



# Visions

HOLIDAY 2015



## OPEN YOUR HEARTS THIS CHRISTMAS

### Strengthen Our Commitment To Children

*Help a child in need by giving online at [voagno.org](http://voagno.org) or in the enclosed envelope.*

It's the season for giving, especially to children in need.

Join Volunteers of America in helping youngsters by supporting our annual *Spirit of Giving* holiday campaign. Your support will directly help youth in our Children and Family Services programs that meet essential needs:

- healthy meals for at-risk schoolchildren
- mentors for children with an incarcerated parent
- afterschool enrichment for underserved students
- coaches to guide court-involved youth

Volunteers of America has a long commitment to serving children in need. For example, healthy meals for students are served up by our Fresh Food Factor initiative. This school year, Fresh Food Factor will supply 1.4 million nutritious breakfasts, lunches, snacks and suppers at local partner education sites. Designed to offer a healthy alternative to processed school lunches, Fresh Food Factor aims to reduce childhood obesity and boost school performance.

This strong commitment also extends to our other children's programs. Youth with a parent in prison

have a 70 percent chance of going to jail themselves—unless intervention occurs. Our Mentoring Children of Promise program is that intervention for hundreds of youth who benefit from extra guidance and attention from caring adults. The Lighthouse program gives

at-risk youth a safe place to learn and develop after school hours. And, the Positive Pathways Program steers young offenders from high-crime neighborhoods to better lives. For more details about our children's programs, visit [voagno.org](http://voagno.org).

This Christmas, our children's programs face a \$300,000 budget gap. Share your *Spirit of Giving* with these children this Christmas. Your gift is greatly needed. Gifts of all sizes, fully tax deductible, will help us ensure a brighter future for our community's most vulnerable children.

Thank you for your generosity! We promise that giving to those in need will bring you joy and add heartfelt meaning to your holidays.



## WWL-TV Presents 'Spirit of Giving'

Watch for TV messages about our Spirit of Giving campaign on WWL-TV throughout the season. Our President/CEO Jim LeBlanc and Tod Smith, WWL-TV President & General Manager, share how your gift will help children and youth in need throughout the year. We greatly appreciate WWL-TV returning as our Spirit of Giving sponsor and sharing our commitment to youth.



President / CEO  
Message  
**James M. LeBlanc**

## Give From The Heart Add True Meaning To Your Holidays

During the holidays, we all yearn for real joy and peace. I say from experience that the only real way to find these qualities is by giving unselfishly from the heart, especially to people in need.

This wisdom is at the heart of our favorite Christmas stories. One reason we at Volunteers of America understand this so well is because we give to people in need year-round and see the joy that giving brings to giver and receiver.

Proverbs 11:24-25 expresses this paradox: “One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.”

In this issue, Volunteers of America tells you about the many ways you can give to the most vulnerable in our community. For example, \$100 serves a day's worth of healthy meals to a class of public school or Head Start students. \$25 provides an hour of counseling to a troubled youth.

I remain inspired by Acts 20:35. “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

I thank you for considering a holiday gift to those in need. I know your holidays will be enriched by your generosity. On behalf of everyone at Volunteers of America, I wish you and your family joy and peace.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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James M. LeBlanc, *President/CEO*

### MISSION

Volunteers of America is a movement organized to reach and uplift all people and bring them to the knowledge and active service of God. Volunteers of America, illustrating the presence of God through all that we do, serves people and communities in need and creates opportunities for people to experience the joy of serving others. Volunteers of America measures its success in positive change in the lives of individuals and communities we serve.



**National Volunteers of America President/CEO Mike King addresses well-wishers at the opening of Bayou Cane Apartments.**

## Opening Doors To Affordable Housing In Terrebonne

*See more Bayou Cane ribbon-cutting photos on [voagno.org](http://voagno.org).*

The Houma community celebrated the Nov. 5 opening of Volunteers of America’s latest workforce housing initiative, Bayou Cane Apartments in Terrebonne Parish.

Bayou Cane brings 82 beautiful, newly constructed one- and two-bedroom apartments to the Houma area, which has a great need for safe, affordable housing for employees of key service industries. “We feel privileged to offer these homes to families as part of our commitment to affordable housing for working people,” said Jim

LeBlanc, Volunteers of America President/CEO. Eighty-five percent of the apartments have been leased.

A portion of Bayou Cane Apartments are reserved for employed persons and families earning up to 80 percent of area median income. The four-acre landscaped site features two- and three-story garden-style buildings, playground, community center, dog park, parking and nature trail. Fifteen of the apartments can serve persons with disabilities and are ideal for older tenants who want to stay in their homes as they age.



Terrebonne Parish President Michel Claudet said, “Volunteers of America has a reputation of doing excellent work and being active members of the communities they serve.” Our organization will stay active at Bayou Cane by offering residents an array of supportive services.

