perform muscle-sparing thoracotomies, entering the chest and performing delicate operations through tiny incisions. The days of cutting through chest muscles and spreading the ribs apart to make a hole big enough for the surgeon's hands and equipment are gone for most patients.

"The open conventional, legacy, classic thoracotomy is the most painful surgery a person can have. And I don't do those anymore, except rarely in select cases."

But for Brothers, the most exciting aspect of this emerging surgical technology is in cardiac arrhythmia surgery. Currently, he said, doctors have very limited options when treating patients with intermittent atrial fibrillation, an abnormal rhythm of the heart characterized by episodes that occur with varying frequency and last for a variable period of time before spontaneously stopping.

"People take very expensive, somewhat dangerous drugs and blood thinners all their lives. But until now there has been no cure for (atrial fibrillation)."

Using minimally invasive VATS surgery, Brothers is developing techniques that, so far, are successful in treating atrial fibrillation.

"This is exciting. This is about innovation. It's not me, it's what we've done, what these techniques will allow me to do."•

— Christopher Snizik

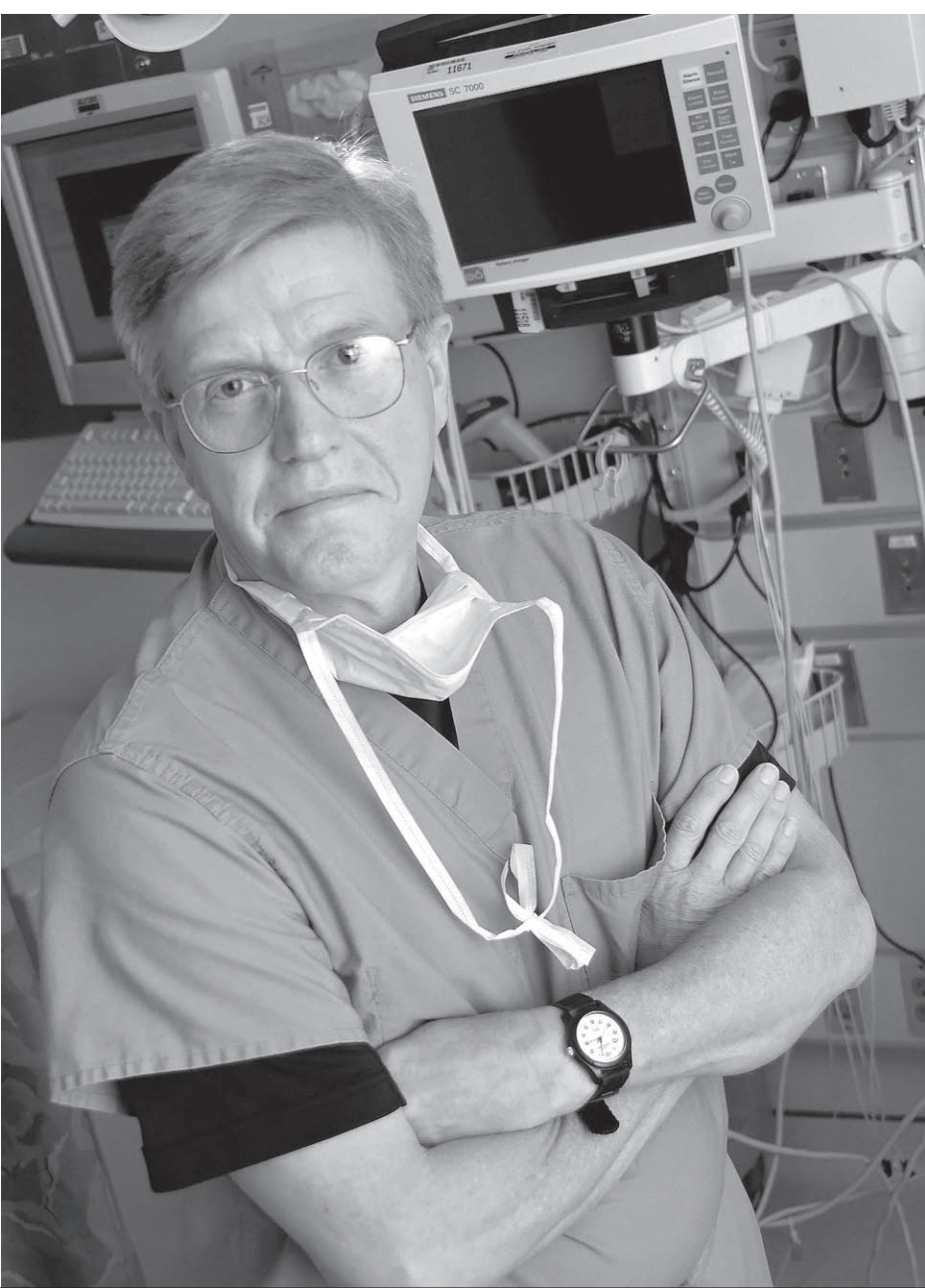


photo by Frank Aymami

PHYSICIAN

Charles Brown

Position: professor of public health, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center

Age: 78

Family: wife, Harriet Avery; children, Hyland Justice, Charlie Brown III, Marilyn Brown, Thomas Brown, Ben Springgate, Betsy Jayasuriya; and six grandchildren

Education: pre-medicine, Tulane University; doctor of medicine, Tulane University School of Medicine

DR. CHARLES BROWN'S 47-year career working in medicine combines 37 years as a hematology-oncology physician and 10 as a professor of public health at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center. Throughout his ongoing distinguished career, however, Brown's most memorable experience has been the 30 years he spent as the medical consultant for the New Orleans Saints.

"I had the opportunity to work with professional athletes and to see how a highly organized professional sport is presented to the public," Brown said.

During that time, he also participated in the initial development of a national level program for drug abuse and alcohol in professional sports. Although Brown no longer serves as the Saints' medical consultant, he is still involved with the National Football League's Program for Drugs of Abuse.

Brown's medical career began in 1953 when he graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine. Since his father had also been a physician in New Orleans, he was intro-



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

duced to the profession at an early age.

"I was always fascinated by medicine and scientifically oriented. I decided that it would be a good way to live my life."

Today, Brown advises young medical professionals who are just entering the field not to "become too specific early on. Look at the entire field (of medicine). Think about the people, not the specific illnesses."

Brown's own career as a medical professional has led him

to become a public health advocate. He oversaw the development of a tobacco prevention plan in Louisiana, and he leads the statewide steering committee that oversees the Tobacco Free Living program.

Today, the Charles L. Brown Jr. M.D. Award is presented to a person in the state who has made significant contributions to tobacco control.•

— Amy Ferrara Smith

PHYSICIAN

Randall Brown

Position: medical director, Baton Rouge Rape Crisis Program and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program

Age: 54

Family: wife, Deborah; and daughters, Ashley, 25, Allison, 23, Kimberly, 21

Education: attended Louisiana State University, majoring in English and zoology; doctor of medicine, LSU Medical School

AS A RESIDENT 30 years ago, Dr. Randall Brown was examining a patient in a Jacksonville, Fla., emergency room when he heard someone crying in the next room.

“Of course, people come into the emergency room crying — it’s not unusual — but this was a different type of a cry; it was really a wail,” Brown said. “So I went next door and looked, and it was a poor young girl who had just been sexually assaulted and beaten brutally.”

The rape counselor had not yet arrived, so Brown sat down and talked to the girl. As she shared her story, Brown had something of an epiphany that would lead him to focus his practice on the treatment of sexual assault victims.

“This is a moment in (the patients’) life where they are as low as they probably are ever going to get, and if you are ever going to do a lot of good, that’s the time that you need to be there for someone,” said Brown, medical director of the Baton Rouge Rape Crisis Program.

