

## **RV FUND YEAR END**

*“We must talk about poverty because people insulated by their own comfort lose sight of it.”*

**-Dorothy Day (1897-1980)**

Founder of the Catholic Worker Movement

Our fund began in response to the physical and emotional ruin of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Since then, Rita, Gustav, Ike, Harvey, Laura, and Ida have taken their devastating turns on our state's besieged communities. With per capita annual income barely exceeding \$30K, it is consistent that nearly one in five of our state's residents live below the poverty level.

Citizens at that income level invariably live not only in fragile financial condition but also in fragile housing. That is why, for seventeen years, our reports teem with accounts of Louisianians whose lives have been capsized by weather. And now a year after Hurricane Ida, we still find neighbors in need because of that storm.

Tangipahoa Parish comprises most of the western border of my home parish, St. Tammany. The tornado spinoffs of Hurricane Ida in Tangipahoa left many low-income residents with destroyed or irreparably impaired housing.

One of those so affected was Hammond resident Kizzie Travis and her disabled adult son. A fallen tree destroyed their small apartment and flood waters did the same to their possessions. When we met Kizzie, she and her son were living on the street.

With help from local volunteers, we found a new apartment for Kizzie and her son. The fund provided a deposit and two months rent as well as some furniture. Although encumbered by epilepsy and diabetes, Kizzy has gained some peace after a year of torment.

Through a friendship with the Sheriff of Henderson (another Tangipahoa community), we learned the tragic story of Tra'shun London, a 14-year-old honor student, who suffered an asthma attack that proved fatal due to the unavailability of needed treatments. The young man's death was yet another example of the medical care desert that exists in much of rural Louisiana. The fund provided \$1000 toward Tra'shun's funeral expenses.

Alonzo Lemoine, a fifty-year-old with physical and learning disabilities, lived with his mother and older sister in a small family home in LaPlace. His mother passed away shortly before the home was severely damaged by Ida. Soon after the storm, his sister also died. The family could not afford insurance and Alonzo now lives alone in a mold-infested home. Alonzo and a neighbor are attempting to clean up and repair what they can. The fund contributed \$1500 for needed materials.

In New Orleans the James Joseph School of Boxing has provided a cultural oasis for adolescents in the Lower Ninth Ward since Katrina. The fund has sponsored numerous

Golden Gloves competitions there over the years. We recently contributed \$1500 toward a bus trip for school students to see a professional boxing card in Mississippi.

Our fund has given annually to Unity of Greater New Orleans since our founding. Unity is a superbly managed collaboration of over thirty entities dedicated to finding permanent housing for clients without it, and providing medical and psychological assistance when needed. The result has been a 90% reduction in homelessness in New Orleans over the last decade.

Innocence Project of New Orleans is another long time favorite. IPNO is comprised of volunteer attorneys donating their professional talents to gain exoneration for wrongly convicted inmates in the Louisiana prison system. Prosecutorial abuse and poor policing have a long history in this state and IPNO has righted many of the system's wrongs. The fund has donated both to the agency and individual exonerees.

We continue support for other valued agencies including Boys and Girls Club, Humane Society of Louisiana, Chimp Haven, Harry Tompson Center, Pro Bono Foundation, Ozanam Inn, and Northshore Food Bank.

There is one new name to mention. That is Northshore Enduring Hope, which provides resources for children entering foster care. The volunteers host monthly foster parent support groups and sponsor a foster care supply facility including school supplies, baby items, toys, and clothing.

In what now seems like the distant past, Dr. Martin Luther King spoke on the subject of giving. "Helping one person cannot change the whole world, but it might change the world for one person." That simple sentence has been our watchword from the outset.

Thanks to you, our fund has been able to improve a few lives and continue support of deserving charitable organizations. As always, our sincere thanks for your continued support.

In 2022. Our contributions totaled \$43,142.12, of which \$33,000.00 came from firm partners. We distributed \$35,741.18. Total distributions since inception now exceed \$1.4 million.

Our ability to function with zero overhead is attributable to the generosity of a few individuals. Our firm compliance officer, Hubert Daigle, maintains our bank account. Our head trader, Dalton Lambert, formats our letters and directs their distribution, and Steve Bellaire, C.P.A. has filed every tax return and federal compliance form since we began.

With best wishes for good health and happiness in 2023 and beyond,

Tim