Volunteers of America’s commitment to the area will continue. In January, Renaissance Neighborhood Development Corporation, a subsidiary of Volunteers of America, will break ground on new senior apartment homes at the former Houma Elementary School. In partnership with Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government and Terrebonne Council on Aging, this development will offer 103 one- and two-bedroom apartments for active, independent seniors age 62 and over. It is expected to open in spring 2017.



**Leonard D. Simmons, Jr., fifth from left, board chair of Renaissance Neighborhood Development Corporation, and officials cut the ribbon for the Bayou Cane Apartments in Houma.**



## Creating Forever Families For Over 70 Years

*To support adoption at Volunteers of America, contact Caitlin Scanlan at (504) 482-2130 or [cscanlan@voagno.org](mailto:cscanlan@voagno.org).*

An unplanned pregnancy can be confusing and overwhelming.

Volunteers of America has been helping women in this situation since 1942. Our expert staff helps women access medical care and offers confidential counseling. We help expectant mothers understand pregnancy options and make the best choices for their babies. From initial consultation through follow-up support, our staff is a constant resource.

Over the decades, Volunteers of America has created literally thousands of loving families through adoption. As a licensed adoption agency, we work with birth parents and adoptive parents through all aspects of adoption.

During November, National Adoption Awareness Month, we celebrate our Adoption and Maternity program as a respected pioneer of openness in adoption. With openness, birth parents choose the adoptive couple who will raise their child and have the opportunity to meet the couple before the birth. The level of openness varies with each

adoption, based on the wishes of the birth parents and adoptive parents. This approach allows all parties involved to share information and work together to ensure a healthy, positive future for the baby. It eases natural anxieties and fears of the unknown that birth parents, adoptive parents and, eventually, the child may face.

This legacy program depends on support from caring friends such as you to ensure that our mission of creating loving adoptive families continues. Adoption and Maternity needs to fill an anticipated \$140,000 shortfall in funding this fiscal year.

There are many meaningful ways to support Adoption and Maternity. In addition to financial gifts, we seek sponsors and volunteers for our annual GolfStar Classic. You even can buy tickets for our upcoming 2016 Mercedes CLA250 raffle that benefits the program. Thanks to our donors, Adoption and Maternity continues our commitment to creating more forever adopted families in the future.

## Welcoming Another Volunteers of America Baby



Becoming parents was a priority to John and Sylvia when they married over five years ago. After trying unsuccessfully to become parents for several years and experiencing the devastating loss of two miscarriages, they began to explore adoption. For John and Sylvia, the decision to consider adoption was an easy one—Sylvia was adopted at birth by her parents through Volunteers of America.

*Sylvia and husband John recently welcomed baby Heath, as President/CEO Jim LeBlanc shares the joy. Now both Sylvia and son Heath are Volunteers of America babies.*

## SNAPSHOTS

### Honoring Veterans: Our Commitment Is Firm

Helping veterans who are homeless remains a major commitment for Volunteers of America and The Home Depot Foundation. On Oct. 24, we participated in Stand Down, an initiative of Southeast Louisiana Health Care System, designed to put veterans in touch with services. Staff from our Veterans Services programs educated veterans about how we can help and gave out bags with hygiene items. Our Fresh Food Factor program prepared breakfast and lunch for participants, and Team Depot, The Home Depot's associate-led volunteer force, served our heroes.



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### Xenex Gift Makes Our Community Home Healthier

To residents of our Olympia Community Home in Mid-City, Volunteers of America is more than an organization—it's a place to call home. Board Member Joseph Hyland Authement, Senior Vice President of Sales at Xenex, is passionate about serving our residents. Mr. Authement facilitated the generous donation of a Xenex Germ-Zapping Robot, which provides effective, full-spectrum UV disinfection to help keep Olympia residents healthy during cold and flu season. Xenex Business Development Manager Rohn Simone, at left, uses the Xenex Robot at the home. Thanks to Xenex and their team for enhancing the home's safe, healthy environment.

John and Sylvia contacted our Adoption and Maternity program and immediately began the home study process. They were selected by the first expectant mother who looked at their profile. Ironically, one of the reasons the birth parents chose John and Sylvia was because they felt who better to love their child unconditionally than someone who was adopted.

John and Sylvia feel it was a blessing to meet their son's birth parents—Sylvia knows what it's like to have questions about one's adoption story. With the

program's assistance, they plan to remain in contact with their son's birth parents.

Sylvia recalls her late father telling her that, when they adopted her, he felt a greater sense of responsibility to give her the best life possible, considering someone entrusted him to raise her child. Sylvia understands that feeling now herself. She is humbled and grateful that Heath's birth parents entrusted her and her husband to be his parents.

# Volunteer Finds ‘Perfect Fit’ In Fresh Food Factor Kitchen



**Stephen loves volunteering at our Fresh Food Factor program. Our organization has volunteer opportunities for persons of all ages and interests.**

says he was put on earth to help people and do his part, with the ultimate goal of reaching heaven.

