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Year



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Carol Solomon

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CityBusiness 2008 Women of the Year 10th Anniversary

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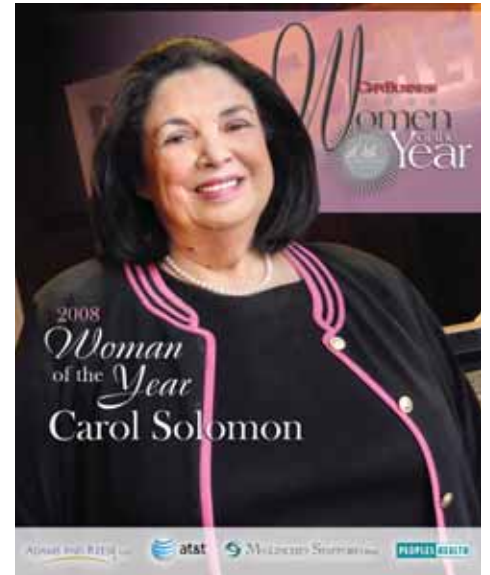


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2008



2007



2006



2005



2004



Introduction

'Women of the Year' marks 10th anniversary

By Christian Moises
News Editor

Carol Solomon knows people have a lot of bad things to say about the managed health care industry.

But she sees a lot of good and has continued to fight for the industry — and its members — for the past three decades. The past 10 years have been some of her most notable, helping grow Peoples Health from about 1,500 members with \$25 million in revenue to 42,000 members with \$500 million in revenue, all while making community involvement a cornerstone of Peoples Health's mission.

As the 2008 Woman of the Year, Solomon and the rest of this year's honorees mark a milestone — the 10th anniversary of Women of the Year.

Born out of Women in Business, a former New Orleans CityBusiness quarterly publication that profiled women on issues facing the city's business community, the first class of Women of the Year honorees was announced in 1999. Since then the program recognizing the area's outstanding women based on professional and community achievements has expanded from 30 honorees to 50.

Including this year's class, 331 women have been recognized as business and community leaders who are innovative thinkers and represent endless energy commitment to the region.

Along the way, some changes have occurred. In 2004, the selection committee began recognizing an overall honoree from the class, choosing Missy Allain in 2004, Laura Maloney in 2005, Doris Voitier in 2006 and Toni Wendel in 2007.

In 2006, the first Hall of Fame honoree was announced.

This year, we welcome four new members to the Hall of Fame. Julia Bland, Donna Klein, Priscilla Lawrence and Solomon join P.K. Scheerle in the elite group of women who have been honored three times.

Even though they are no longer eligible to be selected as honorees, these women — and all of the honorees — will continue to drive our region forward and serve as outstanding representatives in the community.

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



Christian Moises

Hall of Fame

Women of the Year honorees are inducted in the Hall of Fame when they are honored for a third time.

P.K. Scheerle
Hall of Fame Honoree 2006
1999, 2000, 2006

Julia Bland
Hall of Fame Honoree 2008
2000, 2006, 2008

Donna Klein
Hall of Fame Honoree 2008
2001, 2006, 2008

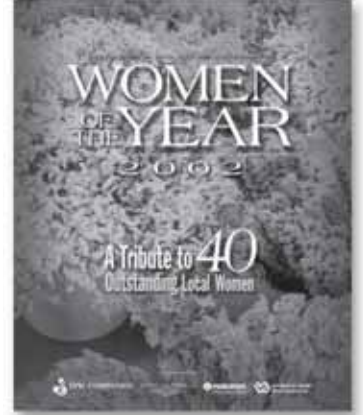
Priscilla Lawrence
Hall of Fame Honoree 2008
2006, 2007, 2008

Carol Solomon
Hall of Fame Honoree 2008
2004, 2006, 2008

2003



2002



2001



2000



1999



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
 Carrol 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 Fortham
 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
 Eugene 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



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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. Coller 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 Kurnatowski
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

2007

Irene "Toni" Wendel

Rachelle Albright
Carmen D. Baham
Debra D. Bowers
Jane S. Brooks
Simone Bruni
Naydja Domingue Bynum

Caitlin Cain
Sharon Latten Clark
Gina Cortez
Darlene Cusanza
Nancy Davis
Gayle B. Dellinger
Maura Donahue

Laura Drumm
Melanie Ehrlich
Jane Ann Frosch
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Christy Kane
Molly Kimball
Rachel Kincaid
Stacy Horn Koch
Phyllis Landrieu

Priscilla Lawrence
Maureen Lichtveld
Rebecca Mackie
Elizabeth W. Magner
Sandy Ha Nguyen
Kristin Gisleson Palmer
Marian Pierre

Brenda Reine-Bertus
Ann Rogers
Denise Shinn
Dolly Simpson
Lisa Stockton
Shelly Stubbs
Michele Kidd Sutton

Elizabeth M. Teague
Cecile Tebo
Suzanne C. Thomas
Denise Thornton
Sarah Newell Usdin
Laurie White
Catherine Wilbert
Sara W. Woodard

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

**We normally dump Gatorade,
but a heartfelt congratulations
seemed more appropriate.**

Congratulations Beth Payton,
2008 CityBusiness Women of the Year Nominee.
From your family and friends at the Saints.



Congratulations!



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Partner, Employment Law Regional Practice Group

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Carol Solomon

Hall of Fame honoree



Peoples Health CEO Carol Solomon has helped grow the company from 1,500 members with \$25 million in revenue to 42,000 members with \$500 million in revenue, all while making community involvement a cornerstone.

Position: CEO, Peoples Health
Age: 64
Family: daughter, Michelle, 38
Education: attended University of South Florida

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I'd make more time to get into hobbies. ... I don't have a lot of down time.

What's the secret to happiness?

Enjoy everything you do.

What's your biggest indulgence?

A week at the beach with some friends and family, having nothing to do but taking walks and reading books.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? I'd love to travel to South America.

Carol Solomon is passionate about her job as CEO of Peoples Health, the managed care company she's led for the past 10 years.

"Health care is just a wonderful place to be," Solomon said. "There is a lot being said about it and what needs to change and how it needs to improve, but I like to think that there's a lot right with it also. We just need to focus on what's right and do more of that and keep working to improve the health care outcomes for our members."

Solomon first arrived in New Orleans in 1993 as a consultant with a group looking to start another company in the managed care business. Five years later, she took the helm at Peoples Health.

"Back then, they had a new Medicare product with about 1,500 members and about \$25 million in revenue," Solomon recalled. "Today we have 42,000 members and \$500 million in revenue."

Solomon started her career path as an accountant in the savings and loan industry. While living in Daytona Beach, Fla., she took a position as controller at a local hospital, where she later became the administrator. When the hospital was sold, she moved to Miami to work as a consultant to area hospitals doing business with managed care companies.

In 1988 she joined the Miami-based Ramsay HMO as chief operating officer. When that company sold to UnitedHealthcare in 1993, Solomon landed in New Orleans.

"And I've loved it here ever since."

Community service is an important part of the business culture at Peoples Health.

"I believe I need to be the example for that within our organization, to get my staff and co-workers to believe in that."

Solomon is a founding member of the Women's Health Initiative, a board member of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation and an active supporter of the American Heart Association. She is a past chairwoman of the AHA's annual Go Red luncheon to promote awareness of heart disease in women, and Peoples Health is a sponsor for this year's AHA charity walk.

During her off hours, Solomon enjoys visiting family in Florida, and she's excited to be welcoming her first grandchild in a few months. She's also a big fan of Jazz Fest and Mardi Gras.

"I'm fortunate enough to live on St. Charles, so I'm in a great place to entertain and take advantage of all the parades."•

— Sonya Stinson

Jacqueline Alexander



Position: CEO, Girl Scouts Louisiana East

Age: 55

Family: husband, Al; stepdaughter, Lisa Howard, 41

Education: bachelor's degree in sociology, Alabama A&M University; master's degree in organizational management, University of Phoenix; associate's degree in education, Bishop State Junior College

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I'd want to be less tolerant than I already am. I'm sometimes too tolerant as an administrator.

What's the secret to happiness?

To appreciate yourself. My spirituality keeps me balanced and happy.

What's your biggest indulgence? I love a pretty pair of shoes and a nice handbag.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? I want to take the time to travel outside the country and see how the rest of the world really is, from my eyes and not so much the media.

Girl Scouts is no longer just “cookies and camping” — that’s the message Girl Scouts Louisiana East CEO Jackie Alexander is trying to spread to her 12,000 girls involved in the organization and those interested in joining a Girl Scouts program that is undergoing a nationwide makeover.

The Girl Scouts transformation realigns more than 300 councils to 103 high-capacity councils better equipped to serve the needs of today’s generation, raise more money because of less competition within each state and increase enrollment numbers, Alexander said.

“Girls discover what interests them, connect with what that is and take action by doing something to make a difference in their world,” Alexander said. “Those are three crucial steps for them to develop leadership skills. We’re trying to really focus on teaching them leadership roles and start developing skills of a leader early on in their lives.”

In April, Louisiana’s organizations leaped into the realignment as the Girl Scouts Council of Southeast Louisiana, originally led by Alexander, merged with Girl Scouts Audubon Council of Baton Rouge to form Girl Scouts Louisiana East.

Alexander was named CEO of the newly formed organization of 12,000 members and more than 5,000 adult volunteers in 23 parishes. The council has a budget of \$4.5 million. The number of councils in Louisiana was

reduced from six to two — the other being Girl Scouts Louisiana Pines to the Gulf.

Alexander has been involved with Girl Scouts since 1989 when she was the field director in Mobile, Ala. She was then hired as an adult development director with the Girl Scout Council of Southeast Louisiana in 1992, promoted to assistant executive director of membership and marketing in 1996, deputy director in 2003 and CEO in 2004.

“It helps that I’ve handled most of the positions throughout the organization. Now it’s just making sure you put the right people in the right places and give them the support to meet the challenges of the organization.”

One of Alexander’s biggest hurdles has been resurrecting the local council after Hurricane Katrina, which damaged the council’s two camps and service center and caused membership to drop by 7,000 because of displacement in various parish areas.

In January 2006, Alexander initiated GIRLfest 2006: Reuniting after the Storm, attended by more than 1,500 Girl Scouts, volunteers and family members who gathered at Bayou Segnette State Park. She also instigated the Adopt-A-Troop program, Hurricane Awareness, Emergency Preparedness and Save our Camp Fund to ensure the camps would be rebuilt and the girls received all the support they needed. •

— Tommy Santora

Heather Alleman



Position: director, ITT Technical Institute
Age: 35
Family: single
Education: bachelor's and master's degrees in education, University of New Orleans

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I would be more like my mother, my inspiration.

What's the secret to happiness? Listening to the inner voice of perseverance.

What's your biggest indulgence? Working on home improvement projects.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Get my pilot's license.

When Heather Alleman wants new cabinets installed in the kitchen, she doesn't call a carpenter; she does the work herself.

Such a hands-on attitude contributes to the success of the educator who since 2004 has directed the technical institute, where she began as a teacher nearly 10 years ago.

"If you're running up against a brick wall on something, you just need to dig a little deeper, get a little more involved," Alleman said. "I don't like to put limits on what I can do. I feel like if you just work harder, you'd be surprised at what you can do."

She began as a GED teacher nearly 10 years ago at ITT Technical Institute, when it was a start-up school with 30 students, and has risen to the school's director. She has grown its enrollment to 600 students, its highest ever. Her passion for math and science fuels an excitement for education and an appreciation for seeing others learn.

Alleman thought she'd found her niche when she began her career in education as a high school science teacher and was devastated when the temporary position ended. She entered the technical college arena on the advice of a friend and was elated at what she discovered.

"It's opened my eyes to this industry.

Obviously, it was a springboard for me," she said.

One of her goals is to improve the public's perception of technical colleges and encourage high school students to include such schools among their educational options after graduation. High school students are conditioned to enter a four-year college and aren't taught to appreciate the benefits of a technical education to join the skilled work force, Alleman said.

Alleman has served as secretary of the Louisiana Career College Association since 2004. ITT Technical Institute, a network of more than 100 schools in 36 states, named her 2006 Southeast district director of the year.

She credits the institute's faculty, staff and students for their participation in several community outreach projects she has initiated, including fundraising efforts to rebuilt the Patrick F. Taylor Science and Technology School. About 50 school representatives volunteered to work during a recent Extreme Makeover Home Edition.

Alleman would like to find more time to contribute to the community, outside of her work with the institute, beginning with the Spina Bifida Association of Greater New Orleans, where she has volunteered since high school. •

— Diana Chandler

Sandra Andrieu



Position: professor and associate dean for academic affairs, Louisiana State University School of Dentistry

Age: 56

Family: husband, Al; cocker spaniel, Cody; feral cat, Latte

Education: bachelor's degree in dental hygiene, LSU School of Dentistry; master's degree in education, University of New Orleans; doctorate in education administration, UNO

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? Say no more often to what others ask of me and say yes more often to what I dream about doing and becoming.

What's the secret to happiness? Reminding myself of what I am grateful for every morning and every night.

What's your biggest indulgence? Protecting my quiet time to have café au lait and beignets and to think, in addition to antique hunting and gardening.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Spend a month living with my husband in Aix en Provence, take a monthlong vacation at home and go on a safari.

The wind blows strong and hard on the tender young trees, not to harm them, but to teach their roots to stay firmly to the ground.

Sandra Andrieu fell in love with that quote more than 20 years ago. She recites it without hesitation — it personifies her life, she says.

Andrieu is an associate professor and dean at the Louisiana State University School of Dentistry where she oversees policies, procedures and committee decisions relative to the school's educational programs. Andrieu came to LSU's Health Sciences Center as a student in 1982 and has since made a career out of it — even breaking barriers by becoming the first woman appointed dean at the school.

"It's not that I wanted to be first. I was prepared," Andrieu said. "When I started teaching at LSU's Health Sciences Center, I found a home away from home where I could learn and grow. ... Some would say that my race has been a slow one, but I believe it has been a solid one, a steady one. And I have developed a strong system that has served me well in my career."

Andrieu is quick to say her "system" is deeply rooted in the moral and ethical values her parents instilled in her as well as her belief in God. She also credits hard work, opti-

mism, basic application of the golden rule and the realization she is a part of a something bigger for helping shape her destiny.

Andrieu leads the school through a rigorous national accreditation process every seven years while maintaining her leadership role as professor and associate dean. In doing so, she maintains her primary focus on people and maintaining an "open and collegial style."

"I am passionate about people and relationships in my family and in all areas of my life. It's just who I am."

At the national level, Andrieu has ongoing experience in dental education, most of which she has gained through a 22-year alignment with the American Dental Educational Association. Andrieu has served on the association's board of directors, focusing on academic affairs. She also hopes to become the association's president-elect in 2009.

Having garnered immeasurable professional credibility and respect, Andrieu said the time is nearing where she will focus more on living consciously and with intent.

"I am feeling that it is time for 'that' woman to sit quietly again, listen to her heart and soul, and focus on the qualities that make me uniquely me."•

— *Nayita Wilson*

Therese Badon



Position: regional development director, United Negro College Fund

Age: 42

Family: husband, Austin Badon Jr.

Education: bachelor's degree in business administration, Dillard University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

To sometimes just relax more and enjoy this great city of New Orleans.

What's the secret to happiness?

Being with my husband and Romeo, our dog, but also being with other family members and friends.

What's your biggest indulgence?

My husband is practically a gourmet chef. And I love everything he makes — it's amazing I am not huge by now.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Travel. And I would like to do more of it, particularly going to Africa.

Making it her career to enhance education opportunities for others, Therese Badon firmly believes in the theory of consequence.

"When you have people who are in poverty and can't afford to send their children to school, the entire community is affected," Badon said. "Those children will have a greatly reduced chance of getting out of poverty, and the more poverty we have, the more crime."

