

40 UNDER FORTY TWENTY TWENTY

BY MICHAELA BECHLER
JAKE CLAPP
WILL COVIELLO
AMANDA McELFRESH
SARAH RAVITS
JOHN STANTON

PHOTOS BY DAVID GRUNFELD

SHECHANIAH "SHESHE" HUTTON, 35 BAKERY SUPERVISOR, DORIGNAC'S FOOD CENTER dorignacs.com



As the bakery supervisor at Dorignac's Food Center, Shechaniah "Sheshe" Hutton has gotten to know her regular customers through their major milestones, most of them good — cookies for an engagement party, treats for a bridal shower, a wedding cake, various desserts baby showers and anniversaries. But in what is surely a sign of the times, over the last few months there have also been the pastry platters and doughnuts, ordered by area funeral homes to be served as a repast at services for the victims of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have close business ties with some of the funeral homes in the area, like Greenwood and Lake Lawn, a lot of those funeral services order donuts and things through us for the families that are burying loved ones due to COVID," Hutton says.

Health care professionals and other frontline emergency workers were quickly recognized for their essential positions as the pandemic took hold of the country, and for good reason.

But grocery store workers have largely

been under-appreciated, despite the critical work they've done to keep stores stocked and locals supplied with food and necessities. They've had to deal with mad rush hours and interactions with potentially sick people and angry customers. Hutton says she saw her team step up to meet the flood of business once restaurants started to close.

"It was like a nonstop holiday season, almost," Hutton says. "We were busy from the time that we've opened to the time that we closed. They toughed that period out. We weren't used to going through such a busy period so continuously."

The pace has only slightly started to let up in mid-June, Hutton says. "We've done some magic in the past few months," she says.

Hutton grew up in the 9th Ward and attended college in Houston before moving to Chicago, where she worked in the restaurant industry. She returned to New Orleans in summer 2005 and evacuated to Houston during Hurricane Katrina, where she stayed until moving back to her hometown in 2009. She now has a 12-year-old daughter and cares for her father.

A lot of Dorignac's customers tend to be generational shoppers, Hutton says, and those regulars have kept something of their routines during the pandemic.

"I develop a personal business relationship with these families," she says. "People think it's just a glazed doughnut, but for some people it's a hello in the morning that comes with the glazed doughnut." — JAKE CLAPP

DR. ALEX BILLIOUX, 39

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HEALTH, OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH, LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Twitter: @alexbillioux; @LAdeptofhealth

Dr. Alex Billioux, the state's top public health official and advisor to Gov. John Bel Edwards on pandemic response, says one of the era's biggest challenges is "getting people to listen" to their advisories to stay home as much as possible, avoid large gatherings and wear face masks as mitigation measures.

Billioux is one of thousands of health experts and scientists working to save lives around the clock while studying the virus and figuring out how to get it under control. Over the past few months, he has

become increasingly recognizable from his frequent appearances alongside Edwards and as a knowledgeable voice helping to steer some of the statewide guidelines.

There are no easy decisions, he says, especially as he and Edwards understand both the economic and psychological impact of the highly contagious virus.

"What we're asking people to do is hard. It's different," he says. "In Louisiana, not being social is a really big challenge. Not enjoying all the great restaurants, bars,

music — all of that is really tough. But those are behaviors that spread COVID."

Billioux is an internal medicine specialist who also works to reduce threats to public health, such as obesity, heart disease, hypertension and infectious diseases.

He received his medical training at Johns Hopkins University and has worked in both the United Kingdom and Uganda studying different diseases and examining social determinants that impact public health, such as access to food, utilities, and other resources.

He also runs state labs and works on disaster preparedness and response, especially for vulnerable populations with special medical needs. His office is in downtown New Orleans, but his work with



PHOTO BY SEAN ELLIS / LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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COVID-19 now requires him to spend more time in Baton Rouge working with the governor and other top aides.

Some of Billioux's work also involves facilitating partnerships in rural health care settings. Even though the Louisiana Department of Health and its Office of Public Health are largely focused on the pandemic, Billioux says, "We're still very much on the job in other areas" of public health.

It's unlikely he'll get a break anytime soon, but he says he's inspired by his colleagues.

"I'm getting to work with extremely dedicated and bright folks," Billioux says. "They really believe in the change they can drive in Louisiana...That is deeply satisfying." — SARAH RAVITS

KYLEY PULPHUS, 39

DIRECTOR, 826 NEW ORLEANS

826neworleans.org; Twitter and Instagram: @826neworleans

"Reading gives you access, but writing gives you power," Kyley Pulphus says.

That became the mantra of 826 New Orleans, the local affiliate of the national writing program where she works with young writers to publish books.

While growing up in New Orleans, Pulphus became interested in telling stories in film and TV. She studied filmmaking at the University of New Orleans and attained a master's degree at Florida State University. She made a short film that won honors at the Chicago International Children's Film Festival and soon found herself in California with an internship at Disney Channel. But in the years after Hurricane Katrina, she knew she had to help New Orleans recover.

Pulphus has spent 11 years teaching, much of it with first and second graders at New Orleans College Prep.

"I was affectionately called a hip-pie," Pulphus says. "Because I really believed in creating spaces for children that had a lot of choices, a lot autonomy and a lot of joy. I was constantly trying to have that in my classroom and advocating for it."

She transitioned from being a classroom teacher to designing and leading writing projects for students of all ages.

"The way you become a better writer is through targeted feedback," she says. "One teacher trying to get to 30 kids on regular basis is nearly impossible. Kids with good feedback grew tremendously in a short period of time."

At 826 New Orleans, she organizes and leads programs that engage young writers and result in the publication of books.

"When they get the published book in their hands, they're so excited," Pulphus says. "They sign their name on the table of contents and turn to the page they're on. They're so proud. It's incredibly powerful."

At 826 New Orleans, she works directly with children and oversees eight current programs for students in elementary through high school.



Programs range from one-hour workshops in classrooms to weeks and months-long programs at their center in the 7th Ward.

During the pandemic, she created Writing on the Wall in response to schools being closed. For students without access to the internet and parents who didn't want another online class, she created packets with sticky paper. Students complete projects that can then be posted outdoors for passersby and friends to come read. Themed packets have prompted children to write about things they miss, jokes, haiku and create author bios.

Other projects have been topical. A 2017 project about creating new monuments for public spaces drew responses about Ruby Bridges and Solomon Northup. A recent Celebrate Black Joy project, related to recent Black Lives Matter activism, encouraged youth to write about what makes them happy.

