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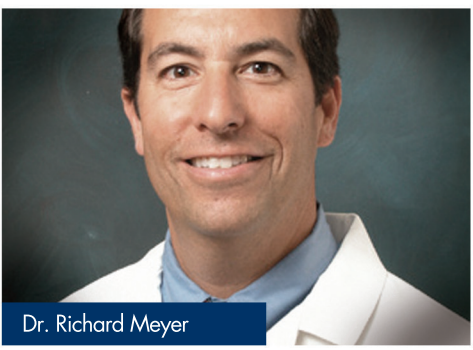
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2006 honorees Innovator of the Year

Innovators

Gold Award:

Turbo Squid

Silver Award:

Home Automation Inc.

Benjamin Taylor and Associates

Coastal Environments Inc.

DHAC Inc.

East Jefferson General Hospital

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 West Jefferson Medical Center/Jefferson Community Health Care Centers
 West Jefferson Medical Center Support Services Facility and Energy Center
 West Jefferson Medical Center CyberKnife Center

Education

Archbishop Rummel
 Delgado Community College

Nonprofit

Katrina Krewe
 Kingsley House
 Operation Restoration
 Youthanasia Foundation Inc.

On the Brink

Duct Saddle
 Thermo Faucets
 LabOpsROI



WAYNE REED

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2007 Innovator of the Year

Introduction



Christian Moises
Associate Editor

CORRUPTION CASES, rampant crime and a slow recovery from Hurricane Katrina continue to overshadow the positive steps being made in south Louisiana.

Despite a flow of large businesses out of the area over the past several years, many new — and creative — companies have established roots in New Orleans.

New Orleans CityBusiness has recognized 59 of those businesses in its 2007 Innovator of the Year program for innovative products and services based on forward thinking.

Criteria such as key innovation, time in the marketplace, sales and client base were considered in the selection process.

An increase in Innovator nominations from 2006 is encouraging and proves New Orleans remains a creative place to foster new ideas.

Thirty-five Innovators are recognized today for proven success in the marketplace and creative approaches to business. Honorees range from electronic document backups and Web-based

appointment systems to garbage collection.

The 10 honorees selected as Innovative Investors spent a more than \$9 million combined to bring the latest medical technologies and services to New Orleans-area patients.

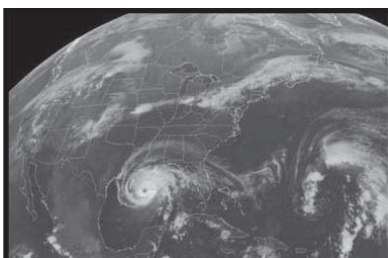
Seven nonprofits are honored today for introducing methods to foster new business, help existing companies return or provide help to recovering residents.

The seven On the Brink honorees have shown entrepreneurial hope and impressive starts. They are on the radar for their potential impact on the business landscape.

Several honorees temporarily relocated after Hurricane Katrina but have moved back. Others are still unable return but plan to in the near future.

CityBusiness thanks each of them for their innovative contributions to marketplace and their commitment to the New Orleans area.

Congratulations to the 59 honorees of CityBusiness' Innovator of the Year 2007 program. •



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2007
Innovator
of the Year Gold Award

SDT Waste & Debris Services LLC



PHOTO BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFFER

Sidney Torres, owner of SDT Waste & Debris Services, chats with James Johnson, an SDT worker, about the morning drives through the French Quarter.

Key innovation: a complete approach to waste removal; significant improvements in the cleanliness of the French Quarter

Biggest client: City of New Orleans

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Sidney Torres, owner

Year introduced: 2006

2006 sales: \$20 million

While many businesses have emerged in post-Katrina New Orleans, one literally turned trash into a multi-million-dollar treasure.

Just weeks after Katrina, developer Sidney Torres purchased a garbage truck, two Dumpsters and slapped his name and phone number on the side of them.

Two years later, SDT Waste & Debris Services has more than 50 trucks, 80 employees and more than \$20

million in annual revenue.

SDT is noted for its success in keeping the French Quarter clean, a task that has seemed impossible in the past. Twice-a-day pickups combined with a desire to do a thorough job have resounded throughout the community. SDT has contracts with neighboring parishes and more than 4,000 commercial clients.

"I'm very satisfied with SDT. They run about 20 30-yard Dumpsters through here on the docks and are heads above the other people I had service-wise," said David Clements, equipment manager at Coastal Cargo.

Torres credits SDT's success to old-fashioned hard work and a genuine concern to do the job right. By making himself available to his employees and often working side-by-side with them, Torres said that care has trickled down to the streets and areas SDT services.

"I pick up the litter and the garbage with them. They see that I care. It's not just that they're going to pick up the garbage and I'm going to collect the checks. I think it's

noticed by them and in turn, they do the great job they do," Torres said.

SDT is also known for its glitzy and stylish image, something uncommon in the waste removal business. Shiny black trucks, well-dressed employees, slogans, jingles and television commercials all helped make the company a household name.

Torres said the company's hefty advertising budget and expenditures on its image slice into profits, but he's more interested in building and maintaining a strong image for SDT. The company's rise from a relatively unknown company to a waste removal powerhouse has been noted in national media such as the *The Wall Street Journal* and *CNBC*.

"You go the extra mile. I always like to overdo it. We want to let everyone know that we are here to stay and we're going to give them 100 percent to get the job done," Torres said. •

— Craig Guillot

2007
Innovator
of the Year Silver Award

Drivesoft LLC

Ken innovation: touch screen in-car computer
Biggest clients: audio stores
Where they're based: Metairie
Top executive: Jack Cali
Year introduced: created in 1998, brought to market in 2001
2006 sales: about \$1 million

In 1995, long before iPods and MP3 files were mainstream, car audio store owner Jack Cali was tinkering with digital music.

He and friends swapped hard drives with music files, but Cali wanted a way to put his whole catalog of music in his vehicle. Assembling a PC motherboard with a screen and a 12-volt power supply, Cali created his own in-car digital jukebox at a time when most people didn't even know what digital music was.

"I knew that I was actually building something that other people would like. I just didn't know if it would actually take off. When I first put it in my vehicle, it was for personal reasons only," he said.

In the late 1990s, as big box stores such as Best Buy and Circuit City started to take away business from small car audio stores, Cali needed a product the stores didn't have.

He honed his creation, enlisted the help of an engineer and soon had an in-car computer with its own operating system and Drivesoft driver friendly software. When the product debuted at a car audio show in Las Vegas in 2000, he had more than 3,500 responses from dealers and vendors.

Cali's product, the Drivesoft Alive Automotive Linked-in Vehicle Entertainment, features much more than Mp3 capabilities, including a DVD player, TV tuner, navigation tools, e-mail and Internet access, and mobile office functions including the ability to access Excel files, Word documents and databases. The unit features a touch screen, remote control and can respond to voice commands.

In its early stages, Cali's customers were mainly celebrities and high-end car audio enthusiasts through West Coast Customs, a Los Angeles-based custom auto shop. When MTV started producing the show "Pimp my Ride" at West Coast Customs, Drivesoft was introduced to millions of viewers.

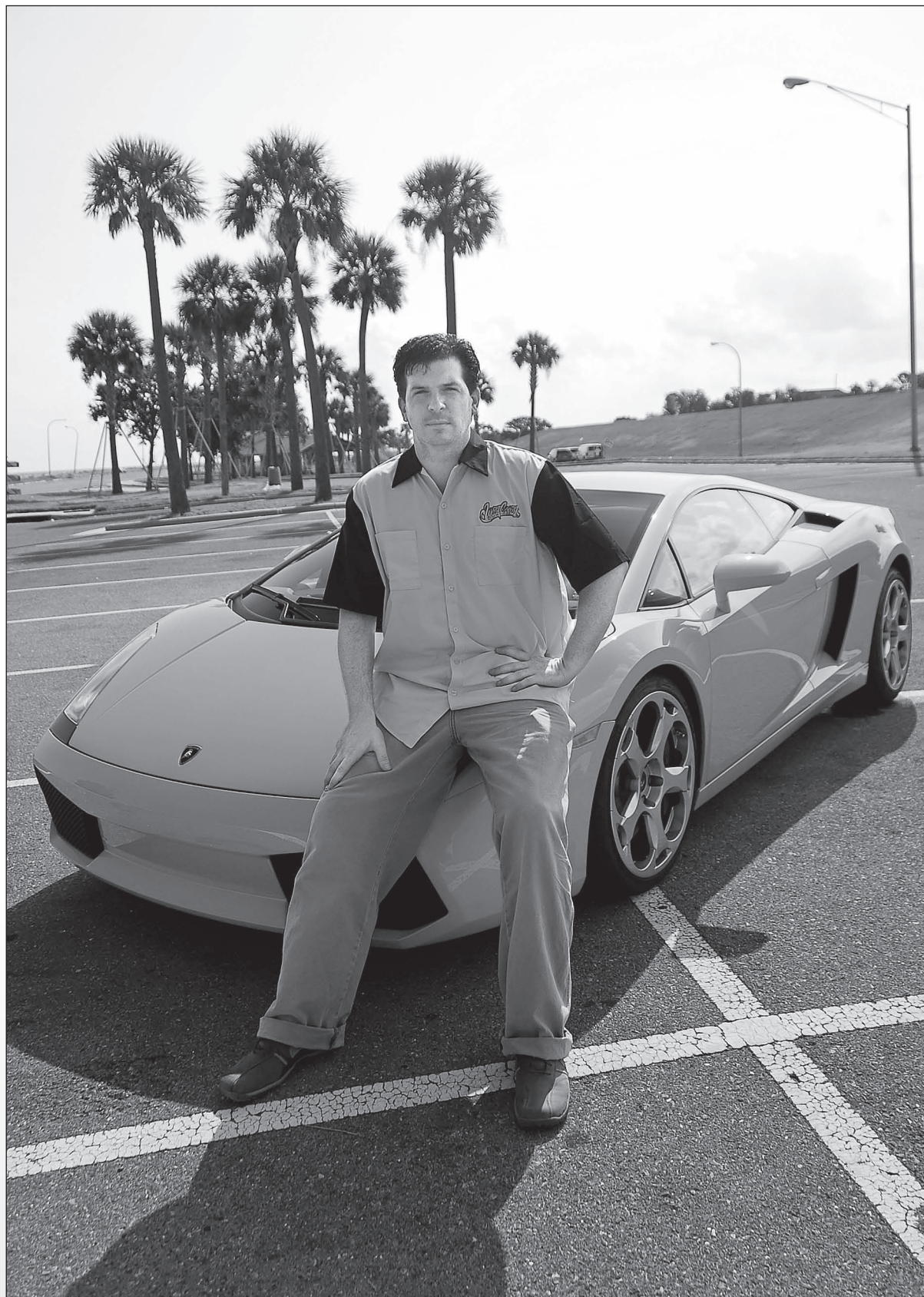
New Drivesoft units cost between \$4,500 and \$5,000 and are sold at audio stores nationwide.

Cali said with the help of the TV show "Pimp my Ride," the Drivesoft name has outgrown the company. That's good but he cannot keep up with production and distribution yet.

He is in talks with a large-scale retailer in Canada and hopes to have Drivesoft products in stores alongside Pioneer and Alpine car audio components.

Since bringing the product to market in 2001, Drivesoft has sold about 4,000 units. •

— Craig Guillot



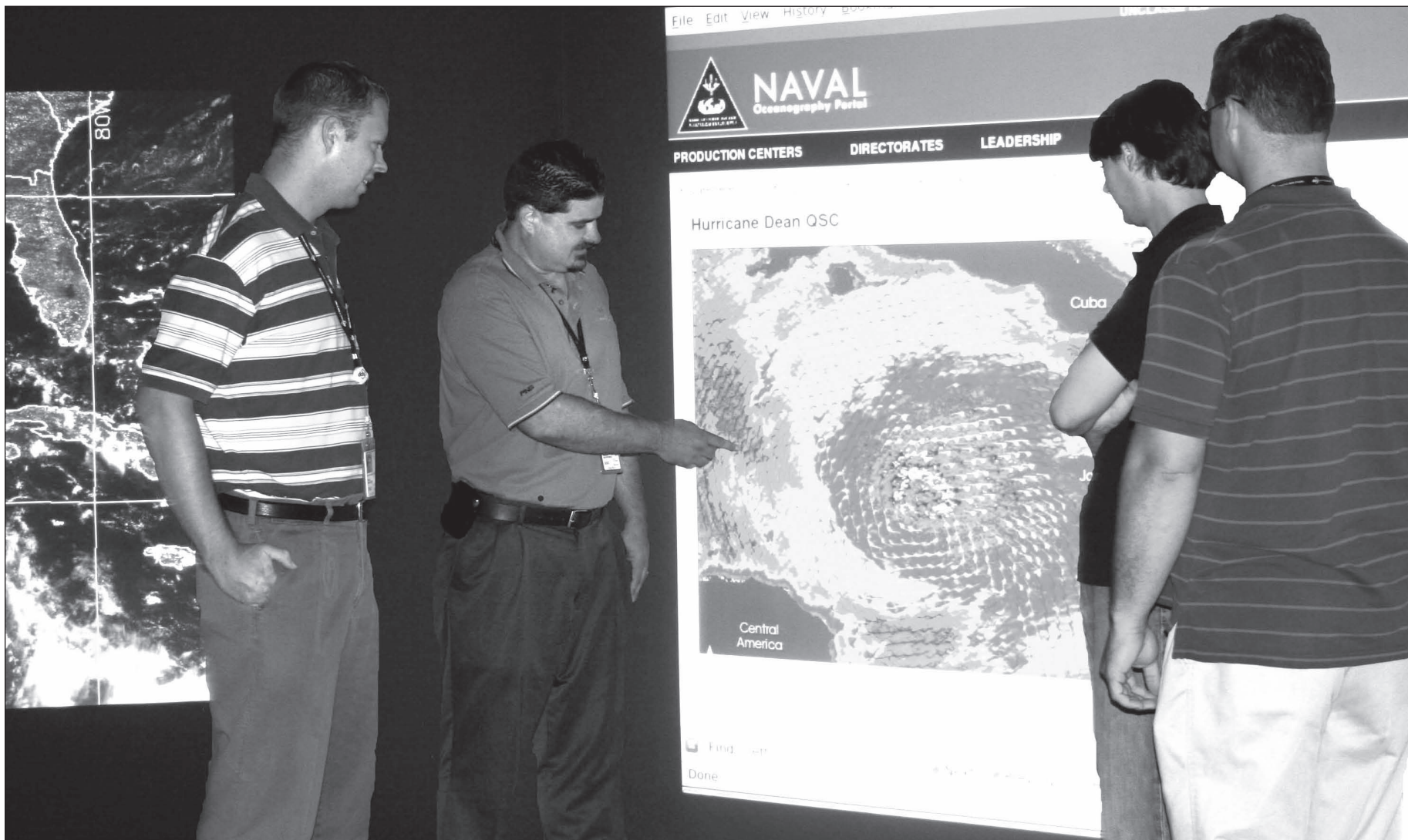
Jack Cali, CEO of Drivesoft LLC, has had his in-car digital music system featured on MTV's "Pimp My Ride" and is in talks with big-box retailers.

2007

Innovator
of the Year

Bronze Award

Diamond Data Systems Inc.



Diamond Data Systems team members, from left: Paul Williams, lead technical engineer; Keith Alphonso, project director; Josh Penton, software engineer; and Drew Whitfield, developer, view wind field data from Hurricane Dean on the Naval Oceanography Portal.

Key innovation: revolutionized meteorological and oceanographic data systems for U.S. Navy
Biggest clients: U.S. Navy, U.S. Department of Agriculture, NASA, Hornbeck Offshore
Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executive: Rick Gremillion, president
Year introduced: 1992
2006 revenue: more than \$9 million

Since Diamond Data Systems began working for its first client, Ochsner Hospital, in 1992, the company has focused on results.

"We provide services, so people are our products," said President Rick Gremillion. "We have a good, knowledgeable staff who perform their jobs well."

Commitment to that philosophy carried Diamond Data Systems through the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina when management kept all 80 employees on the payroll despite reduced revenue.

"It hasn't always been easy, but we're proud to invest in the

local economy and help rebuild New Orleans," Gremillion said.

With business split evenly between commercial and federal clients, Diamond Data Systems has made its name through software and network engineering, information technology staffing, network and IT security, technology consulting and database administration.

Gremillion said all his company's services result in more efficient businesses, but a project called the Naval Oceanography Portal, completed for the U.S. Navy at Stennis Space Center, can directly affect U.S. war efforts.

The NOP system designed by Diamond Data Systems will consolidate meteorological and oceanographic information to aid military personnel in making tactical decisions such as beach landings, submarine navigation and submarine stealth operations.

"An aspect of the project took more than 100 different Web sites and compiled them into a single portal," said Joe Berry, marketing director. "This could greatly simplify military decisions by reducing the amount of time it takes to acquire information."

Project director Keith Alphonso said Diamond Data Systems took an existing technology — content management

systems for quick Web publishing — and applied it to U.S. Navy systems.

"Our system allows dissemination of data through a single Web site, which makes the publishing and acquisition of information easier and more cost effective," Alphonso said.

This means the U.S. Navy now has a single point of presence that is easily searchable.

"The Navy wants to utilize the knowledge of its meteorological and oceanographic experts in real time all over the world," Alphonso said. "This will certainly benefit the war effort."

Pride in helping the war effort extends throughout the company.

"We like working on this project because it could make decisions happen faster and therefore benefit war efforts around the world," Gremillion said.

Gremillion said he has seen companies such as Diamond Data Systems come and go, and he's proud his company is still strong, its first client still with them after 15 years.

"Ochsner is still our client, which speaks for itself," he said. "What sets us apart is that we'll always work hard to be a results-based company."•

— Thomas Leggett

Advanced Imaging Solutions

Key innovation: transferring and preserving paper documents to digital

Biggest clients: oil and gas companies

Where they're based: Metairie

Top executive: Lynne Smith, president

Year introduced: 1992

2006 sales: would not disclose

Among the damage left in Katrina's wake was the destruction and loss of records — the paper documentation of companies and individuals that give definition to a business or a life.

"There probably is nothing that is more important to the functionality of a business than its paper," said Alvin G. Keene, president of the Information Management Institute in Maine.

Businesses throughout the New Orleans metro area and Gulf South lost records to Hurricane Katrina.

"Something like that, unless there is a storage of records at another location, is just about the worst thing that can happen to a business," said Lynne Smith, president of the Metairie-based Advanced Imaging Solutions.

To solve that problem, Smith spearheaded a movement to get companies and businesses to abandon their historic reliance on paper in favor of electronic documentation.

Providing hardware and software solutions for records management, Advanced Imaging Solutions' mission is to "convert all paper records into digital."

"And as such data is being backed up, the business or person in question is also creating a non-destructible version of their documentation which they can then use as part of a larger disaster recovery plan," Smith said.

Launched in 1992 when Smith said most potential clients "needed to be convinced that this was a needed service," Advanced Imaging Solutions specializes in information storage and management solutions.

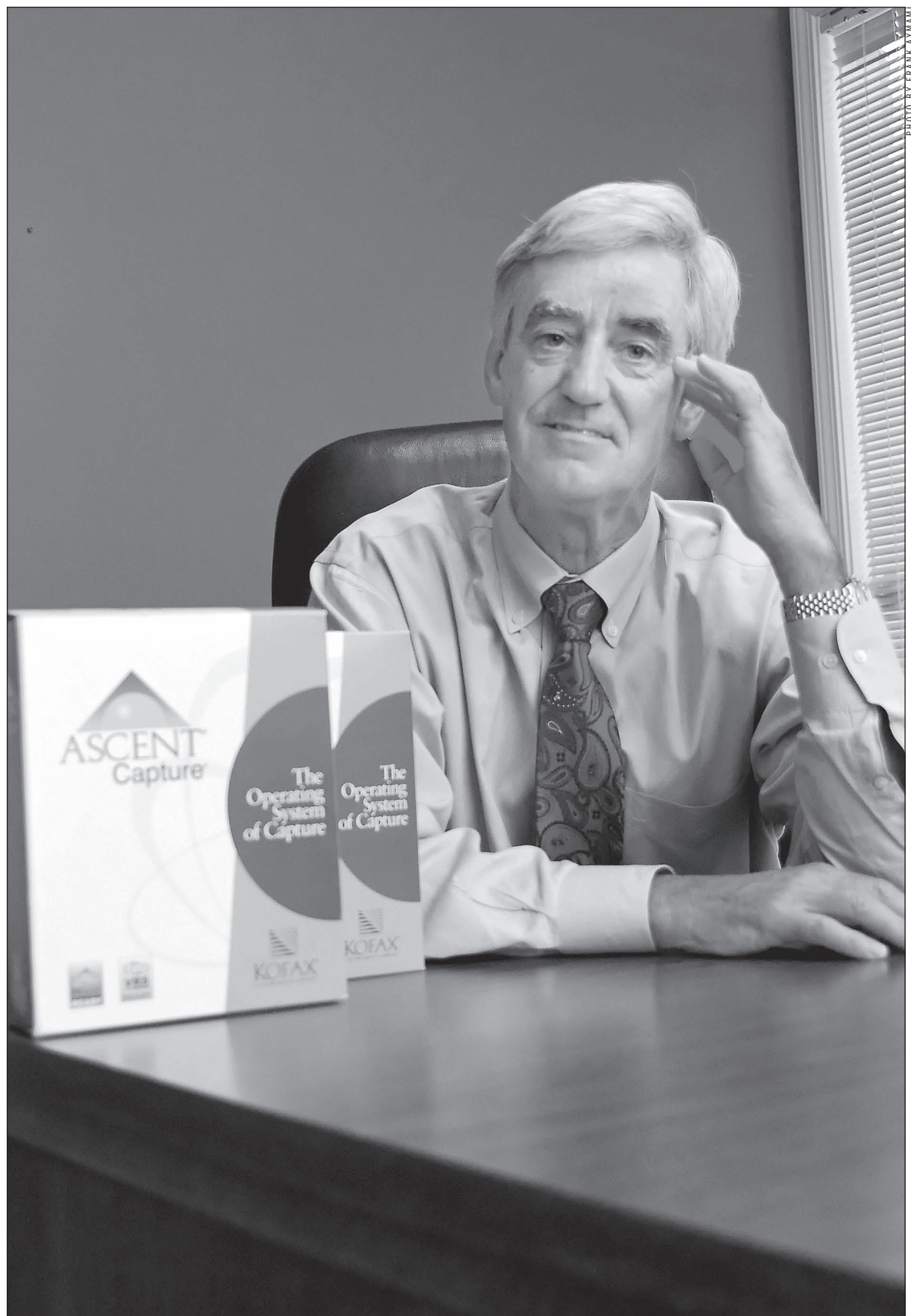
The company also offers a service called Backstop.