That means education is ultimately everyone's business, said the regional development director for the United Negro College Fund.

The former Dillard University executive director of alumni relations and alumni giving oversaw a 300 percent increase in giving during her six years at the school. Badon embraced her current mission just two weeks before Katrina swept through New Orleans, causing millions of dollars in damage to the city's three historically black universities.

Rather than feeling overwhelmed, Badon embraced the challenge of greatly increasing support for those schools, working on the UNCF's Wave of Hope Campaign with former presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton, and ultimately raising \$4 million for colleges and universities and throughout the Gulf Coast.

"I just felt I had to do something, not just from a professional perspective but from a personal one, too," said Badon, whose husband is state Rep. Austin Badon Jr., D-New Orleans.

"This is the way my mother was, so it is obviously learned behavior with me. But once you realize that everything is not about you, but is instead about helping other people and making a difference by changing a life, it almost becomes an addiction. You see the impact you have had and it just makes you want to do more."

Appointed by Mayor C. Ray Nagin in 2003 to serve as a member of the city of New Orleans' Human Relations Commission, Badon is also an active member of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, serving on the body's Alumni Relations Commission.

Overseeing UNCF fundraising efforts throughout Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico, Badon recalls the challenges of Katrina and contemplates a possible economic downturn that might affect giving.

"There may be tough times now and again, but nothing is impossible. I just don't think God puts us in situations where we cannot get through."•

— Garry Boulard

Jesyka Bartlett



Position: director of marketing, French Market Coffee

Age: 34

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in women's studies, University of California at San Diego; master's degree in English, Tulane University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I would like to wake up one day with flawless organization.

What's the secret to happiness?

Discovering the simple things that lift your mood, or figuring out what's close to your heart, and taking time to appreciate those things.

What's your biggest indulgence?

I like luxuries like candles for my house — how does wax cost so much anyway? Also, because New Orleans offers such rich cuisine, I love having a nice dinner out with friends.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't?

Mostly, I'd like to travel. I'd love to visit South Africa. I'd also like to hike the Himalayas or experience the Festival of the Sun at the Machu Picchu ruins in Peru.

Regarding her work as director of marketing at French Market Coffee, part of Jesyka Bartlett's philosophy involves simply trusting in a positive customer experience that has lasted for 117 years.

"Small pleasures like good coffee make a big difference in someone's busy day," she said. "In the chaotic modern world, people place a premium on the luxury of simple pleasures."

Bartlett, who represents a fourth generation of roasting, blending and selling French Market Coffee, views her contribution to the company as a personal investment in a family business.

Three years ago, Bartlett filed for visiting scholar status at the University of California at San Diego and was granted a spot in a doctoral program in English. But she felt drawn back home to a familiar city and a new line of work. When a generational shift in the company resulted in her uncle being promoted to president, she was asked to get on board.

Now, Bartlett plays an ever-evolving role in helping direct office functions and working with brokers and distributors nationwide.

"We have a fairly iconic logo and red can, and as we package new products or adjust to new equipment, someone has to make sure we're happy with what's being done with the brand and label."

A changing and expanding role allows Bartlett to wear different hats in the company's operations, from managing content on the Web site and designing print ads, to directing online advertising and coordinating special events.

Bartlett also finds time for personal and professional involvement in charitable organizations. This year, she led French Market Coffee's efforts in contributing coffee service for the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure and brought coffee to East Jefferson General Hospital for the breast cancer staff every Friday in October.

"One of my best friends is in remission from cancer, so breast cancer is an issue that's near and dear to me."

On Sept. 29 — National Coffee Day — she and her colleagues gave coffee away in front of 1515 Poydras St. For every person who sampled their coffee, the company donated an entire can to the New Orleans police and fire departments.

For Bartlett, making a difference in a person's life drives not only her charitable efforts but also her family's product marketing philosophy.

"People rarely slow down anymore. If something I do gives people one shred of a reason to put a smile on their faces, then that's a successful day."•

— Thomas Leggett

Lauren Baum



Position: director of marketing,
The Idea Village

Age: 27

Family: parents Linda and Dr. Neil Baum;
sister, Alisa, 29; brother, Craig, 24

Education: 13 years at Newman School;
bachelor's degree in communications and
Chinese and master's degree in business
and organizational sociology, Stanford
University

**If you could change one thing about
yourself, what would it be?** Require less
sleep.

What's the secret to happiness?
Surround myself with people who make
me happy.

What's your biggest indulgence?
Traveling and PJ's iced coffee.

**What have you always wanted to do but
haven't?** Have a day where I have more
time than I know what to do with.

When Lauren Baum returned home to New Orleans from New York in the early part of 2006 to help “fix” the city, she never imagined the temporary move would become permanent. But like many locals who have flocked home since the storm, Baum’s passion for her native city has become intertwined in a career that focuses on reviving New Orleans.

“After (Hurricane) Katrina ... something changed,” said the director of marketing for The Idea Village. “A normal 9-to-5 job was no longer good enough, and I was determined to combine my education and life experiences with my passion for New Orleans.”

The Isidore Newman School and Stanford University graduate was working in New York City as a publicist for eBay when she felt a desire to help with the city’s recovery efforts.

“My professional experiences in New York gave me the foundation that I needed to hit the ground running in New Orleans,” she said. “New York also helped me to develop a national network of friends and colleagues who have joined The Idea Village in supporting entrepreneurship in New Orleans.”

As marketing director for The Idea Village, a nonprofit focused on making the city a vibrant entrepreneurial community,

Baum develops programs to “engage the global network to drive innovation and entrepreneurship in New Orleans.”

The Idea Village recently launched 504ward to keep “young movers and shakers” in the city who want to advance their careers and advocate social change.

“Retaining this talent is central to developing a vibrant entrepreneurial community, and programs and partnerships, such as 504ward, are critical to our success,” said Baum, who fits in the middle of the 23-to-35-year-old young adult group 504ward targets.

“I missed the people, spicy food and iced coffee,” Baum said of her time spent living away from New Orleans. “More than anything, I missed the feeling of a small community with a large personality.”

Now she works to inspire other young professionals that New Orleans is the ideal setting for career advancement and community involvement.

“New Orleans is an inspiring place. The most incredible people have arrived and/or emerged in this city and are committed to making New Orleans a better city for future generations. We are living and working in a history book. While other people read about it, we have the opportunity to create it.”•

— Amy Ferrara Smith

Penny Baumer



Position: chief financial officer and vice president, Baumer Foods

Age: 55

Family: husband, Al; children, Patrick Michael Lynch (deceased 2005), Pepper, 19

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

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Learn how to say “no” without feeling guilty.

What's the secret to happiness?

After having lost everything in Katrina, finding happiness and solace in the everyday things you take for granted.

What's your biggest indulgence?

Being able to carve out an afternoon to spend with some girlfriends, and laugh and giggle, or go to the spa and get your nails done.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Sail from New Orleans to the Tahitian Islands.

Tallying up the obligations and engagements on her mental calendar, Penny Baumer calculates she'll be able to take a weekend off by next summer.

In addition to becoming homeless twice in three years — once from Katrina's floodwaters in her Lakeview home, and again when a water heater broke while her new house was boarded up for Hurricane Gustav — Baumer's schedule is dominated by working to sustain Baumer Foods.

Baumer now helps her husband, Al, run the business, which is best known for producing Crystal hot sauce and has been family-owned and operated since its inception in 1923.

Before Katrina, Baumer had her own forensic accounting business, which she has since put on hold to serve as Baumer Foods' chief financial officer.

Though she has made many sacrifices, Baumer knows reviving the company was the right decision, not only for the sake of the business but also for maintaining a New Orleans food tradition.

“It would have been really easy to say the business is destroyed, collect the insurance and we'd be sipping mint juleps right now,” Baumer said. “Katrina so totally destroyed so many traditions that people are still holding on to whatever they can for a sense of normalcy.”

Baumer, a native New Orleanian, involves herself in many other pursuits aimed at maintaining the city's culture and heritage. She is particularly passionate about preserving the city's waterways, for their historical and environmental values. Baumer, who also loves to sail, participates in the Lake Pontchartrain Foundation, the Garden Club and the Maritime Museum.

Although Baumer contributes monetarily to various charities, she says she would prefer to work one-on-one with people. One way she does so is simply by giving her own leftover restaurant food to homeless people — something she learned from her son, who died in 2005.

Baumer's desire to help others began at a very young age. When she was in second grade, her parents began running the State Children's Home, an orphanage in New Orleans, where she and her siblings lived as equals with the orphaned children in their home.

“From second grade on, I wanted to help people. I had a better appreciation of just how underprivileged people could be.”

Today, she continues to perform “random acts of kindness” and hopes others will do the same. Those acts, she believes, “create a trickle, which turns into a wave, which does have a profound and position impact on our city.”

— Leah Bartos



**Congratulations from Baumer Foods, Inc.
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The 2008 honorees:

Jackie Alexander
Heather Alleman
Sandra Andrieu
Therese Badon
Jesyka Bartlett
Lauren Baum
Penny Baumer
Dottie Belletto
C. Lynn Besch
Julia Bland
Kim Boyle
Cindy Brennan

Christine Briede
Debbie Brockley
Nancy Cassagne
Jackie Clarkson
Michelle Craig
Bernie Cullen
Beth Dannewald
Nancy Scott Degan
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Laura Held
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Carol Solomon
Charlee Williamson
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“If it wasn’t for Peoples Health...”



“Well... I’d be laying in the bed right now talking, and that’s all I could do, really.” – Carroll Parr, *Peoples Health Member*

In one instant – with just one slip – 72-year-old Peoples Health member, Carroll Parr broke his neck and lost the ability to move his arms, his legs, his body. “I fell off a little old tin building about six foot high,” he said. “I fell on my neck. I landed on my back with my... my hands in the air. I couldn’t even bring them down... All I could do was move my neck a little bit and talk.”

Parr was rushed from Gonzales to New Orleans for surgery. He was hospitalized for two long weeks. And then came the months of rehabilitation — the struggle to be able to feed himself again, to stand on his own and then to use a walker. After he fell from the shed... when he was lying there on his back, Carroll Parr didn’t know if he would ever be able to move anything below his neck again. Now he walks with a cane. It seems nothing short of a miracle. And he continues to do better every day.

Parr is covered by a Peoples Health Medicare plan. “Financially, it saved me from bankruptcy,” he said. “Two weeks over there was eighty-something thousand dollars,” he said referring to the hospital stay. “The other day, I got a statement showing the surgery on my neck, back here, fifty thousand... I’d have to sell my place and all to pay the bills, you know?” But he didn’t have to sell his home. He was covered.

“When I tell people about Peoples Health,” says Carroll Parr, “I tell them they can’t find a better company. They can check all the rest, but then compare them all and I believe you’ll go with Peoples Health... I tell them that’s about the best Medicare contract that you can get a hold to.”

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Dottie Belletto

Position: president and CEO, New Orleans Convention Co. Inc.

Age: 59

Family: daughter, Veronica; son, Nicholas

Education: attended University of New Orleans for two years, College of Liberal Arts

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? Arrange more personal time for myself to write about all of my personal experiences.

What's the secret to happiness?

To be comfortable with yourself and love what you do.

What's your biggest indulgence? Dining at all of our wonderful restaurants throughout Louisiana.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Go to Alaska and experience the wilderness there.

Dottie Belletto is used to rolling out the red carpet for her customers, sometimes literally, and when you have high-end clients from President Bush to Reggie Bush, that extra touch in event planning can go a long way toward making their events in New Orleans memorable.

"The key is creating new experiences for them and the most unique, enjoyable experience possible," said Belletto, whose meeting and event planning business, New Orleans Convention Co. Inc., is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. "It's a matter of going beyond the client's expectations and recognizing the uniqueness of your city and state and matching that culture with your client's needs for a perfect atmosphere and event."

Belletto has produced events for presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter; Sen. Mary Landrieu and Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu; and New Orleans Saints players Drew Brees, Reggie Bush and Deuce McAllister. She has also catered to clients such as Major League Baseball, the NFL Super Bowl XXXVI Committee, NASA and Shell Oil.

Belletto started her career in the 1980s as a New Orleans tour guide. She trained other tour guides around the city and created and wrote for the state's Hospitality and Tourism Training Program. Belletto also taught people, mostly in the hospitality industry, different languages and secondary classes through the state department's vocational education program.

Belletto began NOCCI in 1988 as a two-person business, along with Linda Potter, who is still with the company. Belletto's business now has 12 employees.

"I remember one of my events that kicked off my career was the elephant romp at the Audubon Zoo as part of the Republican Convention in 1988," Belletto said. "They still do it every year in Baton Rouge."

From September through November, Belletto spent 45 days at the Epcot International Food and Wine Festival, where she helped generate a 7,000-square-foot Louisiana experience for Disney World guests, including Louisiana food, Mardi Gras beads and a taste of Café du Monde.

Belletto also created and coordinated Shell's Coming Home Campaign; worked with Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu to produce the New Year's Day Interface Service outside the Louisiana Superdome; and created Louisiana Oyster Jubilee 2008, which included the longest po-boy down Bourbon Street.

Belletto is executive director of New Orleans Music Legends Park on Bourbon Street. The park is dedicated to honoring Louisiana's living musical legends, and Belletto helped renovate the park in 2003.

"The vision is a park atmosphere where people can move in and out freely and experience the live music and jazz of New Orleans. I am always supporting the cultural arts."•

— Tommy Santora

Ceryl Lynn Besch



Position: associate professor of clinical medicine, LSU Health Sciences Center; director of HIV division, LSU Health Sciences Center Infectious Diseases Center

Age: 55

Family: widowed; children Patrick, 23, Erin, 20, and Matthew, 17

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

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I'd have more patience with administrative responsibilities.

What's the secret to happiness? Having strong connections with other people and finding contentment with what you have.

What's your biggest indulgence? Travel.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Parachute out of an airplane.

It takes a great deal of skill to become either an outstanding doctor or an outstanding administrator. To become both requires someone special, and that's what Dr. Ceryl Lynn Besch has accomplished in her years at the Louisiana State University HIV Outpatient Clinic.

For Besch, the two skills complement each other.

"Being a clinician gives you credibility when you try to change the system," Besch said. "There are more good doctors out there than there are doctors willing to work with the system and change things — I like that stuff."

Besch has been with the clinic since its inception. While she specialized in infectious diseases, she originally expected to be an internist. However, the explosion of HIV/AIDS onto the national scene in the mid 1980s changed things dramatically.

"We went from a time where there were no ads for infectious diseases specialists to there always being ads for infectious diseases specialists."

Besch's work with the clinic has changed over the years as survival rates have grown. Originally, most of the clinic's patients were dying. However, as certain treatments became more available and sur-

vival rates increased, the clinic had to adjust to an increasing number of patients.

Even though the prognosis nowadays is far better for HIV patients than it was during the 1980s and early 1990s, Besch still finds she must battle the old stigmas and beliefs about the disease.

"They think they're handed a death sentence," said Besch, who added that her patients often experience feelings of shame and guilt over the possibility that they might spread their disease to others. "It's not their fault. There's something they can do about it and they can live a long life."

Now, HIV has a better long-term prognosis than certain cancers.

The clinic's patient total almost doubled in the six years before Katrina, going from about 1,700 to 3,200. After a drop in patients immediately following the storm, the clinic is up to about 1,700 again.

When she's not attending to her patients' and clinic's needs, Besch loves to travel — northern Italy is her favorite destination — and do "anything by the water."

But in the end, she loves her work, her co-workers and her patients.

