



Tent Tutoring

LSU Students at Renaissance Village

Nine months after two devastating hurricanes hit the Gulf Coast, things are still not back to normal. But life is especially different in Baker's FEMA relocation trailer community, known as Renaissance Village.

More than 520 fluorescent white trailers polka dot the 62-acre backdrop. Wood shavings replace the floors of the two tents assembled for children and adults to meet, play, or talk. A chain link fence stands for the wall. Picnic tables substitute for desks. And, a tent serves as the classroom.

The tents are only temporary, standing in for several mobile trailer classrooms. But, it is early May in southeast Louisiana and temperatures can reach the upper 80s. That doesn't stop LSU students from investing their evenings to tutor the children who now reside in Renaissance Village.

The students are part of a hurricane relief outreach effort known as The Delta Express Program, a joint venture between the LSU College of Education, the University of California Berkeley's UC Links project, Tulane University, and several other groups that are signing on to participate.

The Delta Express Program addresses both educational and social needs of underserved children displaced by the hurricanes by offering formal and informal learning activities that the children themselves consider "fun."

"Basically, we make it fun and let the kids be creative," said Jolanta "Jola" Smolen, a graduate student from Poland in the LSU College of Education who is interested in

international education. As Smolen handed out arts and crafts supplies for the children's project, she said "The kids are making Mother's Day cards today, using digital cameras, editing their photos and making them look cool with Photoshop.

The Delta Express Program has been active since April after a series of meetings with parents to discover what they thought their children needed and didn't need. Currently working with 12 to 15 students nightly, the program is growing in popularity. But, it's a hard crowd. Various "good do-ers" have been in and out of Renaissance Village, making some residents, and especially the children, skeptical of the shelf life of new programs.

"Every day we get new kids and new parents that stop by and want to know what we are doing and how they can sign-up. I think they are starting to realize that we are here to stay," added Smolen.

After its opening in October, Renaissance Village became a temporary home for about 2,000 hurricane evacuees. And, while no one is completely sure about the ever-changing number, most agree that a third of the residents are younger than 18.

With so many young residents with so many needs, the village caught the eye of philanthropist- comedienne Rosie O'Donnell. Through funds raised by the For All Kids Foundation, O'Donnell donated three mobile classrooms to Renaissance Village for the estimated 500 school-age kids that live there.

They arrived in early December, but FEMA is still in the process of setting up the classrooms. Computer banks were also donated by a local physician and the Virtue Foundation, but as yet there are no electrical hookups for the computers. Once everything is assembled and connected, many learning programs like Head Start and Early Head Start along with after-school programs like The Delta Express Program will benefit from the less temporary, air conditioned space.

"The school trailers should be open soon —once we get a room and out of the tent we can do more organized learning; we can do lessons; we will have computers and can do projects the kids can come back to the next day," said Sherri Taylor, the on-site coordinator for the project with 19 years of experience in special education and English as a Second Language. Taylor will graduate from the College of Education in the summer of 2006 with a M.Ed. focused on educational technology.

Taylor added how she is anxious to do activities with the students that focus on literacy building, "We want to work with them on writing stories and using computers to do it. They can read each other's stories and help each other. It would be really important for these kids to have a place where they can save their files every day and come back to it."

But, the LSU and UC Berkeley groups didn't want to wait until the trailers were assembled and ready to start working. College of Education Professor Jerry Willis said, "We started having meetings about this project last October. We must have had twenty different meetings talking about what we were going to do while waiting for the trailers to be set-up. Finally, we just decided we didn't need any more meetings or a trailer, we just needed to start helping these children."

"Basically, Jerry and I felt like we needed to get this off the ground. We can't talk about serving larger numbers of kids in Louisiana if we can't break through the bureaucracy and help the ones right here," said Charles Underwood, executive director of the UC Links program.

In operation since 1986, UC Links is a network of educational programs throughout the University of California System that connect community and university partners to provide computer-based and other learning activities for school children in low-income communities throughout California. Underwood and Willis collaborated to adapt educational activities and resources from the UC Links models to the situation in Louisiana.

But, the situation in Louisiana was unlike anything Underwood had ever seen in North America, he said after touring the area, "I have been in very low income communities all over California and the nation and I have never seen a camp like this in the United States before."

Underwood added that it was not easy to set-up the Delta Express Program in Renaissance Village. "The difficulty in putting this work together is greater than I have seen before because we usually have something to build on, even in very low-income communities ...But in this community, we have not had any type of infrastructure to build on."

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Renaissance Village had no computers, no electrical outlets, no electricity, no air conditioning, and, no building or rooms available for use on a regular basis for educational activities. Weary from waiting and hoping, the group came together. "We pooled our resources, got a handful of people together, did some training sessions, and got the program off the ground," said Underwood.

The students that come to the tent are devoted said Taylor, "One little girl has a two-hour bus ride from school. The minute she jumps off the steps of the bus, she heads straight to the tent."

And, while some children are in the tent doing a project, getting help with homework, or reading, others are riding their bikes or playing games outside. At best, this only accounts for about 50 children, bringing up the question, where are the rest of the estimated 500 residents under the age of 18?

Many of the children in the park have been through tremendous social and emotional stress—losing relatives, struggling to survive in the aftermath of Katrina, and then moving several times from one temporary shelter to another. "We don't push the kids to participate; we're here, we're consistent, and we accept and encourage the children," said Willis. "Kids may be afraid, depressed, angry, upset, and more. We help them work through that and involve them in learning without lots of pressure."

"Computers are a real magnet for kids these days," Underwood said. "These kids know that other kids have computers and that other communities have these kinds of resources....it can be a source of real engagement for the kids, especially kids that are struggling in school."

Taylor said they are trying to reach out to as many school age children as they can, "It is exciting to see that we are affecting lives. I can only imagine the impact we would have if a technology rich environment were available for us to engage more with the students."

Smolen added that while the tent is hot and not the ideal situation that it is in a great location to recruit, as she pointed to the basketball court nearby.

The sound of thumping basketballs echoed throughout the tent like a heartbeat. A few families passed by on an evening stroll, leading dogs on leashes. And, for a moment it looked like any neighborhood.

But, there is no need for a neighborhood watch group here. Instead, FEMA employs a private security firm with guards to monitor this community. Some even pop in and out of the tent, sitting down and talking with the children about their Mother's Day cards or helping the teachers move heavy ice chests.

Smolen added that the ice chests were a necessity in the heat and were a first attraction for some of the kids, "But, mind you, we had some parents that were very adamant about us not handing out sugary sodas and candy...very adamant." Instead, they offer iced down water, juices, and healthy snacks. "A hot commodity in this heat," said Jola as a guard kindly hauled off an empty cooler.

Like a camp or picnic, the tutoring center has an air of fun to it because it is so different from a classroom. It also gives new meaning to the term "field work," proving to be a truly unique learning experience for the soon-to-be teachers.

Emily Johnson, a tutor originally from New Orleans, works at the tent two days a week. She is majoring in elementary education with a concentration in astronomy and oceanography. While cutting shapes out of construction paper and handing them to a student, she said she enjoys working with the children because they are "so sweet" and "just good kids."

"It is a lot different out here from what people assume," said Johnson recalling friends' worries about her safety while at the village. "It is just so different than what you hear. And, the kids love having us here."

