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AN ANALYSIS OF FAITH-BASED HOMELESS SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS IN  
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA AND THEIR ROLE IN HELPING HOMELESS  
PEOPLE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Public Administration

By

Willie E. Green, Jr.

B.S. Xavier University, 1993

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## ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been a strong push on the federal level to support efforts of faith-based organizations, which provide a variety of social services ranging from literacy improvement efforts to homeless prevention. This thesis sheds light on the current efforts by faith-based homeless service providers in the Baton Rouge area, and examines their role in helping the homeless. This thesis uses existing literature and interviews with the director of The Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless as well others involved with homeless programs in Baton Rouge. This thesis also provides data collected by the ServicePoint HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) which gives a clearer picture of which agencies are providing services in Baton Rouge, and the clients served by these agencies. The efforts of these organizations were particularly critical following Hurricane Katrina, and it is vital that those in the policy arena understand the role of these organizations.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

With merely a cursory review of news media or a walk down any major street of any metropolitan area, one can easily glean that homelessness is a major problem in the United States. Faith-based organizations have played a role in assisting homeless individuals and families by providing shelter, food, clothing and help with overcoming addictions for hundreds of years. Members of the faith-based community have been involved in helping to end homelessness, and the Faith-Based Initiative has shed more light on the value of these faith-based agencies.

According to information distributed by the White House, President George W. Bush created the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives and Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in eleven federal agencies to lead a determined attack on need by strengthening and expanding the role of faith based community organizations (FBCOs) in providing social services. To help accomplish this the federal government has worked on this through an array of regulatory and policy reforms, legislative efforts, and public outreach to FBCOs. Additionally, by making information about federal grants more accessible and the application process less burdensome, the initiative has empowered FBCOs to compete more effectively for funds. (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/president-initiative.html>)

This current study was done for various reasons. For those concerned about the fight against homelessness, and those involved in the policy arena it is important to understand exactly how faith-based organizations meet their objectives and what their accomplishments are. Understanding the role of these organizations is important for

several reasons. First, these issues are important because a problem can not be effectively solved until it has been defined, and current solutions examined.

Those who support faith-based programs believe that faith may play a role in assisting homeless individuals. They also tend to believe that any type of recovery can only be aided if a spiritual and community bonding associated with organized religion is incorporated in the homeless clients' assistance. Because these organizations have a history of assisting those most in need, they feel that that should remain a part of the fight to end homelessness in the community.

Those opposed to government funding have concerns related to tax payer dollars being used to possibly promote religion and possibly exclude people who need assistance due to their religious beliefs. Those policy makers who are opposed to funding faith-based programs see it as a form of religious discrimination and feel that such support is in direct opposition to the principles of separation of church and state.

Additionally, this issue is important because billions of taxpayer dollars have been allocated to homeless service providers and many taxpayers may not have a clear understanding of the work these organizations have done in their communities. To further our understanding, this thesis examines the issue by drawing on existing literature on this subject, interviews with homeless service providers and a service provider management information system. By drawing on information from various sources there should be a clearer and more balanced view of the issues involved.

This study utilizes information from various sources to offer insight that can only be obtained if multiple sources are used. The existing literature used in this study includes governmental documents and announcements. In most cases these documents



contain the goals and guidelines for the governments homeless programs. These sources give us a better understanding of how the government programs to assist the homeless are designed and they also show some of goals of the government's involvement in faith-based programs. The academic studies and various web sites and publications cited offer data on the national homeless statistics, as well as provide a background on the history of faith-based social service programs locally, nationally and internationally. The empirical reports used in this study were conducted by several organizations, such as The National Law Center and the National Low Income Housing Coalition. These organizations appeared to be unbiased and offered a wide range of statistical data on homelessness. Several scholarly reports that focused on the history of the government's involvement in social service issues also offered invaluable insight.

The interviews and ServicePoint data collected also help in understanding the role of these organizations. The interviews make it possible to gain a better understanding of what the agencies in Baton Rouge are actually involved in because we get to hear from the actual agency staff and the director of the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless (CAAH). The ServicePoint homeless management information system (HMIS) data is used to explore the types of services offered by the organizations, and the types of clients served. This information is useful because it helps to highlight the work done by the organizations. The data collected also helps provide background information and insight on issues covered in the interview process. The interview process covers such issues as the percentage of services offered by faith-based organizations and those performed by non-faith-based organizations, and what is the level of participation by faith-based

organizations in Baton Rouge. The HMIS data collected and the interviews work hand in hand to highlight the programs and the work they do.

There has been some debate in the press and in Washington about the delicate relationship between faith-based organizations and the governments funding of these organizations. Critics have expressed the view that faith based groups are using federal funds to discriminate against the clients they serve. This thesis will show how selected faith-based organizations may or may not limit services based on a homeless persons religious beliefs. This study also shows how these organizations have helped the homeless in Baton Rouge.