Brown is the nation’s only board-certified obstetrician/gynecologist who is a member of the American Academy of Forensic Scientists. He’s also the only board-



photo courtesy Randall Brown

certified OB/GYN with training and credentials as a forensic odontologist, someone who analyzes bite marks for criminal investigations.

For the past decade, the American College of Obstetric/Gynecology has used a training video Brown created to teach physicians how to do evidentiary examinations of rape victims. He also implemented the first sexual assault

nurse examiner program in Baton Rouge.

For all that he’s accomplished, Brown said his kids often tease him about one missing element in his career bio.

“I actually never graduated college. It’s a long story, but back in those days, if you had the right grade point ... (medical schools) would accept you before you finished college.”

— Sonya Stinson

PHYSICIAN

Jocelyn Tinsley Greely

Position: obstetrics and gynecology staff physician, Crescent City Physicians Inc. at Touro Infirmary

Age: 37

Family: husband, Efrem; and children, Jordan Woods, 13, Jillian Greely, 3

Education: bachelor’s degree in science and mechanical engineering, Howard University; doctor of medicine, University of Texas at Galveston School of Medicine; residency training, Tulane University School of Medicine

IN A PART of the city that was defined in the weeks after Hurricane Katrina by reports of death and destruction, Dr. Jocelyn Tinsley Greely today regards eastern New Orleans as a place of birth and life.

“When I first came back to this area, after having a private practice, I was continually reconnecting with young mothers I had known before who were expecting and have had their babies since Katrina,” said Greely, who operated out of a 3,000-square-foot temporary medical mobile unit as renovations to the Crescent City Physicians’ office at 9801 Lake Forest Blvd. were being completed.

Greely, who returned to New Orleans last summer, almost instantly realized eastern New Orleans was still lacking in basic hospital and medical clinic alternatives nearly two years after the storm.

“When we first set up out in this area, entire streets were completely abandoned, with different businesses boarded up. It was depressing because

it seemed no one lived in this part of town any more and that no one cared about it either.”

But within days, Greely realized there were still thousands of people, and in particular, young expectant mothers who not only continued to call eastern New Orleans home but who needed medical attention.

“I kept hearing of young women who had to take these different buses to get to the nearest clinic and how glad they were now that they could basically just walk to our offices. That really made us all feel that we were doing the right thing.”

Katrina-related challenges remain.

“A large number of our patients have been in a state of transition since the storm. They are moving here and there, trying to get back to the lives they had before. And the fact that some of these people are also women who are far along in their pregnancies makes it even more important that we be here for them during a crucial time.”

— Garry Boulard



photo by Frank Aymami



PHYSICIAN

Emile LaBranche

Position: physician, Crescent City Physicians Inc. at Touro Infirmary

Age: 61

Family: wife, Anne; and children, Steven, 42, Sheri, 40, Erin, 23, Evan, 16

Education: bachelor's degree in economics, Xavier University; doctor of medicine, Louisiana State University School of Medicine

TREATING HUNDREDS of patients who were a part of his practice in eastern New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina, as well as the new patients who have turned to him since the storm, Dr. Emile LaBranche has been particularly taken with the medical effects of the storm.

“Almost all of those who went through Katrina ended up suffering from post-traumatic stress disorders,” said LaBranche, who lost his house and office in the storm. “They were completely stressed out, both because of the storm itself as well as its aftermath. In fact, some were near death because of the stress.”

And that kind of ongoing stress, LaBranche said, “causes severe headaches, problems with blood pressure and diabetes if it’s not controlled — the list just goes on and on.”

In the summer of 2006, LaBranche, deter-

mined to return to his patients, teamed up with Crescent City Physicians, a subsidiary of Touro Infirmary. He initially worked out of a 3,000-square-foot mobile medical unit next to his old offices at 9801 Lake Forest Blvd. — the first permanent family practice in the area.

“I just felt that my patients needed me and that I had to come back and do what I could to help. Many parts of the East may still be abandoned, but that did not mean that there weren’t people here who didn’t need help.”

LaBranche said about 80 percent of the patients he had before Katrina have returned.

“You like to feel that you are making a difference. But when your patients tell you how grateful they are that you are there, you know you are making a difference.”•

— Garry Boulard

Dr. Emile LaBranche, a physician with Crescent City Physicians Inc. at Touro Infirmary, examines Mike Alexander at the center’s eastern New Orleans facility.

photo by Frank Aymami

PHYSICIAN

Gabriel Lasala

Position: medical director, TCA Cellular Therapy and LifeSource Cryobank LLC; president, Tchefuncte Cardiology Associates; medical director of the cardiac catheterization lab, Lakeview Regional Medical Center

Age: 47

Family: wife, Rechel; and children, Florencia, 23, Julie, 21, Nicholas, 14, Caroline, 11

Education: doctor of medicine, University of Cordoba in Argentina

THE OFT-USED generalization of a mad scientist doctor spending long nights with little sleep in a lab while he performs extensive, cutting-edge research for groundbreaking medical therapies is an image that might describe Dr. Gabriel Lasala’s work ethic.

“On average, I get about four hours of sleep a night,” Lasala said. “We’re always researching and testing something, and when we think we find a solution, we test it again.”

For the past eight years, Lasala has spent most of his time researching adult stem-cell therapies to help advance his cardiology practice.

In 2000, Lasala traveled to Chile and met with Dr. Jose Minguell, who was conducting several large animal trials with stem cells. Lasala was so impressed by the trial research that he brought it back to Covington. After years of further findings and advancement on adult stem-cell therapies, he opened two private stem cell-related businesses: LifeSource Cryobank and TCA Cellular Therapy, which launched in October. TCA Cellular is the research



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

company affiliated with LifeSource Cryobank.

The centers are conducting three Food and Drug Administration clinical trials related to stem cell treatment of myocardial injuries and limb ischemia.

LifeSource is the only cryopreservation facility in the Gulf South and the first facility in the United States to accept adult stem cells from bone marrow along with the more traditional umbilical cord blood storage. TCA Cellular is the only private company in the United States

participating in FDA protocols related to stem cell research.

“It’s unbelievable that we’re actually doing this kind of extensive and high-profile research in our own backyard, and the potential economic impact from stem cell storage is almost as unlimited as the potential of stem cell therapy itself.”

Lasala plans to expand his research to include stem cell therapy for neurological diseases and spinal cord injuries. •

— Tommy Santora



PHYSICIAN

Robert Matheny

Position: president-elect, Greater Southeast Affiliate Board, American Heart Association

Age: 48

Family: wife, Beverly; and son, Aaron, 22

Education: bachelor's degree in zoology, University of Arkansas at Little Rock; doctor of medicine, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences; resident fellowship, Tulane University School of Medicine

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE continues to be the leading cause of death in the United States, according to studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And given its widespread nature, coming up with solutions proves challenging.

Dr. Robert Matheny said the key is catering to cultural specificities while maintaining the same standards and aiming for the same outcomes across the board.

"The same message that we want to reach the entire group has to be targeted a little differently to specific groups than to the mainstream," said Matheny, a volunteer cardiologist with the American Heart Association and president-elect of the organization's Greater Southeast Affiliate Board.

"Culturally specific groups, like the African-American population or people who may be economically disadvantaged, just need education and just need more resources available to them."

Matheny has been involved with the American Heart Association in New Orleans for 15 years and in that time has come up with several creative approaches to heart health care for the city's diverse communities.

Matheny has focused on educational outreach in the African-American community, working through churches to reach people at risk high for heart disease. Matheny also helped launch the "Hooks for Hearts" fishing contest last year as a fundraiser for the American Heart Association that raises awareness about dietary health by emphasizing the health benefits of eating fish.

While targeting health initiatives to culturally specific groups, Matheny realizes New Orleans is distinct, though suffering the same high rates of cardiovascular disease as the rest of the country.

