

@HEALTH & WELL-BEING ISSUE

A PUBLICATION OF THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

SPRING 2002

FOCUS: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKS

Supporting Effective Leadership

Since the adoption of its strategic grantmaking framework in 1998, staff, consultants and trustees of The Rapides Foundation have met with hundreds of community organizations, nonprofit agencies, churches and other groups of Central Louisiana residents all working towards improving their communities. We have learned a great deal about the success stories and the challenges in doing community-based work but one request echoes throughout all the stories – residents of Central Louisiana want local opportunities to learn how to be more effective in reaching their goals. (continued on page 2)



Community Development Works

Helping People Build Communities in Central Louisiana

Community Development Works

Leadership

(continued from page 1)

In response, Community Development Works (CDW) is providing leadership and community development training to Central Louisiana residents with the goal of helping people build healthy communities.

Three years ago the Foundation commissioned a comprehensive study of existing community development training activity. In response, the Foundation in 2000 launched a series of training sessions ranging from nonprofit management and leadership to grant proposal writing under what was then known as the Community Development Initiative.

Today, CDW has a staff of its own, is creating an advisory committee and has enrolled over 250 residents throughout Central Louisiana, according to Julie Owens, the program's training manager. Future plans also call for CDW to gain its own nonprofit status, but it will continue to be a partner with the Foundation.

One unique aspect of the program is that the training is conducted in all 11 parishes throughout Central Louisiana, not just Alexandria.

"We don't expect to have people come here for training," Owens said. "The purpose of the program is community building. You don't sit in one location and build communities that are in another location. The only people who can build communities are the people who live there."

"The purpose of the program is community building. You don't sit in one location and build communities that are in another location. The only people who can build communities are the people who live there."

*Julie Owens,
Community Development
Works (CDW) training manager*

In late 2002, CDW will move into its own offices in downtown Alexandria. It will also establish a Resource and Technology Program to help give rural residents the technological tools they need in their community-building efforts.

Dianne Williams, a community development consultant, conducted the initial study that led to the Community Development Initiative. Ms. Williams brings 15 years of successful experience working in rural Arkansas communities on Community Development issues. She explained the benefits of transforming into a full-fledged program.

"My experience is programs that are controlled by the people they are intended to help stay more true to the mission of the organization," she said. "The goal is for it to be managed and run by the people in the region."

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Community Development Works

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Community Development Works includes a full schedule of training for 2002. Learning opportunities include Leadership for a Healthy Cenla, which gives participants intensive and ongoing leadership training; Nonprofit Management for staff and board members of Rapides Parish nonprofit agencies; Community Builders Toolbox, which emphasizes basic nonprofit organization issues; and training for people involved in Community Development Corporations.

In addition to training new people, CDW also offers follow-up assistance for participants who graduated from sessions in 2001. And some of the people who enrolled in classes last year are in different workshops this year to broaden their skills.

