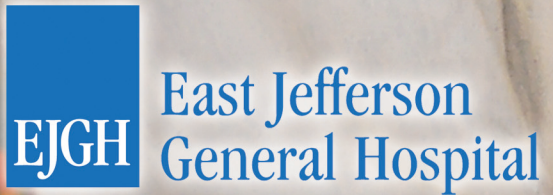


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of the
Year**

2007
**Woman
of the
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Women of the Year build momentum in construction

By Christian Moises
Associate Editor

lone “Toni” Wendel has taken a lead in what many consider a man’s world.

Wendel, owner and president of Olde World Builders & Remodelers, earned a contractor’s license and took over her husband’s home construction business 20 years ago after he became ill.

Her work in the homebuilding industry led her up to leading the Homebuilders Association of Greater New Orleans in 2006, playing a major role in helping homeowners rebuild smarter, safer and more environmentally sound after Hurricane Katrina.

Wendel took her role in the recovery one step further this year by serving on the Louisiana State Licensing Board for Residential Contractors, fighting to safeguard homeowners from fraudulent contractors.

In its ninth year, New Orleans CityBusiness has recognized 50 outstanding women based on professional and community



Christian Moises

achievements. A selection committee reviewed 200-plus nominations before naming the Class of 2007.

Several honorees join Wendel in representing the construction industry, nine continue to improve the education system, two serve as ambassadors for their immigrant communities and one makes sure the space shuttle’s external tank is safe.

This year’s class has six two-time honorees — Debra Bowers, Gayle Dellinger, Maura Donahue, Priscilla Lawrence, Ann Rogers and Suzanne Thomas. These women are one step away from joining the Women of the Year Hall of Fame for three-time honorees.

These women show New Orleans has maintained its diversity and they also share another common thread. They are all leaders in business and the community.

CityBusiness thanks each of them for their professional and civic efforts and the differences they are making in the region.

Congratulations to Toni Wendel and the 2007 Women of the Year. •



Slidell Memorial Hospital congratulates our
2007 WOMAN OF THE YEAR
Elizabeth Teague, Director of Physician Services






Congratulations to
JANE ANN KUCKELMAN FROSCH '74
President of
Archbishop Chapelle High School
on being named one of
City Business'
2007 WOMEN OF THE YEAR



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congratulations

MELANIE EHRLICH
professor and researcher in the Department of Biochemistry at the Tulane School of Medicine, Human Genetics Program, and the Tulane Cancer Center

MAUREEN LICHTVELD
professor and chair of the Department of Environmental Health Sciences of the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine

LISA STOCKTON
Head Coach of the Green Wave Women's Basketball Team


 Women of Tulane
 Women of the Year

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Carmen D. Baham



*on being selected a 2007
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Nomination forms now online

Submitting nominations for CityBusiness' five special programs has never been easier.

Nomination forms for the 2008 programs can be found at www.neworleanscitybusiness.com, filled out online and sent via e-mail. Nomination forms can also be e-mailed to christian.moises@nopg.com, faxed to 832-3550 or mailed to CityBusiness, 111 Veterans Memorial Blvd., Suite 1440, Metairie, LA 70005.

For more information on any of the special events, contact Christian Moises at 293-9249 or e-mail christian.moises@nopg.com. The 2008 special publications are:

Leadership in Law

In its fourth year, Leadership in Law recognizes 50 outstanding individuals in the legal community based on their professional and community contributions. Nominations are due Jan. 4, and honorees will be recognized at an event March 18.

Health Care Heroes

After celebrating its inaugural year in 2006, Health Care Heroes will identify and honor outstanding men and women in the health care industry whose contributions have increased the wellbeing of the community.

Nominations are due Feb. 29, and honorees will be recognized at an event May 22.

Innovator of the Year

CityBusiness is looking for the area's hottest new products, services and concepts to honor in a special salute to innovation in our region. Innovator of the Year nominations are due July 3, and honorees will be recognized at an event Sept. 26.

Women of the Year

For a 10th year, 50 women whose successes in business and contributions to the community have set the pace for the region's future will be recognized as Women of the Year. CityBusiness is looking for innovative leaders who are making waves with their energy, ideas, achievements and commitment to excellence in the area. Nominations are due Aug. 29, and honorees will be recognized at an event Nov. 21.

Best Places to Work

Wonder how your company measures up to others throughout the area? In its seventh year, CityBusiness will rank the Best Places to Work according to how well they treat their most important asset — their employees. Nominations are due July 25, and honorees will be recognized at an event Dec. 12. •



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Wendel

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On the cover: Illone 'Toni' Wendel, owner and president of Olde World Builders & Remodelers, takes a break from renovations on a home in the Irish Channel. (Photo by Frank Aymami)

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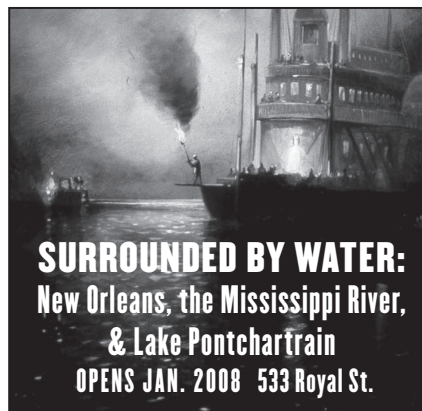


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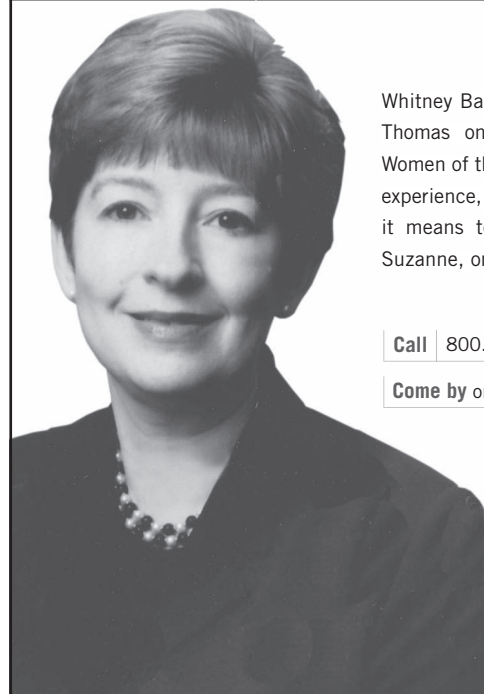
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PRISCILLA LAWRENCE, Executive Director



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Suzanne C. Thomas.



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New Orleans CITY BUSINESS

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WOMEN OF THE YEAR
2007

past honorees

1999

Phyllis Adams
Jan Boatright
Patricia Denechaud
Maura Donahue
Betsy Dresser
Lana Duke
Nanci Easterling

Midge Epstein
Mignon Faget
Donna Fraiche
Patricia Habeeb
Connie Jacobs
Leslie Rosenthal Jacobs
Alice Kennedy

Ti Martin
Judy Perry Martinez
Elise McCullough
Ruth Ann Menutis
Siomonia Edwards Milton
Phala Mire
Margaret Montgomery-Richard

Karyn Noles
Ruth Owens
Sharon Perlis
Nellie Stokes Perry
Leaudria Polk
Kay Priestly
Jan Ramsey

Marguerite Redwine
P.K. Scheerle
Flo Schornstein
Janet Shea
Kim Sport
Carroll Suggs
Barbara Turner Windhorst

2000

Tonia Aiken
Lauren Anderson
Carol Asher
Judy Barrasso
Diane Barrilleaux
Suzette Becker
Elodia Blanco

Julia Bland
Cindy Brennan
Maureen Clary
Sally Clausen
Dr. Elizabeth Terrell
Hobgood Fonham

Joni Friedmann
Joanne Gallinghouse
Brenda Garibaldi Hatfield
Paulette Hurdlick
Maureen Larkins
Gay LeBreton

Sandra Levy
Londa Martin McCullough
Linda Mintz
Judith Miranti
Angela O'Byrne
Rajender "Raj" Pannu

Kay Priestly
Kat Rice
P.K. Scheerle
Eileen Skinner
Bettye Parker Smith
Sherry Walters

2001

Julie Condy
Sherie Conrad
Sheila Danzey
Judy Dawson
Ann Duplessis
Patti Elish
Jean Felts

Patricia Gray
Beverly Gianna
Sheilah Auderer Goodson
Norma Grace
Deborah Ducote Keller
Donna Guinn Klein
Roselyn Koretzky

Corvette Kowalski
Jennifer Magee
Barbara Major
Laurie Vignaud Marshall
Suzanne Mestayer
Nancy Morovich
Barbara Motley

Roberta Musa
Iona Myers
Rickie Nutik
Tina Owen
Sharon Rodi
Wanda Sigur
ChiQuita Simms

Katherine Harlan Sippola
Julie Skinner Stokes
Ruby Sumler
Nancy Bissinger Timm
Ollie Tyler
Pam Wegmann
Ann Wills

2002

Ann Cassagne Anderson
Annie Avery
Trilby Barnes
Ginger Berrigan
Dianne Boazman
Donnie Marie Booth
Christine Briede
Kay Brief

Stephanie Bruno
Kimberly Williamson Butler
Jane Cooper
Shirley Trusty Corey
Kay Dee
Eugenie Jones Encalarde
Alethia Gauthier
Clem Goldberger

Patricia Green
Judith Halverson
Barbara Johnson
Barbara Kaplinsky
Ruth Kullman
Sharon Litwin
Ana Lopez
Barbara MacPhee

Deborah Mavis
Marguerite McDonald
Cheryl Nickerson
Danette O'Neal
Jimmie Phillips
Catherine Pierson
Jane Raiford
Rhonda Robichaux

Julie Rodriguez
Judy Shano
Sandy Shilstone
Susan Spicer
Suzanne Thomas
Deborah Villio
Kay Wilkins
Elizabeth Williams

2003

Donna K. Alley
Dianne Baham
Gaynell Bellizan
Ruth Berggren
Lolita Burrell
Jeanette C. Butler
Vanessa Claiborne
Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson

Elaine E. Coleman
Katherine Conklin
Lisa Crinel
Susan G. D'Antoni
M. Christine D'Antonio
Sandra Dartus
Camilla Q. Davis
Catherine C. Dunn

Carol Etter
Peggy A. Feldmann
Susan K. Fielkow
Deborah Duplechin Harkins
Deborah C. Keel
Patricia A. Krebs
Mary Landrieu
Janet E. Leigh

A. Kelton Longwell
Charlotte Connick Mabry
Laura K. Maloney
Eve Barrie Masinter
Elsie Mendez
Eileen F. Powers
Tonnette "Toni" Rice
Deborah B. Rouen

Dionne M. Rousseau
Diane M. Roussel
Kim Ryan
Grace Sheehan
Andrea Thornton
Keeley Williams Verrett
Dawn Wesson
Charlee Williamson

2004

Philomene "Missy" Allain
Rita Benson LeBlanc
Barbara C. Booth
Lally Brennan
Valerie Cahill
Karen Carter
Audrey Cerise
Hallema Sharif Clyburn
Dorothy M. Clyne
Sandra Corrigan

Elizabeth Coulon
Virginia Davis
Stephanie Dupuy
Anita Gilford
Dana Meeks Hansel
Lane Hindermann
Andrea Huseman
Ellen Kempner
Laura Lee Killeen
Janice Kishner

Dr. Susan Krantz
Angelique LaCour
Janet E. Larson
Diane Lyons
Carla Major
Marilyn Maloney
Lisa Maurer
Mary L. Meyer
Kathleen Mix
Michelle Montz

Carole Cukell Neff
Dr. J. Collier Ochsner
Stephanie Prunty
Dr. Felicia Rabito
Ann Rogers
Gail Roussel
Peggy Scott
Tara Shaw
Jaye Berard Smith
Kathryn Smith

Carol Solomon
Kim Sport
Liz Tahir
Donna Taylor
Fran Villere
Ann Wallace
Barbara B. Waller
Bonnie K. Wibel
Carol B. Wise
Ellen Yellin

2005

Laura Maloney
Danica Ansardi
Anne Babin
Margarita Bergen
Wendy Beron
Elizabeth Boh
Jennifer Bollinger
Tracie Boutte
Delisha Boyd
Kim Boyle

Jaye Calhoun
Anne Cochran
Beth Cristina
Tina Dandry-Mayes
Gayle Dellinger
Rosemary James DeSalvo
Margo DuBos
Kim Dudek
Kirsten Early
Donna Fraiche

Carol Gniady
Ruby Bridges Hall
Dr. Jodie Holloway
Kathy Lynn Honaker
Tonja Koob
Mary von Kurmatowski
Michele Shane L'Hoste
Angelle LaBorde
Mary Helen Lagasse
Susan Laudeman

Belinda Little-Wood
Babs Mollere
Joan Mollohan
Leann Moses
Beverly Nichols
Julie Noto
Vera O'Brien
Rajender Pannu
Lisa Roth
Diane Roussel

Martha Ann Samuel
Miriam Schulingkamp
Lynda Nugent Smith
Raylyn Stevens
Phyllis Taylor
Cheryl Teamer
Polly Thomas
Sharon Toups
Nancy Trosclair
Anne Witmer

2006

Doris Voitier
Donna Alley
Theresa Anderson
Florence André
Terry Birkhoff
Julia Bland
Virginia Boulet
Debra Bowers
Bonnie Boyd
Katie Brasted

Betsy Brien
Sister Camille Anne Campbell
Karen Troyer Caraway
Tiffany Chase
Nancy Claypool
Virginia 'Ginger' Crawford
Katherine Crosby
Klara Cvitanovich
Karen DeSalvo
Mary Ehret

Mignon Faget
Regina Hall
Yvette Jones
Donna Klein
Kathleen Laborde
Priscilla Lawrence
Patricia LeBlanc
Lynn Luker
Sandie McNamara
Suzanne Mestayer

Kerry Milton
Cindy Nuesslein
Angela O'Byrne
Diana Pinckley
Patricia Prechter
Kelly Ranum
Amy Reimer
Patricia Riddlebarger
Sally-Ann Roberts
Judge Karen Roby

Sandra Rosenthal
Pamela Schafer
P.K. Scheerle
Florence Schornstein
Holly Sharp
Adrienne Slack
Carol Solomon
Becky Spinnato
Stacey Stemke
Carol Wise

Names in bold were individual Woman of the Year award honorees.



Ilone 'Toni' Wendel

Age: 66

Position: owner and president, Olde World Builders & Remodelers LLC

Family: widow; children, Ronald, 45, Claudelle, 42, Kathleen, 40, Kevin, 38

Education: graduate of Sacred Heart of Jesus High School, New Orleans; attended Loyola University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an archeologist.

When trying to unwind, I: paint Impressionist pictures and read the writings of Winston Churchill.



Ivon Voloshyn, left, a carpenter with Alpha Omega Construction, works with Toni Wendel on custom-built cypress doors for a home in the Irish Channel.

It makes sense Toni Wendel is a great admirer of Winston Churchill. Like her hero, Wendel knows how to step up and be a leader in a crisis.

When her late husband, Ronald Wendel Sr., became seriously ill 20 years ago, she earned a contractor's license and took over the operations of his home construction business. Last year, as only the second female president in the 66-year history of the Home Builders Association of Greater New Orleans, she accepted the towering task of helping the industry and homeowners rebound after Hurricane Katrina.

This year she became the only woman to serve on the Louisiana State Licensing Board for Residential Contractors, which is responsible for stemming fraud since the storm.

"To me, the most important thing that I can do in my city right now is help the consumer get protected from what is going on," Wendel said.

When the National Association of Home Builders brings its 10th annual Green Building Conference to New Orleans in May, Wendel will again be out front as the official liaison to the event from the HBAGNO. One of the construction projects being showcased at the conference is the Cotton Mill clock tower renovation by Wendel's own company, Olde World Builders & Remodelers.

"We're going to make it energy-efficient — more green, so to speak," she said.

Wendel is especially proud of her company's 2006 project refurbishing a blighted, circa 1890s New Orleans home for use as the New Orleans Mission's center for homeless women.

"Renovation is much more difficult than new construction, because when you start opening things up you find more problems than you expected," Wendel said. "But I had my crew work with me even on weekends, because there was a timeline when (the New Orleans Mission) wanted it done, and we did it."