"Our customers send a backup tape once a month or once a quarter to a facility run by one of our software providers in Ohio," Smith said. "During Katrina, they were able to retrieve the documents on these tapes with no trouble at all through the Web site from this particular service."

Micrographics, digital scanners, and imaging and workflow software, among other technologies, capture and preserve the vital records of client base that Smith said "divides across any number of market segments."

Those segments include nonprofits, major players in the oil and gas industry and government agencies at the federal, state and municipal level — all sharing a common desire to preserve their records, even if, Smith said, "they have to do it in the face of the greatest adversity."•

— Garry Boulard



Lynne Smith, president of Advanced Imaging Solutions, displays some of the company's software to help businesses move to electronic documentation.

Aqua2Go — Esgee Enterprises



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Sales of Aqua2Go, created by Esgee Enterprises founder and owner Stacey Griffin, help finance children's charity groups and storm recovery.

Key innovation: 100 percent purified water packaged in a juice box

Biggest client: Winn-Dixie

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Stacey Griffin, founder and owner

Year introduced: 2006

2006 sales: \$2,000 for the four weeks it was on market

Packaging water in a juice box was an idea people had conceived before. But before Stacey Griffin's Esgee Enterprises invented Aqua2Go, no one had made it available for purchase at grocery stores.

What's more, sales of Aqua2Go finance children's charity organizations and helped the recovery of post-Katrina New Orleans.

"I've owned a children's psychiatric facility for seven years

so I'm a social worker," Griffin said. "It's been my day job for 12 years and my primary passion."

Griffin conceived a marriage that coupled her 1995 degree in social work from Tulane University and an innovative product.

Since Aqua2Go hit the market in December, its sales have benefited up to 20 charity organizations such as the Make-a-Wish Foundation, the Oprah Winfrey Boys and Girls Club and KaBoom, a group dedicated to rebuilding playgrounds dismantled by Katrina.

Griffin has also donated Aqua2Go shipments for fundraising events.

"The way I thought of marrying my social work with this new sales field involved charity organizations geared toward helping children or the post-Katrina situation because I lived in New Orleans."

Her original psychiatric facility was claimed in the floodwaters from the 17th Street Canal levee breach.

Adding to Aqua2Go's innovation is a marketing plan that

hasn't cost Griffin "50 cents." She relies mostly on publicity through magazines such as Entrepreneur Magazine and CityBusiness and local television spots.

Aqua2Go was thrust onto the national scene with free airtime from New Orleans native and talk show host Ellen DeGeneres.

Griffin wrote to the show about her invention, and DeGeneres responded by parodying Justin Timberlake's "In a box" skit from Saturday Night Live to millions of daytime viewers. Thousands more discovered the product via the segment's placement on YouTube.

"I thought she'd wrote it originally and couldn't get over how nice it was," Griffin said. "But then I found it was an SNL parody, and then it was just hilarious."

Aqua2Go's aseptic packaging and reverse osmosis process promises a five-year shelf life and requires no special storage conditions. •

— Ramon Vargas

Barker Homes

Biggest innovation: on-site home built to withstand hurricane-force winds and resist termites

Where they're based: Arabi

Top executive: Carol Barker, president

Year introduced: 2006

2006 sales: would not disclose

Barker Homes President Carol Barker had a simple mission after Hurricane Katrina: Get people back in homes.

To achieve her goal, Barker Homes designed their flagship model, the T-130, which can withstand hurricane-force winds and be elevated from 3 to 9 feet to avoid flooding. The T-130s also have a solid-steel foundation system that is termite resistant.

Barker said the T-130 is not a modular home, even though it can be built quickly. Modular homes are shipped from a factory or warehouse in pieces and assembled at the site, while a Barker home is built entirely on site.

A home with an elevation of 3 feet can be built in 11 weeks. Customers can visit the Arabi offices and make selections on a computer at the office. Barker then can give people an estimate on how much to home will cost and how long it will take to build.

"When you get the keys to your house, everything but your furniture will be in your home," Barker said. "We have the process really streamlined."

Because the homes are similarly designed, Barker Homes can buy materials such as doors, cabinets and archways in bulk. Additionally, the construction process is more efficient because Barker Homes employs contractors who work exclusively for them and therefore aren't tied up on other projects.

Even though the homes are similar in design, Barker said the company tries to provide an intimate feel. All the homes have porches and a complimentary porch swing, accessories Barker remembers fondly from her own childhood in New Orleans.

Barker's ties to the community also influence her interactions with the customers.

"We really care about the community and have committed ourselves to bringing the community back," Barker said. "A lot of people are scared and don't know what to do. We try to help them through the process," Barker said, adding that the company walks clients through the entire process and provides regular updates throughout the construction period.

For Patricia Phoenix, whose Barker Home will be completed in Violet at the beginning of October, Barker Homes has been a godsend.

"Everything's been going along great," Phoenix said. •

— Fritz Esker



Barker Homes, led by President Carol Barker, introduced the T-130 home, which can withstand hurricane-force winds and termites.

The Biodiesel Resource

Key innovation: selling equipment necessary to create biodiesel

Biggest client: Harlon's LA Fish

Where they're based: Belle Chasse

Top executive: George Wilson, president

Year introduced: April 2006

2006 sales: would not disclose

As concerns about the environment grow and gas costs in New Orleans flirt with \$3 a gallon, The Biodiesel Resource strives to provide New Orleans businesses with biodiesel, a more environmentally friendly brand of diesel fuel.

While studying business at the University of Montana, George Wilson, president and founder of The Biodiesel Resource, discovered the university's bus system ran on biodiesel fuel.

"I can't believe there's nobody in New Orleans doing this," said Wilson, recalling his thoughts when he learned about the biodiesel buses.

After his epiphany, Wilson formed his company, which manufactures and sells processors that make biodiesel fuel. Biodiesel is made from vegetable oil through a transfiguration process that extracts elements from the oil to create fuel. Biodiesel can be used in vehicles that use diesel fuel, such as big trucks and heavy equipment.

"Gas gets you from your home to your office, but diesel keeps your business going," Wilson said.

Biodiesel has a number of advantages. It is biodegradable, non-toxic and produces significantly less emissions than standard diesel fuel. Additionally, it decreases the country's dependence on foreign oil.

Wilson said it makes vehicles run smoother and last longer because of its qualities as a solvent, which enables it to clean out gunk in the fuel system.

"It's like taking apart your motor, scrubbing it down and putting it back together," he said.

Biodiesel is significantly cheaper than regular fuel. Wilson said it can be produced for 70 cents a gallon, making it less vulnerable to the price fluctuations that have plagued the petroleum industry.

Wilson, who hopes to make his own fuel in the future, said his biggest battle so far is educating the public.

"There's just not that much knowledge out there (about biodiesel)," Wilson said, adding that many people incorrectly believe they have to significantly alter their vehicle to use biodiesel.

"It cuts your costs dramatically," said Harlon Pearce, founder and president of Harlon's LA Fish and chairman of the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board. In addition to using biodiesel for his business, Pearce is working to secure grants to give local fisherman access to the cheaper fuel for their boats.

"The state needs it badly, especially with what energy costs are," said Pearce. •

— Fritz Esker



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

George Wilson, president of The Biodiesel Resource, which provides equipment to create environmentally friendly fuel, plans to begin mass producing biodiesel soon.

COMPAS — East Jefferson General Hospital



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Bernie Clement, left, chief information officer of East Jefferson Hospital, reviews patient records on the hospital's Clinical Operations Management Patient Access System, with Chief Operating Officer and nurse executive Janice Kishner and Chief Financial Officer Bruce Maremore.

Key innovation: paperless patient records
Where they're based: Metairie
Top executive: Kevan Simms, program manager
Year introduced: 2006
2006 sales: not applicable

Anyone who has ever checked into a hospital knows the process can be a maze of paperwork as the patient goes from department to department.

However, East Jefferson General Hospital debuted its Clinical Operations Management Patient Access System, in July 2006 to create paperless patient records.

Before COMPAS was initiated, there were separate systems for patient access, health information management,

patient billing and collections, clinical documentation, ordering and repository, emergency department, pharmacy and surgery.

Now, all systems are integrated, preventing patient information from being stuck to a chart that is passed from department to department. Patients won't have to be asked the same questions as they go from one department to the next.

"All of the information is available to all of the caregivers simultaneously," said Bernie Clement, chief information officer for East Jefferson's COMPAS System.

If a patient's information is incomplete, the system informs the person entering the data right away so it can be immediately corrected (if someone forgot to enter a piece of information on a paper chart, the mistake might go unnoticed for some time).

It also informs caregivers of any allergies a patient has or

any medications the patient is taking to prevent harmful interactions with any drugs a physician may prescribe.

The system also tracks every patient visit. As a result, physicians can see any trends in a patient's lab results may occur over time. Reports are generated frequently and safeguards protect against crashes.

"If the system goes down, we can still print out reports for all of the patients in house," Clement said. Data backups are made nightly and an off-site vendor can provide downtime services in a major emergency.

The system is at East Jefferson now, but Clement said he plans to work with other health care providers in the region on an information exchange system.

"The big first step was to get electronic and the next step is to get together with other health organizations."•

— Fritz Esker

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www.EJGH.org

East Jefferson General Hospital

Crais Management LLC



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

David Crais, president of Crais Management Group, displays several medical supplies he's helped develop and market.

Key innovation: comprehensive turnkey approach to launching technology startups
Biggest client: Cost Segregation Services LLC, a Baton Rouge engineering consulting firm
Where they're based: Madisonville
Top executive: David Crais, president
Year introduced: 2004
2006 sales: would not disclose

While other small business consultants focus on a particular service such as product development, marketing or raising capital, the Crais Management Group offers assistance in all of these areas, according to President David Crais.

After several years of working in medical equipment sales and development for companies in New Jersey and Los

Angeles, Crais returned to the New Orleans area in 2004 to launch his own firm for technology startups. Crais' primary interest has been in companies developing disruptive technologies, or products designed to restructure the way a business operates.

"I try and stay with things that are innovative: engineered products, some software, but mainly a physical product of some sort," Crais said.

The firm's largest client, Cost Segregation Services of Baton Rouge, conducts engineering studies to assist companies seeking to accelerate depreciation of their facilities under Internal Revenue Service guidelines.

For some clients, Crais Management Group provides consulting services on an hourly basis. Other arrangements have been what Crais calls co-development partnerships, in which he serves as an executive in a startup venture.

Thomas Prager, who last year named Crais president of his startup, the Digital Health Assessment Center in

Houston, said the management company helped provide connections to key people in the medical technology field.

DHAC developed a software system for monitoring patients' health with applications for large-scale employers, health plan evaluators and clinicians. Although Crais Management is no longer affiliated with DHAC, and Prager said a plan for Crais to raise venture capital for the company did not bear fruit, he said, "He's a very knowledgeable individual."

Crais has also made a foray into the technical side of the film industry, working with companies such as Emerald Bayou Studios of Baton Rouge. He said such diversification is necessary in a state where the medical technology industry remains relatively small.

"There are 300 different medical device companies in southern California, and there are about 11 in the entire state of Louisiana, so you've got to be a little bit flexible" to have a viable consulting business, Crais said. •

— Sonya Stinson

E-Claim.com

Key innovation: Web-based process for quickly handling insurance claims

Biggest clients: independent adjusting firms

Where they're based: Gretna

Top executive: Thomas Brown, president and founder

Year introduced: 1999

2006 sales: about \$500,000

Thomas Brown claims no powers of clairvoyance, but an ability to anticipate what he calls “the potential of electronic technology” prompted him to launch a Web-based service that saved headaches for thousands of people after Hurricane Katrina.

“The response has been phenomenal,” Brown said of E-Claim.com, a Gretna-based company he started in 1999 with the idea of offering Internet solutions to claims market associ-

ations as well as businesses.

Even more splendid has been the reaction to a product launched three years ago under the E-Claim umbrella — ClickClaims, which streamlines the claims process by making it entirely electronic.

“Everything in the insurance claim business revolves around paper, with numerous redundancies of data being passed around and re-entered at multiple points,” Brown said. “It is obviously something that frustrates almost everyone involved.”

Instead, ClickClaims, geared toward insurance adjusting firms as well as their carriers, eliminates the mountain of paperwork by processing the information and allowing claims to be processed at a more efficient rate.

“The first year we launched this particular application there were more than 300 adjusters who used it,” Brown said. “By the second year, that number was more than 1,000.”

With a client base growing by more than 400 percent, Brown said he would not be surprised if anywhere from

3,000 to 4,000 adjusters use his company’s software by the end of this year.

As more adjusters log on to ClickClaims, more people will see claims quickly settled after a major disaster.

“That was very much a factor after Katrina,” Brown said.

Should another storm such as Katrina hit, Brown estimates ClickClaims could easily handle anywhere from 25,000 to 100,000 claims in a 24-hour period.

“The process is completely paperless,” Brown said. “And when you eliminate paper from the process, you are also eliminating the need to have a localized catastrophe operations center.”

ClickClaims can be used anywhere, not just in the exact area of the disaster.

“The entire operation becomes a virtual operation that can be initiated immediately,” Brown said. “And that means that the claims adjuster can also send out checks to homeowners a lot quicker, which I know people really like.”•

— Garry Boulard



E-Claim.com President and founder Thomas Brown introduced ClickClaims three years ago, an electronic system to process more insurance claims at a higher rate of efficiency.

PHOTO BY FRANK AYAMI

The Equestrian Therapy Center



PHOTO BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFER

Dr. Beverly Stubblefield, center, leads Lucie Davis and Ricky Alonzo in couple therapy with JR, a Smoothy Scotch American quarter horse.

Key innovation: using horses in the treatment of emotional and behavioral disorders

Where they're based: Slidell

Top executive: Beverly Stubblefield, founder

Year introduced: 2006

2006 sales: not applicable (equestrian therapy figures are not separated from general clinical psychology practice)

The Equestrian Therapy Center of Slidell specializes in a relatively new field known as equine-assisted psychotherapy, which borrows some ideas from another therapeutic outdoor activity that came into vogue in the 1960s.

“Remember those ropes courses?” asked founder and clinical psychologist Beverly Stubblefield. “It’s the same kind of thing. It’s teambuilding, communication, trust.”

In this case, the team — and the bond — formed is

between the emotionally troubled patient and an animal that presents a challenging and confidence-building encounter. Stubblefield, a longtime horse lover, came up with the idea for the Equestrian Therapy Center as a way to help some of her hard-to-reach teenage clients learn to express their feelings and work through their problems.

Equestrian assisted psychotherapy is distinct from hippotherapy, horseback riding to help the physically handicapped. The therapy deals with problems such as anxiety, eating disorders and attention deficit disorder. Stubblefield has treated several clients for post-traumatic stress disorder since Hurricane Katrina.

“There’s one little kid I’ve been working with since the storm because (his family) was in their house when it flooded and he was quite traumatized,” Stubblefield said. “In learning to ride, he felt a sense of mastery and peace.”

Dana Unger, a horse expert and yoga instructor in Folsom who took EAP training classes with Stubblefield in Lafayette last spring, said the method is very effective.

“You’re in a unique situation with an animal that has the ability to reflect emotions and attitudes, and in which the animal and the client work it out,” Unger said. “You’re not standing there telling someone what they need to do. They get it through the process.”

While the model of the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association calls for a mental health professional and a horse expert to collaborate in therapy sessions, Stubblefield assumes both roles, with quarter horses Roanie, J.R. and Slick as her only “assistants.” She also departs from the norm by including horseback riding in her sessions, though the association model employs only non-riding exercises.

Stubblefield said her work is part of a trend in psychotherapy toward moving treatment out of the office, such as conducting sessions while exercising with clients.

“I’m bringing the psychotherapy couch, so to speak, outside to the farm,” Stubblefield said. “Instead of sitting on a chair or sofa in an office, we’re sitting in a saddle.”•

— Sonya Stinson

Evertain

Key innovation: lower-cost retainer replacement
Biggest client: orthodontists nationwide
Where they're based: Mandeville
Top executive: Scott Dalton, chief marketing officer
Year introduced: 2006
2006 sales: would not disclose

Scott Dalton for years has thought about the problems one of his cousins got into every time he lost his retainer.

"It was a big thing," Dalton said. "His family would be upset with him and then he would have to mow lawns and do all kinds of work around the house to get a replacement retainer."

The reason Dalton's cousin was put through the ringer

was simple: The orthodontic retainer, invented 100 years ago, has always been expensive. And so is a replacement retainer, which today costs about \$250, although some replacement retainers can go as high as \$750.

While working for a company that manufactured the raw material used in making retainers, Dalton talked with dozens of orthodontists who were convinced there must be a more cost-effective way to create a replacement retainer.

The orthodontists were primarily concerned the amount of time between when a retainer is lost and replaced could be detrimental to the larger goal of repositioning a patient's teeth.

But an equally motivating factor was the lousy public relations of it all: After patients or the parents of a patient shell out several thousand dollars for a retainer, they are less enthused about paying a couple of hundred dollars to replace it, especially in cases where an absentminded or unlucky teenager has lost the retainer as many as three or four times.

Approached by backers, Dalton recalled his cousin's angst, deciding to create a business that supplies replacement retainers for a set fee over a given period of time.

Launching Evertain in November 2006, Dalton was, he said, "basically creating an entirely new marketplace. Nothing of its kind existed before."

But the numbers made sense. Evertain charges \$495 for a two-year retainer replacement program that features a primary and backup set of retainers. In addition, the company emphasizes timeliness.

"We get an overnight impression of the patient's teeth and build the retainers the same day. In return, we overnight the retainers so that they can be delivered the next day to the patient through their dentist's office.

"The original model for our business plan was to lower retainer replacement costs substantially," Dalton said, "and I am glad to say that so far that has worked."•

— Garry Boulard



Scott Dalton, from left: David Knight and Anthony Daughtry, co-founders of Evertain, a low-cost retainer replacement company, discuss the program with Dr. Gregg May of M Dental Studio in Mandeville.

PHOTO COURTESY EVERTAIN

Frank Relle Photography

Key innovation: photographs of pre- and post-Katrina New Orleans
Biggest clients: Cristiano Raffignone, owner of Cristiano's Ristorante in Houma and Martinique Bistro in New Orleans
Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executive: Frank Relle, owner
Year introduced: series began in 2004
2006 sales: would not disclose

For an artist, capturing the essence of New Orleans is no easy matter.

Yet for photographer Frank Relle of Frank Relle Photography, the challenge inspires him to continually snap the "mood and mystery" of the city.

"My goal is to encourage viewers to see the familiar in a new way," Relle said. "You see houses every day but you don't really pay attention. Architecture is a reflection of the people and underlying story of New Orleans."

Relle began his series of New Orleans photographs in 2004, focusing on buildings to tell the story of locals.

"I want to personify all different levels of expression the city has," he said.

Relle's series of New Orleans photographs continued through Hurricane Katrina and the city's recovery. Regardless of the differences between pre- and post-Katrina New Orleans, Relle stressed he always shows up at the photo scene without any preconception.

"It's the same approach, just a different story," he said.

Shortly after the hurricane, Relle focused on capturing the feelings of New Orleanians during what he called their "quiet moments." He also wanted to tell the story of the people through the buildings they had inhabited.

Relle's pictures gained the attention of David Johnson, director of communications for the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. Johnson published some of Relle's images in the Louisiana Cultural Vistas summer 2006 issue.

"(Frank) has truly documented a time and place in a format that anyone would be drawn to," Johnson said.

Johnson said there has been some debate about Relle's post-Katrina photographs, with some viewers stating Relle took them to document history and others claiming he took them for artistic advancement.

However, Johnson said the photos are a combination of the two.

"He is presenting horrific scenes, but in a very compelling way."

Relle's photographs also captured the attention of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, where they have been included in the permanent collection.

A native New Orleanian, Relle graduated from Tulane University before apprenticing with various photographers. But New Orleans has been his greatest teacher.

"Everything I know, I understand through the metaphor of understanding New Orleans," he said. •

— Amy M. Ferrara



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMAKI

Photographer Frank Relle's pictures of pre- and post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans have been added to permanent additions at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

FutureProof LLC



The team of FutureProof LLC includes, clockwise from left: Prisca Terven Weems, Molly Buchengerger, Stephanie Mezynska, Ross Karsen, Joe Evans, Kelly Landrieu and Toriano Kelly.

Key innovation: a design and consulting firm focused on environmentally sound building and design strategies to integrate climate-specific design features with energy-saving technologies and materials

Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executive: Prisca Weems, principal
Year introduced: February 2005
2006 sales: would not disclose

Prisca Weems and her team at FutureProof LLC have brought to post-Katrina New Orleans a sustainable design consultancy that works to harmonize the environment with its inhabitants.

The staff ranges from building and landscape architects to a renewable energy technician, all of whom work toward the same goal: promoting the viability of sustainable build-

ing practices in the region. Services range from consulting on project goals to full design packages for construction and renovation projects

"We want to raise the bar on affordable housing."

To do this, FutureProof is working with architects, developers, engineers, property owners and neighborhood associations to encourage them to adopt what Weems said is a holistic approach, which involves clients using efficient and climate-appropriate design principles in their projects.

As mentioned on www.futureproofnola.com, climate-appropriate housing involves careful consideration of building materials to maximize building efficiency and to create a healthier living and working space.

