

2009

INNOVATOR

OF THE YEAR

New Orleans Gas and Electric Lights

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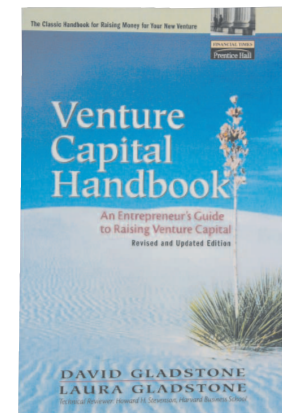
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ON THE COVER: Paul Roussel, owner of New Orleans Gas and Electric Lights, shows his solar and hot surface igniters gas lights that are safer, environmentally friendly and cost efficient.
Photo by Frank Aymami

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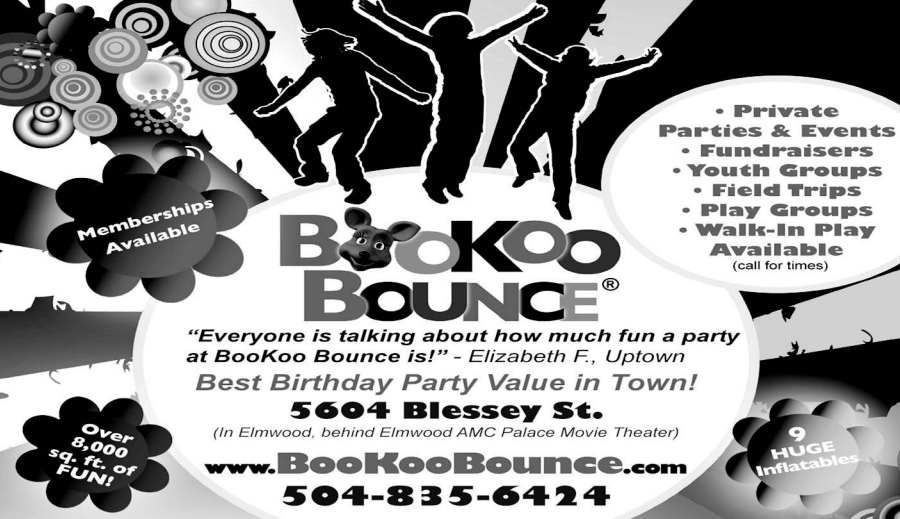


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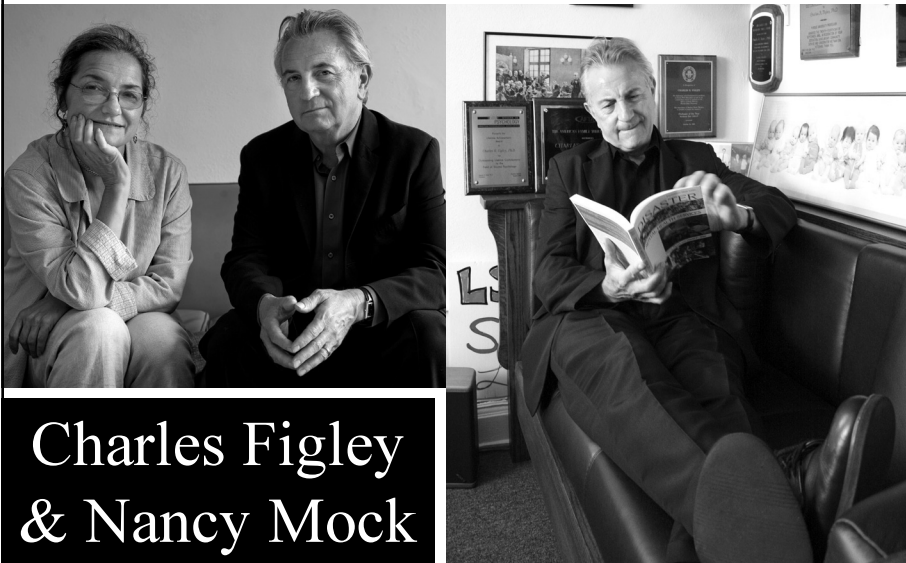
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2009 Innovators of the Year



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University**

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2009 INNOVATOR
OF THE YEAR

Introduction

Entrepreneurial spirit drives 2009 Innovators of the Year



Christian Moises
News Editor

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT is alive in New Orleans.

New Orleans Gas and Electric Lights, the 2009 Gold Innovator of the Year, is lighting the way for a traditional New Orleans feature to become environmentally friendly, safer and cost efficient, and its reach is extending beyond state lines.

Technology continues to drive how New Orleans companies do business, with about a quarter of this year's honorees moving to Web-based systems as their main way of interacting with clients. Also, many of this year's honorees use social networking and mobile communication technology such as Blackberrys and iPhones.

Many new and creative companies are establishing roots here, and New Orleans CityBusiness recognizes 50 businesses for their innovative products, services and forward thinking. Some have been built from the ground up, while others have invested in a new concept and brought it to the area.

Criteria such as the number of years the business or product has been in the marketplace, sales figures and client base were considered in the selection process. With the number of Innovator nominations submitted to CityBusiness increasing for a third straight year, it shows New Orleans remains a creative place to foster new ideas.

Twenty-eight Innovators are recognized this year for their proven success in the marketplace and their creative business approach. They include insurance for pets, environmentally friendly flip-flops and hurricane-proof windows.

Three groups were selected for taking a second look at the area's education system and offering ways to help improve the learning environment while incorporating the real world into lessons.

The eight honorees selected as Medical Innovators have either created new systems or invested in technologies to improve the region's health care in the most cost-effective and least invasive ways possible.

Four nonprofits were selected for accenting our area's unique culture and bringing people together so that they might thrive.

This year's eight On the Brink honorees have shown entrepreneurial hope and plan to have a profound impact on the business landscape. These are companies and concepts that should be watched closely in the coming months.

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

Congratulations to the 50 honorees of CityBusiness' Innovator of the Year 2009 program. •

News Editor Christian Moises can be reached at 293-9249 or by e-mail at christian.moises@nopg.com.

PAST HONOREES

2008

Innovators

Gold Award: BK Products
Silver Award: Old New Orleans Rum
Bronze Award: The Receivables Exchange
 A-Y2K Marine Survey
 Alternative Energy Group
 The Art Station
 CJ Creations
 CommTech Industries
 The Domain Companies
 On the Move - Elmwood Fitness Center
 Express Lien
 Fit as a Firefighter - Slidell Memorial Hospital and St. Tammany Fire District No. 1
 Green Door Construction
 GreenStar Coatings and Recycling
 Imagination Movers
 Landscapedia.info
 M.S.Rau Antiques
 New Orleans Firefighters Pension Fund - Lakewood Golf Club
 On My Way - iSeatz
 Bull Sweeper - SDT Waste and Debris Services
 Schonberg and Associates
 Sucre
 Sanichiro Yoshida - Southeastern Louisiana University Department of Chemistry and Physics
 Tulane University Center for Public Service
 Zapps Potato Chips

Medical

The Aquadex System FlexFlow
 Cryoplasty - Touro Infirmary
 Deep Brain Stimulation - Ochsner Health System
 Human Angiogenesis Assay
 Neevo - PamLab
 Orthopaedic Associates of New Orleans
 Patient Comment System - Touro Infirmary
 TDI Integrity Team - East Jefferson General Hospital
 ThermoSuit System - Ochsner Health System

Nonprofit

Arc of Greater New Orleans
 The Campaign to Build a Teen-Friendly New Orleans
 Latino Apostolate of the Episcopal Church
 Louisiana ArtWorks
 New Orleans Music Hall of Fame
 Puentes New Orleans/LatiNola
 Tipitina's Music Office Co-op
 Urban League of Greater New Orleans Young Professionals - Adams and Reese

On the Brink

ex-cessories.com
 HIV research - Tulane University
 The Lifestyle Revolution Group
 Peptide Research Lab - Tulane University
 PhytoCeutical Formulations
 Precast Building Solutions
 SouthCoast Solar
 Virtual Staging - The Occasional Wife

2007

Innovators

Gold Award: SDT Waste and Debris Services
Silver Award: Drivesoft
Bronze Award: Diamond Data Systems Inc.
 Advanced Imaging Solutions
 Aqua2Go - Esgee Enterprises
 Barker Homes
 The Biodiesel Resource
 COMPAS Computerized Health System - East Jefferson General Hospital
 Crais Management Group
 E-Claim.com
 The Equestrian Therapy Center of Slidell
 Evertain
 Frank Relle Photography
 FutureProof
 Green Bean Foam Insulation

iSeatz.com
 Laughing Buddha Nursery
 Macromolecular Research - Tulane University
 New Orleans Demolition Services
 New Orleans Ice Cream Company
 NPower Mobile
 Ochsner Clinical Workstation - Ochsner Health System
 Omni Technologies
 Piccadilly Food Services
 Plaine Studios
 qTrack - Ochsner Health System
 sunglassengraving.com
 TeAM Inc.
 Transformyx
 Trumpet Group
 Tulane University Center for Gene Therapy
 UAppointment Inc.
 U.S. Flood Control
 West Jefferson Behavioral Medicine Center
 World's Healthiest Pizza

Innovative Investors

Brachytherapy cancer treatment - East Jefferson General Hospital
 Cardiovascular MRI - Ochsner Health System
 Ci System - Touro Infirmary
 da Vinci Robotic System - Ochsner Health System
 Gulf South Joint Replacement Center - Touro Infirmary
 Nathan Laser Institute
 Reverse Shoulder Arthroplasty - Touro Infirmary
 64-slice CT scanner - Ochsner Health System
 Trilogly Cancer System - East Jefferson General Hospital
 Trilogly Cancer System - Ochsner Health System

Nonprofits

Beacon of Hope Resource Center
 IDEACorps
 The Idea Village
 Louisiana Appleseed - Adams and Reese/ConocoPhillips
 New Schools for New Orleans
 St. Anna's Episcopal Church
 Stay Local, A Project of the Urban Conservancy

On the Brink

Basin St. Station
 Broadway South
 GrayMatter Inc.
 The Occasional Wife
 RéVolve
 SiteMighty.com
 Tommye's Tiny Tots 2

2006

Innovators

Gold Award: Turbo Squid
Silver Award: Home Automation Inc.
 Benjamin Taylor and Associates
 Coastal Environments Inc.
 DHAC Inc.
 East Jefferson General Hospital
 EzKee
 G.T. Michelli Company Inc.
 HuckaBuck.com
 International House
 Intradel Corporation
 IsoBreathing Inc.
 Jones Walker
 JPMorgan Chase
 Just Scratch It!
 KB Home/The Shaw Group
 LuMunn
 Ochsner Health System
 PreSonus Audio Electronics
 Sabre Technical Services
 Jefferson Community Health Care Centers - West Jefferson Medical Center
 Support Services Facility and Energy Center -

West Jefferson Medical Center
 CyberKnife Center - West Jefferson Medical 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

2005

Innovators

Gold Award: Louisiana Casting Database
Silver Award: Engine Monitor Inc.
Bronze Award: Rattler Tools
 American Scrapbooks
 The Darkroom
 Electric Candle Company Inc.
 Go For Rent Inc.
 Gulf Coast Bank & Trust Co.
 inFront
 Javaflow
 New Line Environmental Systems
 Parking Solutions
 PMO Link Inc.
 P&O Ports
 Technology Exchange
 ThinPrint Inc.

Education

University of New Orleans

Nonprofit

Bounce for Life
 Studio for Creative Design - Tulane University

On the Brink

E-Z Time
 Hydraulic Industries
 Save our Wetlands Technic Systems

2004

Innovators

Gold Award: Laitram
 Apogen
 Bizzuka
 Boudreaux's Butt Paste
 Delta Queen Steamboat Co.
 Chef John Folse & Co.
 GeneScan USA
 GT Energy
 Hibernia National Bank
 LEI
 Louisiana Production Capital
 MD Technologies
 National EMS Academy
 Penta Corp.
 P&R Accessories
 Procter & Gamble
 Urban Dog

Education

Charity School of Nursing - Delgado Community College
 Ecole Bilingue da la Nouvelle-Orléans
 International Schools of Louisiana
 Louisiana State University

Nonprofit

Audubon Center for Research of Endangered Species
 Exceptional Entrepreneurs of Louisiana
 Jefferson Economic Development Commission

Louisiana Bucket Brigade
 STARC

On the Brink

Bounce for Life
 E-Z Time
 H&A Innovative Creations Inc.
 Jazz Rio
 Johnson, Shields, Jackson Brown and Associates
 Louisiana Casting
 Parking Solutions
 P&O Ports
 RazorLine
 ThinPrint Inc.
 We Care Designs

2003

Innovators

Gold Award: MECO
 Brint Custom Vision
 Chicken Box
 GCR & Associates Inc.
 General Hearing Instruments Inc.
 The Idea Village
 Louisiana Institute of Film Technology
 Metairie Small Animal Hospital
 Neill Corp.
 Patient Care
 ReliaGene Technologies Inc.
 Resurgence Software Inc.
 Shadow Track Technologies Inc.

Education

Columbia Theatre and Fanfare Festival Program - Southeastern Louisiana University
 International Marketing Program - Delgado Community College

On the Brink

Ghost Rider Pictures
 GourmetFoodMall
 The Interceptor
 SEAtreat
 Urban Dog Magazine
 Yearbook Snapshots

2002

Innovators

Gold Award: New Orleans Coffee Co.
 American LIFECARE
 Autoimmune Technologies
 Dr. Nicolas Bazan - Louisiana State University
 Neuroscience Center
 CA Guitars Inc.
 EDG Inc.
 Integrate Inc.
 Dr. Ronald Lemon - Louisiana State University School of Dentistry
 Levy-Rosenblum Institute for Entrepreneurship
 Mele Printing
 Richard Gray's Power Co.
 Schools Leadership Center
 Ship Simulator - Delgado Community College
 Southern Candymakers

On the Brink

Dr. John Burgess
 Burkenroad Reports at the A.B. Freeman School of Business
 Chao-Jun Li
 E-commerce Service Providers Inc.
 Cajun Kettle Foods Inc.
 MakeBuZZ LLC
 Micromaster Inc.
 Pediatric Emergency Room - West Jefferson Medical Center
 State Farm Insurance/Xavier University partnership
 The Worley Cos.

**GOLD
AWARD**



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Paul Roussel, owner of New Orleans Gas and Electric Lights, has two patents for gas lights that are safer, and more environmentally friendly and cost efficient than traditional models.

New Orleans Gas and Electric Lights

Key innovation: solar and hot surface igniters for open flame gas lamps

Where they're based: Folsom

Year introduced: 2008

Top executive: Paul Roussel, owner

Web site: www.neworleansgaslights.com

Through a union of technology and tradition, Paul Roussel has expanded the appeal of the humble French Quarter gas lantern and is setting the gas lighting industry aflame.

Roussel, who owns and operates New Orleans Gas and Electric Lights Inc., manufactures several styles of traditional gas lanterns that use innovative ignition methods to make the authentic replica lamps safer and more cost efficient.

"When gas lamps were first created, the owner would

have to take a match to the gas flow and the lights would burn 24 hours a day. Being in the business 10 years, I became interested in more efficient ways to ignite lamps so that they could be switched on and off."

Roussel has secured patents for two unique ignition systems used in all of the lamp models the company manufactures. He said the igniters eliminate the need for a constant flow of gas through the lamp, which saves energy and money.

"Our company has become known for the hot surface or 'Flo Glo' igniter," Roussel said. "It's more reliable and more durable than a spark igniter."

Roussel said the "Flo-Glo" igniter uses a hot surface to light the lamp and monitor gas flow. The system is similar to an electronic stovetop that glows red-hot.

"When the microprocessor in the igniter is turned on, a coil glows red-hot and then the gas begins to flow," Roussel said. "The coil remains hot for 10 seconds to ensure the gas is properly and safely lit."

An alternative to the hot surface igniter is the solar pow-

ered or "Sol Glo" igniter, which uses no external power and automatically ignites and extinguishes the lamp as needed.

"Solar panels connected to the igniter store sunlight throughout the day," Roussel said. "When it gets dark, the fixture ignites itself and has the ability to relight if it goes out unexpectedly. The lamp is then extinguished the next morning when the sun comes out."

Roussel also builds electric lamps that use what he calls a "flame bulb," which is a bulb that uses six separate LED lights to provide the effect of a gas-powered flame.

"The lights blink and flicker to simulate the motion of a flame," Roussel said. "It gives residences or businesses that don't have access to gas lines the opportunity to add that traditional gas lamp look to their building."

Roussel said the lamps have a strong following in New Orleans, but the look is gaining popularity nationwide. He has sold lamps to hotels and casinos and is now in the process of outfitting two large office buildings in Chicago with gas and electric lighting. •

— Robin Shannon

SILVER
AWARD



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Zachary Rouse, left, and Clarence Davis are part of the Geocent team that created a system to process increasingly larger volumes of meteorological and oceanographic data to help the Navy's anti-submarine efforts.

Geocent

Key innovation: visualizing meteorological and oceanographic data to help mask U.S. submarines and move within range to attack enemy subs

Where they're based: Metairie

Year introduced: 2008

Top executive: Bobby Savoie, president

Web site: Geocent.com

Trying to enhance the abilities of the U.S. Navy to remain up to date and competitive in submarine technology, researchers and technicians with Geocent, a Metairie-based information technology, engineering and technical support company, have gone to the man in the field.

