



Volunteers
of America®

SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA

FALL 2020

visions



GREATER NEW ORLEANS AREA

Your Support Is Helping Veterans Like Christopher Get Back On Their Feet

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families program assists veterans anywhere in Louisiana.

U.S. Army veteran Christopher had no place to turn when he became homeless, but now, his future is bright, thanks to your generosity.

Christopher served in the Iraq War, but when COVID-19 halted the economy, he couldn't pay his bills. That's when he hit the road—literally.

Because he did not have transportation, he started walking from McComb, Miss., to the Louisiana State line, which is about 50 miles. With the help of a good Samaritan, he found his way to New Orleans.

That's when our Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program stepped in. The SSVF staff routinely visits homeless encampments looking for veterans who may need assistance. After seeing on the news that people were being displaced for nonpayment at hotels, the staff began calling hotels to see if there were any veterans and their families living there that may be eligible for the SSVF program. This is how we found Christopher.

“Within two weeks, Christopher was housed by SSVF, and he loves his new unit next to the lake in New Orleans East,” Program Manager DaVaughn Phillips says. “We are now helping him get the services he needs and get him back on his feet again. This is just one example of the hundreds of homeless veterans and their families that we serve as part of our mission.”

The SSVF program began in October 2011 and serves over 600 veterans a year across the state. Our Veterans Services programs receive referrals from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs and the U.S. Department of Labor as well as community and individual referrals.

Thanks to your support, Volunteers of America will be able to continue to assist veterans for years to come.

QUICK FACTS

The Supportive
Services for Veteran
Families program
serves over 600
veterans a year
across the state.



BOARD CHAIR MESSAGE
Christy Howley Connois



Thank You For Continuing To Support The Most Vulnerable

What a year it's been!!! Isn't that an understatement?! I cannot imagine a more challenging year for all of us. However, I can tell you firsthand that every single person who works for and with us from the Board to the employees, has stepped up to the plate. It would have been easy to use the virus as an excuse to shut programs and step away from our responsibilities to the most vulnerable in southeast Louisiana. Instead, our employees stepped up every single day, feeding school children through Fresh Food Factor who otherwise would have gone hungry. Employees used every method, including telehealth appointments, to stay in touch with clients, assisting them daily with mental health and other issues. Our Community Living Services professionals amazed us most of all by continuing to work in our group homes, utilizing sanitization procedures and continuing their work uninterrupted.

As if the virus hasn't changed our lives enough, Jim LeBlanc has decided to retire after 37 years with Volunteers of America. Jim has brought the agency into the 21st century, and grown it so far beyond what even he may have imagined. We will miss his leadership, his stamina, his forward-thinking ideas and drive, and we will even miss his car commercials. In all seriousness, I met Jim over a decade ago, and he changed my life in many ways, always re-enforcing the idea that nothing is impossible and more importantly, that a life well lived is only truly enjoyed if you're helping others live their best life.

In that vein, our Reach For The Stars Breakfast was cancelled due to the virus. I know many of you reading this are donors, and I thank you for that! If you haven't already, I encourage you to increase, extend or renew your yearly pledge. There are a lot of people hurting in our community, now more than ever. Please consider a donation and know any amount is so appreciated and helps immensely.

I hope you and your family are well, safe, and getting through this time with as much grace and love as possible. We will get through this and be better for it as a nation. Volunteers of America will continue to be here, and we are here to help.

Christy Howley Connois

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Christy Howley Connois
Chair

Tod Smith
Chair-Elect

M. Isabel Barrios
Secretary

S. Chuck Viator
Treasurer

Geoffrey C. Artigues
Immediate Past Chair

Rupa Jolly, DDS
Nathan J. Junius
Thomas J. McGoey, II
Fred H. Myers
Christy N. Ross
Stephen C. Schrempp
Lynn E. Swanson
Michelle Treschwig, CPA

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.

STATEWIDE SERVICES

Your Generosity Is Helping Individuals Battling COVID-19

The new program has served over 7,500 individuals in less than three months.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges for everyone, and Volunteers of America Southeast Louisiana has stepped up to help the State of Louisiana assist those affected by the virus.