After hearing Johnson's comments, Carol Bell, a librarian at LSU who has worked with The Delta Express Program since the beginning, joined the conversation, saying "People need to know how sweet these kids are" and mentioned that fear may be what prevents more from going to the village to help in similar relief efforts.

Like Bell and Johnson, the tutors are dedicated to this project and have built an incredible bond with the students. As a New Orleans native, Johnson views her efforts with The Delta Express Program as her way of "helping get the city back, to rebuild in some way."

As a little girl hovers above her shoulders peeking at her project, Amanda Maddox said her reasoning was a little different, "I am helping but I am also getting experience on better ways of teaching, too. I want to give back to the community that I live in now, even if I am not from here." Originally from Atlanta, Maddox is a math major with a concentration in secondary education.

There are also tutors who are not in the College of Education. For instance, Kyra Brown is getting a general studies degree with minors in sociology, psychology, and corrections. LSU Libraries is also active in the village and The Delta Express Project. The students participating in the program all receive specialized training from LSU and its partner, the University of California at Berkeley, which has operated a similar program in the Oakland schools for more than ten years. There is also a great deal of parental and community involvement in the group as well.

Victor Stewart, a community member, who is also a displaced teacher, said he comes by the tent because he likes to see all the children learning and talking with the teachers. After working for the city of New Orleans for 32 years, Stewart retired and then a friend recruited him into teaching. He taught horticulture classes as a volunteer while getting certified through G.W. Carver High School, located two blocks from the industrial canal in New Orleans.

Stewart received his teaching certification three days before Katrina hit. "He is here every night and helps us any way he can," added Smolen. "Even if people are there temporarily they need some sense of community," said Underwood, "Anything we can do together to help build a sense of community will encourage the kids to have hope for a better future."

The College of Education is dedicated to fostering this hope to bring about a true renaissance for the children of the village, helping them rise above catastrophe and achieve the better futures of which they dream.

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Painting by Kate McLean, University Lab School Student

A College-wide Response to the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

In addition to continuing efforts in the CHILL project, it is important to briefly highlight the College's overall involvement with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita recovery efforts. Many of our faculty, staff, and students welcomed displaced family, friends, fellow educators, and even complete strangers into their homes. The College enrolled 125 evacuees as visiting students, created a program to accommodate the alternative certification students from the University of New Orleans, and acknowledged several visiting students who received their diplomas from several New Orleans institutions at the College's commencement ceremony.

While many College of Education members volunteered immediately after the storm at the Pete Maravich Assembly Center, the LSU Help Line, or the School of Veterinary Medicine's animal shelter, others spent weeks and even months offering both their expertise and their time at shelters and for relief efforts throughout the state.

Counseling professors Laura Hensley Choate, Gary Gintner, and David Spruill developed and conducted workshops offering tips for coping with the aftermath of the storms including stress response, examples of common reactions, risk and resiliency factors, and loss issues for health care professionals, parents, school counselors, teachers, governmental officials, and the LSU community.

The College of Education also actively collected and distributed supplies for hurricane assistance. In collaboration with the National Science Teachers Association, Fawn Ukpolo and other College faculty, staff, and students collected and distributed supplies to the City of Baker School System which experienced an incredible influx of many new students into the area after the FEMA relocation trailer site known as Renaissance Village was established in the city of Baker. Through her connections with executive directors from across the country in the Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance and the American Heart Association, Kathy Hill collected and distributed donations and supplies to help replenish class materials for physical education teachers, an estimated \$300 value worth of equipment per teacher.

Through a project funded by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, staff members from the College of Education worked with The International Rescue Committee (IRC) in developing and field testing a shelter survey assessment tool and conducted interviews at area shelters. This preliminary work aided in formation of the Child Friendly Spaces program that addresses the psychosocial needs of children through educational and fitness activities. The IRC also provided training to student volunteers in hopes of implementing the program in area shelters.

Students volunteered over the fall semester break for the Holiday Camp program at Renaissance Village organized by the Association of Hole in the Wall Camps and traveled to New Orleans with another non-profit aide organization known as Hart 4 Humanity to clean up parks and playgrounds. An elementary education junior deserves special mention for her relief efforts. Erin King served at the Istrouma Baptist Church, Green Chapel, and Shilo Baptist Church shelters in addition to volunteering at the River Center Shelter and the FEMA relocation trailer site known as Renaissance Village in Baker. King was moved by her experiences at these shelters; she postponed her studies at LSU for a semester in order to focus her time on working with the displaced children. King wants to dedicate her career to improving the living conditions and learning opportunities for children displaced by natural and man-made disasters within the United States and internationally.

The College of Education continues to explore ways to respond and to better understand the many challenges facing the state. This is only a small sample of the exciting and meaningful activities in which our faculty, students, and staff have been engaged. Some of these efforts are highlighted in more detail in the departmental sections throughout this publication. Due to the ever increasing number of ongoing activities, however, it is inevitable that many projects will go unmentioned—although not unappreciated.

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Understanding Educational Responses in Natural Disasters

With the one year anniversary of Katrina and Rita recently past, LSU researchers have shed light as to how educators dealt with the chaos and questions in classroom communities following two of the country's most devastating natural disasters.

The National Science Foundation and the Board of Regents' Louisiana Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (LA EPSCoR) funded nearly \$100,000 for the project conducted by College of Education Associate Professor Teresa Buchanan, School of Human Ecology Professor Diane Burts, and School of Social Work Associate Professor Timothy Page. The researchers collected information about both teachers' responses to and students' knowledge of the 2005 hurricanes.

To understand the educator side of the storm response, the group surveyed teachers' and schools' activities following the storms. In all, 344 teachers in Louisiana, 93 in Tennessee, 77 from South Carolina, and 78 from Georgia completed surveys that described what school response, planned teacher-directed activities and spontaneous student-led activities took place in the weeks immediately following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

They reported that school-wide responses differed according to location. As expected, Louisiana schools did significantly more school-wide activities than schools in any other state. A few common examples of these school-wide activities involved collecting or providing educational materials such as classroom supplies or toys for evacuee children and providing materials for evacuee families like clothing or dishes.

One of the most surprising findings of the study was that there were no significant differences in teacher-planned classroom activities based on location. The LSU research team found that teachers reported doing approximately the same amount of planned activities in their classrooms no matter where in the country they were located— state, school district, or hurricane-prone area.

“We expected to find a flurry of classroom activity in the Gulf Coast not only about weather but about hurricane safety. Instead, the coastal states did not adjust their classroom instruction anymore than Tennessee—where people don’t worry about a direct hit from a Category 4 hurricane,” said Buchanan, the principal investigator for the project.

Buchanan was most surprised to find that Louisiana teachers didn’t seem to direct any more of their classroom activities toward helping children understand the hurricane-related events, “I think teachers were operating under the impression that it would have been harmful to the children if they had discussed the hurricanes in their classrooms. There are a lot of misunderstandings out there about what to do in a classroom following a crisis.”

In contrast to those findings, the researchers found that children varied greatly in self-initiated activities in the classroom based on their locations. Children in Louisiana initiated significantly more spontaneous activities related to hurricanes than children in other states. The most frequent activities involved children telling stories about Katrina or hurricanes, discussing Katrina or hurricane-related events in the classroom with the teacher, and discussing Katrina or other hurricane-related events among themselves.