The two youngest of Wendel's four children, Kathleen and Kevin, are involved in the construction company, and after both lost their homes to Katrina, they moved their families temporarily into the second floor of their mother's Mid-City home. Wendel put off repairing the flooded first floor to focus on helping her clients with their homes.

Wendel is an accomplished artist who enjoys painting on weekends and other spare moments. Though mainly self-taught, she has taken lessons from local artist Freddie Guess, who recently exhibited some of Wendel's Impressionist works in his French Quarter studio. •

— Sonya Stinson





Rachelle Albright

Age: 35

Position: F.H. Myers Construction Co. vice president of project management

Family: husband, Norman; children, Patrick, 5, Ainsley, 9 months

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

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a geologist.

When trying to unwind, I: spend time with my children.

As a senior administrator for one of New Orleans' largest construction companies, Rachelle Albright has risen through the ranks of what has historically been a male-dominated industry.

Starting with her father's company as an estimator and project manager in 1997, Albright knew she would have to work hard to prove her skills, knowledge and drive.

"The gender barrier is actually one of those things that motivates me," said Albright. "I have found that once you prove yourself, you can gain recognition and respect throughout the industry fairly quickly."

As vice president of project management for F.H. Myers Construction Co., Albright oversees project budgets, costs, profits and schedules. She managed many of the company's top clients and projects including the five-floor renovation

of the Elmwood Tower and the Sacred Heart Academy expansion.

She has been on the board of directors for the New Orleans Bayou Chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors for more than eight years. In 2006, she served as the first female chairwoman of the board in the chapter's 35-year history and created the Women's Forum Committee to promote, foster and develop business education opportunities for women in the industry.

Post-Katrina, her love for the industry has been reinforced by the work she sees coming in the next decade or so.

"I'm glad to be involved in an industry that is helping with the recovery of our city," she said. "I'm involved in a variety of projects and there's always something new and

interesting in this industry."

Colleagues describe Albright as an organized person enjoys traveling and spending time with family and friends.

She is a mother of two and said she strives to find the perfect balance of being good at her day job and as a mother. Her two key ingredients are strong family support and the ability to maximize her quality time when she's not working.

While Albright reports to her father during the day, she often reports to her son, Patrick, at night.

"I just try to get him interested in what I do. When he sees an F.H. Myers sign around town, he knows that's Mommy's company and he takes a look."•

— Craig Guillot



Carmen D. Baham

Age: 53

Position: CDB Properties president and owner

Family: children, Eugene, 34, Courtney, 24

Education: bachelor's degree in paralegal studies with focus on real estate law, Tulane University; advanced studies in architecture, Tulane University

When I grew up, I wanted to: go to law school.

When trying to unwind, I: garden.

For her work at the real estate development company she started after Hurricane Katrina, Carmen Baham borrows a catchphrase from the 1989 film "Field of Dreams."

"I believe that if you build it, they will come," Baham said.

After several years as a contract liaison for the city attorney's office in New Orleans in the early 1990s, Baham began working for the dean of architecture at Tulane University, where she fostered a love of New Orleans' historic homes.

Katrina destroyed her home in Broadmoor, prompting her to put her architectural interest into action.

"I wanted to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. I started a company and quickly began acquiring properties, rehabbing them and returning them to commerce."

Baham partnered with the Pearson Group, an urban planning and consulting organization, to create her own real estate development company, CDB Properties. Together, the partners specialize in improving the quality of life in New Orleans' neighborhoods through revitalization.

"We buy homes, refurbish them and return them to commerce," she said.

In planning the redevelopment of Katrina-affected communities, Baham and her associates address the historical, cultural, physical, social and economic needs of the community they serve.

"I have a love for old, historic properties in New Orleans, and it brings me joy to be able to bring them back to life."

In addition to repairing her home in Broadmoor, where she serves as block captain in the Broadmoor Improvement

Organization, she seeks out properties in other neighborhoods on the rebound.

"We're in the process of acquiring new properties in the Edgewater Park neighborhood of Gentilly. That's a wonderful neighborhood with a lot of life."

Baham said although she has experienced frustration in navigating systems such as The Road Home, she takes joy in seeing positive outcomes, especially the component of her business that empowers clients with the tools to become involved in creating their own success.

"It gives me tremendous fulfillment seeing a first-time homebuyer walk into his or her newly renovated home. I've always been a people person, and that helps me put people first in my business."•

— Thomas Leggett



Debra D. Bowers

Two-time honoree

Age: 53

Position: Barrister Global Services Network Inc. president and chief operating officer

Family: husband, John Bowers II; children John III, 30, Jared, 28

Education: graduate of Soule Business College

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a newspaper journalist or a lawyer.

When trying to unwind, I: read and spend time with my new grandson.

You could make a tongue-twisting riddle from the story of how Debra Bowers sold her small IT firm to an upstate New York company, then took over that business and moved it and 100 jobs to Louisiana.

If Barrister of Buffalo buys Bowers' business, and Bowers buys Barrister, what does she get? The answer is the nation's oldest and largest woman-owned business providing multi-vendor IT services, with 2006 sales of \$23 million, according to Bowers.

Founded in 1972, Barrister acquired Advantage Innovations, the company Bowers owned with her son, John Barrister, in 2002. By early 2004, Bowers had obtained controlling interest of Barrister.

"Barrister was struggling a little bit," Bowers said. "We said, 'If we take it over, we probably can make a lot of changes

that could make it more efficient and more profitable.'"

The company employs 140 people and contracts with more than 15,000 certified technicians in the United States, Puerto Rico, Canada and Mexico.

With the help of a Louisiana Economic Development employee-training grant, Barrister moved to Harahan when Bowers took over. After Hurricane Katrina and a temporary relocation to Austin, Texas, Bowers decided to move the headquarters to Hammond but keep a branch office in Harahan.

Outside of the office, Bowers serves on the certification committee of the Women's Business Enterprise National Council, which provides networking and procurement opportunities.

"It's very gratifying and amazing to see the types of business-

es that women are buying, running and creating from nothing."

Bowers' business is a family enterprise involving both her children. "We wouldn't be as successful as we are if we didn't have that family commitment," she said. "Many times business comes before anything else that we have going on. That's the tough part but it's the reality of it."

Married for 34 years to John Bowers II, whom she calls "a wonderful person who puts up with all of this foolishness," Bowers is excited about the recent arrival of her first grandchild.

For Bowers, the key to business success has been to create a plan and keep working it.

"You fall down a few times but you know what? You just keep going and pretty soon you start winning again."•

— Sonya Stinson



Jane S. Brooks

Age: 55

Position: University of New Orleans professor and chairwoman of the department of planning and urban studies

Family: husband, Walter; children, Lauren, 28, Courtney, 25

Education: bachelor's degree in landscape architecture, Louisiana State University; master's degree in landscape architecture, Harvard University Graduate School of Design

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an artist.

When I'm trying to unwind, I: read.

As a native New Orleanian, professor Jane S. Brooks has watched New Orleans through many transformations.

Brooks has been a faculty member at the University of New Orleans since 1976, where she established and coordinates the Historic Planning Preservation Planning program. Throughout her career, she has conducted neighborhood planning studies throughout the metro area for the New Orleans City Planning Commission, the Jefferson Parish Planning Department and a variety of other neighborhood and community organizations.

Brooks enjoys and preserving historic architecture and design and teaching students and helping them find their passions within the field.

"I really get a lot of fulfillment helping build careers for people," said Brooks. "I like working with my graduate students to

help them find a passion for the built environment, urban planning or historic preservation. It's about a feeling that I can help make a difference with my students and my city."

Brooks found her passion for planning through Robert Reich at Louisiana State University College of Art and Design. With prodding from him and other professors, Brooks landed a scholarship paying half her tuition at Harvard University Graduate School of Design and later jumped at an offer to work as a research assistant at UNO, returning home in 1976.

Hurricane Katrina pushed Brooks and the UNO planning program into the limelight when she led a variety of recovery planning initiatives to support the rebuilding of Gentilly and Lakeview. She was also a member of the American Planning Association's Planning Assessment Team that assisted the New Orleans City Planning Commission in post-Katrina

planning efforts. Brooks also worked to bring Holy Cross High School to Gentilly and will begin working on planning projects in eastern New Orleans in the spring semester.

"We have chosen projects in areas where we feel we can really help make a difference," she said. "I've really been inspired by many neighborhood leaders and their sweat and sheer intuitiveness to return."

Brooks was recently elected to the board at City Park and will work with the park's landscape architecture.

Outside of work, Brooks enjoys art, specifically watercolor and glass, which calls upon her creativity and knack for design.

Planning also seems to run in the family — her husband, Walter R. Brooks, is executive director of the Regional Planning Commission and her oldest daughter, Lauren Brooks, is a planner in Tampa, Fla. •

— Craig Guillot



Simone Bruni

Age: 36

Position: The Demo Diva owner and founder

Family: single; pet ducks, Pearl and Puffy

Education: bachelor's degree in communications, Loyola University

When I grew up, I wanted to: import flowers.

When trying to unwind, I: enjoy Samba dancing.

Things looked pretty bleak for Simone Bruni after Hurricane Katrina. She was laid off from her job as a corporate meeting planner and she lost her house in Lakeview to the 17th Street Canal breach. While she received job offers elsewhere, “I just didn’t want to leave,” Bruni said.

After facing construction issues with her own house and seeing signs for out-of-town contractors, The Demo Diva took shape in her mind.

“I was kind of jealous. I wanted to be a part of the rebuilding.”

She researched how insurance and construction worked, put together a crew to do the construction work, and on Aug. 1, 2006, her company did its first demolition project. The firm has performed more than 200 demolitions since.

Being able to relate to homeowners because of her own experience, Bruni lends a personal touch to the process of tearing down homes.

“I’m an optimist. I’m an encourager. I knew I could bring that to the table,” said Bruni, who shows up at demo sites in a pink shirt and pink pearls.

Through her work, Bruni has witnessed a transformation of the city and the attitude of locals. When her business started, “there was such despair in the air,” Bruni said. “Now, there’s more of an excitement in the air. People are coming back and they’re coming back confidently.”

Aside from her work with The Demo Diva, Bruni volunteers to assist non-English speaking laborers who have come to work on construction projects. Bruni, who has

lived in Guatemala and Mexico and has a Brazilian father, speaks fluent Spanish and Portuguese and serves as a translator at community health clinics.

Additionally, she serves as the gala chairwoman for the New Orleans Medical Mission, which sends doctors to Latin America to provide medical care to poor people.

Bruni realizes that demolition work will eventually dry up as the city gets back on its feet. However, she has a plan for the future — she wants to create a Demo Diva line of tools to be sold at places such as The Home Depot.

In providing demolition services and a sympathetic ear to her customers, Bruni helped her fellow New Orleanians and herself as well. “It’s been my therapy.”•

— Fritz Esker



Naydja Domingue Bynum

Age: 59

Position: Doby Properties president; Historic Faubourg Treme Association founder

Family: husband, Adolf Bynum Sr.

Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, Dillard University; master's degree in nursing science, Louisiana State University; doctorate in nursing, LSU

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a doctor, or go into real estate.

When trying to unwind, I: travel, play tennis or Texas hold 'em, or sew.

Naydja Bynum is a woman of many hats, with a résumé that includes stints in nursing, real estate and craftwork.

Fresh out of college in 1971, Bynum began her 10-year career working with U.S. Public Health Services, an organization that protects, promotes and advances health and safety.

"They teach you everything you ever needed to know," said Bynum, who spent time in New Orleans and Baltimore during her time with the organization. "And they do it very quickly. They also paid my tuition when I went back to school to pursue my masters."

After reaching the level of captain, Bynum left U.S. Public Health Services to work as a clinical specialist in Baltimore before returning to New Orleans to work as a nursing director

for various hospitals in the Crescent City.

"I picked up a lot of management experience during my time in Baltimore. I was able to ascend very quickly when I returned to New Orleans."

Although she didn't technically retire from nursing, Bynum said she has not done much on that front since 1996 when she became involved in real estate restoration with her husband.

"When we would go on dates, we would often walk the neighborhood to look at houses and property for sale. He had been involved in some restoration projects previously and it got me interested. We discovered it was something we both loved."

In 1996, Bynum started Doby Properties, which buys blocks of properties, usually old shotguns, and restores them to their historical beauty.

"The properties were fixed up one at a time. We always tried our best to keep the historical significance of the home, while making them more functional and efficient."

Bynum's project involves restorations in Treme, where she and her husband live. She started the Historic Faubourg Treme Association, to help improve the quality of life in the neighborhood by fighting blight and crime. Bynum purchased a group of homes about seven blocks from where she lives that she plans to restore.

"Treme has been a challenge because it is such a diverse, culturally sensitive neighborhood," said Bynum.

"We have made lots of positive progress in the region with regard to reducing crime, and cleaning up the area."•

— Robin Shannon



Caitlin Cain

Age: 31

Position: Regional Planning Commission economic development director

Family: husband, Kurt Weigle; daughter, Eva P. Weigle, 2

Education: bachelor's degree in political science and economic studies, University of Toronto, Trinity College; master's degree in urban planning, University of Michigan

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a foreign correspondent.

When trying to unwind, I: love to go for long walks and I love to swim.

When the construction ends and the downtown Veterans Affairs hospital is open, Caitlin Cain will have accomplished two goals.

First, she'll have furthered a career ambition of synching economic development and urban planning initiatives. Second, she'll be able to point to the infrastructure and tell her daughter, Eva: "Mama and Daddy helped to do that."

Her husband, Kurt Weigle, heads the Downtown Development District.

For the past five years, Cain has served as economic development director for the Regional Planning Commission. Before that, she worked for Gibbs Planning Group in Birmingham, Mich., Grandmont Rosedale Development Corp. in Detroit and the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission.

"I have always loved design, cities and travel, so studying

the urban environment through urban planning was a no-brainer," said Cain.

Through her five years with the commission, Cain has overseen initiatives for the Economic Development Administration, as well as growth planning and grant programs for the Delta Regional Authority. She also contributed to the design, organization and implementation of New Orleans' Main Street program, which focuses on commercial revitalization.

After Hurricane Katrina, Cain's responsibilities and focus shifted to "stabilizing" the medical industry as well as organizing the New Orleans Regional Biosciences Initiatives and the Greater New Orleans Biosciences Economic Development District.

"I am essentially responsible for helping to secure funding, management, promotion and oversight of these operations,

including the planning of the VA Hospital," said Cain, who earlier this year received an EDA award for creating a plan to strengthen New Orleans' biosciences industry.

Cain also has special interest in mentor relationships involving her peers and belongs to the Women's Professional Council, the International Economic Development Council and the Sierra Club.

"There are so many challenges of being a woman in a workplace," she said. "I strongly believe that women really need to share more of their experiences and strategies so the next generation can benefit from having more women of all ages and experiences engaged in leadership roles."

Cain said her greatest motivators are her husband, her daughter and individuals with minds similar to hers. •

— *Nayita Wilson*

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Sharon Latten Clark

Age: 40

Position: Sophie B. Wright Charter School director

Family: single; twins, Alex and Jada, 11

Education: bachelor's degree in mass communications and business, Xavier University; master's degree in human resource management, Houston Baptist University; master's degree in education, Xavier University; principal certification, Northern Arizona University; doctorate in educational leadership, University of New Orleans

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a newscaster.

When trying to unwind, I: sit in the park, read or make jewelry.

For Sharon Latten Clark, director of Sophie B. Wright Charter School, a typical work day means staying on the move.

"Every day is like being at the gym," Clark said. "There's constant movement — meeting with community leaders, completing grant paperwork, observing school operations, talking to students, ensuring strong curriculum and clean facilities."

Sophie B. Wright became a charter school in 2005 in partnership with Southern University of New Orleans and Tulane University Learning Center, transforming a previously failing school into one of the city's post-Katrina success stories.

Clark, a New Orleans native, left home for 13 years to study education and begin her career. When she returned home in 2001, she was offered a principal position at Wright.

"I just couldn't stay away from home. When I began working for Wright, it was considered a failing school so it's been amazing to be a part of the turnaround."

During the 2006-07 school year, only two out of 24 fourth-graders at Sophie B. Wright did not pass the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program test, while only 12 out of 84 eighth-graders did not pass, a dramatic improvement from previous years. Clark reported 97 percent attendance.