"We talk about a minority group, but to me, this entire area is culturally unique." •

— Leah Bartos

photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

PHYSICIAN

Norman McSwain

Position: professor of surgery, Tulane University School of Medicine; trauma director, Charity Hospital

Age: 71

Family: daughter, Merry McSwain

Education: bachelor's degree in biology, Sewanee, The University of the South; doctor of medicine, University of Alabama School of Medicine; residency, North Carolina Baptist Hospital and Emory University

NORMAN MCSWAIN was absolutely certain he was going to be a physician since he was 8, living a life of helping others feel better.

"I think it is just one of those things that you know is going to happen," McSwain said. "I never saw myself as anything other than a doctor."

McSwain received certification for surgical practice from the American Board of Surgery in 1972 and now splits his time between two jobs — teacher and operator.

Half of his time is spent at Tulane University of Medicine School, where he is a professor of surgery. McSwain said he handles classes on general surgery, as well as trauma and critical care surgery.

"I really enjoy teaching residents. I take great pride in watching them absorb the vast knowledge it takes to practice surgery."

In addition to his educational responsibil-

ities, McSwain is also head of the trauma department at Charity Hospital.

"I mostly deal with automobile accident victims, and patients with gunshot wounds. I love the challenge of working on a gunshot wound. I find they are more fun than car accident victims, because there is an extensive amount of operation involved with any gunshot wound. I like seeing my patients get better."

McSwain said he has seen many accomplishments in his nearly 40 years in the medical field, but one of his more recent endeavors was a pre-hospital life support course he started in 1991.

"We trained more than half a million people from 43 countries, most of whom do not work in a hospital setting. The course showed people how to deal with trauma cases before medical responders arrive." •

— Robin Shannon

New Orleans EMS paramedic Ryan Hageman, left, reviews a patient record with Dr. Norman McSwain, professor of surgery at Tulane University School of Medicine and trauma director at Charity Hospital.



photo by Frank Aymami

PHYSICIAN

Thanh Nguyen

Position: cardiologist, Crescent City Cardiovascular Associates at Touro Infirmary

Age: 38

Family: wife, Chi; and children, Brittany, 8, Brooke, 5

Education: bachelor's degree in zoology, Louisiana State University; doctor of medicine, LSU School of Medicine

DR. THANH NGUYEN was in his first year of practice as a cardiologist when he got a case that sent his own heart pounding.

"The father of one of my best friends had a heart attack," Nguyen said. "I had known his father since I was 16, when he used to drive me to high school. . . . The fact that I had to take care of him was an added stress for me. But fortunately we were able to take care of his problem, and actually he's still doing well today. That was my proudest moment."

Nguyen had been a student at the Louisiana School for Math, Science and Arts in Natchitoches when he first met his friend's father. Born in Saigon, Vietnam, Nguyen fled to the United States with his family in 1979, living in San Francisco for two years before moving to Baton Rouge and then to Natchitoches.

Nguyen often conducts free health screenings and educational sessions target-

ing the Vietnamese population, and he has provided free cardiac care at health fairs of the local Boat People SOS chapter.

"I enjoy doing the health screenings and teaching them about how to prevent heart disease. I really like the prevention part of it."

While his primary practice is at Touro, Nguyen also treats patients in the eastern New Orleans and West Bank offices of Crescent City Physicians Inc. These satellite locations make him more accessible to his Vietnamese patients, whose culture sometimes makes them reluctant to visit doctors, especially if they have to go outside their neighborhoods.

"They don't like to leave their comfort area. That's a reason I decided to go out to the West Bank and to New Orleans East. I found that in my first few years of practice, they never came Uptown."•

— Sonya Stinson

Dr. Thanh Nguyen, a cardiologist with Crescent City Cardiovascular Associates at Touro Infirmary, examines Howard Alexander.

photo by Frank Aymami



PHYSICIAN

Eboni Price

Position: medical director, Tulane University Community Health Center at Covenant House

Age: 34

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree, University of Notre Dame; doctor of medicine, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine; master's degree in public health, Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health

DR. EBONI PRICE lives by the belief everyone should be entitled to high-quality health care. As medical director for Tulane University Medical Center's Community Health Center at Covenant House, she tried to make that a reality.

The center is one of several neighborhood health centers Tulane medical school residents established after Hurricane Katrina.

"The residents wanted a way to better serve the public that remained in the city after the storm," Price said. "These centers serve as a great teaching tool on how to provide community care to the citizens of New Orleans."

Price identified stark differences between working in a large hospital and working in a small community clinic, saying doctors and residents have to understand and discover the community's needs and tune in to the circumstances of each patient.

"One of the real challenges of working in a clinic like this is



photo by Frank Aymami

being able to make some of these patients understand what is happening to them. Many of these patients have a low literacy level or little or no education, and you have to explain a complex medical problem like diabetes, for example, to them. It is sometimes very difficult to make them understand what they have to do to get better."

Price said the health center has set up programs geared toward teaching medical residents how to deal with patients with little education. She said there are also programs for deal-

ing with non-English speaking immigrants, which, she said, is another common roadblock.

Price said that although the neighborhood clinics mostly serve the uninsured and underserved, it does not mean the treatment is substandard.

"We firmly believe in excess care for these patients. Patients are in and out quickly and given the best care available. No one would ever be turned away from our care."•

— Robin Shannon

PHYSICIAN

Elmore Rigamer

Position: medical director, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans
Age: 67

Family: wife, Marianna; and children, Catherine, 38, Elizabeth, 40

Education: doctor of medicine, Louisiana State University School of Medicine; residency in psychiatry, New York Hospital-Cornell University; master's degree of public administration, Harvard University

WHEN DR. ELMORE Rigamer returned home to New Orleans after nearly two decades of counseling terrorism victims abroad, he figured that was the end of it.

“Never in my wildest dreams did I think I’d use, in this country, the same psychological programs that I developed to use overseas in Afghanistan or Beirut,” said Rigamer, who worked as the State Department’s medical director in the Middle East, India, Pakistan, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Trained in psychiatry, Rigamer focused his work on mental health, in particular helping people with post-traumatic stress disorder. Those ended up being useful skills during the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina.

“What’s so interesting is that after Katrina, the psychological model for dealing with trauma is the same ... dealing with the shock and the possibility of developing post-traumatic stress.”

The scope of Rigamer’s work in New Orleans, however, is much wider. Rigamer now works as the medical director



photo by Tracee Morris Schaefer

of Catholic Charities and has launched a number of community-based programs designed to meet social and medical needs. These programs include the Behavioral Health Action Network, which has influenced Gov. Bobby Jindal’s recent health reforms, as well as the Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly in Greater New Orleans, which provides medical and social care for the elderly within their communities instead of in nursing homes.

“If it’s really patient-centric, which is what health care should be, and if you think about what’s best for the patient, then it’s easy to figure out what to do,” Rigamer said of the holistic, “barefoot doctor” approach to medicine.

“I think right now, it’s a wonderful time to be in New Orleans. Every assumption that we had that things were working,” he said, “those assumptions have to be challenged.”•

— Leah Bartos

PHYSICIAN

Alfred Robichaux

Position: chairman, obstetrics and gynecology, Ochsner Medical Center
Age: 55

Family: wife, Patty; and daughters, Jennifer, 22, Lauren, 21, Katie, 20

Education: bachelor’s degree in biology, Spring Hill College; doctor of medicine, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center; obstetrics and gynecology residency, Ochsner Health System; maternal medicine fellowship, George Washington School of Medicine

HAVING HELPED deliver a few thousand babies, the miracle of life can become an everyday event for a physician such as Alfred Robichaux who serves as chairman of the obstetrics and gynecology department at Ochsner Health System.

Once in a while, big surprises do come along. Ochsner delivered two sets of triplets and one set of quadruplets within 36 hours in December. It was a historic moment but Robichaux will never forget when he helped deliver twins more than three months apart in 1994.