"I like to know what's going on. I don't have to run everything, I just like to know."•

— Fritz Esker

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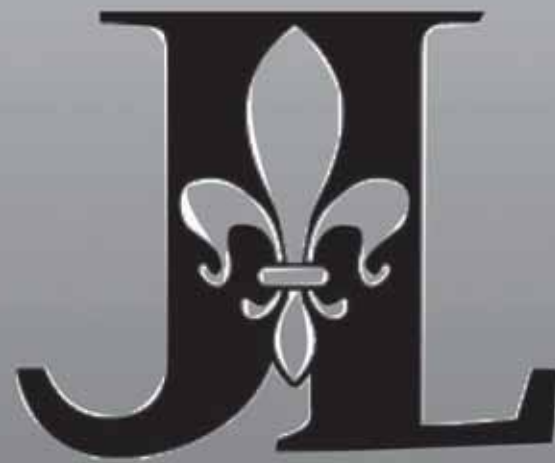
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Julia Bland

Hall of Fame honoree



Position: executive director, Louisiana Children's Museum

Age: 57

Family: husband, Will; children, Will, 27, Webb, 24, John, 18

Education: bachelor's degree in art history, Tulane University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I might shorten the amount of sleep I need because there's so much good stuff to do.

What's the secret to happiness? To be able to identify what makes yourself tingle and run with it.

What's your biggest indulgence? Books.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? I would love to spend more time hiking mountains and rafting rivers.

In post-Katrina New Orleans, many organizations and individuals have taken on new roles and responsibilities, multi-tasking to fill the void in services left from the 2005 hurricanes. Such is the case for Julia Bland and the direction she has steered the Louisiana Children's Museum in the years since the storms.

Under Bland's leadership as executive director, the museum has become much more than just a place for play and has expanded beyond its physical structure on Julia Street. The museum staff has set up shop in St. Bernard Parish and the Lower 9th Ward, providing programs that appeal not only to a child's sense of fun, but also integrate educational, therapeutic and community-building elements. And the programs are designed to engage not only children, but adults and entire neighborhoods.

"It is an important experience for children to be able to interact together and work together, but it's also important for the parents, the child care providers, grandparents, babysitters, elementary school teachers to have a better understanding of the experiential learning that children have in this museum and through our programs," Bland said.

"We're always thinking about not only

what's right for the children, but also what's right for the adults in their lives."

Bland and the museum are also working on a new chapter, the Early Learning Village, which will be housed on a 12-acre plot in City Park and offer parenting resources, in addition to a museum, performing arts and nature center.

Bland, who believes in a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to early childhood development, emphasizes the effect these programs have on entire families. When training new staff members, Bland reminds them, "Don't ever underestimate what you contribute to somebody's family because if these kids go home feeling upbeat and excited, it makes their parents feel better about their parenting."

That's why the key to community well-being is children's well-being, Bland says.

"Our belief is that children are the most valuable resource or asset that we have in our community or any community," Bland said. "And as we learn to put our children first in our decision-making process, whether it's criminal justice, education or economic development, if we think about our children first, then we're really making the right decisions for the long run."•

— Leah Bartos

Kim Boyle

Two-time honoree



Position: partner, Phelps Dunbar

Age: 46

Family: parents, Connie and Ernest Boyle Jr.; brother, Wardell Boyle; sister-in-law, Lois Boyle; niece, Tiffany, 25; nephew, Brian, 19

Education: bachelor's degree in politics and teaching certificate in secondary education, Princeton University; juris doctor, University of Virginia School of Law

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
I'd be more patient.

What's the secret to happiness?
Health and well-being of friends and family.

What's your biggest indulgence?
Eating out.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? I would love to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court.

When Kim Boyle of Phelps Dunbar becomes Louisiana Bar Association president in 2009, she will be the first African-American female to hold that post.

"I'm excited about the opportunity to serve the Louisiana Bar Association," Boyle said. "It's a phenomenal organization. ... I want to continue to work with members of the bar throughout the state."

She also made history locally when she served as the first African-American president of the New Orleans Bar Association in 2002.

"I like what I do. I like the clients who I represent. I like the lawyers I work with, and I like this justice system."

A "born and bred" New Orleanian, Boyle attended Benjamin Franklin High School before she went to Princeton University to earn her bachelor's degree, then to the University of Virginia School of Law to work on her juris doctor. She has since become a partner in the employment law group at Phelps Dunbar's New Orleans office, where she practices labor and employment law, civil rights, commercial and general litigation, and constitutional law.

"I like all of the people I work with," Boyle said. "We work hard, but we have fun with what we do and have fun working as a team."

Throughout her career, Boyle has made

time for pro bono work, including serving as lead counsel on a post-conviction appeal in a death penalty case. Before joining Phelps Dunbar, she served as judge pro tempore in Division I for the Orleans Parish Civil District Court. She has also worked as an assistant professor at Loyola University College of Law.

But while she chose a legal career 21 years ago, teaching has also always interested her.

"I learn as much as hopefully I am able to impart," she said of her teaching experiences.

Outside of the office, Boyle serves in various positions for many different organizations, including on the board of the Greater New Orleans Foundation.

"We are engaged in some very interesting things post Katrina, such as public housing and work force development."

She is also a Fleur-de-Lis Ambassador, where she meets with key leaders nationwide to fight against post-Katrina misconceptions.

"I hope to leave behind the legacy that I was a good person, a good friend, tried to work for the betterment of the city, of the community, and that hopefully I left things slightly better than I found them."•

— Amy Ferrara Smith



Cindy Brennan

Two-time honoree

Position: managing partner, Mr. B's Bistro

Age: 51

Family: husband, Eddie Davis; children, Bren, 15, Ellie, 14

Education: bachelor's degree in business administration, Tulane University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I may sometimes be too understanding and patient. I'm not sure. I think it has something to do with working with so many people through the years and going through their ups and downs with them.

What's the secret to happiness?
Laughter.

What's your biggest indulgence?
An indulgence in a positive sense would be having a lot of friends. Friends get you through life. The extravagance would be traveling, both in the U.S. and outside.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? To be fluent in French.

Looking at the challenges of the city through the eyes of an employer, Cindy Brennan believes one of the best things she can do for New Orleans is continue to hire young people to work in the restaurant she co-manages: Mr. B's Bistro in the French Quarter.

"I don't think I actually could tell you how many people have come through our doors to work here through the years," says Brennan, who has been with the restaurant since its 1979 launching. "But the funny thing is the large number who come back years later as customers. It's nice to know you had something to do with getting them started and that they eventually moved on to their own careers and are now your guests."

Brennan, a member of the famous restaurant family, did not initially get into the restaurant business, instead becoming a buyer for a national department store.

It wasn't until Mr. B's opened that Brennan became a restaurateur, a decision she has never regretted.

"It's really just a great kind of business to be in."

Because she has long believed the restaurant industry is an important contributor to

the local economy, Brennan has served as a board member for the Louisiana Restaurant Association, the New Orleans Restaurant Association, the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau and the French Quarter Business Association, among others.

"I think you have to stay involved as much as possible, primarily to help the local industry, because restaurants are not only a vital part of what makes New Orleans so special, they also greatly contribute to the economy, both here and across the nation."

Brennan has also been active in the March of Dimes Gourmet Galas, as well as supporting the local chapters of Meals on Wheels and Share our Strength. In recognition of her work, Brennan has received the Young Leadership Council's Role Model Award.

"Anyone in the restaurant business will tell you that they are always busy, and they are not lying. But whenever I can help by getting involved in some kind of charity, I am always willing to do it. I just think it's important and that's been my philosophy from the start."•

— Garry Boulard



Christine Briede

Two-time honoree

Position: president, Loubat Equipment Co.

Age: 43

Family: husband Otto; daughters Gillen, 13, Halle, 8

Education: bachelor's degree in communications, University of Alabama

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I wouldn't change a thing.

What's the secret to happiness?

Giving to others and appreciating what you have.

What's your biggest indulgence?

Manicures and facials.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Travel with my family to Europe.

An attitude of action has propelled Christine Briede from sales manager to president, co-owner and majority shareholder of Loubat Equipment Co.

"I've always felt that somebody has to say yes, and it may as well be me. I don't want to be the person complaining," Briede said. "I'm going to be the one working my tail off."

She's the only female among four co-owners and was voted president in 2004 of the foodservice equipment company recognized as a top achiever in the New Orleans food industry. Briede used her background in retail sales management to implement changes at the company to help it succeed, and said her character traits as a nurturer have helped motivate her work force and guarantee client satisfaction.

"I'm a mom. I'm kind of a mom here, too," Briede said. "I place a high value on relationships, and I may try a little harder with some of the employees, whereas someone else may not have the patience for that."

Briede considers reopening the Mid-City company in time to rebuild commercial kitchens damaged by Hurricane Katrina as her top professional accomplishment in recent years, adding that federal recovery dollars are just coming in on many construction projects using food service equipment.

"Even though we're three years out now (from Katrina), I think we're still dealing with a lot," Briede said. "We're a much smaller company than we were, but we're doing the same amount of volume with less people."

Women's Enterprise USA magazine named Loubat a top Women's Business Enterprise this year and industry magazine Foodservice Equipment and Supplies named the company one of two top dealers in the nation.

"They were not giving it to us because of Katrina, but (because) we went through so much and we persevered."

Briede stays connected to the community by volunteering, drawn to causes to improve educational and achievement opportunities for area youth. She's vice president of Friends of Court Appointed Special Advocates-Jefferson, a group protecting the rights of children in the Jefferson Parish juvenile court system, and a sustaining adviser and past board member of the Junior League of New Orleans.

Briede said success is a natural result of her work ethic.

"I've always been very driven. It's just kind of a natural progression for me, that I would be driven and want to be successful."•

— Diana Chandler

Debbie Brockley



Position: CPA and director in tax consulting, LaPorte, Sehrt, Romig, Hand

Age: old enough to know better

Family: husband, Jonathan Red; son Travis, 15

Education: bachelor's degree in business with concentration in accounting, University of South Florida; master's degree in accounting with taxation option, University of New Orleans

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? To be less of a control freak and to be more flexible.

What's the secret to happiness? Having a good center and liking yourself.

What's your biggest indulgence? International travel.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? I want to ride on the Orient Express.

Debbie Brockley is a firm believer in clichés. She's also a believer in the people of New Orleans.

As a director in the tax consulting services department at LaPorte, Sehrt, Romig, Hand, Brockley works with area business owners, many of whom are closely held family businesses.

"Gone are the days that tax accountants sit with green shades and tell people how much they owe. Today's CPA gets to have a real relationship with a business, to help them grow, help them plan," Brockley said.

As a CPA, Brockley and her family could have moved anywhere after her husband retired from a 24-year career in the Navy. But relationships with local businesses have given Brockley a deeper connection to the city.

"As our businesses grow and prosper, our community grows and prospers, and our families can grow and prosper. These relationships and the culture of the city grow on you."

Brockley believes in making the city not just a better place to do business but a better community in which to live, which is where the clichés come in.

"You know the sayings: 'What goes around comes around. And to those that

much has been given, much is expected.' Those aren't just feel-good sentiments. I am a working mom who can contribute to the community. If we each did just two hours of volunteer work a month, look at what we could do for our community. I see potential in so many things and areas where I can help make a difference."

Brockley stands by her convictions. She led her firm's effort to adopt and maintain a large piece of land in City Park, trimming trees and planting new groundcover. She also spearheaded the effort to build a playground in the Hollygrove neighborhood.

On a more individual level, she and her family supported the education of a young man who will be the first in his family to graduate from high school.

Brockley's optimism and faith in people and the community of New Orleans is unwavering.

"There are tons of opportunities to make a difference that don't require huge financial backing. I think people can make a difference. We are the people who are going to make New Orleans better. We can't rely on others."•

— Abby Kral

Nancy Cassagne



Position: CEO, West Jefferson Medical Center

Age: 45

Family: husband, Craig; sons Craig Jr., 21, and Christopher, 18

Education: bachelor's degree in accounting, Nicholls State University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I have absolutely no patience.

What's the secret to happiness? It's all just about attitude and controlling your own positive thoughts.

What's your biggest indulgence? Once a month I get a manicure and pedicure, but that's really it.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Travel to Italy.

As CEO of West Jefferson Medical Center, Nancy Cassagne is noted as one of those rare breed of executives who likes to get down in the trenches with their employees. Not only does she regularly visit employees throughout the hospital, but she walks the halls and pops in on patients to see if there's anything she can do to improve their services.

"I just can't help it. My personality puts me in the trenches and it's just the way I do business," Cassagne said. "As CEO I like to knock on patients' doors and ask them how their stay is here."

Managing a hospital in post-Katrina New Orleans is a significant challenge, and Cassagne has turned West Jeff around with a renewed focus on community, physician and employee relations. She has helped institute new services since Katrina and has helped the complex build one of the South's premier neuroscience departments.

Cassagne is a certified public accountant and has worked in various financial roles for Jefferson Parish for 10 years. She joined West Jeff as chief financial officer in 2006 and was promoted to CEO a year and a half later. Cassagne enjoys working in the health care industry because she can make direct impacts on the lives of patients.

"We affect people's lives, and I don't think

there is any greater motivator than knowing we can really make a difference to a person at a most vulnerable time in their life."

Had Cassagne never taken her career path into accounting and business, she said she may have very well been a teacher. Having taught Sunday school for eight years, she said she could possibly return to the classroom at some point.

Cassagne is on the finance board for Visitation of Our Lady Catholic Church, the Wynhoven Nursing Home board and the executive leadership team for Go Red for Women, an organization associated with the American Heart Association.

Taking pride in the fact she is a product of Jefferson Parish public schools and Louisiana public universities, Cassagne is one of seven daughters. She enjoys spending time with her family and often goes fishing with her husband near Lafitte and on Grand Isle. Cassagne said happiness is more about attitude and that people have more control over their thoughts and happiness than they realize.

"We've all had good and bad days, and we really do have a lot of influence over how our day is going to go. I really think we can control it."•

— Craig Guillot

Jacquelyn Clarkson

Two-time honoree



Position: president, New Orleans City Council

Age: 72

Family: husband, Arthur "Buzz" Clarkson; daughters, Jacquelyn, Cynthia Alsfeld, Diane Hastings, Kevi Sanders, Patricia Clarkson; 10 grandchildren

Education: graduate, National Real Estate Institute

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? Overeating.

What's the secret to happiness?

Loving what you do.

What's your biggest indulgence?

My Tab soda.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't?

I've been really blessed to do everything I have wanted to do. I have been married to the most wonderful man for 55 years who has put up with me, and I have five educated and very successful daughters.

Jackie Clarkson estimates she works about 70 hours a week.

"I'm still going at a fast pace, and I don't plan to go home until they make me," said Clarkson, 72. "There's still so much left to be done to rebuild this city, and I want to use my experience that I have in the business and political arena to play an important leadership role in this historic, rebuilding effort."

The New Orleans Council member at-large has served New Orleans for more than 16 years and returned to the council in December 2007 after a special election to fill the vacant at-large seat. She became president in June.

Clarkson is the first council member to be elected to three non-consecutive terms. In 1990 and 2002, she represented Council District C, which includes Algiers and the French Quarter. She is also a former Louisiana legislator, representing District 102 in the state House of Representatives from 1994 to 2002.

"When I had the opportunity to come back to the City Council, it was not like I was unhappy because I was away from the political life. I was fine spending time with my family, but just something in me couldn't resist coming back to a position of leadership and be a part of putting this city on the right path of rebuilding."

In more than 16 years involved in govern-

ment, the Algiers native is most proud of the Federal City plan to save the Algiers Navy base. Clarkson estimates the base could generate 10,000 high-paying jobs in the next five to seven years through constructed public and private facilities.

Clarkson has worn four hats during the project, including state representative, council member, New Orleans Federal Alliance Board member and now council president. Clarkson began work on the project as a district councilwoman when she wrote the city tax increment financing that allowed the state to contribute money.