## **Defining Homelessness**

Before one can understand the role of organizations that serve the homeless, there must first be an understanding of who the homeless are. The homeless population is more than just old men living on the downtown streets of our major cities (Culhane & Dejowski, 1999); the homeless are children, adults and families. They come from many racial and ethnic backgrounds as well as from urban and rural communities. Many homeless are in need of job skill training, food, clothing and various social services in addition to needing a roof over their heads (Culhane & Dejowski, 1999).

According to the Stewart B. McKinney Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11301, et seq. (1994), a person is considered homeless who

lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence and; ... has a primary night time residency that is: (A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations..., (B) an institution that

provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or (C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. 42 U.S.C. § 11302(a) The term "'homeless individual' does not include any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to an Act of Congress or a state law. 42 U.S.C. § 11302(c)

The education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act includes a more comprehensive definition of homelessness. This statute states that the term 'homeless child and youth'

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence... and (B) includes: (i) children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement; (ii) children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings... (iii) children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings, and (iv) migratory children...who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii). McKinney-Vento Act sec. 725(2); 42 U.S.C. 11435(2).

Other federal agencies, such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), interpreted the McKinney-Vento definition to include only those persons who are on the streets or in shelters and persons who face imminent eviction (within a week) from a private dwelling or institution and who have no subsequent residence or resources to obtain housing. This interpretation of homelessness serves large, urban communities, where tens of thousands of people are literally homeless. However, it may prove problematic for those persons who are homeless in areas of the country, such as rural areas, where there are few shelters. People experiencing homelessness in these areas are less likely to live on the street or in a shelter, and more likely to live with relatives in overcrowded or substandard housing (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1996).

The next step in this study is to define faith-based organizations and show one tool used by the government to collect homeless population data.

## **Faith-Based Organizations**

In a 2002 report, the Urban Institute stated that there is no generally accepted definition of what constitutes a faith-based organization. For the purposes of their study and this thesis, a faith-based organization *is an organization that holds religious or worship services, or is affiliated with a religious denomination or house of worship (Urban Institute 2002, pg. 12)*. According to the Institute report, “this includes churches and other congregations or houses of worship; nonprofit organizations affiliated with churches, congregations or religions; and local nonprofit organizations affiliated with an umbrella or national faith-based network. Faith-based nonprofit organizations generally

maintain a faith-based mission but the services they deliver may or may not have a faith-based content and if they do have a faith-based content they do not necessarily restrict participants to those who adhere to that faith”(Urban Institute 2002, pg. 12).

For simplicity, this thesis, like the Institute report, will focus on two types of faith-based organizations: (1) local congregations of churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship; and (2) nonprofit organizations with some religious or faith-based association.

## **Thesis Questions**

There are several questions addressed in this thesis. The main question covered by this thesis is what roles do some faith-based social service agencies play in helping the homeless population. Another question relates to who are some of the faith-based agencies providing services to the homeless in Baton Rouge. This thesis also addresses the possible role of faith in the services provided to these clients, and how these organizations may differ from private non-faith-based organizations and governmental organizations. Lastly, this thesis addresses the special concerns and work by these organizations because of Hurricane Katrina.

While homelessness is an enormous problem nationwide, this thesis focuses primarily on southeast Louisiana, with primary detail focusing on Baton Rouge due to the large influx of new homeless in the city as a result of Hurricane Katrina. When Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region, many of the social service programs and a large percentage of the cities population were forced to relocate to Baton Rouge. Almost overnight, the city of Baton Rouge became the largest city in southeast Louisiana. Although the primary focus of this research is not Hurricane Katrina, it is impossible to ignore the effects of Katrina on social service providers, and other organizations in the region.

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

There is an abundance of scholarly research focusing on the homeless population in America for both government agencies and non-profit organizations (Culhane & Dejowski, 1999). When beginning to look at homelessness in Baton Rouge it is beneficial to review the broad issue of homelessness in America. By reviewing national statistics, we can get somewhat of an understanding of the homeless population in Baton Rouge.

### ***The National Statistics***

The National Law Center for Homelessness and Poverty reports that over three million men, women, and children were homeless in 1997 – about 30% of them chronically and the others temporarily. In many cases, people are in and out of the homeless system, which includes shelters, hospitals, the streets, and prisons. “It is these chronic users of the system that utilize up to 90% of the nations resources devoted to the problem” (The National Law Center for Homelessness & Poverty, 1998, pg. 20).