“I believe that record still holds and I think that is the first time twins that survived have been delivered that far apart. Usually twins are born one after the other but the first twin was born prematurely,” Robichaux said.

Because of the lack of hospitals delivering babies, births at Ochsner have increased more than 100 percent and Robichaux has led the expansion of the OB/GYN department to meet the need. He has grown Ochsner’s Women’s Center by adding

nearly a dozen more postpartum rooms and hiring 11 new physicians to its obstetrical staff.

Robichaux is also credited with bringing delivery services back to Kenner when Ochsner opened the maternal child services center and labor and delivery unit in 2007 at Ochsner Medical Center-Kenner.

“We were able to recruit some of the best OBGYNs out there and literally doubled our staff. We got the unit back in order and are building another group of physicians from our residency program who have a great desire to be out in Kenner.”

Robichaux is involved with several medical societies including the Society of Maternal Fetal Medicine, Orleans Medical Society, the Louisiana State Medical Society and the American Medical Society. He was also appointed by then-Gov. Edwin Edwards to serve on the Louisiana Perinatal Commission. •

— Craig Guillot



Dr. Alfred Robichaux, chairman of obstetrics and gynecology at Ochsner Medical Center, performs an ultrasound on Jennifer Rachel.

photo by Frank Aymami



PHYSICIAN

Ken Roy

Position: medical director, Addiction Recovery Resources of New Orleans; medical staff, East Jefferson General Hospital

Age: 65

Family: wife, Patricia; and children Darci, 45, Darryl, 36, Alex, 21

Education: bachelor's degree, University of Houston; doctor of medicine, Tulane University School of Medicine; fellow of the American Society of Addiction Medicine

FOR DR. KEN ROY'S patients, Hurricane Katrina's effects have been compounded by a health care system still in shambles.

"The health care system is broken and people don't have access to appropriate treatment for addiction," Roy said. "A lot of people who were stable on medications for the treatment of addiction and of (additional) psychiatric illness lost access to their medications."

Roy is a specialist in addiction treatment and is on the medical staff at East Jefferson General Hospital. However, his primary focus is on the patients at Addiction Recovery Resources of New Orleans, a nonprofit outpatient and residential treatment center in Metairie that he founded and where he serves as medical director.

"There has been an awful lot of relapse for people in good, stable recovery because of the common themes that are so prominent, of displacement loss of family members, loss of a local support system."

Nearly three years after the storm, addic-

tions to legal drugs are one of the biggest problems facing doctors like Roy.

"There are still 'pain clinics' that serve only to prescribe narcotics and the holy trinity of pain pills, Xanax and Soma."

With prescription drugs, the easy availability increases the chance a person will become addicted.

"The amount of drugs that are available to individuals and on the street is just huge."

However, despite all the difficulties, each victory over addiction is a personal victory for Roy.

"It's so fulfilling. I couldn't begin to describe the satisfaction and humility I feel with someone in a follow-up visit, whose life was in a shambles just months ago, (and) who's back in the workplace and in a relationship and learning to be a better parent," Roy said. "There are two types of doctors that get to see miracles every day. Those are obstetricians and recovery specialists."•

— Jason Saul

photo by Frank Aymami

PHYSICIAN

Milton Seiler

Position: partner, Hematology/Oncology Specialists; president, BioPharm; president, OncologyRx

Age: 61

Family: daughter, Statira, 36

Education: bachelor's degree, Tulane University; doctor of medicine, Louisiana State University School of Medicine; hematology fellowship, Baylor College of Medicine; oncology fellowship, Ochsner Health System

TIMES HAVE CHANGED in the treatment of cancer since Dr. Milton Seiler began practicing medicine 30 years ago. Years of research and development have combined with new techniques in genomics to produce powerful therapies tailored to individual patients.

"Right now there is an exponential explosion," Seiler said. "This is just the beginning of a phenomenally great time. It's hard to keep up (and) it's challenging, but the promise that was made 30-something years ago when I decided to become a hematologist/oncologist is now, finally, almost a half-century later, being fulfilled."

These treatments often come with a hefty price tag, with some medications costing close to \$400,000 a year. Seiler said private-practice physicians and hospitals are often caught in the middle of providing for their patients and recouping expenses from insurance companies and the government.

"Affordability, that's a societal issue. There's an awful long conversation we need to have about what's appropriate and



what we need to do to make these things available. Otherwise there are going to be two classes of people: those who live and those who don't."

Aside from the difficulties surrounding high health care costs and despite frustrations that come with dealing with government and insurance bureaucracies, Seiler finds practicing medicine and the one-on-one with patients and family members still brings him satisfaction.

"I've known some of these women for 30 years, and they've become friends. I think that's really wonderful. Sometimes it's very sad to lose a friend, especially when you're the treating physician. I used to think it was a sign of failure, but I realize that I do the best I can and that I'm not always able to hit a home run, but often enough that it keeps me in the business."•

— Jason Saul

photo by Tracee Morris Schaefer

PHYSICIAN

Jim Smith

Position: staff cardiologist and board member, Louisiana Medical Center and Heart Hospital

Age: 53

Family: wife, Sumathi; and children, Greer, 27, Audrey, 25, Zachary, 22, Luke, 21, David, 19, Rachael, 17, James, 15

Education: bachelor's degree and doctor of medicine, University of Nebraska Medical Center

DRAMATIC STORIES ABOUND regarding post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, but during the week of the disaster, when most people were watching in awe from other states or working in the recovery, Jim Smith was performing critical surgeries.

As one of the few hospitals open during the time, Louisiana Medical Center and Heart Hospital in Lacombe was performing surgeries as usual. In the first week after Katrina, Smith performed seven open-heart surgeries, 21 orthopedic procedures, and angiograms and angioplasties.

"We actually did a surgery on the day of the hurricane. The dedication of the staff and the whole way this team just stayed together and performed day after day without much support was amazing," said Smith, one of the founders of the Louisiana Medical Center and Heart Hospital, which opened five years ago in Lacombe.

Having performed the first angioplasty on the North Shore in 1985, he points to the hospital's opening as one of the defining moments in his career. Enjoying the challenging environment and technological equipment involved in cardiology, he said he has the opportunity to regularly make a difference in the lives of critically ill patients.

"In some cases we might save someone's life but you really don't know until you go in there and assess the situation. Sometimes that happens but in almost every case you're drastically improving someone's life and can see immediate results."

Born and raised in Kansas, Smith was working on a factory line as a young man before deciding to go into medicine. He lives on a farm in Bush, is the father of seven children and enjoys riding motorcycles, fishing, traveling and spending time with his family. •

— Craig Guillot



photo courtesy Michael Palumbo Photography

PHYSICIAN

Keith Van Meter

Position: section head, emergency medicine department, Louisiana State University school of medicine; medical director, Keith Van Meter & Associates

Age: 63

Family: wife, Mary; and children, Garth, 30, Mike, 28, Sasha, 25, Ashley, 23

Education: bachelor's degree in chemistry, Miami University; doctor of medicine, George Washington University School of Medicine

RESUSCITATION HAS BEEN a recurring theme in Dr. Keith Van Meter's work.

Van Meter, who heads emergency medicine at the Louisiana State University Medical School, has spent more than 20 years researching hyperbaric medicine, primarily through his experience resuscitating off-shore divers suffering decompression sickness.

Now, it's about resuscitating health care in New Orleans.

Despite the post-Katrina closure of Charity Hospital, Van Meter remains committed to providing affordable and quality health care to New Orleans' citizens.

Though the politics surrounding Charity's closure continues to be tense, Van Meter said he tries to focus on the individual patients he treats.

"I've tried to take solace in taking care of patients and stay away from (the politics)," said Van Meter, who works up to 120 hours a week in the emergency room and training the school's medical

residents. "I go to work and I talk to the patients, enjoy them immensely and try to fix them up. And that gets me (through) any angst that I have about any of the conditions or events that are going on."

