

The Rice Voelker Fund for Recovery
327 N. Columbia St.
Covington, LA 70433

December 24, 2018

If it keep on rainin' the levee gonna break
If it keep on rainin' the levee gonna break
Everybody saying this is a day only the Lord could make
Some people still sleepin', some people are wide awake

- Bob Dylan

The Bob Dylan lyrics above from his 2006 album *Modern Times* came to mind with the thirteenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina in August of this year. Unfortunately for Louisianans, our representatives in the body politic, with rare exception, can be found in the “some people still sleepin’” designation.

Nowhere is that more evident than in New Orleans’ Lower Ninth Ward. That area, once a thriving, largely African-American neighborhood with a high rate of home ownership, was under twelve feet of flood water after a levee breach caused by a Katrina storm surge. Only about one third of the pre-Katrina population has been able to return. The landscape is scarred with empty lots and homes in unlivable condition.

There are green shoots in the Lower Ninth and the fund has contributed to numerous groups and individuals there. Recipients include several affordable housing initiatives (Habitat for Humanity and Musicians Village) and community efforts such as the Spartan’s Boxing Club. Team-USA Junior Olympic Boxing has chosen Spartan’s to host the April 2019 competition. The fund will sponsor our local competitors.

We are impressed with the model of lowernine.org and have added them to our list. Lowernine renovates salvageable homes and also builds from scratch. The organization uses volunteer labor under professional supervision at about a third of market rates.

The Servants of Mary, Ministers to the Sick is an order of Catholic nuns that has been in New Orleans since 1914. The sisters provide in-home medical assistance without charge to the needy. The order’s convent in the Lower Ninth was severely damaged in the storm and the fund contributed to the renovation. Since then we have made an annual contribution to these living saints.

Louisiana ranks 49th among states in a troubling hunger statistic called Food Insecurity. A recent study by Loyola University New Orleans found that one in six children (250,000) here lives in a household without consistent access to adequate food. The fund has supported several organizations addressing this problem.

Pennies for Bread- Since 1990, the monks and volunteers at 129-year-old St. Joseph Abbey have provided food to the poor and homeless in the Greater New Orleans area. The monks bake over one thousand loaves of bread per week and deliver them to twenty-five organizations serving meals to the disadvantaged.

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The Northshore Food Bank provides weekly food assistance to necessitous individuals and families living at or below the federal poverty guidelines. I drive by the Covington location daily, and on distribution days a line has already formed by 6:00 a.m. It is at once saddening to see so many, especially seniors and small children, in need and at the same time encouraging to see them helped.

Ozanam Inn is a sixty-three-year-old homeless shelter in the New Orleans CBD. The fund has long supported the Inn and its Forgotten Angels program that offers year-round assistance to school age children of homeless families. Those kids receive assistance with school supplies, nourishment, wellness checks, professional counseling, and holiday special events.

Innocence Project of New Orleans (IPNO) has an impressive record of success in gaining freedom for wrongly convicted citizens. IPNO attorneys work pro bono on cases that can take years to resolve. Since 2001, thirty-two innocent clients have achieved freedom through IPNO's efforts. We have supported IPNO and its individual exonerees who find themselves free but impoverished when released.



Wilbert Jones

Wilbert Jones and Gerald Manning both served over forty years at Angola for wrongful convictions on rape charges before recent verdict reversals of prosecutorial malfeasance. Until her release after forty-one years of unjust incarceration, Bobbie Jean Johnson seemed destined to bear a life sentence for murder. The fund aided all three of the above upon their release.

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Bobbie Jean with her IPNO attorneys on the day of her release

Karsten Fields suffered a severed spinal cord in 2015 while a passenger in an auto accident. During a long convalescence she regained basic motor skills but needs a wheelchair for mobility. Her teenage daughter, Kariyana, and a younger brother are her lone caregivers. A standing electric wheelchair would enable Karsten to return to her job as a bank teller and make her less dependent on her children. Kariyana's after school job and neighborhood fund raisers have produced \$6000 toward the \$8500 purchase price. The fund is providing the balance and Karsten will soon have her standing wheelchair.

Apollo Solomon is a four-year-old boy living in Fluker, LA about twenty miles from my home in Folsom, LA. Apollo was born two months premature with damaged kidneys. Until last month he had spent his entire life on dialysis. His mom, Kizzy, donated a kidney to Apollo and surgeons at Children's' Hospital in New Orleans performed a successful transplant. Both are now home and doing well but donations for the procedure have fallen a bit short of the total cost. The fund has sent Kizzy \$2000 to help.



Apollo Solomon

Eight-year-old Drake Quibodeaux received a diagnosis in March of Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma. DIPG is a brain cancer with no known cure. Prior to his illness, Drake

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was an avid outdoorsman in Vinton, LA. His mother requested cards be sent for what is likely his last Christmas. The fund did so and included \$500 for him to spend however he wishes.



Drake with Ed Orgeron (LSU Head Football Coach)

Whatever your view of Twitter, our fund is suddenly and surprisingly a beneficiary of its broad reach. One of our earliest and most significant givers is Marc Cohodes, a friend of over twenty years. Before his retirement from fund management, he was also a major client of our firm. Until we lost our cellular connection, I provided Marc and his partners an account of Katrina's onset from my office at home. He has been with us every step of the way since.

Marc provides his Twitter followers with his investment views which largely involve exposure of fraudulent companies. Although he neither solicits nor accepts compensation for his ideas, he does ask those who profit from them to be generous in their charitable giving. This year in a commentary he singled out our fund as his preferred recipient for charitable donations.

In addition, he pledged to match all contributions made by year end up to \$100,000 and a minimum of \$50,000. In the two weeks since his offer, we have received over \$17,000 in contributions from his followers.

With our additional funding, the fund will look for more opportunities to be of help in the New Year. As always, our heartfelt thanks to our longtime supporters and deepest appreciation to our new ones.

Sincerely

Tim Rice