"Words are powerful. Words change the world. We want our young people who be the people out there making that change." — WILL COVIELLO

MARIAH MOORE, 32

CO-DIRECTOR, HOUSE OF TULIP

MILAN NICOLE SHERRY, 29

CO-DIRECTOR, HOUSE OF TULIP

houseoftulip.org | Instagram: @houseoftulipno; @themariahmoore; @nolaresilience



As the coronavirus pandemic took hold in March, Mariah Moore and Milan Nicole Sherry helped coordinate the TGNC Crisis Funding Circle, a relief fund for trans and gender non-conforming people in Louisiana. Trans activists Dylan Borne, Spirit McIntyre and Dylan Waguespack also co-managed the fund, which raised around \$20,000 through GoFundMe and redistributed those donations back to local TGNC folks facing tightening expenses during the pandemic.

They found the main need was for assistance with housing, Sherry says — a reoccurring need month after month.

"We were able to provide that assistance," she says, "but it was short-term. We wanted to think about long-term solutions and how we can actually further provide resources to our community."

Moore and Sherry are the co-directors of House of Tulip, a community land trust project that plans to purchase property and restore a multi-unit building to create safe, welcoming homes for area TGNC people. McIntyre and Waguespack also are Tulip co-founders along with Jai Celestial, Ben Collongues, Sultana Isham, Toni Jones, Camilla Marchena, and Za'hair Martinez.

House of Tulip, a nonprofit, secured \$50,000 in seed funding and launched a GoFundMe in June, which is now at more than \$380,000 toward its \$400,000 goal. The group original planned to buy and renovate a property on N. Claiborne Avenue, but a developer swooped in and outbid them, Moore says. They are now considering several other options around the city to provide a zero-barrier housing option for TGNC people.

Past the immediacy to provide zero-barrier homes for TGNC people — the U.S. Trans Survey estimated 1 in 3 trans people in Louisiana experience homelessness during their lives — House of Tulip wants to be a step in long-term housing goals.

Historically, home ownership has been difficult to achieve in the trans community, "even more difficult for Black trans people," Moore says. "We're looking at how we can break that cycle."

Moore and Sherry both are New Orleans natives and have each been heavily involved in trans justice advocacy locally and nationally.

There is a mantra within Tulip: "Trans United Leading Intersectional Progress."

To lead in the trans rights movement, Sherry says, requires understanding that people come from all kinds of intersecting backgrounds.

"Some of us come from sex work, some of us have experienced violence, some of us are HIV positive," she says. "It's not all of our stories and it's not all of our narrative, but the reality is we are all fighting for the common goal: liberation." — JAKE CLAPP

CHRISTINE BROWN, 36

FOUNDER, WHO'S COMING WITH ME, CFREEDOM PHOTOGRAPHY

whoscomingwithme.org | Instagram @cfreedom504

Following the murder of her 17-year-old nephew in 2011, Christine Brown released *Who's Coming With Me* as a song, album and movement that promoted practicing the seven principles of Kwanzaa every day.

Who's Coming With Me has since evolved and is dedicated to supporting and uniting Black artists, businesses and youth in New Orleans through resources like a Black business directory and events.

Her photography and filmmaking business, Cfreedom Photography, also produces commercials, films, and documentaries for the Black community through WCWM. Events (which are currently on hold) have included anything from homeschool info-sessions to screenings of Ava Duvernay's "Queen Sugar."

Brown, who also contributes work to *Essence*, is currently editing a six-part documentary project, shooting a music video, and compiling a virtual and socially distanced by appointment art exhibition, a long-term project and effort that fights gentrification and the displacement of Black artists in New Orleans.

This year has put the release of Brown's short film project "The Essence of N.O.W." (which highlights New Orleans women) on hold and sidelined other opportunities in Colorado and Africa. Fortunately for her, she loves New Orleans, "so it's not so bad to be home."

"My favorite things about New Orleans are first and foremost the people," she says. "I love the skills, the creativity, the determination, the humor, the heart of New Orleans people. Majority of us are good people. We all just need some love, laughter, and liberation." — MICHAELA BECHLER



MALCOLM JENKINS, 32

SAFETY, NEW ORLEANS SAINTS
themalcolmjenkinsfoundation.org | Instagram: @malcolmjenkins27

Saints Safety Malcolm Jenkins has spent his football career putting to use his physical skills, intelligence and sharp tongue to become a dominant force on the field and in the locker room.

The 32-year-old Piscataway, New Jersey, native has also put those skills to use off the field and, like his playing he hasn't been at all shy. Jenkins, for instance, has long had an eye for fashion, and in 2017 he started his own high-end suit company, brashly naming it Damari — his middle name.

But it's through his social justice work that Jenkins' impact on the world will be felt the longest. Through the Malcolm Jenkins Foundation, he's provided tens of thousands of dollars in scholarships to young athletes in New Orleans and has recently expanded his Power Pathway Academy program's digital learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He co-founded the Players Coalition to advocate for racial equity, and through his Listen Up Media production company, Jenkins is helping fund social justice cinema.

Jenkins also has become a thoughtful, passionate voice for the Black Lives Matter movement, using his celebrity to elevate and amplify demands for justice and an end to systemic racism — even when it's meant calling out his own teammates.

After Drew Brees came out in opposition to players protesting police brutality, Jenkins did the unthinkable — he spoke out. "I'm telling you my communities are dealing with these things and your response to me is don't talk about that here ... When the world tells you that you're not worthy, that your life doesn't matter, the last place you want to hear it from are the guys that you go to war with," Jenkins said.

And it worked. Brees eventually took back his comments, and since then the NFL has begun to finally grapple with racism. — JOHN STANTON



PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

DEVIN DE WULF, 35

FOUNDER, KREWE OF RED BEANS, FEED THE FRONT LINE, FEED THE SECOND LINE

redbeansparade.com; feedthesecondline.org; www.ftfl.org | Instagram: @redbeansparade; @feedthesecondline

Devin De Wulf originally came to New Orleans during college to volunteer after Hurricane Katrina and the levee failures.

"After 24 hours, I heard John Boutte and ate a shrimp po-boy," he says. "I was thinking, 'Hey, this is a pretty cool place.'"

De Wulf, a self-taught artist, settled down in the city and threw himself into its culture. He launched the Krewe of Red Beans, whose members make Carnival costumes with red beans and march with a brass band on Lundi Gras.

When the coronavirus pandemic began earlier this year, the krewe had been preparing a red bean cookoff contest for local restaurants as a fundraiser. With that pre-empted, he launched Feed the Front Line NOLA, a program that took donations and bought food from restaurants to feed medical workers in every emergency room and ICU in the city. The program raised than \$1 million to buy 90,000 meals from nearly 50 local restaurants. He knew the program filled several needs, in part because his wife is an emergency room doctor.

"I knew medical people were risking their lives and food was a really big pick me up for them," he says.