Van Meter was among the health care providers who rode out the storm in Charity Hospital, where they stayed for a week working with no electricity, no air conditioning and no instruments to care for critical care patients, mild care patients and each other.

"To me, I think I was preconditioned by having to be in the Gulf, inside a can decompression chamber five days in a row with horrible temperatures and horrible isolation with divers that were about ready to kick the bucket."

Among the stress and exhaustion associated with emergency medicine, Van Meter still finds his work invigorating.

"It isn't exactly a vacation, but it's a gift of a situation to make me happy that I'm on earth." •

— Leah Bartos



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

PHYSICIAN

Mark Workman

Position: physician adviser, case management for West Jefferson Medical Center; private practice in infectious diseases

Age: 57

Family: wife, Barbara; and children, Sarah, 21, Elliott, 18

Education: bachelor's degree in biology, University of Virginia; doctor of medicine, Medical College of Virginia

DR. MARK WORKMAN lived at West Jefferson Medical Center for three weeks after Hurricane Katrina.

As an expert on infectious diseases, Workman went on the radio, advising citizens about risks of infection from the water and other hazards in the days immediately after the storm. He advised citizens to get vaccinations for diseases like tetanus and hepatitis A.

"It was extremely successful," said Workman, adding that he saw very few tetanus and Hepatitis A cases after the storm.

Aside from the immediate benefits, the vaccinations had long-term bonuses as tetanus vaccines are good for 10 years. Katrina prompted people to get these vaccinations.

"A lot of people might not have gotten vaccines if not for Katrina."

photo by Frank Aymanni



It's the variety infectious diseases offer that stimulates Workman.

"Even the same disease can't always be treated in the same way."

A patient's age or allergies to different medications may alter the way an infection is treated. In addition to this, Workman enjoys what he calls "the detective work" necessary in figuring out what infection is troubling an individual patient.

The infections themselves are widely varied. In a coastal community with a lot of commercial fishermen, Workman treats many people who get infections from catfish or shrimp spine punctures. He once treated a man who got an infection because his fishing camp shower used water from a bayou.

More exotic infections work their way into the city as well, which has had Workman treat a case of central nervous system malaria, as well as a few cases of dengue fever. •

— Fritz Esker

PROFESSIONAL

Bonnie Arton

Position: retired director of information technology, West Jefferson Medical Center

Age: 55

Family: single; dogs, Carly, Twister and Annie

Education: bachelor's degree in accounting, Loyola University; master's degree in business administration, Loyola

BONNIE ARTON WAS a victim of polio in 1955 at the age of 3. She recovered after a nine-week stint at Charity Hospital, an experience that made an indelible mark on her.

"That experience got me interested in health care and made me want to give something back," Arton said.

Arton became a Renaissance woman in the health care field, spending 15 years in nursing.

"My first love will always be nursing," Arton said.

In the intensive care unit, she cared for a 12-year-old boy who was in a bicycle accident and comatose for six months, three spent in Arton's care. The boy recovered and his father took him to Arton's house to thank her. Arton calls the experience one of the most rewarding in her career.

Even though she loved nursing, Arton said she became exhausted after 15 years and decided she needed a change.

"You're on your feet 12 hours a day,

constantly pushing heavy stretchers and heavy patients."

Arton earned a degree in accounting from Loyola University and passed the CPA exam. She helped open the first family physicians clinics at West Jefferson Medical Center and spent seven years in the materials department, working with purchasing and contracts.

"Being a nurse gave me a better understanding of the products and their value."

Arton eventually became head of information technology, where she made it her mission to improve hospital processes through technology. She helped usher in electronic records so physicians can access records from home and medical personnel can access the same record simultaneously.

Arton is now retired and lavishes attention on her three dogs.

"I'm now taking care of my four-legged friends instead of my two-legged ones." •

— Fritz Esker

photo by Frank Aymanni



Redfield Bryan

Position: special consultant, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, St. Bernard Health Services

Age: 70

Family: wife, Carol Ann; and daughter, Kelly, 48

Education: bachelor's degree, Louisiana State University; doctor of medicine, LSU School of Medicine

SURVEYING THE devastation of St. Bernard Parish after Hurricane Katrina, Redfield Bryan was reminded of the challenges he saw at a Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System clinic in Haiti.

"The conditions were very much like what you would expect to encounter in a third-world country," said Bryan, who in the weeks after the storm tried to coordinate basic medical services for a parish that had nearly been submerged by Katrina's floodwaters.

"We had to get the electricity in, we had to have our X-rays wired over the Internet to Baton Rouge in order to be read, while all of our lab work was also daily traveling to our clinic in Baton Rouge and back again. None of the assumptions about how things should work, at least in the beginning, applied."

But Bryan, after talks with state and community leaders, was able to establish a

Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System clinic in St. Bernard that was eventually headquartered in a 22,000-square-foot facility made "of trailers that were put together by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Administration)."

Initially serving up to 60 patients per day, the St. Bernard clinic is now averaging 150 to 200 patients daily.

"We now have five doctors and are treating everyone, including the indigent and those on Medicaid. And we can do our own X-rays, ultrasound and give our own shots. We are doing more in this clinic than you would normally see in a doctor's office primarily because we don't have a hospital here," said Bryan, adding that he has been gratified to be "just a small part in bringing this parish back to what it was before the storm."•

— Garry Boulard

photo by Jason Brown

John Clements

Position: professor and chairman of the department of microbiology and immunology, Tulane University School of Medicine

Age: 60

Family: wife, Elaine; and children, David, 27, Rachel, 26

Education: bachelor's degree in microbiology, University of Texas at Arlington; doctorate in microbiology, University of Texas Health Sciences Center

BEING A PROFESSOR of microbiology and immunology, John Clements spends a great deal of time working with germs and finding ways to keep them from infecting people. His research programs at Tulane University School of Medicine focus on developing vaccines to protect against various bacterial, viral and parasitic diseases.

Clements said his laboratory team has studied the use of long and narrow forms of bacteria as a system of delivering vaccines throughout the body. His lab was among the first to employ this technology with genetic substances within the body that stimulate the production of antibodies, or disease fighters.

Clements said his research has helped create vaccines for children in developing countries, many of which do not require needles.

"We have been developing vaccines that can be delivered through mucus, as well as some that can be administered transdermally, or through the skin," Clements said. "Eliminating needles lowers the cost of production and delivery of these vaccines to mere pennies, and you don't



photo by Frank Aymami

Dr. John Clements, professor and chairman of the department of microbiology and immunology at Tulane University School of Medicine, studies vaccines with post-doctoral fellow Sabena Uddowla.

need a specially trained physician to administer it."

Clements is also part of a team of investigators that has conducted the first human trials demonstrating the practical and affordable use of edible vaccines. The trials used specific foods as vaccine delivery systems.

"There are certain plants that one can eat and become vaccinated. It's easy to produce and very affordable."

Before joining Tulane University in 1982, Clements said he completed a National Research Council Associateship at

Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Washington, D.C. He also worked on the faculty at the University of Rochester School of Medicine.

In 2003, Clements was trained as a weapons inspector in the 7th United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission training program in Vienna. He was a member of the Iraq survey group seeking out weapons of mass destruction in Baghdad. •

— Robin Shannon

PROFESSIONAL

James Doty

Position: director, Memorial Hospital Center for Neurosciences in Gulfport, Miss.

Age: 52

Family: wife, Maria; and children, Jennifer, 26, Sebastian, 4

Education: bachelor's degree in biological sciences, University of California at Irvine; doctor of medicine, Tulane University School of Medicine

MANY PEOPLE say they always keep their word. However, most people don't have that sentiment tested the way Dr. James Doty did.