Another significant finding of the study dealt with grade-level learning. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers who teach children ages four to five did fewer things related to hurricanes or weather than primary grade teachers who teach children ages six to eight. The researchers found that the most common classroom activities were related to reading stories about weather, lecturing about hurricanes, or teaching a unit or theme or conducting a project about weather.

Second-grade teacher Stephanie Sarver provided a clear illustration of outstanding hurricane-related classroom activities. At E.K. Key Elementary School in Sulphur, Louisiana, Sarver based her lessons off of the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum and grade-level expectations. Those guidelines include sections that address community problems and engage the students in discussions about community problems. Among other activities, Sarver adapted these units after the hurricanes by commissioning her students to create Hurricane Rita commemorative stamps for a make believe relief fund.

The students also were required to come to a collective decision about how to use the funds raised by the stamps. They decided that the stamp revenue should be used to

fix all the “blue roofs,” clean up the trash, build an animal shelter, and and buy food for hungry people and animals.

“This school really rolled out the red carpet for us. We arrived to hand-made signs addressed to the LSU research team that read ‘Welcome LSU.’ They were excited to be a part of this hurricane project,” recalled Buchanan.

“We were glad they were part of the sample because we were able to see Mrs. Sarver’s terrific response to the hurricanes. We believe she demonstrated model teaching. Other teachers in the sample had equally impressive responses, but she did a particularly good job describing her teaching to the research team.”

To better understand learning outcomes associated with teaching practices, the researchers measured the children’s knowledge about hurricanes. For this sample, 15 teachers were selected in a stratified random sample taken from the returned Louisiana teacher surveys. The researchers selected three teachers from each grade who conducted various levels of hurricane-related activities in the class. The researchers then randomly selected and interviewed children in these classrooms to assess their understanding of hurricanes.

The six district sample of interviewees consisted of 108 children, ranging in grade levels from pre- kindergarten to third grade. Most of the children came from communities directly hit by the hurricanes with a significant percentage of children in the sample who experienced evacuation, injury, relocation to temporary housing or shelters, cohabitation with evacuees, or loss of property.

Two members of the team of interviewers went to each of the 15 schools for two days conducting interviews with the children using a new modification of the narrative story-stem methodology. Story- stem methodology uses children’s stories to assess attachment, an approach Page uses in his line of research. The research team adapted the methodology to assess knowledge of hurricanes. In this case, the researchers used six scenarios in which the children interacted with wooden human figures, farm animals, a city scape, cars and boats, and doll houses. The researchers filmed each interview, reviewed the footage and coded the children’s responses for statistical analysis.

“These were prompts that encouraged the children to tell stories. We started the story and the child finished it while we observed their words and actions for evidence of their knowledge about hurricanes in general and Katrina and Rita in particular,” said Buchanan.

The preliminary analyses of these stories indicated that the children understood the direct effects of the hurricanes. There was very strong evidence that the children knew that trees fell down or broke, that people left their homes to evacuate, that houses

were damaged, and that streets and houses flooded. Most children told stories that showed they understood that hurricanes are weather systems that can be destructive, often have heavy rain and strong winds, and that there is a hurricane season. Very few stories indicated knowledge of other characteristics or causes of hurricanes.

Ana Morales Boone, a doctoral student in the College of Education, was one of the interviewers in the project. She gained first-hand insight into the students' responses to the project by traveling to seven classrooms and conducting an average of 16 interviews per school.

"The children would take the little people figurines and immediately put them in the dollhouse attic to get them away from the water," said Morales Boone.

"In one scenario, the children would position the dolls in front of the television to discuss warnings about hurricanes and what they should do," said Morales Boone, adding, "They would have pretend conversations about hurricanes. These preschoolers would use the word 'evacuation' and tell the wooden 'friend' about going to shelters."

Morales Boone said that it was touching and sometimes heartbreaking to see such young children's dramatic reactions to storms, giving her an appreciation for what children and teachers experienced during this difficult time. The interviews also gave Morales Boone another appreciation as well, that of the research process. Morales Boone collected and analyzed social science data from the test and pilot stage through the interview, review and coding process, offering a complete tour of the complex research cycle.

"I worked with LSU faculty, staff, students and researchers from other universities and disciplines. I met with community members and educators from all over the area. And, I participated in every aspect of the project," said Morales Boone.

"I was involved with the development of our survey instrument, our methodology, our interviews," she said, adding "I have a profound respect for all of the work



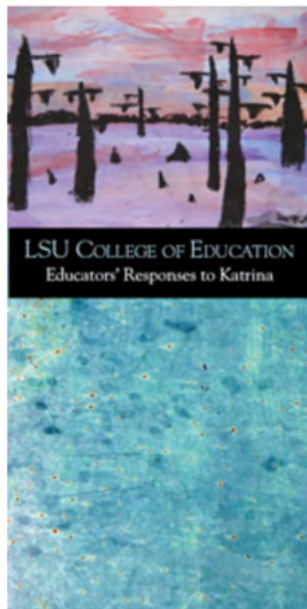
researchers invest in these projects...not to mention the time and intellectual commitment it takes to get an article published and present the findings.”

Morales Boone will present these findings with the LSU faculty team at the Louisiana Early Childhood Association conference and the research team also has submitted proposals to several national meetings including the American Educational Research Association and the Society for Research in Child Development.



With most of the preliminary analyses underway, the researchers will have an interesting picture to paint at these professional meetings. While the teachers were hesitant to change lessons to directly tackle the 2005 weather phenomena, the children themselves were eager to address these powerful storms. The picture that emerges could help teachers know how to respond to disasters that might occur in their own communities.

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Angela Owings Broussard

Author/Photographer/Designer

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Grass Roots Restoration

College of Education Assistant Professor Pamela Blanchard traveled to Grand Isle with students, teachers, and administrators from Lafayette Middle School and Southern Living magazine to help restore the damaged Louisiana coastline. Spearheaded by Grand Isle Port Commissioner Wayne Keller and LSU AgCenter extension service agent David Bourgeois, this planting was a joint effort of the LSU Coastal Roots Project, Lafayette Middle School's Adopt-An-Island Project and the Grand Isle Coastal Plant Resources Project.

A group of eight middle school students accompanied by Lafayette Middle School faculty and parents began the day by crossing over to from Grand Isle to Fifi Island by boat. They met with Stephen Bender, a senior writer for Southern Living Magazine, and a Southern Living photographer. Over the course of the next couple of hours, students were photographed and interviewed while transplanting 60 red mulberry, 100 wax myrtle, and 10 black mangrove plants. The Bourgeois family, Keller and the LSU Coastal Roots project grew and supplied the 170 plants for the project.

Bourgeois has been instrumental in establishing the LSU Coastal Roots Project in Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes. Through its Adopt-An-Island Project, Lafayette Middle School has been working with Keller over the last several years to plant restoration foliage in areas that have suffered erosion problems on and near Grand Isle. Lafayette Middle was the only school in the nation awarded the Environmental Hero Award by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in 2006.

