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2012

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Northshore President

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Published by the NOPG LLC  
 3445 North Causeway Blvd.,  
 Suite 901, Metairie, La. 70002  
 504-834-9292; Fax: 504-832-3534

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# Introduction



**Christian Moises**  
News Editor

**H**elp people and their companies achieve financial success and soundness. It's as simple as that for the Money Makers Class of 2012, which recognizes the area's leading fiscal professionals based on their professional and community achievements.

In its second year, Money Makers recognizes the professionals whose fiscal work has sets the tone for their company and the region.

Readers submit nominations for Money Makers throughout the year, which are then reviewed by a selection committee. Honorees are then selected based on their achievements not only at their company but how that work impacts the region. Their efforts provide a model of professionalism to peers and show a willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty.

Their goal is, of course, to ensure their company is on sound financial footing and set a course for continuing to make

money. But at the end of the day, they want to make sure their clients and customers are just as successful.

Honorees are divided into four categories: banking, corporate, investments and professionals.

This year's nine banking honorees have not only established their institutions as solid businesses but have also worked to provide capital to the community where it's needed the most. They have pushed to make sure potential homebuyers have access to loans in an increasingly tight lending market and provide a growing number of entrepreneurs with the startup funds necessary to build the region's economy.

The nine corporate honorees, comprising chief financial officers, controllers and administrative managers, have implemented programs that continue to keep their companies profitable and are finding innovative ways to cut back on expenses and streamline the balance sheet.

All 20 of the investment honorees are concerned about one thing — their clients. They take calls at all hours of the night, some going so far as to perform what many would consider household chores. At the end of the day, their No. 1 concern is making sure their customer is set up for financial security.

The 11 financial professionals being honored have guided their companies and advised countless others to prosperity. Their skills have been involved in tasks ranging from some of the largest commercial transactions in the city to helping small businesses keep their books straight.

CityBusiness commends its Money Makers for the professional standards they follow as well as for the new ones they are setting.

Congratulations to the Money Makers of 2012. •

*News Editor Christian Moises can be reached at 293-9249 or christian.moises@nofig.com.*

CITYBUSINESS  
**MONEY  
MAKERS\$**

## Past Honorees

### 2011

#### BANKING

Michael Anderson  
Jon Atkinson  
Peyton Bush  
Katie Crosby  
Cami Crouchet  
Jeff Ehlinger  
Dean Haines  
Ra'Shaud Haines  
Steven Hemperley  
Alan Novotny  
Tom Sheldon  
Thomas Westervelt  
Guy Williams

#### CORPORATE

Troy Ashley  
Herbert Carter  
Douglas Downing

Jason Doyle  
Marc Eagan  
Kim Eller  
Sally Kingston  
Annette LeBlanc  
Tim Lessing  
Carlos Mickan  
Gregg Moreau  
Robert Penick  
Thomas Pennison  
Angelique Richardson  
Alan Thriffiley

#### INVESTMENT

Joseph Barreca  
Jude Boudreaux  
Damon Burns  
Mason Couvillon  
Gayle Dellinger

Eric Dunavant  
Robert Folse  
Brad Fortier  
Mark Heller  
Michael Johnson  
Mark Kline  
Suzanne Mestayer  
John Morgan  
James Spiro  
David Thomas

#### PROFESSIONAL

Ray Cornelius  
Natalie Jayroe  
Justin King  
Peter Ricchiuti  
Joey Richard  
Robert Watkins

Congratulations to  
ASI Federal Credit Union's CEO

*Mignon Tourné*



on being named a  
2012 New Orleans CityBusiness  
Money Maker Honoree.

*Your passion for promoting financial justice and economic empowerment and your steadfast commitment to the ASI vision and mission are an inspiration to all who know you.*

**THANK YOU!**

## Our Mission

*To strengthen the financial health of underserved communities through financial services and education.*

## Our Vision

*The elimination of poverty in all the communities we serve.*



# Brad Calloway

**Position:** First NBC Bank executive vice president

**Age:** 52

**Family:** wife, Laurie; daughters, Amy, 27, Susan, 25, Emily 18

**Education:** bachelor's degree in professional accountancy, Mississippi State University

When St. Thomas Community Health Center in New Orleans wanted to expand into a blighted building next door, Brad Calloway of First NBC Bank helped make it a reality.

He assisted the health care clinic in using a combination of Historic and New Market tax credits, government grants and private funding to come up with \$7 million for the acquisition and renovation of what would become an 11,000-square-foot treatment facility.

Calloway is working on closing two projects valued between \$8 million and \$13 million that will put fresh food in two low-income areas of New Orleans and generate entry-level jobs.

His work with New Market and Historic tax credits lending over the past few years has resulted in the creation of more than 800 jobs in the region. It has also led to business expansions and historical preservation of buildings with alternative uses in the community. Examples include the former Belleville Elementary School in New Orleans, which is now a 53-unit assisted living facility, and a six-story office building on Woodlawn Avenue in Algiers that is now a 100-bed nursing home.

"It's rewarding to see projects benefit the community and impact people's lives," said

Calloway, who joined First NBC Bank when it opened in May 2006. "Putting grocery stores in communities where people don't have access to fresh foods, for example, will have a huge impact on the people that can walk or ride bikes to the store."

Calloway is typically involved in 12 to 15 commercial small business or community development projects at a time. The biggest challenge, he said, is the time involved in each project — closing to construction — which easily can be 12 to 18 months.

"There's a lot of paperwork involved in these projects, and it's a long process in terms of projections and analysis," he said. "And oftentimes there are state and city funds involved for economic impact and we have to comply with how the city and/or state wants the funds used."

To stay on top of his game, Calloway works more than 60 hours a week. He also attends national workshops and invests time in reading the latest articles and journals on tax credits.

"I'm committed to what I do because I believe in how these projects benefit the people and our local communities," he said. "I also like what I do and seeing the results."•

— Kerry Duff



# Judy DeLuca

**Position:** New Orleans Firemen's Federal Credit Union CEO

**Age:** 54

**Education:** Benjamin Franklin High School graduate

**Family:** husband, Gary; children, Pamela, 35, Ronald, 34, Vincent, 20, Mary, 17

After serving 32 years at the New Orleans Firemen's Federal Credit Union, including 22 as CEO, Judy DeLuca said the business is "like one of her children."

If that's the case, she has raised it quite well.

Under DeLuca's leadership, the second oldest federal credit union in the United States has grown from 3,000 members and \$10 million in assets in 1990 to 21,000 members and \$145 million in assets.

DeLuca was CEO of Baptist Hospital Credit Union at age 20 before joining the New Orleans Firemen's FCU as a manager in 1980 when the institution had three employees — herself and two retired firemen — and just \$3 million in assets.

"I just kind of got in the industry and taught myself what I didn't know along the way, working toward a certification and joining as many industry groups as I can to learn from other credit union leaders," said DeLuca, who earned her Certified Credit Union Executive designation from the University of Wisconsin in 1989.

Working under the "People Helping People" motto, DeLuca credits the start of NOFFCU's growth to the mid-1980s when it decided to open membership to more than just existing and retired firemen. Plans included targeting select

employee groups and underserved people in low-income designated areas. Membership now consists of about 50 percent firemen from municipal and volunteer fire departments throughout the state and about 10,000 members from 300 diverse select employee groups, including the city of Slidell; car dealerships including Banner Ford, Ray Brandt and Lamarque; Deanie's Seafood; Kirschman's; Slidell Memorial Hospital; and The Times-Picayune.

DeLuca said many of the employee groups joined the credit union after Hurricane Katrina, when assets grew from \$75 million to \$135 million by the end of 2006.

"We became very active following Katrina because we saw an opportunity to increase our membership by going out into all our communities, meeting with people," she said.

In the community, DeLuca volunteers as a Pope John Paul II High School Jaguar Parent Club officer, and she serves on board of the Louisiana Credit Union League-East Chapter. She's also vice president of the Louisiana Chapter of the Credit Union Executive Society and the nominating committee and advisory board of the National Association of Federal Credit Unions. •

— Tommy Santora





BANKING

# Marlene Laboureur

**Position:** Business First Bank North Shore market president

**Age:** 57

**Family:** widow; children, Jacques, 31, Marianne, 27

**Education:** bachelor's degree in psychology, Agnes Scott College

For Marlene Laboureur, two of the most important qualities of a business banker are understanding the market and being dedicated to the advancement of the entire business community, regardless of whether it involves a client.

"It's very important that anybody in our role as a business bank touch, feel and be knowledgeable of all the businesses in the community we serve," said Laboureur, president of Business First Bank's North Shore market. "I'd rather somebody be successful than for me to be their banker."

Before taking her current position in 2011, Laboureur had spent her career with traditional banking structures that consisted of retail networks with multiple branches. First Business offered a new and intriguing business model: placing a single branch in each community to serve local businesses and nonprofits.

Under Laboureur's watch, the bank has providing financing for the expansion of a local hospital and a neuroscience center.

"We have somebody else in the entertainment business that we helped start, and they are going gangbusters," she said, declining to name the client. "And all of that was done within the last 18 months. It translates into jobs and opportunities in the community."

As a self-described "entrepreneur junkie," Laboureur said she has tremendous respect for entrepreneurs in the community, including the "guts and energy and hard work" it takes to make a business successful.

Laboureur's community involvement has included the Arc of Greater New Orleans. During her presidency, she helped implement its signature program, featuring an organic garden and a café that aims to provide clients with the skills to become more self-sufficient.

She also volunteers with Habitat for Humanity and supports work force development.

One of her notable volunteer efforts is mentoring young bankers, in which she brings on a new graduate or college senior for an internship at the bank each year. Two interns have completed the program so far.

"I found 15 years ago or so that we weren't attracting the next generation," Laboureur says, adding that she set out to understand why. Her conclusion was that banking leaders like her needed to do more.

"I'm very proud of having mentored what I consider very successful bankers — 10 or 12 of them that are outstanding, and far better bankers than I will ever be," Laboureur said. •

— Sonya Stinson



BANKING

# Christopher Maurer

**Position:** University of New Orleans Federal Credit Union CEO

**Age:** 41

**Family:** single

**Education:** bachelor's degree in finance and master's degree in business administration, University of New Orleans

Christopher Maurer's day-to-day priorities may vary, but he's always focused on his strategic plan to grow the University of New Orleans Federal Credit Union.

UNOFCU is a full-service financial institution with assets of more than \$22 million as of midyear. About 90 percent of its members are staff, faculty, students and alumni from the University of New Orleans.

Maurer has worked for the credit union 19 years, during which time he has expanded services to be more competitive with banks and community-chartered credit unions. Some of those new services include electronic statements, mobile banking and credit cards, which are the credit union's biggest area of loan growth since 2008 because they offer low rates and better terms than the banking industry.

He also supervised the credit union's certification as a Community Development Financial Institution, which allows it to provide additional services, such as special financing as an alternative to payday loans for low-income members.

"We understand the needs of students and teachers better than a commercial bank or community credit union that serves a broader base of

consumers," Maurer said. "We see our members and work with them every day, so we recognize the challenges they face financially."

Under Maurer's guidance, UNOFCU collaborates with the university on financial education events and seminars and offer classes on topics such as personal finance, budgeting and understanding credit reports. The credit union also works with the statewide nonprofit Louisiana JumpStart, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and the Federal Reserve to provide financial education to students and members.

To continue meeting the needs of the UNO community, Maurer developed a capital growth strategy that emphasized investing in higher yield assets with strict underwriting standards. As a result, the credit union's retained earnings increased from \$500,000 to \$1.1 million over five years, while assets increased by 15 percent.

He also executed a number of successful marketing strategies. One plan increased credit union membership from 2,200 to 4,500 members, and a social media campaign uses Facebook and Twitter to drive brand awareness among younger members. •

— Kerry Duff



# Alton McRee

**Position:** Fidelity Homestead Savings Bank president and CEO

**Age:** 57

**Family:** wife, Joan; children, Kristin, 30, Justin, 26; granddaughter, Kaitlyn, 6 months

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business, finance and banking, Mississippi State University; graduate school of banking, Louisiana State University

Alton McRee entered college as a highly recruited athlete to play Division I football as a wide receiver, with an eye on a career in the National Football League. But a hamstring tear served as a setback during his freshman year.

Even after recovering, "I'd lost speed," he said. "I was never going to be able to regain it."

It was a hard truth to accept at 18, McRee said, just as he was getting started.

"Things can happen in the blink of an eye to change a person's direction in life, and so I had to prepare myself for life after football," he said.

McRee redirected his focus to his studies, choosing a major and a summer job back home in Quitman, Miss., where he worked for a bank president. Over those summer breaks, he built a resume as a teller, then a loan officer and eventually, at age 29, head of a bank.

When Fidelity recruited him in early 2011, they got a CEO who was ready to take the century-old bank in a new direction.

He immediately put in place a mobile application that allowed consumers to make transactions and apply for loans.

"Mobile (access) is a critical part of banking," he said. "And banks make money primarily by making loans."

To that end, he developed a commercial and small business lending division responsible for bringing in more than just the residential mortgages that had sustained the bank for many years.

"We needed to diversify and broaden our customer base," McRee said, adding that some considered it a risky time to lend to companies and entrepreneurs.

But McRee has managed that by building a team that can find viable loan opportunities, scrutinize commercial loan requests, and underwrite and close loans.

His next move was to expand the role of the bank's branch managers so they could double as lenders at branch locations.

"I'm challenging people to become more engaged in various areas of responsibility," McRee said.

But not everyone has been on board with the changes.

"People liked the status quo," he said, and what makes him stand out in such a conservative culture happened on the gridiron many years ago.

"Life has taught me to be flexible and open-minded," he said. "And if you get the ball, you've got to do something with it."•

— Anne Berry



# Mignon Tourne

**Position:** ASI Federal Credit Union president and CEO

**Age:** 58

**Family:** life partner, Karen; dogs, Rosie, 4, Tank, 4

**Education:** bachelor's degree in political science, Southeastern Louisiana University

Mignon Tourne took over as president and CEO of ASI Federal Credit Union shortly after Hurricane Katrina. Although the credit union had lost branches, people and capital, she rebuilt the organization and its 200-member staff.