Doty had accomplished a lot. Growing up, his family was on welfare. His father was an alcoholic and his mother was an invalid. Still, he managed to earn a medical degree and become an accomplished neurosurgeon. Not only was he a skilled doctor, but he made millions in investments and had served as a CEO of Accuray, a company that provides non-surgical radiosurgery for cancer patients.

Upon retiring, Doty planned to buy a villa in Tuscany, an apartment in San Francisco and a private island in New Zealand. He would split time between these locations and various third-world countries, where he would volunteer to perform charity neurosurgery work. On top of this, he vowed to put his Accuray stock into a charitable trust.

However, in 2000, when the dot.com bubble burst, Doty lost \$78 million in six weeks.

"The only asset I had remaining was the stock in (Accuray)," Doty said.



photo courtesy Tulane University

Despite his fortune evaporating, Doty still used the stock to fill the trust, even though it meant he would be unable to retire.

"I felt I had to honor that commitment."

In total, \$37 million went into the trust, with \$4.4 million going to Tulane University for a distinguished endowed chair for the new dean of the medical school. A

scholarship fund was also created for economically disadvantaged students.

Doty took a job at Memorial Hospital in Gulfport, Miss., after Hurricane Katrina. Under his guidance, Memorial Hospital now has three neurosurgeons and three neurologists and is the only stroke-certified hospital in Mississippi. •

— Fritz Esker

PROFESSIONAL

Bill Fox

Position: former CEO, Louisiana Medical Center and Heart Hospital

Age: 52

Family: wife, Teri; and children, Jason, 28, Will, 24, Justin, 23, Monica, 23

Education: bachelor's degree in health care administration, Western Kentucky University; master's degree in health care administration, Trinity University

HAVING SERVED as chief operating officer of Methodist Hospital during Hurricane Katrina, Bill Fox said it was the most memorable moment of his career. During the disaster, Fox was responsible for ensuring patients were taken care of and helped with the evacuation of more than 750 people from the hospital's rooftop.

"I think anybody that was in the city for Katrina got the chance to see the best and worst of humanity at the same time. I'm not in a big hurry to do it a second time but I am glad that I was there," Fox said.

Post-Katrina, Fox went to the North Shore where he took the reigns as CEO of the Louisiana Medical Center and Heart Hospital in Lacombe until March. During his tenure there, he focused on expanding and improving hospital's services to meet the needs of the growing population in St. Tammany Parish.

Fox led the effort to expand the hospital by breaking ground on a new 109,000-square-foot, four-story patient tower with 120 private rooms. After the \$33-million project is complete, the hospital will have 178 rooms. Fox said expanding the hos-

pital in the wake of the storm was necessary to meet the population explosion.

"After the storm, there was a significant shift in population and the North Shore went from 200,000 to 300,000 overnight. All of a sudden, there weren't enough pediatricians or general practitioners."

The hospital originally opened in 2003 as the Louisiana Heart Hospital. To recognize its expanded service capabilities after Katrina, it was renamed as the Louisiana Medical Center & Heart Hospital.

Under Fox's leadership, the hospital achieved numerous rankings and awards for excellence in its cardiac care and surgery programs.

Motivated by a desire to serve the community, Fox said the region's health care professionals are now more important than ever.

"What really motivates me is trying to build infrastructure for the community and to make sure that the people are receiving the best health care they can get." •

— Craig Guillot

photo courtesy Michael Palumbo Photography



PROFESSIONAL

Bob Hawley

Position: CEO, Slidell Memorial Hospital

Age: 61

Family: wife, Freida; and children, Robert, Chuck, Jessica, Joey and Jimmy

Education: bachelor's degree in political science, University of Oklahoma; master's degree in business administration, San Diego State University

WHEN BOB Hawley Jr. became CEO of Slidell Memorial Hospital in 2000, he was determined to help the health care facility recover from a \$12.8-million deficit.

Within five years, Hawley had not only helped the hospital pay off its debt, but also gained the local community's support to invest in technology and additional facilities. The hospital's financial recovery and implementation of new technology has also helped Hawley focus on his primary goal of improving patient satisfaction and safety.

"We went from recovery mode to service and quality mode," Hawley said. "If they are satisfied, we feel the patients will come back."

Dedication to patient comfort has helped the hospital earn for two consecutive years the Distinguished Hospital Award for Patient Safety. The recognition of good work, said Hawley, helps Slidell Memorial maintain its edge in a competitive market.

"Our greatest challenge is to contin-

ue to grow the hospital in the face of significant hospital construction (on the North Shore)."

A former U.S. Navy naval aviator, Hawley tries to maintain Slidell Memorial's positive reputation on the North Shore by encouraging his employees to continue to grow as professionals. He requires they complete 30 hours per year of mandatory and elective training, and he established the Slidell Memorial Hospital Leadership Institute, an academic program for managers.

Originally from Ohio, Hawley has served as chief financial officer of St. Joseph Regional Medical Center in Ponca City, Okla., CEO of Perry Memorial Hospital in Perry, Okla., and CEO of Bolivar Medical Center in Cleveland, Miss.

"If I do the job well, I enable others who provide patient care a good environment and the tools they need."•

— Amy Ferrara Smith

photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

PROFESSIONAL

John Lemoine

Position: chairman of the board of directors, Louisiana Medical Mutual Insurance Co.

Age: 67

Family: wife, Deborah; and children, Emile, 43, Lewis, 41, Alyce, 38

Education: bachelor's degree, Spring Hill College; doctor of medicine, Louisiana State University School of Medicine

DR. JOHN LEMOINE knows the future of the health care community hinges on retaining certain key players: doctors.

Lemoine has dedicated himself to making Louisiana a more physician-friendly environment through his work with Louisiana Medical Mutual Insurance Co., or LAMMI-CO, a physician-led medical malpractice insurer based in Metairie.

Lemoine, who practiced family medicine for 30 years, has been involved with LAMMI-CO since shortly after its founding in 1981, serving as CEO and president from 2000-07 and continuing as chairman of the board of directors.

In regard to the company's goal of attracting and retaining medical experts in Louisiana, Lemoine said protecting physicians from frivolous lawsuits is in everybody's best interest.

"That's why we're constantly trying to improve to make things better," Lemoine said.

LAMMI-CO was created in response to an

increase in frivolous lawsuits and the weak defense of existing insurance companies in the late 1970s and early '80s.

Lemoine has also influenced several pieces of state legislation designed to improve the medical environment.

One law, for instance, requires plaintiffs to pay a simple filing fee prior to litigation.

"A lot of non-meritous claims were being filed because of the ease of filing in Louisiana. We were spending a lot of money defending those non-meritous claims."

Lemoine also worked to help pass what's known as "I'm Sorry" legislation, designed to improve communication between patients and doctors, especially when it comes to discussions about bad health outcomes.

"Physicians were afraid to express sympathy or sorrow because they were afraid it would be perceived as guilt. Most every claim had to do with communication."•

— Leah Bartos

photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Barbara Moffett

Position: director of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Southeastern Louisiana University

Age: 58

Family: husband, Randy; children, Jeff, 32; Melissa, 30, Julie, 27; and three grandchildren

Education: bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing, Northwestern State University; doctor of philosophy in education research methodology, Louisiana State University

NURSING SHORTAGE — two words every nursing college administrator hears most often, and two words that have become part of the daily vocabulary of Barbara Moffett, the director of Southeastern Louisiana University's College of Nursing and Health Sciences.

"We're always trying to answer that million-dollar question, and there is a tremendous amount of pressure placed on all nursing programs in this state to solve the problem," said Moffett, who has been director of Southeastern's nursing college since 2001 and a faculty member at the school for 32 years.

"My question is, 'Where do they all go?' We have two to three applicants for every nursing spot available, and our acceptance and graduation numbers have continually increased, which leads me to believe there may be a retention problem among nurses after they graduate."