In addition to Clarkson's government work, she is still a Realtor, a license she has held for close to 40 years. In 1989, she started her own business, Jacquelyn Clarkson Realtors. Clarkson has also served as president of the Louisiana Realtors Association.

Clarkson is a founding member of the National World War II Museum and a board member for several organizations, including Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carré, the New Orleans Military Advisory Committee, Delgado Community College, Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, Save Our Cemeteries, the Audubon Institute and the New Orleans Recreation Department/New Orleans Ballet Association. •

— Tommy Santora

Michelle Craig



Position: associate, Adams and Reese

Age: 30

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in English, Northwestern State University; juris doctor and bachelor of civil law, Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I wish I had more time in the day; there's so much life to live.

What's the secret to happiness?

Doing what you love and being with who you love.

What's your biggest indulgence?

I like the spa, massages, that type of thing.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Travel, a lot. I traveled a lot in the United States, as a military brat. I also traveled overseas in the LSU Summer in France program. Now, I really want to see the rest of the world.

As a child of a military family, Michelle Craig moved around a lot. However, she's always had a fondness for New Orleans, the city of her birth.

A little less than two years ago, she returned to New Orleans as a lawyer. In that short time, she was part of a group of people who formed the Young Professionals branch of the Urban League of Greater New Orleans.

"When I came here, it was a choice to complain about things going wrong or get in there and do something about it," Craig said. "I wasn't the only one saying it, so we got together."

Now, the group has more than 100 members and works on a number of community projects.

A major achievement has been the Young Professionals University, which gives students from urban environments weekend classes covering a variety of social and behavioral matters. For example, the classes teach them how to dress and behave during job interviews.

"We help kids who aren't getting what they need from their parents. A lot of the kids are afraid to be put into new situations because they don't know what to expect,"

Craig said. "If we give them the tools, they'll use them. No one's given them the tools."

The group is involved in a number of other activities, including voter registration programs, programs for mentoring and tutoring students, economic development tours to give professionals information about areas ripe for growth and debate parties where New Orleanians can socialize and discuss issues facing the city and country.

While Craig is passionate about her work with the Urban League, she is also passionate about her work as a labor and employment attorney at Adams and Reese.

There, she provides management and human resource guidance for local business owners with the goal of minimizing litigation.

"People who open businesses aren't lawyers; they are regular people who are trying to build their dream. I like to help them protect what they love."

Wherever she directs her efforts, Craig works with one main goal: to make New Orleans all it can be.

"We can create the city this should've been a long time ago. There's no reason we can't be a flagship city of the South."•

— Fritz Esker

Bernie Cullen



Position: vice president of oncology services, pastoral care and nursing education and research, East Jefferson General Hospital

Age: 61

Family: husband, Terry; children, Joe Williamson III, 40, Kevin Williamson, 38, Bridgette Williamson, 35; grandchildren, Courtney, Cullen and Katherine Williamson, Meghan Gab

Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, William Carey College; master's degree in nursing, University of South Alabama

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? To have been born with the genes to love exercising everyday like my daughters-in-law.

What's the secret to happiness?

Be true to yourself, and love and appreciate your family and friends.

What's your biggest indulgence?

Being a riding member of Muses this year.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Up to this year, I would have listed 1) ride in a parade, 2) complete a half marathon and 3) learn to play the violin. In early 2009 I will have ridden in Muses and completed a half marathon in Arizona, so now I have to get serious about that violin.

West Bank native Bernie Cullen remembers crossing the ferry as a child to see an orthopedist to be fitted for corrective shoes.

"The doctor suggested that skating would strengthen my ankles," Cullen said. "After that I became a roller derby champion. I skated at all the rinks on the West Bank. I loved roller hockey, too."

Today, as vice president of oncology services, pastoral care and nursing education and research at East Jefferson General Hospital, Cullen is still on a roll. She and her husband Terry are training for a marathon to benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

"My sister-in-law received a bone marrow transplant from her twin sister," Cullen said. "It's been five years and she is doing well, so I'm doing this in honor of them."

Cullen was also a clinical nurse specialist in ostomy care for more than 20 years.

"It's a life-altering procedure," Cullen said. "We are an emotional resource as well as help them take care of their physical hygiene. We hook them up with a person who has already been through it. Their life

is better after the surgery, but when reality hits, you need someone who cares to get you through the rough times."

Cullen was also instrumental in helping EJGH become qualified to be an M.D. Anderson Cancer Center affiliate.

"I feel like I was the foreman. Before Katrina, Dr. Jayne Gurtler had done clinical trials at Anderson and had a relationship with people at the hospital."

To become an affiliate, hospitals have to prove they are a quality institution and their physicians do quality work, she said.

"In 2006, we contacted them again and they were amazed that we still wanted to pursue this. I think it's important that people here remain in the community while we rebuild, and that also frees up Anderson to do their research."

Cullen first considered becoming an elementary school teacher, but a friend suggested she attend an open house at Hotel Dieu Hospital.

"The rest is history. The funny thing is, I became a nurse and my friend became a teacher."•

— Lisa Bacques

Cancer fighters,

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*Vice President
of Oncology Services*

Jayne Gurtler, MD
*Oncologist, credentialed by the
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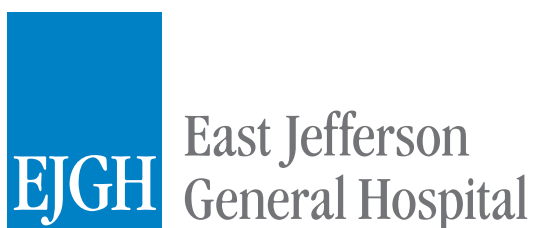
Elizabeth Dannewald, RN
*Supervisor of Inpatient Oncology
and Palliative Care*

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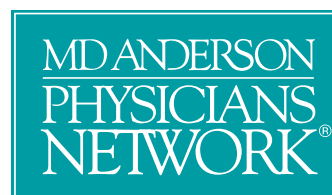
These three women, Jayne Gurtler, MD, Bernie Cullen, RN, and Elizabeth Dannewald, RN, have been recognized as CityBusiness Women of the Year for their tireless efforts in fighting cancer and improving patient care.

They represent the very best in healthcare and service to others. Dr. Gurtler is one of the leading oncologists in the nation. In introducing innovative treatments for her patients, she creates victories when they often seem nearly impossible. Bernie Cullen, RN, is Vice President of Oncology at East Jefferson General Hospital. During her term, she has received our state's highest accolades for excellence in nursing care. Beth Dannewald, RN, demonstrates what is possible when one person dedicates herself to others. Her family, her community and her hospital all benefit from her selfless dedication.

Today, we thank these women along with the hundreds of others who work every day to ensure that no one in our region needs to leave home for the very best in cancer care.



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Elizabeth Dannewald



Position: supervisor of inpatient oncology, East Jefferson General Hospital

Age: 39

Family: husband, Burke; children, Kathlyn Margaret, 7, Kaidin Everett, 3

Education: bachelor's degree in pre-medicine, Louisiana State University; bachelor's degree in nursing, LSU Health Sciences Center; certified chemotherapy and delineated and oncology nurse, Oncology Nursing Society

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I would be less nervous when speaking to a crowd of people.

What's the secret to happiness?

A wonderful and supportive family, a career that I love and a winning football season for LSU.

What's your biggest indulgence?

Shoes, shoes and more shoes.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Backpack through Europe.

Elizabeth Dannewald encountered her first oncology patient in nursing school. That experience helped shape her career path and stirred her desire to offer sincere and quality care to patients and their families at some of life's most vulnerable moments.

"There was something that just clicked between the two of us," Dannewald said of her patient. "She had pancreatic cancer and was experiencing a lot of pain. As a new student, I was not sure what I could offer her. But I realized quickly that there was a lot I could offer her — my time, my reassurance, empathy and caring — so oncology was my calling."

Today, with more than 12 years of oncology experience under her belt, Dannewald has expanded her oncology focus beyond the walls of East Jefferson General Hospital through education and awareness, community outreach, mentoring and support.

While on the job, Dannewald oversees a 55-member team of nurses, nurse assistants and unit secretaries within the hospital's inpatient oncology and palliative care units. As supervisor of palliative care, Dannewald offers support to patients who are near the end of their lives and with their family members, face challenging decisions.

Dannewald is also a proponent of patients' rights and is committed to ensuring patients are informed about their care.

"I believe in treating patients as individuals."

She also says she believes in community service and uses such opportunities to merge her two loves: family and career.

Dannewald purposely involves her family in activities such as EJGH's American Cancer Society Making Strides walks, community screenings and other cancer awareness initiatives and causes.

"Children learn community service from their parents. We have to be there to teach them and encourage them so they can have a better understanding of the people around them."

When she's not merging passions, Dannewald can be found rolling through the dirt — literally.

"Most people would probably be surprised to know that I own a raised Jeep Wrangler and enjoy going four wheeling off-road through the mud."

Having mastered a balanced life, Dannewald said she will pursue a master's degree in nursing administration next year. Her ultimate hope is to be like the "strong managers" at EJGH who have mentored her throughout her career.

"I have become the woman I am today because of the support from my family and East Jefferson General Hospital staff and management."•

— *Nayita Wilson*

We're about Family



Congratulations!

Nancy R. Cassagne

The Auxiliary is a proud branch of West Jefferson Medical Center's family tree. Today we are delighted to join other members of the hospital family in saluting our Chief Executive Officer, Nancy R. Cassagne.



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Nancy Scott Degan



Position: shareholder, Baker Donelson

Age: 51

Family: husband, Sid; daughters, Alison, 20, Emily, 18

Education: bachelor's degree in English, University of New Orleans; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Everything. I think we can all improve on everything we do.

What's the secret to happiness?

Count your blessings every day.

What's your biggest indulgence?

An eternity ring and Chanel purse from my husband.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't?

Take more time to read novels and biographies.

You'd be embarrassed to tell a lawyer joke after meeting Nancy Scott Degan.

The nurturing warmth and humility she exudes as a person makes her first career choice understandable — nursing, which she pursued for two years.

“When my father had a stroke about six years ago, I witnessed close-up what meaningful work the critical care nurses do,” Degan said. “I think I would get a great deal of satisfaction from working in that arena.”

But she instead found success as a litigator, serving as leader of Baker Donelson's business litigation practice group.

“There is nothing quite as intellectually stimulating as being a trial lawyer and helping clients solve their legal problems,” Degan said. “After 25 years in practice, I can finally pinpoint this as the reason I don't mind getting up in the morning to go to work.

“(Law) is fascinating. Think about the daily news. It is inevitably dominated by stories about people making laws, breaking laws or the impact of laws on people and things.”

Among Degan's top achievements this year is serving as a managing director of the American Bar Association Section of Litigation, a group of 75,000 attorneys and

other legal professionals from all 50 states and 12 foreign countries. The section not only assists attorneys in improving their skills, but also initiates service projects in various communities.

“One of the initiatives this year concerns whether and how legal services can be provided on a national scale to people who can't afford a lawyer, but are jeopardized with the loss of parental rights or a roof over their heads. It is humbling to see all the good work lawyers volunteer to do. You do not generally hear about those types of things.”

She led the New Orleans Bar Association's Bench Bar Conference last year, in addition to participating in community outreach activities sponsored by Baker Donelson, including Hands of Hope, which provides various essentials and gifts for a needy family each year, and other initiatives aimed at helping children.

She has volunteered through the University of New Orleans' Alumni Association and WYES TV and has served as president of the Loyola Law and UNO international alumni associations. •

— Diana Chandler

Dell Dempsey



Position: member, board of directors, New Orleans Federal Alliance

Age: 56

Family: daughter, Ryan Laurie, 30; son, Robert Laurie, 28

Education: bachelor's degree in communications, speech and language, University of Arkansas; master's degree in science management, Salve Regina University; master's degree in science, national security and strategic decision making, Naval War College

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Sometimes I procrastinate a little. I guess it's not too bad, but I wouldn't mind getting rid of it entirely.

What's the secret to happiness?

Finding your passion and following it.

What's your biggest indulgence? I am a cook on top of everything else. I like to entertain, and I also like good restaurants. So anything involving food.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Take a raft trip down the Colorado River.

As a career military woman, Dell Dempsey has for years harbored a desire to get involved in the community.

"When you are in the military, you never really have a home," Dempsey said. "When I retired, I decided I wanted some roots and wanted to be civically minded on the theory that you need to be active and involved if you want your neighborhood, city, state and government to work right."

That theory has seen Dempsey, the former military director of defense and homeland security affairs with the state's Department of Economic Development, supporting Federal City, the economic development project on the property of the Algiers Naval Base.

"It's something that is very close to my heart. We were able to get the base off the closure list and keep the space open for redevelopment."

If all goes well, there will be about 10,000 jobs at Federal City in the next decade, with half that number created in the next five years, she said.

"Federal City is the only one of its kind in the country, and we hope it will become

a prototype for interagency operations in the future."

A former Maine Forces Reserve public affairs officer, Dempsey almost instinctively understands the importance of effective public relations, arguing that New Orleans can only succeed if word of its success gets out. She applies that thinking in particular to Algiers Point, where she moved about 10 years ago and has since become involved in the area's neighborhood watch association.

"We have tried to be proactive about crime and done everything we can to make this area as safe as possible. And I think over time that strategy has worked. More and more people have moved into the area, and things here have gotten better."

Dempsey's devotion to New Orleans extends to a keen appreciation of its finer things. As a volunteer promoting sponsorships for the Southern Food & Beverage Museum, Dempsey embraces the institution's goal of celebrating the South's great culinary and liquid traditions.

"These are some of the things that I love the most about our city. So why not try and promote them?" •

— Garry Boulard

Johnette Downing



Position: musician, author and president of Wiggle Worm Records

Age: 46

Education: bachelor's degree in theater, Southeastern Louisiana University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

That I wouldn't be so shy.

What's the secret to happiness? Just doing what you love.

What's your biggest indulgence? Travel.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Win a Grammy.

Growing up in a family of musicians, it was only natural that Johnette Downing followed a path to a musical career.

Given her first guitar in grammar school, she quickly took to singing, playing guitar and writing music. From childhood and into adulthood Downing always played in jazz, folk and country bands. But when she started experimenting with children's music, it exploded into a successful career.

"I slowly got out of all of the other types of music and just focused on children's music," Downing said. "People just started calling me to play and I knew I was in the right place. I really like the honesty in children and love to see them laugh."

Downing's musical performances allow children to express themselves creatively, use their imaginations, learn about music and celebrate the joy of childhood through laughter, play, wonder and unity.

She has received numerous national awards for her music and has performed children's concerts throughout the world, including Nicaragua, Egypt, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.

Downing is also the author of four books including "Down in Louisiana," which teaches young readers about Louisiana animals and their habitats, and "Today is

Monday," which focuses on Louisiana cuisine. Her latest book, "Chef Creole," comes out in December.

"I feel like a musical ambassador to children when I travel abroad. Playing music for children is just what I love to do and when you really love what you're doing, that happiness shows."

Five years ago, Downing founded Wiggle Worm Records, her own record label which through she has recorded, produced and distributed seven titles including "Silly Sing Along" and "Fins and Grins." Downing also participates in educator's workshops, book readings and a Dixieland jazz program.

Downing is also founder of the New Orleans Haiku Society and former vice president and co-founder of the Children's Music Network. When she's not performing or writing, Downing enjoys riding her bike on the levee and walking her dog in the park. Despite the fact she's a public figure and regularly plays and speaks in front of hundreds of people, Downing says she's a shy person.

"People think it's funny. I'm totally comfortable in front of hundreds of people, but when it's one-on-one, I get nervous."•

— Craig Guillot

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Photo by **Howard Baker**, senior member of the Firm, and former chief of staff to the President, Senate majority leader and ambassador to Japan.