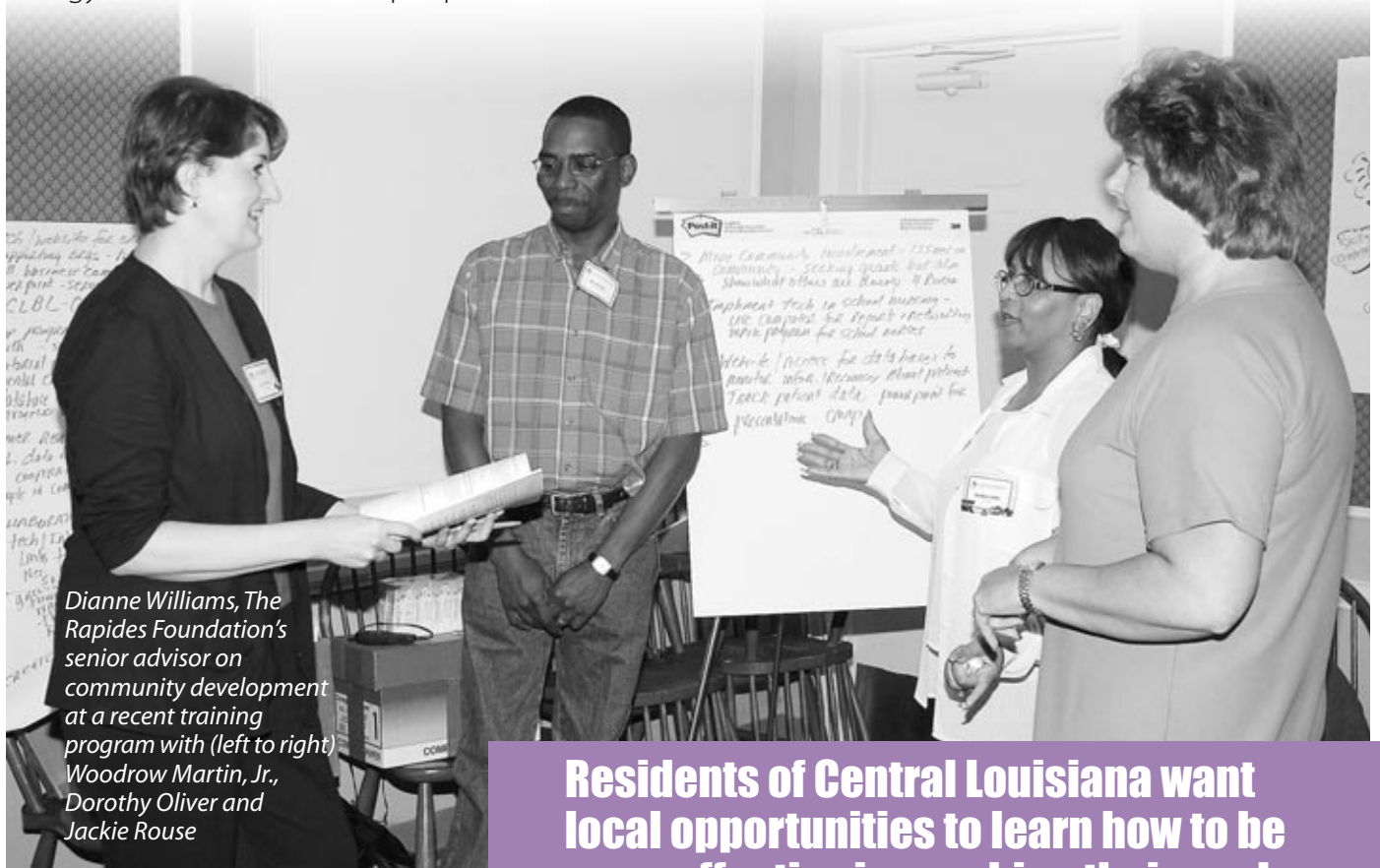
Both Williams and Owens said they are impressed with the participants enrolled in the sessions.

"The most amazing thing to me is the energy and commitment of people who want

to improve the quality of life in the community. It's so rewarding for me to do a training or to meet folks and feel their sense of commitment and to see their energy about that. It's just wonderful," Williams said.

Owens showed her own level of commitment last year when she left her job in Little Rock, Arkansas, to manage Community Development Works. As a trainer and consultant under the initiative, she knew what she was getting into when she took the position.

"My heart at the end of every day is so full it's about to burst. I am getting to work with people who live in very small communities in rural parishes, and the small, rural communities in this country have by and large simply been forgotten," she said. "Every day I come into the office and I interact with people who are trying to make things better in their community. And The Rapides Foundation actually pays me money to do this thing. It's the most wonderful work I've ever done."



Dianne Williams, The Rapides Foundation's senior advisor on community development at a recent training program with (left to right) Woodrow Martin, Jr., Dorothy Oliver and Jackie Rouse

Residents of Central Louisiana want local opportunities to learn how to be more effective in reaching their goals.