ASI now has \$290 million in assets and operates 14 branches with more than 75,000 members in the New Orleans area. About 60 percent of members live in low-income communities.

Tourne served the credit union for more than 20 years as a volunteer board official and five years as board president before becoming president and CEO. Since then, ASI's assets have grown from just less than \$10 million to more than \$250 million.

Under her leadership, the credit union also received certification from the U.S. Department of Treasury as a Community Development Financial Institution. To qualify for the certification, 60 percent of loans and deposits at the credit union have to be earmarked as low income.

"ASI has won full funding six of the last seven years, and as a result, over \$10 million has gone back into the community," Tourne said.

ASI has received \$2 million from the Treasury's Healthy Food Financing Initiative for the past two years to bring produce and fresh foods to areas such as the 9th Ward and Gentilly that have been

deprived of grocery options post-Katrina.

"This award is lending capital designated for food trucks, grocery stores, farmer's markets and food cooperatives," she said. "We do a lot of unique community financing, and we provide access to mainstream services. But we do it with focus of empowerment, affordable lending and character-based lending."

She said the credit union doesn't just look at credit scores when it comes to approving loans.

"We're interested in taking chances when no one else will," she said. "It's about people helping people make a positive impact on the community."

Another innovative service offered at ASI is loans through Kiva, a web-based microloan program that provides loans to small businesses. Since the program launched in 2011, ASI has handled 39 loans equaling \$342,500. As a result, 35 jobs were created and another 78 retained. Women-owned businesses accounted for 66 percent of the loans, 92 percent were low-income businesses and 89 percent are minority-owned companies.

ASI also refines payday loans.

"We get people out of predatory traps that are oftentimes for something as simple as an appliance," Tourne said. "Our mission is very social and about economic justice."•

— Kerry Duff



BANKING

# Mark Rosa

**Position:** Jefferson Financial Credit Union CEO

**Age:** 52

**Family:** wife, Gina

**Education:** bachelor's degree in economics, Southeastern Louisiana University; master's degree in economics and finance, University of New Orleans

Mark Rosa has had his credit union in expansion mode despite the credit crisis and the recession, and the strategy has paid off.

Since 2004, when Rosa took over as CEO of the Jefferson Financial Credit Union, the institution has grown from \$107 million in assets to \$280 million and from 18,000 members to 33,000. Its employee count has also increased from 45 to 115, and there are six new locations throughout the parish.

In 2007, Rosa requested and received the first residential common bond from the state for its chartered credit unions. The bond expanded the credit union's membership from the Jefferson Parish Public School System to all residents of Jefferson Parish.

In 2005, Rosa spearheaded a merger with the Housing Authority of New Orleans' credit union and its \$300,000 in assets when the institution suffered major damages from the levees failures during Hurricane Katrina. In 2009, he arranged an \$11 million merger with Ochsner's Foundation Federal Credit Union, and, in 2011, Rosa coordinated the merger of St. James Parish School Employees Federal Credit Union that included \$800,000 in assets and 3,500 members.

Rosa almost added another merger with Main Street Financial FCU of Baton Rouge and its \$96

million in assets, but members of the Baton Rouge credit union voted against the merger.

He has also taken the JFCU worldwide, initiating an affiliation between the institution and the World Council of Credit Unions, a global trade association and development agency. Through this affiliation, Rosa formed a partnership between JFCU and GESRO Credit Union in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana, where Rosa and GESRO's chief executive visit each other's credit unions to exchange information on operations and leadership training. The JFCU has invested about \$100,000 in GESRO to provide the credit union with capital to make loans to more than 750 people in the African fishing village.

Rosa teaches finance courses at the University of New Orleans and Tulane University's A.B. Freeman School of Business, where he helps students form the Burkenroad Reports. Rosa serves on the board of directors for Louisiana Corporate Credit Union, and, in 2011, was appointed to the Community Advisory Council of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

Rosa started his 28-year career in the credit union industry as CEO of Louisiana National Guard Credit Union before becoming CEO of the New Orleans Municipal Employee Credit Union. •

— Tommy Santora



BANKING

# Donald Washington

**Position:** Wells Fargo Bank financial analyst

**Age:** 28

**Family:** single

When a New Orleans restaurant company came to business banker Donald Washington Jr. for help with an expansion plan, he saw a chance to work with his favorite type of client.

"I always like helping businesses that have a plan to help someone else," said Washington, who was then a business banking manager for Capital One Bank in New Orleans.

Business partners Jeff Baron and Bart Bell already owned and operated two local pizzerias — one catering to the Uptown college crowd, the other serving downtown workers — through their company, Crescent Orange. They were looking for help to open a third location where they could train employees not only in making pizzas but also how to run a business.

Washington worked with Crescent Orange to acquire financing for its new venture, Pizzicare, which opened in September 2011 on Tulane Avenue. He also helped the company develop a financial literacy program for its employees — and potential entrepreneurs-in-waiting.

Washington, who started his new job Aug. 13 as a financial analyst in the wholesale banking division of Wells Fargo National Bank in Chicago, specialized in small business banking at Capital One, managing a portfolio of about 50 businesses with annual sales of up to \$3 million.

Many of his clients first came to the bank for business loans.

"I would use the opportunity of growing their business through our lending resources to get me in the door to talk in more detail about how we could make their operations more successful in a more holistic way," said Washington, adding that his role as a financial adviser often extended beyond business concerns. "We would discuss their personal finances, and I would help them finance college tuition or their first home, or pay off a loan that was secured by their personal property."

Washington was a member of the Capital One Community Corps Board, which partnered with the University of New Orleans Charter School Network to hold back-to-school fundraisers for uniforms and supplies. He also conducted seminars on financial literacy and for first-time homebuyers, in addition to those he presented to his Capital One business clients.

While not everyone would readily think of banking as a creative career field, in Washington's experience, it's been just that.

"I would always like to have a blank canvas and be able to create something from my imagination," he said. "Professionally, I now have the tools to take somebody's idea and make it (materialize)."

— Sonya Stinson



# Stephen Wessel

**Position:** Investar Bank New Orleans regional president

**Age:** 49

**Family:** wife, Dominique; sons, Nicholas, 16, Christopher, 14, Benjamin, 12

**Education:** bachelor's degree in finance, Loyola University

As a young banker, Stephen Wessel learned that every client is worthwhile, knowledge he eventually leveraged to land one of his most loyal customers.

The man was an investor who didn't trust bankers and had been shopping for a loan package. Someone suggested he contact Wessel, who agreed to tour the man's shopping center. That led to a look at the numerous homes the man was renovating as investments.

"I watched and listened," Wessel said, "and I thought, 'He cares about what he's doing.'"

During the meeting, Wessel discovered the man was milling his own wood to create custom crown moldings, baseboards and door trims for his investment properties.

"His character came through and I knew he'd pay the loan," Wessel said.

Though the client has since moved out of state, he continues to be Wessel's customer and friend.

"To have a strong and vibrant bank, you must grow loans and deposits," Wessel said, "and that's (a factor of) the relationships you have with people and businesses."

He cultivates loyalty among his employees as well, which became important when his last employer, Home Bank, bought Guaranty Savings Bank where he was president and

CEO. Some of Wessel's staff members were laid off in the transition, and those remaining were anxious about the change.

"Stay here with your customers," he said he told them. "Help them navigate through this transition."

Wessel also counseled and found help for those employees struggling with new workloads and ultimately kept the lending teams in place.

"Keeping the teams together was critical to maintaining our momentum when it came to making loans," Wessel said, "and (our city's branches) led the company in loan growth."

It was another personal connection that brought him to his current job, at a community bank led by John D'Angelo, a friend he has known since high school.

Even with his new post at Investar Bank, he plans to make time for volunteer projects, such as fundraising for the Cure JM Foundation, which seeks a cure for juvenile myositis, an autoimmune illness that's plagued his youngest son since he was a toddler.

"I've worked with many clients and managed many people, and I can't tell you how many of them have to deal with challenges in their (own) lives," he said. "I don't want to let them down." •

— Anne Berry



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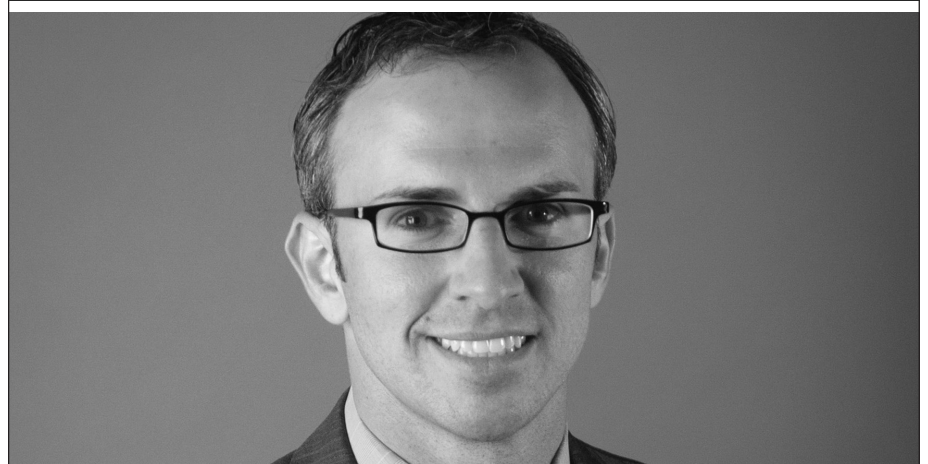
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# Alita Caparotta

**Position:** New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center vice president of finance and administration

**Age:** 44

**Family:** husband, Mike; children, Eva, 6, Olivia, 4, Sam, 4

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business, University of Alabama

The New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center is booking events, which is good news for Alita Caparotta, the financial expert in charge at the facility who has seen her share of ebb and flow in the convention industry over the past 15 years.

"It's a cyclical business, and we're constantly dependent on the economy," said Caparotta, vice president of finance and administration. "That means whether corporations are willing to spend their money for out-of-town conventions and if they can spend, then we need the city of New Orleans and our convention center ... to appeal to their needs.

Caparotta, who earned her CPA license in 1992, joined the convention center in 2000 as director of accounting. She rose to the controller/chief financial officer position in 2005 before being named vice president of finance and administration in 2008. She oversees the center's nearly \$436 million in assets and finances for roughly 45 employees.

As a former supervisor at the law firm Duplantier, Hrapmann, Hogan and Maher, the convention center originally recruited Caparotta after she served as the lead auditor for the facility, which was her client from 1998 to 2000.

"I wanted to make the transition from the

auditing and accounting world to the corporate side, and the hospitality industry is a huge part of New Orleans," Caparotta said. "So why not be a part of it?"

The convention center supports 25,000 jobs in the hospitality industry.

"That is a motivational tool that drives me every day," she said. "What we do here has a ripple effect on our tourism and our city's economy."

Caparotta is currently involved in the new, \$50 million ballroom scheduled to open in January, which will be christened "The Great Hall" in reference to the center's first use as the Great Hall during the 1984 World's Fair.

In the community, Caparotta volunteers with her children's school, St. Clement of Rome. She also has worked with the Young Leadership Council's Methodist Home project placing adolescent children in foster care and helping them through the transition.

Caparotta is also a member of the Society of Louisiana Certified Public Accountants. Her interest in accounting stems from her father, Eugene Gill, a former self-employed CPA.

"I always like being part of the financial solution," Caparotta said. •

— Tommy Santora



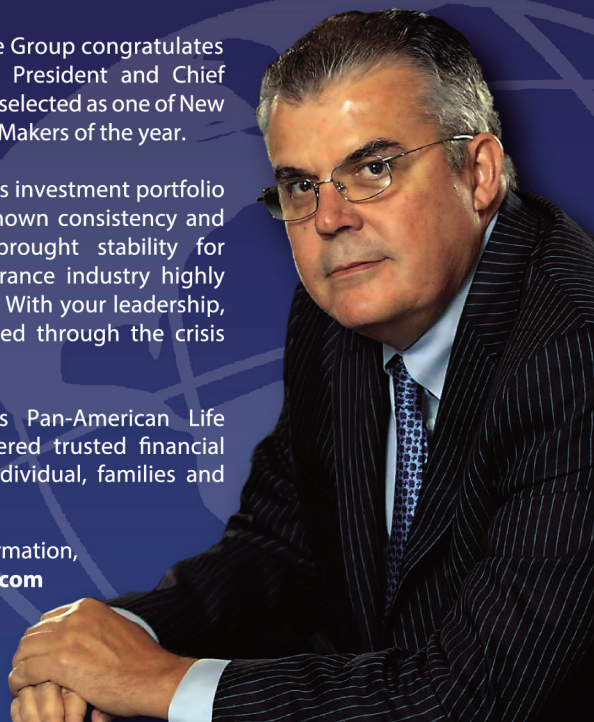
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# Lew Derbes

**Position:** Stewart Enterprises senior vice president, chief financial officer and treasurer

**Age:** 41

**Family:** wife Sheri; children, Lewis "Trey" Derbes III, 13, Molly, 12, Garrett, 9, Elliott, 6

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business administration, University of Notre Dame

Lewis Derbes has made the most of changing fiscal climates to save millions at Stewart Enterprises, the publicly traded death care company with locations in 27 states and Puerto Rico.

As senior vice president of finance in 2007, Derbes saw America's near financial collapse as a chance to retire company debt at a fraction of its cost.

"We borrowed \$250 million of money with this convertible debt issue back in June of 2007, and within ... 18 to 24 months, we had retired \$121 million of the issue, but at a discount of \$26.5 million," Derbes said. "There aren't many times in my career that you'll be able to borrow money and turn around in short order and pay it back at 75 to 80 cents on the dollar. ... It's probably one of my greatest achievements here at Stewart."

Derbes has continued to save the company money while overseeing several departments. Most recently, he shaved \$2 million in company costs through automation and technology.

"I tend to look at what I can do to use technology to our advantage, to let our people be as productive as possible and let the computers do the administrative processes for them," he said.

Derbes has overseen several large system implementations, inserting technology into an industry that he said has historically been a little bit slow to adapt to such changes. It has allowed Stewart to streamline processes, using automation to its advantage and creating back office savings opportunities for the company.