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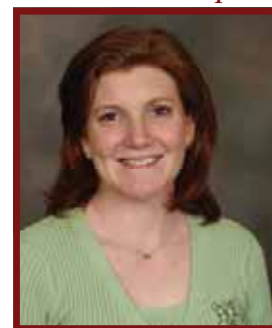
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Patti Elish

Two-time honoree



Position: CEO, St. Tammany Parish Hospital
Age: 55

Family: husband, Gary; children, Melissa, 31, Michael, 27

Education: registered nurse, Charity Hospital School of Nursing; bachelor's degree in health systems management, College of St. Francis; master's degree in health administration, Tulane University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? Lose weight.

What's the secret to happiness? Knowing that every day I get up, I can make a difference.

What's your biggest indulgence? Traveling. I'll head to the Gulf Coast for a getaway.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Go to Italy. I'm Catholic, so I would love to go to Rome.

No one is more thrilled than St. Tammany Parish Hospital CEO Patti Elish about some of the upgrades she's recently overseen during the facility's biggest construction project ever.

From the ceiling murals above patient beds to the softer flooring to ease the strain on nurses doing 12- to 16-hour shifts, Elish said the improvements are a response to the needs of the hospital's staff and the community it serves.

"It's very exciting to give a great staff the tools they need to do the job, whether it's new private rooms or better equipment," said Elish, who spent more than two decades as a registered nurse before becoming a health care administrator. "We've been very focused on some of the brick-and-mortar things that we need here in the community because the community is continuing to grow."

A New Orleans native, Elish was trained at the Charity Hospital School of Nursing and worked her way up the ranks to become director of nursing at West Jefferson Medical Center. She left that post to spend five years as chief operating officer of "a much larger health system" in east Texas.

Her next career move was the appointment to her current post in October 2001.

She actually was surprised, she said, to land the job.

"I didn't really think I even had a chance to get this position, and I was very fortunate to succeed."

For Elish, the job was "an opportunity to come back home," and she's devoted time to give back to her community since her return. She helped establish the first North Shore chapter of the United Way's Women's Leadership Initiative, which has several projects related to early childhood development.

"As a working mom, I know how important it is to make sure that our kids are being cared for," Elish said.

At the helm of St. Tammany Parish Hospital, Elish said she has learned that running an organization successfully is more about managing people than managing processes, especially when it comes to supporting the hospital's newer staff.

"I had always thought that those folks 'at the top' aren't in touch with what's really going on, and what surprises me is that I have to still stay in touch. Maybe it's not really a surprise but just a new way of thinking about how leaders today need to learn what's important to the future generation." •

— Sonya Stinson

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Cathi Fontenot



Position: interim Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans medical director

Age: 49

Family: husband Frank Modica; two sons: Michael, 20, and Matthew, 18

Education: bachelor's degree in biomedical chemistry, Oral Roberts University; doctor of medicine, LSU School of Medicine

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I would learn to delegate more and take things less personally.

What's the secret to happiness?

My happiness is based on my belief that God's timing is perfect and that I am in the right place.

What's your biggest indulgence?

My biggest indulgence is a pedicure on a regular basis and an occasional massage.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Take a trip to Hawaii. Maybe after the kids are out of college.

When Dr. Cathi Fontenot came to New Orleans in 1980 to attend Louisiana State University Medical School, the self-proclaimed "country girl" never intended to stay in the city. But after she married a New Orleans boy, Frank Modica, in 1984, she realized how deeply rooted locals are to their hometown.

A Lake Charles native and a graduate of Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Okla., Fontenot is the medical director of the Interim Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans, which was formerly Charity and University hospitals. In addition to her administrative position, she is an associate professor of internal medicine and is certified in geriatric medicine for the LSU Department of Internal Medicine.

"I love the medical profession. It is my passion," said Fontenot. "Helping people when they are sick and needy, helping them stay healthy and getting to know patients and their families is great fun."

Fontenot said she works 80 percent in administration and 20 percent in patient care. Although she says working in administration isn't "the fun part (of the medical profession)," it is a commitment to continually improve circumstances.

"Working at the medical center has allowed a variety of experiences," she continued. "Seeing patients, teaching medical students and residents, working with alumni and colleagues as well as with various health care

employees has given me opportunities that only a medical center can provide."

Although she never planned to call New Orleans home, her list of career accomplishments and community involvement proves she has found her place in the city.

Since its inception in 1999, Fontenot has offered her talents to the city's music community as medical director of the New Orleans Musician Clinic, a collaborative effort among the LSU Healthcare Network, the New Orleans Jazz Foundation and the Daughters of Charity Healthcare System.

"I am not a musician but love music," Fontenot said. "The churches I attended growing up had lots of great gospel music."

A fan of country, gospel and New Orleans jazz, Fontenot said many local musicians do not have much experience accessing health care systems, with the exception of emergencies.

"They are community icons, and we at NOMC try to get them in for preventative care so we can keep them healthy."

Although during her free time Fontenot enjoys cooking — specifically crawfish in the spring with family and friends — she can't imagine a professional life in anything but medicine.

"I can't think of anything I'd rather do, although I do enjoy bush hogging and baling hay at the farm," she said. •

— Amy Ferrara Smith



Elizabeth Futrell

Position: attorney and partner, Jones, Walker, Waechter, Poitevent, Carrère and Denègre

Age: 52

Family: husband, Ron, 52; children, Richard, 21, Grace, 17

Education: bachelor's degree in history, University of Tennessee; juris doctor, University of Mississippi School of Law

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I would like to spend less time worrying about things I cannot change.

What's the secret to happiness? I have a small but close family, which brings me happiness. I argue for a living, so I try to avoid arguing with family or others outside of my work.

What's your biggest indulgence? I love to cook. My favorite luxury is my wonderful oven, which I nicknamed Corolla because it costs nearly as much as a Toyota.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? I would like to travel overseas.

In discussing the delicate balance between her professional and family lives, Elizabeth Futrell generously gives credit to others. For a parent with no immediate family in the New Orleans area, she says, it's essential to have some help.

"You have to have an understanding husband and a reliable, trustworthy housekeeper who's like a member of the family," she said. "Fortunately, I have been blessed with both."

Following in the footsteps of her father, who was also an attorney, Futrell decided to attend law school after earning her bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee. After graduating from the University of Mississippi School of Law, she became the first female partner in Jones Walker's litigation practice group.

"I chose Jones Walker partly because there were already some smart female lawyers in the firm, but it was a nice distinction to be the first woman in the litigation group," she said.

She has served as a fellow in the American College of Bankruptcy and chairwoman of the Louisiana State Bar Association's Advisory Commission for Bankruptcy Specialization. She also serves as the director of ethical issues for the firm.

But Futrell insists her proudest professional accomplishment has been serving on Jones Walker's board of directors since 2006, an elected position that assists in managing the firm's operations.

For a woman who represented pop legend Prince, that's saying something. And even when her practice requires her to handle the affairs of less colorful figures, she always remains willing to share her wealth of experience with younger lawyers.

"Lisa's animated personality makes her an effective litigator, and her nurturing disposition makes her an ideal mentor to a young associate like myself," Jones Walker associate Erica Beck said.

After her youngest son died as an infant, Futrell raised start-up money for the Michael Dean Futrell School for Boys in Bangalore, India. The school started 18 years ago with 10 children and grew to 40 within five years. The school's success prompted the opening of a sister school for young women.

Since then, Futrell has supported the March of Dimes.

"I have a special place in my heart for this organization. It's such a worthy cause, making sure babies are healthy."•

— Thomas Leggett

Jocelyn Greely



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

Age: 37

Family: husband, Efreem; children, Jordan Woods, 13, Jillian Greely, 4

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

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Be more organized.

What's the secret to happiness?

Be appreciative of what you have on a daily basis.

What's your biggest indulgence? I had a cruise planned around the Mediterranean I had to cancel, so my super-indulgence would be to eventually take that cruise.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Learn how to ride horses.

Dr. Jocelyn Tinsley Greely is committed to her patients in eastern New Orleans, so much so she brought her family back to the city two years after Hurricane Katrina to help rebuild a struggling medical community.

The 37-year-old is the only obstetrician and one of three gynecologists practicing in eastern New Orleans.

Greely felt the effects of the storm. After Katrina hit, she lost her private practice and had to split time among an Uptown office, Baptist Hospital, an eastern New Orleans office and Methodist Hospital.

"But then I didn't have any patients left because the community was so devastated and nobody returned, so we had to decide to move to Houston," said Greely, who stayed in Texas until the summer of 2007 when she moved back to New Orleans and joined the Crescent City Physicians staff at Touro Infirmary.

The office was operating at the time out of a 3,000-square-foot, temporary medical mobile unit as renovations to the Crescent City Physicians' Office at 9801 Lake Forest Blvd. were being completed.

When Greely and her family moved back to New Orleans, she helped open the first permanent family practice in eastern New Orleans since Katrina.

"I just didn't know if I would ever return because of the destruction, but when the opportunity came about, I felt the need to come back for

my old patients and for new residents who desperately needed the service," Greely said. "Young expectant mothers needed medical attention and were traveling by bus and car out of town to get it because there was nothing in walking distance."

Greely and her partners finally moved into their permanent building in April, and she commutes back and forth to Touro for rounds and deliveries.

"I'm seeing several of my former patients who are very excited. These patients would not have anybody if I left. I would have no other reason to be in eastern New Orleans than if it weren't for my patients here who needed medical service."

Greely is vice president of the New Orleans Medical Association, an organization for African-American physicians that has 40 active members and works to obtain scholarships for African-American students to attend medical school.

Greely also conducts numerous eastern New Orleans community health fairs, providing free medical consultations to women and educational seminars to the indigent population.

"I always kind of got into community service wherever I lived and worked. I was just raised with that broadened community sense of spirit to make people's lives better and different and I love doing that."•

— Tommy Santora

Samantha Griffin



Position: partner, Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann

Age: 40

Family: children, Chace Bennett, 21, Brittany Bennett, 20; granddaughter, Juliet Grace, 4½ months

Education: bachelor's degree in political science, University of New Orleans; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I would be more organized.

What's the secret to happiness?

Finding the right balance between work, family and personal time.

What's your biggest indulgence?

My granddaughter.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Spend a month exploring France.

When a person has served time for a crime, the information often remains in the system long after the person has paid his debt to society.

In June 2006, Samantha Griffin, a partner in the law firm Stone Pigman Walther Wittman, helped complete the first 12-person jury trial after Hurricane Katrina.

"We volunteered as part of the New Orleans Bar Association's effort to assist the Orleans Parish Public Defender's Office in providing representation after Katrina. My boyfriend, who is a public defender, myself and co-counsel were appointed on a Thursday, prepared over the weekend and tried the case Monday morning," Griffin said. "We did not take a break all day until we had seated a jury."

Griffin is also a regular volunteer in a program called Expungement Day.

"This was organized by the Orleans Parish Public Defender's office to assist people who were eligible to have their criminal records expunged to remove an impediment to obtaining employment," Griffin said.

Attorneys met with clients, researched their convictions and prepared the appropriate motions on a pro bono basis. The program also offered education and

employment opportunities and voter registration. Later, attorneys were asked to represent individuals at the hearing on the motion for expungement. About 40 lawyers from criminal court volunteered that day, Griffin said, adding that hundreds of people turned out to see if they were eligible for expungement.

"Some people are still getting hearing dates, and it may take six to 12 months for their criminal background check to be cleared."

Griffin knew she wanted to be a lawyer since she was 12.

"What I didn't know is what it would take to become one," she said. Married at 18, a mother of two children by age 20 and divorced at 23, Griffin took the tough road to get where she is today.

"Things have quieted down quite a bit since my kids moved out."

Griffin said most people would be surprised to know she has been skydiving.

"You don't just go up and jump," Griffin said. "We took a 6-hour class. It was static-line jumping, so you go up, climb out onto the wing of the plane and wait for the command to let go. You drop like a rock."•

— Lisa Bacques

Jayne Gurtler



Position: hematology and oncology physician, East Jefferson General Hospital

Age: 60

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree, Newcomb College of Tulane University; doctor of medicine, Tulane University School of Medicine; fellowship in developmental therapeutics; board certified, internal medicine, M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? My temper.

What's the secret to happiness? Love.

What's your biggest indulgence? My horse, Buggy Malone.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? I would love to travel to places I have never been such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Brazil. Besides that, I would just love to do the things I already do, just more times over.

In the 1950s, 6-year-old Jayne Gurtler recalled following her father, Dr. Joseph Schlosser, on doctor's rounds as he treated cancer patients.

"It was really weird because cancer patients were treated as outcasts and abandoned by society way back when," Gurtler said. "People would say, 'Why even bother doing research, these people are going to die anyway?'"

But more than 50 years of advanced cancer research and treatments have changed those opinions, said Gurtler, who has spent more than 25 years following in her father's footsteps trying to extend the lives of cancer patients as a hematology and oncology physician at East Jefferson General Hospital.

Gurtler tells the story of one of her patients with widespread liver cancer. The cancer has almost disappeared now because of the research and use of an angiogenesis inhibitor, a substance that inhibits the growth of new blood vessels. Tumors can grow only if they form new blood vessels. By stopping the growth of blood vessels, it shuts off the means by which tumors can extend themselves and spread inside the body.

The research of angiogenesis inhibitors is just one of more than 80 cancer drug treatment studies and clinical trials in which Gurtler has been involved with since she started at EJGH in 1980.

Gurtler brought the hospital's cancer treatment to the forefront when East Jefferson became the only hospital in Louisiana to have an affiliation with M.D. Anderson Physicians Network. With this affiliation, patients in southeastern Louisiana have access to the evidence-based treatment protocols, credentialing guidelines and treatment processes, developed by the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. Gurtler also became an M.D. Anderson-credentialed physician.

Gurtler videoconferences at least once a week with M.D. Anderson doctors, sharing patient cases with them, and at times, referring patients to their campus for treatment.

She has also been appointed clinical assistant professor at the Tulane University School of Medicine and assistant professor of medicine at Louisiana State University Medical Center.

While advancements in cancer treatment drugs continue, Gurtler says the mentality of the cancer patient is still more than half the battle.

"It's all about your body, mind and spirit. You find what keeps patients' spirits up during treatment, whether it's listening to music, meditation or just being around people and not letting them feel alone," Gurtler said. "I love helping people. I can do this forever because I enjoy it every day."•

— Tommy Santora

Kristine Hatfield



Position: vice president for enrollment management and student development, Our Lady of Holy Cross College

Age: 38

Family: engaged to Adam Strickland; children Kamron, 10, Kierney, 5, Adam Jr., 11, Mary, 9

Education: bachelor's degree in secondary education with a concentration in English; master's degree in higher education administration, Ohio University; pursuing a Ph.D. in higher education leadership, Capella University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? Try not to be so stubborn sometimes.

What's the secret to happiness? Good, strong relationships with people.

What's your biggest indulgence? Purses. I buy a lot of purses.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? To travel more outside of the United States.

Kristine Hatfield came to New Orleans in 1993 from Eastlake, Ohio, so she could try living somewhere else for a change. Fifteen years later, the temporary move has become permanent.

"When I first moved down here, it was to try for a year or two. All of my family is in Ohio still, but I really fell in love with the city and this is my home," said Hatfield, who has also found a home at Our Lady of Holy Cross College, where she has worked for 12 years and serves as vice president for enrollment management and student development.

Hatfield's mission was to help rebuild enrollment at the college after Hurricane Katrina.

"I am proud of the work that we accomplished to help rebuild the school by meeting the needs of the community and making returning to school easier for people. I think we helped — and continue to help — people recognize the value for themselves of continuing their education."

It's not surprising that Hatfield's community involvement is also education related. It was the focus on education and work at the House of Ruth, an agency that provides short-term housing and living assistance for families in crisis, that originally got Hatfield involved with the organization. She now serves on the board.