For example, the company uses structural materials such as structural concrete insulated panelized systems to make the most of energy's natural resource.

Will Bradshaw of Green Coast Enterprises has partnered with FutureProof on several projects throughout

the New Orleans area.

"Our business model is in tangent with what Prisca is doing," Bradshaw said. "They're a wonderful partner for us."

Like Weems, Bradshaw seeks to save on living costs with energy-efficient buildings. He believes if people don't work to save the environment, our lifestyles are in jeopardy. So he and Weems are trying to create a fresh "green" housing industry. Weems recently designed houses for one of Bradshaw's developments near the Fair Grounds.

"(FutureProof) provides a great service here," Bradshaw said. "They have brought a level of expertise to this area."

A New Orleans resident for more than 15 years, Weems said the hot and humid climate of the Gulf Coast is "less served" than other regions in the country in terms of climate-appropriate housing efforts. There has simply been a lack in the market.

FutureProof, Weems said, is working to build a "healthier, safer and more affordable housing environment."•

— Amy M. Ferrara

Innovator

Green Bean Insulation

Key innovation: eco-friendly, high-performance spray foam insulation

Biggest client: Kailas Properties for the Cleary Condominiums

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Kurt Buchert, founder

Year introduced: 2006

2006 sales: about \$20,000 per month

Kurt Buchert, a New Orleans native and founder of Green Bean Insulation, was sitting in a coffee shop in Dallas after Katrina trying to figure out how to return to his city and open a business.

"I remembered a massive Uptown rental property where I had used spray foam and loved the product's performance," Buchert said. "My tenant's energy bills were averaging \$90 per month compared with \$250 for other properties that size."

The foam used on his rental property pre-Katrina is only half the density of the product Green Bean Insulation uses now, Buchert said.

Buchert found two manufacturers — BioBased Insulation of Arkansas and Apex Foam Industries of New Orleans — that make "green" foam products using soybean and sugar cane and less petroleum during manufacturing.

"I established a relationship with these companies, found some experienced installers and went to work," he said.

The company now has three installation crews, a blow-in cellulose crew and a project manager, Mark Comardad, who assists with sales and operations of projects, which generate roughly \$20,000 in gross weekly sales.

Green Bean Insulation offers open- and closed-cell spray products that provide double the insulation value and increased structural support compared with most foam products.

Open-cell foam is soft, like the packaging material that protects fragile objects. The cell walls are broken and air fills all of the spaces in the material.

Closed-cell foam resembles inflated balloons piled together in a compact configuration. The cells are full of a special gas selected to make the insulation value of the foam as high as possible.

Buchert said Green Bean Insulation products reduce monthly utility bills by up to 60 percent by protecting buildings from heat, cold, moisture, mildew, mold, airborne fibers and pests.

As another selling point, the company advises owners and builders to take advantage of tax credits tied to energy efficiency upgrades.

With work in New Orleans, the North Shore, Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Houma, the company keeps its employees busy.

"I believe New Orleans is the best market in the world right now," Buchert said. "There's a huge number of uninsulated homes and raised homes in a hot, humid climate."•

— Thomas Leggett



PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN MOISES

Kurt Buchert, founder of Green Bean Insulation, said his environmentally conscious foam spray helps lower energy bills from \$250 to about \$90 a month.

iSeatz.com

Key innovation: Internet travel and entertainment reservations

Biggest clients: Delta Airlines, Priceline.com, Orbitz.com

Where they're based: New Orleans and New York

Top executive: Kenneth Purcell, founder and CEO

Year introduced: 1999

2006 sales: would not disclose

For New Orleans native Kenneth Purcell, expanding the business model for iSeatz.com has always meant meeting market demands.

"We've consistently modified our technology to service the needs of the consumer," said Purcell, founder and CEO of iSeatz.

From humble roots on Decatur Street in 1999, Purcell and his staff have elevated iSeatz to a premier player in the international travel and entertainment services market.

iSeatz began as an online source for consumers and concierge personnel to book restaurant reservations. But faced with limited demand and a shrinking venture capital market, Purcell recognized other uses for iSeatz's unique technology platform.

In 2002, iSeatz modified its technology to include the pre-sales of tours, show tickets, theme park tickets, airport shuttle services and price-fixed menus at restaurants nationwide.

One year later, Orbitz hired iSeatz to provide sales of airport parking, dinner packages, tickets and other services — virtually everything except for hotels and rental cars. iSeatz then took its product line to Travelocity, Priceline and Expedia.

Business remained strong throughout the 2005 hurricane season and although iSeatz remained online, logistics forced it to relocate temporarily to New York.

To meet demand, iSeatz booked a contract with Delta Airlines, which wanted to differentiate its Web presence from other online travel agencies.

The new Delta site launched June 7 as the only global airline to offer customers an integrated "one-stop" travel shop, including booking hotels, rental cars and destination entertainment. This places iSeatz at the center of an intensifying travel market with outlets competing for the attention of consumers.

With similar programs for Southwest Airlines and Air Canada already in place, iSeatz is negotiating with other major carriers, which may increase employment.

Since Katrina, business has grown dramatically.

Revenue for iSeatz was in the low millions before Katrina and has since increased more than 1,000 percent. Its staff of six is now more than 50 employees.

With its server still located in Louisiana Technology Park in Baton Rouge and an office in Canal Place in New Orleans, iSeatz plans to bring its corporate headquarters back to New Orleans.

A geographic relocation, however, is not likely to slow the company's appetite for expansion into markets such as airline reservations and retail opportunities.

"Right now, we're like the gum and candy racks in a major supermarket," Purcell said. "We want more shelf space." •

— Thomas Leggett



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Delta Airlines, Priceline.com and Orbitz.com are among the clients using iSeatz, an online booking system created by Kenneth Purcell.

Laughing Buddha Nursery

Key innovation: organic gardening techniques and supplies
Where they're based: Metairie
Top executive: Grant Estrade, president and founder
Year introduced: 2004
2006 sales: about \$150,000

Three years ago, Grant Estrade reverted to post-World War II days that brought gardening to the suburbs.

"I wanted to focus on gardening and providing a wide range of supplies to the people who like to garden," said Estrade, 28, president and founder of the Laughing Buddha Nursery in Metairie. "But I didn't want to do it in the way that traditional nurseries do."

Traditional nurseries offer chemical-based products and supplies, said Estrade, who was intrigued with the possibilities of organic gardening, which emphasizes the natural cultivation of soil to support healthy plant life.

Although initial response to Estrade's company were positive, Hurricane Katrina flooded Laughing Buddha Nursery, prompting a regrouping in late 2005.

"Essentially because of the storm, we ended up launching two businesses over the course of two years."

Estrade said the prospects for his nursery's comeback were positive, primarily because he found a local and regional marketing niche.

"There are many more people than you might imagine who understand the issues involved and want to build gardens that are environmentally friendly."

The issues involved include how to use mulch, compost and manure to enhance soil conditions with small amounts of natural pest control to minimize insect infestation.

"For many people, the world of organic gardening is new and sometimes even confusing because it seems to go against everything they've been taught," Estrade said. "For that reason, we try very hard to keep things simple while at the same time offering the greatest number of options possible for effective organic gardening."

Those offerings include bio-inoculant fertilizers, living organisms that help break down toxins and aerate the soil; propagation supplies, which help plants become established; and composting systems designed to enhance yields in a sustainable way.

Demonstrating how the nursery's products work through an ongoing outdoor garden bed and in-store hydroponic displays, Estrade said his work is educational.

"You actually can never learn enough about gardening naturally, which is one of the reasons why I like this business so much."•

— Garry Boulard



Grant Estrade, president and founder of Laughing Buddha Nursery, has been offering organic gardening techniques and supplies since 2004.

Innovator

Tulane University Center for Polymer Reaction Monitoring and Characterization

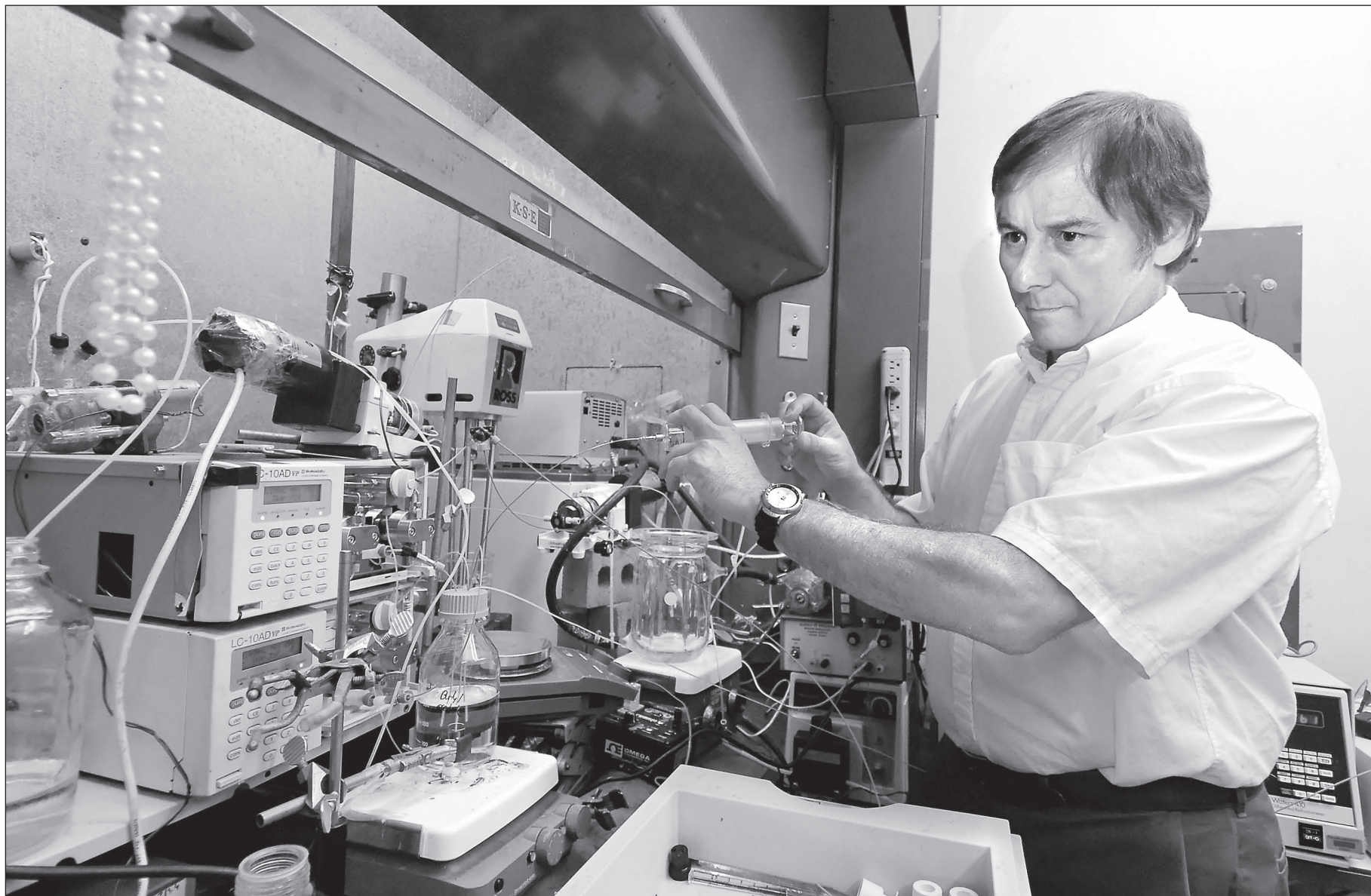


PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

The Tulane University Center for Polymer Reaction Monitoring and Characterization, led by professor Wayne Reed, opened in the summer of 2007 to find new ways to develop products such as concrete, glass, plastic, paper and rubber.

Key innovation: developing instruments and methods for developing polymers and macromolecular materials
Where they're based: Tulane University
Top executive: Wayne Reed, director
Year introduced: 2007

Devising methods and instruments for a more efficient use of molecular materials and polymers, Tulane University's physics department was transformed and ultimately strengthened by Hurricane Katrina.

"Everyone evacuated from here because of the storm; the place was virtually empty," said professor Wayne Reed, "and that means that most of us ended up working in other places."

With contacts at the University of Massachusetts, Reed set to work establishing what he describes as a "full blown

lab," aided by industrial sponsors who donated and lent equipment.

A commitment from Tulane to establish what is now the Center for Polymer Reaction Monitoring and Characterization lured Reed back to the Uptown campus where he resumed his polymer research as director of the new center along with a core research group composed of graduate and post-graduate students, as well as faculty members Alina Alb, associate director for research, and Michael Drenski, associate director for instrumentation.

Polymers, a synthetic or natural material composed of large molecules, appear in a variety of man-made products including concrete, glass, plastic, paper and rubber.

The new facility officially opened this summer. It is expected to become a premier center for polymerization reaction monitoring research and development with a particular focus on the problems of the industry, as well as long- and short-term educational and technical training.

Because today's biotechnical and modern industries are

particularly attracted to the use of polymers in pharmaceuticals, lightweight construction materials and even water purification products, the center's research and development will be geared toward such adaptations.

Tulane's physics department is forming new partnerships with Louisiana's polymer industry.

"We have never had these kinds of ties before," said Reed. "But now that we are getting more actively involved in polymer research and development as it relates to the needs of industry, we think that a bridge has been built between us."

The new partnerships also stirred enthusiasm among the center's researchers.

"It is a very exciting thing to be able to reach out to these giant market segments, both here in Louisiana and elsewhere, with a kind of expertise and methods that have not been used before," Reed said. "That is a kind of collaboration that everyone gains from."•

— Garry Boulard

New Orleans Demolition Services

Key innovation: coordinating a turnkey approach to the demolition of damaged homes in New Orleans

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Dwight Walker, president

Year introduced: October 2005

2006 sales: \$5.4 million

When Realtor Dwight Walker evacuated to Dallas during Hurricane Katrina, he questioned the future of New Orleans' real estate market and whether it would ever recover. He knew one thing for sure — thousands of homes would have to be torn down once the floodwater receded.

Seeing a business opportunity, Walker sought out joint ventures with demolition companies in Dallas but few were willing to dig into the business of demolishing homes. Most companies there are set up to work on 50 or so high-dollar projects a year and because of the logistics,

manpower and other factors involved, they didn't think it was worth their time and money to bring equipment to New Orleans.

Without experience in the industry, Walker went to work drafting a business plan and projections on how many houses he could tear down in a 12-month period.

By October, Walker was back in New Orleans promoting and advertising New Orleans Demolition Services and receiving up to 40 calls a day from residents interested in tearing down their damaged homes. He contracted out the work and developed a way to get flood insurance to cover the cost of the demolition with \$30,000 grants for bringing homes up to base flood elevation.

In 90 percent of the cases, the grants funded demolition of the home.

With 70 percent of his client base out of state, Walker's customers sign a document allowing New Orleans Demolition Services to approach insurers on their behalf and process paperwork. Once a home is demolished, the

company pairs homeowners with reputable contractors and homebuilders.

"They've really made the process easy. I could work and didn't have to be there all the time. They demolished the house for me and helped me find a contractor that wasn't going to rip me off," said Gentilly resident Jimmie Williams.

New Orleans Demolition Services has razed 1,200 homes. In the next few years, as the demolition process nears its end, Walker will focus more on New Orleans Home Builders, subsidiary focused on the homebuilding and referral business. Superintendents will visit sites and update out-of-town homeowners with progress reports and photos chronicling the construction of their new homes.

"That's the challenge. A lot of these people have to drive in from far away and it's very time-consuming and expensive to get the process started. We anticipate that in the next four to five years, we'll still be helping people rebuild," Walker said. •

— Craig Guillot



Realtor Dwight Walker introduced New Orleans Demolition Services after Hurricane Katrina to offer residents an all-in-one process to tear down their homes.

New Orleans Ice Cream Co.



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

New Orleans Ice Cream Co. owner Adrian Simpson, left, and business partner Alan Dugas enjoy their Creole Cream Cheese.

Key innovation: locally influenced ice cream flavors using fresh Louisiana produce

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Adrian Simpson, owner

Year introduced: 2006

2006 sales: would not disclose

With flavors like Creole Cream Cheese, Coffee & Chicory and Ponchatoula Strawberry, New Orleans Ice Cream Co. tapped into the local palate to make a unique and popular product.

"In addition to finding a niche in the market for high-end, rich ice cream, we've also created innovative flavors derived from fresh Louisiana produce," said owner Adrian Simpson.

Originally from Liverpool, England, Simpson decided to

make ice cream through his work with New Orleans Coffee Co., makers of Cool Brew coffee concentrate.

Partnering with Alan Dugas, then a sales manager with Borden Dairy, they manufactured a coffee ice cream flavor before realizing the potential for expansion into other flavors.

Using fresh ingredients that pay homage to local culture, Simpson said some of his flavors also take a satirical jab at New Orleans. Chocolate City, a rich chocolate ice cream with white chocolate flakes, takes its name from Mayor C. Ray Nagin's infamous post-Katrina comments.

Packaging their ice cream in reusable 18-ounce plastic tubs — with 2 ounces of "lagniappe" over most brands — the company sent its first batch to Langenstein's grocery store.

Without advertising, they sold out the first weekend. Other local grocery stores soon began selling their products, and now New Orleans Ice Cream is sold at supermarket chains such as Sav-A-Center and Whole Foods.

"We've been excited about moving our product into Mississippi and Texas, and we're hoping to take the taste of New Orleans national," Simpson said.

With six flavors on the market, New Orleans Ice Cream Co. expects to keep up with demand by creating a range of flavors that taste like local cocktails — the Sazerac, the Hurricane and Brandy Alexander.

After selling Southern Comfort Lime Sorbet at Jazz Fest last year, they are now in discussions with N.O. Rum to partner in making a rum raisin ice cream.

As part of its mission to give back to the community, New Orleans Ice Cream Co. participates in benefits such as Celebration in the Oaks, Zoo To Do and American Cancer Society fundraisers.

"We make ice cream in a hand-crafted, proprietary way and put a lot of love into it," Simpson said. "Ice cream puts a smile on people's faces and in the end that's what it's all about."•

— Thomas Leggett

NPower Mobile



PHOTO BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAFFER

Nathan Albee, left, and Kevin Carriere, co-founders of NPower Mobile, have been providing wireless and traditional voice communications for clients such as American Airlines since 2005.

Key innovation: wireless, data and traditional voice communications

Biggest client: American Airlines

Where they're based: Mandeville

Top executives: Kevin Carriere and Nathan Albee, founders

Year introduced: July 2005

2006 sales: more than \$500,000

With communication technology constantly changing, one company is trying to stay ahead of the game.

NPower Mobile of Mandeville helps companies develop and deliver mobile content, messaging and mobile applications.

"We are 18 months ahead of schedule with our product development and services offered," said President Kevin Carriere.

Carriere and business partner Nathan Albee started NPower in July 2005 and have been successful with provid-

ing mobility solutions to their clients.

NPower, which also help companies create and deliver mobile content, messaging and mobile applications, offers e-mail and text messaging services in addition to short messaging services, wireless alerts, mobile Web sites, ringtones and two-way messaging.

Its biggest client is American Airlines, for which they built the Web site "txtSAaver" at www.aa.com/textsaaver. Users sign up and provide their cell phone number to receive a weekly text message containing information on cheap flights.

Other clients include nationwide insurance companies, universities, real estate agencies and more than 1,000 car dealers.

"Our focus is on giving businesses the tools to get in contact with customers," Carriere said.

NPower allows businesses to use direct marketing and new mobile technology by capitalizing on the immediacy of mobile messaging technology.

Doctors also have used NPower's service to complement

their appointment reminder software that sends patients appointment reminders through their cell phones either as an e-mail or a text message.

"Mobile communication is becoming the norm," Carriere said.

New products and innovations are on the rise in this fast-changing industry. Mobile Internet and multimedia messaging service are the newest segments attracting attention, Carriere said.

"Consumers are rapidly using the mobile device for all of their information needs if they are not sitting at a desk," Carriere said. "Mobile and wireless are predicted to be the next frontier. We see a massive movement toward permission-based programs where the consumer can choose if they want to participate."

With more than 1,500 businesses using the NPower software, Albee and Carriere must continue to create innovative products to help businesses communicate with customers in the future. •

— Jennifer Nall

Innovator

Ochsner Clinical Workstation — Ochsner Health System

Key innovation: an electronic health care information system

Where they're based: Jefferson

Top executive: Dr. Lynn Witherspoon, chief information officer

One of the greatest and physician complaints concerns information or the lack of it. When patient records and vital documents are not accessible, physicians are operating at a disadvantage.

Information technicians at Ochsner Health System took a step in the early 1980s toward creating a working electronic file to make medical records available at a single source.

"We created the Ochsner Medical Information System, an electronic repository for our doctors that included all of the records of any given patient, including lab results, test-

ing results, anything that got transcribed, as well as summaries of hospital visits," said Dr. Lynn Witherspoon, Ochsner system vice president and chief information officer.

Within the industry, the Ochsner Medical Information System, which also allows doctors to retrieve information from a computer terminal anywhere within the Ochsner network, was regarded as ahead of its time.

But the recent creation of the Ochsner Clinical Workstation pushed the technology to a new level.

"We thought it would be really nice if in the context of a doctor seeing a patient, they not only had access to information, but that we could support everything that they do," Witherspoon said, "from collecting more information, creating notes, writing prescriptions, placing orders, responding to telephone messages and checking lab results — things of that sort."

The system's value was evident after Hurricane Katrina. "We did not lose anybody's medical record, they were all

electronic. And those records, as the traumatic post-Katrina days turned into months, became ever more important in determining medical decisions," he said.