The National Coalition For The Homeless has published an impressive fact sheet that gives a detailed picture of the national homeless population:

### ***Demographics***

Two trends are largely responsible for the rise in homelessness over the past twenty to twenty-five years: a growing shortage of affordable rental housing and a simultaneous increase in poverty. Persons living in poverty are most at risk of becoming homeless, and demographic groups who are more likely to experience poverty are also

more likely to experience homelessness. Recent demographic statistics are summarized as follows. (Statistics for the Baton Rouge area are included later in this thesis.)

### *Age*

In 2001, the U.S. Conference of Mayors' survey of homelessness in 27 cities found that children under the age of 18 accounted for 25.3% of the urban homeless population (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2001). This same study found that unaccompanied minors comprised 4% of the urban homeless population. However, in other cities and especially in rural areas, the numbers of children experiencing homelessness are much higher. On a national level, approximately 39% of the homeless populations are children (Urban Institute 2000). A 1987 Urban Institute study found that 51% of the homeless population were between the ages of 31 and 50 (Burt, 1989); other studies have found percentages of homeless persons aged 55 to 60 ranging from 2.5% to 19.4% (Institute of Medicine, 1988).

### *Gender*

Most studies show that single homeless adults are more likely to be male than female. In 2001, the U.S. Conference of Mayors' survey found that single men comprised 41% of the urban homeless population and single women 14% (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2003).

### *Families*



The number of homeless families with children has increased significantly over the past decade; families with children are among the fastest growing segments of the homeless population. In its 2003 survey of 25 American cities, the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that families comprised 40% of the homeless population, a definite increase from previous years (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2003). On a national level, the numbers are higher: the Urban Institute found that approximately 39% of the homeless populations are children (Urban Institute 2000). These proportions are likely to be higher in rural areas; research indicates that families, single mothers, and children make up the largest group of people who are homeless in rural areas (Vissing, 1996).

As the number of families experiencing homelessness rises and the number of affordable housing units shrinks, families are subject to much longer stays in the shelter system. For instance, in the mid-1990s in New York, families stayed in a shelter an average of five months before moving on to permanent housing. Today, the average stay is nearly a year (Santos, 2002).

### ***Ethnicity***

In its 2003 survey of 25 cities, the U.S. Conference of Mayor found that the homeless population was 49% African-American, 35% Caucasian, 13% Hispanic, 2% Native American, and 1% Asian (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2003).

Like the total U.S. population, the ethnic makeup of homeless populations varies according to geographic location. For example, people experiencing homelessness in rural areas are much more likely to be white; homelessness among Native Americans and

migrant workers is also largely a rural phenomenon (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1996).

According to a US Conference of Mayors, the homeless population is diverse:

- 20% work.
- 22% are mentally disabled.
- 11% are veterans.
- 34% are drug or alcohol dependent.

### *Causes of Homelessness*

Homelessness can be caused by a variety of issues according to most of the research, which has been done in this area. “The main cause is unaffordable housing for the poor. Secondary causes include mental illness, physical illnesses, substance abuse, lack of incentives to work, poor work ethics, and lack of decent education (www.grassroots.org).” According to The National Law Center for Homelessness and Poverty (1998), on top of the three million who were homeless or marginally homeless there are an additional five million poor people that spend over half of their incomes on housing, leaving them on the verge of homelessness. A missed paycheck, a health crisis, or an unpaid bill can easily push poor families over the edge into homelessness according to their study according to the study.

A 2003 report by the US Conference of Mayors reported that many people become homeless for a very specific reason -- they are having a housing crisis. Although they may have other needs for services and increased incomes, they can usually manage

until the final housing crisis befalls them according to the report. What is important to realize is, that their needs are best met once the family is in permanent housing - not while they are in transitional housing or shelters and housing needs must be met first if they are expected to develop a sustainable, healthy lifestyle.

Homelessness can often cause or be caused by serious health problems according to some researchers. Illnesses that are closely associated with homelessness and poverty include tuberculosis, AIDS, malnutrition, and severe dental problems. Other health problems in society such alcoholism, mental illnesses, and physical disabilities are even more debilitating for the homeless, since they may have no shelter or money to manage their health problem. People without shelter easily get frostbite and infections, or become victims of violence. They are also more likely to cohabit with drug addicts, alcoholics, or others with disease. Each year millions of homeless people in the United States need important health care services but most do not have health insurance or cash to pay for medical care. Finding health care is an enormous challenge for the homeless (US Conference of Mayors 2003).

Some researchers believe that “a minority of the homeless population is capable but unwilling to work – they may resent the minimal wages they would receive if they could find work. It would be irresponsible if we did not consider that a minority of the homeless may be inherently "lazy", or substance abuse has made them so (Culhane & Metraux, 1998). In these cases, “there is little help the system can offer that will bring about positive social results.” (Culhane & Metraux, 1998: pg. 25). Culhane & Metraux recommend a “tough love” approach in which able-bodied people must work in some capacity to receive the benefits they seek. However, there is often great difficulty in

distinguishing between those who are able-bodied and those who are mentally ill, substance abusers, and suffer other disabilities. Therefore, it is not easy to classify the homeless into benefit categories or to understand their labor capabilities.