"I think for me, I have always particularly been interested in things that have an educational component, anything where you are sort of empowering people to better their own lives — and it doesn't have to be traditional education — or the lives of their children. That appeals to me, and that's what I like to be involved in."

The value of education and self-improvement applies to Hatfield as well, who is pursuing her Ph.D. in higher education leadership.

"I do a lot of reading, for both pleasure and work — self improvement and job-related reading."

But Hatfield's real motivation to be a better person and "do right by her community" comes from her family and her co-workers.

"I want my children to be proud of their mom. And I want the people that I work with to know that they are contributing to making improvements in others' lives. That really motivates me to do better."

As for the future, Hatfield hopes to become more involved in the community.

"I love the mission of the sisters and what they contribute. And I think we need more people to step up and say, 'How can I help make this city better?'" •

— Abby Kral

Laura Held



Position: financial reporting analyst, Superior Energy Services Inc.

Age: 28

Family: single; dog, Mack

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

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I really don't like that question. Anything I don't have control over, I don't waste time worrying about.

What's the secret to happiness?

Surrounding yourself with a great group of people, having a good support system and being confident and having faith in yourself.

What's your biggest indulgence?

I love eating at nice restaurants. I'm always thinking about my next meal. I enjoy good wine. Right now, Clancy's is my favorite place to eat.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Run a marathon. I have run a half marathon, which is 13 1/2 miles.

One of the great events of springtime is the Wednesdays at the Square concert series at Lafayette Square.

One of the people who makes this event possible is Laura Held, who serves as treasurer in her second year on the board of the Young Leadership Council.

"Our mission is to provide leadership opportunities," Held said. "We take ideas all the time. It's a very social group, and your involvement can be as little or as much as you want."

Held has worked as a financial reporting analyst at Superior Energy Services for the past two and a half years.

"I did a lot of traveling with the job I had before," Held said. "I had gone to the U.K. four times, and I felt like it was time to move on. Superior was my client, and I got a heads up when someone resigned there, so I went to interview and got the job."

Held enjoys a flexible schedule.

"My challenge is managing my time, since I work independently," she said. "I'm lucky that there is really no typical day here, given the nature of Superior and the group of people I work with. I have a to-do list, and figure out how long a task will take. When we have quarter close, I stay later."

Held also serves on the finance committee of Akili Academy, a new charter school temporarily based in Gentilly until its permanent home in Central City is ready.

"The executive director is from Philadelphia, and I've noticed how different things are in this school compared to when I was going to Catholic school," said Held, who attended Mount Carmel Academy.

"It is interesting to learn about their educational philosophy, the way the kids are disciplined and their ideas regarding how the kids are expected to behave and interact."•

— Lisa Bacques



Donna Klein

Hall of Fame honoree

Position: managing partner and head of the health care section, McGlinchey Stafford

Age: 61

Family: husband, Russell; children, Steven, 43, Robin, 36

Education: associate's degree in nursing, Manatee Community College; political science program, Loyola University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I might have an inability to say no, particularly when it comes to working for nonprofits. But I think I am better than I used to be.

What's the secret to happiness? Live each day and get as much out of it as you can.

What's your biggest indulgence? Probably traveling. And it's great, not only because you are going to new places but also because you are taking time away from everything else you normally do every day.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Write a book about being too serious, a humorous book about trying to be a perfectionist and why we do some of the neurotic things we do. It would be the kind of book that would allow me to laugh at myself.

Contemplating a long and vibrant activism that has seen her involved in dozens of nonprofit pursuits, Donna Klein says getting involved in the local community has made her feel more optimistic about New Orleans' future.

"Yes, you do become more aware of the problems the city faces when you get involved," Klein said. "But at the same time you also get to meet so many people in the various organizations who in their own ways, collectively, are doing a lot of good, that you can't help but feel positive about the changes taking place in our city."

Klein, one of the first female health care attorneys in the city, comes to her activism naturally.

"My father told me years ago that when you are in a position to do things, you should, that you almost had an obligation to do so."

Klein, one of two chairpersons for the Committee for a Better New Orleans/Metropolitan Area Committee, is a board member for Louisiana ArtWorks and the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts.

But Klein believes that sometimes the best kind of community involvement is a concentrated, streamlined one.

"I tell my young associates who want to

do something for the city that they should not be on five boards as I am at this point in my life, but that they should instead pick one thing that they are interested in and volunteer for that. That way they will have a good balance between work and family and civic involvement and can go from there if they like."

A classic embodiment of the non-partisan public citizen, Klein has served on the health care transition teams for former governors Edwin Edwards, Mike Foster and Kathleen Blanco.

"In those cases, party lines don't matter as much as expertise. Basically a transition team is responsible for touching base with everyone in the outgoing administration to make sure no balls are dropped between it and the new incoming administration. And when it comes to health care policy, that is particularly important."

Klein also serves on the state's Board of Regents for Higher Education and has formed a strong opinion of what's going on in higher education in Louisiana.

"There are so many positive things happening in the state that people don't realize. Our colleges and universities are really doing a very good job."•

— Garry Boulard

Priscilla Lawrence

Hall of Fame honoree



Position: executive director, The Historic New Orleans Collection

Age: 60

Family: husband, John; children, Brian, 39, Shannon, 36; six grandchildren

Education: bachelor's degree in art, Mississippi State College for Women

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I would be a better public speaker.

What's the secret to happiness? Being able to do something you love for work, to have a job that's more than a job.

What's your biggest indulgence? An occasional trip to Europe.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Return to Rome.

In New Orleans, history matters. The city prides itself on it and relies on it to attract visitors.

At The Historic New Orleans Collection, Priscilla Lawrence does her part to preserve New Orleans' unique history and make it available to anyone looking to learn more about it.

Lawrence believes her work is more important than ever post-Hurricane Katrina because of questions about whether New Orleans was worth saving.

"It seemed so important to do what we do — make people aware of our history and culture and how important our city is," Lawrence said. "New Orleans is important to world history, not just Southern history or American history. ... The fact that such a diverse group of people came through here makes the culture unique."

Lawrence was hired in 1998 as the acting director of THNOC, a museum, research center and publisher dedicated to preserving and studying New Orleans' history and culture. After serving in that position for a couple of years, she was named executive director in 2000. THNOC operates out of buildings on Royal and Chartres streets in the French Quarter.

During Lawrence's tenure, a number of additions and expansions have occurred. A

new building was renovated at the Chartres Street location for additional office and exhibition space. A building attachment was recently constructed on Conti adjacent to the Chartres location, with the façade being made to match the 1830s façade of the Veranda Hotel, which stood at that spot.

Overall, storage space for the collections has tripled. Because of the increasing strength of the collection, THNOC has seen a 17 percent increase in staff to 65 full-time employees and 15 part-time employees and a 72 percent increase in budget during Lawrence's tenure.

Lawrence also works on the board of the Tennessee Williams New Orleans Literary Festival and with the Friends of the Vieux Carre Commission. Supporting the literary festival coincides with Lawrence's work.

"We have a huge Tennessee Williams collection. It's a wonderful collaborative."

Collaboration is an important part of Lawrence's work, as she has worked with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra to organize annual concerts that focus on New Orleans history. This year's concert focused on New Orleans' German music heritage.


Through it all, Lawrence wants people to learn about New Orleans and its history.

"We display the treasures of our collection and our city." •

— Fritz Esker

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Deborah Lea



Position: vice chancellor of learning and student development, Delgado Community College

Age: 57

Family: husband, Scott; daughters, Veronica, 33, Andrea, 28

Education: certification in radiologic technology, Charity Hospital School of Radiologic Technology; associate's degree in radiologic technology, Delgado Community College; bachelor's degree in radiologic technology, William Carey University; master's degree in education, curriculum and instruction, University of New Orleans

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I want to be better at not procrastinating.

What's the secret to happiness?

To be able to find contentment in the simple things you do and the simple things you have, things that are not necessarily tied monetarily like health.

What's your biggest indulgence?

Beyond the obvious chocolate, pouring a glass of wine and sitting down to read a book for enjoyment.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Travel to Europe, but that's coming soon.

Deborah Lea's mantra for success on the job and in life is simplicity — her ability to focus on the whole by nurturing the pieces of which it is comprised.

"I try to get down to the basics and facts and go from there when making decisions," Lea said. "But don't forget that they (the basics) make a whole."

As vice chancellor of learning and student development at Delgado Community College, she ensures Delgado's academic divisions and programs work harmoniously to accomplish the college's goals.

Lea oversees the deans of Delgado's academic unit and distance learning program as well as the provosts of Delgado's campuses. She also oversees student affairs, institutional research, institutional effectiveness, curriculum and program development, and quality enhancement plan.

To secure and maintain success, Lea employs inclusion, across the board communication and perspective to keep her team connected and focused on Delgado's future.

"You have to be able to connect."

In retrospect, this drive to connect to see the larger picture mirrors the progressive opportunities Lea has seized through her 30-year career with Delgado, all of which

were offered and solicited and sharply contrasted the plan she had envisioned for herself.

"I always thought I would be practicing radiology and was very content."

A Delgado alumna, Lea became a faculty member in Delgado's radiologic technology program in 1978. She held several instructional posts in that program for 16 years before being offered a position in allied health admissions.

Lea later served as interim associate dean of Delgado's science and math division and director of curriculum and program development. She climbed to the peak of Delgado's organizational structure in March to serve a three-month term as interim chancellor after former Delgado chancellor Alex Johnson left.

While fate may have had the final say in her career, Lea has no regrets. She said she's been faithful to Delgado because she believes in the positive role it plays in the community and because the institution has always treated her fairly.

She said she is just proud to serve the college, the students and the community through "hard work and enjoying hard work."•

— *Nayita Wilson*



Nancy Marshall

Position: 6th District assessor; partner and co-chairwoman of the professional liability section, Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles

Age: 55

Family: husband, Steve Rosencrans; children Willy, 40, Louie, 38, Margaret, 20, Robert, 18

Education: bachelor's degree in mathematics, Tulane University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I'd be neater.

What's the secret to happiness?

You should follow your dreams, no matter how crazy they may be.

What's your biggest indulgence? Books.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? I'd like to live in Europe, probably France.

Nancy Marshall knows doing the right thing is not always the popular thing, especially if it means pushing for an increase in property taxes.

But Marshall, who has served as the 6th District assessor since 2006, has worked to maintain her campaign promises of making fair property assessments.

"One thing that's gratifying is that in general, people want to do the right thing, even if it hurts them. If you bought your house 20 years ago and never had your assessment raised, it's a rude shock," said Marshall, a partner and co-chairwoman of the professional liability section at Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles.

Marshall maintains that fair assessments are particularly important in post-Katrina New Orleans, as the city struggles to retain and attract a new population. Before the reassessments, Marshall said many new homebuyers were paying much higher taxes than their long-established neighbors.

Marshall was elected in 2006 on the I Quit or IQ ticket, which consisted of her and six other New Orleanians who were outraged with what they saw as a New Orleans tradition of unjust property assessments. The IQ candidates vowed to lobby for the seven assessors to be consolidated to one

and then quit, while in the meantime, using their salaries to pay for apolitical, professional appraiser to reassess their districts.

Marshall was the only IQ candidate elected and will serve until 2010, when New Orleanians will vote for a single assessor, for which she will not run. Once elected, Marshall also discovered she could not refuse her salary, so she instead used it to buy laptop computers for the third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students of Andrew Wilson Elementary School.

Marshall has also served as a board member for St. Andrew Episcopal, Crescent Academy and Wilson schools, as well as for St. Andrew Church and Odyssey House, a nonprofit providing substance abuse treatment.

For Marshall, reassessing properties is just one step in repairing the city she has always called home.

"Post-Katrina, there were enormous attacks on our city because of the corruptness of our city. We are being trampled by the public opinion because of our corrupt government. And those of us who have lived here our whole lives — and lots of other people who fall in love with the city — we don't want to see it go down the tube."•

— Leah Bartos

Anne Milling



Position: founder, Women of the Storm

Age: 68

Family: husband, King; sons Clay, 42, King Jr., 40, Michael, 37

Education: bachelor's degree in modern European history, Newcomb College; master's degree in modern European history, Yale University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

To be more patient.

What's the secret to happiness?

Giving to others.

What's your biggest indulgence?

Travel or art.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Travel across the Middle East.

Women of the Storm founder Anne Milling figured the group would have plenty of company in pushing for a comprehensive federal plan for disaster recovery, coastal restoration and infrastructure repair.

But when Milling and other members of the organization traveled to Cleveland last August to testify at the Democratic National Committee platform hearing, she said they turned out to be “the only voice advocating a domestic agenda for either party” on those issues.

“When we cited examples in our testimony, it was surprising to me because I always think of all these people having much more knowledge than we do, how they hadn't really connected the dots,” Milling said.

Famous for the blue-tarp umbrellas they carried on their mission to Capitol Hill to draw attention to areas affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Women of the Storm have more recently expanded their agenda as well as their geographic reach.

“We feel that if we could begin to get the Energy Coast — Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama — working in concert, we would be a much more powerful voice in Congress,” said Milling, who hopes to start a new chapter in Houston. “I know it sounds very ambitious, and it may

be too ambitious for us to pull off, but at least that's the direction we're looking.”

Milling's leadership in Women of the Storm is an extension of her lifelong volunteerism.

“Rather than a career path when I finished graduate school and was married, I chose to be a volunteer, and I have just loved it. It's enabled me to work across the city in a variety of ways and meet people from all walks of life. I feel it's truly enriched my life and made me adamant that when we began Women of the Storm ... the most important thing was to have diversity and be very inclusive.”

Milling has been involved with Second Harvesters Food Bank, the Junior League, the Loyola University board of trustees and the New Orleans Museum of Art, where she is a board member. Project Lazarus is another favorite cause.

“I was on the front lines back in the mid-'80s when Lazarus formed and there were only six (hospital) rooms for people with AIDS.”

When it's time for leisure, Milling's passion is the arts.

“My husband and I spend lots of time in art galleries and in museums. We just love learning and seeing and traveling.”•

— Sonya Stinson



Cheryl Mintz

Position: public relations representative, manager and buyer, Hurwitz Mintz

Age: 27

Family: engaged to Brett Bauman

Education: bachelor's degree in business administration, Loyola University; master's degree in business administration, Tulane University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? To quote my father, I need to work on patience.

What's the secret to happiness? Love.

What's your biggest indulgence? Too many animals. I have four of them.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? I want to go in a cage with great white sharks.

Despite three generations and 85 years of family preceding her in the retail furniture business, Cheryl Mintz said her parents, Mitchell and Christy, always encouraged her to pursue another career if she didn't want to get into the family business.

So Mintz tried different things. She was a pre-med major. She didn't like that. She liked business school, so she earned a business and marketing degree and then her MBA. Then once in business, Mintz figured she had to know about law, so she worked to get her juris doctor and pass the bar. But Mintz isn't going to be an attorney anytime soon.

Instead, Mintz's path has led her back to her family. The 27-year-old, who in addition to her degrees has a pilot's license because she loves to fly, is three years into her career as a public relations representative, manager and buyer for Metairie-based Hurwitz Mintz, the largest furniture retail store in New Orleans with more than \$10 million in furniture and 115,000 square feet of display space.

"I just realized that retail is more fun, and I enjoy it," Mintz said. "I have been around the store since as early as 9 years old doing odds and ends in every department, from organizing catalogs to the warehouse to advertising to customer service to the sales floor. It's a different adventure every day, and

I am always learning about the business."

Mintz's typical day begins by researching the store's product book, which contains all the information on products the store has bought and sold, to determine furniture orders.

Mintz also walks the showroom floor, surveys the stock and checks on the showroom displays. Then she'll take phone calls from salespeople and charity groups and work on managing the store's advertising budget of about \$2.5 million a year.