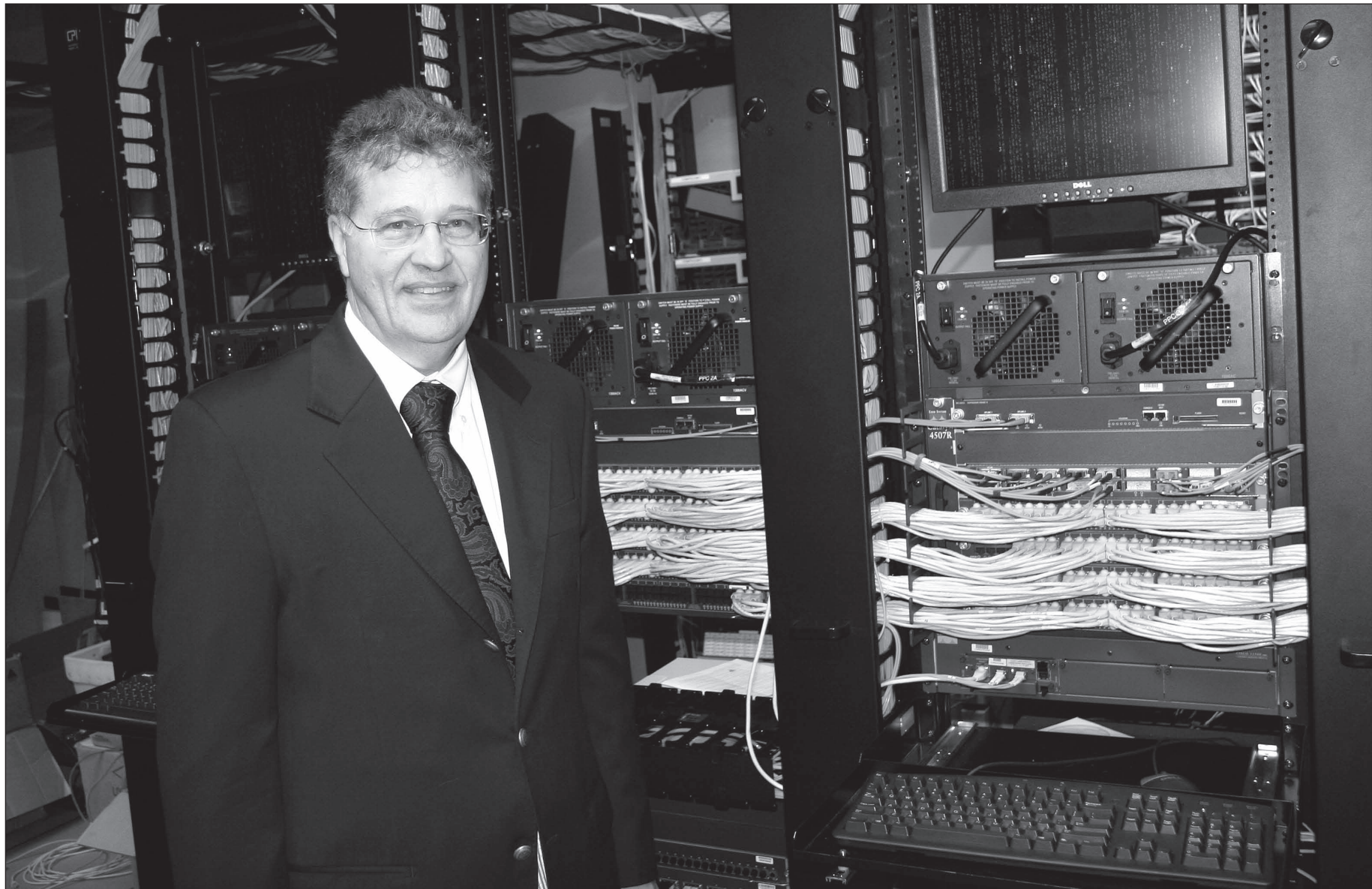
Witherspoon said the biggest patient concern at first was running out of and refilling medications.

"But soon matters of more routine care came into play and that's where the portability of the OCW, the fact that it could be available in any place that the patient and doctor might have found themselves, facilitated our being able to provide care."

Since Katrina, Ochsner has developed a doctor portal making clinical care records available to non-Ochsner physicians registered with the system.

"Basically we have taken down an awful lot of barriers between physicians in the community and whatever knowledge we may have of a patient they are currently seeing who had been to Ochsner previously," Witherspoon said. •

— Garry Boulard



Dr. Lynn Witherspoon, chief information officer for Ochsner Health System, created the Ochsner Clinical Workstation, an electronic system that allows doctors to pull patient records from any location.

PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN MOISES

Omni Technologies

Key innovation: unmanned underwater vehicles that examine what's under the sea floor

Biggest client: U.S. Navy

Where they're based: Slidell

Top executive: Kim Jovanovich, president

Year introduced: September 2004

2006 revenue: \$4 million

While the U.S. Navy developed unmanned vehicles to survey underwater sediment, new technology was needed to equip them.

This is where Omni Technologies stepped in.

Omni began developing a sub-bottom profiler in 1996 in conjunction with the Navy. Sub-bottom profiling gathers

information on what is below the surface of the sea floor, which is then used for cable and pipeline route surveys, piling installations, salvaging operations and any other job where it is critical to know what lies beneath the sediment.

Shortly after Omni started work, the Navy launched its first model, Profiling System. Omni has been working to refine and update the technology ever since.

"It's been a continuous upgrade," said Francis Grosz, an electrical engineer, physicist and one of three operating principals at Omni Technologies.

Before this technology, it was much more difficult to determine what was below the sediment's surface.

"Most sonar looks to the bottom but doesn't penetrate," Grosz said. Omni's profiling system uses parametric sonar, which penetrates the sea floor and provides high-resolution images.

Omni's sub-bottom profilers are also cheaper, more efficient and more accurate than other methods, such as coring, which involves probing below sediment. Coring takes longer and provides less coverage than the sub-bottom profilers.

The profiling system was designed to be user-friendly and energy efficient, and take up as little space as possible on the Navy's small unmanned submarines.

"We have a tight tolerance for payload," said Ken Sharp, director of the Ocean Projects Department at the Naval Oceanographic Office. "The (unmanned subs) have neither the space to accommodate a lot of payload, nor the strength to carry it."

Design is one thing. Successful execution of that design is another. In that regard, the Navy is pleased.

"It's performed very well for us," Sharp said. •

— Fritz Esker



Omni Technologies engineers John Bradley and Francis Grosz examine the main electronics assembly of the company's sub-bottom profiler that examines what's underneath the seafloor.

Piccadilly Food Services



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Paul Tuennerman, vice president of business development for Piccadilly Food Services, and St. Mary's Dominican High School President Cynthia Thomas have an early lunch in the school's cafeteria.

Key innovation: healthy food service options
Biggest client: Savannah River Site, Wal-Mart
Where they're based: Baton Rouge
Top executive: David Green, CEO
Year introduced: under new ownership since 2004
2006 revenue: would not disclose

If someone were to mention Piccadilly to New Orleanians, most would immediately think of Piccadilly Cafeteria, the chain in business in New Orleans and the South for more than 60 years.

Under new ownership since 2004, Piccadilly has branched out, expanding from a chain of 130 cafeterias in 15 states to providing food services throughout the same region.

Piccadilly's clients vary widely.

According to Paul Tuennerman, vice president of business

development for Piccadilly Food Services, it provides food for Meals on Wheels in Memphis, Tenn., and Wal-Mart distribution centers in Louisiana, Georgia and Texas.

In August 2006, Piccadilly Food Services entered the New Orleans market by providing meals at Trinity Episcopal School.

Piccadilly is in partnership with St. Joseph's Seminary College, St. Mary's Dominican High School, Holy Name of Jesus School, Calvary Baptist School and, on a limited basis, Notre Dame Seminary College.

Tuennerman said the credibility Piccadilly Cafeteria had established made the expansion into food services easy.

"I didn't have to go out and explain who we are," he said. "My job is made easy because of the years of service by the many good, talented and dedicated individuals who came and went before my arrival at Piccadilly."

The average tenure of a Piccadilly employee is 28 years, Tuennerman said.

In serving schools, Piccadilly aims to give students more and better options, he said.

At Crichton College in Memphis, Piccadilly runs the student cafeteria and a restaurant near campus. Both options are covered in the students' meal plans.

At St. Mary's Dominican High School, Piccadilly has expanded the food options. Dominican President Cynthia Thomas said finding quality food service was challenging after Katrina, but Piccadilly stepped in and did an excellent job. The menu included more vegetables and a salad bar.

"They offer a very good program, but they're also very willing to adapt to meet the needs and wants of the students," Thomas said.

To satisfy student palates, Piccadilly offered a food tasting for Dominican students to see which items the students like the best and place them in the cafeteria for the upcoming school year. •

— Fritz Esker

Plaine Studios



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Chris Brown's Plaine Studios has helped area businesses such as Republic New Orleans create Web sites that are easy to use.

Key innovation: making technology more personal and user friendly

Biggest client: Republic New Orleans

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Chris Brown, founder

Year introduced: 2002

2006 sales: \$114,000

In a culture where even groceries can be ordered on the Internet, the New Orleans-based Web design company Plaine Studios is helping to make technology more personal and easy to use.

"In a digital word where jargon and confusion are ways to seduce clients into thinking they're getting the latest and greatest, we try to boil things down to common sense while using those same latest and greatest technologies," said founder Chris Brown.

Started in 2002 to make digital design and media acces-

sible to individuals and businesses wanting trouble-free Web sites, Plaine Studios increased its line of services after Hurricane Katrina to include high definition video, traditional print design and comprehensive Web solutions, which, Brown said, are tools that help a business or individual communicate more effectively with their audience.

In 2005 after Katrina, Plaine Studios worked to open Republic New Orleans nightclub even though owner Robert LeBlanc said some thought the project was a "foolish" venture in the recently flooded city.

"(Plaine Studios) really cares about their clients," said LeBlanc. "They go above and beyond. ... They become educators."

Robert said Brown and his team successfully "toe that line" between art and the management of clients to provide tangible solutions. The end product is a functional Web design with a creative edge.

Republic New Orleans uses its Web site to update information about the business to create a more intimate and cost-effective relationship with clients, LeBlanc said.

Brown and his staff also extended their expertise to the Greater New Orleans Youth Orchestra. The company developed a new Web site for GNOYO that caters to the organization's diversity through a "one-stop-shop" Web page for "on-the-go" members, including an alumni submission form, a student blog section and a compact disc order form for supporters.

"They made our Web presence come to life," said Marianna Roll, GNOYO communications coordinator. "They made our entire organization excited about not only the Web site but also about what the Web site reminds us of."

Plaine Studios aims to keep it simple even in a field with technology constantly changing and expanding.

"We're trying to bring to New Orleans high quality design and advertising that can compete on a national level, but on a more reasonable budget," Brown said. "Because we keep things small and focused, we provide a high level of customer service that you can't get with a large firm."•

— Amy M. Ferrara

qTrack — Ochsner Health System

Key innovation: decreasing waits for emergency room patients by streamlining processing

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Dr. Joseph Guarisco, system chief of emergency services

Year introduced: March

Emergency rooms in the New Orleans area are treating more people with longer wait times to see a doctor.

Ochsner Health System addressed the problem with a quicker approach to waiting in the emergency room.

QTrack, a system using engineering to improve workflow processes, was Dr. Joseph Guarisco's concept.

"We applied industrial engineering to health care. It is the same as commercial businesses where engineering methods are used to speed up processes and make things efficient as possible," he said.

Guarisco, an emergency room physician at Ochsner who also has an engineering background, used engineering methods to shorten the time it takes to see a doctor.

With qTrack, the door-to-doctor wait time has been reduced from 75 minutes to 30 minutes, and Ochsner, which sees about 175 patients daily, has decreased from 8 percent to 1 percent the number of patients who leave before being seen.

Changes included using an area just outside the waiting room to create multiple lanes staffed with nurses and physicians so a patient could be seen immediately in most instances.

"We streamlined the registration process and essentially eliminated the triage process ... to eliminate batching, bottlenecks and any queuing. To accomplish this, we simply had to shift personnel and rearrange our intake area."

Guarisco relates the process to what Best Buy and Whole Foods have, where customers queue up in a single line to be distributed into multiple lanes.

"This is a neat solution to a contemporary New Orleans problem. In post-Katrina New Orleans, people are waiting for everything including health care. Patients should not be waiting for health care because it is a safety issue."

While the qTrack system is new to emergency rooms in New Orleans, hospitals in California and Arizona have been using similar versions for a while.

The difference, Guarisco said, is those programs use a triage physician in the emergency room to see patients on arrival, which still causes bottlenecks.

Guarisco and his team started planning in January.

Guarisco said patients have noticed the difference.

"Our patient satisfaction in the third quarter of 2007 has reached an all time high, so patients are responding to a difference," Guarisco said. "The key difference is the timeliness of their care. And in emergency medicine, timeliness of care is critical to the patients' perception of their experience." •

— Jennifer Nall



Drs. Armando Hevia, left, and Joseph Guarisco created Ochsner Health System's qTrack system, which has decreased emergency room wait time from 75 minutes to 30.

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Innovator

sunglassengraving.com



PHOTO BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFFER

Sunglassengraving.com owner John Gagliano started his personalized sunglass business with college logos but recently expanded to construction and oil and gas companies.

Key innovation: personalized laser etching on sunglass and safety lenses

Biggest client: Ohio State University

Where they're based: Ponchatoula

Top executive: John Gagliano, owner

Year introduced: 2004

2006 sales: \$83,000

Sunglassengraving.com lets customers show off their college pride or company logos on sun shades and protective glasses without the symbols wearing off.

Unlike decals or pad printing, the laser markings are permanent. But before owner John Gagliano could make his laser engraving idea stick, he had to figure out how to focus a hair-sized point of light sharply on a curved lens.

Gagliano, who owns sunglasses retail shops in Metairie

and Covington, consulted with a Lafayette dealer, telling him he would probably buy one of his laser engravers if he could help come up with a solution.

"We basically had to invent a jig that would trick the laser into thinking that (it) was focused onto a point," Gagliano said. "We took this standard laser off the shelf and built a special jig that holds sunglasses. Also, there is a software overlay that talks to the laser for the positioning of the markings ... using a special grid formula."

The first application was putting university logos on sunglasses, which provides the bulk of the company's business. Ohio State University is the largest customer, followed by Louisiana State University and Texas A&M University. Sunglassengraving.com can also decorate shades with Greek letters and colors of fraternities and sororities.

"Just laser engraving is one thing, but actually filling the marking with pigmentation is probably just as important and has been just as tough to develop," Gagliano said. "LSU, West

Virginia, Ohio, Oklahoma State, Texas A&M — they all have their own colors. ... You just don't paint it. We had to come up with a special formulation of paint fill to do this."

Allison Lopez handles most of the laser etching at a Ponchatoula warehouse while another person does painting and quality control. She describes the mechanism as operating "almost like a printer" as the laser cuts an image into the polycarbonate of the lens. The two-person team handles every step of getting online orders filled.

"We pick out the blank glasses, engrave them and backfill them with paint," Lopez said. "Then we clean them, tag them and ship them out."

Gagliano recently began marketing to construction and oil and gas companies to engrave their logos on safety glasses.

"We're really excited about that part of the business," Gagliano said. "Very easily, that could outstrip the collegiate business in no time."•

— Sonya Stinson

PepPods — TeAm Inc.

Key innovation: Web-based storage for documents and medical information
Biggest client: Department of Defense's Military Health System
Where they're based: Fall Church, Va.
Top executive: Charles Davis, president, CEO and founder
Year introduced: 2005
2006 sales: \$10 million

When evacuees from New Orleans fled to his Virginia community after Hurricane Katrina, Charles Davis saw many problems unfold. One was the inability of evacuees to access prescription and children's immunization records.

For more than 20 years, his company, TeAm Consumer Products, had been working with the Department of Defense's Military Health System to secure its electronic health records.

Davis and TeAm created Personal Emergency Planned Private Online Data System. PepPods, a Web-based storage solution, allows individuals and businesses to manage health records and store important documents and photos. When a disaster hits, individuals and families can access a computer to obtain all records managed and stored in a central database.

"We discovered that when people are traumatized, their memory often doesn't work very well. PepPods allows people access to their health information and important documents from anywhere," Davis said.

Davis said PepPods maintains data integrity with three layers of security that has been used for government clients and is as good, "if not better" than bank security. PepPods clients can generate forms with critical information to save time when changing doctors. Each account is divided into four "pods" that cover emergency information and contacts, medical information, scanned documents such as deeds and property photos, and pet information.

PepPods will also be rolling out a separate account function with storage and capabilities for asset records. The service starts at \$24.95 per year for up to 40 megabytes of storage space.

Davis said PepPods is marketing its service nationwide, but it is giving special attention to the Gulf Coast and is in the process of talking with a few insurance companies about adopting the system for their clients.

"This enables people to pre-plan and have things in a virtual mode so that more than just the immediate family has access to it. It facilitates running around at the last minute to gather documents," said Sandra Gunner, president of the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce.

Gunner created an affinity program with PepPods and offers the virtual emergency preparedness kit to Chamber members at a discounted rate. •

— Craig Guillot



Maj. General Elder Granger, deputy director of the Tricare Management Activity, left, meets with Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., and Charles Davis, president and CEO of TeAM Inc. to discuss automated medical system support for military families in the Tricare health plan.

Transformyx



PHOTO COURTESY TRANSFORMYX

Claude Bethea, president and founder of Transformyx, believes RallyPoint, a crisis communications plan emphasizing essential personnel and work force recovery during a disaster, is the key to effective communication during a hurricane.

Key innovation: a Web-based crisis and work force recovery application

Biggest client: Coca-Cola Co.

Where they're based: Baton Rouge

Top executive: Claude Bethea, founder and president

Year introduced: 1988

2006 sales: about \$2 million

In two decades as a software developer, Claude Bethea, founder and president of Transformyx, has extolled the benefits of technology, offering e-commerce and Web solutions for a range of Fortune 500 companies.

"Everything we've done here has been centered around communications and technology," said Bethea, whose Baton Rouge-based company provides custom applications as well as host and server technology for companies such as the Coca-Cola Co. in Atlanta.

Bethea said his most recent product came from what he saw happen after Hurricane Katrina.

"We kept running into businesses that told us they had no way of contacting their employees because all of the known communications and phone numbers were not working," Bethea said.

"I think one of the things that everyone came to realize was that when people become displaced and evacuate, they may end up in a new place with phones and power," Bethea said. "But that does not mean they are going to be able to communicate with anyone in the affected area they left because the phones and power there may still not be working."

Bethea's remedy for the frustrating communications black hole is RallyPoint, a crisis communications plan emphasizing essential personnel and work force recovery during a disaster.

"It allows you to dial into a network or system, either through the Internet or a phone line," Bethea said.

RallyPoint uses a real-time communications platform to take stock of conditions during and after a disaster by locating employees, determining their condition and helping them recover.

"All communications are forwarded into a system that managers can access. It is kind of like one big inbox for an entire management group."

Once access is achieved, the process of employee verification begins through such devices as a direct e-mail or text message blast.

Additionally, RallyPoint is able to notify people within a certain skills set, Bethea said. "So that if you need, for example, only your company's electricians, you can go into the system to find out where they are and communicate with them anywhere in the country."

Officially launched in the spring, RallyPoint already serves more than 3,000 users, a number Bethea expects to grow as other companies consider disaster communications. •

— Garry Boulard

Trumpet Group



Trumpet team members, from left: Robbie Vitano, Jenny Dalton, Matt McGuinness, Malcolm Schwarzenbach, Pat McGuinness, Yuma, Scott Couvillon and Jude Chauvin visit their new 12,000-square-foot studio in Faubourg St. John.

Key innovation: a new method of connecting brands and consumers

Biggest clients: New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, Gatorade

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executives: Pat McGuinness and Robbie Vitano, founders

Year introduced: 1997, started new approach in 2005

2006 sales: \$12.2 million

As New Orleans rebuilds, so are the founders of the Trumpet Group advertising firm.

Co-founders Robbie Vitano and Pat McGuinness chose to take their firm in a new direction, one completely different from the old ways of advertising.

"We are using what's called a brand studio model,"

McGuinness said. "We are 'idea neutral,' in that we don't have specific solutions to our client's problems. We see everything as media, whether it be a television commercial or a matchbook cover."

McGuinness said the idea is to come up with new ways to connect brands and consumers. He said the firm works with clients to get the client's name out to consumers in places one wouldn't think to look.

"It creates momentum for brands and finds them a place in popular culture," McGuinness said.

One example is the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau's "Reconnect with New Orleans" campaign, which placed ads promoting New Orleans cuisine on the tray tables of 35 domestic U.S. Airways and America West planes.

"We are the first destination to use this advertising strategy and it seemed like a great fit for us," said Stephen Perry, NOMCVB president and CEO. "I just feel sorry for those

passengers who aren't on New Orleans-bound flights who have to find a way to satisfy their hunger elsewhere."

McGuinness said Trumpet's approach has received lots of positive feedback from clients who appreciate the honesty and pro-active method his firm offers.

"We have a good handle on where our clients sit within the market," he said. "We tell them where the market is, where they stand and what they should do. In the old way of thinking, customers don't often know whether you are suggesting an idea because it is the right one for them. We charge for the value of ideas, what works the best for our clients."

The firm worked with national companies such as Gatorade and Real Mex Restaurants, but McGuinness said most of its energy has been focused on local businesses such as Tracage Condominiums, Tobacco Free Living, the New Orleans Hornets and the Louisiana Superdome. •

— Robin Shannon

Tulane University Center for gene therapy

Key innovation: using adult stem cells to treat diabetes
Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executive: Dr. Darwin Prokop, director
Year introduced: 2005

A recent article published in the Proceedings of the National Academies of Sciences gives new hope to type 2 diabetes sufferers.

Its author, Tulane University Center for Gene Therapy director Dr. Darwin Prokop, claims adult stem/progenitor cells that increase insulin production in mice with type 2 diabetes can do the same work for humans.

Prokop said researchers at Tulane have been working on the treatment for the past two years. It has been in existence since 1999 as a treatment for heart disease.