"Being at Sophie B. Wright since 2001, I've had the opportunity to be a consistent figure throughout the school's transformation. I'm proud that we've been celebrated for academic gains."

In addition to overseeing the charter school transition, Clark helped secure a \$200,000 grant from the federal government and forged partnerships with businesses includ-

ing Office Depot, the New Orleans Outreach Program, the Tipitina's Foundation and Al Copeland Enterprises.

Through these partnerships, Wright received generous donations of furniture, books, computers, school supplies and band equipment. The New Orleans Outreach Program helped fund an after school program that places 50 tutors on campus throughout the school day.

Clark won't take all the credit for the school's success.

"We've been able to create a culture that fosters learning mostly by building a strong team who believes that every child has the capacity to learn."

According to Clark, colleagues at Sophie B. Wright have become familiar with her motto, a quote by Carl Boyd she writes at the top of documents, one that embodies the ethic of her school: "Nobody rises to low expectations."•

— Thomas Leggett



Gina Cortez

Age: would not disclose

Position: Federal Emergency Management Agency public affairs specialist

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in drama and communications, University of New Orleans; bachelor's degree in biology, UNO

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a doctor.

When trying to unwind, I: work out at the gym.

Being an immigrant in a new country with a different language is difficult. Gina Cortez, public affairs specialist for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, knows about this firsthand.

In 1987, she immigrated with her family from Pisco, Peru, to the United States, and she did not speak English at the time.

Even though she went on to become an accomplished journalist and public information officer, Cortez has never forgotten the difficulties immigrants face. As a result, she works to provide information about New Orleans' post-Katrina recovery efforts to the Hispanic community.

"We don't want the language barrier to be an obstacle on the road to recovery," Cortez said.

While some immigrants still struggle to learn English, even those who speak the language reasonably well are served by hearing details about recovery projects in their native tongue.

"The assistance and understanding is not the same. ... When you don't know the language, you get intimidated about asking questions."

Cortez is also eager to dispel the misconception non-English speakers in America don't want to learn English or fail to learn English because of laziness. Just as some Americans have difficulty learning foreign languages in high school, not all immigrants pick up languages at the same speeds.

"It's not that they don't want to learn the language. ... It's just harder for some people."

In an effort to achieve this goal, Cortez writes press releases in Spanish and English, and she also appears on KTV Channel 76's *Hablemos Claro*, "Estudio Abierto" on 830 AM, as well as KGLA 1540 AM.

Before she dedicated herself to her new calling, Cortez

had been a journalist with The Times-Picayune's New Orleans East community section. However, once that neighborhood was devastated by Hurricane Katrina, Cortez found herself without a job.

"I was basically ready to leave the state after Katrina."

Initially, she joined FEMA as an applicant assistant, aiding families in navigating the application process for assistance. She landed the public affairs specialist job in November.

"It's giving me the rewards of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to resume my communications career while helping the community to recover. It's the best of both worlds."

Aside from continuing her work to help the New Orleans community to recover, Cortez, who recently recovered from knee surgery, is working on getting back to running four miles a day three times a week. •

— Fritz Esker



Darlene Cusanza

Age: 48

Position: Crimestoppers-New Orleans executive director

Family: husband, Sal; children, Kristin, 18, Dominic, 12

Education: bachelor's degree in rehabilitation counseling, Louisiana State University Medical Center, School of Allied Health Professions

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a singing doctor.

When trying to unwind, I: eat out, listen to music, shop and spend time with friends.

Darlene Cusanza was about two years into her job as executive director of Crimestoppers-New Orleans one June evening in 1997 when she stepped out of her office and into her constituents' shoes.

Cusanza was carrying about \$1,200 in checks donated to the Crimestoppers reward fund in her purse when a mugger took it at gunpoint. The robber was eventually captured thanks in part to tips on the organization's hot line. The experience gave Cusanza a firsthand view of how vital the service can be.

"It also gave me an opportunity to understand what crime victims go through, and that's really helped me to be more empathetic to the families that we serve."

Cusanza has become a familiar face to through her frequent TV appearances to announce awards for "most wanted" criminals. After Katrina, she worked with the

Crimestoppers affiliate in Houston, where she and her family had evacuated, to help nab criminals operating between that city and New Orleans. She enlisted Hispanic contractors in the fight against post-Katrina looting by distributing information in Spanish about rewards available to workers who report crime.

Cusanza also is a community advocate of crime prevention and education. She implemented a Safe School Hotline to allow high school students to anonymously report campus crimes and receive cash awards if their tips lead to an arrest or the confiscation of illegal drugs or weapons. Volunteers visit schools to promote the program and let students know they have a safe alternative to going along with bad behavior or looking the other way.

A big supporter of youth recreation, Cusanza was an active

Boy Scout mom during her son, Dominic's, younger years.

"I've now sort of passed that on to my husband, because I'm not a camper," she said.

When Cusanza was a child, she dreamed of becoming a doctor and a singer. She performed nationally touring with jazz groups while studying at Louisiana State University, but an aversion to physics and dissecting cadavers steered her from pre-med to rehabilitation counseling. Her first job after graduation was with the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

She calls her job with Crimestoppers the most challenging she's ever had but said the payoff is big.

"My greatest joy when a case has been solved is that we're able to be with the family and let them see that justice has been served."•

— Sonya Stinson



Nancy Davis

Age: 56

Position: Ochsner Health System senior vice president for operations and chief nursing officer

Family: husband, Richard; children, Kristin, 25, Collin, 23, Taylor, 20

Education: bachelor's degree, University of Kansas School of Nursing; master's degree in psychology, University of Missouri; master's degree in nursing, Louisiana State University School of Nursing

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a writer.

When trying to unwind, I: travel, garden, work out and listen to jazz. One thing people don't know about me is that my favorite holiday is Jazz Fest.

The last time Nancy Davis did nursing clinical work was 1982.

The Ochsner Health System chief nursing officer and senior vice president for operations said she does not miss it.

"I knew early in my career I wanted to play more of an administrative role, lead and be in charge," Davis said. "I feel like I get my gratification by building and maintaining a rich environment in which our nurses on staff can succeed and give the best patient care that we can give."

In her 20 years at Ochsner, Davis has set the pace as an administrator.

In 2003, the Ochsner nursing staff was awarded Magnet Recognition for Excellence in Nursing Services from the American Nursing Credentialing Center. The Ochsner nursing staff is one of 105 hospital staffs chosen nationwide.

"That's the pinnacle for any nursing department to reach and it's the highest achievement any nursing department can have. It has brought a lot of professional development, growth and research into this hospital for our nurses and is a great recruiting tool for this organization."

Davis started at Ochsner in November 1987 as unit director over three psychiatric units. In seven years, she climbed the ranks to head of nursing in 1994. When Ochsner bought three New Orleans hospitals from Tenet in 2006, Davis became the system chief nursing officer.

Davis said her biggest challenge was enduring adversity during Hurricane Katrina as her staff worked to meet urgent patient needs. Davis stayed at the hospital for three straight weeks.

The biggest challenge remaining after Katrina is the

added burden to the nursing shortage that existed before the storm, Davis said. In 2006, Davis helped hire 358 registered nurses at Ochsner.

Davis is working with international nurse recruiting companies to hire nurses from the Philippines to curb the nursing shortage.

As former chairwoman of the New Orleans Organization of Nurse Executives and former president and board member of the Louisiana Organization of Nurse Executives, Davis said her biggest passion in her community work is volunteering with the John Calvin Presbyterian Church in Metairie to rebuild homes in the Lower Ninth Ward.

"My biggest passion right now is rebuilding this city anyway I can help."•

— Tommy Santora



Gayle B. Dellinger

Two-time honoree

Age: 57

Position: Wachovia Securities first vice president of investments

Family: daughter, Lauren, 27

Education: bachelor's degree consumer technology, Winthrop University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: the first woman in space.

When trying to unwind, I: garden, hunt or fish.

As part of her regular duties at Wachovia Securities, Gayle Dellinger provides portfolio management, financial planning and investment advice for more than 400 clients.

"For me it is really a client-by-client story," said Dellinger, 57, who is first vice president for investments. "The common thread is that they are all long-term investors looking for specific goals, all of which requires an understanding of the current market and how it affects a given portfolio and making slight adjustments in response."

That ability to manage a variety of projects is also seen in Dellinger's fundraising for the New Orleans Fire Department, which lost 22 of 33 engine houses during Hurricane Katrina.

Through her work with the Rotary Club of New Orleans,

for whom she has been a member since 1990 and a member of the group's board of directors from 2003 to 2005, Dellinger helped coordinate the Fire House Project, raising more than \$12,000 to help replenish kitchenware at the engine houses.

The next phase of the Fire House Project is centered on raising up to \$50,000 to buy new uniforms for the firefighters. In pursuit of that goal, Dellinger helped organize a "New Orleans Fire Fighters Look Hot" calendar featuring city firefighters in a variety of work-related action poses, with proceeds to be used to help buy uniforms.

Dellinger's organizational proclivities have also been put to the test with her presidency of the Krewe of Cork, which she helped expand from roughly 50 members in 2003 to more than 500 today.

"We have an organized route in the French Quarter, with a police escort and a jazz band — the Red Hot Poppers from the Region," said Dellinger, who increased membership of the krewe with an online registration system and a monthly e-mail newsletter.

A descendent of James Ezekiel Blake, who served in the Confederate Army from South Carolina in the Civil War, Dellinger is also a member of the Jefferson Davis chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and has served as the group's treasurer and president.

"I guess you can say I like to stay busy," laughed Dellinger, who said she is never more happy than "when I am involved in a complicated project."•

— Garry Boulard



Maura Donahue

Two-time honoree

Age: 57

Position: DonahueFavret Contractors vice president of business development

Family: husband, Jack; children John, 41, Tracy, 38, Tim, 37, Darryl 37, Lance 33, Lauren 28

Education: sociology major, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an airline stewardess.

When trying to unwind, I: spend time with my husband.

With almost 30 years experience in the construction industry, DonahueFavret Contractors Vice President Maura Donahue has constructed more than just buildings.

She started working with chambers of commerce and served on the board of the St. Tammany West Chamber in 1997. A year later, she served on the board of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to represent Louisiana and led the Small Business Council for five years. In 2005, Donahue was elected chairwoman of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation, which represents more than 3 million businesses nationwide.

"I am a big proponent of economic development and job

creation. I think prosperity for all solves a lot of problems we have. A high-paying skilled job in Louisiana can help solve a lot of ills."

In 2000, Donahue ran for and served on Louisiana's Republican State Central Committee through 2004. She now serves on the steering committee of Blueprint Louisiana, a citizen-driven effort to identify and implement essential changes to improve Louisiana. The agenda includes adopting more ethics laws, preparing students for a lifetime of success, developing a skilled work force, providing access to better health care and building a superior transportation system.

Outside of work, Donahue enjoys reading, spending time with family and friends, traveling, and collecting and savoring

wines from around the world. She said having the right partner is critical for a woman who wants to succeed at work and in the home.

Donahue said spending time with her husband and colleague, Jack, is one of her biggest joys but that her political aspirations aren't just about business — they're about making a better place for future generations. Her husband recently was elected to the state Senate District 11 seat.

"It's just about getting up every day and trying to make the place where you live a little bit better. I love Louisiana and the communities we live in. I want our kids to enjoy it and I want it to be an even nicer community for them to grow up in."•

— Craig Guillot



Laura Drumm

Age: 48

Position: Tabasco Country Stores owner and partner; Second Wind NOLA president

Family: husband, Hughes; children, Lexie, 16, Trey, 8

Education: bachelor's degree in psychology, Louisiana State University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a psychologist or a writer.

When trying to unwind, I: do needle work.

Small businesses are part of what gives New Orleans its charm. While many other American cities feature chain stores, New Orleans still depends heavily on small business owners.

"Small businesses contribute to the flavor of New Orleans. It's why people come here," said Laura Drumm. "New Orleanians like to have personal relationships with businesses. We put more value in that than other cities."

In 2001, Drumm became a part of the small business community as an owner and partner of Tabasco Country Stores — there's one in the French Quarter and two in Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. Despite a first year that posed many challenges, largely because of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the overall drop in tourism that followed,

business eventually picked up for Drumm.

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina created unprecedented difficulties for small business owners such as Drumm. Shortly after the storm, Kevin Curnin of the New York law firm of Stroock, Stroock and Lavin came to New Orleans to offer guidance to small business owners. He and his associates assisted small business owners in New York after Sept. 11 and hoped to start a similar project in New Orleans.

This was how Second Wind NOLA was born. Drumm serves as president of the group that secures grants and loans for small businesses in the New Orleans area.

"We were the ones screaming for help from the state for small businesses."

Second Wind NOLA has gone to bat for New Orleans area

businesses, approving 3,452 grant applications for awards averaging \$18,500. Through the group, small businesses have received more than \$63 million in assistance.

Drumm said an additional series of grants will soon be issued to businesses. She wants the organization become a general business advocacy group with full-time employees as opposed to volunteers.

Drumm said she is passionate about Second Wind NOLA, not because of the assistance that can be gained for her business but for the impact it will have on the city.

"It's not about helping ourselves but helping our neighbors. The city's too important to let go. It's a battle we can't lose."•

— Fritz Esker



Melanie Ehrlich

Age: 62

Position: Citizens' Road Home Action Team founding member; Tulane University professor of human genetics and biochemistry

Family: married with children and grandchildren

Education: bachelor's degree, Barnard College, Columbia University; doctor of philosophy in molecular biology, State University of New York at Stony Brook

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an elementary school teacher.

When trying to unwind: my husband and I like to go to classical music concerts, the opera, theater and museums. I also spend time in my lovely garden.

While temporarily living in Baltimore after Hurricane Katrina flooded her Gentilly home, Melanie Ehrlich spent a lot of time on the Internet reading Web logs about New Orleans residents complaining about the delays of The Road Home program and other federal assistance.

Ehrlich was also dealing with Road Home to obtain a grant to rebuild her Gentilly residence, so she joined in on the conversation.

"I asked them, 'Isn't somebody going to do something about everything being so complicated and taking so long, like organize a citizens' group or something?'" she said. "I didn't realize at that time I would be the one leading the cause."

In September 2006, just a month after she moved back into her rebuilt Gentilly home, Ehrlich launched the Citizens' Road Home Action Team. CHAT has provided

free help to thousands of New Orleans residents wading through The Road Home process to obtain award grants to rebuild their homes.

"It's been a system that has taken too long to get people their money, and in many cases, people are not getting enough money because of miscalculations of the value of their house or their damages. I'm doing this because the need is very great and the injustice that the storm victims have gone through in our city should not be tolerated."

Ehrlich, a professor of genetics and biochemistry at Tulane University, moved to Baltimore to work at a host laboratory. She then met with New Orleans lawyer Frank Silvestri to organize CHAT.

The first meeting took place Sept. 24, 2006, with eight people standing in Ehrlich's new kitchen. The following month, the meetings moved to the University of New Orleans, where the

organization meets once a month, averaging 15 to 20 members.

Ehrlich said CHAT has been forcing The Road Home to disclose information to applicants, such as a breakdown of awards and grants and a policy book to explain the rules and processes of the program. CHAT has also convinced The Road Home to allow Louisiana-certified appraisals to be submitted by applicants in addition to appraisals done by Road Home representatives.

CHAT has online forms to help applicants dispute awarded grants, request information from The Road Home and review the program's policies.

"People are paying rent and mortgages while waiting on these grants, and we hope to be helping people until the program is done. People getting their money to be able to rebuild their homes and move on with their lives inspires me."•

— Tommy Santora



Jane Ann Frosch

Age: 50

Position: Archbishop Chapelle High School president

Family: husband, Craig Frosch; sons Jon, 22, Zachary, 17

Education: bachelor's degree in music education, Loyola University; master's degree in music, University of New Orleans

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a music teacher.

When trying to unwind, I: read a good a book, particularly suspense novels.

Jane Ann Frosch is not one to stray away from her roots.

Months after receiving her bachelor's degree in music from Loyola University, Frosch, a music lover, returned to her alma mater — Archbishop Chapelle High School — to teach music.

Fifteen years later, she became Chapelle's part-time development and alumnae director, cultivating relationships with alumnae and the community, overseeing special events and helping strengthen the school's fiscal resources, all while teaching.