Community Development Corporations

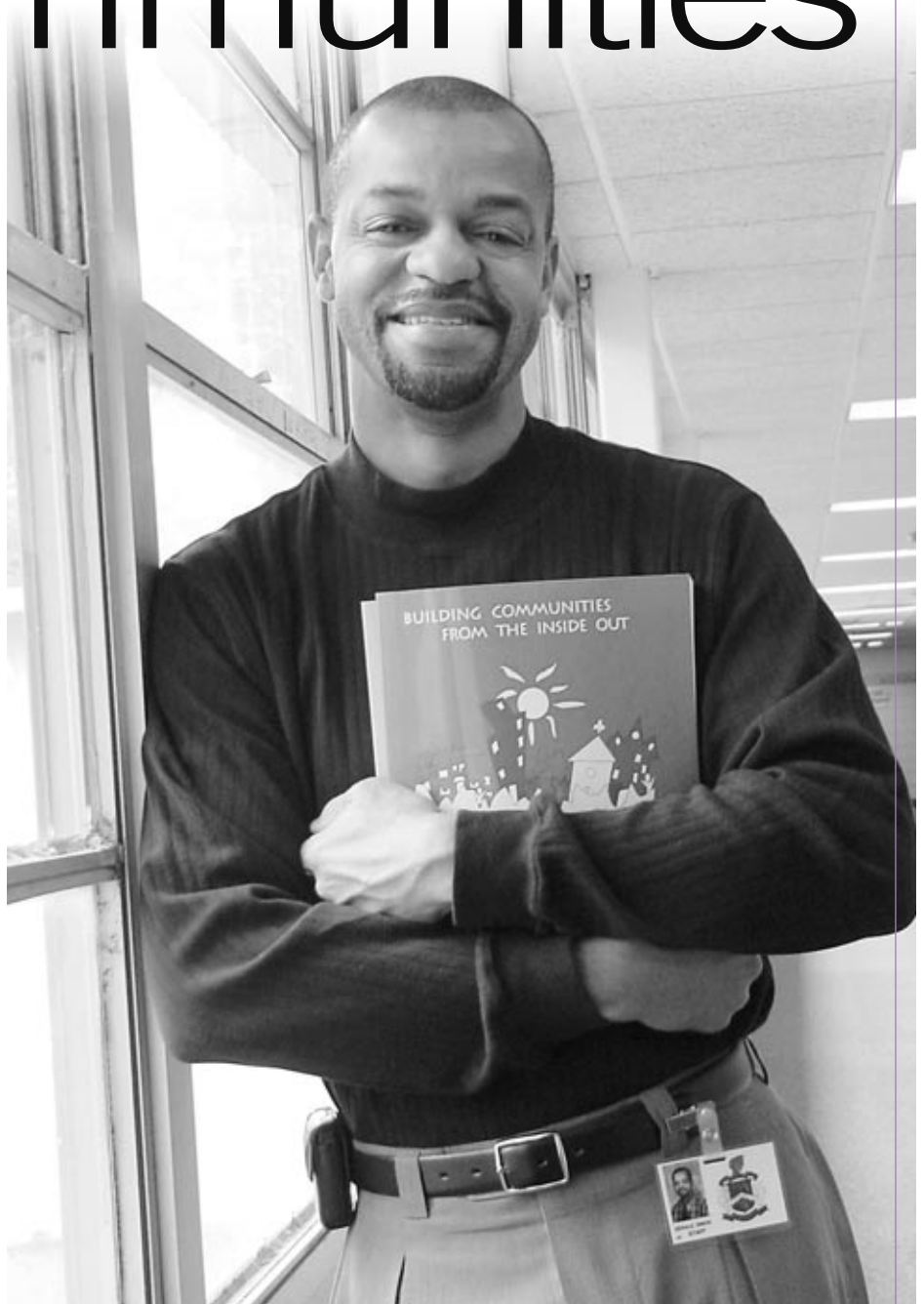
Changing Communities

The South Central Allen Community Development Corporation wants to boost the local economy by helping minority businesses. By having its board president commit to participating in a six-session workshop designed specifically for Community Development Corporations, also known as CDCs, the Allen Parish group will have a better chance of reaching its goal.