"We decided to talk to the guy who is at the pointy end of the sphere, the person who is actually out there on the front line," said Zachary Rouse, a technical lead for Geocent,

which provides high-value solutions to Fortune 500 companies as well as federal, state and local governments.

"We had that person explain to us exactly what he did," Rouse said. "And the more we understood his process, approaching it from the computer geek side, the more we started to see some wasteful steps and how certain software could help speed up the decision-making process while also transmitting information in a more efficient manner."

The result: an anti-submarine visual analysis tool that uses open-source servers and mapping technology to process increasingly larger volumes of meteorological and oceanographic data.

For use by the Navy Oceanographic Office, the Anti-Submarine Warfare Directorate and the Commander Navy Meteorological Command, the visual analysis tool can perform on-demand calculations and instantly process model data to counter potential enemy submarine efforts.

Here's how it works.

When a submarine reaches a certain depth, the sonic

layer depth, which exists below the ocean's surface, acts as a blanket masking it from a warship's surface sonar. Using that ploy, the enemy will come within weapons range while avoiding detection. Once the submarine is within striking range, it will rise to a predetermined depth, known as the attack depth, and assault its target.

This in turn allows submarine commanders to develop courses of action and either move a safe distance away to protect their crews and ships or launch patrols to hunt for threat forces likely occupying the positions.

The Geocent procedure of interviewing users and understanding their challenges has proven so successful that the Navy has moved to institutionalize it.

Geocent has also worked with NASA to coordinate verification efforts at the technical and project management level during the first stage of the Ares I-X demonstration vehicle.

Geocent was born after the 2008 merger of Diamond Data Systems and Prescient Technologies, an aerospace and defense technology firm. •

— Garry Boulard

Green Coast Enterprises

Key innovation: reshaping the approach to real estate development along the Gulf Coast to resist the effects of climate change

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: April 2007

Top executives: Will Bradshaw, president; Reuben Teague, principal

Web site: www.greencoastenterprises.com

For New Orleans, weather is a major concern. That's why Green Coast Enterprises has created housing that is resistant to hurricanes, extreme heat, humidity and termites.

Green Coast's first client was Project Home Again, a branch of the Barnes and Noble's Riggio Foundation. The project involved building homes for Gentilly residents who lost their homes during Hurricane Katrina. So far, Green Coast has built 29 houses, and three more will be completed by this fall.

The structures were the first in Louisiana to meet the Builders Challenge, which aimed to move production homebuilding to a net zero energy basis, or having homes that produce as much energy as they use.

"The homes will be much healthier, especially for people with respiratory diseases," said Reuben Teague, principal of Green Coast Enterprises. Features include all-tile flooring because carpeting can be a hazard for children with asthma. All of the homes also are above the base flood elevation.

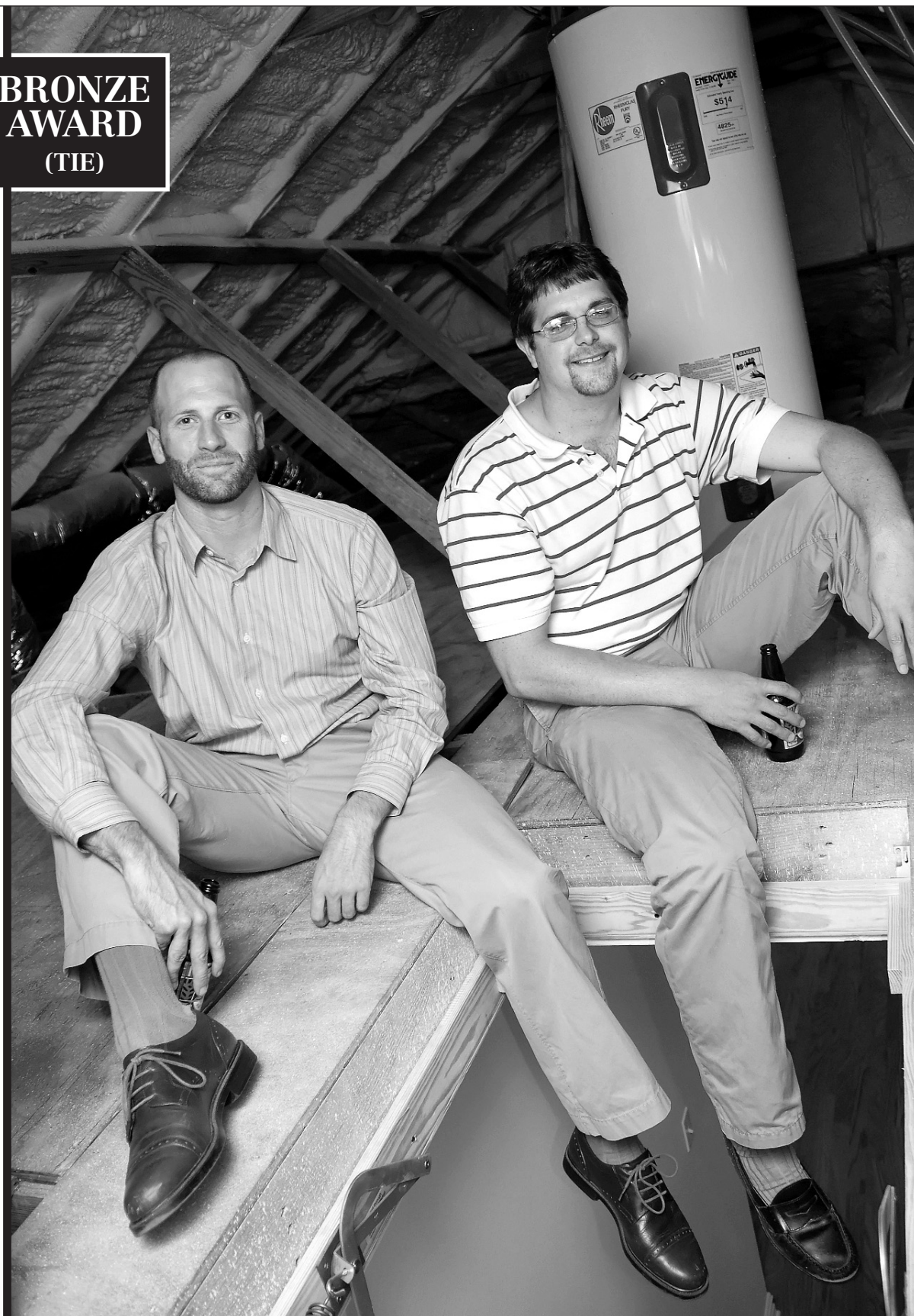
Green Coast has also teamed with EnviRenew, a project of The Salvation Army of New Orleans, to build new homes and renovate existing ones. Green Coast is working on quality control and energy efficiency for the project.

"(These homes) are not being hit with the tremendous volatility of utility bills that we see here, especially in the summertime," said Will Bradshaw, president of Green Coast Enterprises.

Green Coast is also working on the Arabella at Fortin Street, its first solo project. It is a four-unit condo built with organic material. The building provides higher-than-normal insulation and has a highly reflective metal roof. And despite those features, the building's style resembles classic historic New Orleans architecture.

"We see ourselves as a different sort of real estate company," Bradshaw said. "We think we'll be more profitable because of the approach we're using, which is specific to place and responsive to the challenges people face in those places."

**BRONZE
AWARD
(TIE)**



Green Coast Enterprises executives Reuben Teague, left, and Will Bradshaw sit in an attic that was sprayed with the company's insulating foam, which keeps temperatures below 85 degrees.

Making money by building homes isn't their only mission. Green Coast also has a social goal. The company was instrumental in securing an \$80,000 planning grant for a community health center for the Broadmoor neighborhood and has teamed with Pittsburgh's G-Tech Strategies and local work force training organization Limitless Vistas Inc. to form Project Sprout to transform vacant lots throughout the city into bio-energy gardens that grow sunflowers and other plants that clean the soil and therefore elevate property values. •

— Fritz Esker

**BRONZE
AWARD**
(TIE)



CITYBUSINESS FILE PHOTO

South Coast Solar technicians Lauren Craig and Micah Galy install solar electric panels at a Garden District home.

South Coast Solar

Key innovation: selling and installing solar panels on homes and businesses

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2008

Top executive: Troy Von Otnott, president

Web site: www.southcoastsolar.com

Louisiana is not considered a forerunner in the renewable energy marketplace, but South Coast Solar is doing its part to change that reputation.

The company started primarily as a response to an emerging market created by the Louisiana Renewable Energy Tax Credit, which took effect Jan. 1, 2008. The program added a 50 percent tax credit to the cost of implementing solar energy to the existing 30 percent credit the Internal Revenue Service offers.

Soon after the program began, South Coast Solar, spe-

cializing in the design and construction of high-performance solar power systems, joined a growing number of "solar integrators" eager to take advantage of heightened demand created by these incentives.

"Prior to the beginning of that tax credit program, there wasn't much of an industry for renewable energy in Louisiana," said president Troy Von Otnott. "Within the first year, 25 companies entered the market, and now there are 65 companies registered to do solar."

With such an influx of competition, South Coast Solar has managed to stay ahead of the pack by using a scalable business model from the start, an approach that allows for exponential growth to follow increasing demand.

Perhaps more important for demand is the fact that local governments are establishing "renewable portfolio standards" for energy consumption, meaning utility companies will have to develop renewable power options, such as solar panels.

And if Von Otnott has anything to say about it, demand will continue to grow.

Von Otnott and his South Coast Solar colleagues were instrumental in getting legislation approved to create sus-

tainable energy financing districts, which allows the state to issue taxable municipal bonds to finance renewable energy upgrades to buildings throughout the state. The law allows for a wide range of "energy efficiency improvements" aimed at reducing energy consumption.

"This was an important piece of legislation because now we have a financing mechanism for energy upgrades," Von Otnott said. "Now you will see the adoption of these technologies throughout the state."

South Coast Solar grossed more than \$1.2 million in 2008 and is projected to earn as much as \$4 million this year. Von Otnott estimates the company could generate \$10 million in 2010.

For Von Otnott, however, his business is as much about working toward global energy conservation as it is about the bottom line.

"We get to address a major economic issue by creating green jobs while also playing a significant role in helping to enact climate change," Von Otnott said. "I feel pretty good waking up in the morning and doing this work."•

— Thomas Leggett



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Brandyn Scott Fasic, president of Affordable Pet Plans, chats with his dog, Max, about insurance coverage.

Affordable Pet Plans

Key innovation: providing health insurance coverage for dogs and cats through payroll deductions as a voluntary benefit

Where they're based: Metairie

Year introduced: 2008

Top executives: Brandyn Scott Fasic, president; Cameron Scott Fasic, vice president

Web site: www.affordablepetplans.com

As animal-care costs rise, Affordable Pet Plans in Metairie last year launched dog and cat health insurance, priced at a few dollars a week and deducted from payrolls. Companies offer coverage as a voluntary benefit for their employees, said Brandyn Fasic, the firm's president.

"We got the idea for pet insurance when our puppy was attacked by a neighbor's dogs a few years ago and the vet bills were huge," said Fasic, who has spent more than 20

years in the human-health insurance business.

About 10,000 employees in Louisiana, Illinois and Florida have signed up for APP policies through Boise, Idaho-based Pets Best, which "administers our plan under a marketing agreement," Fasic said.

APP also runs a Chicago operation.

"We have opportunities available in 50 states and are looking to partner with other marketing groups," he said. Aetna underwrites the \$4-per-week plan in 43 states, while North Pointe Insurance Co. underwrites plans in the remaining seven states.

For those on a budget, Pets Basic includes a \$100 deductible, 80 percent coverage after the deductible for veterinarian visits, lab work and X-rays, surgery, outpatient care and prescriptions. Basic pays up to \$2,500 per incident, with a \$42,500 lifetime maximum.

APP offers a pet-maintenance plan called the BestWellness Routine Care Option, which costs \$20 a month and covers vaccines, an annual exam, neutering and spaying, teeth cleaning, and heartworm and leukemia tests.

Fasic said the group is pursuing many state and local municipalities to see if they'd like to offer plans to employees. Meanwhile, the American Veterinary Medical Association said it intends to ask Congress to amend laws to include pet insurance in so-called "cafeteria plans." Participants in cafeteria plans can choose to receive life, medical and disability insurance benefits on a pre-tax basis, depending on what an employer offers.

Pet insurance is a potentially big business, Fasic said. North American pet owners have been able to buy insurance for more than 25 years, but only 2 percent to 3 percent of the region's insurable pets are covered, according to the North American Pet Health Insurance Association. In comparison, about one-fifth of pet owners in the United Kingdom have insurance for their animals.

About 60 percent of U.S. homes have at least one pet, and spending on veterinary medicine has more than doubled in the past decade, the American Veterinary Medical Association said. •

— Susan Buchanan



PHOTO BY JASON BROWN

Joel Albin created a harmonic dampener to reduce vibrations in aluminum bats after his son complained about the shock on his hands after making a hit.

Albin Athletics

Key innovation: a harmonic dampener to eliminate the damaging vibrations of metal bats that are harmful to athletes' hands

Where they're based: Livingston

Year introduced: 2008

Top executive: Joel Albin, owner

Web site: www.albinathletics.com

Like many baseball parents, Joel Albin took an interest in watching his son Jarrett play baseball. Little did Albin know that interest would turn into a business.

Albin's son often complained about the shock on his hands produced by aluminum bats. At the time, he owned a sporting goods store in Livingston and noticed the best-selling high-tech hunting bows were equipped with stabilizers and harmonic dampening devices that reduced the product's vibration.

After eight years of research and development, Albin

designed the same type of device to fit into a specialized knob on an aluminum bat. The Albin Harmonic Dampener is a round, slotted piece of rubber surrounding a small plastic cylinder built into the bat's knob.

Each bat contains a special-grade aluminum mixed with scandium, a seven-step heat-treating process and the patented dampener.

"The challenging part early on was there was little information out there about the manufacturing process of bats," Albin said, adding that few bat makers were willing to disclose their secrets because of the competitiveness in the industry.

After testing the dampener himself and receiving good reviews from his son, Albin sent it to a doctor at Kettering University in Flint, Mich., for acoustical vibration testing.

The results confirmed the new device eliminated all painful vibrations.

"I knew I had something that I could put on the market, and it eliminated the sting out of the swing," he said.

In 2008, Albin created Albin Athletics, which sold about 2,000 bats in its first year to college and high

school teams, youth baseball and fast-pitch softball players. That was the same year the South Lake Charles Little League team nearly made it to Little League World Series title using Albin bats.

After a successful first year, when the bat became the official bat of the Louisiana Baseball Coaches Association, Albin was ready to take his product to the next level.

He entered into a joint venture with Baton Rouge-based Marucci Bats, which is owned by Louisiana State University athletic trainer Jack Marucci, Joe Lawrence and former LSU pitcher and major leaguer Kurt Ainsworth.

The wooden bat company was looking for an aluminum counterpart, and the partnership will help Albin Athletics gain access to brand recognition, marketing, a sales force and perhaps more money for research, Albin said.

Albin projects the partnership will help sell about 50,000 bats in 2009.

Their first bat as a result of the partnership is the Cat 5, named after the strongest hurricane level based on the National Weather Service's scale. •

— Tommy Santora



PHOTO BY FRANK AYAMI

From left: Big Easy Blends partners Sal LaMartina, Antonio LaMartina and Craig Cordes sip on their first concoction, the Cordina mar-Go-rita.

Big Easy Blends

Key innovation: ready-to-drink frozen cocktails in an environmentally friendly pouch

Where they're based: Kenner

Year introduced: 2009

Top executive: Sal LaMartina, CEO

Web site: www.bigeasyblends.com

Just four months after Big Easy Blends' Cordina mar-Go-rita hit the shelves in four states, the Kenner-based entrepreneurs who developed the frozen portable cocktail were preparing for its international debut.

The product began selling in Louisiana, Texas, Florida and California in April, "and since then it has grown unbelievably," said Sal LaMartina, CEO of Big Easy Blends, which also includes his brother, Antonio LaMartina, and Craig Cordes. The company will soon begin exporting to

Canada, the Caribbean, Brazil and South Korea, and it's pursuing a deal in Iceland.

A network has aided the business owners' international expansion. For instance, a Caribbean exporter introduced them to a customer in Brazil, and a New York exporter contacted them about doing business in South Korea.

"I kind of scratched my head. I had no idea," LaMartina said in regard to pitching frozen margaritas in Iceland. "That came from a distributor we have in Florida that has a good working relationship with an importer in Iceland. ... They think it's a great product that will sell very well there, and obviously we're not going to say no."

Using 12 1/2-inch, stand-up, flexible pouches instead of bottles or cans helps the company cut its carbon footprint, another plus for the green-conscious Iceland market.

"With flexible packaging, you can get 900 pouches in one small case," LaMartina said. "That same amount would take an entire pallet of regular plastic or glass bottle. One pallet of pouches is equivalent to an entire

truckload of plastic or glass bottles. On top of that, flexible packaging takes up about 75 percent less energy to produce."

A twist on the classic lime margarita recipe helped position Big Easy Blends to reach a wider market. Instead of tequila, Cordina mar-Go-ritas are made with wine.