"We knew the cells would heal tissue," Prokop said. "It was just a matter of searching out the right disease to treat, and diabetes had never been thought of before. It was a good guess."

Prokop said the first experiments with the stem cells showed they repaired the kidneys of the infected mice, an important factor in diabetes treatment. The stem cells come from the patient to be treated. He said just a teaspoon of bone marrow is necessary to develop the cells.

"It hurts more than extracting blood," Prokop said, "but marrow is much more efficient."

Prokop said the treatment is not quite ready to be used on human patients. The next step is to see how the research affects monkeys with diabetes, and Prokop hopes to begin experiments this month. The treatment also needs approval from the Food and Drug Administration before treatment can begin on humans.

Prokop said he hopes to earn approval once all experiments are complete, hopefully by the end of this year.

"We'd love to start treating patients as soon as possible," he said. "We are setting up a facility to do just that. We just hope the FDA approves us."

Prokop wants to keep the research centered in New Orleans. He said his goal is to attract patients to the city to take advantage of the treatment.

"This has the potential to really benefit the city, as well as Tulane," Prokop said. "I look forward to what can become of this discovery."•

— Robin Shannon



The Tulane University Center for Gene Therapy, led by Dr. Darwin Prokop, has been working on a treatment for type 2 diabetes patients using adult stem cells to increase insulin production.

PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

UAppoint Inc.

Key innovation: system for online appointment scheduling

Biggest client: Pat Cassidy & Partners dental practice in Durham, N.C.

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Dov Glazer, CEO

Year introduced: 2006

2006 sales: would not disclose

It took nearly a decade for dentist Dov Glazer to market his idea for online appointment scheduling, but the payoff was almost immediate.

Glazer said his UAppoint system, which went on sale in 2006 and received a U.S. patent in February, “saves about 70 percent of staff time in terms of front desk communications with patients.” He developed the system with his son, Benjamin Glazer, a computer scientist.

In the late 1980s, Glazer’s Uptown dental office was one of the early subscribers to broadband Internet service, which got him thinking about how the speed of the Web might help streamline communications with patients.

During a drive to the University of Texas in Austin, where Benjamin was attending school, the two brainstormed.

“Within a few years, (Ben) developed the fundamentals for online appointment scheduling while he was at UT, and then afterwards he spent a whole year writing the code and figuring out all the intricate details,” Glazer said.

Ira Halper, proprietor of Halper Dentistry in Terrytown, N.Y., has been a UAppoint customer for close to a year. Already bullish on office automation, he switched to a “paperless” office about eight years ago.

“One of the few things that we weren’t able to do in a paperless environment was the recall system, which basically enables our patients to schedule appointments and be notified when they’re due, and also to confirm appointments,” Halper said.

UAppoint takes care of all those needs.

While other online systems allow patients to request appointment times, they still require staff to determine whether those times are available and call the patient to finalize the appointment.

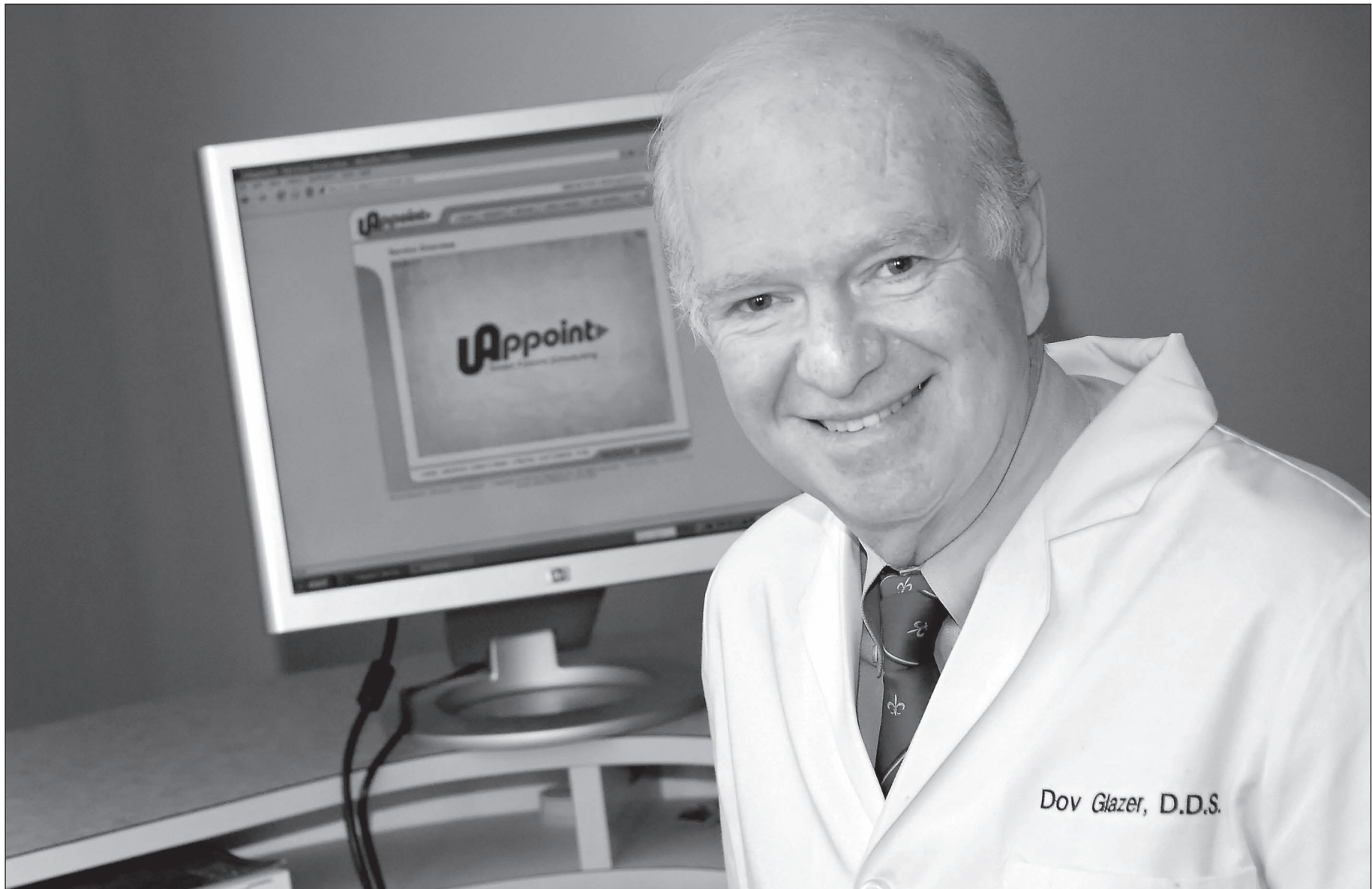
“What’s unique about this, and why we received a patent, is that no other system lets patients actually schedule appointments based on real openings that are available,” Glazer said.

Another bonus, Halper said, is “patients tend to keep their appointments and we have less problems with no-shows.”

With its headquarters in New Orleans and a technical support and development team in Austin, UAppoint is looking to expand into medical and veterinary practices.

“Beyond that, we’re going to go to a broad spectrum of services, such as automotive and health spas,” Glazer said. “Any business that customers make appointments with will benefit from this process.”

— Sonya Stinson



Dentist Dov Glazer’s UAppoint allows patients to schedule their own appointments without help from office staff.

U.S. Flood Control



PHOTO BY GREG LAROSE

Jefferson Parish Public Works crewmembers fill a 700-gallon U.S. Flood Control tube during a storm preparedness exercise in May before the start of hurricane season.

Key innovation: water-filled flood barriers to protect homes and businesses

Biggest clients: provincial governments and states

Where they're based: Carson City, Nev.

Top executive: Paul Vickers, president

Year introduced: 2003

2006 sales: would not disclose

According to the National Flood Insurance Program, a home has a 26 percent chance of being flooded at least once during the course of a 30-year mortgage.

That's why entrepreneur Paul Vickers bought the patent to a flood control system and brought it to market. As a quick and easy alternative to sandbags, U.S. Flood Control manu-

factures collapsible tubes that pack into 55-gallon containers and can quickly create dams around homes or businesses.

Each tube measures 50 feet in length and is 19 inches tall. A six-tube dam measuring 3.5 feet can be erected in one hour using a fire hydrant or water pump. Compact, reusable and easy to deploy, these flood barriers are useful in south Louisiana.

"It's better to use than sandbags. It's something you can use over and over again. From hard rains and hurricanes to street flooding, there are so many applications for it. People even use it on golf courses to drain ponds," Vickers said.

The company already has hundreds of commercial customers, including the St. Charles Parish government, the New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board, the Pontchartrain Levee Board and refineries.

At \$1,250 per tube, it could be expensive for a homeown-

er to build a barrier around their entire home but still cheaper than replacing contents and rebuilding.

A typical 2,000-square-foot home could be protected against a 3-foot flood with about 20 tubes for \$25,000. The homeowner would also need a couple of water pumps to keep out the overflow.

Vickers is trying to introduce the products to the residential market but said the company does not have enough distribution and is already overwhelmed with business from commercial clients. Eventually, he wants the product available in stores such as Wal-Mart or The Home Depot.

"I saw all these people using sandbagging and knew there had to be an easier way," said Vickers. "It's so backbreaking and so hard for older people to try to save themselves. Sandbagging is futile and doesn't work."•

— Craig Guillot

West Jefferson Behavioral Medicine Center

Key innovation: provide transitional care to psychiatric patients

Biggest client: psychiatric patients

Where they're based: Gretna

Top executive: Gary Muller, CEO

Year introduced: November 2006

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, 70 percent of the mental health physicians working in the New Orleans area did not return. Facilities designed to shelter psychiatric patients after they are released from the hospital were damaged, reducing the number of inpatient mental health beds from a pre-Katrina high of 234 to 17.

As a result, psychiatric patients have little alternative but to head to crowded emergency rooms.

To address the situation, the West Jefferson Behavioral

Medicine Center opened in November to provide substance abuse patients with transitional care. The center was started with a \$1.01-million grant from the Jefferson Parish Human Service Authority.

"Our mission is to relieve the pressure on ERs and psychiatric units," said center manager Charles Hart.

Patients stay at the center an average of 14 days. The cost per patient is \$230 per day, about half of the cost of a hospital stay, Hart said. Its 24 beds are full and there is a waiting list for patients.

"We try to stop the revolving door," Hart said.

The center's focus is on getting the patient to understand the situations that led to their destructive behavior.

"What I tell people who enter the program," Hart said, "is that I'm going to give you the best chance you've ever had in your life to change your life."

Deborah Cowan, a patient being released to a group home, said she had been dealing with depression and anxiety attacks

most of her life when she sought the help of the center.

Married with two children, she was involved in the Ames Boulevard Baptist Church and was a substitute teacher at her children's school. Her condition contributed to her marriage ending and her home was damaged in the storm, claiming most of her possessions. Her children, now ages 17 and 14, went to live with her ex-husband in Florida. She traveled to visit her children while trying to put her house back together.

"It was hard," Cowan said. "I missed my kids — I did everything for them."

Sherry Campbell, a parishioner at Cowan's church and business office manager at the center, encouraged Cowan to enter the program.

Cowan said a butterfly provided her with inspiration during one of her bad days.

"That was a sign of new life," Cowan said. "This program gave me that."•

— Lisa Bacques



Charles Hart, manager of West Jefferson's Behavioral Medicine Center, discusses mental health needs with Glenda Gordon and registered nurse Jamie D'Aquin.

World's Healthiest Pizza



World's Healthiest Pizza co-founders Jeff Leach, left, and Randy Crochet enjoy pizza outside their South Miro Street store.

Key innovation: fat-free, healthy pizza

Biggest clients: students of Tulane and Loyola universities

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Randy Crochet, Jeff Leach and Pharon Wilson, co-founders

Year introduced: 2006

2006 sales: would not disclose

Randy Crochet and Jeff Leach had a revolutionary idea after reading reports indicating the number of Americans either overweight or obese is of epidemic proportions.

“What if someone could make a pizza that is not fattening?”

“We were just thinking about the health of our city and country and really getting worried about the direction we are going in,” Crochet said.

Four decades ago, the number of Americans defined as obese was just more than 13 percent, according to a report by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Human Nutrition. Today it is just less than 33 percent.

“We wondered if there was anything we could do to make a difference,” said Crochet, “and the answer was to take a new approach to the one food that everyone loves — pizza.”

Or more specifically, the pizza's dough.

After many tries, Crochet and Leach came up with a dough combination of roots, grains and seeds, prompting them to devise a business plan and officially launch the World's Healthiest Pizza in the fall of 2006.

“My whole family likes pizza, but because we want to be healthy, we have tried to stay away from it,” said Jennifer Walters, a New Orleans-area physical therapist. “There are all kinds of things in most pizza dough, like large amounts of sugar and butter, that are not really very good for you.”

But Crochet and Leach decided to strip their pizzas of such

ingredients, removing sugar, shortening and salt in the process.

The result is a pizza made up of natural ingredients and high fiber.

“Just one slice contains 12 grams of fiber,” Crochet said, “making this a pizza that is actually good for you.”

Located at 6307 S. Miro St., the World's Healthiest Pizza is on the verge of signing a contract with Tulane and Loyola universities that will allow students to use Meal Cards to purchase pizzas. At the same time, Crochet and Leach are opening their first sit-down restaurant in the River Bend area near the corner of Carrollton and St. Charles avenues.

Plans call for franchising the pizza nationally.

“Obviously, because the health challenges of New Orleans are also the health problems of the entire country, something like this can have a positive effect far beyond our city,” Crochet said.

— Garry Boulard

Investors

Brachytherapy Cancer Treatment — East Jefferson General Hospital

Key innovation: procedure using radioactive seed pellets to pinpoint cancer treatment
Where they're based: Metairie
Top executive: Dr. Paul Monsour, medical director of radiation oncology
Year introduced: 1991
Investment: machines cost about \$500,000

East Jefferson General Hospital's Dr. Paul Monsour played a major role in advancing cutting edge radiation cancer treatments and technologies that offer more precise and effective treatment than in the past.

Advances in radiation oncology now better target specific cancers, spare healthy tissues and offer patients opportunities for more normal quality of life while undergoing treatments.

Monsour, medical director of radiation oncology at EJGH, said patients welcome treatment regimes that destroy less healthy tissues and allow for more normal lifestyles.

Imagine being treated for prostate cancer in the morning and being able to play golf in the afternoon. It is possible with brachytherapy, which uses precise placement and targeting by radioactive seed pellets to treat cancers through outpatient procedures that avoid the trauma and downtime of surgery and recovery and maintain more healthy tissues.

"It's really amazing how radiation therapy has evolved," said Monsour.

"The technology has changed. It has become a lot easier to do. The application of it is a lot easier."

Monsour has been performing brachytherapy procedures since the early 1990s, but many advances have come within the past few years. Cancers responding to the treatment include prostate, breast, head, neck, lungs and esophagal.

In addition to brachytherapy, Monsour is using other state-of-the-art radiation therapy treatment. Intensity modulated radiation therapy delivers external radiation as a cancer treatment. The technology allows the treatment to be delivered from various angles, allowing physicians to tailor radiation doses to the diagnosis and treatment regimes of their patients.

Monsour started IMRT in 2002 at EJGH. He said such technologies and advances in radiation oncology treatments offer better hope for cancer sufferers. •

— Jana Mackin



PHOTO BY FRANK AYAMAMI

Brachytherapy cancer treatment machines, which cost about \$500,000 each, help Dr. Paul Monsour, medical director of radiation oncology at East Jefferson General Hospital, precisely pinpoint cancer treatments.

Cardiovascular MRI — Ochsner Health System



Dr. Sangeeta Shah, director of cardiovascular MRI at Ochsner Heart and Vascular Institute, has been using the new system, which reduces pain, recovery time and no radiation since October 2005.

Key innovation: a heart-problem diagnosis system that reduces pain and recovery time without using radiation

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Dr. Sangeeta Shah, director of Cardiovascular MRI at Ochsner Heart and Vascular Institute

Year introduced: October 2005

Investment: about \$1.5 million

Dr. Sangeeta Shah calls cardiovascular MRI one-stop shopping.

The director at Ochsner Health System said the system offered since October 2005 is ideal for patients with heart

problems. It provides noninvasive diagnostic technology with no down time, pain or radiation risks.

Cardiovascular magnetic resonance imaging allows physicians to assess heart disease and damage without the intrusive nature and risk of other diagnostic procedures.

“What we can offer them is a diagnostic modality (nearby) so that people don't have to travel elsewhere, no down time and there is no radiation involved,” Shah said. “And that is why it is good for kids, so you do not have to keep giving them radiation exposure over their lifespan.”

Even though the system isn't as quick as CT scans or ultrasounds — Shah said she can do at most 10 a day compared with about 70 echograms — the images are more precise.

“This system quantifies everything,” she said. “It tells you

a little more about the muscle tissue around the heart. For people with cardiac myopathy, it tells us if we need to open the arteries or not, saving a lot of time and pain.”

Cardiovascular MRI provides images and information that may not be available through other non-invasive diagnostics. It is also can be used in conjunction with echocardiograms, cardiac catheterization, blood and chemical tests, and nuclear imaging, Shah said.

Without radiation, it can show cardiac anatomy, function and traits of the myocardial tissues, she said, while detecting and evaluating valvular, arterial and congenital heart disease, heart masses and previously undetected myocardial infarction. •

— Jana Mackin

Ci System — Touro Infirmary

Key innovation: computer-assisted knee replacement
Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executive: Dr. Richard Meyer, clinical instructor of computer-navigated surgery
Year introduced: December 2004

Knee replacement is the most common joint replacement surgery in the United States, with almost 400,000 performed a year, according to doctors at Touro Infirmary. Every surgical movement must be precise and alignment must be perfect or else the knee will fail.

In an effort to be more meticulous in the operating room, doctors at Touro have been using computer-assisted technology to perform total knee replacements. The software was installed in December 2004 and was an immediate success.

"I think close to 300 surgeries have been done by Touro using this new technology," said Dr. Richard Meyer, a board-certified orthopedic surgeon and clinical instructor of computer-navigated surgery at Touro. "It's starting to catch on throughout New Orleans now. I was just lucky I had an interest in it years ago."

Meyer said the software, called the Ci (*pronounced "sigh"*) System, is designed and manufactured by Brainlab, a German technology firm. It involves a camera with sensors and a software program that communicates with the computer. He said the technology has been around for almost 10 years but recently became user friendlier.

"It allows us to do things in surgery we weren't able to do before," Meyer said. "The computer allows me to have smaller incisions. It gives me pictures of the knee during surgery you don't normally see, and it allows me to make computer-guided cuts to help limit the exposure we used to need."

Meyer said the procedure is minimally invasive, does not involve the use of X-rays and reduces the required amount of drilling to the bone and minimizes the risk of blood clots.

Greg Roques, physician relations assistant for Touro, said the software works off small sensors attached to each side of the knee — one on the thigh, and one on the shin bone.

"Infrared signals pick up the location of the sensors and transmit a 3-D model of the inside of the knee joint," Roques said. "This allows the operating physician to accurately locate the best possible location to position the implant."

According to Meyer, accuracy is everything when it comes to knee replacement procedures, and a correctly aligned prosthesis will certainly last longer.

"There are lots of studies out there that say if alignment is off more than 3 millimeters, the knee replacement is more likely to fail," Meyer said. "It will cause increased wear and tear to the new joint, and a subsequent procedure would be required."

Roques said the technology has put much less strain on the patient. The minimally invasive procedure is less painful, and the recovery time is much faster."

Meyer has had patients walking pain-free as soon as a week following surgery," Roques said. •

— Robin Shannon



Since 2004, Dr. Richard Meyer, clinical instructor of computer-navigated surgery at Touro Infirmary, has performed computer-assisted knee surgeries using the Ci System, which minimizes pain and blood clots.

Da Vinci Robotic System



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

From left: Drs. Richard Vanlangendonck, Richard Kline, Lisa Basse and Stephen Bardot are part of the da Vinci robotic surgical team at Ochsner Health System.

Key innovation: a robotic surgical system that causes less pain, shorter hospital stays and a quicker recovery

Where they're based: Jefferson

Top executive: Dr. Stephen Bardot, director of robotic surgery

Year introduced: 2005

Investment: about \$1.3 million

While people never look forward to having surgery done, the da Vinci Robotic System at Ochsner Medical Center is making the process considerably easier.

The technology has been developed since 2001 by California-based Intuitive Surgical Inc. When the second generation of this equipment was introduced in 2005, Ochsner made the move to obtain it.

Since its introduction at Ochsner, more than 300 proce-

dures have been performed with the da Vinci Robotic System.

The system allows for a less invasive procedure with less blood loss, shorter hospital stays, less pain and a quicker return to work for patients.

"There's a lot of wins for the patient," said Dr. Stephen Bardot, director of robotic surgery and chairman of the department of urology at Ochsner.

In many ways, the system works like a virtual reality video game. Instead of having to put their hands inside a patient and maneuver surgical instruments from there, the da Vinci puts 8-millimeter tubes in the patient for the instruments.

The surgeon controls the instruments with his hands outside the patient. Whatever the surgeon's hands do on the outside, the instruments do on the inside.

Previously, a surgeon's movement was restricted.

Now, a surgeon has a full 360-degree range of motion and can work much more precisely and delicately than before.

The surgeon looks at a screen displaying a real-time image of the area being operated on and the image is fully 3-D.

Making surgery easier for the doctors made it easier for patients as well.

Dr. Lisa Bazzett, a gynecological oncologist at Ochsner, operated on a 75-year-old woman with the da Vinci system and the woman went home the next day.

She did not even feel the need to pick up her painkillers.

The only thing that throws patients off a bit is when the doctors mention the word "robotic."

"They think you go in and program a robot and the surgeon leaves the room. ... But we're controlling everything," Bazzett said.