Chapelle launched several alumnae and fundraisers, including the Chipmunk Classic Golf Tournament, the annual Alumnae breakfast with Santa, Career Day, the annual Community Prayer Breakfast and the Archbishop Chapelle Emerald Gala, which raises more than \$100,000 annually.

Frosch became president of Chapelle in 2005 by appoint-

ment. She said her appointee, mentor and predecessor, Beth Johnson, groomed her for the position, which entails overseeing the school's budget, fundraising and serving in other capacities to help ensure the school's longevity.

Part of Frosch's mission as president is to prepare Chapelle students to perform in a "fast-paced" society, which includes teaching them how to use technology in "responsible" roles.

This year, Chapelle launched a 1-to-1 computing learning program, which provides each eighth- and ninth-grader with a tablet computer to use throughout the day and at home. The ultimate goal is to provide all students with a tablet computer, Frosch said.

Reopening Chapelle, a Catholic all-girls school, nearly two months after Hurricane Katrina was another benchmark. More than 95 percent of the student body returned when the school reopened in October 2005.

That percentage dramatically increased when the school welcomed about 450 students from public and private schools two days later. During that time, the school also continued construction on its Our Lady of Prompt Succor Technology and Fine Arts Building, which opened in August 2005.

"It was probably one of the most exhilarating things that I've been a part of," Frosch said of the reopening.

In the community, Frosch said she works to keep others aware of Chapelle through several professional affiliations. She is a board member for the Kenner Professional Business Association, the East Jefferson Business Association and the National Catholic Education Association. She is also a member of the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce.

"Chapelle did great things for me, and I want to provide those opportunities for our students." •

— Nayita Wilson



Kristin Gisleson-Palmer

Age: 40

Position: Rebuilding Together program, Preservation Resource Center director

Family: husband, Bobby; children Talbot, 9, Josephine, 8, Gear, 5

Education: bachelor's degree in history, St. Louis University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a lawyer and a teacher.

When trying to unwind, I: work on my house and read.

Becoming director of the Preservation Resources Center's Rebuilding Together program in December was a holiday homecoming for Kristen Gisleson-Palmer.

"I was director of this program many years ago, when it was called Christmas in October, in my 20s, and I left to have children and do other things," Gisleson-Palmer said.

When she retook the helm of the program, it had a new name reflecting its affiliation with the national Rebuilding Together network headquartered in Washington, D.C., which uses volunteers to provide free repair services for low-income elderly and disabled homeowners in 240 cities nationwide. In light of the destruction of housing from Hurricane Katrina and its floods, that name — and Gisleson-Palmer's job — have taken on a whole new meaning.

The local Rebuilding Together program, which also targets first responders for assistance, is working on 48 homes in the

New Orleans area, primarily in Faubourg St. Roch, Holy Cross, Broadmoor, Esplanade Ridge/Treme and Hollygrove. Gisleson-Palmer has expanded the two-person staff that was in place when she came aboard to include several AmeriCorps and Vista volunteers as well as additional paid staff.

"I have a staff that is so motivated by love of this city and its people that they just want to make a difference."

It's the same feeling that drives Gisleson-Palmer's passion for her work. While she counts herself as a preservationist who has loved houses from an early age, "It's the people that motivate me first," she said.

She marvels at the resilience and self-reliance of locals such as the 70-year-old cancer survivor in St. Roch and her Alzheimer's-ridden older brother, who gutted half their house by themselves.

"They weren't waiting on help."

Gisleson-Palmer's interest in community service extends to her involvement in public education and efforts to promote the area's revitalization. She is on the boards of the Parent Teacher Student Association at Lusher School; the Louisiana Smart Growth initiative, which addresses a variety of urban planning issues; and Make New Orleans Home, an online community resource designed to help people get settled in the city. She also founded a nonprofit to upgrade the parks and playgrounds in her neighborhood of Algiers Point.

Gisleson-Palmer believes the city's longtime residents, whom she calls "our No. 1 resource," can teach recovery leaders a lot about how to rebuild New Orleans.

"They can tell you what worked in their neighborhood and what didn't work."•

— Sonya Stinson



Michelle Gobert

Age: 40

Position: Signs Now president

Family: husband, Norman; children, Christian, 16, Nicholas, 12, Logan, 9

Education: bachelor's degree in accounting, Xavier University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an accountant.

When trying to unwind, I: spend a day at the spa or an afternoon at the beach.

Michelle Gobert said the idea for the business she owns and operates came from an idea cooked up by her husband.

"For his 30th birthday, my husband received Super Bowl tickets for one of the games held in the Superdome," Gobert said. "After looking around at the large amount of huge signs and banners, he realized the marketing possibilities. That's when we looked into opening a franchise of our own."

She and her husband, Norman Gobert, opened the business in 1990.

She has used digital print technology to offer fast, affordable signage for small and large businesses in the New Orleans area.

"I have helped in the transition among the Signs Now Network of stores to large format digital printing. Instead of

hard printing signs, we can do everything digital," Gobert said. "It has allowed us to expand to billboard printing and full bus wrap advertising."

For piloting this digital printing change, Gobert received the Signs Now Corporate Mark of Excellence in 1996. She has also earned Regional Franchise of the Year and was the Louisiana District Small Business Association's Young Entrepreneur of the Year in 1994.

Gobert's biggest client has been the National Football League and the Super Bowl, which she has worked with since 1997. She said she has implemented a program that sets up and operates an on-demand sign printing facility at the site of the game.

After Hurricane Katrina, Gobert said operations relocated to Slidell for several months. She said her biggest

accomplishment was getting the business back into its Poydras Street office.

Gobert said she always believed she would be an accountant when she grew up since her mother was an accountant at BellSouth and it was all she knew. Before Signs Now, Gobert was an accountant for an advertising firm and still does the bookkeeping for her own business.

Gobert works in the community as a chairwoman for school fairs at Ursuline Academy and St. Andrew Episcopal School, as well as St. Andrew's Parents Club.

"The only other time I have in my life is dealing with my children's lives. I really try to make an effort to spend as much time as possible with my kids."•

— Robin Shannon



Jenny Hamilton

Age: 39

Position: New Orleans Ballet Association executive director

Family: husband, Ewell Smith

Education: bachelor's degree in vocal performance and business administration, Converse College; master's degree in arts administration, University of New Orleans; master's degree in business administration, UNO

When I grew up, I wanted to be: in the arts.

When trying to unwind, I: play the piano or have dinner with my husband.

Jenny Hamilton's passion for the arts intersects with an equally intense enthusiasm for business, a combination of talents and inclinations that makes her a successful leader of the New Orleans Ballet Association.

"I have always loved the world of the arts and knew that somehow I would be a part of this world," said Hamilton, 39, who took over as executive director of NOBA in 1998 after serving as the group's marketing director.

"But it wasn't until I finished my college studies that I realized that I also loved the business side of life and have since tried to balance those two interests."

That balance particularly has been on display at the once financially troubled NOBA, which in the mid-1990s was facing a budget deficit of roughly \$1 million.

"We were able to turn that around through careful fiscal

stewardship and management. The board and the staff together made the hard decisions as to how we would maneuver through and still complete the programming that we wanted with a smaller budget."

Through a vigorous public relations campaign, as well as a more efficient use of resources, the financial fortunes of the association were reversed by the end of the 1990s, putting it in good stead for its next crisis: Hurricane Katrina, which severely damaged the Mahalia Jackson Theatre for the Performing Arts, where NOBA performs, as well as the association's administrative headquarters and 12 of its 14 educational sites.

"Because we had been so conservative fiscally over the previous seven years, we were able to withstand what Katrina did. So much so, in fact, that classes were up and running only two

months after the storm."

Although her work is well beyond the confines of 9-to-5, Hamilton manages to find time for a variety of volunteer efforts that include serving on the board of directors for the Louisiana Alliance for Dance and involvement with the Junior Miss USA, the National Guild of Community Schools for the Arts and the charity fundraiser Men of Fashion/Women of Fashion.

Hamilton's NOBA work made volunteer efforts important to her.

"I realize, being a part of an organization that relies a good deal on volunteer and community support, how truly important that is for other groups, too, which is why I try to get involved when and where I can."•

— Garry Boulard



Paula Hartley

Age: 45

Position: Lockheed Martin Space Systems director of safety and product assurance

Family: husband, Gene; children, Austin, 14, Alexandra, 12, Elizabeth, 7

Education: bachelor's degree in metallurgical engineering and materials science, University of Notre Dame; master's degree in business administration, Tulane University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a veterinarian until age 12, then a metallurgist.

When trying to unwind, I: have dinner and a movie at home with the family.

The successful liftoff of the space shuttle Discovery on its latest mission in October meant Paula Hartley could breathe again.

At Lockheed Martin Space Systems' Michoud facility, Hartley is responsible for quality management for the human space flight program. With 350 employees under her supervision, most of her work is associated with production of external tanks for the space shuttle, including the recent mission to perform repairs on the international space station.

She's also involved in work that supports construction of the new Orion vehicle through the Constellation Program, as well as production of satellites at the Stennis Space Center in Hancock County, Miss.

Days before the last Discovery launch, Hartley recalled another moment nearly 10 years ago when she was a metallur-

gist on the Lockheed team that developed a lightweight, high-strength aluminum alloy that reduced the weight of the external tank by nearly 7,000 pounds. The project took close to eight years to complete.

"We first flew that (tank) in June of 1998, and I tell, you, I held my breath for almost nine solid minutes, because our tank flies for nine minutes and then it separates from the shuttle and falls to the ground."

Other feats on Hartley's list of accomplishments include designing, building and testing a propulsion rocket motor for the Falcon Small Launch Vehicle program and developing a patented invention for an improved method of friction stir welding, which avoids the distortion of materials caused by melting during conventional fusion welding. It instead uses frictional heat to soften the metals to a plastic-like state, then stirs them together under pres-

sure to create a strong joint.

In 2005, Hartley led Lockheed's investigation into the continuing loss of foam insulation from the external tank during shuttle launches. When that study was completed in January 2006, she was named director of safety and product assurance.

In her free time, Hartley enjoys being active, whether it's running, biking, basketball, aerobics or working with her husband, Gene Hartley, to remodel their Slidell home. A rare and special treat for the couple, Hartley said, is a quiet evening at home watching television with the children.

Hartley grew up among the steel and aluminum plants of Pittsburgh and by the sixth grade she had decided metallurgy was her calling.

"And I just really never looked back."•

— Sonya Stinson



Marvalene Hughes

Age: 70

Position: Dillard University president

Family: husband, David Brinks; son, Jan Stiles, 35

Education: bachelor's degree in English and history, Tuskegee University; studies at New York University and Columbia University; doctorate in administration and counseling, Florida State University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an educator.

When trying to unwind, I: exercise.

Ever since she was a young child, Marvalene Hughes knew she was destined to be an educator.

With eight brothers and sisters who all went into education and a family lineage of educators that goes as far back as she can trace, Hughes never even considered doing anything else. Her educational history and career in academia has taken her around the country, from Tuskegee University to New York University, Columbia University and Florida State University. She has numerous honorary degrees including the Honorary Doctor of Laws from Brown University.

“(Education) is without a doubt the most stimulating opportunity to engage with minds that are so well developed and being even further developed,” she said. “It’s just a joy to be a part of it.”

After serving as president of California State University at

Stanislaus for 11 years, Hughes moved to Dillard six weeks before Hurricane Katrina. The school sustained more than \$400 million in damage and was declared “extinct” by some, but Hughes facilitated the recovery, rebuilding and master-planning of the 55-acre campus through hard work and fundraising that took her all around the country.

She said Dillard is not just being restored to its former condition but being rebuilt bigger and better.

“I never imagined that I would be involved in a hurricane like this but I’m driven every day by the will, the motivation and the aspiration to rebuild the university better than it was,” she said.

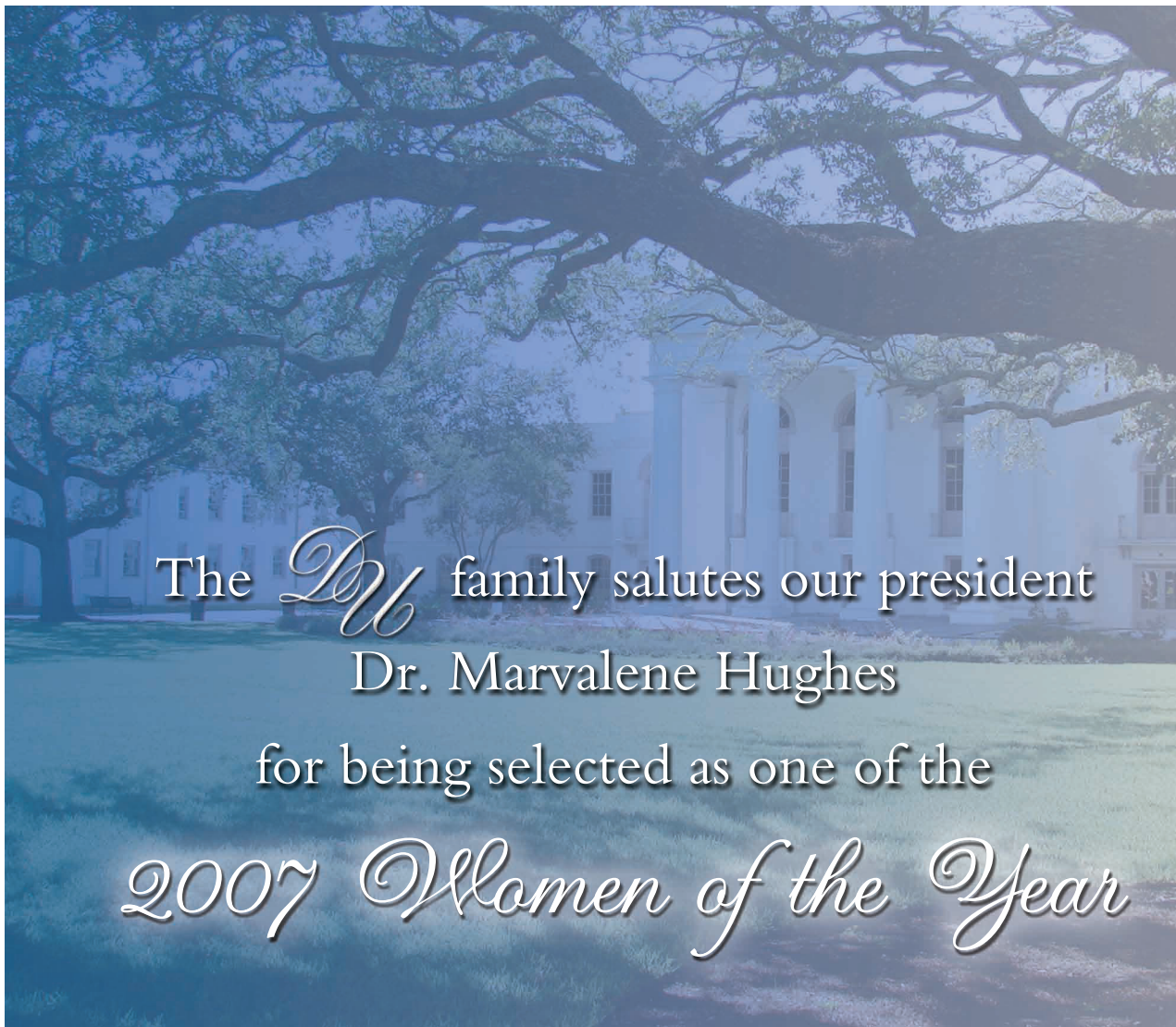
Hughes has been an active leader in a number of organizations including Women of the Storm, the Association of American State Colleges and Universities, and the National Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities, where

she served as vice president. Her work with those organizations and Dillard has taken her around the world. In 2005, “Black Voices” selected her as one of the top 10 black women in higher education in America.

Hughes enjoys exercising early in the morning, saying it allows her to clear her mind and plan the day. On the rare occasion she has a three-day weekend, she likes to travel to New York to satisfy her love for Broadway productions. As a student at Tuskegee, she once spent a summer singing at Radio City Music Hall.

“(Singing) would have been a fun career but that seemed such a tough road,” she said. “I just wanted to become as educated as possible and went from undergraduate to graduate to post-graduate and beyond. I just loved learning.”•

— Craig Guillot



*The Board of Directors and Staff of
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President and CEO**

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Natalie Jayroe

Age: 46

Position: Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana president and CEO

Family: husband, Ken; children, Philip, 21, Kyle, 19, Brittney, 13

Education: bachelor's degree in history and politics, University of Reading in Berkshire, England

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a diplomat. My family has always been committed to serving people through their jobs.