"We use 100 percent blue agave, the same ingredient used to make full-strength tequila, but we ferment it rather than distill it," LaMartina said. "That gives it the exact same taste as tequila, but it's federally classified as wine. That little bit of innovation has allowed our product to be on the grocery store shelves in the states where they do not allow liquor to be sold in grocery stores."

The business partners are working on plans to expand their product line.

"We're launching a strawberry mar-Go-rita in the first quarter of next year, followed by a mango mar-Go-rita," Antonio LaMartina said. "Then we're going to roll into daiquiris."•

— Sonya Stinson



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

BooKoo Bounce owner Gene Sausse plays around in his indoor inflatable playground.

BooKoo Bounce

Key innovation: Louisiana's largest climate-controlled indoor play arena that uses inflatable equipment

Where they're based: Elmwood

Year introduced: September 2008

Top executive: Gene Sausse, owner

Web site: www.bookoobounce.com

When Gene Sausse opened BooKoo Bounce in Elmwood one year ago, he created Louisiana's largest climate-controlled indoor playground that children praise for high thrills and parents applaud for cleanliness.

"We feel like we're giving New Orleans a clean, safe, comfortable, full-service environment that offers high-end children's birthday parties in addition to walk-in play," said

Sausse, who previously worked in marketing.

BooKoo Bounce guests have nine different inflatable bouncer, slide and obstacle course options to explore throughout the 8,300-square-foot building.

"It really has a shock-and-awe effect on kids," Sausse said. Meanwhile, parents can relax in a lounge that features several high definition big-screen televisions, which, during Saints season, ensures parents don't miss a game while their children are jumping, bouncing and sliding close by.

"It's fun to be a part of the kids having fun," Sausse said. "The adults are able to have fun, too."

Many of the guests arrive as attendees of friends' birthday parties. Sausse can schedule two private parties at a time, each for a two-hour period. Individual parties spend 40 minutes experiencing one set of five inflatables before they move on for another 40 minutes to play on the remaining four inflatables. They also spend 40 min-

utes eating cookie cake and pizza, which BooKoo Bounce supplies.

Parents don't even have to send out invitations: BooKoo Bounce gathers the event information and mails out custom invitations.

"It's a close as I could get to a high-end type of experience for parents," he said.

It's little surprise that BooKoo Bounce has captivated 85,000 visitors to make the indoor playground a success. After all, the idea came from a 3-year-old.

Sausse remembers that while his daughter, Sylvie, sat on her mom's lap during a family trip to Disney World she asked, "Daddy, will you open a party place?"

"It was a Eureka moment," he said. "I'm a New Orleanian. I can't imagine doing anything anywhere else. People embrace the entrepreneurial spirit here in New Orleans."•

— Amy Ferrara Smith

Creative Jewelry by Bridgejá

Key innovation: handmade gemstone and crystal jewelry

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2008

Top executive: Bridgejá Baker, owner and designer

Web site: www.creativejewelrybybridgeja.com

Bridgejá Baker's braces gave her more than what her parents call a million-dollar smile. They opened for the pre-teen a new world of creativity and entrepreneurship.

Baker's story began in June 2008 when a bite into a barbecued turkey neck damaged her braces. When her father took her to the orthodontist for the repair, Baker noticed the gemstones, crystals and pearls in the adjacent bead shop and while there registered for jewelry-making classes.

That was 30 beading classes ago for the 11-year-old who now sells her own designs as the owner of Creative Jewelry by Bridgejá.

Her semi-precious stone, crystal and silver creations are available online and at special events, such as the 2009 Essence Fest Market Place.

"Essence was fun and profitable for me and my business. I sold a large portion of my jewelry designs," said Baker, who gained a few out-of-town clients from the event.

Baker's braces were removed in July, but her entrepreneurial spirit stuck. She hopes to earn money for college by continuing her jewelry sales and plans to host a one-week beading camp for as many as 27 girls next summer, offering tuition grants to two attendees.

"I believe in giving back to others," said Baker, who has donated a portion of her earnings to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Children's Hospital. "My parents have taught me to help others and that's what I am doing."

Baker's designs display a maturity and sophistication beyond her years. She designed one of her sets — a necklace, earrings and bracelet of gray pearls and Swarovski crystals — as a tribute to First Lady Michelle Obama. Baker sent a set to Obama, who acknowledged receipt by letter, and hopes to secure permission to name a line of pieces after the first lady.

"I plan to have a line for her," Baker said. "She's a very nice lady and I found out she likes pearls."

Baker usually makes no more than two pieces of each



PHOTO BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFER

Bridgejá Baker, 11, shows off some of the jewelry she's designed and sold at special events such as the Essence Festival Market Place.

design, maintaining originality within the line. With school starting, Baker says she'll work on the designs about two days a week.

She's been featured in local and national media, including Scholastic News, a leading children's magazine. The seventh grader plans to become a pharmacist and drug store owner as an adult. •

— Diana Chandler



PHOTO BY SHANNON DIECIDUE

From left: Ducky team members Mike Paine, Scott Couvillon, Kristen Sullivan, Lauren Card, Angelina Burst and CEO Shawn Burst review market strategies.

Ducky

Key innovation: direct marketing program that allows advertisers to exchange special offers for feedback from consumers

Where they're based: Mandeville

Year introduced: 2008

Top executive: Shawn Burst, CEO

Web site: www.ducky.com

By using new technology and communication methods, Ducky LLC is providing advertisers with a system that allows them to target specific consumers.

Based in Mandeville, with operations in Mid-City, Kenner, Atlanta and Washington, D.C., Ducky builds direct response marketing platforms that allow advertisers to exchange value in the form of coupons, gift cards and other offers with individuals in exchange for personal feedback.

“Unlike traditional direct mail and e-mail from companies who simply send out anonymous coupons and offers as cheaply as possible to consumers who don’t find them of any value, we use variable printing technology and digital assets to send the same offers in the form of personalized gift cards that can be activated and shared online,” said Ducky CEO Shawn Burst. “Recipients of a ‘Ducky’ find it valuable while throwing away all of the other junk found in a mail slot or inbox.”

Burst said Ducky creates offers for a particular store or business that are tailored to fit the interests of consumers they are trying to target. The format of the offer is a paper credit card with personalized information on it that can be redeemed online or in a store.

“Each card comes with a personal URL that the consumer uses for activation,” said Burst, which allows the advertiser to better track who uses the offer and what the offer is used for.

Burst started Ducky in May 2008 after working on direct response campaigns for the auto industry. The idea

was a response to the low redemption, high per-unit cost and lack of tracking available through traditional direct marketing programs.

Ducky’s first big test came in October when Clearview Mall requested a Ducky mailer to bring more traffic into the mall. According to Ducky’s Web site, the mall sent out a direct mailer with coupons and offers for a variety of stores. The mailer went out to 10,000 households within a 10-mile radius of the mall. The mailer experienced a 7 percent to 10 percent coupon redemption rating within the first two weeks.

“The need in the modern marketing world is to have the power to audit your marketing efforts and engage individuals in conversation rather than bombarding them with ads they have become attuned to ignore,” Burst said. “Ironically, what is more simple to the consumer is more complicated for the marketer, but that is probably when you know it is a good idea.”•

— Robin Shannon

Feelgoodz

Key innovation: 100 percent natural rubber, eco-friendly flip flops

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2008

Top executive: Kyle Berner, CEO

Web site: www.feelgoodz.com

If the key to being a successful entrepreneur is to follow one's passion, then Kyle Berner's real business started when he packed a bag and headed for Thailand in 2006.

After graduating from Loyola University, he spent a year there teaching English, traveling the country and learning about the culture. A year later, he returned to Asia and vowed to keep his eyes open for any kind of opportunity that would allow him to make a living and stay in touch with the people of Thailand.

After trying on a pair of flip flops at a market stall, a light came on and Berner knew he had found his product. That pair of flops led to a lengthy conversation with the vendor and would eventually turn into a full-blown business.

"Right then and there, I was able to negotiate an exclusive distribution deal for all of America and the brand Feelgoodz, which I came up with in the stall in Bangkok. I thought the flops felt good," Berner said.

He returned home to New Orleans with no credit, no loans and little more than \$25,000 to put the business together. The money barely covered the first shipment of flip flops and left a little cushion for other expenses. When Whole Foods jumped on board in May, he went from moving 400 pairs a month to 5,000.

"The stars aligned and we ended up in Austin, (Texas), literally working around the clock, packing up and shipping 3,000 pairs of flops within a week," Berner said.

Nowadays, Berner is expanding the brand and has the product in 20 retail locations between New Orleans and Hawaii and in 16 Whole Foods stores. Feelgoodz are also sold in Japan, Maine, Oregon, North Carolina and online.

The 28-year-old, who considers himself an "open-toe shoe kind of guy," also has a socially responsible mission. Feelgoodz created a partnership with the social entrepreneur association Ashoka and has a triple bottom line donation model which puts money toward "the planet, the people and Phitsanulok, Thailand." The company is Louisiana's first B-corporation, a designation for a business that creates a public benefit.

"We built the model to be a lifestyle brand and make use of the power of capitalism to create other social changes around the world," Berner said. •

— Craig Guillot



PHOTO BY FRANK AYAMI

Feelgoodz CEO Kyle Berner brought back a 100 percent natural rubber flip flop from Thailand and is now selling the footwear in Japan, Louisiana, Maine, Oregon and North Carolina.



PHOTO BY FRANK ATWANT

Fire on the Bayou producer and director Jason Villemarette specializes in high-definition video production for television commercials such as SDT Waste & Debris, the Audubon Institute and Piccadilly Cafeterias.

Fire on the Bayou

Key innovation: a high-definition video production company that specializes in shooting TV commercials

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2006

Top executive: Jason Villemarette, director and producer

Web site: www.firenola.com

Fire on the Bayou owner and director Jason Villemarette started his work behind the video camera at 18 when he participated in a New Orleans inner-city program that taught young people how to shoot and edit videos.

He's been making magic with the camera ever since and adapting to the changing times.

"People are saving money in this economy," Villemarette

said. "The idea is to spend less, get a great spot and communicate with your consumers. Entrepreneurs are people who do more with less. And that's how we came about. It was our necessity to grow."

Villemarette launched Fire on the Bayou once he realized he couldn't follow his own dreams working for someone else.

"My model was to go after high-definition better than anyone in town. That was really the catalyst. The high-def market allows you to create high quality at a good price point."

Overhead is not an issue, considering Villemarette owns the building and the equipment. He has even converted an old closet into a sound studio.

"The model for production companies across the country is that they're smaller, more mobile and more aggressive. You have to be. Technology and the advertising market are always changing."

To adjust, he's added equipment such as 16- and 35-millimeter production, online high-definition editing as well as

standard editing. The firm also provides DVD and tape duplication services as well as DVD authoring, in addition to converting video to and from high definition.

In the economic crunch, even industry leaders are feeling the pain and are open to advertising.

"I only produce the commercial. It's up to their business to execute. If my client doesn't fulfill it, it's all smoke, mirrors and fluff."

Being hands-on with his projects, Villemarette also reaches out to his work force. His artistic workers have flexible hours so they can meet their deadlines. Fire on the Bayou has produced high-definition commercials for local clients such as SDT Waste & Debris, the Audubon Institute, Piccadilly Cafeterias, Blue Runner, the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival and the Zurich Classic.

"Since Mardi Gras, I haven't stopped," Villemarette said. •

— John Breerwood

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Clockwise from left: 504ward supporters Nicholas Gross, Nate Scott, Lauren Baum, Lavonzell Nicholson, Amy Boyle and Jessica White take a break in Jackson Square.

504ward

Key innovation: a movement designed to keep young professionals from leaving the city for better opportunities

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: September 2008

Top executive: Leslie Jacobs, founder

Web site: www.504ward.com

In a city that is becoming increasingly populated with talented young men and women wanting to spark social change and make a difference, 504ward has become a home base of opportunities and connections for this fresh group of transplants.

Founded by Leslie Jacobs, a New Orleans business leader involved in education reform in the city, 504ward is described as a movement designed to keep intelligent young

people from leaving the city for better opportunities.

"Our goal is to reverse the 'brain drain' that has plagued our city for decades," executive director Jessica White said. "We promote opportunities that may be beneficial to the talents of these 25- to 30-year-olds. We give them access to the community."

White said 504ward is a collaboration of about 30 organizations in the New Orleans area that work together to highlight events in the city, provide connections to business leaders and offer opportunities for networking. The organization's Web site lists job opportunities and profiles events throughout the city that allow people to engage in the area's culture while making connections with others their age. White said the group communicates with those in the network at least twice a week.

"We create opportunities that are unique and fulfilling," White said. "A good example is an event in February where 34 community leaders opened their homes to 300 young people to talk, mingle and share ideas. We're planning a sim-

ilar event for October when we hope to accommodate 500."

White said 504ward works as one group that promotes the opportunities provided by several others. Some of the groups listed as partners include The Arts Council of New Orleans, The Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region, Greater New Orleans Inc. and The Idea Village.

"We bring them all to the table to create one big event instead of four or five small events," White said. "We do our best to make our events as free as possible. With the demographic we deal with, their income is minimal."

Although the exact impact is hard to measure, White said the group's organizers and partners believe 504ward is having a tremendous impact.

"With the amount of sharing we do, we have heard stories about people getting jobs, finding peer mentors and strengthening the bond they have with the city," White said. "They are staying because of the opportunities and those opportunities have increased since Katrina."•

— Robin Shannon

Flavor League

Key innovation: hand-screened wallpaper in vintage, contemporary and custom designs

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2003

Top executive: Jon Sherman, commissioner of Flavor League

Web site: www.flavorleague.com

Jon Sherman has built a treasure from another man's trash.

Working on a real estate development in Miami a few years ago, he learned of a man in Oregon who planned to burn the equipment and designs left by a deceased brother whose hand-screened wallpaper design business had flourished in the 1960s.

Sherman rescued the equipment and designs, hired a poster printer and secured a building in Bywater, where he premiered Flavor League and his Flavor Paper, a wallpaper design that has attracted customers and praise internationally.

"We consider it fine art," Sherman said. "You're really buying a piece of art that happens to cover an entire roll."

Sherman started by making the designs more contemporary, sharpening the printing accuracy and creating a few designs of his own. Since then, he's brought on two full-time artists, released 10 patterns each spring and will soon premiere a Flavor of the Month series.

"Comparatively, it's economical but definitely more expensive than paint," Sherman said. Most basic two-color prints retail for \$150 a roll, allowing customers to cover a 100-square-foot wall for \$450, Sherman said. Prices go up from there.

His first client for the art on a roll was musician Lenny Kravitz for his French Quarter home, which Sherman adorned with two geometric prints from the original collection, "Highway 66" on a chrome Mylar paper and "Circuit" on a silver Mylar, in custom colors.

Since then, he's rolled out wall coverings for Nike, Cole Haan, Jonathan Adler, W Hotels and the ABC television show "Extreme Makeover." Flavor Paper has been featured extensively in the media, and two of his designs are included in the Smithsonian Museum of Art's permanent collection.

Sherman is shifting wallpaper production from New Orleans to a Brooklyn location, which Sherman expects to debut in October. It will include a printing studio on the first floor with generous windows, forming a public art dis-



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Flavor League commissioner Jon Sherman checks out his hand-screened, original-design wallpaper.

play for passersby.

"Everyone walking by gets treated to the visual delight of seeing wallpaper getting made," Sherman said.

Sherman has partnered with Dirty Coast Press to convert the Chartres Street location into a fabric printing house, importing material from Central America to create lampshades, pillow coverings and other accessories to complement the wall coverings. He plans international distribution from New Orleans. •

— Diana Chandler



PHOTO BY SHANNON DIECIDUE

H&A Services owner Diane Cabeceiras, left, and manager Courtney Poupart discuss potential clients at their Mandeville office.

H&A Services

Key innovation: a janitorial service using environmentally safe products and methods

Where they're based: Mandeville

Year introduced: 2006

Top executive: Diane Cabeceiras, president

Web site: www.greencleaningsolutionsllc.com (in development)

Decaying debris, standing water and mold from Hurricane Katrina triggered health issues that brought out the worst in allergy sufferers throughout the area.

With an allergy sufferer at home, it was difficult for Diane Cabeceiras to find the right products to combat mold and

dirt since commercial-cleaning solutions can cause respiratory irritation and have overbearing scents.

After doing research on dusting and scouring products to combat her daughter's allergies, Cabeceiras decided to start H&A Services, an eco-friendly janitorial company, in January 2006.

"Our products contain no known, probable or possible carcinogens," Cabeceiras said. "They have a neutral pH," meaning they are as chemically volatile as water.

Cabeceiras said her firm avoids using chemicals that create toxic gases or violent reactions when they're mixed or placed next to each other.

And the cleaners she uses are free of volatile organic compounds, which vaporize, enter the atmosphere and damage the ozone layer while also presenting a health hazard.

H&A uses renewable products whenever possible, such as

trash bags and can liners from 50 percent recycled material.

Cabeceiras said studies have shown that absenteeism at school and in offices declines after a shifting to green-cleaning methods.

Tim Sanderson, president of collection-firm VeriCore in Mandeville, said that after his local, 40-person office contracted H&A to come in nightly, absenteeism fell.

"I'd like to think it's because of our new janitorial service," he said.