"What I'm hoping to get is better training for myself so I can do a better job in directing and leading the corporation and also information that is going to help the community," said its board president, Gerald Simon. "One of the things that I appreciate about The Rapides Foundation is they train you, they come into the community. It becomes apparent to me that they really want to help."

CDCs are community-based organizations formed by people who want to change their communities' social, economic and physical health. The series of

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Gerald Simon, Allen Parish CDC board president

Community Development Corporations



“If you’re going to do community work through a nonprofit organization and you want to have an impact, you need to have support from the people in the community. This is sometimes easier to accomplish if people know that your organization is recognized by the federal government as a tax-exempt nonprofit”

Gordon Goodwin of Development Solutions of San Antonio, Texas

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workshops provided by The Rapides Foundation is offered to teams of people representing CDCs throughout Central Louisiana.

Simon, a homebound teacher at Oakdale High School and pastor of the Oberlin-based More Than Conquerors Ministry, has already seen the benefits.

He particularly liked one session in which participants learned about various Web sites and other places they could visit to obtain information about improving economic development. The course puts him in a position where he is “being exposed to the successes of other people and to information that you’re not aware of. It’s a tremendous help.”

The training program covers topics including characteristics of successful CDCs, boards and responsibilities, resource development and fundraising, planning for success, financial accountability and how to prepare for an audit.

Instructor Gordon Goodwin of Development Solutions of San Antonio, Texas, gave participants a wealth of information to

maintain a healthy nonprofit organization.

“If you’re going to do community work through a nonprofit organization and you want to have an impact, you need to have support from the people in the community. This is sometimes easier to accomplish if people know that your organization is recognized by the federal government as a tax-exempt nonprofit.”

Goodwin said that because competition for resources can be stiff, community development corporations with community support and sound financial practices are more likely to survive than those that do not have credibility in the community. His training, therefore, helps participants understand the level of commitment and support they must have to operate a successful CDC.

“We’re informing people about all of the responsibilities there are in running a nonprofit organization,” he said. “We think it is important for people to understand what it takes so they can appreciate the amount of work and commitment necessary.”

Leadership for a Healthy Cenla



Inspiring Hope

Marissa Bejarano-Fernbaugh, children's advocate for the Natchitoches Parish-based Domestic Violence Education and Support program

and Reaching Goals

Micheal Jordan wants to expand Silent Love Ministries, a group he organized in 2000, to provide food for disadvantaged families.

He knows the best way to achieve his goal is to build on the successes of similar organizations. He is getting that help through his participation in Leadership for a Healthy Cenla, an intensive program in which people from each of the 11 parishes served by The Rapides Foundation meet for an extended weekend every other month to learn leadership skills, gain knowledge about issues of health and well-being and develop relationships with other participants.

"I don't think you ever know all there is to know," said Jordan, district conservationist for Avoyelles Parish for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. "I want to be able to network with other individuals and organizations who have similar missions to what we want to do. I want to be able to compare notes. I don't believe in reinventing the wheel."

After participating in two sessions so far this year, Jordan already has learned that "all small communities are just about alike" and "the things we were going through are very similar to the people we want to help. I think The Rapides

Leadership for a Healthy Cenla

“Everybody has some sort of leadership quality in them that I can use to the benefit of community building. I think everybody has potential.”

Marissa Bejarano-Fernbaugh

Foundation is providing a good conduit to be able to network together.”

Jordan envisions Silent Love Ministries, which gained its nonprofit status last year, expanding its services, including the creation of a Kid’s Café that would provide after-school meals and education opportunities for youths. The organization also wants to continue providing meals for needy families.