Your support made it possible for Volunteers of America to begin a partnership with the Louisiana Association of United Ways and the Louisiana Department of Health to provide resource coordination statewide to those who have tested positive for COVID-19 or been in contact with someone who tested positive.

Working in partnership with the state’s contact tracers, the new COVID Care Resource Coordinators are responsible for conducting virtual check-ins and connecting at-risk COVID-19 positive patients and people in quarantine to community

resources. The overall goal of the program is to help people successfully quarantine by making sure basic needs like food, housing, and medicine are met, along with COVID-specific needs like PPE and cleaning supplies.

“We are so excited to help the state with this much-needed service,” President/CEO Jim LeBlanc says. “This is just another example showing that Volunteers of America will go where we are needed, when we are needed.”

QUICK FACTS

Since mid-May, COVID Care Resource Coordinators have assisted more than 7,500 individuals.

“The overall goal of the program is to help people successfully quarantine by making sure basic needs like food, housing, and medicine are met, along with COVID-specific needs like PPE and cleaning supplies.”—Jim LeBlanc



The program began on May 15 and has already assisted over 7,500 clients while adding 70 work-from-home jobs to the economy. The coordinators are located across the state and in the communities they serve. This is the second program that Volunteers of America provides statewide. The first, Supportive Services for Veteran Families, is still assisting hundreds of veterans annually to transition into permanent housing and the workforce.

FLORIDA PARISHES AREA

RSVP Volunteers Log On To Writing, Online Memoir Class

Your support allows our seniors to learn a new skill that they are passing on to others.

When COVID-19 struck in March, it made things difficult for our Retired and Senior Volunteers Program (RSVP), but thanks to your support, our seniors are finding new ways to remain engaged.

One innovative way that our RSVP volunteers are staying engaged is via an online memoir writing class.

“What a great experience, especially for someone who hates to write,” class participant Carole Fowler says. “But here, you got to write what you wanted, when you wanted and how you wanted with wonderful guidance. The how for me are little vignettes, which I had already started some years ago; vignettes that easily collated into the beginning of an autobiography, which I know my children will enjoy.”

Carole was one of a dozen participants in the first class, which gave participants a chance to re-connect with each other and guide them through writing their memoirs. The six-week course was life-changing.

“Volunteers of America has met the challenges we all face today with ingenuity, helping give the seniors in

St. Tammany the tools to delve into their past and write their own story,” class participant Anna Bienvenu says.

“Using email and social media aids, a group of volunteers recorded their life history with professional guidance by Michael Tusa (published author/RSVP volunteer/donor) and RSVP Director Gwen Byars. It was a wonderful experience.”

Now our RSVP volunteers are sharing their skills with other seniors in the community, including those in nursing homes, to help tell their stories, which will be passed down from generation to generation.

Thanks to your support, our seniors, like Barbara Mamoulides, had “the most fun they’ve had since moving to Louisiana” during one of the toughest times for our community.

QUICK FACTS

The RSVP contributes nearly \$1 million worth of volunteer hours to St. Tammany Parish each year.



GREATER NEW ORLEANS AREA

You Helped Jacob Find A New Home

Our Community Living Services program ensures that Jacob is safe and happy for years to come.

When Jacob came to Volunteers of America's Olympia Group Home, he was shy and reserved, but now, he's part of the family, thanks to your support.

Jacob is a nonverbal autistic teenage boy who was living with his elderly grandmother. His mother and father are deceased, so his grandmother was the only family he had until our Community Living Services program stepped in.

So many of the things you and I take for granted, such as family, stability, and a safe environment, were not possible for Jacob. One day, Jacob's grandmother fell and could not get up. That's when she knew her grandson needed more support.

"When Jacob first moved in, he was very standoffish with everyone," Olympia home manager Natasha Edwards says. "However, he did make sure to make it known when it was time to eat. As time has gone on, Jacob has begun to show more of his personality to both staff and his roommates. Jacob is a prankster!"