Most people, including the homeless, are not inherently lazy, but the U.S. economic system does not adequately support those at the lowest skill levels, even if they are willing to work –this leads to unemployment and millions of “working poor” (Culhane & Metraux, 1998). Incomes for the poorest Americans have not kept pace with rising housing costs. Therefore, millions of hard workers are shut out of the private housing market.

### ***Responses to Homelessness***

According to the study published by U.S. Conference of Mayors in 2003, “for mayors, city councils, and even homeless providers it may seem that placing homeless people in shelters is the most inexpensive way of meeting basic needs”. However, this is a deceptive oversimplification. The cost of homeless shelters for the chronically ill can be quite high. In addition, because they have no regular place to stay, people who are homeless use a variety of public systems in an inefficient and costly way. Preventing a homeless episode, or ensuring a speedy transition in to stable permanent housing can result in a significant overall cost savings for state and local budgets. Hospitals, prisons, lost opportunity and emergency shelter are all very inefficient” (US Conference of Mayors 2003).

According to Culhane and DeJowski (1999), job training, education, trade schools, and other systemic economic incentives and welfare disincentives should be

applied with whatever funds are available from foundation or government sources. This will raise income levels overall and make housing more affordable. This should lower the overall future level of homelessness when coupled with other benefits the poor and homeless receive other social services such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), food stamps, and TANF (welfare) (Culhane & Dejowski 1999).

Reports by the National Law Center go on to state that the types of assistance homeless adults felt they needed most were help in finding a job, help in finding affordable housing, and in help paying for housing (1998). However, the main types of assistance they received were clothing, transportation and help with public benefits such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Few homeless people actually receive help in finding housing, possibly because most caregivers know that housing is unaffordable and totally beyond their means in their current homeless situation (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 1998).

### ***Government Support of Homeless Programs***

In recent years, the federal government has allocated billions of dollars to help end homelessness in the country. On January 29, 2001, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13198, creating Centers for Faith-Based & Community Initiatives in five cabinet departments. As President Bush observed: “Charities and faith-based groups fill needs that no welfare system, no matter how well designed, can possibly fill...In times of crisis, people do not need the rules of a bureaucracy; they need the help of a neighbor”. Since that time, religious groups have been awarded over \$1 billion in grants according to a report published by NCADD Washington. These grants have been awarded by agencies

such as DHH and HUD. These grants have been very beneficial to local communities, and specifically these organizations have been able to help thousands of individuals.

According to a 2003 HUD press release, “Thousands of local programs that house and serve the homeless are being awarded nearly \$1.3 billion in grants announced by Housing and Urban Development Acting Secretary Alphonso Jackson. Never before has any federal agency awarded so much financial assistance to help the homeless.” Many of these grants were received by agencies in Louisiana, many of them faith-based.

(www.HUD.gov)

### ***Background on the Faith-Based Initiative***

The government has not always had such an active role in helping to solve social problems in this country and in some ways the President’s current efforts to help solve this issue is in line with how social issues were addressed in the past. Until the early part of the 20th century, issues such as poverty and homelessness were not exceedingly handled at the federal government level. “The New Deal saw a shift away from private and religious providers toward the government as the primary provider of social services (Stabile, pg 35).” Susan J. Stabile notes in her study that, the period from the New Deal until the mid-1990s was characterized by a movement away from local private and governmental efforts and an increasing federalization of efforts to address poverty, leading to the growth of what has been termed a welfare state. In the past, local governments and local groups, both faith-based and non faith-based played the key roles in fighting social issues, and the current plans to strengthen the role of faith-based

organizations in heading back to that type of structure, where issues are addressed at a more local level.

Leaders at the federal level are starting to look at the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, which according to Stabile will focus on decentralization and desirability of, where possible, addressing problems by families and other nongovernmental institutions before resorting to governmental entities. The government of course is not left out of the equation but it may just be more prudent to have local groups play a larger role in designing and running programs to end homelessness. It is also noted by Stabile that faith-based organizations have tremendous advantages over the provision of direct benefits by the federal or state governments because they are closer to the problem allowing them to better tailor aid and solutions to the situations they serve. The fact that organizations are local and faith-based can be benefits for several reasons. “The fact that they are community-based allows them to better facilitate the full development of the human personality of those who they touch. The fact that they are faith-based allows them to capture benefits of attempting to address some of the behavioral contributors to the difficulty of improving the lives of those they serve.” (Stabile, 2002 pg.19)

Some leaders in the faith-based community believe that if the community does not play a major role in solving society’s problems, then society as a whole suffers. Several in the faith-based field see social activism as a natural part of living and working together in a civilized society according to research. Pope John Paul II in his 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* states that society’s role being taken over by government could have devastating consequences:

“By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the social assistance state leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending. In fact, it would appear that needs are best understood and satisfied by people who are closest to them and who act as neighbors to those in need. It should be added that certain kinds of demands often call for a response which is simply not material but which is capable of perceiving the deeper human need.”