Among his classmates in Leadership for a Healthy Cenla is Marissa Bejarano-Fernbaugh of Campti, children’s advocate for the Natchitoches Parish-based Domestic Violence Education and Support program.

“I’m learning how to build relationships with other people in the community,” she said. “Everybody has some sort of leadership quality in them that I can use to the benefit of community building. I think that everybody has potential.”

She wants to use her new leadership skills to help rebuild the town of Campti, located north east of Natchitoches. Campti residents have good ideas, but they suffer from apathy and a “huge loss of hope” because the town is not moving in a positive direction.

“What I really want to gain out of being with The Rapides Foundation is how to inspire that hope,” she said.

Like Jordan, Bejarano-Fernbaugh believes The Rapides Foundation will help her achieve her goals.

“They are one of the best things that has happened to this area. Everybody knows who they are. They support local business. They practice what they preach.”

Two people who have already made a difference with what they learned in Leadership



Micheal Jordan organized Silent Love Ministries

for a Healthy Cenla are Olla Town Clerk Dawn Stott and the Rev. Wiley Shaw of Allen Parish. Stott and Shaw are graduates of the first-ever leadership class and part of its alumni group.

While taking the class in 2001, Stott helped form a planning commission for the town of Olla. The five-member commission has identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the community, and it will use that information to develop a comprehensive plan for the town’s future, she said.

“What I learned in the leadership classes

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Leadership for a Healthy Cenla

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Dawn Stott, Olla Town Clerk

has helped me with that," she said. In rural parishes like LaSalle, people tend to get bogged down in negative thinking and believe they can't make change. "These classes showed us that you can," she said. The class also emphasized the importance of youth. As a result, the Olla Kiwanis Club, of which Stott is a member, plans to recognize youth leaders in the spring.

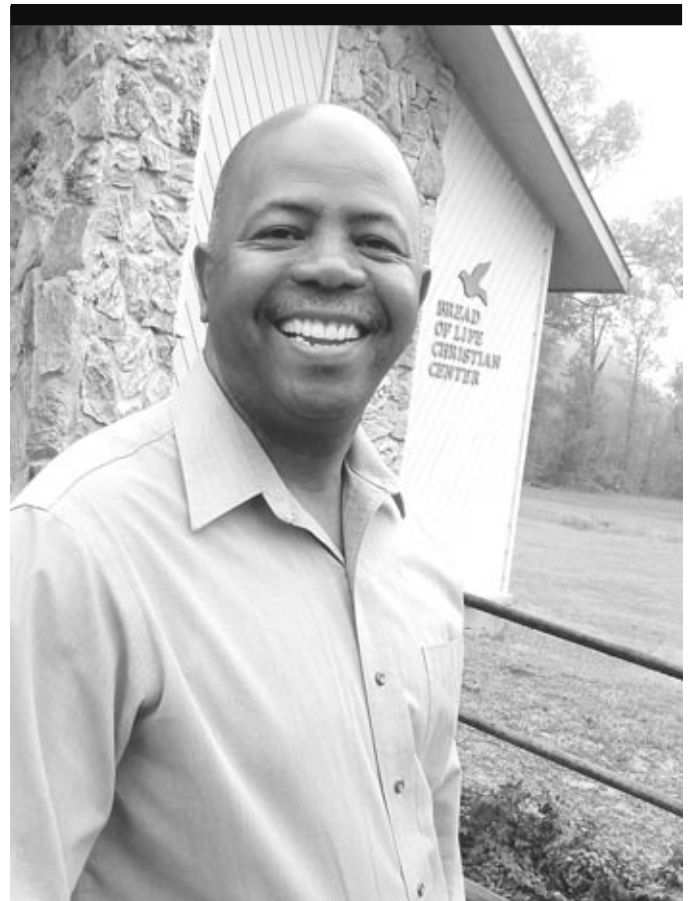
The leadership class, she said, "is the most positive experience that I've ever been through, honestly. We formed within the group itself a tremendous bond. We were totally free to express our opinions and learn from each other, which is a tremendous network."