Then he launched Feed the Second Line, a program that provides groceries to elderly culture bearers and pays young musicians to deliver the food. — WILL COVIELLO



IRENE "RENY" GRUNDY, M.D., M.S., 38

INTERNAL MEDICINE PHYSICIAN, SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

CLINICAL ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, TULANE UNIVERSITY AND LSU

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In March, before COVID-19 cases spiked in Louisiana, Dr. Irene Grundy, an internal medicine specialist at the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System braced herself when she realized one of her patient's symptoms mirrored some of the cases in China she'd read about.

"The gravity of the situation began to loom," she says. "I realized that if the case was positive, it likely meant the coronavirus had already spread widely in the community and beyond."

Her team at the medical facility consulted with their infectious disease colleagues and quickly mobilized to get approval of testing at the state level. They developed a protocol for quick screening of patients in need of tests. Within a week, they had created a covered, outdoor testing unit.

"The teamwork, creative thinking and dedication is both reassuring and humbling," Grundy says of her work over the past several months.

With COVID-19 still ravaging Louisiana, Grundy is splitting time between clinical and administrative work — on top of raising three young children, including an infant.

The advice she tries best to follow is, "'Never give up on a bad day.' I was given this advice while breastfeeding my first child, and it helped me to persevere through challenging times." — SARAH RAVITS

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ADEBOLA "BOLA" ADEYEMI, 30

INFECTION CONTROL SPECIALIST,
OCHSNER BAPTIST

Coming back from maternity leave is already a heroic feat, let alone days before New Orleans reported its first case of COVID-19. But that's exactly what Adebola "Bola" Adeyemi, an infection control specialist at Ochsner Baptist, did this spring.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Adeyemi has been on the front lines, helping educate staff on personal protective equipment (PPE) best practices, while preserving PPE stock for the staff to remain protected through the duration of the outbreak.

"My passion and commitment to my profession [has] kept me going," she says. "Getting out of this with health care workers being healthy even with the high risk of contracting the virus is my driving force."

A natural adapter to change, Adeyemi has stayed on course during the pandemic and says she has learned many lessons from the experience. "There is no perfect for anything. Enjoy life [and] take one day at a time, because you never can tell what tomorrow holds. This time last year, nobody thought of this pandemic that [has] shut down everything." — MICHAELA BECHLER



ERICA CHOMSKY-ADELSON, 33

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR, CULTURE AID NOLA

cultureaidnola.org | Twitter and
Instagram: @cultureaidnola

It should be easy to get the help you need, says Erica Chomsky-Adelson, the founder and executive director of Culture Aid NOLA. Since it began in March, the organization and its partners have served more than 250,000 pounds of food in New Orleans by following that philosophy.

"It shouldn't be demoralizing, it shouldn't be depressing," says Chomsky-Adelson, who has more than a decade of experience in disaster response work. "Food at a basic level is something we all need. Mental health resources right now is something we all need."

Culture Aid — whose partners include the Music and Culture Coalition of New Orleans, New Orleans Musicians' Clinic & Assistance Foundation and Second Harvest — helps everyone, but there is a particular focus on the city's hospitality workers, musicians, artists and culture bearers.

The nonprofit distributes meals and groceries twice a week and delivers food to people's homes. Between 1,300 and 1,500 people show up to each distribution, Chomsky-Adelson says. And Culture Aid helps connect people in the cultural community with other services.

Culture Aid is intentional in its methods: No ID is required, the group buys from local farmers and suppliers, and they hire musicians to play at distributions to welcome guests in. The language they choose to use is especially important, Chomsky-Adelson says.

"We serve our neighbors with hospitality and warmth and gratitude," she says. "There are a lot of people out there who have dedicated their lives to the hospitality and service and culture industry. Their entire career has been upended. Keeping that sense of service and welcome alive is really important for our people." — JAKE CLAPP

EDITOR'S NOTE: ERICA CHOMSKY-ADELSON IS MARRIED TO REPORTER JEFF ADELSON OF THE TIMES-PICAYUNE | THE NEW ORLEANS ADVOCATE. CAPITAL CITY PRESS PUBLISHES BOTH GAMBIT AND THE TIMES-PICAYUNE | THE NEW ORLEANS ADVOCATE.



ZACHARY WILKINS, 17**FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, REMEDY RIBBONS**

remedyribbons.org

When his schoolwork slowed down this spring, Zachary Wilkins couldn't stand to stay home and be idle. The Lusher Charter School student began researching different aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic and was immediately drawn to articles about how hospitals across the country expected to see health care workers grapple with mental health issues because of the added stress.

"I knew that I wanted to help in any way that I could," he says.

The result is Remedy Ribbons, a non-profit that focuses on raising money and awareness for the mental health needs of frontline health care workers. Through its website, the organization raises funds for mental wellness programs for health care workers. Wilkins and volunteers have also tied light blue ribbons in public areas around New Orleans to show their solidarity and support.

"My whole life, I have been a keen believer in the strength of a community," he says. "I love that I have gotten the opportunity to form a community of New Orleanians that truly want to help our health care workers just as I do." — AMANDA McELFRESH

**RENARD BRIDGEWATER, 35****MUSICIAN AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR, MUSIC AND CULTURE COALITION OF NEW ORLEANS**

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A few years ago at the Mardi Gras Indian Hall of Fame Awards, Renard Bridgewater heard Big Chief Delco of the Creole Osceola say something that stuck with him: "I do this for the neighborhood, not for Bourbon Street."

There is a need to understand the historical perspective of New Orleans culture bearers, especially Black Masking Indians, Bridgewater says. Indians' traditions are tied to their individual neighborhoods, and in many ways they act as historians for them.

Bridgewater is the community engagement coordinator for the Music and Culture Coalition of New Orleans. In the role, he develops partnerships for the organization and in the close to four years he's been with MaCCNO has expanded to be a mediator between law enforcement and street performers. During the pandemic, he has been focusing on direct assistance for New Orleans musicians, artists and culture bearers. You'll also see him running MaCCNO's social media accounts.

A New Orleans native and Holy Cross High School graduate, Bridgewater performs as Slangston Hughes. His musicianship and advocacy are a "symbiotic relationship" he says. He also co-hosts with Thelonious Kryptonite "Draw Fo' Radio," WWOZ's first show dedicated to hip-hop.

During the pandemic, "what I've leaned into right now is really looking to delve deeper into that advocacy role," Bridgewater says. "Organizing has always been a part of the job, but now more so than ever — just to be able to make sure that any policy-based directive that's going to affect musicians, creatives, culture bearers in the city, that they're a part of that process."

— JAKE CLAPP



PHOTO BY CHRIS GRANGER

NICHOLAS MANUEL PINO, 36**FILMMAKER, WRITER AND DIRECTOR**

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@nicholasmanuelpino

It's hard to make it in the film industry, but when things get tough, Nicholas Manuel Pino remembers what his father has always told him: "Nothing ever worth doing is easy."