His success is driven by a desire to improve customer service through increased efficiency, Derbes said.

"For me, while my focus is certainly on the financial arena, it's also collaborating on the strategic vision of the company going forward," he said. "We can take care of that (administrative processes) with technology and allow (workers) to better serve our customers. That is really what drives me to help make them more efficient each day."

Derbes volunteers as treasurer of Boys Hope Girls Hope to improve opportunities for success among underprivileged, at-risk children. He has raised about \$200,000 for the organization by leading its golf tournament and donates time to manage the group's monthly finances and mentoring Boys Hope Girls Hope students.

— Diana Chandler



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New Orleans  
**CityBusiness**

# David Fried

**Position:** Blessey Marine Services Inc. controller and vice president of finance

**Age:** 50

**Family:** wife, Judy; children, Hailey, 14, David IV, 13

**Degree:** bachelor's degree in business administration, University of Texas at Austin

For David Fried, controller and vice president of finance at Blessey Marine Services Inc., success means getting things done on time with honesty and integrity.

Fried has been with Blessey Marine Services since 1992 and oversees its 15-member accounting department that works to save the company money and assimilate financial information for the company's upper management and decision makers.

In addition to 130 office workers, Fried juggles the finances for an inland tank barge and towing vessel fleet that includes 57 boats, 125 barges and 586 employees.

"We only had nine boats and 24 barges when I came onboard 20 years ago," Fried said. "And right now we have a number of boats and barges on order because we're continuously growing. It's a constant process to keep things operating efficiently in a growing company. We continuously monitor spending trends, look for budget variances and conduct investigations to see if things can be done a bet-

ter way to save the company money."

Fried, a New Orleans native, believes honesty and integrity are the keys to success in business and everyday life. Respecting people, listening to their ideas and respecting their opinions is also important for success, he said.

"I think the most important things in life are your name, what it represents and of course family and friends," he said. "You also want to be a good role model at work and for your kids and be a dependable friend."

Over the past three years, Fried has been a member of the St. Martin's Episcopal School alumni board, working fundraising events and participating in activities that bring alumni back to the campus to share their time and resources.

He also served 10 years as a board member and treasurer of the Community Day School, formerly known as the New Orleans Jewish Day School, and as a board member and treasurer of the Hillel Foundation of New Orleans. •

— Kerry Duff



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# James Harp

**Position:** Hornbeck Offshore Services Inc. executive vice president and chief financial officer

**Age:** 52

**Family:** wife, Pamela; children, Elizabeth, 21, Victoria, 16, Alex, 16, William, 11

**Education:** bachelor's degree in accounting, Louisiana State University

Jim Harp said ringing the bell at the New York Stock Exchange is the equivalent of winning a Super Bowl for a chief financial officer. Calling it the pinnacle of his career, the executive vice president and CFO of Hornbeck Offshore had the privilege of signaling the start of business on Wall Street in March 2004 when the company went public — and again in October 2005 when its stock value tripled.

Harp became Hornbeck's first CFO when he joined the company in January 2001. In 11 years, he has overseen the raising of nearly \$3 billion in capital and credit through a series of 22 securities transactions and bank financings involving high-yield bonds, convertible bonds, bank debt and common stock.

Prior to joining Hornbeck, Harp was an international CPA with Arthur Andersen for 15 years and a Wall Street investment banker for four years. He also served as treasurer and director of Seisco Inc., a privately held seismic brokerage company he co-founded with his father-in-law.

"It has been a great experience to be the CFO of a publicly traded company in a very dynamic and volatile industry that always keeps you being innovative," he said.

Hornbeck was one of Harp's marine-related

oil service company clients when he served as vice president in the corporate finance departments of RBC Dominion Securities Corp. and Jefferies & Co. Inc. Christian Vaccari, one of the original company founders and then-CEO, and Todd Hornbeck, the company's current CEO, had long pursued Harp and finally convinced him to take the job, Harp said.

"It was a great career opportunity for me and for our family, and it turned out to be a blessed day for me, all things considered," Harp said.

In the community, Harp has served as board president of Tchefuncta Club Estates and was a member of the leadership team that executed the strategic plan to acquire and develop a 169-acre tract of adjoining land in 2005. The development served as the catalyst for \$20 million in infrastructure improvements.

Harp has also served on the board and as past president of the Louisiana chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation since 1982.

"I had a friend die at the age of 30 from cystic fibrosis, and I watched him live with it for 15 years," Harp said. "It's a cause near and dear to my heart. We are on the verge of finding a cure for the disease and saving a lot of people's lives."•

— Tommy Santora



# Beth Johnson

**Position:** F.H. Myers Construction Corp. controller

**Age:** 58

**Family:** husband, Bill; son, Martin, 31

One of Beth Johnson's first tasks when she arrived at F.H. Myers as controller in 2008 was to replace the construction firm's antiquated accounting software.

Under the old system, processing financial transactions and finding related documents was a tedious exercise. Take the handling of an invoice from a subcontractor or a materials supplier, for instance.

"In the previous scenario, it would get routed to three different people who would initial it," Johnson said. "My accounts payable clerk would cut the check, make copies of it and file it in a folder. If they ever needed to refer back to that invoice, they would have to go dig through the files and find it."

Within a year of arriving, Johnson had led a companywide system overhaul. Each invoice is now submitted, approved and stored online, where it's accessible with a few clicks.

"That may sound like a small thing in the big picture, but you cannot believe how much time that saves," she said.

Before joining F.H. Myers, Johnson spent 30 years in the commercial lending department at GMAC and four years as the controller at an auto dealership. While she says her own lack of experience in the construction industry made the job of integrating accounting software with construction project management "an interesting adventure," her new field wasn't entirely foreign to her.

Her father was in the construction business, as are her husband and son.

In addition to being controller of F.H. Myers, Johnson also is manager of human resources. She said each role requires a different mindset to perform well.

"In the accounting world, everything is so structured, and there's usually not a whole lot of flexibility," said Johnson, who took courses in accounting at a Dallas community college and at General Motors University. "There shouldn't be, because everything is black and white in accounting. In H.R., where you're dealing with people and processes and ideas, you have to take off that really strict, structured approach."

Johnson also manages F.H. Myers' donations to the United Way and its Christmas drive for the Volunteers of America Veterans Home. The community service project in which she has the most hands-on involvement is the firm's annual charity golf tournament to benefit St. Michael's Special School.

"On the day of the tournament ... I run the operation, from the standpoint of making sure all the money is collected and that I can come up with a final number right then and there that we write on the big check for the picture to be taken," Johnson said. •

— Sonya Stinson





## CORPORATE

# Mark Joslin

**Position:** Pool Corp. chief financial officer

**Age:** 53

**Family:** wife, Martha; children, Connor, 17, Lia, 15

**Education:** bachelor's degree in accounting, University of Illinois; master's degree in management, Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University

Mark Joslin has earned the nickname "Mr. Fix It" among the people he's worked with over the years.

He has gained a reputation for walking into a disorganized company, giving its operations a makeover and transforming it into a well-oiled machine. That's why Pool Corp. recruited him to join the company as chief financial officer in 2004.

"Pool Corp. was functioning pretty well when I came in, but it was more about the longer term," Joslin said. "How do we continue the growth that we see for the company by putting longer-term initiatives and processes in place to achieve that growth?"

A publicly held distributor of pool equipment and landscape supplies, Covington-based Pool Corp. has seen its revenues increase steadily in the past three years, up 16 percent to \$1.79 billion in 2011 from \$1.54 billion.

Keeping the company's infrastructure lean is one of the key strategies Joslin has relied on to maintain Pool Corp.'s profitability since the market bottomed out. He reduced costs by \$40 million in two years by reining in expenses such as freight, travel, tax and office space leasing.

"By keeping focus on what we could control and making necessary adjustments, we were able

to position ourselves for more success going forward," Joslin said.

Pool Corp. recruited Joslin from Eastman Chemical Co. in Kingsport, Tenn., where he served as vice president of corporate development and corporate controller. When Joslin joined the chemical company a decade earlier, it was an entirely different operation and hadn't yet been acquired by Eastman, he said.

What was once Lawter International Inc., a \$250 million company, had operations in eight countries. Despite being publicly traded, Lawter didn't have computers, was not using email and relied on a payroll clerk to manage human resources. There also was minimal communication with investors, he said.

"They had significant opportunities for process improvements," Joslin said. "It was just a matter of identifying what those were and prioritizing what could be done."

Joslin brought in computers, hired staff to handle financial management and technology, and sought out analyst coverage, among other sweeping changes. He ultimately positioned the company for acquisition by Eastman, a \$6 billion operation 20 times the size of Lawter. •

— Autumn Cafiero Giusti



## CORPORATE

# Mary LaValla

**Position:** Poydras Home director of finance

**Age:** 41

**Family:** single; sons, Jason, 17, Nicholas, 14, Matthew, 10

**Education:** bachelor's degree in accounting, Our Lady of Holy Cross College

Nonprofits aren't in business to make money, but money is essential to achieving their goals. Just ask Mary LaValla, who as director of finance for Poydras Home oversaw a deal to raise \$15 million to expand the facility's mission of caring for the elderly.

Her work can be seen on the campus at 5453 Magazine St. where 33 new apartments, 11 of which are designed for assisted dementia care, are being built. It was a need that Poydras Home determined the current market wasn't meeting.

The project also includes renovations of the existing facility, but securing money for the expansion wasn't easy. LaValla had Poydras Home contribute a portion of its built-up equity in addition to securing \$9.4 million in commercial loans. She also worked with Crescent Growth Capital to secure \$5 million in New Markets Tax Credit equity.

"It was a very complicated financing structure and involved many months of study and re-workings, but we were finally able to get the deal closed and are now watching our new ... building go up," LaValla said.

She began by arranging to retire the home's long-term debt from a previous expansion and

raised money through teamwork, incorporating marketing and financial feasibility studies, careful cash management, financial projecting and forecasting.

"By going through a marketing study and financial feasibility study, we were able to determine the needs of the community that could be supported by Poydras Home," she said.

She teamed with Whitney Bank as the lender and tax credit investor, which saved the facility the expense of closing costs.

LaValla also turns to Poydras Home as a way to give back to the community. Working with its chaplain, she organizes a Thanksgiving basket giveaway and adopts families in need at Christmas.

"I am trying to teach my children to help others who are less fortunate," she said.

She has turned to Poydras Home staff to nurture her passion for health by volunteering as team captain of the home's American Heart Association walking and fundraising team.

LaValla also married her love for dance with her job by becoming a certified Zumba instructor, which she uses to teach residents and promote exercise. •

— Diana Chandler



# Christian Stuart

**Position:** Harrah's New Orleans Casino and Hotel vice president of finance

**Age:** 33

**Family:** wife, Jessica; son, Kingston, 2

**Education:** bachelor's degree in marketing and sales, Louisiana State University; master's degree in international business, Grenoble Graduate School of Business; master's degree in business administration, University of New Orleans

Christian Stuart's accomplishments are not just known in the New Orleans area; he has also made a name for himself on the international stage.

After joining the Harrah's New Orleans team in January 2005 and helping guide the company's properties in Gulfport and Biloxi, Miss., and New Orleans through the Hurricane Katrina recovery, Stuart took on a role with a newly acquired Harrah's subsidiary known as London Clubs International.

The New Orleans native had to move to England in 2007 and was there for three years. He developed a planning and analysis group for LCI and handled analysis for five clubs in London, five others in the United Kingdom, two in Cairo and one in South Africa.

In 2009, Stuart was promoted to club director of LCI's flagship property in London. Within two months, the company's earnings doubled and operations improved.

"You have to find new ways to relate to people and build a strong network," Stuart said. "That can sometimes be tough when you are abroad. You have to know how to network with people who come from different walks of life."

In July 2010, Stuart returned home to handle finances for Harrah's New Orleans Casino and

Hotel, where he helps manage the properties' clubs, bars and other ancillary services.

"I'm proud of the position we are in as a hotel and casino," he said. "We partner with neighboring restaurants, hotels and business to build a client base of visitors who may be spending just a weekend in the area."

Stuart said his role as vice president of finance is particularly challenging in the current economy, in which broad based gambling revenues are struggling. Despite the challenges, Stuart has been able to help maintain and grow annual revenues of more than \$325 million while securing more than 2,400 jobs.

"I am good at making sure we find the right talent and keep them on board," said Stuart, who serves on the board for economic development agency Greater New Orleans Inc. and is a member of the group's executive and finance committees.

He also is a sub-committee member of the Southeast Louisiana Super Region Committee and is a board member and finance committee member for the Louisiana Minority Supplier Diversity Council, where he helps minority businesses create mutually beneficial partnerships with larger corporations. •

— Robin Shannon



# Steven Toups

**Position:** Bottom Line Equipment chief operating officer and chief financial officer

**Age:** 44

**Family:** wife, Hali; children, Madelyn, 18, Ben, 15, Jason, 11

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business administration, Louisiana State University

While Steven Toups may still be studying construction machinery terminology, it's his knowledge and experience with financial consulting and strategic planning that's helping steer Bottom Line Equipment's balance sheet.

The senior-level professional and certified public accountant with more than 20 years of executive and financial consulting experience traded in running his own consulting firm, Novedo Group, in March to work as the chief operating officer and chief financial officer of the heavy construction equipment rental and sales business.

"I didn't know a lot about the construction industry, but I saw an entrepreneurial environment and a growing company with a solid foundation that had a niche in the construction industry, and I wanted to be a part of their success," said Toups, who for the previous five years advised more than 40 privately held, mid-market and small companies in growing their company and making them more financially sound.

Toups is helping oversee the company's move into its new headquarters in St. Rose, a \$4 million project that will increase its footprint from 2,500 to 28,000 square feet and provide new space for employees, a parts warehouse and covered areas for machinery repair and work.

Toups, a CPA since 1991, received the 2012

Louisiana Certified Public Accountants' Outstanding Continuing Professional Education Discussion Leader Award and the 2011 American Institute of Certified Public Accountants Outstanding Discussion Leaders Award.

In the past two years, he toured the United States as part of the professional and leadership development series for both organizations. Toups is also serving a two-year term as member-at-large on the LCPA Board of Directors.