When trying to unwind, I: love watching Saints games. I like reading, traveling to new places and I'm a political junkie.

Having traveled the country throughout her career, Natalie Jayroe did not want to go anywhere else when she learned about the job she holds.

When the president and CEO position at Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana opened in January 2006, just four months after Hurricane Katrina sent thousands into poverty, Jayroe wanted to be at the center of the challenge.

"I am mission-driven. I chose to come to New Orleans because if you like this work and what you do, where else would you be in a time of recovery to help people," Jayroe said.

Jayroe began her work with Second Harvest in 1994 when she was named president and CEO in Savannah, Ga. She then led the San Diego Second Harvest effort and joined the joint field office in Baton Rouge before coming to New Orleans in 2006.

Second Harvest is a nonprofit whose mission is to acquire and distribute food in partnership with agencies serving people in need.

"I got to see the hungry and poverty problems in Savannah firsthand and I knew I wanted to make a difference full-time."

Since hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Jayroe has spearheaded the distribution of more than 80 million pounds of food to 175 member agencies in Second Harvest's 23-parish South Louisiana service area.

Before the 2005 hurricanes, Second Harvest distributed an average of 14 million pounds of food a year to senior care centers, day-care centers, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, church pantries and drug rehabilitation programs.

Second Harvest recently received \$5 million from the Legislature to purchase food from Louisiana farmers,

fishermen and vendors.

Jayroe also secured a \$2.4-million state grant this year to help with the distribution shortage.

The money has helped support Second Harvest programs such as Mobile Market, where residents who live in neighborhoods where grocery stores have not returned can buy food at discounted prices.

Jayroe is co-chairwoman of Orleans Parish's Food Policy Advisory Committee and a member of the New Orleans Regional Leadership Institute.

"I am committed to help rebuilding this city. I am not a crier, but I have cried a lot since I moved here because I see the need of so many people. I get a lot of calls from people who never thought they would be poor or need assistance but they do now."•

— Tommy Santora



Jacqueline Jones

Age: 53

Position: The Jeremiah Group lead organizer

Family: husband, Ronal Soulé; children, Tenaj Lynette Jones, 35, Ché Romano Jones, 32; seven grandchildren

Education: bachelor's degree in social studies education, Southern University of New Orleans; certification in special education, SUNO

When I grew up, I wanted to: play music, particularly brass.

When trying to unwind, I: spend time with family.

In the late '60s, as a seventh-grader at newly integrated Worley Junior High School in Jefferson Parish, Jacqueline Jones was excited to go with her class on their first Friday trip to the bowling alley, but she encountered a problem.

"The bowling alley wasn't integrated yet, and I couldn't go with my class because of my race," Jones said.

Jones' mother and father continually lobbied the school about the issue during the following weeks. On the third Friday, the school principal boarded the bus with the students and walked Jones into the bowling alley, personally demanding Jones' admission.

"Throughout my career, I've worked to ensure that no one else would have to go through experiences like that."

After studying education at Southern University, she was hired as a teacher, working under the same principal who marched her into the bowling alley, eventually winning three

Teacher of the Year awards during an 18-year career and becoming the first African-American Key Club adviser.

At first hearing of The Jeremiah Group, a faith-based, nonprofit for civic change, she was attracted by its focus on education.

"The pastor who founded The Jeremiah Group wanted to look at the numbers of African-American students who were being identified as troubled students, those who had repeated suspensions, and work on making them more productive."

Instead of retiring, she joined The Jeremiah Group in 1994, eventually becoming the lead organizer.

Under Jones' guidance, the group has worked with community leaders and residents to accomplish a number of goals with respect to civic change, including the creation of after-school programs at public schools and securing voting rights for displaced voters after Hurricane Katrina.

In April, the group won changes to The Road Home Program. First, they lobbied the state of Louisiana to amend its \$756-million contract with ICF International, the group governing the program, adding performance benchmarks and penalties for non-performance.

The Jeremiah Group also took action to prevent proposed cuts in the state rental assistance program, securing \$300 million to create about 7,400 units of affordable rental housing in the New Orleans area.

"This work is about creating space for ordinary citizens to be a part of the decisions that impact their families' lives."

Reminded of the connection between her early experiences with inequality and today's issues of opportunity in New Orleans, she reiterates her purpose.

"Recognition for my work is nice but it's not about me. The reward for me is making a difference in the community."•

— Thomas Leggett

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No representation is made that the quality of the legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of the legal services performed by other lawyers. FREE BACKGROUND INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST. Author: Charles P. Adams, Jr.



Christy Kane

Age: 35

Position: Adams and Reese partner

Family: husband, Sean Kane; children, Katherine, 2, twins Ryan and Lindsay, 1

Education: bachelor's degree, Loyola University New Orleans; juris doctorate, George Washington University School of Law

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an attorney.

When trying to unwind, I: spend time with my family.

Gaining a love for the Constitution and grasping how laws work from an American government class in junior high, Christy Kane knew early she wanted to be a lawyer.

"It really was something that was a direct result of that class," said Kane, who is a partner at Adams and Reese.

If Kane's career provides any clues, just being a lawyer has not been enough. She subscribes to the idea attorneys, particularly successful ones, should give back to their community beyond the pro bono requirements of their firm.

For that reason, Kane — whose primary focus at Adams and Reese has been in the areas of class action and complex multi-party litigation — has also been the manager and director of Louisiana Appleseed, one of 16 national

public interest law centers designed to provide legal support on issues of chronic injustice.

"Most of our projects are tied in with the needs that have arisen in our area since Katrina," said Kane, who has served as the pro bono coordinator for the New Orleans office of Adams and Reese and now serves as the Conoco Phillips/Adams and Reese fellow.

"Appleseed is a nonprofit that not only identifies social injustices, it also tries to come up with solutions to effect change for the most amount of people."

With an advisory board that includes attorneys from the city's largest firms, Appleseed is taking the pro bono concept one step further, she said.

"We will always need to have traditional pro bono work for lawyers who take on wills and divorces and adoptions for people who could otherwise not afford such services. But for right now, we also need lawyers to use their very sharp minds to try to solve some of our city's most complex problems."

Such work additionally indicates a larger commitment on the part of the city's legal community to post-Katrina New Orleans, she said.

"For those of us who have decided to stay here, this really is an opportunity to contribute in a way that is meaningful."•

— Garry Boulard



Molly Kimball

Age: 32

Position: Elmwood Fitness Center, a service of Ochsner Health System, registered dietician and certified specialist in sports dietetics, and sports and lifestyle nutritionist

Family: husband, Brad Schlotterer

Education: bachelor's degrees in dietetics and food science and technology, Louisiana State University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a veterinarian.

When trying to unwind, I: exercise or go for a run. At the end of the day, I'm ready to spend time with my husband, Brad.

Growing up in Baton Rouge, Molly Kimball always knew she would have a career in health care.

"For the longest time, I thought I would be a veterinarian," Kimball said. "And when I enrolled in college I was fully intent on becoming a doctor. But I soon realized there were a lot more career options."

At the end of her freshman year, Kimball switched majors from pre-medicine to dietetics and earned a double degree in dietetics and food technology and nutrition. After graduation, Kimball joined the staff at Elmwood Fitness Center, a service of Ochsner Health System, where she has worked as a sports and lifestyle nutritionist since 1999.

The career switch Kimball made in college has served her well, allowing her to join her interests in helping people with her love of exercise and health care.

"I work with all people — women and men, athletes, working parents — and try to help them reach their goals, whether it's developing a healthy diet, losing weight, gaining weight or maintaining a specified weight."

Being a nutritionist means more than just creating menus and telling people to eat more fruits and vegetables. It also requires a great deal of listening and patience to learn what motivates people and to create a nutritional program that is fail-safe. Whether it is during a cooking class or a one-on-one discussion, Kimball likes to be creative with menus and have fun with people so they learn how to incorporate the foods that are important to them as part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

"People can be their own worst enemies. They can be unnecessarily hard on themselves. Changing a diet or your nutritional pattern doesn't happen overnight and it certainly

doesn't have to be all or nothing. If a client tells me they really like Doritos, then we make that work for them in their diet."

Cheese, bacon and the crispy skin from a rotisserie chicken are just a few of Kimball's favorite junk foods.

"The stinkier the cheese, the better. And I really enjoy salty, crunchy, crispy chicken skin."

At the end of the workday, Kimball unwinds with her husband Brad, usually over a meal, when the two share the highs and lows of the day. The two are rebuilding their home in New Orleans.

"The clients I see and meet with everyday are really inspiring. They are so focused and determined, they go above and beyond. They are what motivate me to always do better for them."•

— Abby Kral



Rachel Kincaid

Age: 39

Position: University of New Orleans chief of staff and assistant to the chancellor

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree, University of Memphis; master's degree in business administration, UNO

When I grew up, I wanted to be: in education.

When trying to unwind, I: daydream about another weekend in Key West.

When Rachel Kincaid was growing up in a rural area outside of Memphis, Tenn., she and her family traveled to New Orleans to see the King Tut exhibit. Rachel and her sister, Mary, were so enamored by the city they made a pact to one day move to New Orleans.

"It was just mystical. There's something about New Orleans that's unlike anyplace else."

While Rachel was working for a hotel chain in Memphis, Mary decided to transfer from Ole Miss to the University of New Orleans to pursue a civil engineering degree. Rachel jumped at the opportunity to achieve her childhood dream and also moved to New Orleans.

For 11 years, Kincaid has worked in the chancellor's office at UNO. Her position, chief of staff and assistant to

the chancellor, was created after Katrina. Her primary task was to secure funds for the university — something the school was in dire need of after Katrina.

"We didn't have any cash flow. We didn't have any students."

Funds were needed to fix storm damages and pay faculty and staff for the semester Katrina canceled. Working with representatives from New Orleans' other universities, Kincaid spent a lot of time in Washington trying to persuade Congress to help New Orleans schools.

Based on her experience trying to secure funding after Katrina, Kincaid has worked with other area universities to establish a loan program through the Department of Education that can loan money to disaster-hit universities

at a 1 percent interest rate.

She also has helped secure funds to repair and reopen The Cove, UNO's popular dining area, by 2008 and helped find support for a backup power station for the campus.

While Kincaid loves New Orleans, her affinity for UNO is equally strong.

Coming from a small town where some of the best students didn't have the financial resources to attend college, Kincaid believes in UNO's mission to give students an affordable higher education option.

"I want everybody to have a choice. ... I see myself in a lot of the students."•

— Fritz Esker



Stacy Horn Koch

Age: 49

Position: Covenant House executive director

Family: husband, Thomas; children, Brady, 19, Nico, 2

Education: bachelor's degree in psychology, Loyola University; master's of social work, Southern University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a veterinarian.

When trying to unwind, I: ride horses.

If there's one thing Stacy Horn Koch enjoys about social work, it's that she gets to help people and see the results.

Koch has worked at many of the city's chemical treatment centers including DePaul Hospital as director of addictions and Methodist Hospital as director of outpatient services.

Specializing in chemical dependency, Koch sees the difference she makes in people's lives. Giving up her lucrative positions in the for-profit psych field in 2001, Koch jumped at an offer to take over the Covenant House, a safe haven for at-risk and homeless youth ages 16 to 21.

"I came here and just fell in love. I fell in love with the kids and the staff. It's the loyalty to them and the city that keeps me

here post-Katrina."

Since Katrina, Koch opened the Rampart Street building to a number of social services, including a walk-in medical center run by Tulane Medical Center, the Travelers Aid Society which assists homeless or displaced people and the state Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health.

Koch is on the boards of Unity for the Homeless, NO/Aids Task Force and the Institute for the Study of Race and Poverty. She was also one of the co-chairwomen for the social services panel on the Bring New Orleans Back Committee. She is also founder and chairwoman of the board of the Qatar/Tremé Lafitte Renewal Project, a nonprofit she started with a \$2.5-million grant from the country of Qatar.

The desire to make a difference drives Koch in every aspect of her life. She brings that philosophy home to her children as well and spoke at her son's high school graduation about the importance of helping others.

"My son's birth is the reason that I chose to go on the path of making a difference in the world," she said. "I felt it was important for him to learn firsthand and to teach him that with great opportunities come great responsibilities. Just to stand by in life and do nothing is unacceptable."

Koch enjoys riding horses and has a Lusitano thoroughbred she rides dressage, a form of riding which displays the skills of controlling a horse. She has five dogs, including a bull mastiff. •

— Craig Guillot



Phyllis Landrieu

Age: 73

Position: Orleans Parish School Board president

Family: husband, Joseph; children, Michael and Stephen, 52; Renee, 51; Gary, 50; Joanne, 48; Judy, 47; David, 46; Kenneth, 44; Greg, 40

Education: bachelor's degree in general studies, marketing and communication, University of New Orleans; master's degree in education, curriculum and instruction, UNO

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a mother and an educator.

When trying to unwind, I: spend time with my family, in particular my 17 grandchildren.

Pointing to former Second District Congresswoman Lindy Boggs as her role model, Phyllis Coldeway Landrieu is sometimes jokingly referred to around the office as the "Pit Bull."

"I am not really sure that that's a name I want to be remembered for," Landrieu said. "But it is true that when I get a hold of something I usually don't let go, no matter how difficult the challenge or problem."

Such tenacity has served Landrieu well as Orleans Parish School Board president. Now in her second term, Landrieu admits when she first joined the board in 2005, she did so with the zeal of a young reformer.

"I thought I could really make a difference and found out, about six or eight months later, that I was really not doing very well. There were so many problems that needed to be

addressed in a system that was in so many ways practically impregnable that I gradually became very discouraged."

Then came Hurricane Katrina, which caused a massive dispersal of students and closed dozens of school buildings.

"Essentially, the storm wiped out virtually our entire system."

The bad news was transformed into something hopeful when Landrieu, among others, realized Katrina "made it possible for us to rebuild the system from the ground up, and to finally do the things that should have been done all along."

Landrieu, sister-in-law of former Mayor Maurice "Moon" Landrieu and aunt of Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-New Orleans, has spearheaded the creation of the Early Childhood and Family Learning Center Foundation,

designed to reach out to children almost from the day they are born. The center will teach children social skills such as knowing right from wrong, how to share and how to have a high self-esteem.

"This is something that is going to revolutionize our educational system because poor children who start school often do so with health care, social and psychological problems that are undiagnosed."

A 1948 graduate of Our Lady of Lourdes Elementary School, Landrieu said the goal is to have six to eight of these centers operating around the city.

"By so doing finally addresses the problems that our very poor education system in New Orleans has ignored for the past three generations."•

— Garry Boulard



Priscilla Lawrence

Two-time honoree

Age: 59

Position: The Historic New Orleans Collection executive director

Family: husband, John Lawrence; children, Ryan O'Reilly, 38, Shannon Wade, 36

Education: bachelor's degree in fine arts, Mississippi State College for Women; pursued a master's in art history, Tulane University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a visual artist.

When trying to unwind, I: work in the garden or renovate homes.

Priscilla Lawrence is coming up on 28 years working with The Historic New Orleans Collection, starting as assistant registrar in 1980.

Since that time, Lawrence has ascended into the position she now holds with the museum.

"Three years after I started, I took over for the registrar when she left," Lawrence said of Lisett Oser. "I had the opportunity to be really involved with how the museum worked."

The experience paid off. When Oser left, Lawrence was asked to be acting director in 1998 while the museum searched for a new one, before being named executive director in 2000.

As director for The Historic New Orleans Collection,

Lawrence was part of a team of employees who oversaw a physical expansion to accommodate the growing needs of the Collection. Under Lawrence's leadership the Collection started the first major construction in the French Quarter after Hurricane Katrina.

Lawrence promotes the educational mission of the Collection through workshops for educators and history tours for schools.

"Stepping up the programming at the collection has been something I am very proud of. Trying to make people aware of our history, our culture and what makes us such a special place is very important to me. There can't be any question that we need to preserve our city and our culture."

In the little time she has outside of working with the museum, Lawrence is involved in the community as a member of the Louisiana Association of Museums and the American Association of Museums. She serves on the board of the Tennessee Williams Literary Festival as well as the Women's Professional Council Board.