Rev. Shaw is using the information he learned in the class to improve the quality of life in Oakdale. Pastor of Bread of Life Christian Church in Oakdale, Shaw has started two community organizations since his leadership involvement: the Old Forest Improvement Association, which was formed last May and will eventually seek nonprofit status, and Bethlehem Development Corporation, a parish-wide community

development corporation.

The leadership course, he said, changed his way of thinking. "It just opened my mind, my eyes, my perception of what leadership was all about. In looking at leadership I had been looking at it from inside out. They taught us from the outside in," he said. For example, he is now teaching other potential leaders instead of trying to do it all alone.

Shaw also learned about various Web sites he can visit to gain more knowledge. "It really opened up a whole new world to me," he said.



Rev. Wiley Shaw of Allen Parish, pastor of Bread of Life Christian Church in Oakdale

"It just opened my mind, my eyes, my perception of what leadership was all about."

Rev. Wiley Shaw

Leadership for A Healthy Cenla 2002

Participants

Allen Parish

Sandy Ray
The Health Enrichment Network, Inc.
Oakdale

Gerald Simon
Allen Parish School Board
Oberlin

Avoyelles Parish

Bruce Coulon
Coulon's Electrical Sign Service, Inc.
Bunkie

Micheal Jordan
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Marksville

Catahoula Parish

Jackie Rouse
Catahoula Office Products
Jonesville

Woodrow Martin, Jr.
USDA Rural Development
Jonesville

Concordia Parish

Dorothy Oliver
LaSalle Community Action Association, Inc.
Clayton

Susan Rabb
Governors Program on Abstinence (GPA)
Vidalia

Evangeline Parish

Joyce Latigue
Retired (Evangeline Parish School Board)
St. Landry

Ricky Thomas
Evangeline Parish School Board
Ville Platte

Grant Parish

Lamar Briggs
Grant Parish Sheriff's Department/School Board
Pollock

Jim Reid
LA Conference of the United Methodist Church
Colfax

LaSalle Parish

Pam Callender
Town Clerk
Urania

Lynette Villemarette
LaSalle Parish School Board
Jena

Natchitoches Parish

Rev. Ronnie Evans
Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Department
Natchitoches

Marissa Bejarano-Fernbaugh
DOVES (Domestic Violence Program)
Campti

Rapides Parish

Gwen Cobb
LSUHSC/Huey P. Long Medical Center
Pineville

Johnie Varnado
KaZette Enterprises, Inc.
Alexandria

Vernon Parish

Neil Early
NSU Ft. Polk/First Christian Church
Leesville

Doug Stannard
West Central Broadcasting Company
Leesville

Winn Parish

Tony Acosta
Winn Parish Medical Center
Winnfield

Sandra Goff
Winn Parish School Board
Winnfield

Community Builders Toolbox

Participants in The Rapides Foundation's Community Builders Toolbox program have one thing in common: They want to improve the quality of life in their communities.

By enrolling in a series of four quarterly courses, participants are learning that establishing a healthy nonprofit organization can help them achieve their goal.

"These folks are really looking toward the nonprofit sector. They are trying to understand how, through their good efforts, they might be able to bring in some funds and bring in some resources to solve a community need," said Kellie Chavez Greene of Baton Rouge, instructor for Community Builders Skills, one of the programs offered under the Community Builders Toolbox.

Community Builders Toolbox offers training for community-based nonprofits at sites in Allen, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Evangeline, Grant, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon and Winn

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The Importance of Good Management

Kellie Chavez Greene, instructor for Community Builders Skills, has a discussion with program participants Louise Schneider (far left), Evelyn A. Williams (center) and Janice Molette (far right)

Community Builders Toolbox

parishes. Its goal is to create a network of nonprofit organizations and community leaders in each parish.