"I thoroughly enjoy learning more and more about the accounting profession, how the profession interacts with the rest of the world, and then teaching that back to our young people," Toups said.

He is active with Our Lady of the Lake Church in Mandeville and the Krewe of Orpheus, where he was a former float lieutenant. He is a former treasurer for the Young Leadership Council, sat on the finance council for the United Way in Alexandria and served as finance chairman for a church in North Carolina, where he lived for two years before returning to New Orleans in 2003.

"Given my background, I find myself being named treasurer for a lot of different community organizations," Toups said. •

— Tommy Santora



INVESTMENT

# Leonard Alsfeld

**Position:** FBT Investments Inc. president and CEO

**Age:** 60

**Family:** wife, Cynthia; children, Meg, 29, Cassie, 27, Clark, 26, Mac, 25

**Education:** bachelor's degree in English and education, Providence College

From his office window on Poydras Street, Leonard Alsfeld can see the New Orleans Exchange Building, which houses Foto-Kem, one of the film industry's largest independent post-production companies — and one of many Alsfeld helped recruit to the area.

"In that same building is the production company Emmett-Furla, which just wrapped their eighth film here, investing more than \$320 million in our local economy in the last 16 months," said Alsfeld, who started FBT Film Credit, FBT Investments Inc. and FBT Advisors Inc., all subsidiaries of First Trust Corp. in New Orleans.

FBT Film Credit helps production companies secure tax credits and find gap financing. Its client base has grown to more than 1,000 companies, including 26 that have set up local offices.

Ashton Ryan, then-president of First Bank and Trust, tapped Alsfeld's decades of investment banking experience in 2000 to take advantage of new opportunities created by the repeal of the Glass-Steagal Act. With the creation of FBT Investments, Louisiana had its first bank-owned, full-service Wall Street brokerage firm.

"I felt confident that we could do it, even though in 2000 the market had hit its all-time

high," Alsfeld said. "I had that rather odd timing to come in at the very peak."

Alsfeld organized the Louisiana Association of Broker Dealers in 2003, which introduced and helped win passage of a bill requiring the state's four pension funds to conduct 10 percent of their equity and fixed-income trades through Louisiana-based firms.

Soon after moving to New Orleans in 1981 to open a branch of Sherwood Securities, Alsfeld co-founded A Child's Wish, a nonprofit helping terminally ill children. To date, it has granted more than 1,300 wishes to children and families throughout Louisiana.

Alsfeld, a former high school hockey coach, also founded the Crescent City Hockey League, started ice hockey teams at Tulane and Louisiana State universities, and helped organize the Southeastern Collegiate Hockey Conference.

One of his most gratifying community service endeavors was serving three years as a trustee of the Jefferson Parish Home Mortgage Authority.

"It was great to see people who might (otherwise) have been shut out of home ownership have an opportunity to get low-cost mortgages and financing on their down payment," Alsfeld said. •

— Sonya Stinson



INVESTMENT

# Mary Margaret Brewer

**Position:** Northwestern Mutual Financial Network financial representative

**Age:** 44

**Family:** husband, Craig; children, McAlister, 14, Sophie, 11, Tess, 10

**Education:** bachelor's degree in English, Rhodes College

One of the hardest parts of Mary Margaret Brewer's job is convincing people she's not simply out to sell them something.

As a financial representative for Northwestern Mutual Financial Network, Brewer has learned that her financial guidance can make it possible for a widow to provide for her family after her spouse dies.

"When you're standing there handing someone money after a funeral to help educate their children, it just changes you," she said.

What has set Brewer apart in the past couple of years is that in addition to serving her local clients, she has been traveling the country for large estate tax planning cases and to audit existing clients' insurance policies.

As a result, Brewer has become a one-woman economic engine for Northwestern's local office. Last year, she accounted for almost \$1 million in premiums.

Northwestern Mutual recruited Brewer 14 years ago when she was an estate tax paralegal for Jones Walker. She went from "surviving to thriving" a few years ago, when she started taking classes on how to structure policies more effectively, she said.

"I saw that there was a tremendous opportunity to go help people around the country," she said.

"And when I realized that my practice did not have to be confined to New Orleans or the state of Louisiana, that was a big turning point."

Brewer got the idea to go back and re-evaluate her existing national clients' policies to see if there was a more efficient way to do them. Among her clients is a department head and administrative board member at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. After Brewer did some of his planning work, he referred her to several doctors who needed insurance guidance.

Brewer's portfolio includes the obligatory heavy hitters, such as investors with hedge funds and family trusts. But that's just one end of the spectrum.

"I always tell people I represent everyone from the janitor to the managing partner," she said.

Honesty is critical, Brewer said. In some cases, that means breaking the news to a client that their policy is flawed and could collapse in five years if they do nothing. In other cases, it means telling the client they have the best policy possible and not to change a thing.

"I want my clients to trust me, and I can't get them to trust me if I don't tell them the truth," she said. •

— Autumn Cafiero Giusti



INVESTMENT

# David Capo

**Position:** Northwestern Mutual financial representative

**Age:** 56

**Family:** single; son, Michael, 35

**Education:** attended University of New Orleans

David Capo has made his mark on and off the clock by training future financial leaders. In his 25 years as a Northwestern Mutual agent, he has developed a program to recruit and train new agents and served as the local college unit director for six years.

In the latter capacity, Capo developed and managed the New Orleans office's college intern program, training students from area public and private schools, including Louisiana State, Tulane, Loyola, Xavier and Dillard universities, and the University of New Orleans.

Capo's practice focuses on business ownership, specializing in business continuation, employee benefits and investment services. For his efforts, he won Northwestern Mutual's Best Year Ever national award in 2010 and 2011.

Outside the office, he teaches financial literacy to children as a Junior Achievement of Greater New Orleans volunteer classroom leader.

"My energy and passion for young people continue to motivate my volunteerism and my success in my private practice," Capo said. "Whether it be teaching young students in

local schools about the basics of finance, developing and mentoring young professionals in the financial services industry or working with businesses in and around the New Orleans area, my desire to educate and mentor have been the driving force throughout my career."

Northwestern Mutual recognized Capo with its community service award in 2006 and 2011, which includes a \$10,000 grant to the nonprofit of the honoree's choice. Capo gave the money to Junior Achievement both years.

As of this year, Capo has devoted nearly 2,000 classroom hours to financial literacy education, reaching nearly 9,000 children, he said.

"This accomplishment alone is more than any other volunteer in the history of Junior Achievement," Capo said. "I believe in teaching children the basics of finance at a young age and instilling in them a drive to succeed and excel."

Capo was one of less than 100 volunteers worldwide to receive the Junior Achievement Bronze Award in 2007 and one of fewer than 50 in the world to receive the nonprofit's Silver Award in 2011 for his outreach. •

— Diana Chandler



INVESTMENT

# Don Celestin

**Position:** Morgan Stanley Smith Barney senior vice president

**Age:** 50

**Family:** wife, Toni; sons, Canyon, 9, Stone, 6

**Education:** bachelor's degree in construction engineering, Louisiana State University

Although the economy has been a struggle recently for those looking to stabilize their financial future, Don Celestin of Morgan Stanley Smith Barney has been able to grow his client's assets through improved communication.

"The low-end interest rates we have seen lately can be a real strain on people's retirement plans," Celestin said, referring to low yields on certificates of deposit. "But when you concentrate more on the clients' needs and get more from them, you can point them in a better direction."

He said his success comes from forging long-term relationships with clients and their families.

"You have to find out who they are," Celestin said. "You need to find out where their risks are in life, but it isn't always that simple because new challenges and setbacks can crop up every day of the week."

Celestin and his team of five manage

accounts for between 250 and 300 clients who collectively have more than \$400 million in retirement, personal and business accounts, and savings for education.

Although it has been more than seven years since the catastrophe, Celestin said Hurricane Katrina and the levee failures provided a wake-up call for residents who had not considered serious financial planning — and served as a boon for his business.

"People took serious stock in how much debt they had and what they needed to do to move on it," he said. "People became more accountable for themselves because they came to the realization that known guarantees like Social Security are not as secure as they were."

When he's not planning his clients' futures, Celestin, an avid sports fan, coaches his two sons, Canyon and Celestin, in baseball, basketball and soccer. •

— Robin Shannon



INVESTMENT

# Jack Dardis

**Position:** Dardis Couvillon & Associates chairman

**Age:** 70

**Family:** wife, Anne; children, Anne-Marie, 44, Mary Kay, 43, Jay, 41, Bill, 40, Suzie, 39, Beth, 36, Jeanne, 35, Steve, 33, Lynne, 32, Katie, 29

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

When Jack Dardis hears a client say, "What do I do now?" he knows they received bad advice from a competitor in the investment industry. He also knows it will be challenging to resolve.

"When I hear someone say that, I know they've been sold a high-commission investment product that's not in their best interest," Dardis said. "I'm not knocking the competition, but it's hard to believe that professionals treat people that way. ... My success is based on meeting client needs and presenting solutions in a clear and honest manner."

Dardis is chairman of Dardis Couvillon and Associates, a 10-person firm that focuses on financial and estate planning for individuals and business owners. The company was founded in 1987 and became a branch of NEXT Financial Group Inc. in 2006.

Dardis has been working in the investments industry for more than two decades, specializing in creating financial and estate plans based on client goals and objectives that often include retirement planning, education for children and grandchildren, buy-sell agree-

ments for business owners, charitable intentions and miscellaneous needs.

"I provide clients with the education and ability to acquire wealth, grow it, use it, conserve it and pass it on to the next generation," he said. "If clients have the proper plan and follow it, they will be successful."

Dardis said his biggest challenges today are getting clients to take risks, diversify their investments and understand how federal budget issues can affect them. Industry regulation changes and constraints are also making investment strategies more challenging.

"I spend a lot of time today explaining the parameters to people because they're worried about reaching retirement and not having enough money," he said. "Rules on buying and selling stock have also changed. We used to be able to buy and sell stock and that was the end of it. Now we have to ... document everything for each client. ... The bad thing is it still doesn't mean someone is selling the right product to the client."•

— Kerry Duff



INVESTMENT

# Emmett Dupas

**Position:** Northwestern Mutual wealth management adviser

**Age:** 42

**Education:** attended University of New Orleans

**Family:** wife, Jennifer; sons, Jeremy, 24, Ethan, 10

The characters Charlie Sheen and Michael Douglas played in the 1987 movie "Wall Street" had a big influence on what Emmett Dupas III wanted to do with his life.

"I was intrigued by that movie and I said to myself, 'I want to be in that business,' and I have been fortunate enough to follow my dreams and pursue that passion," Dupas said.

Twenty-five years later, Dupas was recognized on the national stage for the work he did to pursue his dream.

In 2012, Dupas received what he calls the "most prestigious honor thus far in his career," being named one of the "Top 100 Retirement Plan Advisers" by the trade publication Plan Adviser. It was a landmark accomplishment for Dupas, who started in the investment business in 1990 and handled operations, legal and compliance issues, and sales management for UBS and Morgan Stanley Dean Witter.

He joined Northwestern Mutual in 2002 and, 10 years later, has built a client list of 120 companies comprising about 5,000 participants throughout the nation. For eight years during that span, he was presented the firm's Most Valuable Producer award.

But his focus isn't limited to clients. In addi-

tion to mentoring and teach young representatives in the New Orleans market, Northwestern Mutual has tapped him to share his knowledge and expertise at seminars throughout the country.

Like many in the 2005 hurricane season, Dupas faced personal loss, but it wasn't all bad. Hurricane Katrina flooded Dupas' home in St. Bernard with 6 feet of water, displacing his family for several months until they rebuilt. In the interim, he rented an apartment in Metairie, worked 15- to 16-hour days and "just buried myself in my work," he said.

It was a distraction and mindset that turned out well for Dupas as many financial advisers left the New Orleans area and never returned, he said, leaving more opportunities for new clients and new business.

In the community, Dupas has volunteered as a St. Bernard Recreation Department basketball and baseball coach for the past 16 years. He and his wife, Jennifer, donate their time to Our Lady of Prompt Succor School as co-chairs of its annual Who's Who fundraising event.

He also volunteers with the Salvation Army, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Old Arabi Neighborhood Association and the Firemen's Charitable and Benevolent Association. •



— Tommy Santora

# Octave Francis

**Position:** FFC Capital Markets founder and CEO

**Age:** 48

**Family:** wife, Penny; children, Casi, 24, Camryn, 11

**Education:** bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, Tulane University; master's degree in business administration, A.B. Freeman School of Business

Octave Francis said that the early years of FFC Capital Markets were not without challenges. The company launched several months before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and then had to cope with an economic downturn.

But becoming the pension consultant for the New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board was an early coup for the firm.

"That was something like a \$200 million and more account," Francis said, "and it did open other doors for us. There is a certain amount of notoriety and respect that you get from working with a large client that leads you to other clients of all sizes."

Francis, who maintains up to 300 accounts annually at FFC Capital Markets for 150 to 200 customers, was recently asked his opinion of the ideal account size.

"It's your account — your account is the ideal account size," Francis said. "It doesn't matter if it's a \$2 million account or \$200 million. I am going to devote the same amount of attention and energy to it."

Such devotion is all consuming for Francis.

"There is no such thing as a 40-hour week," he said. "It's more like an 80-hour week. We work Saturdays and Sundays and in the evening, I

respond to emails at 1 and 2 in the morning. Sometimes my team and I are working on projects late into the evening, and we're always communicating and exchanging ideas on a non-stop basis."

Francis said his work transforming FFC Capital Markets into a firm with more than \$3.4 billion in assets is a passion.

"It's not about making money," he said. "It's about the chase and the process. You have to have a passion for it and enjoy what you do, talking to people, communicating with them, giving back to your community. These are all the critical qualities of an entrepreneur."

Beginning his career as an investment executive with asset management company Legg Mason in 1986, Francis then became the first vice president in Paine Webber's New Orleans office in 1992 before starting FFC Capital.

He also serves as board chairman of the New Orleans Regional Black Chamber of Commerce.