She is also a member of Le Petit Salon and the Vieux Carre Property Owners, Residents and Associates Inc.

When she wants to relax, Lawrence works in her garden and spends time painting and renovating homes in the area. Lawrence said she also does a little art on the side.

"I've always wanted to be a visual artist. I just always drew on anything and everything that was blank."•

— Robin Shannon



Maureen Lichtveld

Age: 52

Position: Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine professor and chairwoman

Family: husband, Case; children, Kim, 25, Sam, 15, Sue Claire, 13

Education: bachelor's degree in biological sciences, DeMiranda College (Suriname); doctor of medicine degree, University of Suriname, School of Medicine; master's degree public health, Johns Hopkins University, School of Hygiene and Public Health

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a medical doctor.

When trying to unwind, I: like to read biographies and poetry.

Maureen Lichtveld's 25-year career in public health consists of national and international practice. She's cared for runaway slaves in the Amazon rainforest, held key leadership positions for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention throughout her 18-year tenure with the organization, served as a consultant for NATO and helped establish public health training programs in environmental science in 50 states.

Lichtveld, a professor and chairwoman at Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, arrived in New Orleans three weeks before Hurricane Katrina with the intent of implementing the nation's first master's degree program in disaster management.

Lichtveld wanted to use the experience she'd gained in responding to and analyzing the environmental and public health issues after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to

develop the program, which explores topics such as disaster communication, public health law, evacuation, surveillance and shelter.

"It's not an academic degree. It's a real front-line degree."

Lichtveld also is director for the Louisiana Research Consortium in the area of population services, studying cancer health disparities and cultural competence and looking at ways to reduce disparities and make physicians more aware of cultural differences.

Last year, she was selected to serve as principal investigator for Head-off Environmental Asthma in Louisiana, a 30-month study on children ages 4 to 12 who have asthma and have been exposed to mold and allergens post-Katrina.

Lichtveld discovered her call to public health early in her career while working with the inhabitants of the

Amazon. She said that experience increased her desire to help the greatest number of people, as she saw no work being done in areas such as food handling, safe drinking water and malaria.

Her thought was, "If I can provide safe water, I can save thousands of children."

Lichtveld was born in Suriname, formally Dutch Guyana. Next year, she will return to her native country to help start a master's of public health program and teach a course on environmental health as an expert for the Pan-American Health Organization. While there, she plans to work on an exchange program that will allow students from Tulane and Suriname to study in each other's country.

"To go back to the country where you were born is very special."•

— Nayita Wilson



Rebecca Mackie

Age: 47

Position: National World War II Museum chief financial officer and vice president of finance

Family: husband, Roy Mackie; children, Anthony, 29, Patience, 27, Sarah, 25, Andrea, 11

Education: bachelor's degree in business administration with a major in accounting, University of New Orleans

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a journalist, but I found out I liked working with numbers better.

When trying to unwind, I: spend time with family.

Understanding how money works, especially as it relates to financial reporting, fundraising and investments, is not enough for Rebecca Mackie, chief financial officer and vice president of finance for the National World War II Museum.

"I actually think it would be quite boring to just sit around all day and number crunch for the sake of number crunching," said Mackie.

"What I enjoy instead is doing what an accountant is supposed to do, but in a way that is connected to something else that I believe in. That's when I really feel that I am contributing in a meaningful way to the welfare of the larger organization."

That need to connect was on display when Mackie served as CFO for the Kindred Hospital, a specialty hospital for

patients requiring long-term care. Partly as a result of her efforts, the facility was able to reopen within one week after Hurricane Katrina.

Mackie joined the museum at a crucial time during a \$350-million expansion that will provide enough new space for an exploration of all of the services and theaters that played a part leading to the conclusion of the war.

"There is generally a very deep recognition of why our country had to fight in that war. No one questions it. And how the war was fought from the perspective of D-Day is something that people are interested in, which is why we have a clientele with members who live across the country."

Mackie is continually inspired by what the museum is trying to preserve.

"I may take a 10-minute break and walk through the galleries here and re-experience what this greatest generation of Americans did and how they really changed the entire world, and that to me is very exciting."

When Mackie is not guiding the museum's financial operations, she likes to give back to her profession as a member of the American Institute of CPAs and the Louisiana Society of CPAs. On most weekends she also sings in the choir at the St. Joseph Church in Gretna.

Like her work as a CPA, Mackie said singing in a church reaffirms her desire to contribute something in a larger sense.

"But I am not really all that sure that I have a very good voice."•

— Garry Boulard



Elizabeth Magner

Age: 48

Position: U.S. bankruptcy judge for the eastern district of Louisiana

Family: husband, Michael; children, Michael, 21, Betsy, 17

Education: bachelor's degree in accounting, Louisiana State University; juris doctorate, LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an astronaut.

When trying to unwind, I: garden or play duplicate bridge.

Elizabeth Magner's career as a U.S. bankruptcy judge did not happen at an ideal time. She was sworn in Sept. 9, 2005, 10 days after Hurricane Katrina.

Despite a devastated community, Magner proceeded with the task at hand, managing more than 10,000 cases in her first year on the bench and raising the completion rate for bankruptcy cases.

Before the storm, the district averaged 800 new filings per month. When Katrina hit, the court had about 7,500 cases under management. After Katrina and a change in bankruptcy laws, Magner saw 4,500 new filings in a six-week period in addition to the 7,500-case backlog, leaving about 12,000 cases in need of immediate attention.

To get the court back up and running, Magner secured housing for more than 200 federal court personnel and their families.

"I called every friend and parent's friend in Baton Rouge asking them to give whatever they had, whether it be a garage apartment or an extra room," Magner said.

Magner has always liked a challenge. As she puts it, "Challenges are what make life worth living. You are pushing yourself and doing something different."

In 2006, Magner took on a new challenge and volunteered her time to the Jefferson Parish Public School System by helping two new academic programs for poor performing students. The Bunche and St. Ville accelerated academies offer students who have fallen behind academically a means to bridge the educational gap through an intense accelerated program.

"These are 16 year olds operating on an academic level of sixth grade. They had already failed two grades. These children are prime candidates for dropping out of school since students can legally age out of the system at 17."

In September 2006, 250 students entered the two academies. But the start of the 2006 school year was not without obstacles, she said.

Many students were initially jaded, she said, but students soon realized the teachers were committed and were not going anywhere.

"It was amazing how quickly the kids fell into a system that worked." Magner established a volunteer program where community leaders served as guest lecturers and provided summer jobs and internships for the students.

"We wanted the kids to see how their talents could be translated into different fields."

Magner helped stockpile instruments, equipment and supplies to establish extracurricular programs, including culinary arts, music, photography, art, horticulture and sports.

"We feel like we starting to find a piece on this puzzle. If effective long term, this can make a dent in a lot of issues, such as crime and poverty. If you put the money into education it comes out in the back end."•

— Maria Barrios



Sandy Ha Nguyen

Age: 34

Position: Louisiana Small Business Development Center Greater New Orleans Region business counselor

Family: husband, Michael; children, Hana, 6, Dylan, 2

Education: bachelor's degree in management, Tulane University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a nurse. I have always wanted to help people.

When trying to unwind, I: like to listen to music and play all kinds of sports. I also like to fall asleep with current events on the television, like CNN.

When Sandy Nguyen was growing up in eastern New Orleans' Vietnamese-American community, she saw her mother, Duong, and father, Son, struggle to learn English and often pay a lot of money to hire a translator anytime they needed one.

"I can remember my mom would pay some guy \$50 to be a translator to go with her to the food stamp office, and \$50 was a lot in the mid '80's," Nguyen said. "I said, 'One day, I'm going to be my mom's translator, and I'm going to be the one to help our people out whenever they need it.'"

As a sophomore in high school, Nguyen began that quest, working with people in the Vietnamese-American community by translating business documents to them.

For the past 20 years, that practice has grown, and Nguyen has parlayed her bilingual skills, her cultural knowledge of her community and business savvy to help thousands of Vietnamese become accustomed to the rules and regulations

of running a business in the United States. Eastern New Orleans is home to the largest Vietnamese community in the city with about 10,000 people, Nguyen said.

Since March 2006, Nguyen has worked as a business counselor at the Louisiana Small Business Development Center's Greater New Orleans Region facility. The center provides low- to no-cost guidance and training for existing and prospective small business owners.

Nguyen said her job includes translating English documents, credit consulting, helping them understand the permitting system, explaining how to file taxes and understanding the basics of running a corporation in the United States.

"Credibility is the biggest issue in this community. You have to earn people's trust and show them that you can help them be successful business owners," she said.

Before joining the LSBDC last year, Nguyen worked on

her own as an entrepreneur, helping people with business services similar to what the LSBDC provides.

She also provides immigration assistance, helping about five to 10 people a week fill out citizenship forms on the U.S. government's Web site and aiding them in the study and translation of American civics materials to prepare for citizen exams.

A large part of Nguyen's job since Hurricane Katrina has been helping people realize the financial assistance programs available to them, especially since the Vietnamese community has many fishermen and shrimpers working in the community who lost their boats and homes in the storm.

Nguyen's family was one of them.

"We returned in November 2005, rebuilt everything for ourselves and I jumped right in, just helping as many people as I could as fast as I could."•

— Tommy Santora



Marian Pierre

Age: 60

Position: Crescent City Guardian Security Inc. founder and president

Family: children, Arthur James Pierre (wife, Gerri), 41, Marcus John Pierre (wife, Yvette Pierre), 38; granddaughters, Artices Jonique Pierre, 22, Alexia Jade Pierre, 12; grandson, Jaden Miles Pierre, 3; great-grandson, Elijah Dimitri Jacobs, 2

Education: bachelor's degree, Southern University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an attaché to a foreign country.

When trying to unwind, I: I try to spend the little time I have with my family with most of that time being spent with my three grandkids.

Marian Hymes Pierre's Crescent Guardian Security is a small, locally owned business but its commitment to New Orleans helped safeguard the city for nearly 15 years.

A graduate of George Washington Carver High School and Southern University, Pierre had a career in New Orleans city government before establishing Crescent Guardian Security. When she opened her business nearly 15 years ago, she used her experience with firearms and security training for various government agencies and from the National Association of Security Executives.

Today her business employs 170 individuals who work to keep businesses and property safe through detective guard and armored car services.

"The future of New Orleans will depend on the growth of small businesses such as mine," Pierre said. "I think that this city must embrace small business if we hope to restore it and make it the great city it deserves to become."

Next to the birth of her grown sons, Arthur James and Marcus John, Pierre said establishing Crescent City Guardian has been one of the most significant accomplishments in her life. It is a business, she said, that allows "men and women the opportunity to be trained in a growing industry that has no boundaries."

During Hurricane Katrina, Pierre evacuated to Dallas to be near her two sons but didn't stay long. Pierre returned to New Orleans, found her employees and re-established her business. Although her home in eastern New Orleans had been

destroyed, Pierre bought and rented residences for her employees to live. She is still assisting many of them to become first-time homebuyers.

Pierre's heart is in her service to others.

"My entire life has been about service: service to my God, my family, my community and my city."

Pierre's commitment to her city is also apparent in Women Inc., which she founded in 1999. The organization is devoted to empowering women, particularly African-American women, through politics, education, social involvement and economics.

"New Orleans has been home to my family and me for our entire lives. Who would want to live anywhere else?"

— Amy M. Ferrara



Brenda Reine-Bertus

Age: 56

Position: St. Tammany Economic Development Foundation and St. Tammany Parish Development District executive director

Family: husband, Donald Bertus; children, Kimberly Horsley, 35, Elizabeth Reine, 31; grandchildren, Katie, 5, William, 3, Sadie, 1

Education: graduate of computer programming, Institute of Computer Technology; graduate of the Economic Development Institute, University of Oklahoma

When I grew up, I: was focused on one day being a mother and wife. I had no outside career expectations — that quickly changed.

When trying to unwind, I: work out at the gym, garden, and enjoy the outdoors, fishing in particular.

As a member of Rotary International, Brenda Reine-Bertus has taken the mission “service above self” to heart in her career and personal life.

This was especially true when Hurricane Katrina turned the St. Tammany Economic Development office and Reine-Bertus’ personal life upside down. It took three months to repair her home after sustaining tree damage and 5 inches of flooding.

Professionally, there were even more obstacles to be met.

“Businesses were truly desperate to get up and running,” said Reine-Bertus. “They and their employees had to get back to work for financial reason. In fact, many employers used their personal life savings to get their companies back on the ground.”

It was a challenge for the agency to find suitable locations for the homeless businesses. Reine-Bertus and her colleagues

were able to find many undamaged locations for the businesses.

“We were able to fill almost 1 million square feet of space with businesses.”

Reine-Bertus also helped business owners obtain grants and apply for Gulf Opportunity Zone Bonds.

“To date we have preliminarily approved over \$500 million in GO Zone bonds, which equates to over 5,000 new jobs.”

For smaller businesses, Reine-Bertus has worked to build a pool of six companies to share the cost of the bond since it is cost prohibitive to obtain bonds less than \$5 million.

Reine-Bertus is a member and Paul Harris Fellow of the Rotary Club of Slidell Northshore, which aided in rebuilding many nonprofits after the storm, such as the Rainbow Child Care Center and the Soup Kitchen. She is also on the board

for the St. Tammany Association for Retarded Citizens, which provides day care for special needs children and helps find jobs and housing for disabled adults.

Reine-Bertus has gathered much of her strength from friendship. Married to her high school sweetheart, Reine-Bertus joined a group of widowed girlfriends when he died.

“It was a wonderful support system. We were all in different stages (of healing) and it was impressive to learn how strong these women are. Some of them lost their husband and then their home in the storm, they were stronger than even they knew they could be.”

Recently married, she has found much happiness with her husband, Donald Bertus, who also is widowed.

“My husband says that I have now graduated from the widows club,” laughs Reine-Bertus. •

— Maria Barrios



Ann Rogers

Two-time honoree

Age: 43

Position: Sponsor One owner, Tales of the Cocktail founder

Family: husband, Paul G. Tuennerman; dogs, Sadie and Gratzie

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

When I grew up, I wanted to be: Wonder Woman.

When trying to unwind, I: relax with my husband and dogs, or enjoy a good Sazerac.

Ann Rogers applies the same mantra to her work in promotions and event planning to participating in triathlons and marathons: "Feel the fear and do it anyway."

"When you start something new, it can be a little scary," Rogers said. "You move beyond it and realize that change is part of the growing process."

This philosophy led Rogers through positions in promotion and marketing, culminating in her latest work as founder and planner of Tales of the Cocktail, a culinary and cocktail festival celebrating New Orleans hospitality annually since 2003.

Rogers began her career at an advertising agency and worked as promotions and marketing director at WVUE-TV Fox-8 News and B-97 FM in New Orleans.

In 2002, she founded Sponsor One, a full-service sponsorship and event marketing company with clients includ-

ing Cox Communications, Harrah's New Orleans, Morton Steakhouse, Arnaud's Restaurant, Audubon Nature Institute and The National World War II Museum. Her team planned and implemented the 20th anniversary celebration for Abita Beer.

"I've always liked promotions. My best talent is envisioning a final product and ensuring that a project reaches its goal."

Rogers is involved in the community, serving as a N.O. Aids Task Force board member from 1997 to 2001 and participating in Avon's 3-Day Breast Cancer Awareness Crusade.

The New Orleans Culinary and Cultural Preservation Society, a nonprofit dedicated to the hospitality industry, produces Tales of the Cocktail. The organization recently partnered with Save Our Cemeteries to create a culinary tour of Metairie Cemetery, educating visitors about

the hospitality industry and prominent proprietors buried there.

The city of New Orleans used to measure the annual success of Carnival by the amount of trash generated. Rogers found a similar method of assessing the popularity of Tales of the Cocktail.

"I like to measure our success in garnishes."

According to her tallies, last year's event generated 3,580 lime wedges, 800 watermelon cubes, 560 gin-soaked dried cherries, 7,250 mint leaves and 3,000 pounds of ice.

Rogers' attitude helped her face challenges in developing and running successful events, and in conquering personal obstacles.

"Most of my friends know how uncoordinated I am. I overcame one of my biggest fears when I took West Coast swing dance lessons and won a competition."•

— Thomas Leggett



Congratulations

Denise Shinn

On your New Orleans CityBusiness
Woman of the Year Nomination!

