

Reconnecting a Neighborhood – Third Annual BooDat celebration brings awareness, community, and joy to Gert Town Community.

Hundreds gathered in the middle of a Gert Town neighborhood for 12 hours of free youth arts and crafts with local artist **Ayo Scott**, STEM projects presented by **STEM Nola**; youth and adult costume contests; the “Fright Night” haunted house; safe trunk or treat with the **New Orleans Police Department – Second District**; a Thriller Flash Mob with the “Bad Girls” from **Nice Guys NOLA**; interactive activities with the **New Orleans Fire Department**; and closed the night out “Dancing in the Streets” featuring celebrity **DJ Arie Spins**.

The birthplace / residence of many New Orleans legends including **Dave Bartholemew**, the Mackie Family (**Calvin Mackie** – Founder and Director of STEM Nola and **Anthony Mackie – Captain America**); Gert Town stakeholders came together to inspire creativity, family, community, and giving back. The event took place around the corner from the house that the late great **Allen Toussaint** grew up in and where he wrote many hit songs. The once tightknit community of families that lived in the area for over 50 - 100 years, many neighbors had never spoken to or even seen each other prior to the event. Other past residents were excited to come back home and reconnect at the event.

Attendees were also treated to a complimentary array of family foods including gumbo, red beans and rice, meat sauce and spaghetti, jambalaya, pastas, meatballs, corn bread, and desserts.

Event organizer says the support of so many area organizations helped make the day such a success. “I received so many ‘absolutely’ responses from area businesses and organizations. They were excited to be included and to have an opportunity to be in the neighborhood interacting with their constituents and fellow community members.” The Marchand and Billy Families, friends, and other community members were the foundation that made this event a reality. Additionally, **Total Community Action**, **Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Louisiana**, and **Together Gert Town** all sponsors of the event, had staffed tents to provide information about the resources they have available to the area’s residents. **Richard’s Disposal Inc.** donated two portable toilets. **Xavier University of Louisiana**, **the Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Black Catholics**, **Transcendent Law Group**, **Nice Guys NOLA**, **Go.Be.**, **K. Jones Advisors**, **Orleans Entertainment**, **Paparazzi Cam Photo Booth and Photography**, and **DJ Arie Spins** participated in various ways throughout the event providing judges, volunteers, in-kind services and donations, and logistical and planning support.

“This is how real change happens in our communities – people focusing beyond themselves and their immediate circles and collectively focusing on others,” said Marchand. To that point, after the recent domestic violence tragedy in which a New Orleans mother lost her three children, her home, and all her possessions, event organizers quickly accepted an invitation from radio personality **Wild Wayne** and community leader / psychiatrist **Megan Andry** to add a service element to the event – raising Domestic Violence Awareness and fundraising and seeking in-kind services for the surviving mother. The BOO!Dat23 event was able to collect 7 bins of donations and raised several hundred dollars in support of the “**My Three Angels**” Campaign. The **Knights of Peter Claver and Ladies Auxiliary – State of Louisiana** were on hand to collect donations and have taken the project on as a month-long community service project. Marchand says we must not forget this mother or this crucial cause, “**We want to help their campaign reach \$100,000 by Thanksgiving and we are challenging other events, businesses, and individuals to step up and support however they can.**”

Categorized Event Photos: www.BooDat.com (If you need particular photos and can’t access, please contact us so we can assist)

Event videos available upon request

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