This year Cabeceiras is focusing her marketing efforts on schools, day care centers and offices, and is developing her own green-cleaning product. She doesn't want to disclose any secret ingredients at this stage but said her new formula, which will be manufactured in Louisiana, is made from renewable resources and contains no hazardous or ozone-depleting chemicals. •

— Susan Buchanan



PHOTO BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFER

Jay McLellan, president and CEO of Home Automation Inc., shows the company's SmartGrid that manages and reports on home energy use.

Home Automation Inc.

Key innovation: SmartGrids technology that manages and reports on energy use

Where they're based: eastern New Orleans

Year introduced: 1985

Top executive: Jay McLellan, president and CEO

Web site: www.homeauto.com

Jay McLellan, Brian Yokum and Tom Pickral were friends and colleagues with commercial expertise in controls for ships and oil and gas pipelines. In 1985, they heard of a complex project sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders to make homes more energy efficient.

"We heard about the project and thought we could do better," said McLellan, Home Automatic Inc.'s CEO.

With that, the friends embarked on a mission to design and manufacture products to service the energy needs of res-

idential customers. Soon they found themselves in the midst of a growing market aimed at energy conservation, home security and customer convenience.

SmartGrid technology's primary function is to manage energy consumption. Utility companies are switching to "SmartMeters" that track energy being consumed at a home through a radio signal. Home Automation Inc. intercepts this signal and sends it to a home's Omnistat2 thermostat, which displays the information, allowing the homeowner to know exactly the amount of energy they are using during a given time period.

"As the demand and cost for energy continues to go up, conservation is becoming more and more valuable," McLellan said.

As energy grids become more crowded, utility companies nationwide are adopting "time-of-use pricing" methods that charge customers more for energy use during on-peak hours and less during off-peak.

Home Automation's products allow homeowners to

automate their thermostats to reduce consumption during peak times, often when they are not in the house, and automatically return to desired levels when they are in the house.

"When you leave home for work or vacation, you push a single button, which reduces heating and cooling costs, sets the alarm and controls lighting," McLellan said. "Now we also do controls for music and home entertainment, and offer remote access for video surveillance."

While they remain in competition with other companies in the market for

McLellan, who has New Orleans roots going back three generations, is especially proud to have centered all warehousing, quality control and agency listings operations in New Orleans since 1985.

"We design or specify products in the U.S., Mexico and China, but we're proud to handle all warehousing, quality control and agency listings right here in New Orleans," he said. "We're here to stay."•

— Thomas Leggett

The IP Building

Key innovation: an office building with tenants sharing creativity, entrepreneurial innovation and technological advancement

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2008

Top executive: Brian Gibbs, developer

Do you ever see a product or service and wonder where it came from? Perhaps one day, a tenant in the Intellectual Property building will be the source.

Tim Williamson of The Idea Village and Michael Hecht of Greater New Orleans Inc. approached developer Brian Gibbs with the idea of clustering entrepreneurial companies soon after Gibbs purchased the building in July 2008. The conversion of the former McGlinchey Stafford law firm offices on Magazine Street included putting companies that thrive on creativity, entrepreneurial innovation and technological advancement under the same roof.

“Our market had many entrepreneurial companies in the city,” Gibbs said. “It has kind of taken on a life of its own once the building achieved some momentum. The building is about the tenants, for the tenants.”

The idea is to cluster companies that seek to take a proactive role in influencing the local economy, and there is a need for that energy in the New Orleans market, Gibbs said.

“We hope to provide an atmosphere in the building that helps its tenants recruit and retain their employees by providing a pleasant place to work. Obviously, more companies choosing to put down roots in New Orleans helps drive NOLA’s economy forward.”

Two of those features include being dog friendly and a Brainstorm Room. Firms that have set up shop in the IP include 3-D imaging company TurboSquid, Couhig Partners business law firm, Carrollton Technology Partners, online reservations company iSeatz, entrepreneurial workspace provider Launch Pad and The Idea Village, which provides opportunity and business development for entrepreneurs.

The IP now is ready for more innovative companies.



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

From left: Kevin Taylor, Craig Bayer and Benjamin Reece head out of the IP Building after another day at the office.

“The building is only 33 percent occupied at this moment, so we hope to continue to build on the progress that has been made to date. Hopefully, it’ll show more companies that NOLA is a great place to locate their businesses.”

Gibbs said the recession will not hurt the IP’s momentum.

“Certainly, the lease-up pace has been hampered by the economy, but we have competitive lease rates that can help companies save money on their office space costs.”

Overall, companies within the IP have accrued more than \$61 million in revenue. •

— John Breerwood



Shawn ODaniels, founder and president of iworktickets, says his smartphone-based mobile workflow management system can be customized for any client.

iworktickets

Key innovation: smartphone-based mobile workflow management system

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2009

Top executive: Shawn ODaniels, founder and president

Web site: www.iworktickets.com

Already writing computer programs in high school and judging himself a poor student, Shawn ODaniels chose not to enroll in college. That was nearly 25 years and three businesses ago.

He founded Computer Systems Network in 1985 and co-founded River Marine Management in 1998. But with the latter company, ODaniels said, it was difficult to keep track of invoices and other paperwork submitted by workers

in the field. Surmising the possibility of filing such reports via cell phones, he developed the prototype for iworktickets using an iPhone in 2008.

"There are so many different uses for it," ODaniels said. "It's actually bringing the field worker into the office. It creates productivity."

Workers in the field can open work orders, order parts, and transmit job updates and time reports to office personnel. Once submitted on the phone, the information is forever stored at the office and on a secure off-site server.

"Once they press 'enter,' there it is. It can't be lost, even if the guy loses the phone," ODaniels said.

No additional computer equipment is needed. Workers simply need smartphones and do not have to be particularly computer savvy to use the software.

"We are providing a product that helps the small business make it through this fierce downtown," he said, emphasizing the reduced need for paperwork, manual

record keeping, office space and office personnel.

The system improves efficiency in reporting information while in the field, making it ideal for such clients as trucking companies and nursing homes. It also is easy to implement and can be customized to fit the particular needs of the client, ODaniels said, accommodating photographs and forms. The company already has a client in Chicago, and plans include marketing the product internationally.

"It's limitless. It's mobile," ODaniels said. "Some of the technology that's used is not even out on the market today."

ODaniels has combined iworktickets' information gathering capabilities with the office computer system know-how of his oldest company, Computer Systems Network, which he envisions will lead to more network solutions.

"We're just in our infancy," ODaniels said. •

— Diana Chandler

Launch Pad

Key innovation: co-working facility for businesses and professionals to share office space and advice

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2009

Top executives: Will Donaldson, Chris Schultz and Barre Tanguis, partners

Web site: www.launchpadnola.com

Located in the IP building in the Central Business District, Launch Pad provides startups, other small businesses and individual professionals with the cost-cutting benefits of sharing office space and equipment, plus the chance to be part of a mutually supportive entrepreneurial community.

"The history of Launch Pad is actually very organic," co-founder Chris Schultz said.

A couple of years ago, Schultz placed a Craigslist ad to lease some extra space in the offices of his technology company, Voodoo Ventures. Barre Tanguis, who would later become a partner in Launch Pad, was the first to move in, followed by two more tenants.

"It was a very nice work environment," Schultz said.

The third partner, former Voodoo Ventures intern Will Donaldson, approached Schultz several months ago with the idea of turning the co-working concept into a stand-alone business.

A second-place showing in the 504ward business plan competition provided seed money to start Launch Pad in June. VCE Capital is an investment partner in the startup, which took just nine months to get off the ground.

"I think 504ward accelerated our development," Schultz said. "Apart from the fact that we came in second and had some winnings from it, even going through the process and formalizing our business plan really forced us to get the ball rolling."

Co-working spaces, which are gaining popularity nationwide, differ from traditional incubators in that there is no single leader of the facilities. Schultz said the collaboration among Launch Pad members takes place on two levels: the casual "water cooler conversations" about how to solve problems and accomplish goals, and more formal programs.

Last fall Launch Pad started a series of seminars for 504ward competitors called Startup School. The company also recently hosted a BarCamp focused on computer programming. The nationwide BarCamp movement grew out of a 2005 Silicon Valley event put on by a group who met at a bar across the street from a major conven-



Launch Pad partners Will Donaldson, left, Chris Schultz and Barre Tanguis opened their co-working facility in June.

tion they couldn't afford to attend.

Schultz said he believes New Orleans' "entrepreneurial ecosystem" is thriving, driven largely by young newcomers who moved to the city to be part of the recovery.

"These are very smart and intelligent people, and they're starting businesses down here, which is very exciting," Schultz said. "I hope that in five years we can look back at a whole string of startups that have come through Launch Pad and gone on to be very successful New Orleans companies."•

— Sonya Stinson

PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Max Pro Windows

Key innovation: energy-efficient and specially engineered windows designed for hurricane protection and security

Where they're based: Kenner

Year introduced: 2006

Top executive: Mark Martinez, president

Web site: www.maxprowindows.com

Mark Martinez spent years selling windows and hurricane shutters for home improvement companies before he realized it was the products, not necessarily the home, that needed improving.

Despite having no training in window design, Martinez began working on a stronger, more energy-efficient window that would eliminate the need for bulky roll-down shutters or makeshift plywood covers. After 11 years of selling windows, he had become familiar with their composition but studied Florida hurricane windows for more inspiration.

"I just came up with a very unique glazing channel ... to ensure that the window wouldn't come out during the impact (of a hurricane or break-in)," said Martinez, who launched Max Pro Windows three years ago.

"It's thermally broken, which means that unlike normal commercial grade windows, it doesn't conduct the heat and cold," he said. "That makes it very energy efficient. We also use a monolithic glass. It's five-sixteenths of an inch thick, but it's 100 times stronger than the windshield of your automobile."

Able to withstand Category 4 hurricanes, the windows are certified to meet American Standardized Testing Method codes for the Gulf Coast, as well as Florida building codes.

The process of getting the window designed and code-approved took two years, and Martinez acknowledges some early missteps.

"I failed my first test," he said. "I went to Miami, and I failed. That was kind of a letdown because it was like \$12,000 of my money. But it brought me back to the drawing board. I redesigned a certain interlock, and we were able to pass with flying colors."

The company won contracts to install windows at six U.S. Army Corps of Engineers bunkers at the pumping stations on the 17th Street, London Avenue and Orleans Avenue canals and at the West Jefferson Levee District's command center.



PHOTO BY FRANK AYAMI

Max Pro Windows president Mark Martinez demonstrates his specially engineered windows that can withstand hurricane-force winds — or a strike from a baseball bat.

"That's really important because these people are essential personnel. They will never evacuate our city," Martinez said of the recently completed Jefferson Parish project. "It's a humbling experience to know that my windows are in there protecting these folks and their families."

The windows are manufactured in a 2,500-square-foot facility in Kenner, but Martinez hopes to move to a larger location in either Jefferson Parish or on the North Shore. He'd also like to establish satellite offices along the Gulf Coast and branch out into Lafayette, Houston and Florida. •

— Sonya Stinson



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Nationwide Environmental Solutions president Trey Adams sprays laptops with mPale, a germ shield that protects against and kills viruses and bacteria for up to three years.

Nationwide Environmental Solutions

Key innovation: a germ shield that kills viruses and bacteria for up to three years

Where they're based: Metairie

Year introduced: 2008

Top executive: Trey Adams, president

Web site: www.nwesllc.com

H1N1 has brought germs to the forefront of American culture in recent months. But less exotic germs, such as staph infection, can be just as harmful.

To combat that, Metairie's Nationwide Environmental Solutions sells and applies the spray coating mPale, which

features the Aegis Microshield, giving businesses protection from germs and bacteria. The mPale/Aegis product is a spray coating applied with an electrostatic application that sticks to all surfaces.

NES is a local firm that worked in the mold remediation business when Trey Adams, president of Nationwide Environmental Solutions, received a call from mPact Environmental Solutions. Officials with mPact were looking for a partner to take care of the applications for the mPale technology. NES is now an exclusive service provider for mPact.

The product has been registered with the EPA and approved by the FDA. It can be applied to wood, steel, dry-wall, carpet, upholstery and painted surfaces. Once applied, the coating is completely undetectable by touch, nontoxic and biodegradable. An independent third party tests the

location before and after the application to judge the coating's effectiveness.

NES has received interest from a variety of businesses, but hospitals and schools are particularly interested in the product.

"When we talk to hospitals, their ears perk up," Adams said. "If we save one patient from getting a staph infection, they (the hospital) would make the money back in what they'd have to pay out in insurance claims."

Aside from staph infections, the application can help fight other diseases, including all forms of influenza and H1N1. The germ shield also provides a longer lasting protection, as a standard disinfectant is good for one-time use, meaning it will kill any germs it gets on the first spray, but germs that arrive even a day later will be unharmed. The mPale application lasts up to three years. •

— Fritz Esker



PHOTO BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFER

Damien LaManna co-founded Net²NO to bring together locals involved in social and digital media.

Net²NO

Key innovation: a community group for social media users

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2009

Top executive: Damien LaManna, co-founder

Web site: www.net2no.com

As a local chapter of NetSquared, an organization dedicated to helping nonprofits take advantage of social media to achieve social change, Net²NO has grown to be one of the largest and most successful chapters in the world.

Co-founder Damien LaManna moved from Washington, D.C., to New Orleans in 2008 to take a day job as digital media director for communications firm Morgan + Co. To

further immerse himself in the community, he and search specialist Jessica Rohloff co-founded the local NetSquared chapter as a way to bring together locals involved in social and digital media.

With almost 350 members running the gamut from graphic designers to public relations professionals, the group is just a few members short of surpassing London as the biggest NetSquared chapter in the world.

Because of the influx of post-Hurricane Katrina federal money and young talent lured by digital media tax incentives, LaManna said New Orleans is becoming a burgeoning epicenter of tech startups, on par with Austin, Texas, and San Francisco. Yet with the unique culture, geography and recent events, the nature of technology in New Orleans is different.

In today's high-tech, always-in-touch world, social media is growing to be a critical means of communications, marketing and growth for business of all sizes.

"One of the great things about NetSquared is that they understand each chapter has its own needs. Here in New Orleans, with the rebuilding, that took a turn towards social entrepreneurship. It is something that is still for profit but providing a public benefit," LaManna said.

Net²NO meets in the back room of Tchoupitoulas Street bar Bridge Lounge on the first Tuesday of every month. Meetings have featured topics such as search engine optimization, social media marketing and have included speakers such as Elliot Adams, the director of digital media for Louisiana Economic Development.

The organization also features networking opportunities that can lead to jobs, innovation and the occasional start-up.

"The power and strength of our organization comes in our amazing membership. They're on the forefront of the tech community in New Orleans, in the region and even beyond that," LaManna said. •

— Craig Guillot



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

From left: NOLA Brewing executives Dylan Lintern, Peter Caddoo, Kirk Coco and Melanie Knepp enjoy a beer at the end of the day.

New Orleans Lager and Ale Brewing Co.

Key innovation: two beers on the market that mix English, German and American hops, malts from around the world and unique yeast blends

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2009

Top executives: Kirk Coco, president; Peter Caddoo, brewmaster

Web site: www.nolabrewing.com

Native New Orleanian Kirk Coco had never been in the beer business, but he has always been a fan of drinking beer — local beer.

One night while drinking Dixie beer, he took a closer look at the bottle's label.

"There I was thinking I was supporting local beer; I knew Dixie had shut down, but I didn't know it was being produced in Wisconsin," Coco said. "I was wondering if

there were any local breweries left in New Orleans."

There weren't, so Coco decided to change that. Through friend and home brewer Byron Towles, Coco connected with Peter Caddoo, a local brewer of 30 years. In the fall of 2008, they began moving brewing equipment into a 10,000-square-foot building on Tchoupitoulas Street. The crew came up with two ales to be distributed in the New Orleans area: NOLA Blonde, with floral and citrus hops aromas, and NOLA Brown, with notes of chocolate, coffee, caramel and nuts.

In March, the first kegs left the building and New Orleans Lager and Ale Brewing Co. was born. While NOLA only produces kegs now, Coco said they hope to begin producing bottles by February.

The company has since sold 850 barrels, or 1,700 kegs, of beer to distributors who in turn sell the beer to about 130 bars and restaurants in New Orleans. The beers are a mix of English, German and American hops, a variety of malts from around the world and unique yeast blends, Caddoo said.

They will release an India pale ale in October, named Hopitoulas, with five malts and six different hops, and an Irish Channel Stout and a sweet potato IPA in 2010.

NOLA Brewing's biggest challenge in the industry is its distribution.

Coco started distributing NOLA through Glazer's, but because Glazer's could only deliver during the week, Coco could not get his beer in several French Quarter bars that needed weekend suppliers. On Aug. 10, Coco gave Glazer's notice he was terminating his contract and signed with distributor Southern Eagle. Glazer's fought back and was granted a temporary restraining order that prevented Southern Eagle from selling NOLA Brewing beer.

"It's a situation that could affect us as a business because no matter how hard we work and how good of a job we do, our business depends on our relationship with the distributor," Coco said. "Now we just have to hope the distributor situation gets worked out and we continue our early success brewing as a company in New Orleans."•

— Tommy Santora



Payroll Rx CEO David Scheuermann started his company after Hurricane Katrina when he saw an influx of new businesses looking for a local payroll service.