"Our job as administrators and faculty is to not only round these students into top, quality nurses, but to do enough to encourage them to stay in the industry and also

photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer



help out with the shortage in the state."

With close to 40 years in the nursing industry, Moffett has done her role.

During her time as director, Moffett has introduced an accelerated track for registered nurses seeking a bachelor's degree, obtained additional funding from the Louisiana Board of Regents to allow the admission of additional students into the program, secured a Board of Regents grant to develop online orientation modules for new and part-time clinical faculty and secured a grant from the National Student

Nurses' Association for development of standardized patients for teaching assessment skills and more clinical space.

"It's very gratifying to my personal and professional career that we have built a strong nursing program here at Southeastern. We have a very strong faculty that turns out a lot of outstanding nurses, and a lot of my job now is working with new faculty who come on board. I want to be comfortable with the fact that whenever I do leave and retire, I am leaving the nursing program in good hands."•

— Tommy Santora

Mark Peters

Position: physician, president and CEO, East Jefferson General Hospital; chairman, Metropolitan Hospital Council of New Orleans; director, board of the Coalition of Leaders for Louisiana Healthcare

Age: 54

Family: sons, James, 31, Brad, 27

Education: bachelor's degree in chemistry, Valparaiso University; doctor of medicine, Ohio State University; residency in family practice, Miami Valley Hospital, Dayton, Ohio

MARK PETERS IS a leader.

He is president and CEO of East Jefferson General Hospital, chairman of the Metropolitan Hospital Council of New Orleans and director of the board of the Coalition of Leaders for Louisiana Healthcare.

But rather than boast on his own achievements, Peters gives credit to the people around him for bringing EJJGH and the New Orleans health care community back from Katrina.

"East Jefferson has the same number of beds, the same amount of staff and the same grouping of services that we had pre-storm," Peters said. "I think that's a great tribute to this staff, whether that's the housekeeping person or the dietary person or the person in the back office that most people don't see."

Peters is especially grateful his staff has stayed and worked under circumstances that, at times, have been less than ideal.

"There isn't a health care worker who doesn't have other opportunities, either locally or elsewhere. The fact that we've been able to maintain our quality, to provide the full gamut of services under those circumstances ... I think everyone should be congratulated."

In addition to leading EJJGH, Peters is interested in improving the state's health care system. Through COLLAH, he and his colleagues intend to develop a health system redesign that will serve as an example for the nation.

"I appreciate the ability to be part of a group of people who are saying, 'How do we do things better?' We're not just interested in returning to how we've always done things."

But Peters knows COLLAH faces sizeable challenges and is realistic in his expectations.

"I know we won't solve everything. But we can at least provide a format for thought and discussion."•

— Christopher Snizik

photo by Frank Aymami



PROFESSIONAL

Dwayne Thomas

Position: CEO, Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans

Age: 50

Family: children, Brandon, 23, Dana, 19

Education: bachelor's degree in chemistry, Dillard University; doctor of medicine, Louisiana State University School of Medicine; master's degree in medical management, Tulane University School of Public Health

FOR MANY PEOPLE, career choices start coming into focus in the teenage years or even adulthood. But for Dr. Dwayne Thomas, the decision occurred much earlier.

"In second grade, I had to have a tonsillectomy, so my mother brought home a book about kids going to the doctor," Thomas said. "That became the spark, and soon I was asking for chemistry sets for Christmas."

After completing internal medical training with Ochsner Health System, Thomas went to the University of Florida for pulmonary and critical care training, eventually teaching and serving as assistant dean of minority relations. In 1995, he returned to New Orleans, where he helped develop the Ernest N. Morial Asthma, Allergy & Respiratory Disease Center, the first comprehensive center of its kind in Louisiana.

In 1997, Thomas accepted an offer to become medical director of Charity Hospital, where he became CEO in January 2002.

After Hurricane Katrina, Thomas faced the biggest challenge of his professional life — rebuilding an entire medical care facility from the ground up.

First, Thomas and his colleagues confronted the problem of providing health care from military tents on South



photo by Frank Aymami

Dr. Dwayne Thomas, CEO of the Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans talks Dr. John Hunt, trauma critical care, at University Hospital.

Johnson Street, reworking everything from setting up registration systems to managing patient care. After expanding services and moving into the Morial Convention Center - New Orleans, personnel became another difficult issue.

In building a new facility at the University Hospital campus, Thomas, like many in New Orleans, was left at the mercy of contractors and construction crews. When problems arose, people turned to Thomas for guidance.

"Sometimes, I think people assumed I was a descendent of David Copperfield and could magically make things hap-

pen. The expectations of my staff were tremendous, but we eventually made everything work."

Looking back on his post-Katrina accomplishments with an optimistic eye to the future, Thomas keeps an appropriate Chinese symbol on his door that translates, "Out of chaos comes order."

"That symbol captures what we've gone through. For me it's always been about the patients, and now it's great to see patients smiling and getting the care they need."•

— Thomas Leggett

VOLUNTEER

Elsie Olivier

Position: surgery hostess, West Jefferson Medical Center

Age: 80

Family: husband Philip; and children, Gwyn, 59, Philip, 54, Farley, 51

WHEN SERIOUS surgery is required, it is scary for the person undergoing the surgery, and their loved ones. The patient is sedated and often unconscious, while the loved ones remain in the waiting room, sometimes for hours, waiting to hear if the operation went well.

Since 1976, Elsie Olivier has volunteered her time as a surgery hostess at West Jefferson Medical Center, offering comfort and company to those awaiting the results of a loved one's operation.

She provides a sympathetic ear and conversation, while other times it is a drink and a snack. She even joins families in prayer.

And the wait can sometimes be so stressful for the families that the people waiting can become physically ill, which is when Olivier escorts them to the emergency room.

Olivier also brings messages to the fami-

lies. The news varies.

"We go through a lot of happy times and some sad times, too," said Olivier, a West Bank resident since 1955 who began volunteering after the birth of her first child. Her husband, Philip, joined her as a volunteer in 1986.

While Olivier has volunteered to comfort others for 30 years, her efforts have not gone unnoticed by the people she helps.

Several years ago, a family was so grateful for her kindness they treated her and her husband to a three-day weekend at Beau Rivage Hotel and Casino in Biloxi, Miss.

But more often than not, the volunteering provides its own reward.

"We help out families. It's the most rewarding thing."•

— Fritz Esker



photo by Frank Aymami

Volunteer Elsie Oliver gives good news to Don Victoriano about his wife who had surgery at West Jefferson Medical Center.

VOLUNTEER

Philip Olivier

Position: volunteer, West Jefferson Medical Center

Age: 84

Family: wife, Elsie; and children, Gwyn, 59, Philip III, 53, Farely, 51

Education: attended L.H. Marrero High School before joining the Army in 1942, received his general education degree after his discharge from the Army

SINCE RETIRING FROM Chevron in 1990, Philip Olivier has dedicated his time to helping families cope with critical surgery procedures at West Jefferson Medical Center. Olivier said he began his volunteer work helping his wife, Elsie, in the Women's Auxiliary at the hospital.

"I was the first male member of the auxiliary before they opened it up completely to men," Olivier said. "It felt a little funny at the time, being the only guy in a group of women, but I didn't let it bother me. I felt like I was really doing something meaningful."

Olivier said volunteering is his new full-time job. He works an eight-hour shift behind the desk of the critical surgery care center.

"The main part of my day is taking care of families who have relatives or friends that are undergoing some type of serious surgery. My job is to make them feel as comfortable as possible."