"Being a black business owner is not any different from being any kind of owner," he said. "We all have similar needs and characteristics. The goal is to seize opportunities, and the onus is on all of us to know when to do that."•

— Garry Boulard



# Robert Hand

**Position:** FSC Securities Corp. registered investment adviser

**Age:** 56

**Family:** wife, Tina; son, Nathaniel, 17

**Education:** bachelor's degree in marketing, Mississippi State University; master's degree in business administration, Loyola University

It's possible to spur redevelopment along a dilapidated corridor and bring affordable housing to a community while still making a profitable investment.

Just ask Robert Hand, who has played a key role in securing more than \$200 million for new developments in the past five years to bring affordable housing to New Orleans.

Inherited real estate accounted for a sizeable portion of the city's housing stock before levee failures during Hurricane Katrina wiped much of it out in 2005. When Hand's clients came to him after the storm looking for profitable investments, he steered them toward developing affordable housing.

"We took industrial sites and parking lots and helped clients see the opportunity in them and commit to the development," he said.

Hand negotiated the development of an abandoned warehouse on Poydras Street into The Marquis apartments. He also helped revive abandoned buildings into new businesses, such as The Saint Hotel on Canal Street.

His work has fueled the transformation of Mid-City, where the former Baumer Foods factory site is now The Preserve apartment complex and a former auto dealer lot on Tulane

Avenue is now the Crescent Club mixed-income apartment community.

"That was at a time when nobody wanted to be on Tulane," he said. "Each of those developments was a \$20 million investment, so it was a large undertaking."

Hand continues to use commercial real estate — in addition to stocks, bonds, mutual funds and other strategies — to help solve his clients' investment problems. To his knowledge, he is the only registered investment adviser in Louisiana with an MBA and the Certified Commercial Investment Member designation. He is also past president of the International Association for Financial Planning.

Hand got his start in the industry on one of the unlikeliest of days in 1980, when he came to New Orleans from Jackson, Miss., to interview with Merrill Lynch on the day that came to be known as Silver Thursday.

Silver prices crashed, and panic ensued on the commodity and futures markets. In spite of that, Merrill Lynch asked him to start work the following Monday. It marked the beginning of Hand's 32-year career in the investments field. He joined FSC Securities in 2003.•

— Autumn Cafiero Giusti



INVESTMENT

# Ralph Leopold

**Position:** Ralph Leopold and Associates, a financial advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, managing director  
**Age:** 59

**Family:** wife, Karen; children, Sophie, 19, Bradley, 22

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business management, University of New Orleans

In making money, certified financial planner Ralph Leopold heralds a balanced, conservative approach he says has helped his clients thrive during the turbulent market of the past few years.

Leopold wouldn't provide any averages and said the stock and portfolio performance numbers his competitors may give are just "B.S."

"The annual return of a fund is one of the more irrelevant numbers," said Leopold, who lists 150 to 200 families in 10 states as clients. "Everybody's returns are different from the published returns. Average annual return on a portfolio is roughly dependent on the needs and risks a person will take. The risks in the market really don't change that much. It's the perception of risks that changes."

Rather than numbers, Leopold cites examples of people satisfied with the service he said is suited to the unique financial needs of each client.

For example, when many in the media were bashing variable annuities as a wasteful, high-cost product, Leopold knew better. He recalls a client who was surprised to learn that the much-trashed annuity he steered her toward actually helped her survive the most recent

recession that had assaulted the stocks in the multi-million dollar portfolio Leopold had managed for 12 years.

"We had a client whose husband passed away in one of the downturns, 2007-08," Leopold said. "She was pleasantly surprised to find out that she had that protection and she not only hadn't lost, but she had protected her profits, that the variable annuities that were lambasted for so many years and she was so skeptical on ... had served her purpose very well."

Leopold hosts a weekly radio broadcast, "Your Money, Your Life," and has trained several hundred financial planners as a national trainer for Ameriprise Financial.

He has volunteered with the National and Louisiana wildlife federations, monitoring and responding to reports of environmental damage from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

"The coastline is vanishing and no one likes to pay it attention," Leopold said, explaining his passion for preserving the natural habitat. "The world's finally waking up to it. Hopefully, we'll get the recognition of the importance of it."•

— Diana Chandler



INVESTMENT

# Geary Mason

**Position:** Sterne Agee senior vice president

**Age:** 51

**Family:** wife, Mary; sons, Baylor, 22, Henry, 15

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business administration, Louisiana State University

For much of his career as a financial adviser, retired Lt. Col. Geary Mason has pulled double duty as a member of the Army National Guard. He put everything on hold in 2003 when he was deployed to Afghanistan for a year after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"I remember sitting there at my desk watching it all unfold, and I knew that at some point I would get deployed," Mason said. "Not only was I worried about heading to war, I was also dealing with an economy in recession. The market was plummeting and I was managing people's accounts."

Mason said the toughest part was having to hand off his clients to another broker.

"I trust my colleagues," he said, "but it is never the same for the client, and at that time I was handling about 200. It's a little like going to a new doctor. You just don't feel as comfortable."

Mason has been in the financial business since 1985 when he started at Merrill Lynch. After 22 years there, he moved to Sterne Agee, where he has built a roster of more than 250 clients.

"All I do is manage relationships," Mason said. "The job forces you to keep up with current events, which I really enjoy. The markets move based on things that happen globally, and you

have to know when to make moves."

Mason said his career in the National Guard and his time overseas in 2003 prompted him to create a nonprofit, Operation Homefront-Louisiana, which he continues to manage today. The program collects items that soldiers distribute to the locals overseas.

"We would get emails all the time from our families asking what they should send to us, and it always ended up being toiletries," Mason said. "There was a time where we were getting sent so much that we could open our own Wal-Mart at the base. So we needed something different."

When troops would go from town to town, soldiers would often find that the children rarely had adequate school supplies, he said.

"That was our hook," Mason said. "We would gather pens and pencils and paper and distribute them to the schools."

Operation Homefront partners with area high schools to encourage students to donate any supplies they did not use during the year.

"It has been wildly successful," Mason said. "We have been able to forge agreements with the Saints and the Hornets that have helped us raise a considerable amount of money."•

— Robin Shannon



# Cham Mehaffey

**Position:** Fleur de Lis Financial district manager

**Age:** 65

**Family:** wife, Mary; son, Griffith, 33

**Education:** bachelor's degree in sociology, University of Southwestern Louisiana

Good financial advisers listen more than speak and help clients build a solid foundation to support short and long-term goals and dreams, said Cham Mehaffey, a 30-year veteran of the financial services industry and district manager of Fleur de Lis Financial, a member of the Mass Mutual Financial Group.

"Many people today put all their money in 401(k)s but don't have liquidity," he said. "So when something happens ... they start pulling money out of their 401(k) and paying penalties and interest or they take out a second mortgage on their home. They basically start to implode because they didn't have a program in place that took all their needs into consideration. People need the right protection."

Mehaffey's success as a financial consultant, he said, stems from using an integrated model that pulls everything together for clients such as tax returns, statements of investments and insurance policies to provide a 360-degree view of their financial standing.

"Success is by design and failure is inevitable

without a plan," Mehaffey said. "Our goal is to help clients increase spendable income, increase protection of assets, lower risks and taxes, and double income in retirement. We aren't here just to sell life insurance, investments and retirement plans. This business is not transactional. ... We help crystalize visions."

Mehaffey has been designing financial plans for individuals and business owners since 1981 when he became a financial adviser. Qualified and non-qualified investments and insurance make up the bulk of his work, which equates to between \$1 million and \$3 million in production annually.

In addition to his financial consulting role with Fleur de Lis Financial, Mehaffey hires and trains new producers for MassMutual in Louisiana and South Mississippi.

He is also involved in the community by serving as president of the North Shore Estate Planning Council for St. Tammany and Tangipahoa parishes and as interim chairman of the Folsom Fire Department. •

— Kerry Duff



# Tom Meyer

**Position:** Benefit Planning Group vice president

**Age:** 45

**Family:** wife, Tish; children, Crystal, 24, Candice, 22, Zachary, 9

**Education:** bachelor's degree in broadcasting, Loyola University

Tom Meyer returned to New Orleans from the Rocky Mountains in 1990, fresh out of a broadcast marketing career looking to switch gears professionally.

"I had been working for an ABC affiliate in Colorado and wanted a change," Meyer said. "I'd done some investment work in the past and liked it. When I got back I thought I would try it again."

As vice president of Benefit Planning Group in Metairie, he specializes in providing health, life, annuities and variable insurance, in addition to assisting public school teachers with their pension plans.

"I became familiar with how the state's pension plan works because my wife was a schoolteacher," Meyer said. "We learned people didn't know how these plans worked, and our firm became the only one in the area specializing in helping educators figure out what they needed for retirement."

Meyer's work with teachers evolved into his volunteering to help high school students increase their financial literacy.

"I talk to them about how to write a check and understanding what is good debt versus bad debt," he said. "I ask them if they've ever heard of the S&P or the Dow Jones and what that means

to them. I ask them about what it means to have Social Security and whether or not it'll be around for them when they retire."

Meyer said he believes education and business are inextricably linked when creating a good community. He's the former chairman of the Jefferson Parish Chamber of Commerce education committee and spearheaded its efforts to "help businesses make an impact on the school system."

That kind of work is important, Meyer said, because developing strong neighborhoods through business development and better schools is a paramount concern.

"The first thing people ask when relocating to a community is, 'Where am I going to live and what are the schools like?'"

Meyer is also chairman of the Jefferson Chamber Foundation, whose goal is to improve economic development through education and work force development. The organization focuses on the Jefferson Chamber Foundation Academy Charter School and Leadership Jefferson.

His time on the chamber's board also led him to lead the Jefferson Parish committee to explore creating an inspector general position, which was approved by voters in October 2011. •

— Mason Harrison





INVESTMENT

# John Morgan

**Position:** Raymond James Financial Services Inc. branch owner and financial adviser

**Age:** 52

**Family:** wife, Jackie; daughter, Victoria, 11

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business administration, Nicholls State University; master's degree in financial services, College for Financial Planning

John Morgan decided long ago that client success is an individual affair.

"Some clients you are charged with maintaining wealth, and in doing so, that becomes successful for that client," said Morgan, who was a certified financial planner with Royal Alliance Associates Inc. before opening a Raymond James Financial Services branch in 1998.

For a client who may not be as wealthy, success may be defined as developing clear goals, acceptable risk tolerance and an ability to structure their portfolio in a manner to help them achieve their goals, he said.

"For some people, that may mean that we need to make 5 percent a year," Morgan said. "But for others, 5 percent may not be enough, so success is defined in totally different ways for each individual."

Morgan describes his constant objective for all clients as a conscious effort to minimize loss of capital.

"We learned pretty quickly during the downturn of 2002 that the most dangerous thing we had facing us was volatility," Morgan said. "Our office ended up battening down the hatches and going into a more defensive positioning of client portfolios, although we still worked to make more

money for them."

For Morgan, making money has also meant building a list of clients, most of which have been with him for more than a decade and have reasonable financial goals.

"People with unrealistic expectations don't wind up being our clients," he said. "I tell those who say they need 9 percent or 10 percent that we probably are not for them. Six percent is pushing it. We are trying to work at 4 percent."

Today, Morgan's office sees more than \$275 million in business and handles the portfolios for up to 125 families.

"The goal is not to find new clients but to take care of the people who have entrusted their capital with you," Morgan said. "If I can do that, everything else takes care of itself."

Morgan said he first became interested in how the financial industry works by watching his father, oilfield entrepreneur Clint Morgan, buy stocks.

"I worked for a couple of banks while still a student and never left the financial markets after that," Morgan said.

Morgan serves on the Metropolitan Crime Commission's board and is a sponsor of the Jefferson Performing Arts Society. •

— Garry Boulard



INVESTMENT

# Rudy Revuelta

**Position:** Pan-American Life Insurance Group senior vice president and chief investment officer

**Age:** 64

**Family:** wife, Elizabeth; children, David, 24, Jessica, 23

**Education:** bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration, University of Florida

When turmoil takes hold of the economy, following the crowd isn't the best strategy if a company wants to thrive.

So goes the thinking of Rodolfo "Rudy" Revuelta. As senior vice president and chief investment officer of Pan-American Life Insurance Group, his investment foresight has boosted the company's financial performance since the 2008 financial crisis.

As the crisis loomed, he watched as other investors bought up subprime mortgages, collateralized debt obligations and other investments that were about to bust. On Revuelta's advice, Pan-American opted not to invest and instead went after corporate bonds.

"We had the rationale, the discipline and the know-how to say, 'No, we're not going to do it.' And it paid off," he said.

Revuelta's strategy limited the company's exposure to high-risk debt investments at the height of the financial crisis. As a result, Pan-American secured an upgrade of its financial strength rating in 2010 to A from A- by A.M. Best Co.

In 2011, the company's bond portfolio results were 80 basis points higher than the industry average, which put the company among the top 10 firms in its class in terms of investment yields,

as rated by Conning Research & Consulting.

Born in Cuba, Revuelta moved to Miami when he was 15 and attended the University of Florida. He started out studying engineering but changed direction after taking a finance course as an elective.

Revuelta joined Pan-American 36 years ago and has led his department since 2005. The international field of investments always appealed to Revuelta, and it continues to motivate him on a daily basis, he said.

"What I like about investments is that every day is something new."

Revuelta's investment savvy led the United Way of Southeast Louisiana to recruit him several years ago for its investment committee, which he ended up chairing. His role is to guide the nonprofit on how to best invest the money it raises in the community.

Outside of work, Revuelta has a long-standing tradition of playing Cuban dominoes every Friday night, a game he learned as a boy watching his father play at the local social club.

"There is a group of older Cubans here in the city, and it's a commitment that we make," he said. "This is kind of my therapy for the week." •

— Autumn Cafiero Giusti



# Howard Rodgers

**Position:** Morgan Keegan and Co. financial adviser

**Age:** 30

**Family:** wife, Lovie

**Education:** bachelor's degree in accounting, Xavier University

Howard Rodgers began his career fresh out of college as a financial adviser with no clients and no leads. But in a few years, he was able to amass a long list of customers through his civic work.

"I was able to gain a large volume of clients through the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce," Rodgers said. "I also spent time volunteering as a mentor at Café Reconcile, where I started to meet people with the same mentality as me. These were people who wanted to get back to the city (after Hurricane Katrina) but needed more financial stability."