That has inspired Pino as he writes and directs numerous film projects, screenplays, commercials, music videos and more. Pino, a Chilean-American, has committed to hiring diverse casts and crews for his projects. Together, he hopes they create work that entertains and sheds light on issues such as racial inequality, poverty and other struggles.

"I hope the city starts paying more attention," he says. "There needs to be more attention on the well-being and safety of our citizens so we can create wealth for ourselves — instead of relying so much on tourism money."

In 2018, Pino received the Emerging Voices Fellowship from the New Orleans Film Festival. He's working on a documentary about a body painter and a novel adaptation. He's gained notice at screenplay contests and film festivals around the world.

"I love exploring the human condition within the characters," Pino says. "I always learn something about myself through them. It's always amazing finding out that the people who read or watch my work can see themselves in the characters, too."

— AMANDA McELFRESH

**ROCIO AGUILAR, 31****ORGANIZING FELLOW, CONGRESO DE JORNALEROS**

Facebook.com/congresodejornaleros

Congreso de Jornaleros (Congress of Day Laborers) organizer Rocio Aguilar has a particular focus on language justice, the push to create multilingual spaces and make public participation accessible for non-English speakers.

"Language justice is not only something we should have, it's something we should demand," Aguilar, a Spanish speaker, says through a translator. "We want to be a part of what's going on in our city. We want to be a part of a community, knowing what's going on and actively participating."

Congreso is an organizing group of immigrant workers and their families in New Orleans, working to address the myriad issues facing the area's immigrant community. The organization falls under the umbrella of the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice, along with the Seafood Workers Alliance and Stand with Dignity.

Aguilar, a Honduran immigrant, has been in New Orleans for nine years and started working with Congreso as a member about five years ago. She became the group's organizing fellow two years ago.

Language justice "is used as a tool to unite us," Aguilar says. "Since there is a language barrier in some ways, sometimes different communities don't realize that the same [challenges] are happening, just in a different manner."

— JAKE CLAPP

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MATTHEW BOVIA, 32

CERTIFIED REGISTERED NURSE ANESTHETIST, UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

Instagram: @mbovia

Matthew Bovia, a Kenner native and a member of the 610 Stompers, is a certified registered nurse anesthetist at University Medical Center. As a CRNA, Bovia normally would be busy preparing people for surgery, inducing anesthesia in the operating room, blood work and diagnostics, helping with acute pain management and working in critical care.

Throughout the pandemic, some of that work has continued, but Bovia says his focus has largely shifted to critical care. He and other CRNAs were well-positioned to help with ventilator care, putting in breathing tubes and invasive IV access and weaning people off of ventilators so they could breathe on their own once again.

Weaning people from ventilators "is essentially what we do during surgery," Bovia says. "We were uniquely prepared to be in that scenario."

Bovia and his team developed a strategy within the hospital to more carefully flip patients on ventilators onto their stomachs, a method to help people with aggressive syndromes. They also developed a team for rapid response in ventilator care, quickly assessing a COVID-19 patient's condition and facilitating the ventilator if necessary.

The pandemic hasn't "so much changed the way I think about my job, but more so there's a sense of gratitude that we exist in a place where we have the experiences that we have, that we have the skills that we have, and those skills match up so uniquely to the situation," Bovia says.

— JAKE CLAPP



MEGAN OLSEN, 34

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT OF NURSING, OCHSNER-WEST BANK CAMPUS CO-OWNER, VICE & GRAFT PAPER ARTIST

etsy.com/shop/MeganOlsenArt

Megan Olsen is originally from upstate New York, but she's always had Louisiana in her heart.

"I spent years in a tiny kitchen cooking red beans, listening to scratchy jazz records and dreaming of a life in New Orleans," she says. "Six years ago, my husband and I uprooted and relocated to the French Quarter."

Olsen always wanted a career in the sciences and was drawn to nursing. She knew she could help others, meet interesting people and serve in different capacities. In her current role, she works with patients and employees to identify areas for health care improvement and helps implement strategies to address them.

New Orleans has also allowed Olsen to nurture her creative spirit. She runs a virtual shop selling her paper art, which focuses on shotgun homes and silhouettes of women inspired by Storyville Blue Books. As a co-owner of Vice & Graft, she sells vintage items inspired by New Orleans' Storyville era.

"I've always loved the deep, gritty history of New Orleans, so creating art based on it and selling vintage items from it has been a dream," Olsen says.

While COVID-19 impacted all aspects of Olsen's life, she's found silver linings. At Ochsner, she's seen people come together in new ways during the pandemic.

"The teams are incredibly nimble problem-solvers and getting to lead them through COVID was incredible," she says. "They helped solve things in hours that would normally take weeks of planning."

Meanwhile, Olsen has enjoyed continued support for her online shop. Since launching the shop in 2019, she's had local stores stock her work, and some was displayed in the Fawkes gallery on Royal Street. Olsen remains optimistic that New Orleans' will rebound from the pandemic in positive ways.

"I hope COVID becomes a distant memory and that the local economy improves for small business owners, artists and performers," she says. "I also want to see that the efforts taken towards equality and inclusion have a permanent, positive change." —AMANDA McELFRESH



SENAIS EDWARDS III, 30

FOUNDER, NOLAKEYS

nolakeys.org | Instagram: @nolakeysmusic

Senais Edwards III was born with music in his blood. His grandfather Senais Edwards Sr. aka "Eddie 3-Way" owned and operated record shops in New Orleans and supported many local musicians.

He says music gave him a positive outlet. "As a young Black man music provided me with a focus for my time and energy. It kept me out of trouble."

With his own funding and a few donations, Edwards founded NOLAKeys, a nonprofit providing free music lessons and instruments for children and teens. In its inaugural year, his team of six has engaged New Orleans youth in hours of online lessons and provided a small stipend to local music teachers.

In the wake of the pandemic, Edwards launched the Music is Power campaign, an attempt to offer a source of income for musicians and music teachers and opportunities for musical development for children and young adults.

"New Orleans culture is rich and music is an integral part of who we are and everything we do. NOLAKeys mission is to use music to build a thriving network for education, development, and support for children, families, and partners to transform lives and communities," he says. —MICHAELA BECHLER



MICHAEL GULOTTA, 39

EXECUTIVE CHEF AND CO-OWNER, MOPHO AND MAYPOP RESTAURANTS

maypoprestaurant.com |

Twitter: @mgulottano;

Instagram: @michaelgulotta

Despite winning many culinary awards and national acclaim, Chef Michael Gulotta says he feels intimidated by the New Orleans food scene every day.