The passion you display for this city and the people of New Orleans is an inspiration to all of us, and we're proud to follow your example as you strive to build a legacy of service in this community. From helping people get back into their homes after the storm to reaching out to senior citizens, families and those less fortunate, you truly are an ambassador for this organization and consistently demonstrate a greater purpose for our presence in New Orleans.

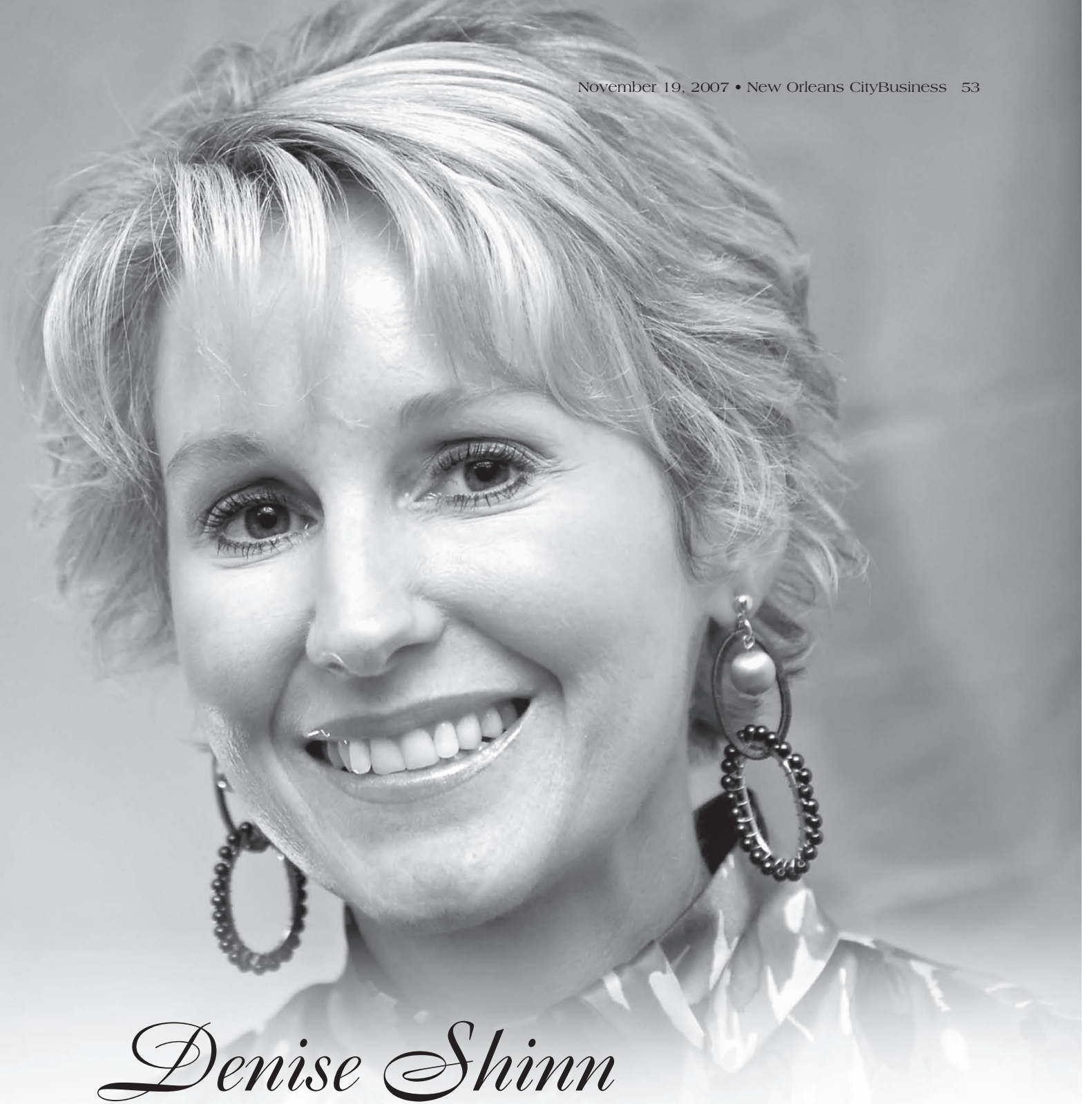
Thank you for all that you do.

The New Orleans Hornets



NEW ORLEANS HORNETS

PASSION ♣ PURPOSE ♣ PRIDE



Denise Shinn

Age: 38

Position: Shinn Foundation president

Family: husband, George Shinn; stepchildren, Chris, 33, Susan, 31, Chad, 27

Education: attended King's College; bachelor's degree in business, Peace College; nursing degree, Central Piedmont

When I grew up, I: loved fashion and I thought I wanted to be something in the fashion industry.

When trying to unwind, I: love to read, listen to music and exercise.

When Denise Shinn met her future husband at a Hornets game in North Carolina eight years ago, she knew virtually nothing about basketball, wasn't a sports fan and was attending games purely for the social aspects.

"I was a surgical nurse and worked for the team doctor, who is an orthopedic surgeon," Shinn said. "George was sitting a couple of seats behind me. We talked and we've been together ever since."

Shinn is still fuzzy on stats and players being tracked by the team, but she is a natural with people, philanthropy, marketing and business.

"I like all the community relations part of it and being involved with the Honeybees," said Shinn, who fulfills her fashion designer tendencies by helping select the team

cheerleaders, uniforms and having some input in the choreography.

"The Stingers, our younger kids, are something I thought of. I like the entertainment, the fun part."

Although her husband originally formed the Shinn Foundation in North Carolina before they met, Shinn has embraced it, leading to her taking it over two years ago.

From the annual Season of Giving events that include shopping sprees for children, a seniors' holiday luncheon at First Baptist Church and a shoe giveaway at Bridge House, to Habitat for Humanity and the Susan G. Komen Foundation for breast cancer research, the Shinn Foundation's contributions have touched many.

Since Hurricane Katrina, Shinn spearheaded Hoops for Homes, which raised more than \$1.5 million to help rebuild

20 homes in New Orleans.

Because Denise and George select the Shinn Foundation's beneficiaries, the recipients are near and dear to Shinn's heart: the poor, women and children.

"Children are so very helpless and innocent," said Shinn, explaining her interest in programs such as Grace House, Baptist Friendship House and Kaboom, a program that donates playground equipment and team elbow grease to erect it.

Hands-on participation by the entire organization is integral to the foundation's success, she said.

"It's important for the organization to be a family, so we want everyone to be a part of it, make suggestions and work together."•

— Angelle Bergeron



Dolly Simpson

Age: 56

Position: Daughters of Charity Health Center chief of clinical operations

Family: husband, Oliver; daughter, Dalila, 26

Education: bachelor's degree, Tennessee State University; master's degree in psychology, Tennessee State; master's degree in health administration, Tulane University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a professional majorette. But I really wanted to be in social services or working the community.

When trying to unwind, I: exercise. I'm a certified personal trainer and spinning instructor.

Dolly Simpson has always had the urge to help people make the right decisions in life. Her work with the Daughters of Charity Health Center reflects this drive because it is the type of facility that assists people who don't have the best resources.

"We work with the state to get the best for people in the community who are underprivileged medically," Simpson said. "We are mission driven, and want to help anyone."

Simpson's mother, a retired educator, is the one who influenced her to follow the path she has been on in the health care world.

"She is the one who always said, 'Show people the way to make better decisions.' And that is what I do."

Before starting with Daughters of Charity, Simpson spent the first 18 years out of college working as a mental health

counselor but it wasn't what she really wanted.

"I have always been more of an operations person. One day I just decided that I wanted to go in a different direction. I wanted a position that was more administrative, so I went back to Tulane to get my master's in health administration, and now here I am."

In the community, Simpson has been active with Women of the Storm, which she said has been more fun than anything she has done.

"I really love how dedicated to the environment and rebuilding these women are. I think our message is really getting across."

Simpson is particularly proud of what she has done to spread positive recognition about conditions in the city. She said Women of the Storm has made great strides in let-

ting people nationally and internationally know things in New Orleans are not as bad as what the media conveys.

"You get the impression sometimes that we are all not smart and our politicians are corrupt. I think we have really worked hard to change that image of New Orleans."

Simpson does her best to keep her own recovery struggles quiet because she considers it more important to focus on the needs of the patients who come through her office.

"These people have suffered far more than me. I am the one who needs to stay strong."

Outside of work, Simpson loves to exercise and be outdoors. She loves hiking and kayaking whenever she has spare time and is a personal trainer, as well as a certified spinning instructor at the University of New Orleans. •

— Robin Shannon



Lisa Stockton

Age: 43

Position: Tulane University women's basketball head coach

Family: single; cocker spaniel, Gumbo

Education: bachelor's degree in exercise, Wake Forest University; master's degree in teaching, University of North Carolina

When I grew up, I: always wanted to do something in sports, and I can remember when I was playing basketball in high school that I wanted to coach someday.

When trying to unwind, I: play golf, go to movies, exercise and do a lot of nothing.

Lisa Stockton says if you're from North Carolina, chances are you're born dribbling a basketball.

That saying held true for Greensboro, N.C.-born Stockton, who played point guard at Wake Forest University and continued her basketball career by coaching 20 seasons, including the past 13 years, as Tulane University women's head basketball coach.

"I have always wanted to coach, even back to my high school playing days," Stockton said. "I have enjoyed a long tenure at Tulane, and I am very grateful for that because this has been my home and I enjoy coaching at a Division I athletic program with a rich academic environment."

Under Stockton, the Lady Green Wave's basketball program has earned nine National Collegiate Athletic Association Tournament bids, reached the postseason in 10 of 13 seasons and won four Conference USA tournament titles and three

regular season championships. The program has produced 15 All-Americans, five Women's National Basketball Association players and every player who's completed her eligibility under Stockton has earned a degree. Stockton also coached three players in the Tulane Sports Hall of Fame: Grace Daley, Barbara Farris and Janelle Burse.

"We really stress that success goes across all boundaries in academics and athletics. We concentrate on the total person, and I consider myself more of an educator than a coach."

Stockton recently received a contract extension through the 2013-14 season. She has a 266-127 record at Tulane and a 329-154 overall record in 16 seasons, including three at Greensboro College, where she started her career before going to Georgia Tech as an assistant for four years.

"This is my fit right now. If someday this doesn't excite me, then maybe I will move on. But I enjoy developing players,

watching them come in as freshmen and seeing them have great college careers here before they leave as seniors."

Stockton was named 2007 Conference USA Coach of the Year after leading the Lady Green Wave to a 26-7 season, a CUSA regular season championship and a second-round appearance in the Women's National Invitational Tournament.

Stockton said her biggest challenge as Tulane coach came after Hurricane Katrina when the women's basketball program moved to Texas Tech for a semester, and they played a season with nine players.

"It was the most challenging but at the same time, most gratifying because we had to overcome so much just to field a team. It created a bond between me and my players that I will never forget."•

— Tommy Santora



Shelly Stubbs

Age: 44

Position: DQSI Corp. president and CEO

Family: husband, Mike Stubbs; children, Dane, Shaenen and Casen, 14, Jase, 11

Education: bachelor's degree in computer science, Southeastern Louisiana University; doctorate in computer science, Louisiana State University

When I grew up, I wanted to: own a business.

When trying to unwind, I: play with my children.

Shelly Stubbs had already accomplished a lot by 1998. She had earned a Ph.D in computer science even though she gave birth to triplets during grad school and was pregnant with her fourth child when she walked across the stage at graduation.

Despite her achievements, she longed to fulfill her lifelong dream of owning and running her own business

"I've always been more afraid of not trying something than trying something and failing."

So, she founded DQSI, an information technology provider to businesses in the New Orleans area.

Gradually, the company prospered and really blossomed when DQSI received 8(a) status from the government, which meant DQSI was picked as one of a small group of companies

the government would use for information technology contracts. Business was going well until August 2005 when Hurricane Katrina hit.

"We were scared, but we love it here, and my husband would never move. We're here for the duration," she said.

However, DQSI had to adjust to the post-Katrina climate in New Orleans.

While the company continued in the field of information technology, DQSI branched into heavy construction and became one of the prime contractors for rebuilding. DQSI rebuilt Chalmette High School's football and baseball fields in time for the 2006-07 school year. DQSI is also rebuilding a 2.3-mile section of levee in Kenner and is performing work on another levee in Larose.

The diversification does not mean DQSI abandoned its technology background, however. The company is doing work with the Minerals Management Service (an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior) creating interactive maps allowing a user to click on a map to get detailed information.

"There can be so many applications of this technology for everyday businesses as well."

What Stubbs ultimately hopes is that when DQSI graduates from 8(a) status, clients will respect their work so much they will continue to use the company.

"We want the government to want to use us because we're so good and we have a special niche to offer."•

— Fritz Esker



Michele Sutton

Age: 44

Position: North Oaks Health System chief operating officer

Family: husband, Wayne; stepsons, Reid, 38, Brook, 32

Education: bachelor's degree in marketing, Southeastern Louisiana University; master's degree in business administration, SLU

When I grew up, I wanted to: work in business communications or be a nurse.

When trying to unwind, I: cook, read, exercise or spend time with my husband and dog, Mattie.

Michele Sutton has worked for North Oaks Health System in Tangipahoa Parish for 20 years, transitioning from positions in marketing and community resources to her most recent position as chief operating officer.

Her first encounter with North Oaks was during a hospital visit to see a friend's mother. Sutton left that visit impressed with the hospital and the services it provided — she knew she wanted to work there in the future.

"This place has something to sell," Sutton said of her first visit.

One year after the visit, Sutton applied for a marketing position with the hospital and her dream became reality.

Sutton oversees the daily operations of two North Oaks hospitals, 25 clinical and non-clinical departments, and the North Oaks Rehabilitation Center. North Oaks is the second-

largest employer in Tangipahoa with more than 2,000 employees; she supervises about 1,000 employees with the assistance of an administrative support staff and is also responsible for building and maintaining internal and external relationships and overseeing the system's \$200-million expansion project.

Her transitions have been gratifying and allowed her to "make a greater impact" in how North Oaks provides health care to the community, she said.

Helping secure legislation for North Oaks and other hospitals through the Community Hospital Coalition has been her most rewarding accomplishment.

Sutton is proud of her work with the Prescription Drug Task Force for which she helped launch a public relations campaign to make teens and parents more aware of the dan-

gers of drugs.

Sutton is president of the Hammond Rotary Club and has been a member of the Hammond Chamber of Commerce for 23 years.

She wants this year to be the most successful year for the Rotary Club and North Oaks. One particular objective is to see the hospital "exceed all patient safety and quality goals."

Sutton also hopes to find balance between her personal and professional lives.

"I want people to know that I couldn't have accomplished what I have done both professionally and personally without the love and support of my husband and the outstanding people that I work with who challenge me to be the best — and I never want to let them down."•

— *Nayita Wilson*



Elizabeth M. Teague

Age: 56

Position: Slidell Memorial Hospital director of physician services

Family: husband, Benjamin Clifton; children Jessica Clifton, 31, Meghann Teague, 27; grandson, Alexander, 3

Education: bachelor's degree in secondary education, University of Miami (Fla.); master's degree in public administration from University of Southern Mississippi

When I grew up, I wanted to be: involved in business and economics, but I was also interested in science and oceanography.

When trying to unwind, I: go to the gym, particularly water aerobics. I also go into New Orleans to enjoy the galleries, theater and opera.

Rebuilding New Orleans will require the efforts of many people with a sense of what Elizabeth Teague calls urban pioneerism.

"We in St. Tammany have a good way of life, but our economy is tied to the city of New Orleans," said Teague, director of physician services at Slidell Memorial Hospital. "Without health care, you can't sustain a quality of life in a community. People won't come back unless they have their doctors. They are a very essential part of the fabric of the community."

From the time she was vice president of her class in high school and throughout her career in politics, regional planning and economic development, Teague has been a civic activist. And she has reveled in the development aspects of each of her pursuits.

"I do like to get involved in things from the bottom up. I don't thrive on the daily and the mundane."

In her role at SMH, Teague has been challenged with recruiting and retaining physicians, managing and developing business strategies for hospital properties and departments, and supervising employees.