"I found that really our best form of advertising is through our charity work, how we donate accessories, furniture and money for various events and nonprofits around town."

Mintz recently worked with the Louisiana Humane Society on its Bad to the Bone: Rescued on the Runway fundraiser and the Key to the Cure fundraiser, which raises money for cancer research. Mintz also works with the New Orleans Ballet Association and the SPCA, and has helped start the Young Professionals Society, a networking group of 50 to 100 young people who visit a New Orleans restaurant once a month for connections and networking.

"The time volunteering is worth more and means more than the money we give sometimes."•

— Tommy Santora

Beverly Nichols

Two-time honoree



Position: tax director and director of employee benefits, Bourgeois Bennett

Age: 62

Family: husband, Ray; German shepherd, Elza

Education: attended University of Southwestern Louisiana, the University of New Orleans and Loyola University; earned certified public accountant's license in 1975

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I have always admired individuals who could make strong impact and clarity with fewer words. I have not mastered that.

What's the secret to happiness? My Cajun mother, now deceased, taught me to change what I can and accept and do the best with what I cannot. And to do that with much love and compassion which returns to me much love, compassion and respect.

What's your biggest indulgence? Shoes.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Be a great dancer and have a great dance partner.

In a career field once dominated by men, Beverly Nichols rose to the top of the local accounting profession in 1981 as one of the first two female partners at Bourgeois Bennett.

"There were few women partners in most of the professional arenas nationally at that time," Nichols said. "We were of the few exceptions, and it was exciting and a huge responsibility to do well and help open more doors."

Today, Nichols said Bourgeois Bennett's staff is more than 50 percent female.

"We have come a long way."

Besides establishing her position as a top female certified public accountant early in her career, Nichols has also become a respected specialist in employee pension benefits. She prides herself on being known in the field as a tax professional at a firm that, she said, maintains high ethics and standards. And she is "pleased and encouraged" when clients understand her explanations of complex tax and pension issues.

A native of Abbeville, Nichols has adopted at least two of New Orleans' many cultural assets: music and fine dining. She enjoys dining at Commander's Palace, and she finds joy in listening to her favorite musicians — Charmaine Neville, members of the

Marsalis family and various Cajun artists — at the city's live music venues.

"The place I go is where the music is."

Even with such full work and social schedules, Nichols has made time for community involvement, involving work with the Priestley School of Architecture and Construction, an open enrollment public charter high school, and Junior Achievement of Greater New Orleans.

Nichols was one of the founding board members of the Priestley School, helping develop its application for charter school status with Orleans Parish in the fall of 2005. She has since maintained the financial records and guides the development of the annual financial budget.

For the past 12 years, she has been a part of Junior Achievement, serving on the board, and is now chairwoman of the Junior Achievement Education Foundation.

"New Orleans offers many opportunities for all young professionals as we rebuild and redefine business in New Orleans," she said. "The accounting profession is in much need of personnel and is seeking CPAs and young accountants to come to the city to join us as we re-establish a vibrant business community here."•

— Amy Ferrara Smith

Michelle Nugent



Position: food director, New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival

Age: 47

Family: single

Education: studied art and architecture at the University of New Orleans and Louisiana State University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I'd like to exercise more.

What's the secret to happiness? One of my strongest personality traits is that I'm pretty blunt, and I think that serves to keep things uncomplicated.

What's your biggest indulgence? Single malt whiskey.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Travel more. Spain is on the top of the list.

Michelle Nugent is hefting a full platter as food director for the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

As the only full-time member of the department, she oversees a food vending operation that involves about 66 vendors, more than 70 booths and 210 food items; a monthlong staff catering operation that serves meals during the building of the show and 3,000 drinks for workers on festival days; catering for VIP and sponsor hospitality events; and two stages of cooking demonstrations.

After a brief career in music production, Nugent's entry into food production was as the first sous-chef for Susan Spicer at Bayona.

"I got tired of doing production work, and I was working in a little bakery Uptown — and Susan was dating the baker," Nugent said. "She said, 'You have way too much energy. Are you at all interested in cooking?'"

Since Nugent had been pondering the idea, she signed on to work for Spicer. She said she values that apprenticeship more than any formal training she could have received.

"I couldn't have paid for that education," Nugent said. "I couldn't have gotten that in a school. As it turned out, I liked it

and I was fairly good at it."

Now with Jazz Fest for the past decade, Nugent said her training in the kitchen helps her understand what the festival's food vendors need and want.

"I do whatever I can to make things as easy for them as possible. We want them to make money as well as serve delicious food."

When she's away from the Fair Grounds and Jazz Fest headquarters, Nugent enjoys reading history and fiction — especially anything by Gabriel Garcia Marquez — and she's heavily involved in the restaurant industry's anti-hunger, anti-poverty organization Share Our Strength.

"When I realized that I was gifted and could put beautiful food on a plate in a fancy restaurant, it became important to me to find a way to help the community," she said. "I've been working with Share Our Strength off and on for almost 20 years."

What you won't find her doing in her off time is watching television.

"I own a television, but it's only to watch movies," Nugent said. "I don't get any television reception. I think it's mostly about time, although I don't think the state of today's television is too swift. I'd rather listen to NPR and read the newspapers."•

— Sonya Stinson

Beth Payton



Position: vice president, Payton's Play it Forward Foundation

Age: 40

Family: husband, Sean; children Meghan, 11, Connor, 8

Education: bachelor's degree in marketing and finance, Indiana State University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I pray for patience every day because I am not a very patient person.

What's the secret to happiness? Putting your family first.

What's your biggest indulgence? Our annual beach getaways in Watercolor, Fla.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Actually, I'm doing it right now.

Born and raised in a small town in Indiana with a few more than 1,500 residents, it has been a big journey for Beth Peyton to find herself in the spotlight.

As the wife of Saints head coach Sean Payton, it's hard for the family to go anywhere in New Orleans without being recognized. But with that fame and fortune comes the opportunity to do good things.

Payton serves as vice president of Payton's Play it Forward Foundation, a charitable organization she and Sean started to improve the lives of families and children throughout the South. The foundation raises money and awareness for organizations that help children in the areas of homelessness, education, health care and domestic violence.

Having discussed the idea of a foundation with current executive director Karen Hegner since 2003, Payton said that throughout her husband's coaching career, she always had the dream of using their success to give back.

"I think we are in a situation now where we have the ability to do that and give back to the city. I wanted to follow a passion of mine and also set an example for my kids that you can make a difference," Payton said.

Through charitable events such as the Black and Gold Gala, the organization has raised money for Blaine Kern's First Responder Fund, Brad Pitt's Make It Right Foundation and the Dr. Phil Foundation. Having lived in eight different cities — from San Diego to Dallas — throughout her husband's coaching career, Payton finds a special charm in the people of New Orleans.

"I have lived in so many different cities, and the people here are so warm and want you to love their city as they do. They really open their arms and show that. I've never experienced that before."

Before having her first child, Payton was in the banking industry and worked as a branch manager and loan officer.

When she's not working with the foundation, she enjoys cycling with the family or hanging out in their backyard. In the height of football season, life can get hectic. But Payton said that during Sean's five-week leave every summer, the family vacations and relaxes in Watercolor, Fla.

"That time is really sacred to us. We just go down to the beach and stay there as a family."•

— Craig Guillot

Tara Richard



Position: partner, Jones Walker

Age: 36

Family: husband, Keith Hinson

Education: bachelor's degree in journalism, University of Louisiana at Lafayette; juris doctor, Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? My inability to say "no" to helping out a good cause.

What's the secret to happiness?

I'm still working on that one.

What's your biggest indulgence?

My continued optimism. I also enjoy spending some time at the Ritz Carlton's spa and traveling.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Be a back-up singer for a well-known band. Unfortunately, I can't sing.

When Tara Richard isn't working as a partner at Jones Walker law firm and serving as a liaison to numerous community nonprofits, she enjoys playing tour guide in her adopted city.

"The culture bubbles from the ground, and you can't help but get swept into it," she said of New Orleans. "For instance, I often run outside when I hear a second line coming down my street. And I happily take visitors around New Orleans and give them 'tour guide' advice."

It should be no surprise then that if Richard had chosen another career, she said it would have been travel writing.

Richard came to New Orleans in 1994 after graduating with a degree in journalism from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. She worked for the local Chamber of Commerce before starting law school two years later at Louisiana State University's Paul M. Hebert Law Center. Equipped with a second degree, she moved back to the city in 1999, where she clerked with Catherine D. Kimball, associate justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court. She then joined Jones Walker in 2000, where she focuses on bankruptcy and creditors-debtors rights.

"The practice of bankruptcy and creditors-debtors rights is a specialized field. So, I take pride in being able to walk my clients

through the bankruptcy process."

Richard has stayed in the legal profession because it allows her to help others. She has also carried this desire to the numerous community organizations in which she is involved, including serving as the 2006 chairwoman of the Young Lawyers Section of the New Orleans Bar Association. Through YLS, she has also been chairwoman of Bar & Grill, an annual cook-off among city firms. The money raised from the event goes to the New Orleans Legal Assistance Corp. for pro-bono work.

Richard has also acted as Jones Walker's liaison for the Secret Santa program, which collects gifts for underprivileged children in the city.

"I call myself the Chief Elf," she said, explaining that she delivers bags of gifts to the receiving agency or organization.

Many of Richard's community activities are intertwined with her law career, and she hopes other young lawyers will continue to see the importance of community involvement.

"I hope my legacy is that people realize what Gandhi said, 'They have to be the change they want to see in the world.' I also hope to see an increased number of lawyers volunteering their time through various nonprofits."•

— Amy Ferrara Smith



Jade Russell

Position: attorney in the transactions and corporate advisory services group, Adams and Reese

Age: 30

Family: husband, Donnie; daughter, Jadon, 2

Education: bachelor's degree in political science, Howard University; juris doctor, Southern University Law Center

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I have a disability to a certain extent in that I can't say no to people. That may be a good thing, but it can also be bad in that I sometimes feel I end up taking on too much.

What's the secret to happiness?

After my family was in Chicago and then all moved back here to New Orleans, I realized more than ever that being with your family and just living life is the most important thing you can do.

What's your biggest indulgence?

Probably shopping. It doesn't matter if it is for me or anyone else.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't?

If I had to list the top things I wanted to do before I die, it would be to travel more — particularly in Africa and Europe.

When Jade Russell thinks of the many civic endeavors she has committed her time and energy to, she thinks of what she calls the “holistic person.”

“I think that being involved in as many different things as you can helps to make you whole,” said Russell, who as an attorney with Adams and Reese is primarily involved with mergers, acquisitions, corporate finance and securities-related transactions.

“Civic engagement, for me, has been a matter of really getting out there and trying to do all that I can and be all that I can not just for myself or family, but also for the city.”

Russell knew she loved New Orleans and wanted to do more to make it a better place after she left the city to take a job in Chicago for the firm of Sidley Austin. There, she met and worked with two associates who would go on to national political prominence: Barack and Michelle Obama.

While in Chicago, Russell's family joined her during their Katrina evacuation. But by 2007, Russell and her family were ready to return to New Orleans, where she

not only signed on with Adams and Reese, but also embraced a variety of civic and community pursuits.

A co-founder of the Urban League of Greater New Orleans' Young Professionals program, Russell has served as a commissioner for the Downtown Development District and co-chairs Adams and Reese's Secret Santa Project, which every Christmas provides gifts to local children in need.

Her interest in youth welfare extends to increasing literacy with her service as a member of the board of directors of the Start the Adventure in Reading program.

“Anything that helps kids to read and gets them interested in reading has got to be a good thing.”

With more than enough to do professionally and personally, Russell is determined to stay involved and do all she can to help make New Orleans a better place.

“I just feel that this is something I have to do, no matter how much time it may take.”•

— Garry Boulard

Elizabeth Scheer



Position: health grants program director, Baptist Community Ministries

Age: 57

Family: husband, Douglas; children, Erin Alabaster and Matthew Scheer; grandson, Cole

Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, University of Southwestern Louisiana; master's degree in nursing, Louisiana State University School of Nursing; master's degree in business administration, University of New Orleans

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Acknowledge and thank those whose shoulders I stand on.

What's the secret to happiness?

To love and be loved.

What's your biggest indulgence?

Frequent flights to Nashville to visit my grandson, Cole.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't?

Sip a vintage, famous Bordeaux wine

Elizabeth Scheer finds it difficult to separate work from pleasure, appreciating the joy her professional successes bring.

She's topped a 30-year career in nursing and health care management with a grant-making position at the philanthropic Baptist Community Ministries since 2003, improving the health care of people in need throughout the New Orleans area.

"It's the most rewarding job I've ever had," Scheer said.

She relishes the opportunity to use her "yenta" or matchmaking skills, borrowing a term from the musical "Fiddler on the Roof," to help nonprofit health agencies get the funding they need to accomplish shared goals.

"I'm energized by the opportunity to work with outstanding health and social service agencies like Kingsley House, Second Harvest, the Program for All Inclusive Care for the Elderly, the Tulane Sickle Cell Day Hospital and all the grantees whose efforts improve the lives of many of our marginalized citizens," Scheer said. "It's a privilege to help them accomplish their mission and identify other not-for-profit partners who can assist them."

She's focused on helping Louisiana's disproportionate indigent population develop healthy lifestyles and gain access to primary health care.

Through her leadership, BCM has helped fund five area school-based health clinics and

improved access to federal dollars for such community-based health providers as the St. Thomas Community Health Clinic. She works to address Louisiana's fundamental health care challenges of high costs, uneven quality of care and inequitable access to care.

"Part of what makes our challenge so great is ending poverty."

She's working to secure access to primary care settings for low-income populations, steering patients away from emergency rooms and encouraging true relationships with health care professionals such as pediatricians, nurse practitioners and counselors.

Her professional outreach includes membership on the National Advisory Committee of Grantmakers in Aging and the Women's Health Care Executive Network.

She works with the corporate and government sectors to improve health outcomes throughout the community, serving on the board of directors of the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce and Jefferson Dollars for Scholars. She works on the program development committees of the chamber's leadership initiative and the New Orleans Leadership Institute.

"I feel a compulsion to help the corporate world see and appreciate the scope and depth of services provided by area not-for-profits at very low costs."•

— Diana Chandler



Rachael Schorr

Position: financial adviser, Smith Barney

Age: 38

Family: husband, Eric; children, Eric Michael, 8, Isaac, 6, Jacob, 4, Samuel, 2

Education: bachelor's degree in business administration, University of New Orleans; master's degree in business administration with a concentration in finance, Tulane University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? Not always being so interested in the next big hurdle.

What's the secret to happiness? Helping other people and having faith in something bigger than yourself.

What's your biggest indulgence? Forgetting about schedules and just spending time with my family.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Hang glide and run with the bulls in Pamplona.

Rachael Schorr was already well established in her career in the financial industry when her mother was divorced, and soon thereafter, both her grandmothers were widowed. That was when she decided to shift her career focus.

Schorr's mother had been married for 30 years and had no career of her own; her grandmothers had been married for more than 60 years. Besides emotional hardship, Schorr saw the financial hardship women in transition can face.

"The changes that I saw with them as women maturing and going through that process happened as I was doing other things, and a couple of years ago I decided I wanted to focus on helping women," said Schorr, who works as a financial adviser at Smith Barney, a subdivision of Citi Group Global Markets Inc.

Schorr sees her work, though, as more than just numbers on a page.

"There are things that life experience gives that helps you relate to clients, and that's important to me because most of the relationships that I build with my clients I'm hoping are lifelong relationships."

Like many of her clients, Schorr — herself a mother of four sons — is constantly

striving to find a balance between work and family life.

"A lot of women I work with (are) managing not just their careers and their family, but their family finances as well," she said. "There's a lot of women I've worked with who would say it has been a juggle and it has been a balancing act and there a lot of times when you feel like you're sacrificing one thing for the other."