"We are a city that takes its food so personally. It still amazes me that Mopho has been accepted for what it is, and I am truly grateful that it has been."

Gulotta left his fine dining post as chef de cuisine at August restaurant and in January 2014, launched Mopho, a casual Mid-City restaurant that combines New Orleans and Vietnamese flavors. He and his business partners' ethos is to find natural parallels and pathways between southeast Asian and southeast Louisiana cuisines. The process, both stressful and exciting, has been a "whirlwind of a good time."

Next came Maypop, a more high-end eatery, followed by another Mopho location at the new airportMSY MOPHO in 2019 at the new airport. Both are currently closed, and Gulotta calls the experience heartbreaking.

"We went from a company that employed almost 120 people to having right around 20 team members," Gulotta says.

During the pandemic, the chef has slowed down and spends more time with his twin sons through reading, cooking, and taking them to restaurants around New Orleans.

—MICHAELA BECHLER

KRYSTLE SIMS-CAMERON, 34

FOUNDER, FOR THE HORTICULTURE

Facebook.com/forthehorticulture | Instagram: @iyanla_plantzant; @forthe_horti_culture

Krystle Sims-Cameron started For the HortiCulture as a way to connect Black women and their families to edible and herbal gardening. It's a tradition, she says, once common among Black New Orleanians.

"This is what we used to do," Sims-Cameron says. "We used to grow food for our families, share food with our neighbors. It strengthens the Black community — you don't have to worry about where your next meal is coming from because you know your neighbors got you."

Sims-Cameron wants to break down barriers to gardening and make it accessible. She and a group of volunteers install gardens for interested people and teach them growing methods. Six gardens have so far been installed in New Orleans with at least 25 more planned in the next two months.

Sims-Cameron and her husband, Nate Cameron Jr., are both New Orleans area natives. After living in the Midwest and West Coast for several years, they decided to move back — now with a young son — to their hometown last year.

When the pandemic hit, putting her and her husband's work on hold, "I started to get really nervous about our financial situation," Sims-Cameron says. "And I remember working in the garden one day — this garden is also my therapy, my anti-anxiety — I had this moment of clarity and gratitude that I had this place to work out my frustrations and fears that was productive, and that no matter what happened, my family was going to eat. I thought to myself, I want this for other Black women." — JAKE CLAPP



DENISE FRAZIER, 40

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, NEW ORLEANS CENTER FOR THE GULF SOUTH AT TULANE UNIVERSITY

BOARD MEMBER, GOAT IN THE ROAD PRODUCTIONS AND MUSIC AND CULTURE COALITION OF NEW ORLEANS

liberalarts.tulane.edu/programs/nocgs; goatintheroadproductions.org; maccno.com | Facebook.com/lescenelles; Instagram: @nolagulf

Audiences who saw Goat in the Road Productions' first immersive show in a local historic home, saw Denise Frazier play Carlota, a woman with roots from Cuba, living in New Orleans during the era of yellow fever epidemics. Frazier, who completed her doctoral dissertation on art and culture as forces of resistance to state power in Cuba and Brazil, developed the character as well as performing in the show.

"Carlota [the character] was a combination of various people who influenced me," Frazier says. "One of those people is Carlota, a revolutionary figure. In Matanzas, Cuba, there is a statue of a big, Black woman with an Afro with a machete in her hand. We would never see a statue like this in the United States. The strength of this character and her spirit was influential."

Besides writing, performing and serving on the board of the theater company, Frazier is active on several art, education and organizing fronts. She has taught everything from Spanish and African Diaspora studies on the collegiate level to violin lessons for children. She plays violin in Les Cenelles, a Black chamber music ensemble. She's also the assistant director of the Center for the Gulf South at Tulane, where she runs programs for undergraduates and works with its residential learning community. And she's on the board of the Music and Culture Coalition of New Orleans, which provides grants to artists. — WILL COVIELLO



SARAH ZOGHBI, 36

CO-FOUNDING DIRECTOR, LOYOLA CENTER FOR COUNSELING AND EDUCATION
cnh.loyola.edu/lcce

Loyola University opened its Center for Counseling and Education in February 2019 with the mission to offer sliding-scale counseling services and mental health care to New Orleanians. No one is turned away for lack of funds.

"It's not easy to work the system here and get your needs met for mental health when you don't have the finances," says Sarah Zoghbi, the center's co-founding director.

Zoghbi grew up in Louisiana and Texas and has lived in California, Oklahoma and Ohio, where she worked in theater — her first big career love, she says. She moved to Baton Rouge just two weeks before Hurricane Katrina and then to New Orleans shortly after the storm to take up a residency at Southern Rep Theatre. For several years, she directed Southern Rep's Care for Creatives program.

In 2013, Zoghbi decided to take a step back, she says, to refocus. She decided to study different methods of healing and earned a degree in psychology. She returned to New Orleans in 2017 to pursue another degree at Loyola and is now a provisional licensed professional counselor.

As part of an academic institution, Zoghbi says, "we are able to operate purely with what's in the best interests clinically by not setting up our infrastructure tangled up with things that might complicate what's best for the person. That's been a really satisfying place to work." — JAKE CLAPP



VIVEK SHAH, 36

DIRECTOR OF TRANSIT PLANNING, RTA

Vivek Shah moved to New Orleans in the years following Hurricane Katrina, in part due to connections to the city through family and his partner's friends. It also was a relief from nonprofit work in Washington, D.C.

"Working on federal accountability at the time was like running into a brick wall, repeatedly," he says.

In New Orleans, he began organizing programming at the Studios at Colton, in which 45 artists who lost space due to flooding used classrooms as studios and worked with area youth. One of Shah's projects was coordinating engagement events and getting students from across the city to Colton.

As he became involved in various projects in the city and met professors from the University of New Orleans, he realized he had essentially entered the field of urban planning. So he formally enrolled and pursued a master's degree. His thesis analyzing ways to reduce crashes and delays on the St. Charles Avenue streetcar line won an award from the federal Department of Transportation, and aspects were implemented on the Canal Street lines.

Shah joined the board of Bike Easy in 2011, and he's worked on development of city bike programs such as bike share. Shah also worked on a bicycle master plan for Jefferson Parish and environmental programs in Terrebonne, Lafourche and St. John the Baptist parishes. Currently the Director of Transit Planning for the RTA, he is working on a network redesign of the New Orleans transit system. — WILL COVIELLO





ALLISON GUSTE, 40
ASSISTANT VICE
PRESIDENT, CLINICAL
AND OPERATIONAL
EXCELLENCE, LCMC HEALTH

Two things inspired Allison Guste to work in health care: her parents — her mom is a nurse and her father, an optometrist — and the TV show “ER.”

“That show definitely launched my desire to become an ER nurse, which I eventually accomplished in 2005.”