After Hurricane Katrina, she scoured Slidell, taking inventory of which physicians and services were available and utilized a SMH hot line to inform the public. Teague helped write a grant that secured almost \$1.5 million in Department of Health and Hospitals funds to ensure SMH's pediatric clinic would remain operational.

Teague's activities earned her a seat on the Louisiana Health Services Recovery Council, a regional grassroots

collaborative in which 14 community-elected representatives of parishes most impacted by hurricanes Katrina and Rita meet bi-weekly to focus on health care recovery and redesign. Through her activities with the Council, Teague has secured an additional \$2 million for work force development while another \$11.7 million package has been requested for St. Tammany Parish in the current legislative session.

Thanks to the ongoing, regional collaboration through the council, Teague is certain the right people are working toward solutions.

"It's private arrangements for the benefit of the public good, for the benefit of the health of the people."•

— Angelle Bergeron



Cecile Tebo

Age: 47

Position: New Orleans Police Department Crisis Unit administrator

Family: husband, Balad; sons, Will, 18, Christopher, 13, Alexander, 11

Education: bachelor's degree, Mt. Vernon College; master's degree in social work, Tulane University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: a cop.

When trying to unwind, I: play tennis.

Despite being happy as a social worker for adoption cases, Cecile Tebo wanted to be a cop.

"I call it my defective gene from my grandfather," said Tebo, referring to her grandfather's service as a superintendent of the New Orleans Police Department. As a child, Tebo would ride her bike around her neighborhood with a pad and pen in hand, writing down all the bad things she saw happening.

That childhood dream led her to become a reserve officer in the NOPD at age 40.

"I figured it was now or never."

Shortly after beginning as a reserve officer, she took her sons to a snow-ball stand on Plum Street and saw a car for the crisis unit pull up. After briefly chatting with the officers, she learned they dealt with cases that require mental health inter-

vention such as suicide attempts and schizophrenics.

With her experience as a social worker, she saw it as a natural fit and transferred to that unit. After working as a volunteer, she was hired as a coordinator in October 2004.

After the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, in which Tebo lost her house, she began to work as an advocate for mental health issues in the city.

"Unbelievably, mental health was left out of the picture and it was the No. 1 medical problem in the city," said Tebo, adding that people she dealt with post-Katrina would be turned away from hospitals because they were taking up sick beds. "I was like, 'But they are sick,'" she said.

Tebo's awareness of these issues stems from painful personal experience, with her own bout of depression that

occurred shortly after Katrina and the suicides of a close friend of hers and the close friend of one of her sons. She has appeared on CNN and on the local news as an expert on mental health issues.

While some people who suffered through Katrina might find constant exposure to the myriad mental health problems New Orleanians face post-Katrina to be depressing, Tebo finds it exhilarating. She said there is no greater feeling than talking to a seriously distraught individual, comforting them and getting them the help they need to get better.

"I have so much gratitude for what I do have that I feel I can't give back enough."•

— Fritz Esker



Suzanne C. Thomas

Two-time honoree

Age: 52

Position: Whitney National Bank senior vice president

Family: husband, Robert Thomas; children, Elise, 20, Evan, 16

Education: bachelor's degree in fine arts, Dominican College; master's degree in business administration, College of William and Mary

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an artist.

When trying to unwind, I: cook and garden. They allow me to relax and be creative.

Suzanne Thomas has been involved in commercial banking in the New Orleans area for more than 25 years, and she is now one of the highest-ranking women working at Whitney Bank.

"My father was a banker with Hibernia for 35 years," Thomas said. "It is something I was just drawn to because I was so familiar with it."

As part of the credit administration group, Thomas' responsibilities include approving large commercial credits, monitoring the credit quality of the bank's loan portfolio and interfacing with federal regulators, rating agencies and investment analysts of the publicly traded New Orleans-based corporations.

"I had always been drawn to commercial banking. There is

so much interaction with people, I really enjoy that."

Thomas was part of the management team relocated to Houston after Hurricane Katrina; she also helped establish the bank's temporary headquarters in fall 2005.

Thomas has been a part of numerous bankwide initiatives to help spread the word nationally about New Orleans' continued financial needs. One of the initiatives the bank sponsored, "Seeing is Believing," brought female leaders down to New Orleans to expose them to the city's needs.

"The conference helped solicit continued financial support for the needs of the city through the United Way."

Although Thomas has been in the banking world quite a while, it was not always what she aspired for.

"I always remember wanting to be an artist. I always loved

to draw and create, it's why I pursued a fine arts degree before going for my MBA."

Thomas said her artist gene has rubbed off on her daughter, who is working toward a degree in graphic design.

"Every time I look at her crooked, she reminds me of my past. I really have no argument, and I know she will do well with it."

Thomas is active in the United Way Women's Leadership Council. She serves as Special Events chairwoman and has been responsible for various fundraisers.

"My most recent event was the 'Cruise for a Cause,' which sold cruise packages to Cozumel, Mexico. A portion of the sales of the cruises went to support the United Way."•

— Robin Shannon



Denise Thornton

Age: 50

Position: Beacon of Hope Resource Center founder and president

Family: husband, Doug Thornton; son, Jared (wife Elizabeth), 30; granddaughter, Eloise, 2

Education: attended Nicholls State University and University of New Orleans

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an attorney because I like to argue, but I didn't pursue it. I didn't think that far.

When trying to unwind, I: am an artist of sorts and do a lot of crafts. I used to read, but now what I do for fun is help people. It's the most rewarding thing I've ever done in my life.

During the hours she was in the Louisiana Superdome for Hurricane Katrina and the messy aftermath, Denise Thornton made a pact with her maker to do something more meaningful with her life if she survived.

"Sitting there, I just didn't feel worthy," Thornton said. "When you are sitting there watching the destruction and the human suffering, you think all hands need to be on deck. We'll never overcome this unless everyone who has a talent, something to give, steps up."

When she returned to her devastated home in Lakewood South, the loss of her business and a city in chaos, she began the process of putting her life back together. That's when it became clear to Thornton how she would fulfill her promise to God.

The result was Beacon of Hope Resource Center, a grassroots effort to facilitate neighborhood recovery that has grown from Thornton's house to 11 centers serving 14 neighborhoods in Lakeview, Gentilly and the Lower Ninth Ward.

"When I started rebuilding my house, there were so many things I discovered that I thought everyone should know."

Thornton contacted Entergy, prompting the return of electricity to her neighborhood and got Cox Communications to route Internet service to her home. Neighbors gathered at her house for Internet, fax and telephone access as well as emotional support, camaraderie and tips on everything from how to handle a contractor to how to access volunteer support for house-gutting and debris removal.

"My whole thinking was that when I got my neighborhood

back up and running, they would go out, give back and help others."

That's exactly what happened.

As word spread, the mission grew from neighbors helping neighbors to neighborhoods helping neighborhoods.

Thornton does not receive a salary as president and said she never will, as her goal is to provide opportunities for others, not selfish benefit. Now that some neighborhoods look much better and people are on the road to rebuilding, Beacon of Hope's direction will be guided by the communities' changing needs.

"We are a very agile organization, so we just move with time and do whatever is needed."•

— Angelle Bergeron



Sarah Newell Usdin

Age: 38

Position: New Schools for New Orleans founder and president

Family: husband, Tommy; children, Lyle, 5, Cecile, 1; dog Australian Shepard Stella, 3 months

Education: bachelor's degree in German and religion, Colgate University; master's degree in curriculum and instruction, Louisiana State University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an attorney like my father.

When trying to unwind, I: take a long swim.

Sarah Newell Usdin has undertaken one of the most controversial and important aspects of New Orleans: the public school system.

In 2006, she founded New Schools for New Orleans to boost the “recovery and reformation” of public education in the city.

“In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans is undergoing one of the most compelling educational transformations in recent history,” Usdin said.

The reason for this transformation, she said, is the organization of public charter schools, which “establish a national model for urban education reform.”

Usdin’s own 15-year involvement in education reform influenced her interest in improving schools. A recipient of the Fulbright Scholarship, Usdin taught in Germany before joining Teach for America, a national group of college graduates who teach in the country’s lowest-income communities.

She then taught at Park Elementary in Baton Rouge with Teach for America before joining Teach for America again as the executive director of Louisiana. Usdin later became a partner with The New Teacher Project, a national nonprofit teacher recruiting and training organization.

Taking action appears to be second nature to Usdin. After establishing New Schools for New Orleans, she set three initiatives: attracting and preparing teachers; launching and supporting open-enrollment public charter schools; and advocating for a responsible and sustainable system of high quality public schools.

The program’s success is backed by its placement of more than 200 teachers and school leaders in schools. With an estimated 80 public schools opening for the 2008-09 school year, New Schools for New Orleans will have incubated at least seven schools, or nearly 10 percent of all

public schools in the city, in addition to providing grants to a minimum of 15 schools, or more than 20 percent of all public schools in the city. Usdin and the program have raised more than \$12 million to benefit the institutions.

As a New Orleans resident, Usdin said she is simply seeking results within her own city’s school system. Together with her husband, Tommy, their 5-year-old son, Lyle, and their 1-year-old daughter, Cecile, she lives in the Faubourg St. John neighborhood, the area of the city she designates as her favorite.

“It is such a reflection of all that is great about New Orleans: fabulous restaurants, great diverse community, beautiful gardens, the best music with Jazz Fest in our center, the bayou flowing through near the grandeur of City Park.”

And Usdin is striving to put New Orleans’ public schools on that list. •

— Amy M. Ferrara



Laurie White

Age: 48

Position: Laurie A. White and Associates founder, manager and practicing attorney

Family: husband, Thom Wilson; stepdaughters Doughty Varnadoe, 30, Courtney Wilson, 28, Ashley Mullens, 25

Education: bachelor's degree in criminal justice, Louisiana State University; juris doctorate, Southern University Law Center

When I grew up, I wanted to be: an attorney, since the third grade when I watched Perry Mason beat up on Ham Berger. Also, because my initials spell L-A-W.

When trying to unwind, I: travel with my husband. We go to lovely exotic places until we actually forget about work, and then come back.

A dream case for criminal defense attorney Laurie A. White would involve her being the victim of death by massage.

"That is one of my goals in life, to one day die from over-massage," White said. Practicing criminal law — whether on the side of the prosecution or defense, she's been on both — is very stressful.

"You deal with a lot of hard cases, tough issues and bad people."

So it's important to keep the personal scales balanced so one can perform at maximum capacity, as the Constitution dictates and clients deserve.

Although it's challenging, White doesn't remember ever wanting to do anything else.

"I really love criminal law, prosecution and defense. I like

helping people and I like criminal law because it's much more fast-paced than civil law and I get excited about the issues. I like how all of these issues collide in a courtroom over a case. There is so much drama in a courtroom, and it's exciting, almost like being an observer in other people's lives and having a huge part of it."

One of the most exciting moments in White's career was when she helped overturn the conviction of Gene Bibbens, a man accused of the rape of a young child and convicted based on eyewitness testimony.

"He was the first case after the statute was passed that DNA can be used as evidence, and the testing came back that it wasn't him," White said. "He had served 16 years in jail. It's a stunning moment to have a client proved innocent through science."

White said the state of affairs in the public defender and district attorney's offices since Hurricane Katrina prompted her run for the Orleans Parish Criminal Court seat vacated after Judge Charles Elloie's retirement. At press deadline, she faced a Nov. 17 runoff against Juana Marine Lombard.

For years, White's constant companions at home and in her law office have been exotic finches and two dogs — Jencks and Cara.

"I sleep with dogs at night, and I work with dogs," White is fond of saying. Yet the pets, like massages, are another weight on the healthy side of the scales. If elected, will the new chambers be coated in dog hair?

"I'll wait awhile before I spring that on the other judges."•

— Angelle Bergeron



Catherine Wilbert

Age: 44

Position: PhytoCeutical Formulations and Vitality Juice Java and Smoothie Bars founder, formulator and owner

Family: two dogs, Rudy and Chance; six cats

Education: bachelor's degree in mass communications, Loyola University; certified fitness trainer and performance nutrition specialist, International Sports Science Association; doctor of naturopathic medicine, American Naturopathic Medical Association

When I grew up, I wanted to: help people be healthy.

When trying to unwind, I: exercise or participate in outdoor activities.

To educate visitors on Vitality Juice Java and Smoothie Bar's Web site, owner and formulator Catherine Wilbert offers one piece of advice to modern consumers: "Don't eat anything your great-great-great-grandmother wouldn't recognize as food."

This premise serves as a guideline for choosing healthy, organic foods — those without additives, preservatives, chemicals or other substances, which are decidedly absent from Vitality Juice Java and Smoothie products.

"I started the company seven years ago as a way to provide people with good choices," Wilbert said. "Everything we sell is good for you, not just less bad."

Wilbert's business began as a supplement store and grew into a smoothie bar and a full-service restaurant, serving customers at five locations throughout Louisiana.

Vitality's products get many of their healthy ingredients

from natural supplements formulated by Wilbert and manufactured by her other company, PhytoCeutical Formulations, which distributes nutritional products nationwide.

Born and raised in New Orleans, a city that frequently ranks among the nation's least healthy, Wilbert knew she would be fighting an uphill battle when she entered fields related to fitness and good health.

"People in Louisiana generally aren't as healthy as they should be. I knew it wouldn't always be easy, but people who try our products love them because all people want to feel good."

Wilbert began working out at age 9 as competitive swimmer. Through years of education, research and hard work, she has earned more than a dozen bodybuilding titles since 1998.

Later, working as a naturopathic doctor and fitness trainer, Wilbert began developing products to help her clients achieve

success and soon realized their value to the public, leading her to start her businesses. Rather than treating symptoms, naturopathic medicine looks at symptoms as clues to what is truly wrong, so treatment cures the symptoms and the customer ends up feeling better and well overall.

Because of the inherent health benefits to customers, Wilbert finds motivation in viewing her work as community involvement as well as a lucrative business.

"I enjoy helping people to make positive changes by taking a closer look at what they put in their mouths."

Wilbert also finds time for charities such as animal rescue operations. Her two dogs and six cats are rescue pets — her dog Rudy inspired the "Rudy Smoothie," a healthy take on the Starbucks Frappuccino. Her company is doing a promotion to fund St. Francis Animal Rescue. •

— Thomas Leggett

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Sara W. Woodard

Age: 57

Position: Start the Adventure in Reading executive director

Family: husband, Allan Woodard; children, David, 24, Matthew, 21

Education: bachelor's degree in English, College of William and Mary; master's degree in literature, American University

When I grew up, I wanted to be: I didn't know.

When trying to unwind, I: walk every morning at 5:30 a.m. with my dog, Stella, who is a mix of Spitz and Border collie. That's how I plan my day. And I read.

Although Sara Woodard describes herself as “not very exciting,” since the summer of 2003 she has been introducing New Orleans-area children to one of the greatest adventures in life — reading.

As the executive director of Start the Adventure in Reading, Woodard's life became much more exciting when Hurricane Katrina threatened the future of the program, which partners volunteer reading tutors with second-graders who want to read but need some help.

In spite of the loss of funding, uncertainties about the demographics of New Orleans and the future of the school system, Woodard and hundreds of the program's volunteer tutors managed to keep STAIR alive.

“We had 27 sites and we were serving 33 schools,” said

Woodard, who feared a post-Katrina exodus of board members and volunteers would be a death knell for the program.

However, even before the future of the city was certain, faithful volunteers and new ones were calling, ready to get back to work helping New Orleans children.

Woodard went from school to school telling new principals and charter schools about STAIR's mission.

“If I had waited for them to come to me, I would still be sitting here waiting. I went to whoever I had to talk to in order to convince them, and we came back even though they said there would be no children in Orleans Parish.”

STAIR's budget, funded by individuals, foundations, businesses and churches, was immediately cut in half. Still, Woodard managed to get the program back up and running

by January 2006.

“Pre-Katrina we had 27 sites in Orleans and Jefferson, serving 33 schools with 500 volunteers and 400 children,” Woodard said. “We came back with 11 sites in January. By this fall, we will be serving 200 children at 27 schools with 300 volunteers.”

Her goal is to expand STAIR to more sites and serve more children. Woodard is determined to continue something STAIR began before Katrina — family reading workshops designed to meet the literacy needs of everyone in the STAIR participant's family.

“It is not just the second-graders we need to reach out to,” she said. “We want to teach everyone in the household how to read.”•

— Angelle Bergeron

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