### ***Policy and Legal Debate***

The use of federal funding to help support faith-based organization has been a controversial issue for many years. The time frame 1947-1980's has been referred to as The Era of No-Aid Separationism, a period which started after the Court's 1947 ruling in *Everson v. Board of Education*, the First Amendment came into play when states, and all local governments, funded social service programs (Black 2004). According to author Amy Black, this and other cases led to the *Lemon* test. In *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971), Chief Justice Warren Burger articulated three “prongs,” all of which had to be met for a program of aid to a parochial school to survive constitutionally (Black, 2004). According to the *Lemon* test “First, the program in question required a secular purpose; second, its principal or primary effect could be neither to advance nor to inhibit religion; finally, the government aid was not to foster an excessive government entanglement with religion. A violation of any one prong would make a program unconstitutional.” (Black, 2004: pg. 41)



Over time, the separation standard has become much more flexible. This flexibility may be related to the rise of a more conservative Rehnquist Court. The current era is called the Era of Neutrality (1980s to Today) according to Black. This era began as a result of the court case *Mueller v. Allen* (1983), which allowed parents a state income tax deduction for expenses directly related to all types of elementary and secondary education, including the costs of tuition payments to private religious schools. By doing this, the Court emphasized that the state scheme was “formally neutral in its treatment of religious as opposed to public schools because aid went directly to families rather than to the schools.” There were also several other cases in which the Court ruled that aid given to citizens that passes through a beneficiary to a religious institution offering services, such as education or social services does not constitute government support of religious activity.

These cases all helped set the framework for the Faith-Based Initiative. In 1995, as a part of “The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996” (welfare reform act) Senator Robert Dole added sentences in the bill that he introduced in early August:

“The provision provided that religious organizations who participated in welfare reform’s new state block grant program were to retain their independence from government, and that organizations could not deny aid to needy families with children on the basis of religion, a religious belief, or refusal to participate in a religious practice (Black 2004, pg. 53).”

The provision related to religious organizations was considered a small issue in the larger context of welfare reform, and other than some concerns raised by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) at the time the issue went unnoticed (Black

2004, pg. 53). In one ACLU document, the charitable choice language was referred to as “nothing short of government subsidized bigotry.” (www.aclu.org)

Support for the faith-based funding and the charitable choice provisions have largely been along party lines as many have observed. In 1996 President William Clinton signed the welfare reform bill, but expressed his desires to have the charitable choice language deleted, and he used his administrative powers to essentially void charitable choice, writing a guidance letter to federal administrators that prohibited “religiously-affiliated organizations that are pervasively sectarian” from eligibility to compete for federal funds (U.S. Congress 2001). This action resulted in not much changing as far as the roles of faith-based organizations in providing social services or receiving federal funding. States that had a long history of working with faith-based organizations continued to do so, and those with little interaction with faith-based programs remained consistent (Black 2004, pg. 80). Stephen Monsma noted in his 1996 book *When Sacred and Secular Mix*, that the problem is not widespread exclusion, but rather inconsistency due to constitutional, legislative, and administrative ambiguity (Monsma 1996, pg. 321).

### ***Policy and Legal Debate in Louisiana***

In Louisiana, the debate over government support of faith-based programs was addressed in the 2002 court battle *ACLU of Louisiana v. Foster*. The case was filed in May 2002 in U.S. district court according to published documents. The lawsuit challenged the Louisiana Governor’s Program on Abstinence, which included federal subsidies made available via the 1996 welfare bill. It was reported by the Washington Post that Louisiana receives approximately \$1.6 million in block grants each year to

lower the state's teenage pregnancy rate: the ACLU argued in their suit that the funds were applied to support "Christ-centered" skits, religious youth revivals, biblical instruction, and other overtly religious methods. A federal judge rules against Louisiana, ordering it to cease paying money to those organizations that "convey religious messages or otherwise advance religion" with tax dollars. (Washington Post, July 2002)

### ***Faith-Based Role Post Katrina***

The issue of faith-based organizations assisting those in need became an ever-bigger issue due after Hurricane Katrina. When Katrina hit the Gulf Coast region in August of 2005, some of the first relief efforts in the region were spearheaded by faith-based organizations. From large somewhat secular organizations such as The Red Cross and The United Way, to smaller local churches and other houses of worship, their efforts showed the importance of all forms of assistance from government, business and non-profits both secular and faith-based. "Now more than ever ... following Hurricane Katrina – we are seeing that faith-based organizations are a priceless national resource, providing help and hope to communities across the Gulf Coast and throughout the nation" according to John Boehner, Chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce (The Advocate, September 12, 2005).