In her role at LCMC Health, Guste has been one of the system’s key leaders in its handling of the pandemic. Her time is now dedicated to ensuring that the system has the operational testing capacity to efficiently serve their hospitals, community and employees. She also led the coordination of LCMC Health’s community testing program to bring more widespread COVID-19 testing to neighborhoods, which has been both impactful and a highlight of her career.

“The patients are so full of gratitude, and that experience has fueled me to continue to expand and enhance the service we provide to the community,” she says.

While her background in emergency nursing prepared her for the challenge, the mother of three remains optimistic. “It was my job to keep us focused but also, and maybe more importantly, to keep it light and positive when we all needed it.”

— MICHAELA BECHLER

PAUL THIBODEAUX, 30

COORDINATOR,
FEED THE SECOND LINE

feedthesecondline.org |
Instagram: @feedthesecondline

Musician Paul Thibodeaux got his first job with regular, 9-to-5 hours during the pandemic, and it’s been one of the most rewarding, he says. At Feed the Second Line, he’s the wrangler who connects the needs of mostly elderly culture bearers to a network of shoppers and drivers who bring them groceries and other basic necessities.

“You could almost call it social work,” Thibodeaux says. “They need someone to take the time to talk and connect.”

Thibodeaux grew up in the region, from the West Bank to the Northshore. He became interested in music and studied at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts and the University of New Orleans, where he was mentored by Alvin Batiste, Steve Masakowski, Ed Peterson and others. He performs with the Panorama Jazz Band and with Aurora Nealand, as well as with members of the Masakowski family.

When the pandemic started and music gigs were mostly closed down, he volunteered to deliver food for Feed the Front Line, a \$1 million donation-funded effort to buy food from restaurants and pay musicians to deliver it to medical staff at area hospitals.

As he got more involved, Thibodeaux became the coordinator for the subsequent project Feed the Second Line. Thibodeaux reaches out to elderly culture bearers, including Mardi Gras Indians, social aid and pleasure club organizers and baby dolls, and the program helps support them while keeping deliveries safe during the pandemic.

“I love connecting with the elders,” he says. “There’s so much wisdom and warmth. I walk away feeling so good.” — WILL COVIELLO



KENN BARNES JR., 32

SPECIAL COUNSEL, CRIMINAL
JUSTICE & SPECIALTY COURTS,
LOUISIANA SUPREME COURT

Twitter and Instagram:
@KennBarnes

Kenn Barnes describes himself as an extrovert who is in a “dynamic” career that suits his personality and interests. As a special counsel of criminal justice and specialty courts to the Louisiana Supreme Court, he says he loves being able to help people on a range of legal issues.

A native of Baton Rouge who has family ties in New Orleans, Barnes has worked to mitigate employment discrimination, on political campaigns and as an Orleans Public Defender prior to joining the state supreme court. As someone who started his higher education career at a community college, he says he has dispelled the preconceived notion of how things should be done.

“I have charted my own path,” he says. “I enjoy change, growth and different day-to-day experiences, so my career as a lawyer provides me diverse situations.”

After recently losing his sister due to a non-COVID related ailment, he says he’s facing a number of challenges professionally and personally. He misses social interactions, but he’s reconfiguring ways to still succeed. This time period has given him “perspective and respect for what is important.” — SARAH RAVITS



PHOTO BY MATTHEW HINTON
OF THE AP

JRUE HOLIDAY, 30

GUARD,
NEW ORLEANS PELICANS
jlhfund.org

In July as protests over the police killing of George Floyd spread across the United States, Pelicans guard Jrue Holiday announced he was donating the remainder of his salary this season to create a nonprofit — the Jrue and Lauren Holiday Social Justice Impact Fund — supporting Black-owned businesses and nonprofits in New Orleans, Los Angeles and Indianapolis.

The announcement was part of a broader transformation for Holiday, who for most of his career has avoided overt social justice activism.

For Black athletes, questions about race are inevitable. Some embrace the notion of being an advocate for victims of systemic injustice. Others avoid it, for reasons ranging from indifference to simply not seeing it as their place, or they are simply reluctant to be publicly involved in political and social issues. And it’s rare to see an athlete suddenly become outspoken on politically charged issues.

Which is what makes Holiday’s activism this year all the more impressive. These are by their very nature difficult conversations, and American culture actively discourages them, particularly if “activist” isn’t part of their identity. At a time when millions of Americans are struggling with how they will respond to calls to action from the Black Lives Matter and broader social justice movements, a celebrity willing to abandon the safety of a “no comment” and enter the fray is a powerful example.

— JOHN STANTON

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40 UNDER FORTY

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MAX STEITZ, 23

CO-FOUNDER, GLASS HALF FULL

FRANZISKA TRAUTMANN, 22

CO-FOUNDER, GLASS HALF FULL

glasshalffullnola.org | Instagram: @glasshalffull.nola



While drinking wine one evening, Tulane University students Max Steitz and Franziska Trautmann began discussing how the bottle would never decompose and would likely end up in a landfill due to meager recycling programs in New Orleans.

At the same time they were worried about how “this incredible city could disappear before our very eyes to coastal erosion,” Steitz says.

They realized these existential issues could be mitigated with one solution: pulverizing glass into sand and using it for coastal restoration.

After a successful crowd-funding campaign that allowed them to purchase equipment for the operation, they launched Glass Half Full — a free program — and now oversee a small facility in the Riverbend.

Trautmann, a chemical engineer, conducts research, coordinates volunteer shifts, runs social media and manages drop-off days for the program.

“Some [challenges] are small, such as how to stop people from dropping off glass when they aren’t supposed to,” she says. “And some are big, such as how we would fund the purchase of our first machine.”

With COVID-19 restrictions in place, the duo says they’re constantly busy because their operation is limited in size, but when the virus is under greater control, they look forward to more community engagement.

“This is the story of a city coming together to bring about much-needed change,” Steitz says. “Our program is funded by small dollar donations and driven by the community.” — SARAH RAVITS

JOE EAGAN, 30

GENERAL MANAGER OF
LEITZ-EAGAN FUNERAL
HOME IN METAIRIE,
WESTSIDE LEITZ-
EAGAN FUNERAL HOME IN
MARRERO, H.C. ALEXANDER
FUNERAL HOME IN NORCO,
GRACE FUNERAL HOME
AND ST. LAZARUS OF
BETHANY MEMORIAL
GARDEN IN COVINGTON

Dignitymemorial.com

Joe Eagan feels like he was born to help families through difficult



times. The sixth-generation funeral director follows in the footsteps of his great-great-grandfather, Ambrose Leitz, who began the business in 1854 with a cabinet shop in the Irish Channel. The shop evolved into a coffin business, then Leitz-Eagan Companies.