As a financial adviser at Morgan Keegan, Rodgers manages 100 households in the region with 183 accounts ranging from families saving for college to retirees trying to protect what they have built.

He said he takes pride in helping small business owners and everyday people build for the future and navigate the challenges of an economy that can be affected by the slightest things.

"I get to hear so many stories of self-made individuals who built what they have from the

ground up," Rodgers said. "People are understanding. They want to learn more about how to protect their family."

Customer service and attention to detail are keys to success, Rodgers said. Every customer goes through an in-depth review of his or her financial circumstances and future goals. He also takes into account economic pitfalls, such as in 2008-09, when the economic downturn affected dozens of his clients in the region.

Before changing paths to a career with a more personal touch, Rodgers was a banker at Capital One, where he dealt with businesses and larger corporations. He said he left because he wasn't able to consult people on a personal level.

And he's taken that concern to the community by lending his financial expertise to several organizations. In addition to serving on the finance committee for this alma mater, St. Augustine High School, he also volunteers on St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church's finance board. •

— Robin Shannon



# Lain St. Paul

**Position:** Well Fargo-Mandeville vice president for investments

**Age:** 48

**Family:** wife, Nicole; children, Alexis, 17, Pierce, 14, Lizette, 10

**Education:** bachelor's degree in finance, Louisiana State University

Few people would equate the ability to walk in another person's shoes as having anything to do with the often-rough world of financial markets and investment portfolios. But standing in his clients' shoes as vice president for investments at Wells Fargo in Mandeville, Lain St. Paul is exactly where he wants to be.

St. Paul began his career in financial investments in 1989 in New Orleans, working for Merrill Lynch as a "young neophyte, know-nothing financial adviser," he joked. Ten years later, he switched to A.G. Edwards, which is now Wells Fargo.

Today, St. Paul has a cadre of clients and has survived the consolidation of the financial industry by changing his approach to the business of financial management.

"When I started out," St. Paul said, "most of what I did was centered around transactional accounts. If a client wanted to sell or buy a particular amount of shares, then I'd help them do that and receive a percentage of the value of the transaction and that was it."

But St. Paul, 48, said he saw the financial writing on the wall with that approach and decided to switch gears.

"I knew that that method was going the way of the dinosaur," he said. "So I decided to do something different and put myself on the side of the client."

The approach he has taken since allows him to assess fees based on the value of his clients' accounts.

"If their income goes up, so does mine," he said. "If their income goes down, so does mine. That's the way it should be. It means that I am invested in ensuring the best possible outcome for my clients because my income is directly tied to theirs."

St. Paul has also tied his efforts to a number of volunteer activities he and his wife, Nicole, are involved in, including serving on the North Shore advisory board for the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and on the finance committee for Christ Episcopal School in Covington.

"No matter what, if you're a finance person they always seem to get you and want you to serve in a financial capacity," St. Paul said.

At the end of the day, though, he said he is always glad to help. •

— Mason Harrison



INVESTMENT

# Jonathan Stewart

**Position:** State Farm financial services representative

**Age:** 28

**Family:** single

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business science management, Tulane University

Financial services representative Jonathan Stewart is the leader at State Farm in New Orleans for new insurance policies. In three years, he has completed more than 500 auto policies and 150 life insurance applications. He also ranks among the top five in New Orleans for new money in mutual funds and completed the highest number of rollovers of retirement accounts.

"This is a relationship business," Stewart said. "The key to my success is building a relationship with every client so they're comfortable and will call me with their needs. My expertise is helping people manage the risks of everyday life."

Stewart admits his biggest professional challenge is getting people to see the big picture and start planning for retirement early instead of in their 50s.

He joined State Farm in 2009, and along with helping individuals choose the correct insurance and investment products, he conducts seminars and presentations on how to protect earnings through disability and long-term care policies. He also speaks to first-time homebuyers, trains team members and develops agency marketing strategies.

"A lot of my job is educating people on the importance of preparing for retirement early and the negative financial impact that can come

with delayed financial planning," he said. "You have to make a plan for the future, stick to a budget, understand tax benefits and incentives, and save for retirement."

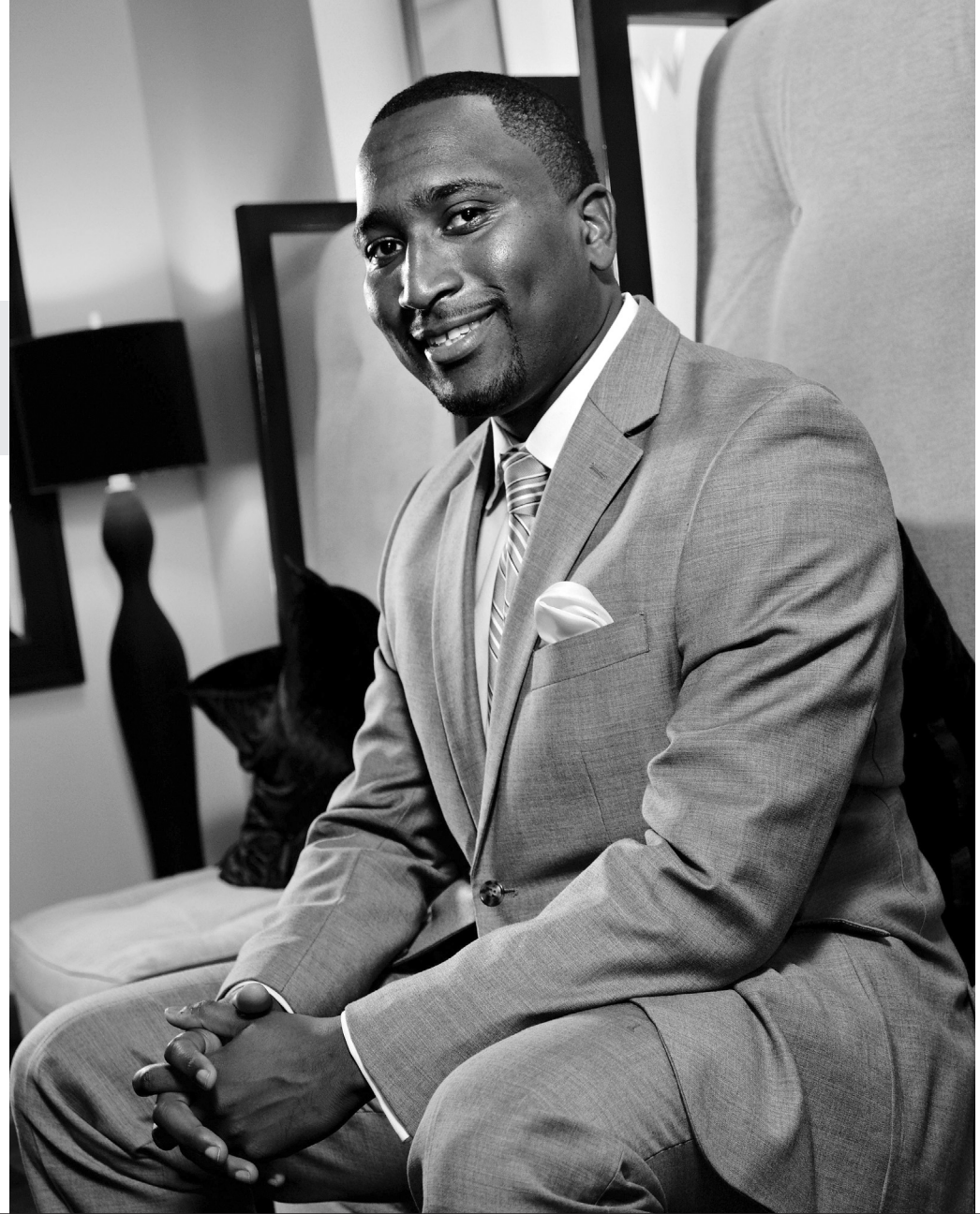
Stewart said people can't rely on Social Security in the future, something that can be difficult for his clients to understand.

"Folks also panic when they hear in the media that people are losing their life savings," he said. "It makes them cynical about investing and fearful their money isn't in the right place. So at the end of the day, it's all about trust between me and my clients."

Outside the office, he serves on the board of Jericho Road Episcopal Housing Initiative and helps raise money for the organization, which builds affordable housing in the Uptown area and plants flowers and trees throughout the community. He recently helped plant 40 varieties of citrus trees on Loyola and Washington avenues so children in the neighborhood can have fresh fruit.

He's also a volunteer basketball coach for the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission, which serves at-risk youth in the community, and a motivational speaker for elementary, middle and high school students. •

— Kerry Duff



INVESTMENT

# Diana Stieffel

**Position:** UBS Financial Services senior vice president of investments

**Age:** 49

**Family:** husband, Rod; children, Emma, 19, Roddy, 18, Dalton, 16

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

Chatting up people has never been a problem for Diana Stieffel, a self-described people person and "half-native" of the New Orleans area who spent part of her youth growing up in suburban Philadelphia.

So when adding a personal touch to investment banking became "trendy," Stieffel felt right at home.

Stieffel, 49, is a senior vice president of investments at UBS Financial Services, where she manages more than \$95 million in assets for close to 100 clients. She attributes her success as a woman in a traditionally male-dominated field to her father's early lessons in all things financial that helped lead her to a career rooted in numbers.

Stieffel, who at one time dreamed of working for the Federal Reserve, said that as a child she would enjoy counting coins she had saved and watching the amount grow, a trait that would serve her well in helping to build wealth for her clients.

But Stieffel believes the biggest asset for her clients lies in her ability to listen to their needs.

"I believe in taking the time to get to know

people and finding out who they are while assessing their needs," she said.

Stieffel, who earned a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of New Orleans, also applies her consultative approach outside the office. She and her husband, Rod, provide marriage advice for newly engaged couples as part of a Catholic-sponsored program to help soon-to-be spouses make the most of their marriages.

"I often tell them what my mother told me," Stieffel said. "There will be two things, she told me, that can always cause tension in a marriage — money and how to discipline the kids."

But regardless of whether Stieffel finds herself giving financial advice to couples or offering investment ideas to a major client, the common theme in all of her interactions is the depth of the relationships she has formed with people.

"I have built longstanding relationships for more than 21 years in the business," Stieffel said. "That's the value I add, that's why I do what I do. I add value to my clients' financial lives. I wouldn't get referrals if I didn't." •

— Mason Harrison



# Randy Waesche

**Position:** Resource Management Inc. president and CEO

**Age:** 62

**Family:** wife, Bonita; children, Megan, 26, Beatrice, 20, Rachel, 20

**Education:** bachelor's degree in chemistry and biology, Regis University

Randy Waesche knows the normal cycles of business are going to challenge any investment strategy. That includes the most recent economic downturn.

"Its magnitude and the response by our regulatory authorities is what made this one so frightening — in essence, our regulatory structure failed," he said.

But what Waesche cannot abide is any hint of behind-the-scenes dealing affecting his clients' investments.

"Whenever something like that happens, you have to take action," he said.

Waesche put that principle to work in what he considers one of the greatest triumphs of his career: a multi-million dollar lawsuit against hedge fund and private equity manager Bill Huff and the W.R. Huff Asset Management Co. The lawsuit's origins began after Huff withdrew from a \$40 million commitment in early 2009 to lease about 46,000 acres near the Mexican border for gas exploration.

Waesche was the leader of Longview Energy Co.'s board at the time, and he said the board felt it had to do something.

Waesche subsequently found out about a lease sale for the same acreage.

"We had it looked into and found out the acres were acquired by Huff 30 days before our

January 2009 board meeting," he said.

A Texas jury agreed this summer that Huff had violated his fiduciary responsibilities to Longview, which resulted in a \$95.5 million award for the company.

"That, plus all of the net revenue from the well as of June and a constructive receipt over all the acreage, which means the verdict is essentially worth \$500 million," Waesche said. "It was a victory for people who were being taken advantage of."

The head of Resource Management, who manages about \$800 million annually, is similarly blunt when it comes to investment advice for his clients.

"I let them make the decisions regarding what they want to do," he said. "But that doesn't prevent me from giving them my honest advice, particularly when I think they are heading in the wrong direction."

Serving as a board member for the North Shore Community Foundation, the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation and the St. Tammany Parish Economic Development Foundation, Waesche said his off-hours work underlines a guiding principle.

"If you don't give back, you don't have the right to complain, and that especially applies to the place where you chose to set down your roots."•

— Garry Boulard



# George Young

**Position:** Villere & Co. partner

**Age:** 53

**Family:** wife, Sarah; daughters, Bess, 24, Charlotte, 22

**Education:** bachelor's degree in English, University of Virginia

George Young isn't interested in investing in Coca-Cola or Exxon. As mature companies, their stocks have been there, done that.

"What you want as an investor is something people haven't heard of — something that can grow," said Young, a partner at Villere & Co. The family-owned investment firm, also run by Young's two uncles and cousin, advises \$1.7 billion in advisory accounts for high net worth individuals and not-for-profits.

When scouting investments, Young looks for the next Facebook, something with room for growth. A decade ago, Villere invested in navigation product manufacturer Garmin, long before GPS was a household term. The company held it for about four years, then let it go once everyone started hearing about it.

"You've got to be able to get in and get out," he said.

Young has employed that strategy to help build the firm's Villere Balanced Fund, which earned the highest consistent risk-adjusted return over three and five years, among 139 and 134 funds, respectively.

Villere & Co. started the fund in 1999 as New Orleans' first independent mutual fund for investments of \$2,000 and more. Co-managed by

Young, the fund has grown to more than \$170 million in 13 years.

When Young isn't playing the investments game, he holds a number of community board positions, including president of the Louisiana Civil Service League and treasurer of the Lambeth House board.

Young was unsure what career path to choose in college. After majoring in English, he sought help from a career counselor, who initially encouraged him to try journalism or public relations. Young initially doubted that path because the rest of his family was in the financial industry, but he said he came to realize the investigative process would serve him well in the investment field.

Young gathers information about potential investment targets from different sources to corroborate the company's story and find out how their product or service works. Then, he seeks out other sources to explain the company's finances and where they stand.