The da Vinci has been such a success at Ochsner that Intuitive Surgical has established Ochsner as one of six training sites for System S (the latest da Vinci system). Surgeons from around the country will travel to Ochsner to learn how to use the da Vinci. •

— Fritz Esker

Investors

Gulf South Joint Replacement — Touro Infirmary



The Gulf South Joint Replacement Center at Touro Infirmary team, seated from left: Penny Nunenmacher and Leslie Parry. Standing, from left, Al Trevino, Shirley Martin, Dwayne Murray, Brian Mahl, Lillian O’Cain and Heather Uhl.

Key innovation: hip, knee and shoulder replacement surgeries

Where they’re based: New Orleans

Top executive: Ralph Dean, vice president of operations and chief operating officer

Year introduced: March 2007

The way Touro Infirmary’s Al Trevino sees it, baby boomers refuse to retire to a life of lounging on rocking chairs the way their parents and grandparents did. Sore knees and joints won’t keep them from weekend tennis games and company basketball leagues, even if it means going under the knife.

Thanks to the Gulf South Joint Replacement Center at Touro, which opened in March, New Orleans patients have

access to surgical procedures that can keep them active.

“If we start to experience hip or knee pain that can be helped, then that’s an option we’re going to take,” said Trevino, the center’s patient care manager. “The center is a matter of getting people back to a lifestyle they’re used to without the pain.”

An Academy of Orthopedic Surgery study last year showed orthopedic doctors expect to perform 3.5 million knee replacement surgeries a year by 2030 — a 673 percent jump from now. The only unit able to meet such demands locally is Touro’s, which counts on skills and techniques seldom seen in other parts of the country.

Dr. Lance Estrada is one of only a few doctors in the country certified to repair severe rotator cuff injuries and arthritis with an innovative shoulder surgery. Dr. Richard Meyer Jr., a hip and knee replacement specialist, was the first physician in Louisiana to perform a total knee replacement

using computer-assisted orthopedic surgery. Other surgeons say his specialty is safer and less invasive than the traditional method and call it “the wave of the future.”

“No place else in the Gulf South can you get the dedicated, comprehensive joint replacement treatment that is provided here,” said Karen Hales, spokeswoman for the center. “It is creating a reason for people to come here at such a crucial time.”

Patients and their families know exactly what’s coming a week ahead of time — from what chair they’ll sit in for lunch the day after surgery to how to prepare their homes for the recovery period.

“It truly was one of the best hospital experiences I’ve ever had,” said Stephen Labranche, one of Touro’s first total hip replacement patients. “I did exactly what they said to do, and five days later I was discharged. I’ve gone back twice to visit them just to say hello.”•

— Ramon Vargas

Investors

Nathan Laser Institute

Key innovation: minimally invasive laser liposuction

Where they're based: Lacombe

Top executive: Dr. Paul Nathan, founder

Year introduced: July 2002

Investment: more than \$100,000

Dr. Paul Nathan is on a mission: melting off post-Katrina fat.

Nathan was one of the first doctors in Louisiana and Mississippi to perform state-of-the-art laser liposuction, a minimally invasive procedure the Food and Drug Administration approved last year.

"Louisiana is among the fattest states in the nation," said Nathan, owner and founder of the Nathan Laser Institute. Nathan is a board-certified interventional cardiologist and vascular specialist, and active member of the American College of Phlebology. He has been extensively trained in laser surgery and aesthetics.

"This is an opportunity to trim the fat so to speak," he said. "We are the luminary center for Smartlipo (laser liposuction)."

Since introducing the procedure to the area in February, he has been training other area doctors in the procedure.

Laser liposuction relies on a small laser to melt fat from targeted areas and tighten skin. The surgery can be performed in one to two hours under a local anesthetic, and patients can resume most normal activities the same day.

The treatment results in less trauma, shorter down time, fewer side effects and minimal swelling, Nathan said.

While laser liposuction does not replace traditional liposuction, it is an effective alternative for clients near or at their ideal body weight with small areas of fat — love handles, saddle bags and chicken necks — resistant to diet and exercise.

Laser liposuction usually targets inner and outer thighs, knees, the chin, abdomen and upper arms.

For heavier patients, traditional liposuction treatments may be required.

Many of Nathan's clients are middle age women, often mothers, though he said men are also seeking laser liposuction. He has treated a range of patients between the ages of 18 and 60.

Nathan stresses the technology does not replace diet or exercise as essential techniques for weight management. However, laser liposuction promises to be an effective tool in helping eliminate excess fat.

"My training is as a cardiologist, so I use this to jump start people with weight issues," he said. "We are trying to get people on the right path, give them a head start. I'll tell them, 'This is a one time deal and that you are going to have to do the work to diet and exercise to keep the weight off.'"

—Jana Mackin

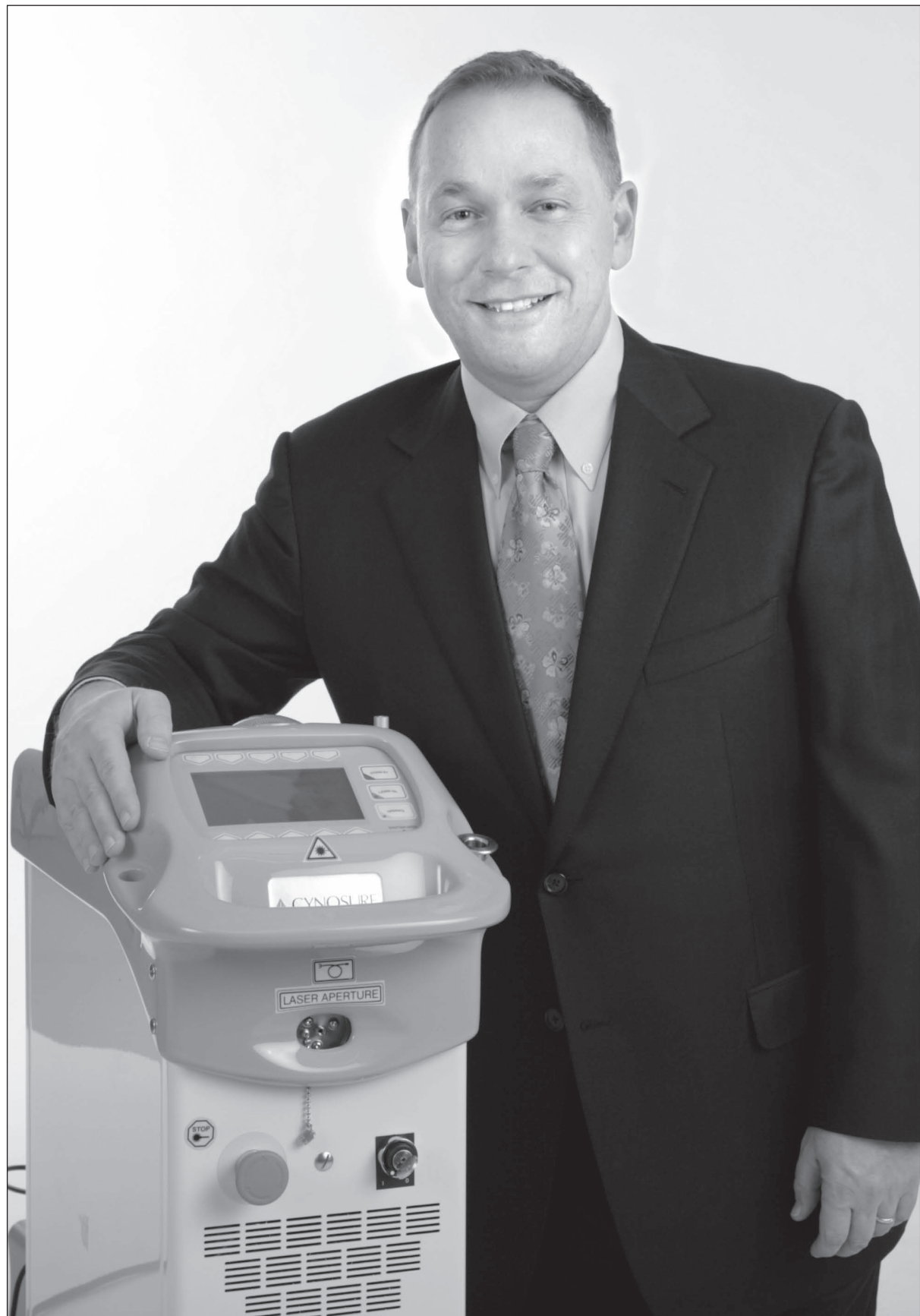


PHOTO COURTESY NATHAN LASER INSTITUTE

Dr. Paul Nathan, founder of the Nathan Laser Institute, spent about \$100,000 on the Smartlipo machine, which uses a small laser to melt and sculpt away fat from targeted areas and tighten skin.

Reverse Shoulder Arthroplasty — Touro Infirmary

Key innovation: shoulder surgery for arthritis patients and those with irreparable damage to rotator cuff muscles
Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executive: Dr. Lance Estrada, orthopedic surgeon
Year introduced: 2006

Surgery on or replacement of the ball and socket joint of the shoulder can be quite a medical undertaking. It is even trickier when the patient suffers from arthritis and has irreparable damage to rotator cuff muscles.

Dr. Lance Estrada, an orthopedic surgeon at Touro Infirmary, said for those patients, the socket is no longer centered on the joint. It rides up higher on the shoulder, causing more pain and limiting function.

"They wouldn't even be able to put on deodorant," Estrada said. "They can't maneuver their arm away from their side actively. They have lost that lever arm from the rotator cuff tearing."

To fix the problem, European doctors developed a procedure that reverses the ball and socket connection. Estrada brought this method to the New Orleans area.

Reverse shoulder arthroplasty uses a chrome and cobalt ball screwed into the socket side of the joint. The ball is then attached to a titanium alloy stem with a snap-in shell that wraps around the ball.

"Two things allow you to abduct your arm from your side," Estrada said. "The rotator cuff starts the first 15 degrees, and after it has gotten it hiked up a bit, your deltoid takes over. When you lose the rotator cuff and the bone rides up high, it cannot initiate the first half of the arm movement. It's because the center of rotation is off the ball and higher on the bone, and the muscles have lost their mechanical advantage.

"What this procedure does is move the center of rotation away from the body and it allows the deltoid to work much easier."

Estrada said the prosthesis is initially fixed to the shoulder with five screws. The base plate of the ball is sprayed with a special coating that provides an ideal environment for bone growth into and around the prosthesis.

"If you can get the body to grow around the prosthetic, the long-term results are better than relying on cement," said Estrada. "Once bone grows into it, it is there to stay."

Estrada first performed the surgery for Touro in August 2006. He trained in Tampa, Fla., under the doctor who introduced reverse shoulder arthroplasty to surgeons in the United States after great success in Europe over the past 10 years. The Food and Drug Administration approved the procedure two years ago.

Estrada has only performed about 12 shoulder arthroplasties since introducing the procedure to the area. The results have been good.

"In some cases patients regain total arm movement almost the next day," said Estrada. "It relieves pain because bone is no longer grinding on bone, and it restores full function."•

— Robin Shannon



Dr. Lance Estrada, an orthopedic surgeon at Touro Infirmary, uses a procedure called reverse shoulder arthroplasty to help patients regain arm movement.

Investors

64-slice cardiac CT scanner — Ochsner Health System

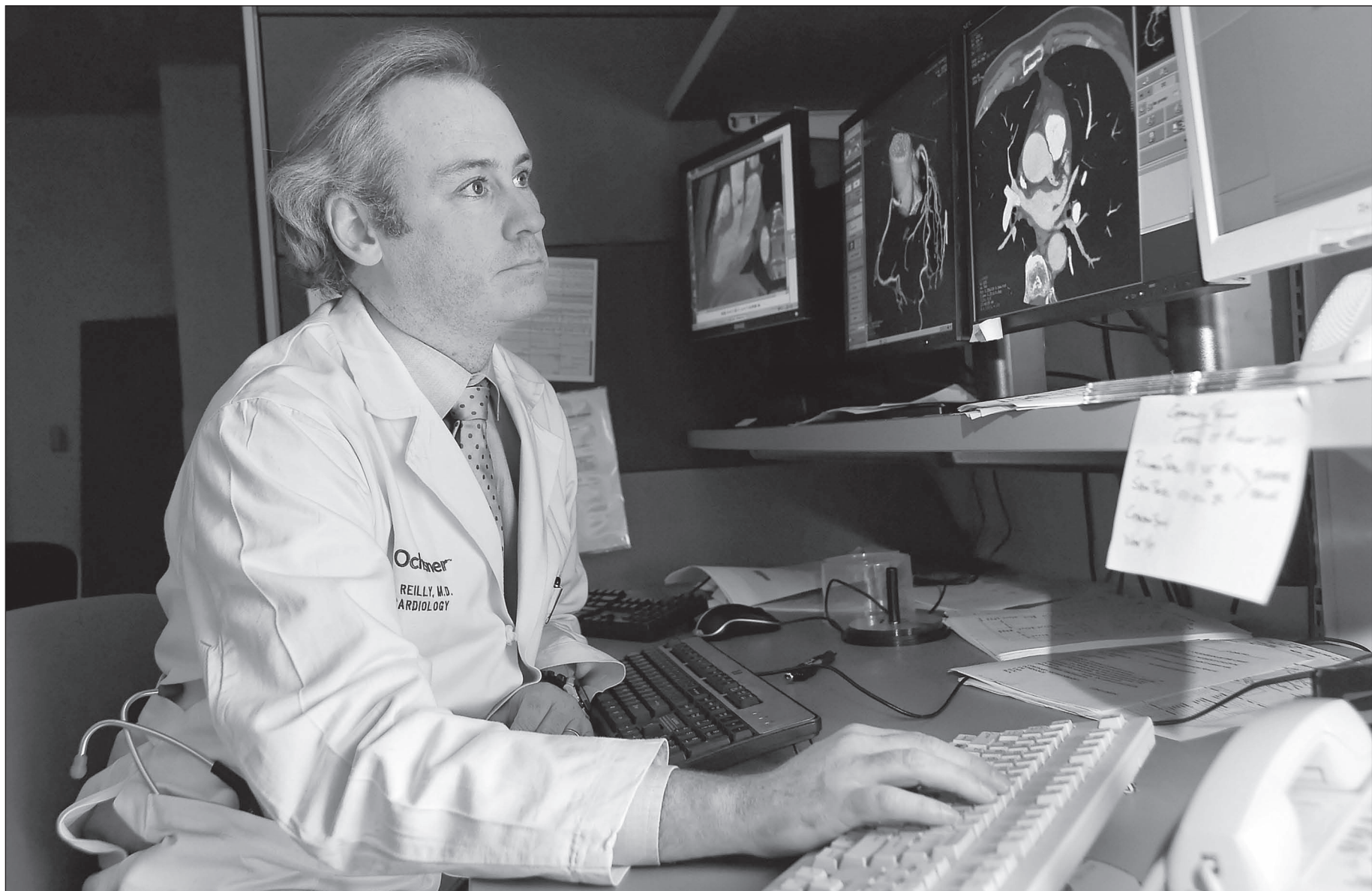


PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Dr. John Reilly reviews results from the 64-slice CT cardiac scanner, which examines the whole heart, allowing doctors to identify problems quickly without surgery.

Key innovation: procedure allowing doctors to identify heart problems quickly and less painfully

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Dr. John Reilly, associate director of cardiac catheterization lab

Year introduced: April

Investment: about \$1.4 million

For Dr. John Reilly, the decision to bring the 64-slice CT cardiac scanner technology to Ochsner Health System was an easy one. Like any good doctor, he is in favor of anything leading to better diagnoses, faster recovery times and fewer invasive, uncomfortable procedures for patients.

“Older, more established technologies like stress testing have limitations and fall short in certain ways,” Reilly said. “The cardiac CT overcomes many of those shortcomings.”

Reilly said older diagnostic technologies are about 90 percent accurate. But when it comes to dealing with heart disease, “the No. 1 killer in the United States, to leave even 10 percent of doubt is too much.”

That’s especially true for his patients. Louisiana and Mississippi have higher rates of heart disease and strokes compared with other states, and Reilly said 64-slice technology being made available to patients is a step in the right direction.

“We have to be more aware as patients and physicians and family members, especially in this area,” Reilly said. “We must use whatever tools that can be brought to bear to aggressively identify those that do or don’t have heart disease.”

The 64-slice CT scanner takes 192 images of the heart per second. The speed with which it operates helps doctors identify potentially deadly conditions, such as aortic dissections and pulmonary embolisms. The exams take less time, results come in promptly and read more accurately than traditional scans.

The technology is a cost-effective alternative to invasive diagnostic procedures, which are more labor-intensive for doctors and demand long recovery periods for patients.

Despite its ability to identify anything from early blockages in arteries to embolisms, Reilly said the 64-slice scanner is at its best when identifying patients who don’t have heart disease.

“It keeps them from undergoing expensive, invasive tests when they don’t need it,” he said.

Ochsner began installing the scanner at the end of 2006 and the technology was first offered to patients in April. •

— Ramon Vargas

Trilogy Cancer System — East Jefferson General Hospital



Radiation therapist Cathy Vaccaro sets up Keith Darcy on the Trilogy Stereotactic Treatment System at East Jefferson General Hospital.

Key innovation: image-guided radiation therapy for cancer treatments

Where they're based: Metairie

Top executive: Dr. Paul Monsour, medical director of radiation oncology

Year introduced: 2007

Investment: about \$4 million

In an effort to make cancer radiation treatments safer, East Jefferson General Hospital's Radiation Oncology Department recently invested in a machine that allows for more precise treatments.

The Trilogy machine, developed by Varian Medical, is the world's first image-guided radiation therapy system for conventional and stereotactic approaches to treating cancer. East Jefferson was the first hospital in the area to utilize this new technology.

Dr. Paul Monsour, medical director of radiation oncology

for East Jefferson Hospital, said the system allows oncologists to be more accurate as to where they want the radiation to go, while excluding surrounding normal structures from radiation exposure.

"Before, when we wanted to treat a cancerous tumor, we had to expose surrounding body structures to radiation," Monsour said. "Now with Trilogy, we are able to form a more rounded box of radiation that takes the form of the tumor."

Monsour said Trilogy can safely deliver more radiation during treatments, increasing curability and diminishing side effects. He said the image-guided therapy allows doctors to monitor the area of concern daily to ensure treatments are on target.

"Tumors and organs can move from day to day, based on various factors," Monsour said. "This allows us to move the treatment as necessary and hit the tumor with a stronger beam of full radiation while avoiding normal tissues."

Monsour said an elaborate planning process uses computer images and physics to ensure the cancerous area is

targeted correctly. The technology requires specialized physicists who monitor the machine to ensure it does what it is supposed to do.

Trilogy also uses stereotactic radiation, a cancer treatment usually used on tumors of the head, neck, brain and spinal cord. The technique can be done on an outpatient basis.

"Simply put, Trilogy lets us treat these tumors with great precision and accuracy in a fast and comfortable manner for our patients," said Monsour.

Monsour said East Jefferson received the machine about five months ago, and spent about \$4 million to bring it to the area. After installing the necessary components, his department started treatments in early August. About 20 patients are receiving treatment from Trilogy. He said typical treatment times are lengthened but they are safer and more accurate.

"There is no doubt that this machine will change the way we treat cancer," Monsour said. •

— Robin Shannon

Investors

Trilogy Cancer System — Ochsner Health System

Key innovation: image-guided radiation therapy system
Top executive: Dr. Troy Scroggins, department chairman of radiation oncology
Where they're based: Jefferson
Year introduced: 2007
Investment: \$3.2 million

Just a few months ago, Ochsner Health System brought cancer sufferers new hope when the hospital installed radiation technology called the Trilogy System from Varian Medical Systems.

The Trilogy System is touted by its manufacturers as the world's first image-guided radiation therapy system that treats cancer through conventional and minimally-invasive stereotactic approaches. It can also treat other medical conditions.

"The machine costs about \$3 million," said Dr. Troy Scroggins, department chairman of radiation oncology at Ochsner.

"It is worth it. Whether we can actually cure more patients, time will tell," Scroggins said. "Clearly we are seeing decreased side effects in patients."

But oncologists are optimistic.

The system can deliver therapeutic and surgical doses of radiation for cancer and neurological treatments. The techniques available through the Trilogy system give physicians tools to make, more precise and customized diagnostic and treatment plans.

Because of the machine's power, versatility and precision, the technology offers the ability to precisely target cancers with strong radiation doses while avoiding healthy tissues. The highly concentrated delivery of radiation doses provides patients faster treatments with improved comfort and potential for improved outcomes.