The Coastal Roots program is transitioning from the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program to the LSU College of Education and LSU Department of Horticulture. Blanchard and horticulture faculty member Ed Bush hope to bring together the College's community ties and relationships with school systems to involve students and teachers in ecological stewardship efforts across the state. *Look for the article in the Summer 2007 issue of Southern Living magazine.*



Spotlight on Future Alumni

Nicholas Ng-A-Folk and the United Houma Nation

The work of Mr. Nicholas Ng-A-Fook serves as an excellent example of the College of Education's participation in research and outreach. Mr. Ng-A-Fook extended the classroom boundaries beyond the University and into the community to research communities who have had little or no access to higher education and to use his research as a platform to build bridges between universities and local indigenous communities.

Mr. Ng-A-Fook focused his dissertation research project in his passion for the United Houma Nation. The Houma are one of the largest indigenous communities in Louisiana, including more than 17,000 members. Suffering from Jim Crow policies of racial segregation, American Indians were also denied access to local schools. A few non-traditional educational venues were open to the students of the Houma Nation, most of which were established by religious institutions. Yet most of these schools ended at grade seven. Parents who could afford to do so then sent their children to out-of-state high schools. As a result, many Houma were prevented from attending

high school until the mid-1960s. "I wanted to research on something which was meaningful to the United Houma Nation community, and something that had not been done in depth before within the faculty of Education at Louisiana State University—something that would benefit both the community and the University," said Mr. Ng-A-Fook on his dissertation focus. After introducing himself to the United Houma Nation community, Mr. Ng-A-Fook said, "I wanted to negotiate a research project that formed a synergy between what the research community wanted and what research the Houma would like to see done about their educational history and heritage."

"In the end, the work I did on my dissertation was only a small portion of the research I collected," stated Mr. Ng-A-Fook about his four-year qualitative study of the Houma community. Mr. Ng-A-Fook collected more than 6,000 photographs and more than 100 hours of digital video recordings from Houma members and elders. His dissertation documents the daily lives inside and outside of colonial institutional systems through oral histories of the United Houma Nation.

In addition to the massive amount of cultural history he collected, Mr. Ng-A-Fook became actively involved in the Houma community. For instance, Brenda Robichaux, head of the American Indian education program in Lafourche Parish, initiated a summer education camp to offer a cultural curriculum for American Indian children who had no other formalized educational opportunity to learn of their heritage. The three-night/four-day camp promotes literacy and community. Each day students gather for breakfast and read their "Sakchay Anumpa" (Houma Indian language word for Crawfish Tails), a daily newsletter produced from students' own words and writing highlighting their daily activities, artwork, and social gatherings.

With the cooperation of Mrs. Robichaux, Mr. Nicholas Ng-A-Fook started the Sakchay Anumpa Newsletter three summers ago and produced it until the camp director was able to find someone to collect, edit, design, and print the material. "It is an excellent way for the children at camp to gain experience reading, writing, and communicating with each other," explained Mr. Ng-A-Fook. "This is critical to not only preserving their rich heritage, but also an opportunity to reaffirm their culture by living it."

Mr. Ng-A-Fook's research and involvement with Houma will not end with the spring diploma ceremony, "The Houma told me when I first met them that if I wanted to understand them, I had to spend time and become part of the community," he recalled. After the devastation of Houma lands and homes in Southern Louisiana by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, Mr. Ng-A-Fook began a fundraising project from his current home in Canada through a group called Education for Global Peace. The group conducted bake sales and sold more than \$2,500 in silicone bracelets to benefit an educational fund for the Houma. With a goal of \$5,000, Mr. Ng-A-Fook hopes to present the donations to Houma Principal Chief Brenda Dardar Robichaux at

an educational conference sponsored by the University of Ottawa in Canada this April.

Mr. Ng-A-Fook earned his B.A. in Classical Studies from Ottawa University; his graduate diploma of education from the University of Western Sydney, Australia; and his Master's of Education from York University, Canada. He will receive his PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from the LSU College of Education in May 2006. He is currently working to convert his dissertation titled "Understanding an Indigenous Curriculum in Louisiana Through Listening to Houma Oral Histories" into a book.

For more information on the United Houma Nation visit:
www.unitedhoumanation.org/

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Educators from China Visit the College of Education

Tuesday, November 1, 2005, the LSU College of Education hosted 13 visitors from China for a luncheon presentation and tours of three Louisiana public schools. The visit was brought about by interest in the work of Bill Doll, PhD, on curriculum and how some of his research can be implemented into the Chinese educational system. Dr. Doll, professor in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at LSU, published three books on curriculum theory that have been translated into Chinese.

Mrs. Ge Mu, an undergraduate student in Arts & Sciences at LSU, was instrumental in setting up the visit. Mrs. Mu's father works for the Education Commission of Heilongjiang Province in China. Mrs. Mu translated her father's comments on Doll's work, indicating that "Professor Doll's book *A Post-modern Perspective on Curriculum* has made a deep and great influence in the field of Chinese education."

The visitors, known as the Education Research Team, were hosted by the Education Commission of Heilongjiang Province in China. Three of the 13 members are elementary school principals in Harbin, the capital city of Heilongjiang Province. These elementary schools, which serve more than 1,000 students each, focus on bilingual education. The other 10 visitors are officials from the Education Commission of Heilongjiang Province, including the director and vice-director of basic education.

Most of the high schools and elementary schools in Heilongjiang Province have undergone a "curriculum revolution," Mrs. Ge Mu translated for the visitors. "Their achievement has been regarded as a great success by the Education Ministry of China. LSU's education department is very famous, so, this is a great chance for us to learn more."

"Hosting international visitors is an excellent way to open avenues for collaborative research and to expand our own experiences with different cultures," said Dean M. Jayne Fleener of the College of Education, who also has two books being translated into Chinese.

The program for the Chinese visitors included several tours of area schools organized by Elizabeth Willis, PhD, through her close ties with local school administrators. The first three tours included classroom observation of Holmes elementary teachers at Broadmoor Elementary School and Sherwood Middle School of the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. Mr. Alan Jeff Berthelot, College of Education alumnus and social studies teacher who works with the Holmes students at Sherwood Middle School, described the LSU-School partnership, "We work together, giving and taking and sharing ideas in a truly collaborative way." Mr. Berthelot also stressed the strong professional-academic relationship that evolves from designing classroom inquiry projects as thesis research.

After meeting with Sherwood Middle School faculty, the Chinese Research Team enjoyed a lunch hosted by College of Education Dean M. Jayne Fleener. During the luncheon, Dr. Doll gave a presentation on the LSU Holmes Elementary Education Program called "Designing and Implementing a Post-Modern Curriculum." The day concluded with another tour of the LSU University Laboratory School and visits to area attractions.

Dr. Doll is Coordinator of the Holmes Elementary Education Program and Codirector of the Curriculum Theory Project. One of the primary goals of the College of Education Curriculum Theory Project is to research the role education plays in a democratic society with focus on internationalization of curriculum, reflective teaching and inquiry, cultural studies, and global and social responsibility.

"Professor Doll's ideas on education are not only valuable for China, but also valuable for the world education field," reflected Mrs. Mu.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 3, 2023 @ 12:00 PM

Join Louisiana Veterans for Medicinal Cannabis (LVMC) and LAMMJ in advocating for patient's HOMEGROW rights. The second annual event will feature special guest speakers, including a physician, a farmer, a firefighter, and a California Medical Cannabis dispensary owner along with first-hand testimonials from veterans, patients, and families who have lost loved ones to The Opioid Crisis.