Not every investment is a clear winner, Young said.

"The caveat is once you buy something, you need to be prepared to admit you're wrong and cut your losses," he said. •

— Autumn Cafiero Giusti



PROFESSIONAL

# Gary Bell

**Position:** U.S. Forensic managing partner

**Age:** 45

**Family:** wife, Monica; children, Keller, 15, Justin, 10, Gary, 7, Richard, 5, James, 2

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business administration, Holy Cross College; master's degree in business management, Troy University

Few things have occupied the national political dialogue recently like health care. But rising costs, federal mandates and recent court decisions have not dissuaded Gary Bell, managing partner at Metairie-based U.S. Forensic, from going about the business of addressing access to health care.

Bell's firm pays for 100 percent of the cost to his enroll his staff. But his approach to providing health care for his employees is less about politics and more about a business philosophy that stresses going the extra mile for clients and employees. That thinking took root years ago as a manager at another forensic firm where he was faced with a moral dilemma.

"I remember being told that we were going to pay our employees smaller bonuses than what we had previously promised them, but that we were not going to tell them," Bell said. "I couldn't believe it. I was flabbergasted. I thought to myself, 'I can't lie to my employees.'"

Bell, 45, had had enough and made a deci-

sion, he said, "to do something different."

That something was to start U.S. Forensic. The company investigates mechanical and structural failures for businesses and insurance companies and has offices throughout the country. Its staff includes civil, electrical, mechanical and structural engineers along with environmental professionals who all analyze design, manufacturing and construction. The company has 13 offices in six states and four field staff locations.

But U.S. Forensic's success, which allows it to provide a 100 percent match on its employees' 401(k) contributions, was not always certain in the early days of Bell striking out on his own.

"We didn't get paid for seven months," Bell said, recalling that period of time where he and his partners kept their fingers crossed and stayed "hopeful."

Soon business started to trickle in, and Bell and his partners began to breathe a bit easier. •

— *Mason Harrison*



PROFESSIONAL

# Scott Dessens

**Position:** LSU Health Sciences Center School of Public Health assistant dean for business affairs

**Age:** 50

**Family:** wife, Cara; children, Alexander, 23, Mackenzie, 17

**Education:** bachelor's degree in accounting, Louisiana State University

Scott Dessens served as business assurance manager at PriceWaterhouseCoopers, inventory control director at Campo Electronics, audit director and accounting director at K&B and controller and chief accounting officer at Oreck Corp. before joining LSU Health and Sciences Center School of Public Health as assistant dean for business affairs.

When he joined LSU in July 2008, the school had gone without a business dean for a while and was at the onset of a series of state budget cuts.

"I had to get control of the financial processes and understand exactly what did we spend and how did the business operate," he said.

Dessens applied what he knew from his past experience in accounting.

"With an accounting background, no matter where you are in accounting, the mantra that backdrops everything is: You always have to be lean, you have to be as efficient as possible and you have to run as cheaply as possible."

Dessens looked for ways to save money and said most of the budget cuts were done in the first year and a half of his tenure.

"We had to change some of the ways we did things as an academic institution to be more efficient and cheaper," he said. "A lot of the roles for any finance person in that process is to constantly

remind people where you are, what money are you spending on this, how much money are you saving, what do we have to do to bring more money in or prevent more money from going out."

Dessens has also collaborated with Dr. Peggy Honoré and the National Association of County and City Health Officials to develop the Public Health Finance and Management and the Public Health Uniform Data System websites.

But he said his most challenging experience professionally was when Oreck hired him to take the company public.

"We had to start from scratch and their financial records were not in good condition," he said.

Dessens was responsible for hiring new accountants and building the company's accounting department, instituting new accounting processes and procedures, providing current accounting and cleaning up the records from prior years.

Dessens and his staff had prepared all of the financial data and completed all of the procedures required to go public in an eight-month time frame, but Oreck eventually decided to sell a majority ownership in the company to a private equity buyer rather than through a public offering. •

— *Jennifer Nall*



# Gus Flattmann

**Position:** Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans senior accountant

**Age:** 60

**Family:** wife, Janet; daughters, Trudy, 37, Becky, 31

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

Gus Flattmann III, a soft-spoken 37-year accountant, is the in-house financial guru at Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans. He has been with the organization since 1998 and is responsible for managing its day-to-day money matters. He also oversees bank accounts, depreciation schedules and payroll for 130 employees at four Daughters of Charity health care centers.

Three years ago, he played a role in bringing billing in-house for the organization's medical, dental and pharmacy practices. The new system netted a 50 percent increase in collections from 2009 to 2010.

"It took about a year to implement the new billing system, which included hiring six new staff members," he said. "The new system allows us to bill our patients in a timely manner and get paid faster, which is great for cash flow. We also saved money because we don't have to pay to outsource billing any more."

While he was instrumental in streamlining the billing system, Flattmann can also go back to the basics. He turned out vendor checks using a manual typewriter after Daughters of Charity's lone center and accounting system were destroyed by flooding after levee failures during Hurricane Katrina.

"When I'm at work, I feel good about who I

work for," Flattmann said. "Daughters of Charity helps a lot of people that need help, and it's rewarding that I'm part of a mission that's being worked on at all times."

Prior to joining Daughters of Charity, Flattmann worked as an accounting director for National Marine Inc. While there, he helped implement a new billing system and assisted in developing a crosscheck training system that resulted in a revenue increase of \$30,000 a month. He also helped revamp the company's boat and barge insurance policies, which netted an annual savings of \$1 million a year.

Before that, he worked at a barge company where he discovered an employee had stolen \$500,000 from the business.

"I was on the job two weeks when I discovered something wasn't right," Flattmann said. "So I conducted a thorough financial investigation and interviewed a lot of people and discovered that an outside vendor was making up false invoices, and the vice president was approving them for payment."

Flattmann is past president and a former fundraising volunteer for the Sunshine Club of Algiers. •

— Kerry Duff



# Fred Johnson

**Position:** Neighborhood Development Foundation CEO

**Age:** 58

**Family:** wife, Joan; daughter, Laini, 40

**Education:** Joseph F. Clark High School graduate

Fred Johnson, Jr. helped start the nonprofit Neighborhood Development Foundation 26 years ago and has helped about 5,000 people to become homeowners through the financial education and homeownership program. He also became the group's CEO along the way.

The NDF was established after Rudy Lombard's failed bid for mayor of New Orleans in 1986. Lombard knew Johnson, who worked for Tambourine and Fan, a New Orleans organization that teaches young people about civil rights, leadership and political engagement, and Johnson also worked with Lombard through a community anti-drug program for teenagers.

Lombard and Johnson researched homeownership statistics in New Orleans and discovered that 17,000 people were paying rent equivalent to a home mortgage. They also found that 70 percent of the city's population rented and only 30 percent were homeowners.

"I didn't know much about the lending process or mortgage requirements back then, but I knew I wanted to help people," Johnson said. "I never thought 26 years later I would still be doing this."

The NDF works with more than 100 homeowners a year through a 12-hour, four-day-a-week course held every month, focusing on clos-

ing assistance, the lending process with banks, government assistance programs and other means to help people buy a home.

Johnson said one of the breakthrough events for the organization came in the early 1990s when former clients Bernice Porter and Brenda Hyde appeared on a WWL-AM radio talk show. Porter and Hyde, who are sisters, each made about \$15,000 a year and wanted to buy their own home. Johnson worked with them and came up with a solution to pool their money to purchase a double and make it a family property, where they take turns every year writing the home off for tax purposes. They bought the double, kept it in the family and when Hyde passed away several years ago, she passed on her side to her son.

"When they told their story on radio ... it made me a firm believer in what we were doing to help people," Johnson said.

Johnson is a legend among the Mardi Gras Indians. He appeared on "Treme" and "When the Levees Broke," and established The Black Men of Labor in 1994, an organization that promotes New Orleans cultural expressions through parade club traditions. At the age of 15, he joined Tootie Montana's Yellow Pocahontas tribe and organized its music practices. •

— Tommy Santora



PROFESSIONAL

# Robert Kimbro

**Position:** Ernst and Young New Orleans managing partner

**Age:** 54

**Family:** wife, Debbie; children, Wade, 22, Chandler, 19, Andrew, 16

**Education:** bachelor's degree in accounting, Louisiana State University

Robert Kimbro said that after joining Ernest & Young as a partner, he wondered if his career success would make for an easier life.

"I thought that once you made it to the top, you'd be playing golf every day and having two-hour lunches," said Kimbro, who joined Ernest & Young in 2002 after serving as a partner with Arthur Andersen. "But in fact, I am working harder now than ever before just to keep up."

Part of that work centers on Kimbro's role of leading an office with 125 people, but most of his time and energy continues to be devoted to clients.

"You absolutely have to do that," said Kimbro, who is responsible for attracting clients such as First NBC Bank, IberiaBank and Pan-American Life Insurance Group to Ernst & Young.

"Public accounting revolves around people," he said. "And that means not only having the right people to work with, but also the right clients ... and giving them the best service you can, hoping they will continue to use you."

Clients signing annual engagement letters do so for a variety of reasons, but Kimbro says his "bedside manner" in candidly discussing individual and corporate accounts is a factor.

"You have to do these things with a little bit of empathy," he said, using the example of a client who has to pay a higher tax bill compared with the previous year.

"When you deliver bad news, you have to demonstrate to your clients that, first and foremost, you care about them," Kimbro said. "You let them know that while we don't make the rules, we are always trying to ensure that our clients follow the rules."

To create a more sustainable entrepreneurial climate in New Orleans, Kimbro is also part of the support network for The Idea Village, a non-profit designed to support entrepreneurial talent.

"It's an investment in the future, wanting new companies to stay local, grow and have success," Kimbro said, "which I think is a great concept and great for our community." •

— Garry Boulard



PROFESSIONAL

# Shasta Leininger

**Position:** New Orleans Firemen's Federal Credit Union marketing director

**Age:** 33

**Family:** husband, Jacob; daughters Ren, 7, Libby, 2

**Education:** bachelor's degree in marketing, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Shasta Leininger has discovered there's a lot more to gain from promoting a business than just getting its name out there.

As marketing director for the New Orleans Firemen's Federal Credit Union, Leininger has grown the business' membership base by taking up charitable causes in the community.

"I have a passion for reaching out to others and helping those in need," Leininger said. "This has allowed me to do that in a professional environment, and I feel like I'm getting to make a difference."

Leininger started her career as marketing director for Heritage Credit Union, a small organization in Lafayette. When her husband was transferred to Metairie two and a half years later, she applied for a job with the Firemen's Federal Credit Union. She now handles all of its advertising, promotions and business development for and has been there since 2007. With Leininger's marketing efforts, the credit union has grown to more than 21,000 members from 15,660 when she joined the staff.

In marketing Firemen's Federal Credit Union, Leininger said she has focused on spreading financial literacy in local schools. The credit union's employees teach financial lessons

for elementary and high school students. Because of its youth outreach efforts, the credit union added members to its Spot Savers youth account, a savings account for newborns to 12-year-olds, and its Teen Smart savings account for 13- to 18-year-olds.

Leininger is also on the steering committee for the Louisiana Young Professionals Network. She helped the organization host its first-ever workshop in Baton Rouge this April for more than 65 young professionals from throughout the state.

The Children's Hospital Guild, the hospital's fundraising arm, is another focus for Leininger and the credit union. Both organizations host activities together, and Leininger and two of her co-workers hold board positions on the guild. This year, Fireman's Federal Credit Union held a birthday party at the hospital for its Dalmatian mascot, Spot, and gave presents to each child.

Leininger credits her CEO, Judy DeLuca, and management team for creating a culture where she has the freedom to try out different marketing and business development strategies.

"It's allowed me to create effective marketing campaigns, and I just love it," she said. •

— Autumn Cafiero Giusti



PROFESSIONAL

# Sandy Marlborough

**Position:** independent accountant

**Age:** 46

**Family:** children, Cindy, 22, CJ, 19

**Education:** bachelor's degree in accounting, Our Lady of Holy Cross College

While most incoming college freshman are still deciding on a major, Sandy Marlborough knew exactly what she wanted to do — accounting.

“I’ve always liked the math side of things,” said Marlborough, who credits an “exceptional” accounting teacher in high school with leading her to choose the career path. “I’ve always known that accounting was what I wanted to do.”

Marlborough started her career in accounting immediately after graduating college in 1988. She served as chief financial officer at Logan Marketing before going out on her own as an independent accountant in 2006.

Some of her clients include Fabre Smith & Co., Gambel Communications and Studio Mundi.

Marlborough’s priority is to give clients the financial information they need.

“I help them to navigate their way with the financial side of the business,” Marlborough said, adding that her responsibilities include book-keeping and maintaining records for her smaller clients and acting as an integral part of the business for her larger clients.

“I work as a financial partner in growing their business, expanding their business and making them as profitable and successful as possible,” she said.

And saving money is part of that equation.

“I want my clients to get the most bang for their buck. I find ways to cut costs and effectively manage their costs, make sure expenses are being monitored and that they are not wasting money on the expense side.”

The most frequently asked question she gets from her clients: Can we afford that?

“The biggest question I’m asked is do I have enough money to do such and such, whether it is to expand, hire someone or buy equipment for the building.”

Marlborough’s efforts are collaborative, explaining that she works with her clients as partners to reach goals based on different circumstances.

“I help track their progress and their goals and meet certain benchmarks using industry standards,” she said.

On branching out on her own, Marlborough said she regrets not doing it sooner.

“I would encourage anyone to be self entrepreneurial and not to be afraid to take that next step and have faith in themselves that they can do it,” she said. “Being self-employed is really rewarding. It’s something to be proud of, knowing that you worked hard and did it on your own.”

— Jennifer Nall



PROFESSIONAL

# Ted Mason

**Position:** LaPorte CPAs president and CEO

**Age:** 54

**Family:** wife, Therese Puglia; sons, Chad, 32, Damian, 26

**Education:** bachelor's degree in accounting, University of New Orleans; advanced degree, Graduate School of Banking of the South

Orchestrating a more than double-digit increase in revenue and positioning an accounting firm to quadruple its work force within a decade doesn’t require fancy management skills, new client acquisitions or developing an innovative strategic plan for growth, said Ted Mason, president and CEO of LaPorte CPAs and Business Advisors.