The machine can rotate and position patients to allow delivery of radiation from multiple angles. Scroggins said Trilogy has many advantages including real-time tracking of tumors, automatic patient positioning and an ability to sense and correct for tumor motion during radiation treatments. •

— Jana Mackin

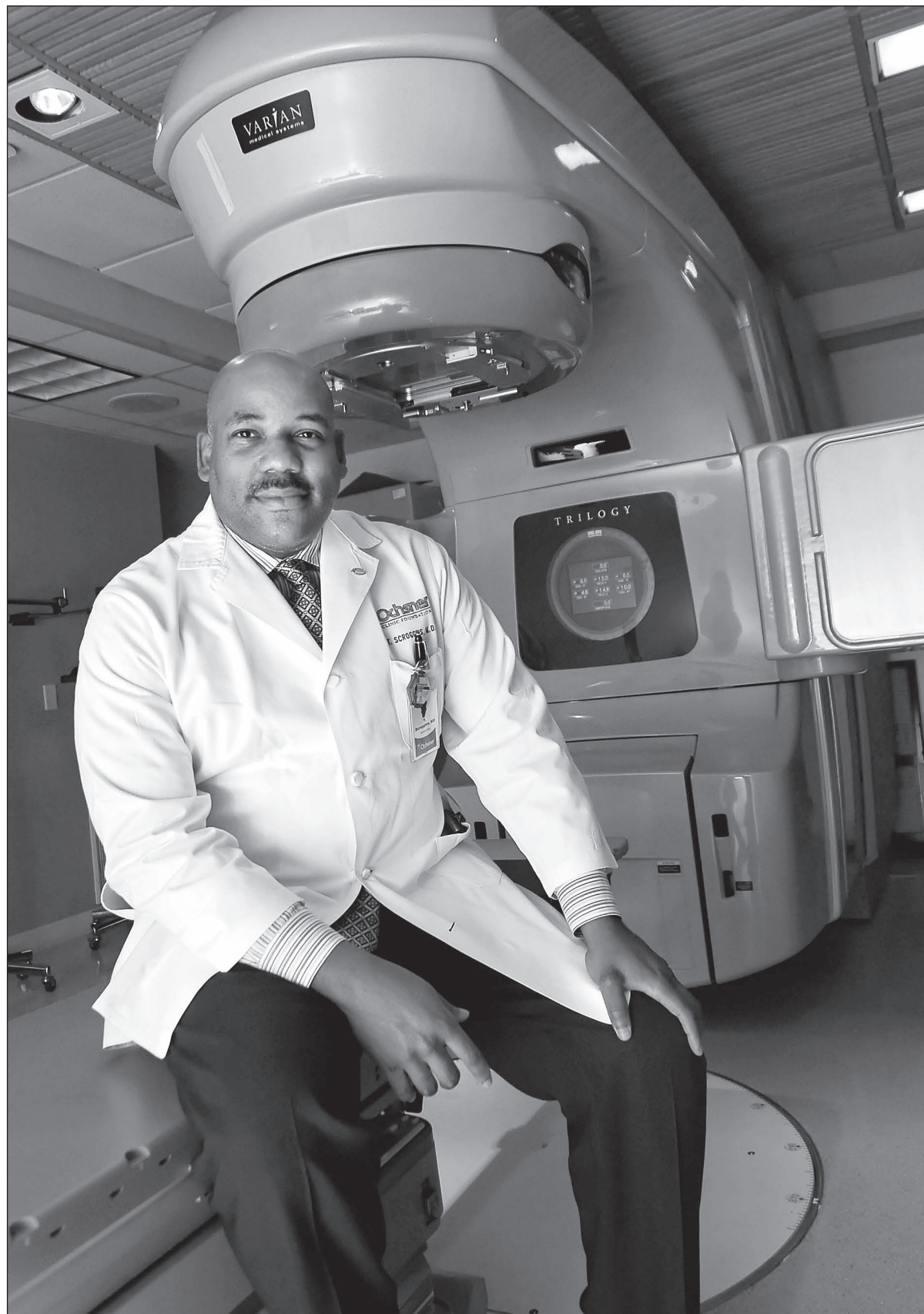


PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Dr. Troy Scroggins, department chairman of radiation oncology at Ochsner Health System, has been using the \$3.2-million, image-guided Trilogy Cancer System since early 2007.

Beacon of Hope Resource Center

Key Innovation: providing a central location in neighborhoods for residents to receive information and help with rebuilding

Top executive: Denise Thornton, founder and president

Where they're based: Lakeview

Year introduced: 2006

Denise Thornton has undergone more changes in the past two years than most people experience in a lifetime.

With her husband, Doug Thornton, manager of the Louisiana Superdome, Denise lived in the stadium for five days after Hurricane Katrina. During that time, she began to reflect on her life and whether she had made a difference.

"I made a promise to God that if I survived this, I would do something meaningful with my life," Thornton said. "I

began learning things and wanted to share that information with my neighbors."

Thornton went into action and contacted Entergy, asking the utility company to turn on electricity in her Lakeview neighborhood. Then she contacted Cox Communications, which routed Internet service to her home. Soon her home was a hub for neighbors who needed to get online or fax information to their insurance companies.

The Beacon of Hope Resource Center, which since has spread to 11 other neighborhoods, was born.

With the help of donors such as the United Way, Good News Camp, Lakeview Christian Church and former New Orleans Hornets co-owner Ray Wooldridge, Thornton was able to buy lawnmowers and equipment for neighbors to help clear debris and return the neighborhood to normal.

Thornton's work has had a ripple effect.

A resident of another section of Lakeview, who saw what was going on and wanted the same thing to happen in her area, contacted Thornton. She suggested the woman come to her neighborhood for a week and see what she was doing. Thornton then went to her neighborhood to lend a hand.

"That's what makes us unique," Thornton said. "We are from the ground up instead of from the top down. We are boots on the ground. We are agile and have the ability to move with the environment's need. And we are residential-based, not political."

What is the typical day at Beacon of Hope?

"There is no typical day," Thornton said. "We're a moving target. I do check e-mails first thing each day, and then figure out the problem of the day. Then the volunteers come and we disperse them to the various beacons with their work orders. They clean up, do some planting and help people in some way." •

— Lisa Bacques



Beacon of Hope team members, kneeling from left: Brandy Bowen, administrative assistant and Heather Huth, volunteer supervisor. Standing, from left: Denise Thornton, founder and president; Paul Arnemann, volunteer supervisor; Jackie Richard, executive director; Denise Strauss, outreach coordinator; and Keith Huber, equipment manager.

Nonprofit

Ideacorps

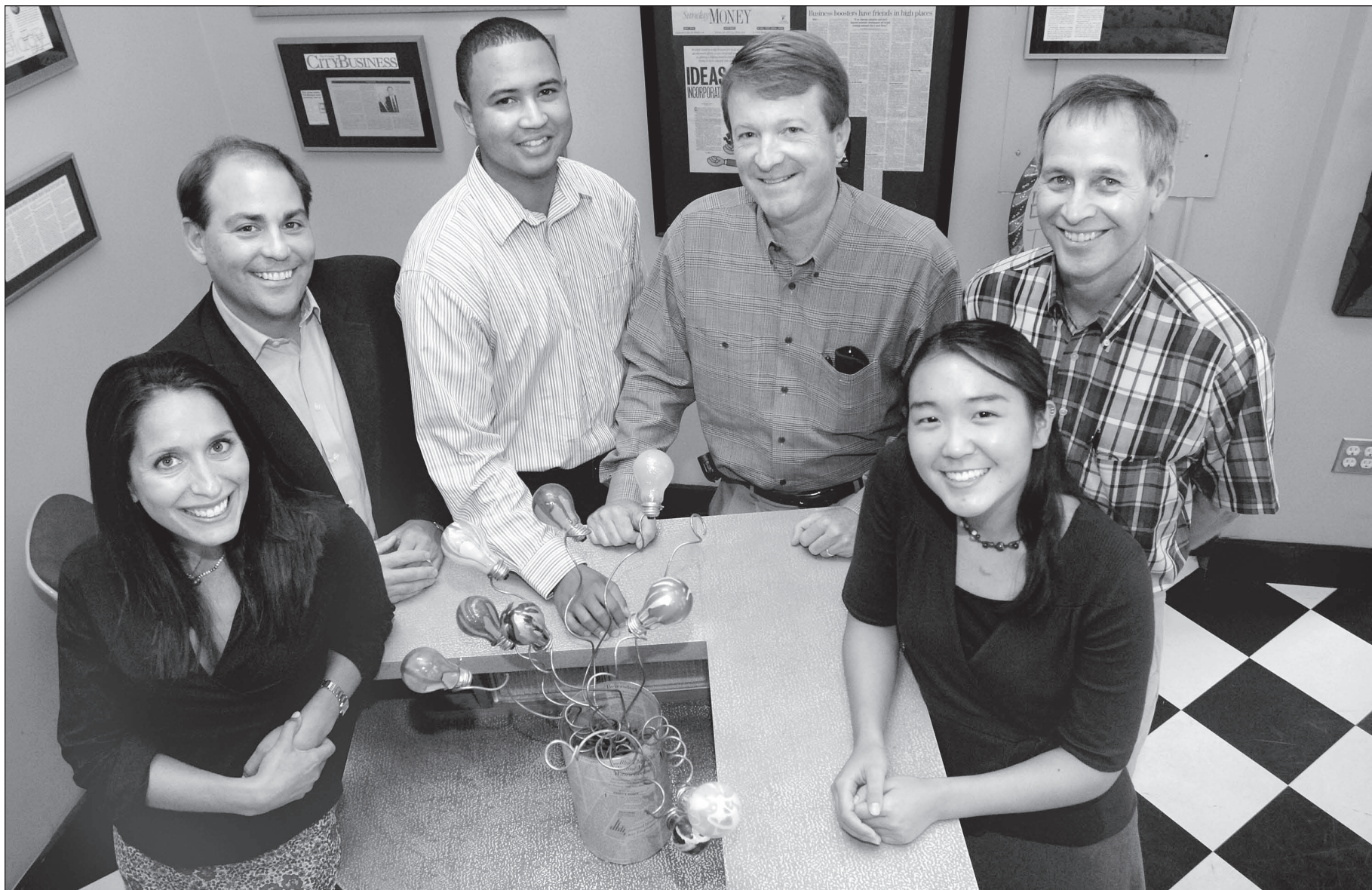


PHOTO BY PAULA E. BURCH

IDEACORPS members, clockwise from left: Lauren Baum, Tim Williamson, Morial Ballot, Allen Bell, John Elstrott and Miji Parks.

Key innovation: helping rebuild small businesses in New Orleans

Biggest clients: New Orleans-based small business

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: John Elstrott, Tulane University

Year introduced: 2005

Like many great ideas, Ideacorps began in the classroom.

During Tulane University's spring 2006 term, 70 graduate-level business administration students, whose first semester in graduate school was interrupted by Hurricane Katrina, brainstormed with John Elstrott and guest speaker George Cloutier to develop an idea to help local small businesses with storm recovery.

Cloutier, founder and CEO of American Management Services, contacted Elstrott to pitch an idea to the professor's Rebuild New Orleans class about starting a business service corps.

Partnered with the nonprofit business incubator Idea Village, the Ideacorps came alive. Through this partnership and a gift of \$20,000 from Cloutier, the students and their teacher set out to help local small businesses recover from Katrina.

"(The Ideacorps) took one of the city's greatest assets — Tulane University — and integrated it to help rebuild the city," said Elstrott.

Tim Williamson, founder and president of The Idea Village, said the group encourages talented young people to work in New Orleans.

"Engagement and retention of talent is one of the greatest oppositions and challenges for the city to move forward," said Williamson.

"Instead of a brain drain," said Elstrott, "there's a brain gain."

The Ideacorps, Williamson said, also provides a high level of experience and talent to help businesses recover and grow.

After assisting with organizing the Ideacorps, Elstrott is infusing the concept throughout Tulane's campus and continues to assist with its funding. He also recommends Tulane

students as candidates to join the Ideacorps.

Since its inception, the Ideacorps has assisted small businesses through the installation of computers, which students also supplied. One such business, Hurricane Guy, provided services to homeowners preparing for hurricane season. The company's disaster preparedness kits evolved into Ready One. Owner Drew Herrington expects his company to reach \$2.5 million in sales in the next year.

"The Ideacorps program has been instrumental in helping us launch our new line of products, marketing materials, logos and collateral," said Herrington.

The project has attracted six other universities across the country, adding 54 more students to the corps.

Emily Mitchell was one of the first students who worked with Elstrott to help develop the Ideacorps.

"I saw it as an exciting and innovative and creative way to get involved," said Mitchell.

She is now a fellow with the group and continues to expand what she calls a "robust program" to other schools. •

— Amy M. Ferrara

Innovation Center — The Idea Village

Key innovation: resource center to help New Orleans business development

Biggest client: Savvy Gourmet

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Allen Bell, co-founder and chief operating officer

Year introduced: 2002

As people return to the Upper Ninth Ward, a neighborhood wiped out during Hurricane Katrina, retail and office space will be needed to re-establish vital services.

That's where the Idea Village, a nonprofit designed to promote business development in New Orleans, enters the scene.

"We were founded on the belief that innovation in entrepreneurship could drive economic and social change," said Allen Bell, co-founder and chief operating officer.

The Upper Ninth Ward will serve as the staging ground for the Idea Village's Innovation Center. Its goal is to provide needed retail and office space to New Orleans neighborhoods in an effort to attract residents and business.

"Hurricane Katrina's aftermath illustrates that at the community level, residential and business recovery are interdependent."

The Upper Ninth Ward's Innovation Center will be near the intersection of North Galvez and Piety streets. The space is about 3,000 square feet and will provide subsidized rents for one to two retail businesses and two to three office spaces. Tenants have not been determined.

The center will provide computers with Internet access, copiers and printers. For residents and small business owners, entrepreneurship and literacy training, meeting spaces and work force development services will be offered.

Bell said the center will open in late 2007 or early 2008. It will be housed in an existing building requiring renovation.

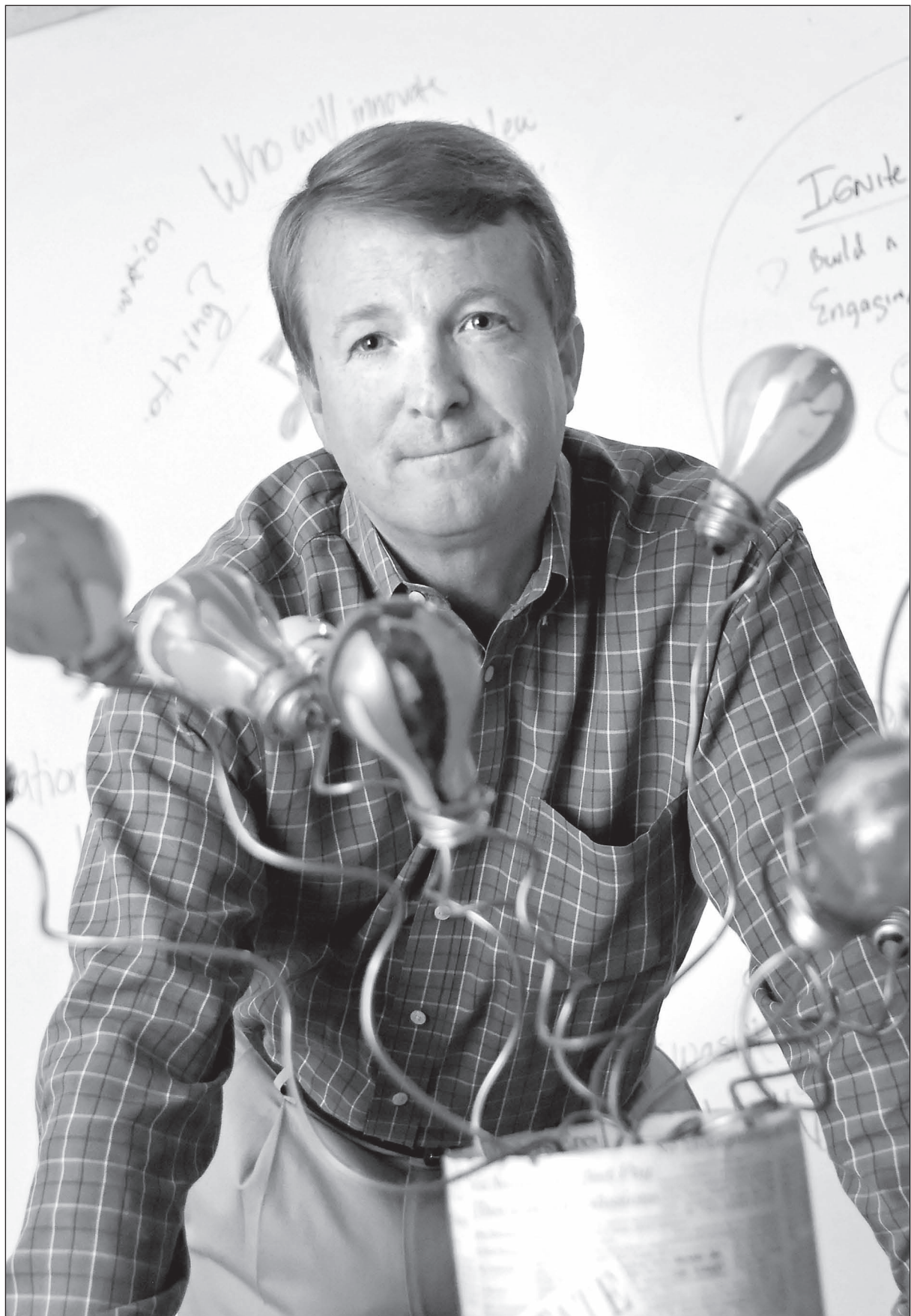
The Idea Village has partnered with Habitat for Humanity, which helped provide discounted materials to assist with construction and renovation on the project. Regions Bank and Mercy Corps provided capital to acquire the building and get the project moving.

Idea Village does not plan to stop working on this project once the center opens. Bell said the concept will expand into other neighborhoods.

"The great thing about this model is that it can be replicated throughout other devastated areas," said Bell.

"Post-Katrina, the innovative approaches to problems are the only ones that are going to get the city back on its feet."•

— Fritz Esker



Allen Bell, co-founder and chief operating officer of the Idea Village, said its Innovation Center in the Upper Ninth Ward will help foster business development by providing space for retailers and other resources.

Nonprofit

Louisiana Appleseed — Adams & Reese/ConocoPhillips

Key innovation: free bank literacy classes
Top executive: Christy Kane, director
Where they're based: New Orleans
Year introduced: January

According to the Hispanic Apostolate of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, the number of Hispanic residents has ballooned from 60,000 before Hurricane Katrina to as many as 100,000.

Among the barriers facing the new members of the Hispanic community was a perceived fear of local banking institutions. Working to remedy the situation is the nonprofit Louisiana Appleseed.

Backed by the Adams & Reese law firm is nearly 300 attorneys, Louisiana Appleseed is part of a network of public interest law centers in the United States and Mexico working to remedy social and systemic injustices. The work often involves changing laws through state and municipal authorities and refining the procedures of institutions, including banks.

"We have various areas of outreach, including low-income African-American communities and even the educational system," said Christy Kane, Louisiana Appleseed director.

"We thought it'd be a great way for the legal community to engage in pro bono work," she said. Adams & Reese and ConocoPhillips started the state chapter in January. The law firm requires 10 hours of pro bono work from attorneys, with much of it devoted to Appleseed.

The group offers bank literacy classes, many taught in Spanish, to teach low-income and undocumented workers how to manage their savings with a bank account.

Participants can learn how to apply for a tax identification number instead of a Social Security number to store their money in banks.

"We're also doing a study on teacher recruitment and retention, seeing if any lawyers can use their bright minds to come up with solutions on that problem," Kane said. "I just think we have a lot of house problems to tackle, and we're just trying to solve these problems at their root causes, once and for all."

Adams & Reese lawyers, on their own time, have also written mental health and child custody handbooks and are also working with Road Home applicants to resolve title clearance issues.

"We believe it is every attorney's ethical obligation to perform pro bono work," said managing partner Chuck Adams. "Community service is a core component of our corporate culture."•

— Ramon Vargas



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

The Adams & Reese/ConocoPhillips partnership Louisiana Appleseed led by Christy Kane made bank literacy classes for Hispanic residents a priority of the pro bono program.

New Schools for New Orleans

Key innovation: helping New Orleans schools
Biggest clients: New Orleans charter schools
Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executive: Sarah Newell Usdin, president and founder
Year introduced: January 2006

Before Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans public schools were in a state of chaos. After Katrina, New Schools for New Orleans has more hope for the system.

"This is a once-in-a-many-lifetimes opportunity to rethink how we do urban education," said Sarah Newell Usdin, president and founder of New Schools for New Orleans.

New Schools for New Orleans aims to give open-enrollment charter schools a solid foundation. Among its accomplishments, New Schools has raised more than \$5.3 million to help New Orleans schools; developed, sponsored and distributed more than 10,000 copies of "New Orleans Parents' Guide to Public Schools;" recruited, trained and hired 215 educators; and awarded \$50,000 start-up grants to eight charter schools for the 2007-08 school year.

Under Usdin's system, schools will receive funding individually. Previously, funding for schools would go to the Orleans Parish School Board for allocation. Usdin said 30 percent to 40 percent of funding would be taken off the top before being dispersed to schools.

"We believe having the autonomy and accountability of the individual school site will drive student performance," Usdin said.

By keeping the schools autonomous, individual school quality will be stable despite any political changes on the city or state level.

Barbara MacPhee, retired principal of the New Orleans Charter Science & Mathematics High School, praised New Schools.

"They provided excellent, essential training for our governing board. They provide legal assistance of top quality. I think of them as the perfect central office, providing us services reliably without obligation and tailor-made to what our needs are."

At the Langston Hughes Academy Charter School, School Leader and CEO John Alford is equally happy.

"They walked my business manager through the myriad of financial, purchasing and compliance tasks that we had to complete in our very hectic startup period. They've also provided us with contacts, office space and a friendly ear to talk to through all the chaos."

Usdin has no intentions of resting on New Schools' initial successes.

"We can have an excellent public school for every child in New Orleans."•

— Fritz Esker



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

New Schools for New Orleans, founded by Sarah Newell Usdin, has raised more than \$5.3 million to help schools in Orleans Parish reopen.

St. Anna's Episcopal Church



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Diana Meyers, parish nurse and disaster relief coordinator for St. Anna's Episcopal Church in New Orleans, helped run the church's mobile clinic to offer medical services in the Lower Ninth Ward, Central City, Meraux and Kenner.

Key innovation: providing community outreach services, including a mobile clinic
Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executive: Father William Terry, rector
Year introduced: summer 2006

Serving an urban and sometimes distressed congregation, St. Anna's Episcopal Church has given new meaning to the concept of outreach with the use of a mobile clinic that is on the road daily, providing medical care to pockets of the city often lacking most health care services.

"We got the RV going last summer, and on its first weekend it did a health fair in Tremé at St. Augustine's Church where it saw more than 130 people," said Father William Terry, rector of St. Anna's. "That proved to us that there is a

pressing need for this kind of a service and that all of our efforts to get the RV had been worthwhile."

Those efforts included a fundraising campaign bringing in more than \$30,000 to purchase and renovate the RV into a working mobile clinic. Parishioners agreed to man the vehicle, which also stops in the Lower Ninth Ward, Central City, Meraux and Kenner, among other locations.

"The unit goes into poor neighborhoods where people are underinsured or have no insurance at all," Terry said. "And it provides a service that is dignified by not making them wait in long lines."