The program consists of three courses, beginning with Nonprofit Basics, a seven-hour course for anyone who wants to learn more about nonprofits, said Julie Owens, training manager for Community Development Works.

The second course, Grantseekers School is a two-day training session that helps organizational leaders learn how to position themselves so that they have the best possible chance of having their grants funded, Owens said.

Third, the Community Builders Skills program is a 16-hour course that delves more deeply into the nonprofit structure.

“It is empowering to be in a room full of people who want to make their community better, for the children and for the future.”

Kellie Chavez Greene

As instructor, Greene covers a variety of topics including the roles and responsibilities of boards, recruitment and training, financial responsibilities and governance versus management.

Greene, an independent consultant, explained that people who want to improve their communities usually start off with a vision or a mission in which to focus. As they begin to organize, they realize they need funding to make things happen. The next step, as a result, is to apply for nonprofit status and organize a board of directors, she said.

The work doesn't stop there, however.

Because competition for nonprofit funding is stiff, Greene stresses the importance of good management and fiscal responsibility. “Only the most credible and most well-positioned organizations, and the organizations that can clearly articulate and demonstrate the achievement of their mission are going to get the grants.”

She said the participants in the Community Builders Skills sessions have already demonstrated their commitment.

“What's really wonderful is the diversity of the program interests, from the arts to working with youth to working with domestic violence to providing increased access to healthcare,” she said.

“It is empowering to be in a room full of people who want to make their community better, for the children and for the future. It's all about social justice, which is really wonderful.”

The Rapides Foundation is a philanthropic organization that provides grants to organizations throughout an 11 parish service area that share the Foundation's mission to improve the health and well-being of Central Louisiana.



THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

www.rapidesfoundation.org



Nonprofit Management Program

Gaining Tools for Positive



Jannease Seastrunk, director of the Shepherd Center

As the relatively new executive director of the Shepherd Center, Jannease Seastrunk wanted to learn more about her position.

Donald Powell had worked at for-profit companies most of his life, so he realized he needed some nonprofit training when he took a job as executive director of the Southern Forest Heritage Museum in Long Leaf. "I didn't know a lot about managing nonprofits," he said.

"Usually you have to travel and pay a whole lot of money to get training, and it's not going to be this in-depth. I think it's vitally important the Foundation is focusing on training."

Jannease Seastrunk

Both got the help they needed when they participated last year in the first-ever Nonprofit Management Program, which consists of six monthly sessions designed for nonprofit staff and board members.

The second Nonprofit Management Program began in January of this year. Meanwhile, graduates of the first seminar series have formed the Nonprofit Management Program Alumni, which provides continuing education and networking opportunities.

The program gives its 20 participants knowledge in a wide variety of topics, including financial management and board governance.

Seastrunk and Powell said they gained the tools they needed to make positive changes in their respective board of directors.

Powell said he realized the museum's board was too large to get things done efficiently. After participating in Nonprofit Management, "I set out to change that," he said. The board went from about 24 members to a more-manageable 17. In addition, "We've had a board retreat as a result of The Rapides Foundation schooling," Powell said.

Seastrunk also saw a need for change in the Shepherd Center's board. The Shepherd Center is an ecumenical ministry based in Alexandria.

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Donald Powell, executive director of the Southern Forest Heritage Museum in Long Leaf

“The training gave me a lot of good ideas and provided a concrete understanding of what role the board would play,” she said.

After taking the Nonprofit Management Program, she sat down with board members and asked them for suggestions for improvement.

As a result, the Shepherd Center increased its board membership and established committees that could better focus on different aspects of the organization.

Seastrunk said she enjoyed the sessions because they gave her the opportunity to learn from people with varied experiences in the nonprofit business.

“To be in Alexandria and have the opportunity to participate in this kind of program is pretty amazing. It is really exciting,” she said. “Usually you have to travel and pay a whole lot of money to get training, and it’s not going to be this in-depth. I think it’s vitally important the Foundation is focusing on training.”