At Volunteers of America, we think Stephen’s work is already heavenly. Thank you, Stephen, for your role in feeding children. Your dedication inspires. The commitment of thousands of volunteers such as Stephen makes it possible for us to serve others.

*Explore more volunteer opportunities at [voagno.org](http://voagno.org).*

Meet Stephen, a volunteer who helps prepare healthy meals for at-risk youth in our Fresh Food Factor program. Twice a week on product delivery days, Stephen takes a bus from the West Bank to arrive early at our Tchoupitoulas Street kitchen. With pride, he manages the coolers and quickly organizes large quantities of food to ensure freshness. Fresh Food Factor staff appreciate Stephen’s commitment—they truly depend on him.

Stephen’s dedication is even more special considering his intellectual disability. Since 1992, he has lived in a group home, yet chooses to “work” because it lifts him up. He is proud to volunteer to give to others by putting in a full days’ work. Fresh Food Factor is not Stephen’s first volunteer experience, but it is his favorite. The job is a perfect fit. Stephen



## MANY WAYS TO GIVE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Your gift can do so much to help. If you choose to give a financial gift, check the back cover to see what various holiday giving levels can mean to a child or adult in need. If you prefer more personal giving, adopt a person, served by Volunteers of America programs, who may not receive any other present this holiday season. Our Christmas Wish Project will provide a wish list of simple gifts that

need to be wrapped and delivered to our Canal Street offices by Dec. 1. It’s that easy. Contact Caitlin Scanlan: [cscanlan@voagno.org](mailto:cscanlan@voagno.org) or (504) 482-2130.



## St. Tammany Senior Credits Crisis Response Program With Life-Saving Care

Old habits are hard to break. No one knows this better than retired St. Tammany residents Lou and Betty, married 60 years.

Outwardly, Lou, 82, was known as a good friend, popular and active in his community. But inwardly, a problem haunted him for most of his marriage. Often and without warning, he flew into extreme fits of verbal rage at his wife. Lou always felt ashamed and frustrated after an outburst. Betty felt hurt, helpless and alone. Lou says he always sincerely loved Betty, but she felt the brunt of his anger. Their friends had no idea.

Over the years, Lou tried getting help through religion or therapists, but nothing worked. It took a call to Volunteers of America's Crisis Response Program for him to finally discover ways to control his rage.

Following an outburst, Lou was in desperation. He recalls thinking, "If I die tomorrow, all Betty is going to remember is my anger." He saw a newspaper article about our Crisis Response Program. Broken and distraught, he tried one more time to reach out for help.

He talked to Suzanne, a licensed social worker with the program, who listened carefully. Suzanne persistently reached out to help the couple, discussing coping skills and encouraging Lou to attend a 12-step program for those with similar challenges. She found him transportation to the meetings.

Slowly, Lou learned ways to prevent his escalating anger. He admitted his struggles to others in the program and took responsibility for his actions. And, he discovered the painful truth that he had



***Lou and Betty are two of many whose lives have been transformed by our Crisis Response Program in St. Tammany, which helps people cope with behavioral health problems.***

long suffered from untreated PTSD since his Korean War combat service.

Lou sincerely apologized to Betty for the pain he had caused over the years. Gradually—with the commitment of Suzanne, now a close friend, and group support—Lou's anger issues have begun to dissolve. Betty says Lou is truly a changed man. "Life is so much better now."

The Crisis Response Program helps many in St. Tammany cope with behavioral health problems. The goal always is to intervene before a crisis escalates. Our staff is committed to offering hope and real-life solutions. As Lou's experience shows, it's never too late, or too early, to ask for help.

## Focus On Year-End Giving

Call us today at (504) 482-2130 or go online to donate now at [voagno.org](http://voagno.org).

The best gifts are those that help people in great need. Volunteers of America invites you to reach out to help others through our *Spirit of Giving* holiday campaign.

- **\$25** provides an hour of counseling for a troubled teen, young mother and others in search of hope and care.
- **\$50** delivers eight weeks of healthy lifestyle behavior education for a child in stress from peer pressure and bullying.
- **\$100** serves fresh, healthy meals to an entire class of public charter school or Head Start students.
- **\$125** covers a year of academic, physical and emotional support for a needy child in your neighborhood.
- **\$250** trains five volunteers to give their time and talent to uplift others in our community.
- **\$500** affords emotional and physical care for one day for a child or adult with a disability who has little or no family support.
- **\$1,000** supplies one year of afterschool academic and social education for a child in distress.



**REMEMBER THE BOOTH LEGACY IN YOUR WILL**

[voagno.org](http://voagno.org)

Various Volunteers of America of Greater New Orleans services are accredited by CARF, the Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission and ACA, the American Correctional Association. Volunteers of America is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation. Contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent provided by the law.



  
**Volunteers of America®**  
GREATER NEW ORLEANS

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