

## **Rolfe McCollister, Recipient of AABP's 2022 Lewis M. Conn Award**

In 1982 a 26-year-old named Rolfe McCollister started a business journal in Baton Rouge. He named it the *Greater Baton Rouge Business Report*, along with the no-frills slogan: "The magazine for Business." There were just two employees – Rolfe, who was publisher and sales manager – and an editor.

After just 15 months in business, Rolfe launched the Business Expo trade show. The Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce declined to co-sponsor it, but unfettered, he made it a success. The event sold-out in its first year. It has since grown to 240 vendors and has become one of the largest of its kind in the southeast United States.

Rolfe went on to introduce the Baton Rouge Business Awards in 1984. He hired Steve Forbes as the keynote speaker and it too, was a successful, sold-out event.

Forty years later, the *Greater Baton Rouge Business Report* is still going strong, having shared thousands upon thousands of enlightening business stories with its readers.

But today, it is so much more than simply "the magazine for business." Under Rolfe's vision, innovative spirit and leadership, the company launched *Daily Report* an e-newsletter in 1998. At the time, most publications were still producing a fax newsletter as email was just gaining public traction. Over the years, The Power Breakfast, Influential Women in Business, the Louisiana Business Symposium honoring the Top 100 Private Companies, and Best Places to Work honorees, and Forty Under 40 would follow.

All the while, *Business Report* continues producing award-winning business journalism. It was honored with its first award from AABP the year it joined in 1983, and has won awards every year since – twice bringing home the Gold for best publication.

For anyone else, that might be enough. But not for Rolfe McCollister. In addition to having created an amazing company in partnership with Julio Malara and a talented team, he is heavily invested in the local community. Working with others to make Baton Rouge a better place is truly a passion for Rolfe.

Given his tremendous heart for community service, the *Baton Rouge Business Report* now hosts more community events than any other single organization in the city. These events that always are filled to capacity. There was a period in his life when he served on 13 community boards at one time. He served two terms as a board member of the LSU System Board of Supervisors, and partnered with the late Gov. Buddy Roemer to start two banks, including the incredibly successful b1BANK.

He has served in so many ways – some of them public, but most often behind the scenes, quietly inspiring and collaborating, helping others to take the lead. His aim is to encourage the capital city of Louisiana to follow best practices found in other communities and to become more innovative, creative and open to embracing change. Rolfe has never stopped dreaming and innovating. He has never stopped envisioning different ways to tell the story of business.