Payroll Rx

Key innovation: creating a full-scale payroll service for local and regional businesses

Where they're based: Metairie

Year introduced: 2006

Top executive: David Scheuermann, CEO

Web site: www.payrollrx.com

One of the greatest challenges for businesses of all sizes is not only meeting a payroll but efficiently managing it. It includes dealing with tasks such as keeping track of state and federal tax withholdings, payroll registers and timekeeping on a weekly basis.

"It's an ongoing and time-consuming process," said David Scheuermann, a certified public accountant and auditor who,

in discussions with his fellow CPAs, saw a market niche.

"When we talked about what was going on in our industry, some of my associates told me that there was no single, reliable payroll company that they could refer business to."

Scheuermann decided to act after Hurricane Katrina when some businesses in the New Orleans area were closing and others were moving in from out of state.

"I knew that both existing businesses and the new businesses could use a good payroll service and that they would like to have one that is local," said Scheuermann, who launched Payroll Rx in January 2006 with the idea of providing a full-scale, one-stop payroll service.

"I thought it would be a good idea to offer as much as possible," said Scheuermann, whose company offers payroll checks as well as direct deposit and debit cards.

But he didn't stop there. Payroll Rx also provides workers' compensation documentation, state unemployment forms, time and attendance registers, and a sched-

uled notification of all tax filings and payments due to federal, state and local authorities.

Within months, Scheuermann realized his dream. Not only would he provide a variety of payroll services for more than 5,000 employees, but his client list soon expanded beyond Louisiana.

"Opportunities were presented to us to do payroll work in Mississippi, Texas, California and North Carolina," Scheuermann said. "Some local clients have offices that are in other states, while at the same time we have, through referrals, also gotten clients in other states."

Today, Payroll Rx is providing services to businesses and employees in up to a dozen states and has recently opened a new office in Franklin, Tenn.

"Looking back on it, there was no reason why this kind of service should not have proven popular," Scheuermann said. "It really was a case of seeing an opportunity and moving on it."•

— Garry Boulard

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Policy Pitch.com

Key innovation: a civic engagement Web site that allows the public and legislators to share ideas

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2009

Top executive: Zach Kupperman, CEO and founder

Web site: PolicyPitch.com

In an era of increasing citizen interest in politics and policy and almost-blanket usage of the Internet, the founder of PolicyPitch.com is bringing both worlds together in the hope of making New Orleans a better place.

"Not long ago, I was working on a project called Destination Broadmoor, which applied the concept of crowd sourcing to real estate development and rebuilding," said Zach Kupperman, CEO and founder of PolicyPitch, "and I wondered if it could be used for larger purposes like public policy."

Crowd sourcing, in which a task is performed by a large group of interested people, could be applied interactively, Kupperman said, to give a "voice to citizens who don't have a small group or nonprofit to represent them and can't hire a lobbyist."

This spring Kupperman launched PolicyPitch and scored an early coup when state Rep. Walter Hines, D-New Orleans, posted on the site legislation he was proposing before he released the information to the traditional media.

"In many ways that was a test run for us," Kupperman said. "Now we are going forward with the second phase of the site."

Kupperman hopes to aggregate every single bill filed by state legislators in all 50 states, allowing interested citizens throughout the country to follow those bills through the legislative process.

"We're going to pull in all of the data and present it in an aesthetically pleasing manner for anybody to see," he said.

PolicyPitch is also partnering with two other sites, EngageNola.org and HumidBeings.com, for a project called "If I were Mayor," which is designed to encourage voters to pitch ideas for improving New Orleans in the hope of letting candidates in the 2010 mayor's race get a feel for what's on the public's mind.

Working with Damien LaManna, who launched Net²NO.com, a site that connects professionals in the technical sector, Kupperman believes the time for virtual and real



Damien LaManna, left, and Zach Kupperman teamed to create PolicyPitch.com, a civic engagement Web site that will allow the public and legislators to share ideas.

civic participation has never been greater, particularly among the area's younger residents.

"Younger people in general are becoming more engaged and are particularly interested in the future of New Orleans," said Kupperman, adding that a recent survey conducted by Tulane University indicating that voters younger than 45 comprise a majority in New Orleans.

"If something like PolicyPitch encourages or inspires them to become involved, that has to be seen as a good thing."•

— Garry Boulard



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

PostitMD.com president and CEO Dr. Ramesh Ayyala explains his free, Web-based ophthalmology training program.

PostitMD.com

Key innovation: a free, Web-based ophthalmology training program

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2008

Top executive: Dr. Ramesh Ayyala, president and CEO

Web site: www.PostitMD.com

Dr. Ramesh Ayyala is an expert in training eye doctors, not the technology of building Web sites.

But Ayyala saw the need to expand his skill set when the scattering of ophthalmology residents and faculty members threatened the ability of his medical school department to meet its accreditation requirements.

As ophthalmology residency director and professor of ophthalmology at Tulane University School of Medicine, Ayyala had to come up with a way for the department to con-

tinue to meet the instruction hour requirements of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education despite the post-Katrina dispersal of residents throughout the United States.

Thinking the Web might offer a solution to this long-distance learning dilemma, he checked out available programs, but none fit the bill.

"Some of the existing commercial sites could not be used in all the locations, and surgical videos could not be played on the sites," Ayyala said. "Out of this desperation came the idea: Why don't I create my own Web site?"

Working with a computer programmer, he began developing PostitMD.com, a Web-based training program that allows students to view lectures, surgical videos and other presentations online.

"Many, many Sundays we spent meeting to design this Web site," said Ayyala, who constantly stressed to his techie partner that the site be user-friendly. "I had to tell him that doctors are not as computer-savvy as you might think. We had to simplify the program so that anyone can navigate through the Web site."

It took almost a year of working closely with the programmer to get the Web site up and running in early January 2008.

The password-protected site lets instructors make PowerPoint presentations, edit surgical videos and post practice exam questions. Students can download the information and images as study aids, as well as to listen to lectures at their convenience and as many times as they need to learn the material.

PostitMD.com also has proved useful in expanding the medical school's international reach. Medical students in Guatemala are participating in a Tulane science course through the Web site via a "desk-sharing" component on the site.

While Ayyala had never before seen himself as an entrepreneur, his motivation to create PostitMD.com came from his commitment to keeping his academic department alive.

"If I had not done this, we would not be having a Tulane ophthalmology program," Ayyala said. "It was as simple as that."•

— Sonya Stinson



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Julie Piazza, who works in software development for Wheelware Software, tests the company's interactive kiosk for previewing and selecting wheels and other vehicle accessories.

Wheelware Software

Key innovation: interactive computer program for previewing and selecting wheels and other vehicle accessories

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 1998

Top executive: Anthony Piazza, president

Web site: www.wheelwaresoftware.com

The creators of Wheelware Software aimed to eliminate the cumbersome selection process that can drive the fun out of customizing a car.

Merging images of more than 1,400 vehicle models with online wheel and tire catalogs, the program has changed the experience of shopping for automobile accessories. Customers no longer have to spend hours flipping through catalogs. Retailers don't have to hold up display wheels while their customers try to imagine how a car will look with a product attached.

Wheelware Software can match the look of the customer's vehicle right down to the window tint. Besides wheels, buyers can also shop for stereo and exhaust systems.

"This November we're going to introduce some new software that deals with other accessories on the car and truck," said Tony Piazza, president of Southern Tire Co., which owns Wheelware Software. "You can see a custom grill on your truck, for instance, rather than have to imagine how it's going to look."

Kiosks containing the software are installed in more than 20 locations throughout the United States, including auto dealerships, tire stores and repair shops. There are several kiosk models, including a new one just starting production that pops up out of a briefcase.

The software is also sold online.

"We've shipped programs as far away as Russia," Piazza said.

Piazza started Southern Tire, a custom wheel, tire and auto repair business, in 1965. Development of Wheelware Software began in the mid-1990s. Today, Piazza's daughter,

Julia Piazza Wang, is responsible for the software department, while Ronald Boudreaux is sales manager.

Boudreaux and Piazza said a new application has recently emerged for this car-customizing tool: Crime investigation. For instance, police can match a tire pattern left at the scene of a crime with a vehicle on the database.

"We have done some programs for police departments to help them reconstruct vehicles that may have been hijacked and to identify stolen items like stereos," Piazza added. "We've also worked with insurance companies."

Piazza also touts the green advantage of Wheelware Software over the old method of selling auto customizing products.

"The rest of the companies are producing tons of brochures and pictures that ultimately are dispersed and have to be replaced," Piazza said. "When a company sets up a computer station in the showroom, the catalogs do not disappear. You cut way down on the amount of catalogs that you have to keep, which saves trees and other energy sources that go into printing."•

— Sonya Stinson



PHOTO BY FRANK AYAMI

Dr. Nancy Mock, left, and Ky Luu assess a Hurricane Katrina-damaged boathouse in Lakeview as part of Tulane University's Disaster Management Leadership Academy, which will launch next spring.

Disaster Management Leadership Academy

Key innovation: the first university program in the nation to offer training through the doctoral level in international disaster management

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2009

Top executive: Ky Luu, senior director

Web site: www.dmlatulane.org

Starting next spring, Tulane University will launch a degree-granting program in which government officials and other leaders can learn how to take charge when disaster strikes and pick up the pieces after the emergency.

The Disaster Management Leadership Academy will be the first of its kind in the nation to offer training and certification in communications and disaster mobilization. Its organizers hope to eventually put students into research pro-

grams that will lead toward earning master's level and doctoral degrees.

Dr. Nancy Mock, an associate professor of public health and tropical medicine at Tulane and one of the program's leading proponents, said the academy is designed for higher-level people who are in the middle of their career who want to move into upper management.

"While working in international disaster management and spending some time with the recovery effort in the city, you come to realize that one of the high-capacity problems has been leadership," Mock said. "There has never been any form of solid leadership teaching in this country, and Katrina showed that to be more than evident."

Mock said the program is the brainchild of senior director Ky Luu, former director of the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and vice president of the International Medical Corps, a private nonprofit that trains health-care practitioners and organizes relief and development programs. Mock said Luu will begin assist-

ing in curriculum development this fall so classes can get started in the spring.

"Part of the process has been our collaborative projects with international nonprofits that work in disaster relief," Mock said. "We are also doing a global leadership study of disaster management to gauge international awareness of the importance of leadership."

Mock said much of the global emphasis has been on countries in Africa that often struggle with myriad disasters of all levels. The program is reaching out to colleges in Africa in the hopes of one day training a team that will make the continent self-sufficient in disaster response.

A portion of the Tulane program's funding will come from a three-year, \$2.1 million federal grant from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. Mock said the program will provide an opportunity to analyze critical issues for recovery in New Orleans and hopefully create some high-profile debates. •

— Robin Shannon



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Thurgood Marshall students Jessica Irons, left, and Richelle Gladstone work on their Mapping New Orleans Initiative project with the program's director, Eric Jensen.

GNO Afterschool Partnership

Key innovation: Mapping New Orleans Initiative, in which teens canvass and compile the city's youth-serving resources

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2009

Top executive: Gina Warner, executive director

Web site: neworleans.ilivehere.info

Under Mapping Initiative 2009, a project sponsored by the Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership, teens have pounded sidewalks this year to provide their own descriptions of youth resources such as recreation centers and arts programs on an interactive Web site.

The project is needed because some youth services were revamped after Hurricane Katrina while others have cropped up, said Gina Warner, executive director of the Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership.

The site, neworleans.ilivehere.info, shows everything from Cops for Kids Summer Camp on Lafreniere Street to Start the Adventure In Reading on State Street. It's a tool for youth, parents, caregivers and teachers seeking services, Warner said, that should also help identify gaps in city resources.

Richard Murphy started teen mapping in 1992 when he was commissioner of New York's youth services. He's now executive director of Youthline America, a New York non-profit, and recently teamed with Warner to implement Youthline's mapping "curriculum" and software in New Orleans.

Youth mapping has been used in a number of states, "but the difference in New Orleans is kids are going straight from the classroom to the streets and back, collecting data, then entering and testing it," Murphy said.

"Schools have played a bigger role in mapping New Orleans than in other cities, and the mapping technology they're using is more advanced and interactive."

New Orleans youths participating in the program plan to introduce a feedback function on their site shortly, he said, and some of them will visit Jackson, Miss., to train children there.

To date, about 60 teens from Walter L. Cohen and Frederick Douglass high schools and the Urban League of Greater New Orleans' college track for high schoolers have canvassed swaths of the city.

Because of his background as a local teacher for Teach for America and his work with young people, Eric Jensen, the partnership's mapping project director, has been an asset to the program, Warner said.

"We were approached by Eric Jensen about providing students for the mapping project," said Alex Hochron, Health Sciences Academy Principal at Walter Cohen High School. "Teachers in our two ninth-grade geography classes taught their students to map, and the kids got especially interested when they heard they'd be paid."

Thirty Cohen students started mapping neighborhoods in March at \$50 for six hours of work.

The W.K. Kellogg and Surdna foundations have provided \$300,000 for the local project. So far, students have mapped Central City, St. Roch, Gentilly and the Freret Street corridor. They plan to canvass the entire city by 2010. •

— Susan Buchanan



PHOTO BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFER

Korbin Johnson, principal of William J. Guste KIPP Central City School, chats with first-grade students Traveal Brown, left, and Dariana Bernard.

KIPP New Orleans Schools

Key innovation: free, open-enrollment, college-preparatory public schools that prepare students in underserved communities for college and life

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2005

Top executive: Rhonda Kaifey-Aluise, executive director

Web site: www.kippneworleans.org

Hurricane Katrina was a tragedy transformed into hope and change for KIPP New Orleans Schools and executive director Rhonda Kaifey-Aluise.

KIPP New Orleans Schools was introduced in the spring of 2005 as a charter alternative for public school students in lower-income communities. The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education awarded the group a charter, and KIPP Phillips Preparatory opened its doors in July 2005 to a class of 120 eighth-grade students in the former E.H. Phillips Middle School building.

But Katrina brought an abrupt end to the recently opened summer school. KIPP returned to New Orleans for the 2006-07 school year and opened two schools for 520 students.

"Even before Katrina, parents were looking for some solutions to problems in New Orleans schools," said Kaifey-Aluise, who was a KIPP New Orleans founding board member in 2004. "They were unhappy with the school system and wanted change, and we knew what KIPP was doing for students across the country."

Knowledge is Power Program schools are part of a nationwide network of free, open-enrollment public schools that prepares students in underserved communities for success in college and life. More than 80 percent of KIPP students go to college. There are 82 KIPP schools in 19 states and the District of Columbia serving about 20,000 students.

After Katrina, Kaifey-Aluise said, motivated program officials realized there was an opportunity to finish what they started before the storm.

For the 2009-10 school year, KIPP New Orleans has five schools on three campuses with 1,310 students and 110

teachers. KIPP Renaissance High School, grades nine through 12, will open in the fall of 2010 in the former Frederick Douglass School Building at 3820 St. Claude Ave.

Kaifey-Aluise said the KIPP system has three goals:

- middle school graduates will attend a college-prep high school;
- KIPP alumni in high school will maintain a 3.0 grade point average in a college-prep curriculum; and
- KIPP alumni will earn a degree from a post-secondary institution within six years of graduating from high school.

KIPP models include 10-hour school days, some school on Saturdays; a rhythmic call-and-response style in the classrooms, where students might snap their fingers to encourage or applaud classmates; and teachers providing their cell phone numbers to students.

"We are very interactive, and from the first day they are enrolled, we tell them what year they will be in college, and they are reminded of that every day," Kaifey-Aluise said. "Going to college is a doable goal, and that's emphasized to our students from both teachers and parents."•

— Tommy Santora



PHOTO BY FRANK AYAMAMI

From left: Drs. John Wales and Richard Deno and nurse Michelle Gabriel review patient updates on East Jefferson General Hospital's Computerized Patient Order Entry system.

Computerized Physician Order Entry

East Jefferson General Hospital

Key innovation: handheld computers that doctors use to communicate with the nurses station from a patient's bed and retrieve all medical history

Where they're based: Metairie

Year introduced: 2009

Top executive: Dr. Mark Peters, president and CEO

Web site: www.ejgh.org

Gone are the days of nurses and medical secretaries struggling to read doctors' handwriting in East Jefferson General Hospital's emergency department.

Instead, doctors' orders are entered into handheld computers at the patient's bedside and transmitted electronically to the nurses' station in a legible computer font, one of many features of the new Computerized Physician Order Entry system in place since February.

The system has streamlined communication among doc-

tors, nurses and secretaries who no longer have to ask doctors to clarify their orders, which reduces the possibility of error, said Dr. John Wales, emergency department medical director.

"In the beginning, the nurses thought we didn't love them anymore. The unit secretaries thought we didn't love them anymore," Wales said, because doctors didn't have to communicate as much among themselves to get the work done efficiently.

The system allows doctors to access at bedside all of the hospital's medical information on a patient, alerting doctors to any allergy or potential adverse reaction the patient may suffer from a treatment. X-rays, test results and standardized treatment information for 40 to 50 ailments patients may suffer are available with a keystroke.

"It's much more a failsafe to prevent patients from getting unsafe doses or things they're allergic to," Wales said. "There's probably an improvement in turnaround time, probably fewer medical errors. It's a move toward a safer, more secure and more timely way to provide health care. It's

just what the doctor ordered."