The secret, he says, is investing in a company’s employees.

When Mason took the reins at LaPorte 10 years ago, the firm had 40 financial experts and boasted \$6 million in revenue. In the years since, its operations have ballooned into a \$21 million accounting and consulting business with 160 employees in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Covington and Houston.

“Our leadership group put together a plan to become a growth organization,” Mason said about LaPorte’s early plans to expand its business. Part of that plan, he said, was to involve the firm’s existing employees in the growth.

“We increased the number of owners in the firm from eight to 17 and retired several others,” Mason said. “We created 50 to 60 promotional opportunities for staffers to grow their skills as leaders and business advisors.”

Mason said he considers the task of “investing personally” in LaPorte’s junior staff part of the company’s “one-firm focus” that makes senior managers responsible for creating a team-oriented environment and to always zero in on “what’s best for the firm.”

Achieving double-digit growth wasn’t enough for Mason and his leadership team. LaPorte set out to encourage its employees to invest in their communities in much the same way the firm had invested in them.

“We began requiring people to get involved in organizations,” Mason said. “We didn’t tell them what to get involved in; we let them do whatever they were passionate about and in the beginning not everyone was receptive.”

Today, LaPorte employees are involved in more than 100 nonprofit organizations in the New Orleans area.

Mason practices what he preaches. He has served for more than a decade as treasurer of the Christwood retirement community, is chairman of the board at St. Paul’s School and is involved in economic development for St. Tammany Parish.

— Mason Harrison





PROFESSIONAL

# Philip Rebowe

**Position:** Carr, Riggs and Ingram partner

**Age:** 56

**Family:** children, Leson, 16, Wayne, 25, Nell, 29

**Education:** bachelor's degree in accounting, Louisiana State University

Philip Rebowe's success stems from his commitment to look beyond the technical aspects of his profession and help clients achieve their financial goals.

"Many CPAs file tax returns and that's the end of their services," Rebowe said. "I sit down with my clients and compare financial ratios to historical trends and peer industry groups, so they can see how they are doing overall and where they are underperforming and outperforming the competition. It's business advice that helps them be more prosperous and react to the ever-changing financial world."

The foundation of Rebowe's advice comes from 30 years in the accounting industry and more than two decades as a business owner. Before becoming a partner with Carr, Riggs and Ingram in August 2011, he served as president of accounting firm Rebowe & Co. for 21 years. The firms merged last year, he said, to grow and provide specialized resources to clients from both companies.

Rebowe's expertise is audits, consulting services and employee benefit plan audits for construction companies, including general contractors and subcontractors, state and local governments, nonprofits, financial institutions, manufacturers, tourism businesses and retail stores. He also pro-

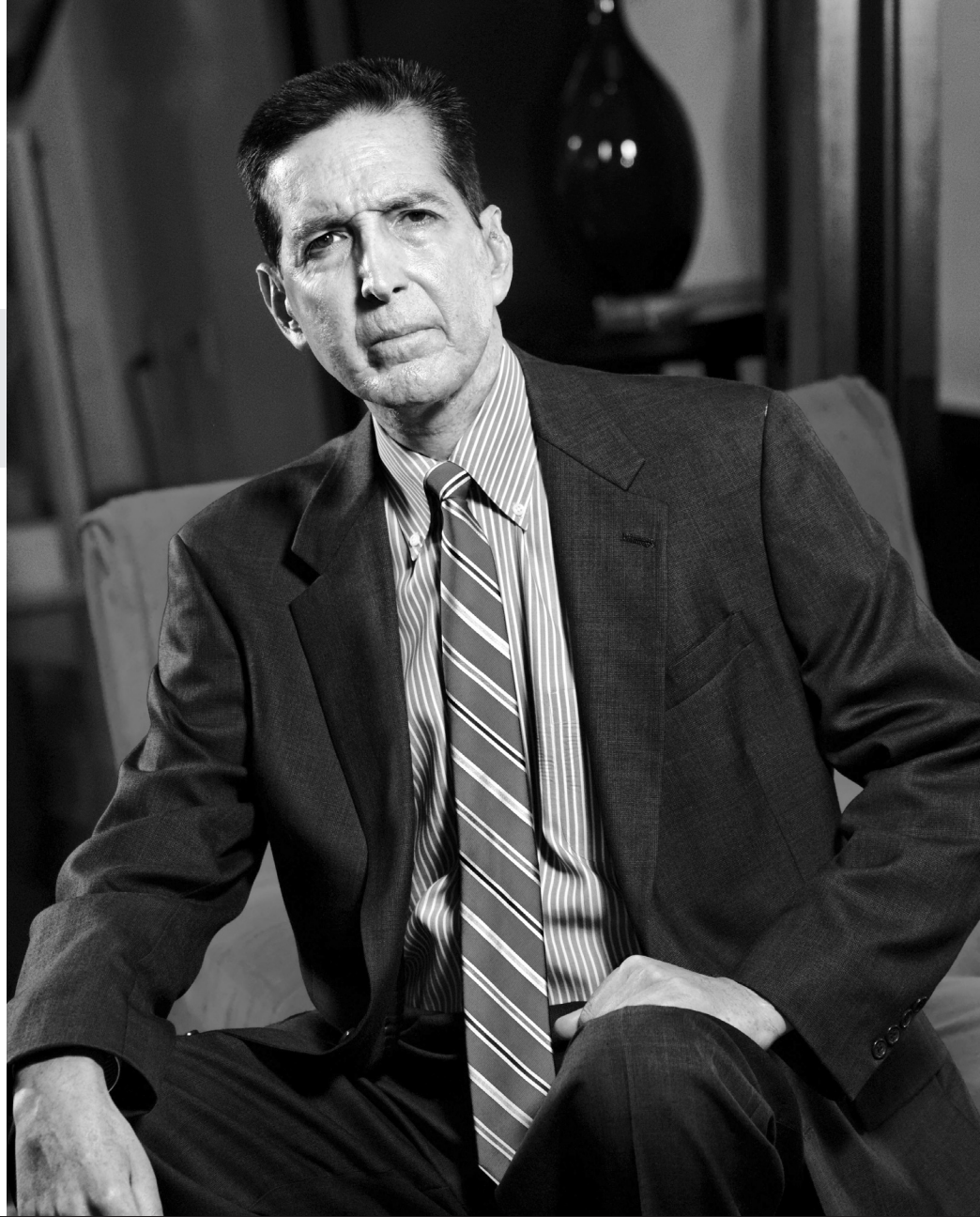
vides forensic and fraud accounting services, including anti-fraud consultations and litigation support.

"Not so long ago, everything in the construction industry was on paper," he said. "So it was weeks before any financial decisions could be made. Now jobs and jobsites are being managed on an iPad, so we can look at cash flow and profitability numbers and make financial decisions daily. The construction industry has complex requirements, so they need someone devoted to their industry full-time who can advise them on ways to become more profitable."

Fifteen years ago, Rebowe helped start the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce, which now has more than 850 members. While serving as chairman of the chamber, he helped form the Jefferson Convention and Visitors Bureau and its board of directors by obtaining funding sources for the organization.

Throughout his career, Rebowe has been involved in numerous professional and community organizations. He currently is involved with the local chapter of the American Cancer Society, for which he seeks donations and grants for its annual gala, and participates in Relay for Life and other fundraising events. •

— Kerry Duff



PROFESSIONAL

# Allen Villarrubia

**Position:** Gulf Coast Bank and Trust commercial underwriter

**Age:** 27

**Family:** single

**Education:** bachelor's degree and triple major in economics, finance and business administration; and master's degree in business administration, University of New Orleans

Allen Villarrubia wasn't even a teenager when he was introduced to the business world. He started working for his father's wholesale company in junior high school, which set him on the path toward a career in creating enterprises.

In high school and college, he ran a lawn care business informally known as Al's Lawn Care, which he later sold. He then started At Home Advertising, a company that distributed advertising pieces for small business owners that he later closed to focus on college.

"I've always had a strong inclination to numbers," Villarrubia said. "It's a passion. It's not just what I do at work, but it is what I do when I get off of work."

As a business consultant for the Louisiana Small Business Development Center-Greater New Orleans region, Villarrubia focused on helping small business owners access capital. That included helping local tourism companies, restaurants, salons and yogurt shops obtain loans.

"It is a difficult process for small business owners to get a loan," he said. "I help them to create a startup plan and align that plan with bank expectations. Once we identify a realistic plan, then we will go through a loan packaging process."

Villarrubia moved to Gulf Coast Bank and Trust as a commercial underwriter in late August. He brings to the bank a background in community education. While at the SBDC, he taught a "Five Steps to Secure Financing" class that focused on what lenders consider and how to land a loan.

"It's about educating them for what the banks are looking for, not just walking in and hoping they can get the loan," he said.

In his last two years with the SBDC, Villarrubia assisted clients in accessing more than \$12 million in capital formation and helped them obtain capital to relocate or expand their business.

"For most of my clients, their growth would not have happened at all had they not secured the capital to make the expansion possible," he said. "I'm able to restructure how they actually plan to run their business differently so it aligns with bank expectations and then the model brings that capital to them through the banks enabling them to implement their growth plan."

Villarrubia received the 2011 Louisiana SBDC State Star award for being the highest performing business consultant in the state for his work during 2010 and 2011. •

— Jennifer Nall



PROFESSIONAL

# Ellen Yellin

**Position:** Bourgeois Bennett tax and employee benefits director

**Age:** 59

**Family:** husband, Marc; sons, Jeffrey, 31, Brian, 29

**Education:** bachelor's degree in political science, Newcomb College; master's degree in business administration, A.B. Freeman School of Business

Despite her love of public accounting, Ellen Yellin knows the uncertainty represented by the next wave of federal tax laws is daunting.

"It's my greatest challenge," said Yellin, who started her career as a tax manager with Alexander Grant and Co. in the late 1970s before signing on with Bourgeois Bennett in 1985. "This is somewhat true every year, but for next year we don't know the full implications of the new tax laws, and that makes it hard to plan."

Yellin specializes in tax matters, retirement planning and employee benefit planning.

"With the changes that are going to take place next year, you have to decide whether it will be better or not for a client to stay in a tax-exempt municipal bond, or if they should think in terms of tax-deferred municipal annuities," Yellin said. "All of which means there are a lot of things you can tell your clients to think about as their investment advisor, but we may not really know until next year what to tell them."

Despite her status as a pioneer female in public accounting, Yellin said she doesn't look at herself as a path-breaker.

"It is really more a matter of going through the

ranks," she said. "There is a degree of time that you have to spend to learn this business — and I've certainly done that."

Yellin claims to have backed into public accounting. She wanted to major in law, but upon the advice of her late father, Dr. Harold Schwartz, who had told her to learn how to type so "she could always get a job," she took an economics class and liked it.

"I ended up cross-registering with the business school and went on from there," she said.

Working on a regular basis with up to 100 clients, Yellin said she spends most of the non-tax deadline time of the year doing employee benefits work, along with the taxes. With a client load that has grown through the decades, she's happy for the work.

"When you develop a reputation that shows that you give good service, that you care about your clients, help them save money and help them plan for their future, I think the word gets out."

In her spare time, Yellin has served as founder and president of the Women's Professional Council and treasurer of CourtWatch NOLA. •

— Garry Boulard



If you are doing business in New Orleans,  
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*Congratulations to Executive Vice President Brad Calloway on being selected as one of the CityBusiness Money Makers of the Year.*



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**Best Places to Work**

First NBC Bank recognizes that a community based financial institution grows when it has professional and caring employees. We strive every day to supply the best banking services to each of our customers.

First NBC Bank is now a 32 location full-service financial institution. Majority local ownership, allows us to cut through red tape and make decisions quickly when responding to our customers' financial needs. Our entire staff is committed to a relationship-based community bank structure unlike any other found in today's crowded banking environment.



Veterans Office

The Bank's flexible organizational structure affords our clients access to highly skilled and empowered bankers who are valued as trusted financial partners. And because we believe in open communication with customers, we will always encourage you to discuss your financial objectives and look for ways to implement them.

First NBC Bank never stopped lending even during days of market instability.

We're recognized as one of the top lending and service related banks throughout the Crescent City and the Metropolitan Area.

So, if you want to work with a bank that makes client services its primary concern, you know who you can turn to.

**Serving customers on the South and North Shores**

***First NBC Locations***

**ORLEANS PARISH**

- Main Office**  
210 Baronne Street  
504-566-8000
- Mid City Office**  
504-252-4345
- St. Charles Office**  
504-252-4330
- Read Office**  
504-671-3875
- Carondelet Office**  
504-671-3560
- DeGaulle Office**  
504-252-4300
- Lakeview Office**  
504-671-3520

**JEFFERSON PARISH**

- Elmwood Office**  
504-671-3510
- Kenner Office**  
504-671-3540
- Lapalco Office**  
504-671-3570
- Veterans Office**  
504-671-3530
- Transcontinental Office**  
504-671-3425
- Terrytown Office**  
504-671-3550
- Manhattan Office**  
504-252-4315
- Cleary Office**  
504-252-4360

**ST. TAMMANY PARISH**

- Pontchartrain Office**  
985-819-1240
- Covington Office**  
985-234-2265
- Mandeville Office**  
985-626-4488
- Madisonville Office**  
985-819-1310
- Pearl River Office**  
985-819-1385
- Lacombe Office**  
985-819-1200
- Gause West Office**  
985-649-3535
- Gause Central Office**  
985-265-1000
- Gause East Office**  
985-781-2265
- Brownswitch Road Office**  
985-768-4560

**TANGIPAHOA PARISH**

- Range Road Office**  
985-819-1375
- Amite Office**  
985-819-1345
- Southwest Railroad Office**  
985-819-1330
- Ponchatoula Office**  
985-819-1360
- Kentwood Office**  
985-819-1450

**WASHINGTON PARISH**

- Bogalusa Office**  
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**LIVINGSTON PARISH**

- Denham Springs Office**  
225-706-1357

[www.firstnbcbank.com](http://www.firstnbcbank.com)