One of the first organizations to assist hurricane Katrina evacuees in Baton Rouge was Catholic Charities USA. The overwhelming tasks of assisting such a large number of displaced citizens required that organizations work together as they had never before. An article in The Baton Rouge Advocate reported that Catholic Charities USA, which is based in Alexandria, Va., traditionally lets the American Red Cross, Salvation Army and

others make the initial response before stepping in to help people rebuild their lives. Hurricane Katrina required that more organizations work together to feed, house and clothe evacuees. (The Advocate, September 12, 2005).

Clearly, the support and assistance offered by faith-based organizations was not limited to Catholic organizations and that should be noted. There was assistance also given by Protestants, Baptist, Jews, Muslims and non-denominational groups as seen in many media reports. In many cases, these organizations not only offered money, supplies and volunteers, but they also sent their leaders to the area to offer support and drum-up national and international attention. According to The Baton Rouge Advocate, Southern Baptist President Bobby Welch met with Baptist relief teams and Baton Rouge area pastors in September at Florida Boulevard Baptist Church. The Baton Rouge area also received visits and support from Rabbi David Sarperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in Washington D.C., and Archbishop Demetrios, leader of the Greek Orthodox Church in America and chairperson of the Standing Conference of Canonical Bishops in America (The Advocate, September 12, 2005).

### ***Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless***

The Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless is an organization that works with homeless service providers in the Baton Rouge Area. The website for the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless (CAAH) states that it is a “coalition of diverse agencies providing housing and support services for homeless persons in the greater Baton Rouge area. Services include emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing case management, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, life skills

training, employment and job assistance.” CAAH was formally incorporated on November 1, 1993 as a result of the then Governor, Edwin Edward’s Interagency Council on Homelessness and incorporated in 1996 to better fulfill its role as the “Continuum of Care” (CoC) agency for the seven parish area of the Capital Area Human Services District II. Through steps of CAAH’s existence, there was a growing awareness of the extent of the homelessness, but parallel awareness that solutions exist, with community cooperation in East Baton Rouge Parish, and the implementation of best practice solutions. From its inception, CAAH membership was open to any organization or individual involved or interested in the alleviation of homelessness ([www.homelessnessinbr.org](http://www.homelessnessinbr.org)).

CAAH literature states “...members include long established programs that provide shelter and services to the homeless (Volunteers Of America Greater Baton Rouge, O’Brien House, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and Our Lady of the Lake's St. Anthony’s Home, and Catholic Community Services) and governmental agencies charged with providing services to homeless persons (Capital Area Human Services District, the City-Parish Office of Community Development, and the City-Parish Office of Community Services).” (1993)

CAAH and its members continue to address homelessness and its root causes. The mission statement found on the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless (CAAH) website states that it

“...holds the fundamental belief that everyone, no matter how deprived in circumstances of housing and necessities is valued, entitled to dignity, respect,

and is deserving of community assistance and the opportunity to achieve a life of self-sufficiency. The mission of the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless is to provide a continuum of care network for the homeless in the Capital Area (comprised of the civil parishes of Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Pointe Coupee, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana) through a coordinated body of diverse organizations and individuals. This body will address issues of homelessness in the capital area parishes; affect the development of resources to meet the needs of the homeless; provide for a formal assessment of homeless needs; and educate the community on homeless issues, needs, and priorities ([www.homelessnessinbr.org](http://www.homelessnessinbr.org)).”

CAAH tracks the needs of the homeless population in Baton Rouge. CAAH’s 2004 shelter survey found a 490-bed shortage for homeless persons in the East Baton Rouge parish. Meanwhile Baton Rouge Crisis Care’s 211 telephone line experienced a sharp increase in housing related calls. The second quarter of 2004 saw an 85% jump in housing inquires and a 227% increase in requests for assistance with rent payments since (2004). In spite of CAAH’s members bringing more than \$10 million in federal grant money to alleviate the problem, homelessness persists. ([www.homelessnessinbr.org](http://www.homelessnessinbr.org))

## **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

The research used in this thesis is both qualitative and quantitative. Although qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis may appear incompatible or in competition, research often demands that, both types are used in such projects, according to author Earl Babbie (Babbie, 2004; pg 392). Five interviews were conducted and statistics from the ServicePoint HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) help support this thesis. The information in the ServicePoint system, and several interview questions address the basic issues related to the number of clients served by these agencies, the types of services offered by these agencies and the statistical data on the homeless population in Baton Rouge both pre and post Katrina.