Wales said the system has reduced the amount of time it takes to order and complete diagnostic tests by about 20 percent.

The system is the latest step in a move EJGH started four years ago to implement a system of electronic health records, replacing paper charts and records in line with a national and international trend. The emergency department is the first to use the system at the hospital by design because it's smaller than other medical departments there, said Wales.

He suspects doctors in other departments will use the system as well, depending on physician preference.

"It's always been on our radar. It kind of became imperative that we would use the system," he said. "There is a level of confidence that the team is working together. We've now taken a big step toward standardized health care."

Wales said patients also appreciate the technology.

"If you come in with this thing in your hand, (patients) are fairly mesmerized," he said. •

— Diana Chandler

Hertzak Laser Center

Key innovation: an outpatient surgical procedure designed to enhance vaginal muscle tone, strength and control

Where they're based: Slidell

Year introduced: 2007

Top executive: Dr. Peter Hertzak

Web site: www.hertzaklaser.com

In the summer of 2007, Dr. Peter Hertzak brought to Louisiana an innovative obstetrics and gynecology cosmetic procedure that is still unknown to many local women.

"Laser vaginal rejuvenation is an outpatient surgical procedure that restores a woman's intimate anatomy to the condition it was before the birth of her first child," said Hertzak, an OBGYN who maintains the Hertzak Laser Center in Slidell. "The procedure is heavily based on the old tried-and-true corrective surgical pelvic relaxation procedure."

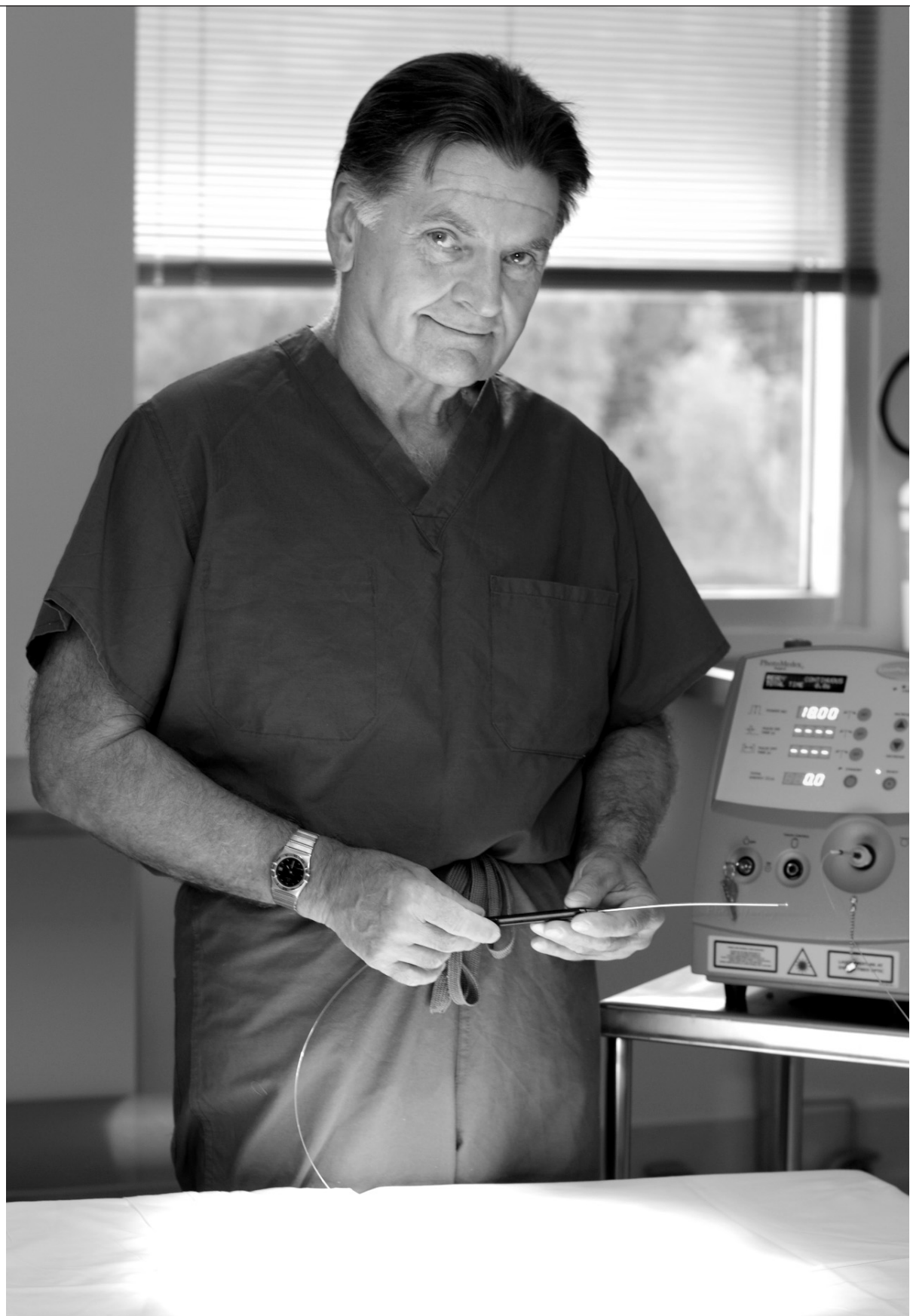
Vaginal relaxation occurs when a woman experiences stretching during vaginal childbirth.

"Every subsequent childbirth results in more stretching," Hertzak said.

In vaginal relaxation, the muscles are so relaxed that they have poor control, strength and tone, and the internal and external diameters increase. The result is a diminished sensual side of sexual gratification.

With 21st century technology, however, the rejuvenation process enhances the vaginal muscle tone, strength and control through outpatient laser surgery. Although Dr. David Louis Matlock of Los Angeles invented the process in the late 1990s, Hertzak has added his own innovations to the procedure, including an option for patients to correct bladder weakness while in surgery.

Throughout his 33 years of practice, he has focused on the latest advancements in gynecology and laser aesthetic medicine, including laser vaginal rejuvenation and breast augmentation through fat transfer.



Dr. Peter Hertzak, an obstetrician/gynecologist who runs the Hertzak Laser Center in Slidell, has added his own twists to an outpatient surgical procedure to enhance vaginal muscle tone, strength and control.

"I believe that women need to be empowered about the availability and options to correct problems they intimately feel and are aware of," he said. "(Vaginal relaxation) is a common problem, it's uncomfortable and there is an alternative."

Hertzak is a fellow of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery. He is also board certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology. •

— Amy Ferrara Smith



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

From left: Members of the Kaye Center for ultra rapid detoxification team include Dr. Ryan Rubin, Dr. Alan Kaye and Ed Runci.

Kaye Center for ultra rapid detox

Key innovation: a rapid detox method that clears all drugs from the system within 36 hours

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2008

Top executive: Dr. Alan David Kaye, medical director

Web site: www.kayerapiddetox.com

A New Orleans clinic is changing the entire process of detoxification and offering a ray of light for drug addicts.

For many, ridding the body of the drugs is one of the biggest challenges to getting clean. When users become physically dependent on their chemical addictions, withdrawal symptoms can last for weeks and send many scrambling back to the drug for relief.

Founded by and operated under the guidance of Dr. Alan David Kaye, the Kaye Clinic for ultra rapid detox has developed a process that eliminates the physical addiction to opiates in less than two days. It is the only clinic of its type in the country to be endorsed by a major hospital.

As head of anesthesiology at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center and chief of anesthesiology at University Hospital and Ochsner Medical Center-Kenner, Kaye developed a detoxification technique in 2000 that helps patients overcome drug withdrawal symptoms while they are under anesthesia.

The method clears the body of opiates and cleans the opiate receptors from the brain so there are no physical cravings for the drug when the patient wakes up.

Performed in the intensive care unit under the care of life support systems and medical personnel, the method has been proven to remove 100 percent of all drugs from the body and reports a 66 percent rate of drug abstinence after the process.

“Conventional detox basically has a 5 (percent) to 8 per-

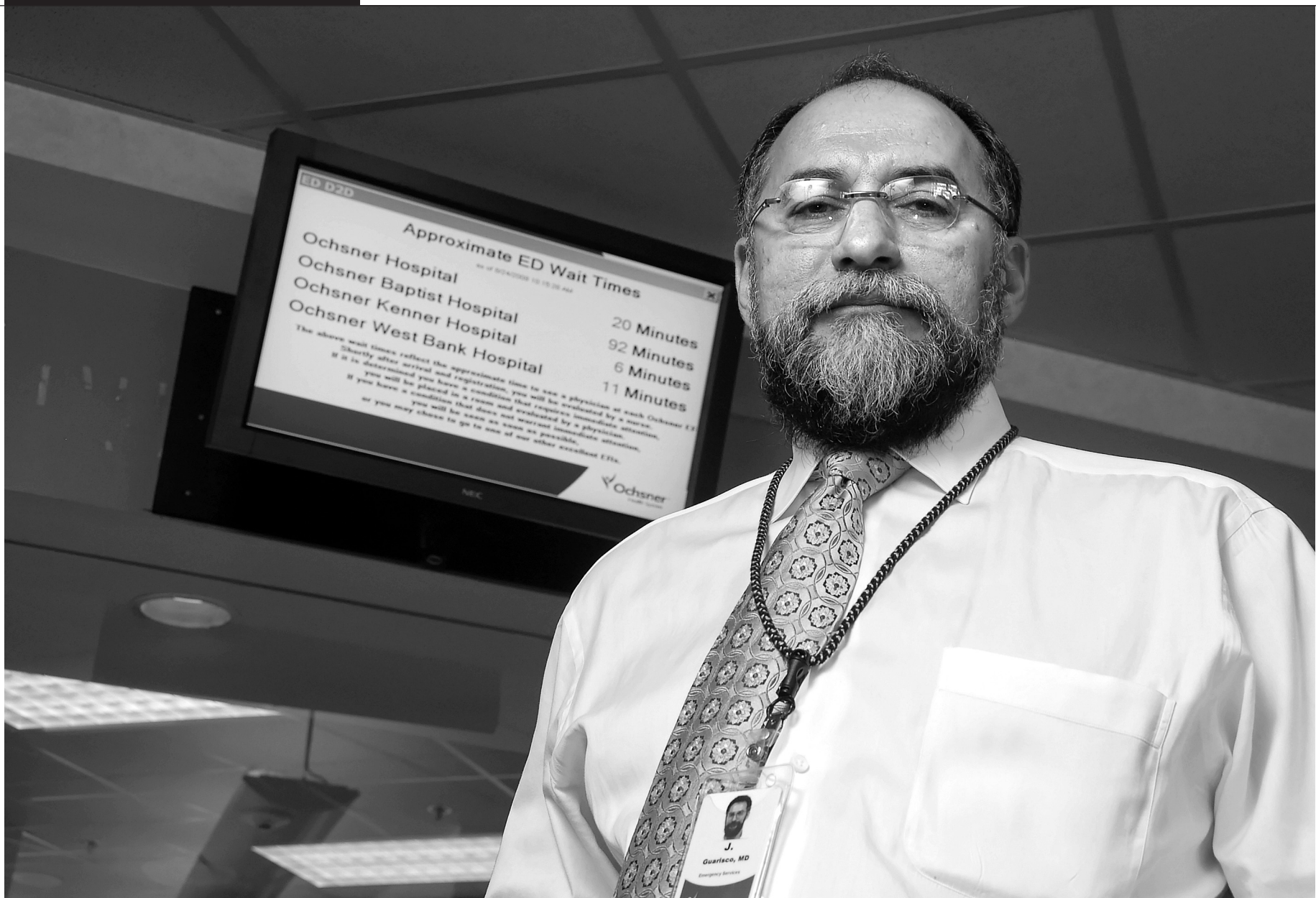
cent success rate, and the reason is that there are withdrawal symptoms. They are put under general anesthesia so they miss all the withdrawal because they are completely unconscious,” Kaye said.

Detoxification off certain drugs can be a dangerous and deadly process, but Kaye has maintained a 100 percent safety record on the hundreds of procedures he has performed since 2000.

Aside from street drugs such as heroin and opium, the Kaye Clinic detoxes patients from highly addictive prescription pain medications such as codeine, Demerol and Vicodin. Kaye said the clinic see patients from throughout the country, but he wants to continue to expand its presence.

“There are millions of people who are dependent on these drugs, and we don’t pass any judgment on why they may have started it. It is an epidemic, and our goal would be that this were done in every community throughout the world,” Kaye said. •

— Craig Guillot



Dr. Joseph Guarisco, chief of emergency services for Ochsner Health System, has helped create a system that posts emergency room wait times online to avoid overcrowding.

Online ER wait times

Ochsner Health System

Key innovation: a system allowing patients to see emergency room wait times online to determine which facility would be the most convenient

Where they're based: Jefferson

Year introduced: April 2009

Top executive: Dr. Joe Guarisco, Ochsner Health System chief of emergency services

Web site: www.ochsner.org

In a time when New Orleans is facing a deficit in health care facilities because of Hurricane Katrina and emergency rooms throughout the area are overburdened with

patients, Ochsner Health System has taken a step toward reducing patient stress by posting estimated wait times at www.ochsner.org.

"We're a very data rich institution," said Dr. Joe Guarisco, system chief of emergency services for Ochsner Health System. For years, Ochsner had estimated wait times available at its four New Orleans area hospitals. Now, it has found a way to make the information available to patients.

"The most troublesome issue for patients waiting in emergency departments is the wait time," Guarisco said. "The quicker we see patients, the faster we can discover potentially life-threatening diseases."

The first step was to put the wait times on plasma screens in the waiting room. The second step was putting the times online. An application to receive wait times on iPhones and

Blackberrys also became available in August.

The innovation has gained a following.

There have been about 10,000 hits a month on the wait-time link, which has become the second most popular link on Ochsner's Web site. Guarisco said there has been interest from hospitals throughout the country to replicate the system, which has led to Ochsner making presentations nationwide.

The system has also allowed the hospital to help its staff by divvying up the patient load by preventing any one ER from becoming overwhelmed with patients.

Ochsner plans to keep adding features to enhance the convenience factor for its patients. The next step will be to create a feature that allows patients to pre-register online before leaving home. •

— Fritz Esker

St. Charles Surgical Hospital

Key innovation: a breast reconstruction technique that avoids implants by using fat from the patient's body and leaves minimal scarring

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: January 2009

Top executives: Drs. Frank DellaCroce and Scott Sullivan, co-founders

Web site: www.scsch.com

Drs. Frank DellaCroce and Scott Sullivan have a niche practice for a widespread diagnosis, and they have brought that innovation to New Orleans.

The doctors, who met during their residency training at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, came up with an innovative surgical technique six years ago that preserves the female form in a nipple-sparing mastectomy procedure, avoids implants by using fat from the patient's own body and leaves minimal scarring. After recovery, the breast's size fluctuates along with a woman's normal weight fluctuation and improves in shape over time allowing for a more natural-looking reconstruction.

With four surgeons on board, St Charles Surgical Hospital has worked on about 300 patients since opening in February.

DellaCroce said about half their patients come from out of state and as far away as Australia, Canada, Israel and Germany.

"Many of them don't have this kind of procedure available to them, so they travel to us," DellaCroce said. "That in itself is kind of special to think of New Orleans as a hotbed for this innovative surgical technique."

In 2003, Sullivan and DellaCroce opened the Center for Restorative Breast Surgery on St. Charles Avenue. They offered breast cancer patients a range of services prior to and during the recovery period from support groups and a resource center to spa-style environment.

But the center was missing a hospital for surgeries, which were being performed at facilities throughout the New Orleans area.

So the duo opened the hospital adjacent to the center, providing a 60,000-square-foot facility that provides initial consultation through recovery for breast reconstructive surgery.

The combined campus has 17 luxury rooms, two high-end suites, seven operating rooms, a clinic atrium and lobby for the hospital. The hospital features luxury bath products,



St. Charles Surgical Hospital nurse Margaret Chastant chats with patient Mikeal Swift.

spa robes and its own chef.

"It feels like you're checking into a hotel instead of a hospital. There is a calming, relaxing and soothing effect from the paintings on the wall to the color of the walls to the decor, everything intended to make the patient and their family feel at ease as much as possible," Sullivan said.

The hospital was actually under development a year after the center opened on St. Charles Avenue, but Hurricane Katrina postponed plans.

"It has been a long journey, but a rewarding one as well," Sullivan said. •

— Tommy Santora

PHOTO BY FRANK AYAMAMI



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

From left: Dr. James Korndorffer Jr., Jennifer Calzada and Drs. Kevin Krane and Paul Primeaux test Tulane University School of Medicine's robotic patient in the school's new simulation center.

Simulation Center

Tulane University School of Medicine

Key innovation: medical simulation training center for medical students that uses responsive robotic patients

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: January 2009

Top executive: Dr. James Korndorffer Jr., medical director

Web site: <http://tulane.edu/som/sim/>

Doctors, nurses, technicians, first responders and medical students living and working in the New Orleans area now have access to hands-on medical training without the need for human patients.