Olivier said he comes in contact with a range of people

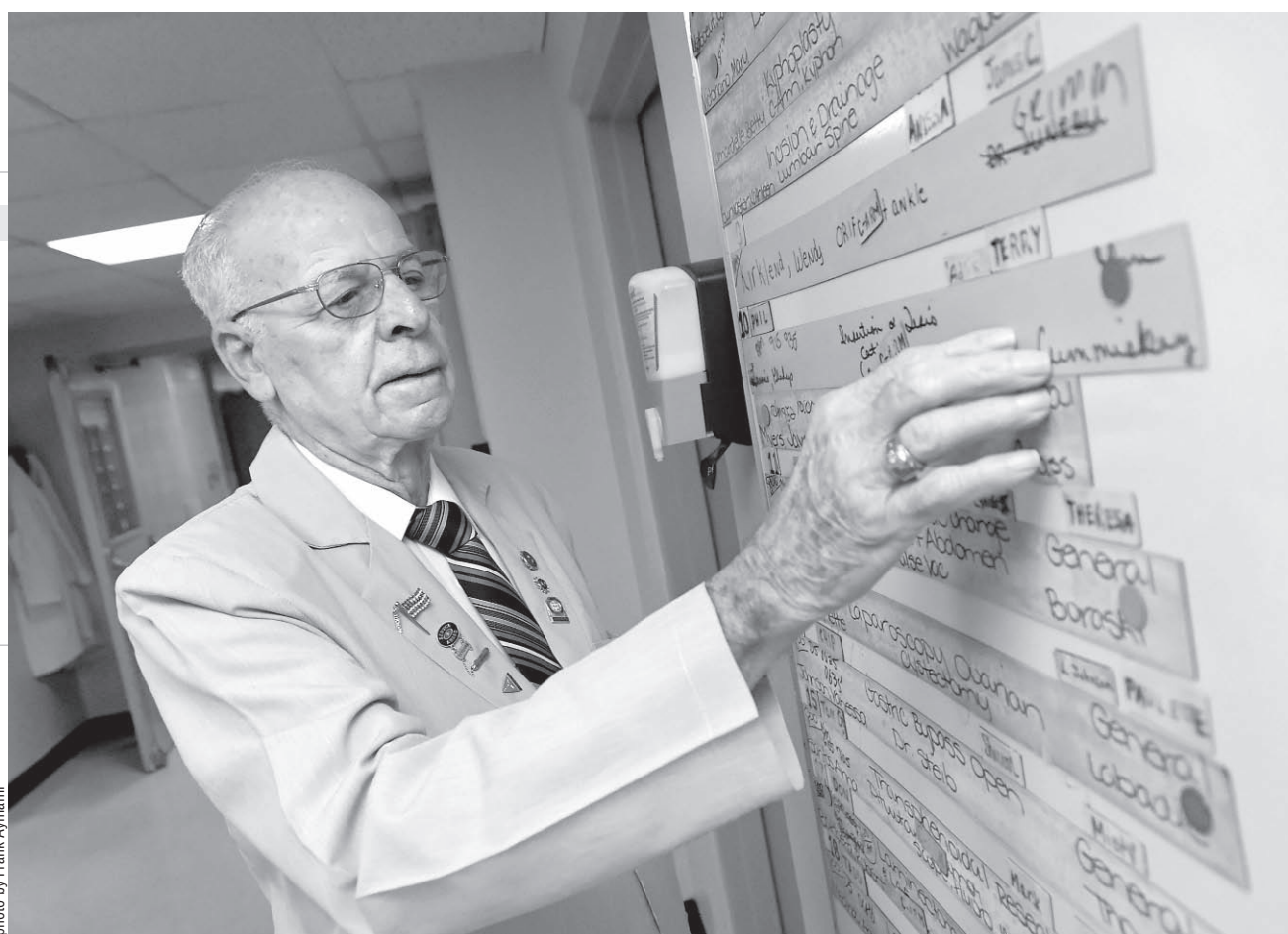


photo by Frank Aymami

with a variety of quirks and said it takes a specific type of personality to deal with some of these people.

"Ofentimes, people are not acting like themselves. It is sometimes very difficult for some family members to deal with what is happening because there are occasions where the patients don't make it. It's all about keeping them comfortable."

Olivier said he has spent 18 years on the job because he

gets great joy from helping other people, and it gets him out of the house on a regular basis.

"I would just rather be on the giving end than on the receiving end. I tell people that if you are a person who is retired and all you do is sit at home and stare at four walls, you're just waiting for the undertaker. You got to get out and do something."•

— Robin Shannon

VOLUNTEER

Theresa Trosclair

Position: coordinator, Catholic Chaplaincy Team volunteers; Pastoral Care department, Touro Infirmary

Age: 85

Family: children, Brenda, 67, Mark, 58, Beth, 55; seven grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren

Education: chaplain training, Baptist Hospital

FOR THE PAST 28 years, Tessie Trosclair has made the 55-mile roundtrip ride from Norco to New Orleans three times a week to provide care for those who most need it—and it hasn't earned her a dime.

As a key part of Touro's Pastoral Care department, Trosclair has logged more than 6,000 volunteer hours since 1989, working with the Rev. Doug Brougher, Touro's Catholic chaplain. But when it comes to hours, Trosclair isn't counting.

"Sometimes you just wind up where you know you're needed," Trosclair said.

Ministering to long- and short-term patients often facing serious and distressing health circumstances, she visits people at all hours of the day, sometimes even making house calls. With each patient, the number of people in need of care increases exponentially. Often, it's the families of patients who need the most care.

"The other day some teenagers' mother had died, and they were in the hallway beating on the walls. They need-



photo by Frank Aymami

Touro Infirmary volunteer Tessie Trosclair visits with patient Ron Cheek.

ed someone to tell them it was going to be OK."

Trosclair's colleagues have recognized her for her limitless energy and tireless commitment. Named Touro's Volunteer of the Year in 2003 and recipient of the New Orleans Saints' Quarterback Award for Volunteerism in 2004, she's still motivated by a simple guiding principle.

"I always try to put myself in the other person's shoes. I talk to people, encourage them and tell them the Lord will take care of them."

At age 85, Trosclair quotes the Book of Jeremiah when speaking of the future and harbors only one fear. Asked if she ever feels reluctant to make the long trip into the city for work that offers no financial reward, she defined her efforts as a calling God provides her the strength to continue.

"I dread the day I can't go to Touro anymore to do this work, but I know the Lord will take care of that part, too."•

— Thomas Leggett

VOLUNTEER

Jessie Williams

Position: retired nurse, Harry Tompson Center

Age: 78

Family: widow; children, Norva, 56, Harold, 54, Dallas, 47, Bridgette, 44

Education: registered nurse, Charity Hospital School of Nursing

FOR JESSIE WILLIAMS, a volunteer intake and triage nurse at the Harry Tompson Center, the question that often reveals a client's greatest need isn't "Where does it hurt?" but "Where do you live?"

"You ask for the address and they'll say, 'Well, I'm homeless. I live right over there under the bridge,'" said Williams, a retired registered nurse who worked for 30 years in local hospitals.

Next to getting prescriptions filled, help with finding a place to live is probably the most common request among the people Williams sees at the center, which provides a variety of services for the poor and homeless in downtown New Orleans, from laundry facilities to referrals for legal aid. So besides getting patients' medical histories, taking their blood pressure and other vital signs, and preparing them to see the onsite nurse practitioner, Williams often refers clients to the social worker on duty for housing assistance.

Many of those who walk through the center's doors are also looking for a compassionate listener.

"Sometimes when they come in, they want to talk



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

about what's bothering them."

Williams, mother-in-law of the center's executive director, Don Thompson, began volunteering there a couple of months after it opened Sept. 11.

Before her retirement, Williams spent six years as a licensed practical nurse at Charity Hospital before returning

to school for her registered nurse credentials. She then spent 24 years at the Veterans Administration Hospital.

What makes her happiest about the work she does now is simply "to say that maybe I'm making a difference — helping somebody."•

— Sonya Stinson

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