HOMEGROW provides a quick and cost-free solution to the state's problem of ensuring equal access, availability, and affordability for patients throughout the state. Additionally, HOMEGROW can revitalizing the many vacant acres of Black farmlands while injecting a cash boom into the struggling Louisiana economy.

It's a win win for everyone. This is the second year for the Veterans' Rally which focuses on highlighting plant medicine's positive impact on veterans' and patients' lives, careers, and families.

VETERANS RALLY FOR HOMEGROW

April 10, 2023

9:00 AM @ VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK

(Formerly Arsenal Park)

BATON ROUGE — Plagued with shortages, medication rationing, and prices three-times higher than other states, patients enrolled in Louisiana's Medical Marijuana (MMJ) program are begging legislators to offer the option of home cultivation, known as "HOMEGROW."

"Patients are suffering. It has created an equal access problem, that at this point only HOMEGROW can fix," says Tony Landry, a Navy Veteran who founded both the Rally and the advocacy group Louisiana Veterans for Medical Cannabis (LVMC).

"People should not be hurting because they cannot afford something priced at a 300% markup," added Landry. "We have the capacity here to help people, but instead, a handful of people are controlling who gets pain relief and who gets to hurt—and, that is just wrong," said Landry.

"Let me put it to people bluntly: Patients are not here to pay-off legislators condos in the Caribbean," said Angela Owings Broussard, medical marijuana patient and advocate. "We begged our legislators last session to help us, to expand the market. All they did was dig in deeper. Patients can handle this better ourselves with HOMEGROW and caregivers," said Broussard, who

founded the advocacy group LAMMJ to combat the stigma many patients face for choosing to medicate with marijuana.

Patients in many other medical states have HOMEGROW; states like Missouri, Vermont, Maine, Alaska allow patients to grow sometimes up to 12 plants. For patients who cannot garden, community “caregivers” can grow for patients, even specializing strains to meet the needs of specific medical conditions.

Most states have hundreds of growers and thousands of dispensaries. “Louisiana has the least amount and the highest prices...and that is no coincidence,” says Army National Guard veteran Etienne Fontan, who also co-owns Berkeley Patients Group, the longest continually operating medical cannabis dispensary in the United States, located in California.

“The quality is not medicinal; patients should have choices. This is not a free market,” added Fontan who’s advocacy background began in his childhood, advocating alongside his family, fighting for students who are Blind to attain free educational transportation in Louisiana.

As a founding board member, Fontan served on the National Cannabis Industry Association’s (NCIA) Board of Directors from 2010 to 2020, including serving as Board Chair from 2012 to 2013. Fontan founded the Veterans Action Council and sits on the advisory board for Battle Brothers Foundation.

Patients are not the only people missing out, according to John Ford, a Louisiana Hemp farmer and, more recently Cannabis Entrepreneur. “Mississippi already has made more money just in the licensing process, than Louisiana did in four (4) years.

“Louisiana’s struggling economy is missing out on millions of dollars. Louisiana Black farmers have thousands of acres of vacant farmland that could grow medicine and small business opportunities not just for Black farmers but other communities as well,” added Ford.

According to the Mississippi Medical Cannabis Program, the state just opened in February of 2023. There are currently 313 Dispensaries and Cultivation/Testing Facilities (https://www.mmcp.ms.gov/search_business).

Louisiana has been operational since 2018; selling marijuana since 2019. We have two (2) cultivators and (9) dispensaries. The state has yet to report how much money has been made off the mainly cash sales of marijuana.

Ford was not alone. Many Louisiana entrepreneurs had to leave the State of Louisiana just to open a business. Within six months, Mississippi welcomed them and they are now operational in the Mississippi Medical Cannabis market. —and, it didn't require a bribe to do it.

Jeff Schmidtke and a group of Louisiana and Mississippi investors formed Noble Labs and Dispensary, headquartered in Tylertown, Mississippi. The group lobbied in Louisiana for years, fighting to get a license that never was issued.

“The opportunity in Mississippi brings forth mixed emotions. On the one hand, we are very excited to put our infrastructure into action. On the other hand, it's a bit disappointing Louisiana could not provide this same opportunity,” said Schmidtke.

Including a hub for cannabis education and development to expand the industry state-wide, “Mississippi is poised to do great things, for a great many people—patients and industry.”

“Patients see what is going on in Mississippi and they are starting to realize that we are like ‘Sitting Ducks’ with this kind of a set-up, it's corrupt and it's un-American” added Landry.

Dr. James Moises said that Louisiana's patients who are the most ill are the ones who lose in this type of a scenario, citing high costs, product shortages/ inconsistency, and low-potency/low-terpene THC flower.

Treating patients as young as five to 95, some of Dr. Moises's patients really struggle if their tincture is unavailable. “Seizures return. Pain gets bad if you miss a dose—just like any other medicine. People are suffering, unnecessarily,” added Dr. Moises of the Medical & Marijuana Clinic located in the New Orleans area, adding, “This is not a recreational, once-a-week kind of thing. I treat marijuana just like a medicine because it is a medicine.”

Researchers discover new applications for marijuana's medicinal potential as more states and countries enact medical cannabis programs for patients or recreational programs for party goers.

“People are discovering new uses for it every day,” Marijuana is a less harmful alternative to the deadly drugs that are circulating on the streets, out there right now,” said Casey Leleux, a harm-reduction advocate who leads The Levi Grace Foundation.

Leleux's daughter Lyric, or "BeBop" as her family and friends called her, took a pill she thought was a Xanax. "It was a fake. And, it was laced with enough Fentanyl to kill several people," recounted Leleux about that horrible day almost a year ago that took her daughter's life.

After, BeBop's passing, Leleux began handing out as much Narcan as she could, hoping that more people would have this life-saving medication available and be able to stop an opioid overdose in mere minutes.

Professional firefighter Orlando Wallace added how deep the epidemic runs: "I've administered Narcan in trailers. I've administered Narcan in mansions—Opioids kill anyone no matter the zip code. And, Fentanyl is everywhere," said Wallace who witnessed first-hand, multiple times a day, how many people die due to opioid overdoses.

Wallace was fired after serving on the Baton Rouge Fire Department for more than 10 years. He also is a US Air Force veteran and speaking on the need for employment protections for Firefighters and First Responders. Wallace, like many other patients, is looking to move out of the State of Louisiana and into a more patient-friendly and protected state.

Firefighters are not the only who can save lives with Narcan. In addition to passing out as much Narcan as she can, harm-reduction advocate Casey Leleux wants to make Narcan available in businesses and schools and even vending machines.

"Saving as many lives as we can is the point," said Leleux.

"Cannabis can play an important role in dealing with The Opioid Crisis, marijuana, especially something therapeutic like growing it at home could be another tool in tool chest during the the long road to recovery many people face in dealing with addiction and dependency."

Leleux' group, The Levi Grace Foundation, advocates for a "Harm Reduction Strategy" for treating addiction that begins with acceptance, aiming to reduce the overall level of drug use among people who suffer from addiction and dependency, designing policies that help them to live better, healthier lives rather than to punish them.