Earlier this year, Tulane University School of Medicine opened a \$3 million, 14,000-square-foot medical simulation and team training center that offers medical practitioners on all levels the opportunity to learn and perfect the latest techniques and best practices for patient care and safety. The

center uses robotic patients that can simulate a wide variety of medical ailments.

"The facility was built to hospital standards," administrative director Jennifer Calzada said. "It includes an emergency room, an intensive care unit, an operating room and a labor and delivery suite. It's equipped to handle any situation and allows clients to practice and perfect techniques with no risk to human patients."

Calzada said all of the 147 life-sized robotic patients, which come in adult, toddler and infant sizes, look and feel like living, breathing humans.

"They move their eyes, they speak, they have a variable pulse rate, they even react to doses of medication," Calzada said. "A simulation can even be arranged where the robotic patient goes into cardiac arrest and expires."

Calzada said plans for the simulation center got started after Hurricane Katrina when Dr. Benjamin Sachs, dean of the medical school, joined the staff following a stint at Harvard. She said Harvard's medical school had enjoyed great success with a similar simulation center and Sachs

hoped to emulate that success at Tulane.

Calzada said early results have been promising.

"People come in and use the center on a daily basis, and we have bookings through next year," she said. "The unique thing about our facility is the emphasis on team training. We are helping health care professionals perfect their communications skills, which are critical in emergency and high stress situations."

According to training statistics through July 31, the simulation center has provided training to 623 medical students, 156 medical residents, 102 nurses and nursing students, 122 allied health professionals and 155 practicing physicians, many of whom are external to Tulane.

"The training at the simulation center is tailored to meet the clients' goals," said Calzada said. "We ask what their goals and objectives are, find out what they hope to learn and create training exercises to fit their needs. We give physicians the opportunity to practice procedures dozens or even hundreds of times before they ever involve their patients."•

— Robin Shannon



PHOTO BY FRANK AYAMAMI

From left: Touro Infirmary Diabetes Center patient Fannie Johnson joins team members Daphne Olivier, Deatrice Jeff, Pamela Butler and Valerie Burton.

Touro Infirmary Diabetes Center

Key innovation: rescheduling patient visits and classes, increasing client retention and helping control blood sugar levels

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 1994

Top executive: James Montgomery, Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives president

Web site: www.touro.com

Touro Infirmary's Diabetes Center has reduced its patients' health risks by revamping its education program and using the best practices available, said manager Pam Butler.

Four people staff the center, which opened in 1994 and serves more than 400 people annually on an outpatient basis.

Patients have to adhere to a diabetes education program enough to change how they eat, exercise and take medications, Butler said. Before Touro made changes, 60 percent of the center's patients had moved on before they'd finished a recommended, 10-hour education program.

"To address that problem, we changed our education schedule from two to four classes, made classes shorter and tested the program over four months," Butler said. "Good things happened as a result."

Patient retention doubled to more than three-fifths of all clients. Of the diabetics who completed the program by early 2009, 82 percent had reduced their average blood sugar.

"That result is clinically significant and exceeds the norm reported in the literature," Butler said. "It is associated with a greatly reduced risk of complications."

Diabetes treatment is measured with a blood test called A1c, which provides a snapshot of a patient's blood-sugar control over three months, she said. The Touro center tests

the patient levels at their first and last appointments. Patients attend four classes between those tests.

About 10 percent of Southeast Louisiana residents have diabetes, while about 20 percent have pre-diabetes symptoms and are at great risk of developing the disease, Butler said.

Insulin resistance sets the stage for diabetes' development and is often accompanied by obesity, high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol levels and heart disease, Butler said.

"We welcome all patients who come to us but would much rather prevent the disease than teach someone to manage it," she said. "Diabetes can be prevented, even in high-risk groups, by regular exercise and by maintaining a comfortable body weight."

New Orleans has much to offer diabetics trying to control their disease, she said, "since we're a walkable city with beautiful parks and plenty of fresh food is grown in south Louisiana."•

— Susan Buchanan



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Patient Mara Plessy works with Lynn Foto, patient care manager for Touro Infirmary's brain injury unit, in the hospital's Transitional Living Suite.

Transitional Living Suite

Touro Infirmary

Key innovation: a living suite that helps to train a brain injury patient's family regarding their care

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2009

Top executive: Jeanette Ray, vice president for rehabilitation and post-acute services

Web site: www.touro.com

Recovery from a head injury is a complicated, delicate process, one that often becomes even more challenging after the patient leaves the hospital.

"That patient may be reliant on his family for things like getting in and out of bed and the shower. He may even need help in the shower itself," said Jeanette Ray, vice president of rehabilitation and post-acute services at Touro Infirmary.

"But families often have a tendency to do more than they should and sometimes end up making the patient more dependent," Ray said.

The vast majority of brain injuries at Touro result from gunshot wounds, followed by people involved in motor vehicle accidents, she said.

Such patients typically undergo therapy for up to four weeks and require ongoing treatment and care even after their release.

Enter the hospital's Transitional Living Suite, which consists of a living room and kitchen that allows family members to live with the patient 24 hours a day and get a feel for what it means to do enough without doing too much.

Opened in April as part of a new 14-bed unit made up of private patient rooms, the Transitional Living Suite is unique given Touro's mission as an acute-care hospital.

"This sort of suite typically exists in a rehab hospital,"

Ray said. "But because Touro has one of the most active rehab programs in the country, it's appropriate to have something like this here."

Funded by private donations and the hospital's capital budget, the suite cost \$1.5 million and already has hosted eight families staying an average of four days.

"The suite underlines for the families the responsibility they have for what happens after the patient leaves the hospital," Ray said.

The facility sees patients from throughout the South, she said.

"If we just send them home upon their release, their family would have no idea about what to do or how to take care of them. But doing it this way, living with the patient for several days at a time, they can get a real feel through the therapist, the nursing staff and the social workers of how much the patient can do."•

— Garry Boulard



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Hal Roark, executive director of the Broadmoor Development Corp., left, and Capt. Ethan Frizzell, New Orleans area commander for The Salvation Army, review plans for a home that will be built as part of the Salvation Army's EnviRenew program.

EnviRenew

The Salvation Army of Greater New Orleans

Key innovation: a community-based disaster recovery initiative that focuses on green sustainability and neighborhood cohesiveness

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2009

Top executive: Ethan Frizzell, area commander captain

Web site: www.EnviRenew.com

In an effort to rebuild New Orleans neighborhoods, the Salvation Army has launched a community-based disaster recovery initiative to bring cohesiveness and sustainable building standards to flood-affected areas of the city.

"We recognize that New Orleans is a large area of small neighborhoods," said Ethan Frizzell, who moved to the city one year ago with his wife, Sue Frizzell, and children, Canaan and Hallie.

The initiative, EnviRenew, works with neighborhoods to increase green-standard homebuilding projects for owners who will become active members of the community. The Salvation Army has already jumpstarted the initiative in Broadmoor and Riverview because of their strong neighborhood associations and plans to rebuild.

EnviRenew officials hope to expand to five neighborhoods and build 25 homes in each.

"The argument is that if we were given housing options that have a lower occupancy cost, then the savings could be used to build better homes," said Frizzell, area commander captain for the Salvation Army.

Frizzell, whose most recent assignment was in Columbia, S.C., said he served in Biloxi, Miss., after Hurricane Katrina.

"I recognized quickly while in Biloxi that if we wanted to bring the cities back," he said, "we have to do it in the neighborhoods."

In addition to placing citizens in homes, EnviRenew leaders also ask neighborhood associations to identify the

types of professionals they feel would best suit their neighborhoods. Of particular interest to neighborhoods are first responders, such as firemen, policemen and teachers.

"It's brought a great deal of recognition to the fact that housing costs are still unaffordable for first responders," Frizzell said. "We are intentionally putting people in neighborhoods."

Residents in the chosen community categories are then invited to apply for grants to build homes the neighborhoods approve.

The program has reserved \$3 million to establish the largest solar power financing district in the country, which will enable first responders to return to their homes as soon as possible after a storm even if electrical service have not been restored.

"I'm very competitive," Frizzell said. "I want the neighborhoods to win. The (Salvation) Army is a significant believer in individual and community capacity."•

— Amy Ferrara Smith



From left: Alonzo Knox, Kathia Duran and Matthew Jones taste some of the fresh produce available at the Latino Farmers Cooperative's community market on Claiborne Avenue.

Latino Farmers Cooperative of Louisiana

Key innovation: microfarm that produces fruits and vegetables to sell at community markets

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2008

Top executive: Kathia Duran, executive director

Web site: www.latinofarmerscoop.org

In a blighted section of Central City, the Oretha Castle Haley Micro Farm thrives with fresh produce, chicken coops and an opportunity for socioeconomic success for the influx of Latino laborers aiding in the city's recovery.

The Latino Farmers Cooperative of Louisiana includes churches, universities and other nonprofit grass-roots

groups. Kathia Duran, a Latina New Orleans resident for 19 years, coordinates the effort.

Motivated by a desire to help a minority population whose language and culture few nonprofits understood, Duran began nearly two years ago meeting with others who supported her vision. She wanted to use vacant lots in the city to teach urban farming and marketing skills to Latino laborers who could grow healthy produce for themselves and become sustainable farmers.

Her first meeting at Good Shepherd Baptist Church in Metairie attracted 25 people. Realizing the challenge the group would face working just a few hours a week, Duran volunteered in February 2008 to work full time on the project, with few resources other than a commitment to serve and no office to call her own.

"You're motivated by the mission and the belief that you're doing good for the community," Duran said. "It's very, very rewarding because all the people I work with, they

acknowledge the need. The Latino community here as a people of color is a new thing."

The cooperative serves 85 low-income members, mostly Latinos, at its farm at 1410 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd., secured through a partnership with Parkway Partners. There, co-op members cultivate fruits and vegetables to eat and sell at community markets. The co-op has also built chicken coops to produce poultry this fall.

"Thanks to an army of volunteers, we have put in place a lot of activities with very little money," Duran said.

The cooperative meets and holds training classes in Central City at locations nonprofits provide at no cost.

"We hope in the next year to have funding for administrative offices and operating expenses," Duran said.

Future plans include creating a cow/goat share club for access to raw milk and expanding to include low-income Latino communities in eastern New Orleans. •

— Diana Chandler



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMAHI

New Orleans Video Access Center executive director Liz Dunnebacke has changed the nonprofit's mission to help train people to land jobs in the city's growing film industry.

New Orleans Video Access Center

Key innovation: providing economic background access to new technology and training for New Orleans' media industries

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 1972

Top executive: Liz Dunnebacke, executive director

Web site: www.novacvideo.org

When it was founded in 1972, the New Orleans Video Access Center's mission was to provide access to an emerging media technology. At the time, that technology was video.

Thirty-seven years later, video is easily accessible to everyone, but NOVAC continues its mission to provide easy and affordable access to emerging technologies for

New Orleans area residents.

Because of the constant change, NOVAC is always looking ahead for the next-best-thing to serve the community, said Liz Dunnebacke, executive director.

Hollywood productions began flocking to Louisiana after state legislators passed tax credits in 2002 to entice film crews to come to Louisiana. However, those productions often would bring crews from out of state, leaving local workers out in the cold.

In response, NOVAC began a film-crew training program for local workers so they could compete for the influx of film and TV production jobs. NOVAC is expanding its offerings to not just include film and TV classes, but also other forms of creative media such as animation, graphic design and podcasting in addition to the film and TV classes that cover screenwriting, editing, lighting and camera work.

NOVAC's classes allow students to receive training for a specific skill set without having to spend tens of thou-

sands of dollars on a two- or four-year program. Classes are held on evenings and weekends, making it easier for working professionals, and NOVAC also has a portable instruction lab.

NOVAC has no plans to rest on its laurels.

This fall, it will partner with Tulane University's communications department on a community needs assessment to determine what forms of media the community wants access to the most.

NOVAC's 48-Hour Film School will return in the spring, giving aspiring filmmakers a weekend-long crash course in making short films.

Dunnebacke also hopes to apply for grants and government programs that will make more financial aid and scholarships available to students.

"The growth of these businesses are what ensure a truly indigenous industry in New Orleans," Dunnebacke said. •

— Fritz Esker



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

From left: Jessica Venegas, Zack Rosenburg, Liz McCartney and Drue Banta take a break from rebuilding a home in St. Bernard Parish.

The St. Bernard Project

Key innovation: the organization can build an average size home in 12 weeks for about \$15,000 using mainly volunteer labor

Where they're based: Chalmette

Year introduced: March 2006

Top executive: Liz McCartney and Zack Rosenburg, founders

Web site: www.stbernardproject.org

When Zack Rosenburg and Liz McCartney arrived in Chalmette from Washington, D.C., they didn't know anything about the tight-knit community with the neat brick homes, schools and churches that had existed before Aug. 29, 2005. But they knew they wanted to help out in some

way. What they wound up doing was much more.

They created The St. Bernard Project, a nonprofit that has helped St. Bernard Parish residents rebuild their decimated homes, and by extension, their lives.

"Our goal is to solve Katrina-related housing and mental health issues," Rosenburg said. "We focus mainly on seniors, the disabled and families. We see a problem and ask, 'What is the barrier?' Then we attack the barriers."

The organization keeps records of everything — which homes are being worked on, who is working on them, how far along in the process they are and what supplies are needed. The group has acquired new software to track the rebuilding process from beginning to end.

"From the moment we receive an application to rebuild to the day the family moves back into their home is a 204-step process," McCartney said as she scrolled through each step on her laptop.

A program that began in February is the Center for Wellness and Mental Health, where members of Louisiana State University's department of psychiatry work with residents.

Coming soon is the Good Work Good Pay program, which will help veterans and local residents find work by partnering with trade unions. A third program in the works is the Fair Rate Construction Plan, which will help people who can afford it find a reliable contractor to rebuild their home at a fair price.

"St. Bernard has true family values," Rosenburg said. "People want to rebuild, raise their family and earn a living."

McCartney said she was more cynical before coming to the area.

"Now I realize that people do care, and there is a lot of generosity. I realize that life comes at you, and I have become more open-minded."•

— Lisa Bacques

Body Evolution

Key innovation: online body assessment tool that helps people understand their body image

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2009

Top executive: Tom Fischmann, CEO

Web site: www.thebodyimageproject.com (still in development)

Ever since mirrors were invented, men and women alike have struggled with issues of self image when it comes to their bodies. Diet and exercise can often dramatically change one's body, but for some, self-perception plays more of a role than reality.

Body Evolution, an online body image assessment tool, addresses the problems that more than 90 percent of people who attempt a diet ultimately fail.

CEO Tom Fischmann said Body Evolution's concept is derived from the work of Tiffany Stewart, a clinical psychologist at Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge. Stewart has performed studies of beauty disorders, obesity and individuality and has treated thousands of cases through a unique way to deliver body image education and awareness to those who needed it.

Fischmann, who has a background in interactive simulations, recently joined the company to help put the ideas into motion.

"Body Evolution is about getting more to the root of our perceptions, thoughts, feelings and ultimately our behavior as it relates to food, eating, body nutrition and fitness," Fischmann said.

Through an online assessment of the individual, Body Evolution helps users visualize the gap between how they see their body and what is an ideal or acceptable body image. Based on the findings, there may be a number of body image interventions and methods to change how users view themselves. Interactive programs will then help the users develop new skills and change the perceptions on their own bodies.

Combined with diet and exercise that actually change one's body, the program is designed to tackle the mental challenges that come with self-image and perception.

Fischmann said most weight loss programs focus on symptom relief, but Body Evolution addresses behaviors as they relate to food, eating, body, nutrition and fitness.

"It's not just information transfer; it's actual skill building and behavioral change that is the desired outcome.



PHOTO BY FRANK AYAMAMI

Body Evolution CEO Tom Fischmann is working on an online assessment tool to help users visualize the gap between how they see their body and what is an ideal or acceptable body image.

Once you understand why body image is important and how deep it goes, you can stand and assess your view of yourself," Fischmann said.

Body Evolution is still in development and in October, the company will launch a research site where it will post a sampling of what the content and experience will look like.

The company is testing the content in the consumer, institutional and clerical marketplaces and is expected to launch the full product in 2010. •

— Craig Guillot



PHOTO BY FRANK AYMANI

Neel Sus has started marketing his Elympus Wireless Medicine system to hospitals so doctors can review patient information bedside from a wireless device.

Elympus Wireless Medicine

Key innovation: review patient information from a cell phone or wireless device

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: 2006

Top executive: Neel Sus, founder and president

Web site: www.elympus.com

Treating patients can be a time consuming activity for doctors who typically need to get the patient's background information from a computer first. The doctor needs to wait for a computer to pull up the files, then transcribe the relevant information to a chart.

"We allow doctors to treat patients anytime, anywhere, from their cell phones," said Neel Sus, chief operating officer and founder of Elympus Wireless Medicine.

Elympus Wireless Medicine allows that information to be put on a doctor's BlackBerry or iPhone so the doctor can access it at all times.

The idea came to Dr. Edward Espinosa, CEO of Elympus, earlier this decade, when he noticed other businesses did not have the convoluted process hospitals do when obtaining information about patients. He wanted to be able to access pertinent information at all times.

"We wanted to develop that technology, make it user-friendly and do it in a way that's affordable to small- and medium-sized hospitals," Espinosa said.