In addition to helping women in her job, Schorr is also involved with several other organizations, including the Women's Professional Council and the Women's Leadership Initiative, a United Way group focused on moving New Orleans women and children forward in society.

Perhaps just as important, Schorr strives to be a role model for her boys.

"I'm hoping one day, when they're older, they can better understand what it was for me to go to school and earn my MBA while I was working and being their mother," Schorr said.

"It's important to me for my boys to grow up with a strong woman in the house and appreciate that, not so much today, but know that later."•

— Leah Bartos



Stacy Seamon

Position: president, Traffic Solutions Inc.

Age: 35

Family: single

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

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I would like not to be as hard on myself.

What's the secret to happiness?

Never take one day for granted and live every day to the fullest.

What's your biggest indulgence?

Staying at a really nice hotel when I travel.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Learn to speak another language.

Road construction and maintenance is something most people take for granted. It's an essential part of any city's infrastructure, but people often fail to notice its importance.

As president of Traffic Solutions Inc., Stacy Seamon works to provide traffic safety, including signs, cones, barricades, drums and closing lanes, for road construction projects.

Seamon started her company in August 2004 after having worked in the traffic safety industry for five years. In addition to this, the traffic safety business was in her blood — her mother had owned a traffic safety company. Seamon had reached a point where she was offered an advanced position at her old job, but that would have entailed signing a non-compete clause.

That was when Seamon decided to take the plunge and start her own business. Things went well, then took a turn toward the uncertain.

"The company had just started taking off when Katrina hit," Seamon said. Despite sustaining significant damage at her offices, the company rebounded, and Traffic Solutions has been involved with a number of significant projects, including the new Twin Span, the Interstate 10 expansion from the 17th Street Canal to Causeway Boulevard and the Huey P. Long Bridge widening. Seamon donates signs to churches and schools, and money to

Operation Smile, which repairs facial defects in children.

More than four years after she started the company, Seamon takes the most pride in two things. The first is the work atmosphere she has created.

"I wanted to work every day at something I love and I wanted to create an environment where people enjoyed coming to work every day."

Secondly, Seamon loves the opportunity to help improve her native New Orleans. "I've lived here my whole life. I love the city, the culture, the food. ... Maintaining, expanding and safeguarding our highways and bridges is important to the economic development of our region."

And while some people work at jobs where it's hard to notice tangible results of hard work, that is not the case for Seamon.

"When I drive down the highway and I go through a construction project, it brings a smile to my face. I feel really proud to have been a part of that growth and expansion in the area."

Seamon sees the key to her success as forming good relationships with her employees, her vendors and with her customers.

"There's a lot of relationship building. It's crazy, hectic and ever-changing, but there's never a dull moment."•

— Fritz Esker

Pamela Senatore



Position: vice president, Horizon Initiative

Age: 48

Family: widowed; children Patrick, 23, Erin, 20, and Matthew, 17

Education: bachelor's degree in marketing, Georgetown University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I would be a computer whiz.

What's the secret to happiness?

The house-made spaghetti at Herbsaint.

What's your biggest indulgence?

Yearly trips to Paris.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Take jazz vocal lessons.

As vice president of the Horizon Initiative, Pamela Senatore spends her days trying to spark economic development in New Orleans through the cooperation of culturally diverse business and civic organizations.

With more than 400 members, the organization is dedicated to increasing economic prosperity in New Orleans by knocking down cultural, racial and geographical barriers and bringing positive business trends to the city. Having moved to the city just before Katrina, Senatore is sometimes told by locals she's naïve in thinking New Orleans can change from its old ways.

"I have had people say to me that I am ignorant of the politics of the past, but I think that is a good thing," Senatore said. "I think people who are not from here can see something else instead of 'that's just the way it is.'"

With that positivity and enthusiasm, Senatore has visited Miami to learn how the Miami Beacon Council helped attract business and spark tourism after recovering from a reputation for drugs and crime. She also coordinated with the International Economic Development Commission to ensure the Horizon Initiative had access to the best practices and expertise of successful cities nationwide.

Senatore said the basis for the success of Horizon Initiative and economic develop-

ment in the city rests upon working with leadership citywide to bring everyone together.

"(Real economic development) can happen here if we get rid of the fiefdoms and bring everyone to the same table. Everyone has a seat at this table and I think that makes the difference."

Before she took a role in economic development, Senatore worked in the television and film industry and was a producer and manager at Senatore Management, where she worked with writers and directors of feature films, television series and movies. She has also worked for Network Sports Television Production, living and working in Europe and coordinating with U.S. contacts on events such as Wimbledon, the French Open and the St. Tropez Music Video Festival.

When Senatore is not working to bolster the city's economic development, she enjoys rollerblading in Audubon Park and socializing with friends. Despite having worked around the world, she finds a special charm in New Orleans and sees it as a city where she can make a difference.

"This place really grabbed me. There's a sense of community and graciousness that I haven't seen anywhere else. This place is extraordinary, and people who are not from here can see it."•

— Craig Guillot

Kristin Shannon



Position: executive director, Emeril Lagasse Foundation

Age: 33

Family: husband, Michael; and son, Mason, age 1

Education: bachelor's degree in English and music, William & Mary College

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I'm a bit of a procrastinator.

What's the secret to happiness? Family.

What's your biggest indulgence? Fine dining, food and wine. I love to go to our fine restaurants. And fried shrimp po-boys.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Write a novel.

Like many people who relocate to New Orleans from other parts of the country, Kristin Shannon discovered the city's vibrant food culture as a gateway to her new home.

Seven years later, she hopes to foster the same type of appreciation among the young people who already live here.

Shannon is executive director of the nonprofit Emeril Lagasse Foundation, which the celebrity chef started to enhance young people's lives, primarily through the culinary arts. And, as Shannon points out, since the unique food culture is so integral to New Orleans' identity, a love of the food translates to a love of the city.

"What I've really wanted to do is re-instill that sense of pride in where you're from, because I think it's easy to become disenchanted as a child," Shannon said, noting the added post-Katrina stress in young people's lives. The foundation, she says, works "to bring passion to them about cooking, about music and about the arts culture that we have here; to re-inspire them to love their city again."

Shannon and Lagasse first met when she was working in book publishing in New York. Lagasse already had the vision for a nonprofit mentoring program in New Orleans and found Shannon to be the per-

fect collaborator and leader to run the foundation.

"We're a great team. I have a lot of fun helping Emeril pursue what he wants with this foundation."

The foundation is working to fund several strategic projects, all of which are aimed at engaging young people from pre-kindergarten to high school age. Since Katrina, the foundation has given \$2.3 million to the greater New Orleans area.

One of the foundation's current projects is to renovate the second floor of Café Reconcile, a "streets-to-work" program that trains high school dropouts in culinary arts and helps them get permanent work.

The foundation also works closely with local schools, including the Edible Schoolyard at Samuel J. Green Charter School, a life skills kitchen at St. Michael's Special School, and plans are under way for a four-year culinary arts curriculum at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts.

Shannon's favorite part of her job, though, is the foundation's annual wine auction fundraiser, the *Carnivale du Vin*.

"It's a big part of what has brought me so much into the culture of this city and the community of this city. It's really helped me get to know New Orleans."•

— Leah Bartos

Jessica Soileau



Position: assistant vice president, Ochsner Cancer Institute
Age: 33
Family: daughter, Nalon, 5
Education: bachelor's degree in biological sciences, Southeastern Louisiana University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Nothing. I think people should be content with what God gave them.

What's the secret to happiness?

Take pleasure in every day you're given.

What's your biggest indulgence?

My shoe collection, perhaps 400 pairs.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Scuba dive from Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

Jessica Soileau refers to herself as a “country girl from Zachary” but admits her career evokes a “wow.”

She's moved from inspecting and evaluating nuclear power plants and radiation technology for safety and efficacy to working in the healing profession in her role supervising oncology services at Ochsner Cancer Institute facilities in New Orleans and Jefferson.

Through it all, she maintains a Christian faith she describes as the driving force in her career.

“Radiation heals, but then I truly believe in the faith that I have that God heals,” Soileau said. “The Bible says God is light. What if God has the same healing principles as we have?”

Soileau oversees a staff of close to 100 professionals in the position she accepted in December 2007 after working for two years as manager of operations for Alliance Imaging Inc. in radiation safety and services. She was pleased to move to patient care and considers improving cancer services at Ochsner a legacy project.

“It's almost a perfect fit. I'm here for a reason; it's patient care.”

Soileau expresses a concern for patients at all levels of care, including

insurance issues and the need for counseling to cope with health crises.

“I understand health care in Louisiana.”

Soileau contributes to the community through the Windows to the World project, mentoring physics students at Zachary High School, serving as a Career Day speaker and matching professionals with school career fairs.

She has completed numerous continuing education courses at various universities and is pursuing dual master's and doctorate degrees from Madison University in Gulfport, Miss., in health care administration, with an anticipated graduation in May. In January, she'll begin teaching a radiation biology course at Ochsner.

She maintains affiliations with many professional groups, including the Louisiana and American Nuclear societies and the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors, where she serves as an adviser to breast cancer organizations and leads an organizational review committee.

She does it all by placing an emphasis on faith.

“I have a promise of eternal life and a mission to fulfill here on Earth.”•

— Diana Chandler

Charlee Williamson

Two-time honoree



Position: executive vice president, Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group

Age: 37

Family: husband, Richard; chocolate brown Labrador, Roux, 7

Education: bachelor's degree in advertising, University of Texas at Austin; master's degree in business administration, Tulane University

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I would like to live as a Type B personality for just one week to see how it felt.

What's the secret to happiness?

Loving yourself first, having passion for what you do and realizing the grass is still green on your side.

What's your biggest indulgence?

A 90-minute Bikram yoga class.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't?

Take time off and travel internationally.

In today's world of lateral moves up the ladder through job hopping and jumping at the next best offer, some might find it refreshing Charlee Williamson has remained with the same employer since she graduated from college 15 years ago.

Williamson started as the marketing manager for two of the Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group's locations and has since then helped open two more including one in California. With a varying range of responsibilities, Williamson does everything from determining the concept and décor to creating menus and building the team.

"To be working for the best-known brand and respected brand in hospitality has been a real privilege," Williamson said. "I've been able to grow tremendously with the company both professionally and personally."

Williamson oversees operations at Bacco, Red Fish Grill, Ralph's on the Park and Ralph Brennan's Jazz Kitchen at Disneyland. She credits Ralph Brennan as a strong role model who has helped her develop her professional career and said the strong and dedicated staff has helped the restaurant group in its success.

Following a dream when she had some time off after Hurricane Katrina, Williamson went back to school to earn a master's degree in business administration from Tulane University.

"I love to do new things, and that was a huge professional and personal challenge. One of our company's core values is professional and personal growth, and I really felt I accomplished that by going back to school."

Williamson is highly involved in her community and is on the board of directors for the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans and the Junior League of New Orleans. She is also on the board of trustees for St. Martin's Episcopal School. In her job and volunteer activities, Williamson credits the support of co-workers and peers as a motivating and inspiring force.

"I think if you are passionate about what you do and who you work with, it's easy to get up in the morning. In our business, we make people happy and that makes me happy."

Outside of work, Williamson enjoys spending time with her husband. Last year, they took off a month from work and traveled to Asia. She said she has always had aspirations to be an entertainment reporter and admits she is a pop culture junkie and has 30 shows she records regularly on TiVo.

Although that love for pop culture may not be in line with the network's agenda, she also said she would like to be a political commentator on the Fox network. •

— Craig Guillot

Rachel Wisdom



Position: member, Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann

Age: 46

Family: husband, Arthur; children, Pierce, 16, Leila, 14, Jacqueline, 13

Education: bachelor's degree in political science, Tulane University; juris doctorate, Tulane University School of Law

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I would change myself into Chris Paul. To me, he is poetry in motion — the way he moves so fluidly with the ball like it was just another part of him.

What's the secret to happiness? Being open and able to appreciate all of the beauty and treasure that exists in others.

What's your biggest indulgence? Unrestricted eating habits that allow for frequent consumption of great New Orleans food.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Skydive.

While others view her as being more aggressive than she perceives herself to be, Rachel Wisdom said she, like most of her peers at Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann, gladly considers herself to be a law geek.

For the past 17 years, Wisdom has specialized in class action and complex, commercial, employment and securities litigation at Stone Pigman. She said she enjoys the complex procedure involved with class work.

Wisdom recently was among the lawyers who successfully defended the Housing Authority of New Orleans in an anti-demolition lawsuit filed against the agency. She said the case engaged her at a level she'd never before experienced and convinced her HANO acted in good will by attempting to rebuild public housing in New Orleans.

"The Housing Authority today is well on its way to rebuilding its public housing stock in New Orleans despite the impediments that that lawsuit initially presented," she said.

Wisdom has a personal interest in housing as a social issue and works with several charitable organizations that focus on homelessness. She's a member of the board of advisers for Ozanam Inn, a local home-

less shelter, and she offers legal services to homeless individuals through the Homeless Experience Legal Protection program.

"Doing that is tremendously and personally gratifying because the people that are served through those organizations are the most vulnerable in our communities. The things that I really love all sort of coalesce with being into the practice of law."

Wisdom is also a member of the American Bar Association, the Louisiana State Bar Association and serves as secretary of Lusher Charter School's board.

Wisdom said that throughout life she has been fortunate to meet many inspiring people who have donated their wisdom and energy to her growth and success. People such as the late Judge John Minor Wisdom, Judge Martin L.C. Feldman and experienced and young attorneys have been constant sources of professional inspiration.

"Likewise, there are people in the charitable community who inspire me to do as much as I possibly can to serve my community by displaying unparalleled virtue and commitment to that work."•

— *Nayita Wilson*

Ellen Zakris



Position: director of the radiation oncology department, Touro Infirmary

Age: 47

Family: widowed; children, Sara, 19, Arielle, 15, Jake, 13

Education: bachelor's degree in studio art, Rutgers University; doctor of medicine, Duke University School of Medicine

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I'd want to be able to be two places at once.

What's the secret to happiness?

Having a well-balanced life with career, family and friends.

What's your biggest indulgence?

Eating a piece of chocolate cake.

What have you always wanted to do but haven't? Go to Italy.

Cancer remains one of the most frightening words in the English language. The word conjures mental images of suffering, lost loved ones and our own mortality. In her career as an oncologist, Ellen Zakris has committed herself to combating the disease and caring for the people — patients and their families — affected by it.

Zakris' work appeals to her creative nature — she studied art as an undergraduate. Curing cancer is often a balancing act of giving patients chemotherapy and/or radiation without overdoing it. No two tumors are the same. They're different sizes and in different parts of the body, and what works for one might not work for the next, she said.

"I have to use my creativity to figure out a way it (the chemo/radiation) won't be as bad but will still cure them," said Zakris. "I have to figure out a way to get a dose to the tumor while sparing the normal tissues around it."

Treating cancer is not just the physical act of attacking a tumor either. Patients have emotional needs on top of their physical ones, she said.

"It's the most devastating thing that's ever happened to them. I hold their hand, I guide them, I comfort them."

In addition to her work at Touro, Zakris works with cancer patients at Children's Hospital. As a mother of three, Zakris is adept at dealing with children and empathizing with parents who are often understandably horrified by their child's diagnosis. Zakris' work with young cancer patients extends to Louisiana's Make-a-Wish Foundation chapter, where she served as an executive committee member.

Zakris' skills with patients has not only made her an exceptional oncologist, but has made her a leading candidate to lead Touro's new cancer center. The new center will open within 18 months.

As a mother of athletic children, Zakris has sponsored her children's teams with the Carrollton Boosters. She also devotes time to teaching and community education projects, including local high school programs that teach young women the importance of self-examinations for breast cancer. •

— Fritz Esker

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