### ***HMIS Homeless Management Information System***

The agencies serving the homeless population and the types of services provided tend to vary greatly from city to city, making it difficult to collect and maintain accurate and timely data. Without a good picture of the need in any one location, appropriate services are hard to provide. The Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) was designed and put into place to ensure that an accurate picture of the homeless population is available and that service providers can adequately serve these people in need.

In an August 2001 report to Congress, HUD outlined its goals and strategy for collecting homeless data. The report highlighted the need for data and analysis on the extent of homelessness and the effectiveness of McKinney Act programs. According to the HUD documents, the goal was that jurisdictions collect an array of homeless data

including an unduplicated count ([www.HUD.gov](http://www.HUD.gov)). In order to accomplish this goal, HUD would assist communities by: “(1) flexibly implementing the new Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) eligible activity under the Supportive Housing Program in the 2001McKinney-Vento competition; (2) initiating a comprehensive technical assistance program to help local jurisdictions collect unduplicated client-level data by 2004; (3) developing an approach to obtaining meaningful data for an Annual Homeless Assessment Report from a nationally representative sample of jurisdictions, and (4) analyzing the most viable approaches to obtaining homeless client-level reporting.” ([www.HUD.gov](http://www.HUD.gov)).

The interview process will also illustrate how the HMIS system also gives valuable information as to the number and types of agencies working with homeless clients in the community and the services offered by these agencies. In a 2005 report to Congress HUD stated that with continued support of the HMIS project they would continue to build local and national capacity, report and analyze homeless data. ([www.HUD.gov](http://www.HUD.gov))

Having a system in place to collect homeless data is critical according to many in the field. Authors Culhane & Metraux recommend that the federal government as well as the individual states move toward a fully integrated computerized system which would make delivering benefits and getting people off the streets more cost effective, as “...there is no one comprehensive system to manage the myriad of services for the homeless, their benefits, and their reintegration into society.”(1998) Even though documenting peoples’ lives in detail verges on an invasion of privacy, Culhane & Metraux feel that “if the US taxpayers need to foot the bill, which they ultimately do,



there is no alternative but to build an efficient system with subjective inputs, in order to provide benefits and opportunities based on need.” (Culhane & Metraux 1998: pg.85)

### ***ServicePoint Data***

The data used in this study were collected in late April and early May 2006. The ServicePoint reports provide quantitative data on both the agencies that operate in the Baton Rouge area and the clients that are served. The variables used in this study are the same variables set in the ServicePoint system. These data give readers an understanding of the number of agencies operating, the types of services offered by the various agencies and whether or not these agencies are classified as faith-based.

For this thesis, I utilized data from two periods. The data collected in the ServicePoint system began to be collected in July of 2004 therefore the first period analyzed covers July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005. The second period covers July 1, 2005 through March 31, 2006. Although the second period does not cover a full twelve months, the information gathered still offers valuable insight into both the level of involvement by faith-based organizations post Katrina and the increase in the Baton Rouge homeless population.

The data were entered into to the ServicePoint System, by case managers from over forty public and private social service agencies in East Baton Rouge Parish. ServicePoint is a web based data collection tool used by many homeless service providers all over the country according to their web site ([www.servicept.com](http://www.servicept.com)). When homeless clients come to service providers they meet with a case manager who interviews them and collects basic information from the individual, such as age, race, ethnicity, gender,

veteran status and household composition, a process that was discussed with homeless service providers during the training process. The homeless social service provider also discusses services offered by their agency and decides if that individual will best be served by their agency, or if they should be referred to another agency in the area.

All the agencies that utilize ServicePoint also have access to information related to which services are provided by other agencies and the types of clients served. For example, if a young mother with two children arrives at an agency that only serves homeless male veterans, the case manager can access the ServicePoint agency directory and find a service provider who will assist her and possibly offer shelter to her and her children.

The ServicePoint system provides what is known as an unduplicated census count. This means that if an individual receives services from one agency, but is subsequently referred to a second or third agency, they are only placed in the system one time. This offers HUD officials and others interested in homeless data more accurate figures on the total number of homeless served in the community. Therefore, if an individual is served by a faith-based agency then referred to a different organization they will not show up in the census data for any subsequent agency.

The ServicePoint system also generates several data reports that are the bases of the figures used in this study. The variables analyzed are type of agency, services provided and the number of clients served. The thesis also analyzes data that includes client statistical information. The variables selected were chosen because they help to illustrate who makes up the homeless population and the information collected helps show the numbers of agencies involved and the type of work they do.

