



# THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Date:** September 30, 2003  
**Contact:** Vicki Bernard or Annette Clark  
318-443-3394

## **Details Announced for Funding Challenge for Proposed Economic Development Partnership In Central Louisiana**

**Alexandria, LA** - The Rapides Foundation announced the findings and recommendations from a four month long project which gathered input from civic and business leaders into the future of the Central Louisiana economy.

This process involved in-depth interviews with 63 of Cenla's civic and business leaders. The interviewees responded to questions about successes, barriers, challenges and opportunities for economic development in this area.

The Foundation consolidated the information gathered from those interviews, then presented the findings back to these community and business leaders with the recommendations for moving forward suggested by those interviewed. The Foundation facilitated this process because of its mission to improve community health; research shows the healthiest communities are those with vibrant economies, where people have opportunities to earn a living wage.

One of the key findings to come out of this community engagement was the strong recommendation for the development of a new group - to be called the Cenla Advantage Partnership (CAP). CAP would be a private nonprofit economic development partnership to be organized and funded by private sector members of Central Louisiana - with the goal to produce larger numbers of higher paying jobs, generate more wealth in Central Louisiana communities, and create more economic opportunity for all of Cenla's citizens.

Also at this meeting, Randy Bruns of Cheyenne, Wyoming, President of Cheyenne LEADS, the Cheyenne-Laramie County Corporation for Economic Development, presented an example of a successful employer-run organization from a community with some similar characteristics to the Cenla region.

-more-

**The Rapides Foundation**

**News Release**

**September 30, 2003**

**Page 2**

This program was a follow-up to an April meeting that focused on the future of economic development in Central Louisiana. At the previous meeting, organizations, officials and business leaders from throughout Cenla were presented survey and labor data related to economic development challenges, and also heard information on how other communities have successfully responded to similar challenges.

In closing today, three local business leaders were called upon to comment on their hopes for the future of these efforts.