That involved allowing for customization to meet each individual hospital's needs. The mobile technology also

eliminates the need for hospitals to rely on wireless hotspots for Internet access. Sus said Elympus is now ready for launch and is in the process of signing customers.

Sus and Espinosa are now looking to improve patient-to-doctor communication. They want to find ways for patients to communicate with doctors directly without doctors' privacy being invaded.

The format would be similar to Facebook, which allows users to send messages without necessarily knowing the other person's e-mail address or phone number.

While Elympus officials plan to develop a national client base, Sus and Espinosa started the company in New Orleans and plan on keeping it here.

"We think it's really important to help this health care system and keep the work force here," Sus said. •

— Fritz Esker



PHOTO COURTESY JON GUIDROZ

Jon Guidroz, director of project development for Free Flow Power Development, stretches out inside the form for a water turbine that will be planted on the floor of the Mississippi River to generate power.

Free Flow Power Corp.

Key innovation: placing turbines at the bottom of the Mississippi River to generate hydropower

Where they're based: Gloucester, Mass.

Year introduced: opened New Orleans office in January under the subsidiary Free Flow Power Development

Top executive: Daniel Irvin, president and CEO

Web site: free-flow-power.com

Free Flow Power Corp., a Gloucester, Mass.-based hydropower developer and technology company, is halfway through a five-year licensing process to use the Mississippi River as an energy source. The company has obtained preliminary federal permits to install 150,000 underwater turbine generators at 55 sites between New Orleans and St. Louis at a cost of \$3 billion.

The company cannot break ground on the turbines

until 2012 at the earliest, but several prototypes could be installed in the New Orleans area by the end of the year. The project would also be a first for the Federal Regulatory Commission, which has never issued a commercial license for an underwater turbine.

"We are trailblazing here, and every day is a step forward and our investment gets larger and deeper," said Jon Guidroz, director of project development for Free Flow Power Development, a subsidiary created in January in New Orleans to house the local research and testing office operations.

"It's an extensive timeline process in which a number of checkpoints need to be satisfied," he said. "Many have quit a quarter or halfway through, and no one has gone through all the steps. No one would engage in this kind of investment unless there was some guarantee for that license and belief in our process and product."

Plans call for the turbines to be installed on the riverbed where they would not be visible or interfere with shipping. The water current spins blades in turbines that activate a generator to produce electricity.

Guidroz said the process is being used in several oceans worldwide, but not in the United States. Of the 55 prospective turbine sites, 32 are in Louisiana with nine in the New Orleans area.

The Louisiana turbines could power on average 500,000 to 600,000 American homes a year, or two nuclear power plants' worth of production.

Guidroz said the company has no interest in becoming a utility. Two potential plans are being a developer and technology manufacturer that could partner with utilities that could sell the power, or teaming with a chemical manufacturing plant or refinery to provide it with electricity.

Guidroz said the company picked Louisiana for its subsidiary office because of the state's proximity to the Mississippi River and the base of marine workers who are familiar with placing energy equipment in deepwater environments.

"We are excited to be located in New Orleans and look to create possibly 1,000 jobs here once are licenses are issued," Guidroz said. •

— Tommy Santora

Global-E

Key innovation: a 100 percent electric car that can exceed 100 miles per gallon fuel equivalency

Where they're based: Mandeville

Year introduced: February 2008

Top executive: Carl Guichard, founder

Web site: www.TeamGlobal-E.com or www.Global-E.US

Carl Guichard grew up with a love for cars. And now that his company, Global-E is developing and refining a series of electric and hybrid vehicles that are “durable, long-lasting and environmentally friendly,” he’s even more revved up.

One of those vehicles is the Pulse, a four-passenger car that is a 100-percent electric plug-in. It takes four and a half hours to charge, can go 70 mph and meets all federal safety standards, Guichard said. It also has air-conditioning, power steering, power brakes, solar panels on the roof and eight feet of storage space.

While Global-E is moving into production with one model, the company is looking for venture capital to produce more cars.

“We will capture 3 (percent) to 4 percent of the market initially because the major car companies are over-expanded and are parts-centered. Since we don’t have their huge infrastructure, we can bring these super efficient vehicles to market faster.”

Guichard said the key is changing the consumer’s mindset.

“We are doing what Henry Ford did, making cars for the common man. In the event of an accident, the battery will shut off. No acid or fuel will be leaking on the ground.”

Guichard said a mechanic won’t be a necessity for basic repairs.

“This car doesn’t have 700 parts in areas where you can’t get your hands on them,” he said.

Global-E, whose home office is in Mandeville, is in the process of securing a site in south Louisiana, Guichard said, while another property is being prepared in Los Angeles. The company is also looking for space on the Gulf Coast to assemble the cars.

“We have 35 employees now and should have 150 employees by January or February. From there, we will expand to 500 during the next two years,” Guichard said. “In about five years, we should have 2,000 employees.”



PHOTO BY SHANNON DIECIE

Global-E founder Carl Guichard stands behind one of his electric concept cars that can exceed 100 miles per gallon fuel equivalency.

Global-E is participating in the Progressive Insurance Automotive X-Prize competition as part of its marketing strategy. Teams will compete for their share of a \$10 million prize. The winner, which will be revealed in 2010, will be the vehicle that wins a rigorous, long-distance stage competition and can get more than 100 miles per gallon.

Guichard, an aerospace engineer at the Stennis Space Center, participated with the X-Prize Foundation to help build the rules for the competition.

“We currently have three vehicles competing and should finish in the top five.”•

— Lisa Bacques



Koda network members include young professionals such as, front row from left, Joanna Curran, Kristen Sullivan, Lauren Card and Kristen Sullivan, and, back row from left, Cyril Celestine, Brett Bergeron and Tara Curtis.

Koda

Key innovation: a combined social networking and job listing site

Where they're based: New Orleans and San Francisco

Year introduced: 2009

Top executive: Jeff Berger, CEO

Web site: koda.us

Sites promoting social networking are usually good for just that, while companies posting job notices on the Web rarely offer anything more than just the most basic information.

To merge both worlds, Jeff Berger and Tony York have created Koda.us, a social recruiting site connecting talent with companies.

"When I was in school, I remember looking for jobs and

wondering where to turn," said Berger, who with York, majored in business at Tulane University. "Social networks are social, but they are not going to help you get a job. So we began to work on creating a platform that helps you express who you are while discovering, at the same time, the job opportunities that are out there."

Officially launched in May, Koda's first round of funding has proved promising. In less than four months it has secured about \$3 million in start-up capital. At the same time, Koda has formed relationships with more than 400 corporations, private businesses and nonprofits.

"The idea is to change the way that people with roughly zero to five years of experience connect with companies to find jobs," Berger said.

The site focuses on the entry- to mid-level job market.

"It's really gotten steam in the last few weeks, with about 125 companies joining," Berger said. "At the same time, individuals are signing up, and they are a necessary piece of the puzzle."

Because many young job-seekers are not always certain about the type of company they want to work for, viewing advertised positions on traditional job-posting sites is sometimes regarded as a limiting experience because the posting usually says little about the company itself.

Koda allows visitors to network with representatives from the company in conversations designed to give the potential employer and employee a chance to know each other better.

Pulling up-to-date listings from employers' Web sites, Koda is also designed to provide postings and information on thousands of job openings throughout the country.

Koda was conceived in New Orleans and has an office in the city.

"But because some of the funding we have received was in San Francisco and the outsource partners we are using for Web development were also there, we have decided to make that city our headquarters," Berger said. •

— Garry Boulard

KooVoom

Key innovation: working to establish an office in New Orleans for an existing, global online lottery that runs 17,000 games per day

Where they're based: Antigua, Barbuda, Connecticut, Florida and New York

Year introduced: 2007 (expected to launch in Japan and South Korea in 2010)

Top executive: William Frost, chairman

KooVoom Inc., an online gaming group based in the Cayman Islands, hopes to establish a sizable production and technology presence in New Orleans soon, company chairman William Frost said. The firm runs a proprietary electronic program for lotteries played mainly in Asia and South America.

Online gaming is illegal in the United States, but the industry is watching a bill sponsored by Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., that could make it lawful soon. Frank said in July that support for his legislation was growing and he predicted Congress will approve it next year.

If that bill passes, KooVoom intends to be the first company to apply for a U.S. gaming license, Frost said. And if KooVoom obtains a permit, it may eventually need more than 100 employees in New Orleans for production of televised lottery drawings, technology work and call centers, he said.

"We have 17,000 lottery drawings a day, with the larger drawings being televised."

KooVoom expects to set up shop initially in pre-structured space in New Orleans but, as its staff grows, could eventually refurbish its own building, Frost said.

"We'll have various backup facilities to ensure proper latency," or transmission of data, he said.

KooVoom is negotiating with the state's Department of Economic Development for digital-media tax credits and has sought assistance from Greater New Orleans Inc., which created the city's Digital Industry Alliance last year.

Frost likens KooVoom's interest in Louisiana to that of Electronic Arts, or EA, the video-game manufacturer that last year said it would locate a sports software center in Baton Rouge using state tax credits.

GNO Inc. and New Orleans officials are trying to diversify the local economy by encouraging technology groups



Depending on the outcome of a bill in Congress, KooVoom chairman William Frost hopes to establish an office in New Orleans to support an existing, global online lottery that runs 17,000 games per day.

and start-ups to locate in the city and by opening centers to house those firms.

Meanwhile, KooVoom is allocating a significant portion of its revenue to an international charitable entity called Silent Partner, which will focus on several needy causes, including post-Katrina rebuilding, Frost said.

A 2006 law prohibits U.S. financial institutions from taking credit card payments, electronic transfers or checks to settle online wagers. And even before 2006, the U.S. Justice Department viewed Internet gambling as illegal. Meanwhile, gaming sites have prospered overseas to become multibillion-dollar business worldwide. •

— Susan Buchanan

Limb regeneration Tulane University

Key innovation: studying how salamanders naturally regenerate limbs and trying to change the way humans generate scar tissue after an injury

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: in development

Top executive: Ken Muneoka, John and Mary Wright Ebaugh chairman in science and engineering at Tulane University

Man's quest to conquer the mysteries of the human anatomy isn't a new concept, and that search continues with researchers at Tulane University studying the regenerative properties of human tissue.

Biology professor Ken Muneoka is working with a team of scientists from the University of California at Irvine and the University of Kentucky to change the way humans generate scar tissue in a typical wound-healing process.

"I think we're at a point now with the human genome project completed, the cloning work that's been going on and the stem cell research that has been going on, that it's within our grasp to regenerate complex structures as in animals that normally regenerate," Muneoka said.

Muneoka's collaborators study the complex genetics of salamanders that naturally regenerate limbs, while he studies the dynamics of digit regeneration in mice.

"Part of this project is the collaboration I have with a couple of other labs that work on amphibians. Their job is to develop that blueprint, and my part is to apply that."

The mice serve as a model for humans.

But there are certain genes and proteins that must be activated for the plan to work, and that's what Muneoka and his team seek to implement in human life. The long-term goal is the actual regeneration of lost limbs, but that may not materialize until the next few decades.



Tulane University graduate student Jennifer Simkin examines specimens for limb regeneration studies with biology professor Ken Muneoka.

"It's very much down the road," Muneoka said, "But that's the vision in trying to uncover how to get to the self-potential, which is the tissue's potential to regenerate. This is a first step in that direction."

The Department of Defense has already devoted \$6.25 million to the project, which Muneoka says would bring notoriety to the city. •

— John Breerwood



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Thriv Natural Performance

Key innovation: athletic apparel made from a bamboo fabric

Where they're based: New Orleans

Year introduced: company was founded in 2008, and product goes to market in October

Top executive: Todd Andrews, president

Web site: www.thrivnp.com

Clothing is an important component for those who work out on a regular basis. Jumping into the multi-billion athletic apparel market, New Orleans-based Thriv Natural Performance has created a breathable, anti-microbial fabric that offers ultraviolet ray protection and wicks away moisture.

Thriv was born from Andrews Sport Co., an athletic clothing manufacturer in business for more than 13 years. Branching out from its current lines, the company was looking to capitalize on the growing market for hi-tech synthetic sports apparel to compete against companies such as Under Armour, Nike and Reebok.

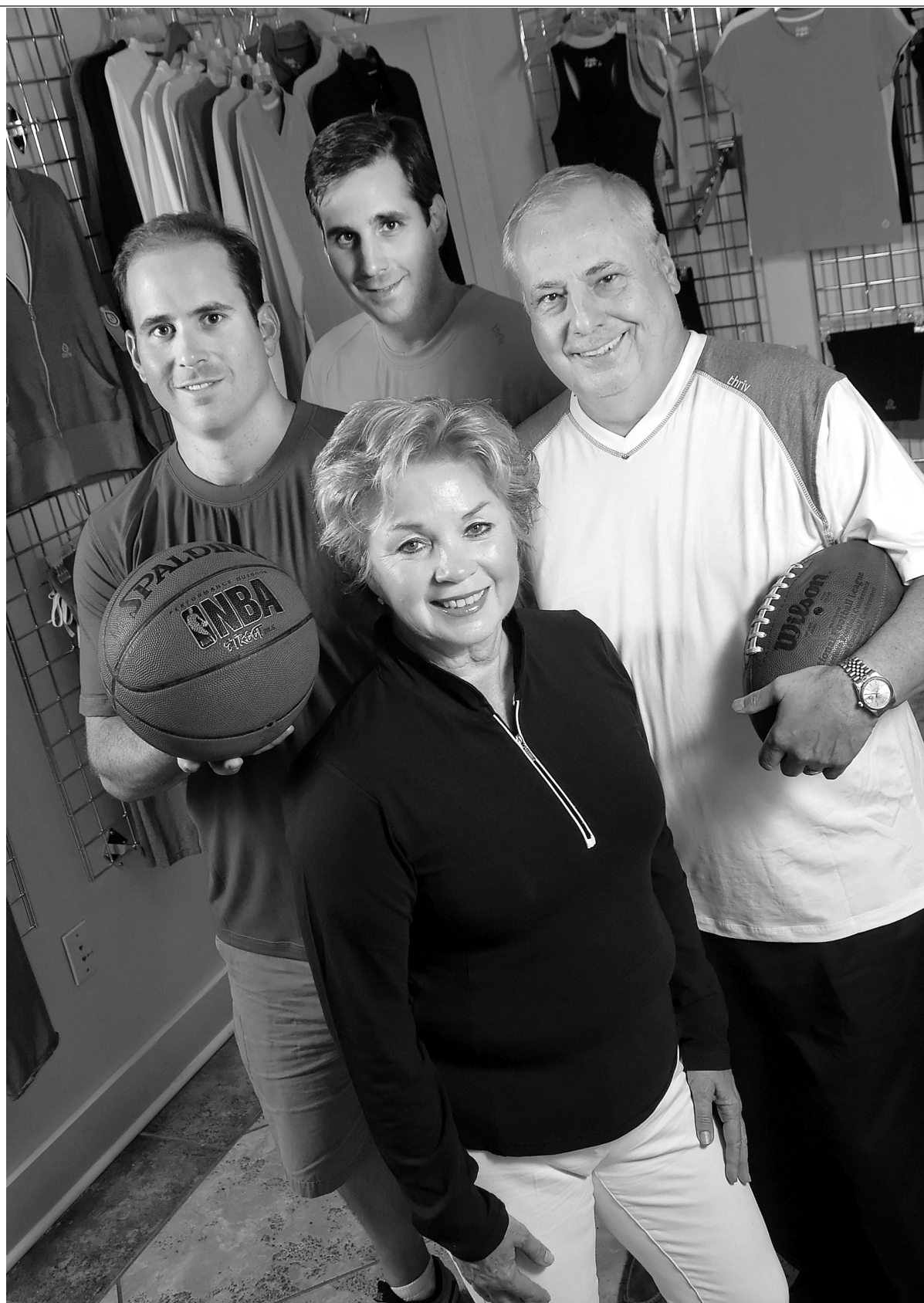
Chafing is a frequent complaint from endurance athletes when it comes to their clothing, while others say their high-tech garments retain smells no matter how much they wash them.

Thriv President Todd Andrews said two years of research and development at factories in India led them to a unique material made from bamboo and cotton that offers all the benefits in one fabric.

"It's as comfortable as silk, performs as well as the synthetics and we realized it had tremendous application for the athletic apparel market," Andrews said. "It has all the characteristics of polyester but is a lot more comfortable. We call it workout cashmere."

Some of the first prototypes were given to the strength and conditioning coach for the New Orleans Hornets. Thriv now has a patent pending on the process of the fabric it calls Bamco.

The products will be available in 50 Sports Authority locations throughout the country by October and will include 14 women's styles and 12 men's styles in multiple colors.



Clockwise from left: Scott Andrews, Todd Andrews, Al Andrews and Cindy Andrews show off Thriv Natural Performance's athletic apparel made from a bamboo fabric.

With most similar products priced between \$24 and \$55, Thriv is aiming to compete with brands such as Nike and Under Armour.

Made from a renewable resource, Thriv's product line is also eco-friendly, a characteristic Andrews plans to use in marketing.

"It's much easier on the environment than polyester, which is a petroleum-based product. We're using bamboo, which is grown organically without pesticides."•

— Craig Guillot



2010 Editorial Calendar

Space Reservation Deadline: Two weeks prior to issue date Camera-Ready Art Deadline: One week prior to issue date

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