"I started helping at the funeral home on weekends during high school, which led to a greater appreciation of the family business and the care we provide to families after the passing of a loved one," he says.

That role has taken on added urgency during the pandemic, which has cost thousands of people their lives — and also forced new constraints on funeral homes' abilities to provide comfort and support to families.

Eagan said the restrictions as a result of COVID-19 have changed many aspects of his team's operations. Meetings with families often take place via phone or internet, rather than in person. Capacity limitations mean fewer people can attend services. Social distancing requirements are in place.

"We're doing our best to keep everybody comfortable and help families through what is already a trying time," Eagan says. "We just work with each family differently and help them as much as we can."

Eagan oversees staff, facilities and vehicles at four properties; arranges and conducts funeral services, manages community relations and is the executive secretary of the Louisiana Funeral Directors Association. It's a lot of work, but Eagan remembers the words of former boss Jake Williams, who advised him about expanding his duties a few years ago.

"He said, 'Regardless of what you decide, you should always embrace more responsibility. If you live by this belief throughout your career, good things will come.'"

— AMANDA McELFRESH



KRISTIN MALONE JOHNSON, 33
OWNER AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR, HOME MALONE

homemalonenola.com |
Instagram:
@homemalonenola

A decade ago, Kristin Malone Johnson was browsing an art market when inspiration struck. She had always been creative and loved business, but never considered combining the two until she saw the excitement from both artists and customers. "It made me remember the few sales I made in high school from my art," she says. "That day, I decided I would make a plan to run a creative business."

Home Malone began as a hobby in 2011 out of a carport in Lakeview. Over the years, the hobby turned into a business, which she set up in various locations. Sales of single items turned into wholesale and custom orders. In 2016, the first Home Malone retail shop opened in Mid-City.

Today, the shop sells artwork, clothing, home decor, jewelry and more. Malone Johnson focuses on carrying work from local artists and makes adjustments based on feedback.

"The more I listen, the more I learn about the people in our community — our customers, our mailman, our neighbors, our family," she says. "The ability to be empathetic to the people you surround yourself with will grow your heart."

— AMANDA McELFRESH



TODD WACKERMAN, 33
DIRECTOR AND CO-FOUNDER, STEM LIBRARY LAB

stemlibrarylab.com

Todd Wackerman thought he was going to be a history teacher. Then he ended up teaching physics "almost by accident" and discovered his passion for science education. Wackerman decided to combine that passion with a lifelong desire to address racial and socioeconomic inequities in education into the STEM Library Lab.

Using a library model, the lab allows schools to purchase an annual membership that gives teachers access to special equipment, lesson plans, training and one-on-one support sessions.

"STEM Library Lab is changing perspectives and empowering teachers to bring rigorous, inquiry-based instruction to their students," Wackerman says. "Through our coaching, I get to see the light bulbs and the joy turn on for teachers, and then see how they use it to bring science to life for students across New Orleans."

Wackerman believes improving public education is the main catalyst to address other societal issues, such as criminal justice, homelessness, hunger and more.

"Developing more highly capable, career-minded educators is the single most important factor in improving our education ecosystem," he says. "The work of STEM Library Lab and so many others have the power to effect this change."

— AMANDA McELFRESH

SEVETRI WILSON, 33
CEO/FOUNDER, RESILIA
Sevetriwilson.com

Sevetri Wilson considers herself a disruptor. Since she was 22, she's been an entrepreneur and business owner. She developed Solid Ground Innovations, a communications and management firm for nonprofits. That then led to Resilia, a company whose technology helps nonprofits with compliance, grants, fundraising and more.

"I'm always thinking of ways to solve persistent problems in business and within the community," Wilson says. "We really are solving some of the world's most critical problems and using technology as a bridge to more sustainable, equitable outcomes."

Part of what Wilson loves about New Orleans is its resilient nature. But she would like to see the community shift from a mentality of surviving to one of advocacy and thriving.

"We have to take bolder steps to create a better quality of life for communities most often overlooked and divested in," she says.

Through it all, Wilson keeps in mind a note that her mother left for her just before passing away.

"When you enter these rooms and sit at these tables that you have rightfully earned a place at, don't leave your dignity and self-respect on the table," the note said. "Always take that with you."

— AMANDA McELFRESH



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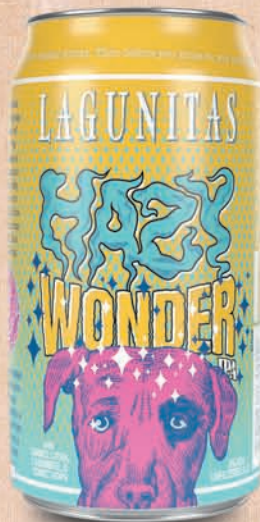


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Style – Hazy IPA
ABV – 6.0%



40 UNDER FORTY

AULSTON TAYLOR, 40 CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, ST. AUGUSTINE HIGH SCHOOL

Twitter and Instagram:
@aulstontaylor

On the morning the LSU Tigers faced the Clemson Tigers in college football's national championship, Aulston Taylor brought former ESPN coworker TJ Adeshola to his alma mater, St. Augustine High School, to talk to students at 8 a.m. As the school's director of fundraising, it was part of his mission to help spread the word about the school. It paid off when Taylor was able to pitch the school's mission to the #startsmall initiative, started by Twitter founder Jack Dorsey.

"Four-and-a-half hours later, I got the call," Taylor says. The foundation donated \$1.5 million to St. Augustine.

Taylor grew up in the 7th Ward, and a combination of scholarships and weekly work hours at St. Augustine helped draw him into the school founded by the Josephite Fathers and Brothers. Taylor attended Texas Southern University on a baseball scholarship. After graduating, he moved to New York and spent four years at ESPN, before moving on to do marketing at BET while getting a masters degree at NYU at night.

Taylor returned to New Orleans to lead St. Aug's development office. In his first year, he led his team in raising \$1.7 million. In the fiscal year that ended July 31, they reached \$3.5 million. The new fiscal year started Aug. 1, but the mission to spread the word about the school continues.

"My reason for returning is I want to be the person I needed when I was a student here," Taylor says. "I gained a lot of experience and want to pour it into a place I believe in." — WILL COVIELLO



NATHAN ROBINSON, 30 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, CURRENT AFFAIRS

currentaffairs.org |
Twitter: @nathanjrobinson

You will never see advertisements — well, serious ads — in Current Affairs, the progressive bimonthly political and culture magazine edited by Nathan Robinson. The print publication, funded by subscriptions, cares deeply about aesthetics and is filled with editorial content broken up by satirical, humorous faux ads. It's a similar style presented on its website.

"Our print issues, we take pride in them being very beautiful," Robinson says. "We put a lot of work into the design of the magazine. So just as an object, as a visual object, the magazine is really interesting."