"Growing something from seed to plant, to medicine—there is therapy in that," said Ryan Bales, an Army veteran who served in Afghanistan and Iraq. Bales hopes that caregiving will help veterans not only afford their medicine but give

them a chance to reconnect with other service members and provide a way to “giving back” through service to the veteran community.

“If it’s your brother or sister that you served with, It think it carries a lot more weight,” added Bales, who is hopeful to one day grow medicine for his Uncle Joe, a World War II veteran whose life was changed dramatically by MMJ.

“So while the state just finished a grand ‘Mardi Gras’ themed promotion of their King Cake-flavored gummies, veterans like Orlando Wallace are losing their jobs over a positive THC test,” said Broussard, “This is a state approved recommendation, obtained from a licensed physician, bought at a dispensary, dispensed by a pharmacist, and sold by the State of Louisiana,” if that is not state-approved, what would be?”

“Many of Louisiana’s MMJ patients are people recovering from opioid dependency or addiction, or disabled veterans, the elderly, and even children patients who are living in chronic pain and undergoing cancer treatment,” added Landry, “This is not a group anyone should be messing with,” said Landry. “They have enough to deal with, just existing with their chronic illnesses.”

“No politician should be making money off a veterans’ PTSD or a recovering opioid dependent’s path to recovery. Patients have begged everyone for help and all they did was put up a recreational tax bill. We need HOMEGROW and we need it last year,” said Landry.

“Come to the rally, show your support for veterans and all MMJ patients who need help in this state,” said Landry.

Rhett Anthony will be performing for the Rally, Live Music provided by Pipi’s Purpose and Blue Basin Canna. The rally will feature personal testimony from veterans, patients, families impacted by The Opioid Crisis, doctors, farmers... first-hand stories about how Homegrow could change not just patients’ lives, but the entire State of Louisiana’s Agricultural Small Business Economy.

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EVENT ORGANIZERS, VOLUNTEERS, SPECIAL GUESTS, SPEAKERS
For Samples of Each Speaker and Detailed Biographical Information, Visit
WWW.LAMMJ.ORG/HOMEGROWSESSIONS

*If no contact information is available, for the person you wish to interview,
please contact the main media contact: Tony Landry.*

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Army Combat Veteran, Desert Storm

West Virginia Army National Guard

Founder Veterans Action Council

Founding Board Member + Former Chair, National Cannabis Industry Association

Vice President + Co-owner of Berkeley Patients Group, the nation's oldest
continuously operating medical cannabis dispensary, established in 1999 and
located in California.

Since 1993, Fontan has been engaging activists seeking to make cannabis legal
and safe. He lobbies nationally and internationally on veterans' behalf for the
use of cannabis and natural medicines. Fontan founded the Veterans Action
Council and has served on the advisory board for Battle Brothers Foundation.

Fontan founded medical and recreational cannabis retail, cultivation, and
processing facilities in Berkeley, Emeryville, Incline Village, Las Vegas, Los
Angeles, Reno, Sparks, and West Hollywood.

***** Continued Contact List *****

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In April 2022, Casey Leleux lost her daughter Lyric “Bebop” Verrett to the Opioid Epidemic. Lyric took a pill she thought was a Xanax, but it was poisoned with Fentanyl. Leleux became an advocate for harm-reduction methods such as MMJ and encouraging people to “Be the One BEFORE 911,” passing out as much Narcan as possible. Leleux will be speaking on behalf of her organization The Levi Grace Foundation. The Today Show covered Lyric’s untimely passing and how her mom is determined to stop it from happening to other young adults and teens.

BIOGRAPHIES

**SPECIAL INVITED SPEAKERS,
RALLY SPECIAL GUESTS + HOMEGROW SESSION INTERVIEWEES**
**** Please contact Tony Landry for additional information on these speakers****
**** Speakers will be available for interview @ the rally ****

Orlando Wallace
Air Force Veteran
Professional Firefighter
VAC Member; LVMC Volunteer

After serving in the US Air Force, Wallace has been a Professional Firefighter for more than a decade. He sees the effects of synthetic opioids such as Fentanyl every day and has been a loud advocate for firefighters’ and others in the First Responder community to have employment protections for medicating with MMJ.

Wallace also served on a task force to help firefighters deal with the trauma they experience on a daily basis. Wallace has seen the toll the job takes on firefighters first-hand as he himself struggles with the traumatic events that he has witnessed as a firefighter and veteran. Wallace was recently fired for testing positive for marijuana—despite having a valid physician’s recommendation for the medication.

**** Continued Contact List ****

Ryan Bales

Army Veteran, 82nd Airborne

LVMC Volunteer

Ryan Bales served in The US Army 82nd Airborne Division, completing tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Bales has been a vocal advocate for the service men and women he has served alongside, hoping to reduce the stigma associated with medicating with MMJ.

Bales is hopeful with the passing of HOMEGROW legislation, that he could serve his brothers and sisters by registering as a CAREGROWER, helping veterans and MMJ patients obtain the best strain for their condition. CAREGROWERS provide a vital component of HOMEGROW, in that they serve patients who cannot grow for themselves due to their medical condition, agricultural knowledge, or living arrangements. Bales notes this can provide therapeutic benefits not just for the patients receiving their specific strains but also for the veteran growing the cannabis for other veterans, similar to the Therapy Gardens suggested for soldiers returning from World War II.

John Ford

Black Farmers Hemp

Ford is a hemp farmer in Louisiana and an MMJ farmer in Mississippi. He has expert-level agricultural knowledge of the cannabis plant and first-hand knowledge about the industry in both Louisiana and Mississippi. Ford is involved in outreach activities in an attempt to engage Black entrepreneurs and educate Black farmers about cannabis and it's potential to benefit reinvigorate the many acres of vacant farmlands throughout the state.

Additionally, Ford can comment on the economic boom cannabis is for so many more people in the Black community while helping patients who are desperate for specific strains, better quality medicine, and more affordable pain relief.

Ford has been vocal about how Louisiana is not seizing this golden opportunity to use the many vacant acres of farmland owned by Black and minority farmers across the state.

With the Black Farmers Hemp Flagship location in Lafayette, Louisiana, Black Farmers Hemp are "Modern Reparation Farmers" with the goal to grow high quality premium hemp floral for our Black Farmers Hemp CBD wellness brands. The hemp is grown indoors using organic/natural practices without any harmful chemicals.

***** Continued Contact List *****

Dr. James Moises

Moises Medical & Marijuana Center

Born and raised in New Orleans, Dr. James Moises completed medical school and residency training at LSU School of Medicine New Orleans and Charity Hospital. As a board certified Emergency Medicine physician, he achieved faculty appointments as an Assistant Clinical Professor of Surgery at Tulane School of Medicine and an Associate Clinical Professor of Emergency Medicine at LSU School of Medicine New Orleans. In addition to many years of Neuroscience research and academia, he has spent more than 20 year practicing clinical Emergency Medicine at various community hospital emergency rooms.

Dr. Moises has spent many days at the Capitol advocating for increased access, affordability, and HOMEGROW for his many patients who require high doses of MMJ.