Both she and Powell said they jumped at the opportunity to join the alumni group. “We wanted to keep the networking going. We wanted to continue that training,” Seastrunk said.

Powell agreed. “I don’t know it all, and the more I learn the more I find out I don’t know. I’m 74 years old and I’m still learning, thank goodness.”

Coming up in @ **HEALTH & WELL-BEING** **ISSUE**

Summer 2002 Focus: Education Initiative



Learn about ELI - the Educators Leadership Institute. It's the Foundation's latest endeavor to support educational efforts in our communities. More than 100 educators will be part of this intensive program, which begins in June. They are making a yearlong commitment to the project to learn how to nurture leadership in our schools.

Leadership will be the focus of the summer newsletter, which also features several stories on efforts by schools participating in the Foundation's Education Initiative. More than half of all schools in Cenla are part of this Initiative - 103 schools received \$2.4 million during the 2001-02 school year for a variety of projects, all aimed at improving student achievement.

Fall 2002 Focus: Community Assessment Update



The data collection for the update of the Foundation's landmark 1997-98 community health assessment is almost complete. The updated information will be available in a new password protected web-based product. In addition, you'll be able to access print studies that will be more easily readable and parish-specific.

Beginning in early fall, the Foundation will conduct community sessions in each parish to announce the findings and train local residents to use the data.



GRANT UPDATE:

The Rapides Foundation Grants from January - March 2002

Initiative Grants

American Heart Association	\$300,000	2 yrs
Implementation of Phase II of AED campaign for automated external defibrillator placement in public places (churches, auditoriums, schools) throughout Cenla		
AED Fund	300,000	2 yrs
Matching funds to subsidize purchase of AEDs in collaboration with American Heart Association		
Arts and Humanities Council of Avoyelles	30,000	1 yr
Support of arts programs for elementary school students in association with Avoyelles Parish School District		
Central Louisiana Area Health Education Center	135,000	1 yr
Implementation of Phase III of assessment on barriers to healthcare access to include Concordia, Evangeline and Natchitoches Parishes		
School Based Health Center (site to be determined)	500,000	3 yrs
Establishment of model high school school-based health center to emphasize risk reduction and disease management programs		
Volunteers of America	270,000	3 yrs
Establishment of outreach and treatment programs for homeless mentally ill persons		

Mini-Grants and Technical Assistance Grants (one year or less)

Kappa Alpha Psi Scholarship and Guide Right Foundation	\$10,000
Pilot youth recreation, tutoring and health education programs	
Kent House	15,000
Planning funds to develop enhanced education and fundraising programs and strategies	
Rapides Symphony Orchestra	10,000
Development of strategic and fundraising plans	
Ninth Judicial District Court	10,000
Pilot project to develop web site, marketing and training materials for families and attorneys involved in family law cases	
Town of Jena	10,000
Fiscal agent for development of LaSalle Parish Cultural Alliance - new umbrella organization for existing arts and culture organizations	
Town of Jena	10,000
Fiscal agent for various arts programs for students in LaSalle Parish schools (matching funds)	

www.rapidesfoundation.org



Visit The Rapides Foundation's Web site for grant updates at www.rapidesfoundation.org. The site provides comprehensive grant program information as well as workshop dates and application deadlines.

"Given the vast amount of information that must be made available to potential grantees as well as the general public, the Internet is a natural medium for us to utilize," says Joe Rosier, President/CEO of The Rapides Foundation. "This site makes our Foundation and programs more accessible to our 11 parish service area stretching from Texas to Mississippi."

Toll-Free Foundation Number **1-800-994-3394**

The Rapides Foundation has a toll-free number for callers outside the Alexandria/Pineville area. "This is a major convenience for people contacting the Foundation, especially for those grant and technical programs requiring contact with the Foundation prior to submitting an application," says Allen Smart, Vice President of Programs for The Rapides Foundation.



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The Rapides Foundation continues a legacy of community healthcare initiated in 1903.

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