Now funded by the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana, the mobile clinic is only one of the community services offered by St. Anna's, a church whose roots go back to 1846 and includes the establishment of an orphanage to deal with a yellow fever epidemic that lasted well into the Civil War.

Self-billed as a church that welcomes all "without regard to

economic status, race, ethnicity, sex, age or sexual orientation," St. Anna's also created a Ministry to Musicians for New Orleans musicians that includes a Wednesday night "Community Supper and Jazz Concert," a hot meal, legal advice and health care service.

"People come in tired, angry and upset, and I watch them leave the church in the evening laughing, in small groups telling jokes," said Terry, who describes the jazz nights at St. Anna's as "body, mind and spirit all in one place."

St. Anna's also offers English as a Second Language classes to Hispanic families who have moved to the city since Katrina.

"The idea for years has been to provide as many services to the community as we can," Terry said. "And that obviously is a tradition that we intend to keep going."•

— Garry Boulard

The Urban Conservancy's Stay Local



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Geoff Coat, left, Dana Ennes and Ben Gauslin discuss strategies to foster business development among locally owned businesses at Gelato Pazzo on Oak Street.

Key innovation: an online database of locally owned and operated businesses in the New Orleans area
Biggest clients: local businesses
Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executive: Dana Ennes, executive director
Year introduced: 2003

In New Orleans, the phrase “locally owned and operated” refers to a class of business owners who maintain the unique local market.

Shoppers help to keep them afloat. In turn, initiatives such as the Urban Conservancy's Stay Local encourage consumers to support the local businesses.

“The Urban Conservancy is an entrepreneurially oriented not-for-profit, which advocates for the wise stewardship of New Orleans' urban fabric,” said Executive Director Dana Ennes. “Its flagship program, Stay Local, is a citywide initia-

tive to create a strong economy based on locally owned and operated businesses.”

Created in 2003, Stay Local is an Internet service that provides a directory of local businesses to the community. This listing helps link businesses to new markets and to resources.

According to Ennes, the online searchable directory, which is a free service for all eligible businesses, has grown to nearly 1,000 listings since its 2006 launch.

After hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Stay Local was aware of new threats to local businesses, such as labor shortages, rebuilding costs and high insurance rates, Ennes said.

“In today's disaster recovery environment,” Ennes said, “Stay Local's projects have revolved around the question: What do New Orleans' traditional commercial corridors need to stabilize, sustain and grow existing businesses and attract new businesses and industries?”

One such business is Zeus' Place LLC, a dog and cat overnight boarding service that also offers dog daycare and

grooming. Owner Michelle Ingram listed her business on Stay Local.

“Stay Local has been incredibly valuable in helping me grow my business,” Ingram said. “Through them, I've been able to attract a wonderfully loyal clientele, enabling me to pass that first-year hump that is the downfall of so many new business ventures.”

Acting as a cheerleader for local businesses such as Zeus' Place, Stay Local strives to keep New Orleans, well, New Orleans.

“Now more than ever we need Stay Local,” Ingram said. “They are helping to keep New Orleans unique and locally owned. Without the help of people like Dana at Stay Local, New Orleans could easily turn in to the next large suburban sprawl with big box stores and no soul. It is through their tireless efforts that we remain the New Orleans that everyone loves and wants to rebuild and visit.”•

— Amy M. Ferrara

Basin St. Station

Key innovation: historically accurate train station in the Treme neighborhood renovated into a visitor center

Biggest clients: tourists

Top executive: Michael Valentino, managing partner

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2006

A positive light shining at Basin St. Station. Located at 501 Basin St. between St. Louis and Conti streets in the Treme neighborhood, Basin St. Station is just off of the Orleans Avenue/Vieux Carre exit of Interstate 10 and right across North Rampart Street from the French Quarter.

"We want to be a catalyst for growth in this area," said Michael Valentino, creator and managing partner of Basin Street Station. "This is the cultural core of the city and

wonderful things are happening in this area."

The first thing visitors will notice is the free parking lot next to the Visitor Center. The building's façade is a recreation of the exterior of the original Southern Railway Passenger Station, which faced Canal Street when it was built in 1904. The Basin St. Station was formerly the freight office building for the New Orleans Terminal Co. and Southern Railway.

As you walk inside, the mural on the right is a reproduction of a postcard of Canal Street in 1937, showing the Southern Railway Terminal and the Saenger Theater. On the left is another mural, a recreation of a map from the Historic New Orleans Collection, showing the mouth of the Mississippi River as it looked in 1847. Under that mural is a coffee bar, which will sell refreshments from O'Reilly, a New Orleans-based company.

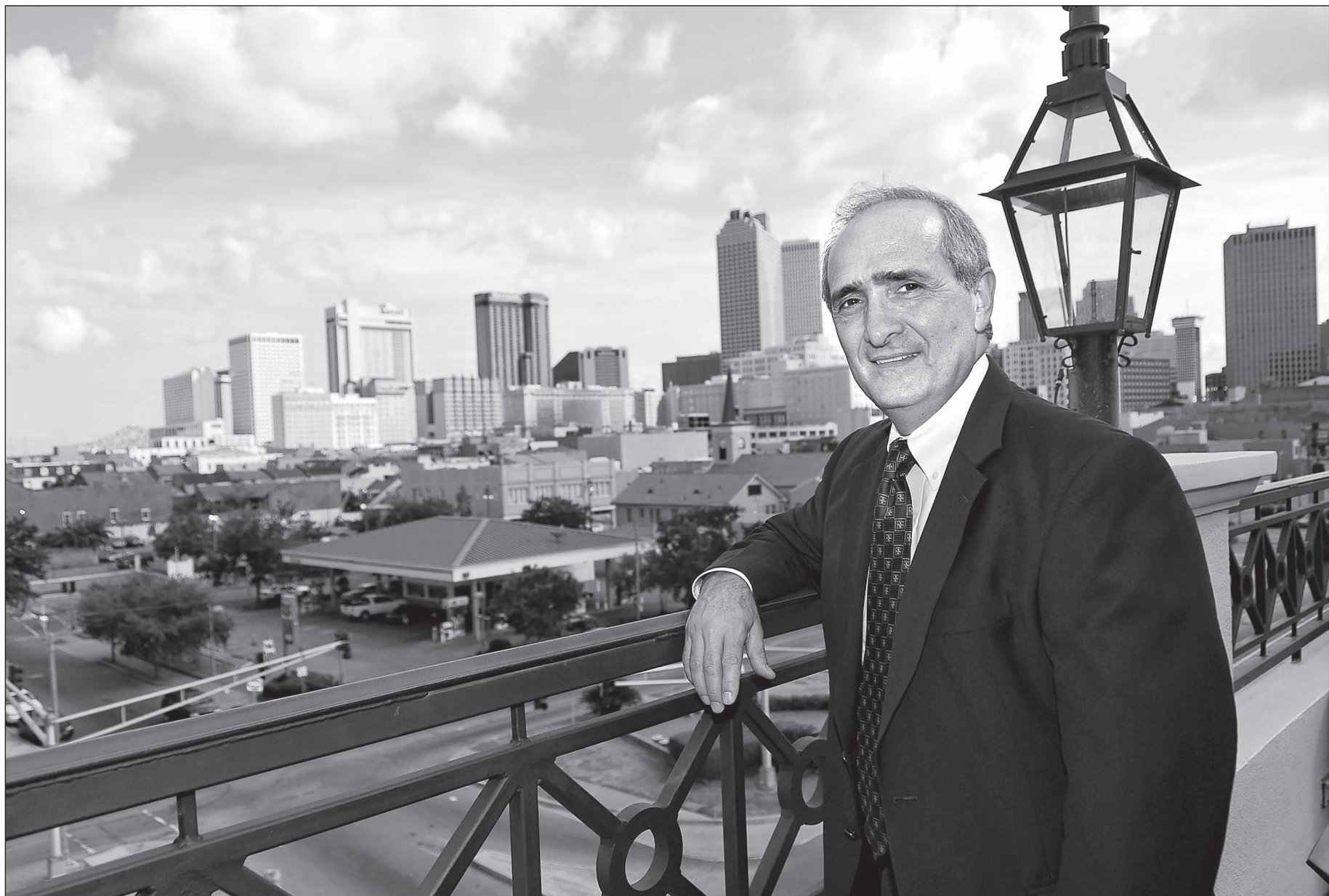
Farther into the building, still under renovation, a gift

shop is being built along with an art gallery and kiosks for media presentations. There is also an area for exhibits explaining New Orleans history and culture, and live performances, some of which will be held from a recreation of the front porch of a shotgun house.

The second and third floors of the building are offices, and the fourth floor, added after Valentino noticed the view from the roof, is a spacious room with an outdoor terrace perfect for meetings, receptions and other special events.

Valentino is also excited about a Web site being developed, lasameday.com, which links visitor centers throughout Louisiana. He said if a visitor in Alexandria wants to come to New Orleans, the site can create a personalized itinerary. The visitor can get assistance with directions, hotel reservations, restaurant information and find out what events are happening in the area. •

— Lisa Bacques



Michael Valentino, creator and managing partner of Basin Street Station, opened a visitor center in a former Treme train station to show off the neighborhood and the surrounding culture.

PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Broadway South



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Louisiana Senate Bill 218 was the first step in Roger Wilson's Broadway South plan to redevelop many of the theaters along Canal Street to attract first-run stage productions to New Orleans.

Key innovation: tax incentive initiative designed to attract first-run stage productions to New Orleans

Biggest client: the city of New Orleans

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Roger Wilson, president

Year introduced: April 2006

In the past five years, film productions have flocked to New Orleans, even after Hurricane Katrina, giving the city's economy a needed boost. Through Broadway South tax incentives, Roger Wilson hopes to create a similar renaissance for theatrical plays in New Orleans.

According to Wilson, the goal is to "take what we have in abundance, which is a rich cultural tradition and the infrastructure to support it, and marry that to tax incentives to attract the arts. ... Culture is to this city what oil and gas used to be."

Regarding the cultural infrastructure, Wilson pointed to the French Quarter's reputation, and the amount of quality restaurants, hotels and museums either in the Quarter or the CBD/Warehouse District, as well as the recent development of the city's ports and condominiums.

Most importantly for the Broadway South initiative, a number of theaters — the Saenger, the Joy, the State Palace, the Orpheum, the Municipal Auditorium — are being underused.

Louisiana Senate Bill 218 set the project in motion, giving tax incentives for theatrical productions. First, productions get a 25 percent tax credit to their production cost and a 10 percent tax credit on their payroll. Secondly, there is an infrastructure tax credit for companies that build a theater facility — 25 percent tax credit on building costs, with a cap of \$10 million on each project (meaning the most credit a company can receive for this is \$2.5 million). There are tax credits for transportation costs.

In the next two years, companies will receive 100 percent

credits on costs to transport sets and costumes to New Orleans. For the following two years, it will drop to 60 percent, then to 25 percent the two years after that. The reason for the decreasing percentage is Wilson and local lawmakers hope that, as the companies know audiences are supporting the theater industry here, they will want to build sets and costumes here and hire local workers to do so.

Because of similar tax incentives offered to the film industry, film production revenues in Louisiana went from \$20 million a year to \$600 million a year.

"Even if we're only half as successful as the film industry, you have a billion-dollar entertainment industry," Wilson said.

For Stacy Head, councilwoman for District B, the importance of Broadway South is clear.

"I believe that Broadway South could be the most important economic development initiative for the city's future. We must play up our strengths and win in areas where New Orleans is naturally competitive, Head said." •

— Fritz Esker

On the Brink

GrayMatter Inc.

Key innovation: a patented autonomous vehicle system for civilian and military use

Where they're based: Metairie

Top executive: Eric Gray, president

Year introduced: in design phase

GrayMatter Inc., a spinoff of a Louisiana company whose primary business is insurance, had its genesis in the 132-mile race of a driverless vehicle across the Mojave Desert.

It all started in 2005 when Eric Gray, who with his brother, Mike Gray, was running Gray Company Inc., a business their father founded more than 50 years ago, read an article in Popular Science about the Defense Agency Research Project's Grand Challenge in robotics technology.

The goal: Produce and race an autonomous vehicle for the battlefield that runs without either a human driver or remote control operator.

"We decided to do it just as a fun exercise, a teambuilding experience for the IT department," said Eric Gray. The team consisted of a core group of four people from the IT department and several university students.

Using electronic mapping, autonomous vehicles are designed to navigate their way to a programmed destination. Team Gray's entry, called KAT-5, made it all the way to the DARPA Challenge finals in October 2005 in Primm, Nev., where it was one of only four vehicles to cross the finish line in less than 10 hours.

This year the design team is competing in DARPA's tougher Urban Challenge with an enhanced vehicle named Plan B.

This time vehicles must perform tasks such as driving through busy intersections and merging into moving traffic. Equipped with a GPS system and laser scanners that can recognize obstacles in its way, using only 168 watts of power, Plan B passed its test during an agency site visit in June and has advanced to the National Qualifying Event in Victorville, Calif., to be held in October.

"Not only were we one of the 36 semifinalists, but they also announced that we were the only ones that had finished the last Grand Challenge," said IT department head and team leader Paul Trepagnier. "That means we were better than Carnegie Mellon, MIT and Stanford, who won last year. ... Basically we're just this little small technology company and, once again, we're taking on the big boys."

GrayMatter's biggest challenge now is to land a customer for its technology.

Trepagnier said the most likely users of the GrayMatter vehicles are the military and tire testing companies, whose conventional methods tax human drivers and are not as consistent as a robotic system. His development team expects to have prototypes to potential customers in the next few months. •

— Sonya Stinson



Eric Gray, president of GrayMatter Inc., plans to have prototypes of autonomous vehicles that run without either a human driver or remote control operator in the next couple of months.

The Occasional Wife



Kay Morrison, owner of The Occasional Wife, started the consulting business after she and her husband, Camp Morrison, began looking for ways to get through day-to-day tasks.

Key innovation: consulting agency
Biggest client: leading lodging company in United States
Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executive: Kay Morrison
Year introduced: April

Have you ever had so much to do but didn't know where to get help? The Occasional Wife, a consulting firm, is where to turn and they do a little of everything, according to owner Kay Morrison.

Morrison does everything from event planning, personal shopping, organizing, travel planning and developing marketing tools for businesses. She has even organized Road Home materials for clients.

"I provide an extra set of hands."

As a mom and former business executive for Starwood Hotels, Morrison has experience with developing marketing materials, fundraising, organizing and multitasking.

The idea came about when she and husband, Camp Morrison, were talking about how much they had to do and the stresses of being working parents.

"We need a wife," he joked.

On another occasion, Morrison's divorced male friends were telling her husband, "if only she wasn't married."

Her husband replied, "She can be your occasional wife."

Thus, The Occasional Wife was born.

Since starting in April, Morrison said she has been going nonstop.

"The response was overwhelming. My phone was ringing constantly."

As Morrison puts it, she can help people organize, socialize or prioritize.

She helped her divorced male friends organize their house and did shopping for their children. She has also helped people start businesses by developing marketing tools.

Single working dad Ray Rhymes said Morrison helped organize his house and gave him advice on raising his daughters.

"She helped make my house more family oriented as

opposed to a bachelor pad, and she showed me things like where pictures should go. She helped me organize and prioritize accordingly," Rhymes said. "We get so busy that we sometimes forget about the little things. Kay helped keep me on track."

Morrison's company is different from others in that it focuses on more than one service.

"We are a consulting agency for all aspects of life," Morrison said.

Karen Wimpelberg, co-founder of The Alliance for Affordable Energy, turned to Morrison for help organizing an event for her company.

"She was a lifesaver for our organization and she took care of everything," Wimpelberg said.

Morrison did everything from ordering food, setting up, decorating and adding her creative touch for the function.

As a result, Morrison created a beautiful atmosphere for the nonprofit organization on a small budget.

"We are all under so much stress these days and we need a little help to get our work and events done," Wimpelberg said. •

—Jennifer Nall

On the Brink

RéVolve Jewelry

Key innovation: micro-motor for rotating gem stones within a piece of jewelry to interact with sources of light

Biggest client: targeting home shopping television networks

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Joseph Koll, founder and CEO

Year introduced: 2007

In a painstaking process, Joseph Koll, founder and CEO of RéVolve Jewelry, said he is convinced he has created a method of displaying jewelry equal to the jewelry itself.

"We've been working on this for a long time," said Koll, who started RéVolve 10 years ago in New Orleans primarily as a research and development company. "But I feel so good about what we finally ended up making that I am right now in the process of taking it to market, and doing that in a very big way."

Koll's brainchild, helped by Technotime, a micro-technology company based in Switzerland, is a rotating device that allows for a gradual turning motion of a gemstone placed within jewelry. By rotating, the stone is better able to interact with sources of light that enhance its natural beauty.

"What we finally ended up doing is developing the smallest micro-motor in the world, and Technotime helped us to make the tools that would be needed to service such a motor," Koll said.

That motor is also the end result of a collaborative process that included input from micro-engineers, business planners, draftsmen and graphic animators. Even before the product's official launch on the market, it has won praise from such industry publications as *Modern Jeweler*, *Couture Jeweler* and *Jeweler's Quarterly*.

The anticipated response from customers concerns Koll. He hopes to see his invention featured on such television shopping mainstays as QVC and the Home Shopping Network, adding that any TV exposure is important because instead of trying to explain what the product is, viewers would be able to see for themselves the motion of the piece.

"If all goes well, we really believe this could turn out to be one of the biggest things that has ever been on home shopping television."

Koll similarly envisions offering his gemstone-rotating device to major retailers, including Wal-Mart.

Although RéVolve's Canal Street store was closed for more than three months after Hurricane Katrina, Koll said he never considered leaving the city and hopes his product will give evidence of "the spirit of innovation and new ideas that still exists in New Orleans."•

— Garry Boulard



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

RéVolve founder and CEO Joseph Koll created a micro-motor to rotate gemstones within a piece of jewelry, a product he hopes to market on home shopping programs.

On the Brink

siteMighty.com

Key innovation: siteMighty.com
Biggest client: 1,700 Internet users
Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executives: Chris Schultz and Blake Killian, founders
Year introduced: March

Did you ever want to create a Web site but had no idea how to do it?

SiteMighty.com, an Web-based software program, allows people to design Web sites without having any technical expertise.

Founded by business partners Chris Schultz and Blake Killian, siteMighty.com bills itself as being quick and easy even for the technology impaired.

"With siteMighty, you can build a Web site in five minutes," said Schultz, whose expertise is online advertising and affiliate marketing. "SiteMighty allows businesses to make money through affiliate marketing."

He said the site is a useful tool for small businesses and entrepreneurs who want to create a powerful income stream through their Web site.

When creating siteMighty, which took a little more than a year to design, Schultz had a particular goal in mind.

"The goal was to make it so simple that my mother would be able to do it."

There is a free level of service as well as two paid enhanced services.

The siteMighty name came about by combining its platform and goals — "site," meaning a Web site builder tool, and "mighty," referencing a powerful income stream and a built-in revenue model for their users.

With an Internet business, it allows users to be mobile and to have a business up and running from home. For instance, when Katrina hit, Schultz just took his laptop and was able to continue doing business remotely.

Since its debut in March, siteMighty has had more than 1,700 users nationwide.

"The most satisfying thing is that users are making money by using our product," Schultz said.

Schultz moved his business from Los Angeles to New Orleans five years ago and believes New Orleans is a great place for Internet businesses.

"I'm an advocate of trying to inspire Internet companies to locate here. We have many talented and creative people in New Orleans," Schultz said.

Schultz and Killian are not new to inventions. Their first invention was Huckabuck.com, a search engine they have since sold. •

— Jennifer Nall



Chris Schultz, co-founder of siteMighty.com, discusses new Web site designs with wife, Megan Schultz.

On the Brink

Tommye's Tiny Tots 2

Key innovation: providing child care post-Katrina
Where they're based: New Orleans
Top executive: Tommye Lambert
Year introduced: May

It is unusual that a place known for adults is now a place filled with children — 7979 Earhart Blvd. was a bar and now is a child-care facility thanks to Tommye's Tiny Tots 2.

Tommye Lambert was determined to help parents asking her to provide them with child care.

"It was an issue of supply and demand," Lambert said.

Lambert already had a day care in Mid-City before opening her second day care on Earhart.

After finding a location, she opened in May where children 6 weeks to 12 years of age attend.

Lambert stresses the importance of education at her day care and said learning at a young age is crucial to brain activity.

"Here they have an opportunity to explore and we introduce them to as much as we can. I teach them through play and they don't even realize they are learning."

Many of the children she watched at her Mid-City location spent four or five years at the day care before they entered kindergarten.

With some of the young children spending their formative years at the day care, Lambert plants the seeds of learning.

Lambert introduces the toddlers to the ABCs, colors and numbers, as well as sharing.

"I teach them the basics and lay the foundation before they get to elementary school," she said.

Lambert, who has four children, said her love for children is the reason she opened her first day care in the first place.

Lambert said parents telling her, "You made a difference," keeps her going.

"Knowing you made a difference in a child's life and hearing success stories from parents makes it all worthwhile."

Lambert said small business owners should consider New Orleans as a good place to start a business.

"People need to see past the damage and look into the future," she said.

Lambert received a special grant designated for child care from The Idea Village, partnered with Tulane University's A.B. Freeman School of Business, the Tulane School of Social Work and Entergy's charitable foundation. Lambert was one of 10 child care entrepreneurs to receive the grant. •

— Jennifer Nall



Tommye Lambert, owner of Tiny Tots 2, in the play area with Drayanna Johnson, 3, in lap, Kenner Davis, 4, left, Kaden Davis, 3, and Draell Johnson, 4.

PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Think outside the rhombus.

True innovators have been thinking outside the box for a long time. Now we're on to reshaping the box. Expanding the business circles. And reinventing the globe. At AT&T, we put innovative thinking into action for you. We provide solutions to help pull together the physical and intellectual resources you need to turn untapped potential into proven results. Our ever-evolving networking environments will provide you with the cutting-edge thinking you need to reshape your business from everything it already is into all you know it can be.