Jeff Schmidtke

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As a founding member of Noble Labs, Schmidtke became the team's director of business development in 2021, responsible for overseeing the administration, programs, and strategic plan of the organization. Schmidtke graduated from Christian Brothers University in 2001 and has a Masters Degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. With more than 13 years of experience working with businesses facing transitions and transformations, Schmidtke leads Noble Labs as they transition and grow into a premier cannabis provider in Mississippi.

REFERENCES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 5, 2022 @ 12:00 PM

Join Louisiana Veterans for Medicinal Cannabis (LVMC) in raising awareness of the healing properties of psychedelic plant medicines; hear first-hand, personal stories about the positive impact plant medicines have made in the lives of veterans and advocates.

March 14, 2022
9:00 AM
@ VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK
(Formerly Arsenal Park)

LVMC welcomes the community to an event to raise awareness of the healing properties of cannabis and psychedelic plant medicines. The event features a range of veteran and community speakers highlighting plant medicine's positive impact on their personal and professional lives.

BATON ROUGE — The Louisiana Veterans for Medicinal Cannabis (LVMC) extends a warm welcome to join LVMC and other plant medicine advocacy groups at the Veterans Memorial Park (formerly Armory Park) on March 14, 2022 at 8 AM.

Veterans, their families, and friends along with community members, media organizations, and local advocacy organizations are invited to Veterans Memorial Park (formerly Armory Park) on the grounds of the Louisiana State Capitol to hear first-hand stories about the positive impact plant medicines have had on veterans, their physical and mental health, and their families and communities.

“We reached out to our veteran community and they answered,” said Tony Landry, director of LVMC, a non-partisan advocacy group made up of both veterans and civilians. “Veterans will be telling their stories, these are deeply personal stories about plant medicine’s role in their recovery or management of their medical condition.”

Landry’s grassroots advocacy group promotes wellbeing within the veteran community through support and education. Landry also uses his voice amongst the veteran community to navigate legislative bills and get the word out to Louisiana Veteran voters, which bills will favor veteran access to safe, affordable medical cannabis.

“Plant medicine does not cause the terrible mental, physical, and social side effects that opioid and similar pharmaceuticals cause,” said Landry. “Many people in our community treat their pain with these less harmful and natural plant medicines.”

Currently, the only plant medicine available in Louisiana is medical marijuana. The exorbitant costs of Louisiana’s ill-equipped marijuana monopoly forces many patients

to leave the program, instead buying cannabis off the street because it's cheaper. Stigma also forces patients to under-treat their pain due to the legal consequences and safety risks in purchasing their cannabis from the illicit market.

This under-treated pain can be physical or mental. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation and the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Louisiana is experiencing an increase in mental health challenges: as much as 47% of adults reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, compared to just 31.6% of adults in the U.S." (Kaiser Family Foundation; National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2021).

With a geographic location smack dab in the middle of "Cancer Alley," plant medicine's role in addressing Louisiana residents' cancer-related depression cannot be ignored: "Johns Hopkins researchers report that a substantial majority of people suffering cancer related anxiety or depression found considerable relief for up to six months from a single large dose of psilocybin" (Gukasyan et. Al., 2022).

Psilocybin is the naturally occurring psychedelic compound found in magic mushrooms that allows it to penetrate the central nervous system.

"This is not some 'magic mushroom' or 'Dazed & Confused' party stuff. Even our conservative neighboring state of Texas is waking up to the psychedelic renaissance," Landry mentioned, referring to the Center for Psychedelic Research and Therapy at the Dell Medical School of the University of Texas at Austin.

"These are just a few examples of prestigious medical schools and universities conducting *actual* scientific research that explores innovative treatments using psilocybin...research that is helping not just veterans but people with Alzheimer's, epilepsy, ALS/MLS/MS...real people in real time," said Landry. "With all of the talent in Louisiana, we need to be doing things like this. Why bother involving LSU and Southern University if they are not conducting any research?"

"Thinking outside the box really paid off for these other universities," Landry described, "Johns Hopkins just raised \$17 million in psychedelics research funding and formed the Center for Psychedelic and Consciousness Research."

Rally organizers hope to inspire Louisiana to embrace not only medical marijuana but also psilocybin, hoping the state will see plant medicine not just as medicine but as a celebrated, state-wide natural resource.

"I especially want to thank Representative Coussan for supporting Louisiana Veterans in this mission to bring about awareness of the beneficial affect plant medicines can have on our body and mind. By sponsoring our event and providing the necessary equipment for our speakers," added Landry, "Representative Coussan is helping veterans get their story out there, first-hand, for everyone to hear."

One speaker, a veteran helping other veterans, is working to do just that via his modern, no-judgement approach to therapy: “Medicinal cannabis is seen as a strong ally for relief, growth, and change,” said Morgan City native and five-year, combat veteran turned licensed professional counselor Joshua Moffett.

Moffett served three tours of duty in Iraq and two tours in Afghanistan with the 3rd Ranger Battalion out of Ft. Benning, Georgia, completing more than 300 combat missions, one of which was a rescue and recovery operation for Operation Red Wings—made famous through the book and film *Lone Survivor* (2013) starring Mark Wahlberg who portrayed former Navy Seal Marcus Luttrell.

Moffett decided to take a leap of faith in his counseling work with other veterans: “Instead of judging people for using cannabis, I decided to use it as a resource.”

Moffett’s non-traditional approach to therapy could help veterans manage reintegration challenges they face, “Cannabis and other plant medicines can help veterans process their painful memories of war,” said Moffett, adding, “In my work, stigma is a barrier to many people. The more we talk positively about plant medicines, people will feel better about accessing it as a medication.”

Current state law allows only physicians to prescribe MMJ, so while Moffett cannot send in a recommendation to a marijuana dispensary, he integrates cannabis into his online therapy outfit Accurate Empathy Counseling, “Plant medicine helps some veterans find relief. I’ve seen it with my own eyes. As a therapist my goal is to use any tools available to assist veterans on their path to healing and spiritual growth after all they’ve been through.”

In addition to veterans, several speakers from local advocacy groups with missions related to plant medicine helped organize the event. “So many families have been hurt by opioids. Pain pills have ruined people’s lives,” said Angela Owings Broussard, a volunteer medical marijuana (MMJ) advocate with LAMMJ, an organization that seeks to eliminate the stigma of using marijuana as medicine, especially as it relates to the Opioid Epidemic.

According to the Louisiana Department of Health “Louisiana has one of the highest per capita overdose rates in the nation, raking 11th overall. Last year alone, 15 out of every 100,000 persons in Louisiana died due to accidental overdose. According to the CDC, 46 people die daily from an overdose of prescription painkillers in the U.S. with 10 of highest prescribing states in the South.”

“We have this great medicine, something easy to grow and easy on your body. Research proves that it can help people stop taking opioids...but, because of some outdated, disproved, *Easy Rider*-1970’s propaganda, people are scared to death to use it,” Broussard added, citing the Nixon Administration’s initial press strategy that spawned the failed War on Drugs (Winkelman, 2014; Dufton, 2012).

“Are we really still talking about medical marijuana stigma the week after Mardi Gras in Louisiana?” asked Broussard, “That’s pretty rich...Look, we are getting the word out that plant medicine can help end opioid dependency and addiction for many people. Plant medicine can help veterans process trauma. Time is NOT on our side here,” added Broussard. “The quicker we end this ridiculous stigma and expand the number of cultivators to 10 in Louisiana’s over-priced market, the more family members and friends we are saving from dying in the opioid epidemic.”