Today, he shares a home with seven other individuals. He has his own room, and he is the baby of the family because six of the seven individuals whom he shares a home with are women.

"They all dote on him like a little brother, or maybe even act like six mothers," Edwards says. "He has a special place in the hearts of his fellow housemates and the staff."

Jacob's grandmother is also part of the family. She regularly calls to check up on him, and when she was struggling due to COVID-19, the staff went the extra mile to make sure she had everything she needed to remain safe.

Since 1974, our Community Living Services program has provided 24-hour support and supervision for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. That support will continue for as long as individuals like Jacob need it.

QUICK FACTS

We have seven community living homes in Orleans and Tangipahoa parishes, serving 54 individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities.



"They all dote on [Jacob]...He has a special place in the hearts of his fellow housemates and the staff."—Natasha Edwards

■ snapshots

PORTRAITS of GRATITUDE—How many ways can Volunteers of America Southeast Louisiana serve the community? As many ways as there are generous supporters and volunteers. Thanks to all who help make a real difference.

2020 marks the second consecutive ► year that the Louisiana Children's Trust Fund (LCTF) has invested in our **Mentoring Children of Promise** program that connects mentees like Jessie'anna with caring mentors like Lori. LCTF awards grant funds through a state-wide competitive process and has selected MCP as a partner program again this year. The mission of the LCTF is to prevent child abuse and neglect among Louisiana's children and families through building strong cross-sector partnerships and through increased child safety public awareness.



Congrats to our **Director of Supportive Services Melissa Haley** ► on her appointment as the Interim President of the National Association of Black Social Workers. For the past three years, she served as National Vice President, working closely to prepare strategic goals, produce quarterly and annual reports and preside over the National Steering Committee Meetings.



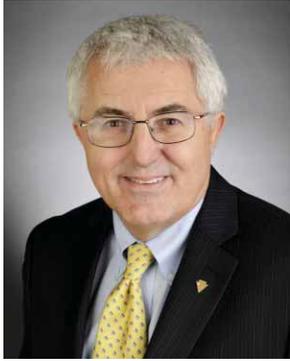


◀ Our senior residents at **The Terraces on Tulane** have had limited social interactions due to COVID-19, so they were overjoyed to play some socially distanced bingo recently complete with prizes. Masks were required, but it was a great way to give our seniors some needed entertainment!



◀ Our Direct Support Professionals (DSP) in our **Supported Living Services** program are true heroes. They have been working with our consumers non-stop since the pandemic began, and they recently received a special THANK YOU with a drive-by parade. As you can see, both our consumers and DSPs were thrilled with the parade!

President/CEO Jim LeBlanc To Retire After 37 Years



After serving Volunteers of America for 37 years, our President and CEO Jim LeBlanc is retiring at the end of the year.

“It has been an honor and a privilege to serve this amazing organization,” Jim says. “I am blessed that the good Lord placed me on this

path so many years ago. As I depart Volunteers of America in less than six months, our organization is in a strong position because of your generosity in helping the agency assist the people we are called to serve.”

The Board of Directors has formed a CEO Search Committee that has begun the process of selecting Jim’s

replacement. The committee and the entire board would like to continue all the success that our organization has created in the 16-parishes we serve. Jim has committed to working through a transition plan to ensure success for the incoming CEO.

“Thank you for being our partner in good times and difficult times. I love the consumers we serve and their inspiring stories. This work is only possible because of supporters like you,” Jim says.

“Like all good things, my time at Volunteers of America must come to an end. I look forward to hearing what the future has in store for our staff, our consumers, our community, and for you—our steadfast supporters. I invite you to keep our vulnerable neighbors, our dedicated staff, the Search Committee and the Board of Directors in your prayers. And I will keep YOU in my daily prayers.”

Join the Booth Legacy and remember us in your will. Call Charlotte D’Ooge at (504) 486-8686 for more details.

Various Volunteers of America Southeast Louisiana 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.



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1716
New Orleans, LA

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Volunteers of America®
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA
4152 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70119
(504) 482-2130 | (504) 482-1922 fax
www.voasela.org