Robinson started Current Affairs in 2015. He had been freelance-writing about politics while in graduate school — and writing and designing children's-style books for adults as a hobby — and felt constrained by his outlets. He put together a prototype, raised more than \$16,000 through Kickstarter and launched the magazine on a subscription-based model. Current Affairs has around 6,000 subscribers, Robinson says.

The publication has developed a loyal national following for its leftist politics, and Robinson comments for other print and television outlets. Macmillan last year published his latest book, "Why You Should be a Socialist."

Robinson was born in England and grew up in Sarasota, Florida, and holds a law degree from Yale Law School. In 2012, Robinson interned with the Orleans Public Defenders, which introduced him to New Orleans. When he felt Current Affairs was on sure enough footing, he decided to relocate here in 2017.

"It's a friendly and accepting place. It's a very beautiful place," Robinson says, "I'm kind of 19th-century in many ways, so it has suited my aesthetic very well." — JAKE CLAPP





DR. MEG MARINO, 39
**DEPUTY MEDICAL DIRECTOR
 FOR NEW ORLEANS EMS**
**PEDIATRIC EMERGENCY
 MEDICINE PHYSICIAN AND
 DIRECTOR OF PEDIATRIC
 PREHOSPITAL EDUCATION,
 OCHSNER HOSPITAL
 FOR CHILDREN**
 megmarino.com

Dr. Meg Marino's life changed forever when she was 21. Her brother was diagnosed with brain cancer in a pediatric emergency room, inspiring Marino to pursue a career in medicine. As she did, she learned that paramedics and EMTs wanted more training to help their youngest patients. Soon, she began teaching paramedics and EMTs in Houston, then back home in New Orleans.

Today, Marino creates free pediatric educational opportunities for Louisiana paramedics and EMTs. In addition, she works at Ochsner Hospital for Children and is the New Orleans EMS deputy medical director.

Marino sees her work evolving. Since COVID-19, she's focused more on the health and well-being of paramedics and EMTs, something she hopes begins a larger culture shift among first responders. Marino also has been encouraged by recent public health initiatives, particularly efforts to help underserved patients.

"I hope we continue to focus our efforts on community health for these patients even after COVID is no longer a threat," she said. "This pandemic has highlighted that in order for our society to be healthy, we need to ensure that everyone has access to health care, including the most marginalized members of our community."

— AMANDA McELFRESH

JULIEN WORMS, 38

**VICE PRESIDENT AND
 CO-FOUNDER, PICARDIE**

ptfnola.com | Instagram:
 @picardie_nola

Julien Worms and his wife Christina run a business in the modern world, but their eyes are always on history. Their company, Picardie, is a busy millwork and preservation shop that handles residential, commercial and historic preservation projects throughout the area.

Worms' dedication to his craft and the old ways of doing things stand in contrast to the immediacy of modern technology.

A native of France, Worms was inspired by his godfather, who ran a similar company in Paris. As a teen, Worms enrolled in the intensive, 10-year work-study program at les Compagnons du Devoir. The prestigious organization dates to Medieval times and is responsible for many French cathedrals and castles.

Once he relocated to New Orleans, Worms was delighted to find others who shared his commitment to historical accuracy.

"We have found a niche in preservation and restoration with my wife's background in historic preservation and my training," he says. "We appreciate and support the many organizations here who are raising awareness about the importance of historic preservation."

Worms hopes to someday help teach a new generation the value of the old techniques. He says, "I'd love to see a high-quality trade school to form tomorrow's craftsmen."

— AMANDA McELFRESH



VICTOR JONES, 35

**GENERAL COUNSEL AND
 SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR,
 STATE OF LOUISIANA**

Victor Jones, general counsel and senior policy advisor for the State of Louisiana, says his job duties include advising agencies on compliance with civil rights, federal, state and regulatory laws.

His journey to his current position involved "wearing many hats," he says. He taught kindergarten at a public school and worked in corporate law, before becoming a civil rights attorney.

"My professional experiences have allowed me to view systemic issues, including behavioral health, education and workforce disparities from many different angles," he says.

"The pandemic presents challenges to legal compliance for governmental agencies," he acknowledges. But, he says, it also presents opportunities for stakeholders to take new approaches to long-standing issues.

Jones' advocacy extends beyond his career — he is involved on boards and commissions that are geared toward enhancing the lives of youth. He was recently appointed by Mayor LaToya Cantrell as a member of the Audubon Commission, and he also serves on the advisory board for AfterCLASS, a Tulane University initiative that provides professional development for teachers in the area.

"Being a public servant is a privilege," Jones says. "Each day I leave work knowing that I have helped tens of thousands of people throughout the state of Louisiana." — SARAH RAVITS

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ROBERT A. MCKNIGHT, 33**ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY,
LEAKE & ANDERSSON, L.L.P.**leakeandersson.com |
Instagram: @ramcknight16

An attorney who practices general civil litigation, Robert A. McKnight says his duties are to provide “zealous, client-centered representation” in cases pertaining to insurance defense, general casualties, premises liabilities and products liability.

He is also committed to the Greater New Orleans Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, and co-founded Together Gert Town Neighborhood Association, where he has conducted several free legal clinics for residents.

“What I like the most about my career is to be a voice for the voiceless, whether that is being a voice for the [impoverished] on Tulane and Broad [where the city’s courthouses are] or for clients at Leake & Andersson,” he says.

A New Orleans native who loves football and crawfish, he says he can’t wait until the pandemic is over so he can spend more time with friends and family. “I miss second line Sundays and backyard barbecues,” he says. — SARAH RAVITS

**EMILY LIPPOLD GUMMER, 37****PARTNER AND REGISTERED PATENT
ATTORNEY, CARVER DARDEN****BOARD PRESIDENT, THE NOLA PROJECT**

carverdarden.com; nolaproject.com

When she graduated from Tulane University with a chemical engineering degree, Emily Lippold Gummer wasn’t thinking about a legal career. But her professors said her scientific background would mesh well with her strong communication skills. Law school beckoned and today, Lippold Gummer is a patent attorney.

“I use my engineering education and my legal advocacy skills to work with businesses and individuals to turn their ideas and improvements into legally protectable intellectual property that they can use to further succeed in their business,” she explains.

Lippold Gummer loves her day job, but she also felt the need for a creative outlet. That’s why she’s deeply involved in The NOLA Project, a local theater company where she works closely with artists who produce “some of the most innovative and creative theater out there,” she says.

Whether she’s at the law office or near the stage, Lippold Gummer relies on the adage, “Show up and do your best work every time.”

“It’s not revolutionary advice, but it is a lesson that, in various forms, I have received through my life,” she says. — AMANDA McELFRESH



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