Another advocate taking part in the rally, is Lessie LeBlanc. Raised in Lafayette, LeBlanc serves as the Acadiana Community Organizer working on the LA REPEAL Project for The Promise of Justice Initiative (PJI), which works to create positive change for people in the criminal legal system. The group focuses on ending the death penalty, challenging inhumane conditions of confinement, exposing prosecutorial and judicial misconduct, providing pro-bono representation for criminal defendants, and fighting racism in the criminal legal system.

Many other states are seeing great gains in re-investing in underserved communities through cannabis-business initiatives. Businesses can thrive while also helping the people in our state who rely on cannabis and other plant medicines for relief.

Decriminalize Nature’s Baton Rouge group is trying to do just that. Lifelong East Baton Rouge Parish resident, Donna McCollough founded the local chapter to help improve and expand the state’s medical marijuana program to include psychedelics and all plant medicines as a treatment option.

“Fungi, Ayahuasca, peyote...these have been used by our ancestors for thousands of years. We refer to them as ‘entheogenic,’ a Greek word which translates to ‘Becoming divine from within,” adding, “They expand consciousness and help you process trauma so that you can heal” said McCollough.

“If we have veterans coming back from war in pain, whether it is physical pain from losing limbs or feelings of emotional numbness, we need to give them all the tools we have so they can heal,” reminded McCollough.

Francis Dorsey, an 11-Year Infantryman from New Iberia who retired from the U.S. Army due to his combat-related injury recalled, “My deep love for photography helped pull me out of pain pill despair. Doing something you love distracts you from the sadness, pain, and trauma that led us to addiction in the first place.” Dorsey is serving as the volunteer photographer for the event through his self-named photography studio located in New Iberia.

Dorsey pointed out, recalling what he described as “a revolving door of pill mills...pills that caused more problems than they solved. The beautiful thing about plant medicine: I went from nine medications...to only two.”

“In fact, growing plant medicine can be as helpful as consuming it for some veterans,” Dorsey illustrated using a veteran-led Hemp farm in Louisiana that uses the physical act of Hemp farming as therapy for veterans.

Horticultural Therapy, similar to sensory-related therapies, uses the soil under foot, the sweat...whether it's time spent outdoors in the sun and fresh air or inside a greenhouse, the literal hands-on approach to nature through gardening has helped humans heal since our history began according to the American Horticultural Association. Organizers hope that hearing what other states are doing will inspire Louisiana to initiate similar statewide green exercise and horticultural therapy programs to that would do nothing but help our state's economy and the people who live here.

"With reduced barriers of entry for both patients and local, small businesses, a more open cannabis industry would create a micro-business boom all over the state," said Aurora CBD & Hemp co-owner Hunter A. Poiencot, COO of Aurora CBD & Hemp.

Poiencot began bringing hemp-derived products to market in efforts to help his infant cousin who was using CBD to treat her rare form of epilepsy. "The cost of the products is too high, yet this is caused by the legislation itself which seems to be the limiting factor and downfall of the program. Open the market, and I guarantee our current program will see the influx of patients that it needs to create a larger demand and drive down the cost associated with these products."

While Industrial Hemp laws have changed in Louisiana, the state restricts patients from growing their own THC-rich medical cannabis. "Most medical states allow patients to cultivate up to nine (9) plants in the safety of their own home or outdoor garden," with our lack of diversity in the Louisiana Medical Marijuana program, "HOMEGROW is a must!" said Poiencot.

Patient-centered Medical Marijuana programs support HOMEGROW and are seeing significant positive results through their use of therapeutic cannabis cultivation non-profit organizations and farming co-operatives. Organizers are hoping to help transform Louisiana's current program into a Patient-centric Medical Cannabis Regulatory Program outlined by NORML. Home Cultivation is a required attribute for this type of program.

In addition to speeches from veterans and advocates, "Chief Albert P. "White Buffalo" Naquin, Traditional Chief of Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians, will begin the ceremony with a speech about the collaborative efforts of our cajun and indigenous ancestors' use of plant medicines and how climate change is currently eroding the very land many of our ancestors grew these plants on and called home.

“The good of plants,” we know this as fact, said Chief Naquin, “I was raised on the Island and that’s all we had. There was no road and the doctors were our elders. There were plants for every disease and ailment.”

In addition to speeches by veterans, advocacy groups, and cultural leaders, other invited guests topics include: Prison recidivism reduction through psychotherapy re-entry programs, changing legal statutes and laws related to psychedelic plants, patient barriers to access plant medicine, harm reduction while medicating with plants, and a focus on plant medicine stigma’s role in the National Opioid Crisis.

“This event is the first time we’ve combined our local advocacy groups. We are laser-focused on ending the stigma and expanding access and affordability of these life-changing medications for Louisiana patients,” added Broussard.

“The *Easy Rider* days are over,” said Landry. “We are going to change the way Louisiana views plant medicine. Plant medicine helps and it’s here to stay. More importantly, though, health is a human right and a right to health requires a right to access affordable medicine.”

PLAN OF THE DAY

- | | |
|--|---|
| 9:00 AM | Opening Prayer for Good Harvest (Announcer, TBA)
Chief Albert P. "White Buffalo" Naquin,
Traditional Chief of Isle de Jean Charles Band of
Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians
<i>Collaborative efforts of our cajun and indigenous ancestors' use
of plant medicines and how climate change is currently eroding
the very land many of our ancestors grew these plants on and
called home.</i> |
| 9:00 - 9:30 AM | <i>Introduction: Tony Landry, Lead Event Organizer & Veteran</i>
State Representative Jean-Paul P. Coussan (Dist. 45)
<i>Special Guest: Invited Veteran Speech</i>
<i>Joshua Moffett</i> |
| 9:30 - 9:55 AM | <i>Additional Veteran Testimony from Attendees</i> |
| 9:55 - 10:00 AM | Brief walk to the State Capitol Steps
Posting of Flags
Vocalist + Instrumental Song |
| 10:10 - 11:00 AM
11:00 AM | <i>Community Advocate Speeches</i>
Color Guard Posts Flag and Colors inside Capitol Rotunda
Attendees & Organizers invite attendees to gather in the Capitol
Rotunda for networking with their local representatives to support
plant medicine-related legislation during the opening of the 2022
Louisiana Legislative Session. |

CONTACTS FOR SPECIFIC MEDIA INQUIRIES:

EVENT ORGANIZER & LEAD MEDIA CONTACT

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VETERAN SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKERS & VOLUNTEERS

Joshua Moffett

Veteran Special Guest Speaker

Combat Veteran & Counselor

Founder of Accurate Empathy Counseling

<https://www.accurateempathycounseling.com>

Francis Dorsey

Combat Veteran & Volunteer Event Photographer

Owner of Francis Dorsey Photography

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Chief Albert P. "White Buffalo" Naquin

Traditional Chief of the Isle de Jean Charles

Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians

Speaker: Climate Change + Disappearing Lands + Plant Medicines of Ancestors

<http://www.isledejeancharles.com/tribal-leadership>

EVENT CO-ORGANIZERS & GUEST SPEAKERS & COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

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