## *Qualitative Data*

The qualitative data used in the thesis were obtained in the interview process and the major focus is on what makes these agencies unique and important in helping to fight homelessness. This section is considered qualitative because it is a nonnumeric examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings, and patterns of relations (Babbie, 2004; pg. G8). In a qualitative study, you can gain an understanding of a population, in this case faith-based social service providers, by gathering information from a small number of people ([www.alberscommunications.com](http://www.alberscommunications.com))

The interview of Mr. Randy Nichols the Director of the Capital Area Alliance (CAAH) for the Homeless in Baton Rouge, Louisiana took place in Baton Rouge in April 2006. The CAAH is made up of over 40 public and private social service agencies in Baton Rouge according to Mr. Nichols. Mr. Nichols has a working relationship with several faith-based agencies in the area and has offered insight into the services offered by these agencies.

The focus of the interview with Mr. Nichols included background on the organization and its interaction with homeless service providers in Baton Rouge. The interviews also help give understanding of the role of faith-based agencies in the community; and offered special insights needed subsequently while interviewing faith-based agencies in the community. Mr. Nichols' familiarity was especially essential to this study.

The interviews with faith-based homeless program workers were conducted over the telephone in late April and early May 2006. The focus of the interviews includes

background on the organizations and their experiences with providing services to the homeless in Baton Rouge. The goal was to gain a better understanding of the role of faith-based agencies in the community; and learn of any special concerns or issues related government funding and the homeless situation in Baton Rouge post Katrina. The interviews also mention the role if any of faith in the services offered by these organizations.

All interviews were recorded and written notes of the discussions were taken. Permission to use the interviewee's names and agency information in this study was granted prior to these interviews being presented. All notes and audio records will be held in a locked file for a minimum of three years after the interview. These are standard procedures used in this type of study.

As a part of the interview with Mr. Nichols, a list of current members of the CAAH was provided. Mr. Nichols recommend several potential interview subjects, and final decision as to the four agencies to be interviewed was made at that time after considering such factors as agency size and willingness to be interviewed. The first two large agencies contacted agreed to provide information for this study, but it took several calls to multiple smaller organizations before two agencies agreed to participate.

After the interviews were conducted, summaries of the information were gathered. Common responses and trends were noticed during these discussions. Qualitative research allows very detailed information to be gathered, but because the data are more raw, generalizing across the interviews is be a more complex task than gathering the basic statistical data. This information is more narrative and an attempt to

tell the story of these agencies and the work they do for the homeless community.

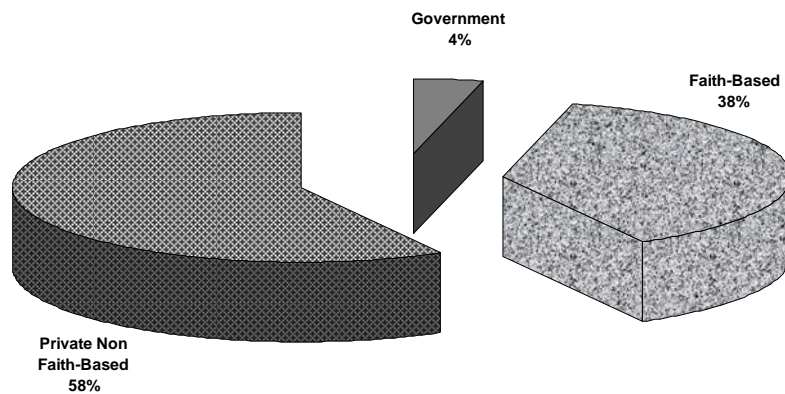
([www.socailresearchmethods.net](http://www.socailresearchmethods.net))

## CHAPTER 4 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

### *HMIS Data*

The first agency variable analyzed is the type of organization. The categories presented are faith-based, government agency and private non faith-based organizations. This information was collected by the CAAH and the ServicePoint system and verified with Mr. Randy Nichols, the CAAH director.

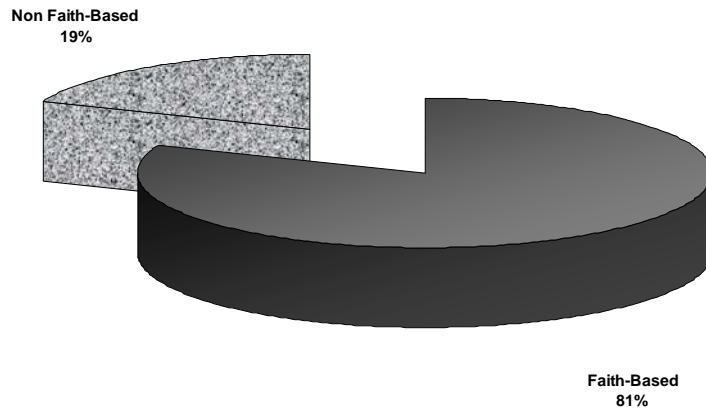
Fig. 1 CAAH Membership



As of March 31, 2006 there are currently 45 (forty-five) organizations who are members of the CAAH according to data collected. These organizations include governmental entities such as the East Baton Rouge Parish Schools – Homeless Children’s Program, private non-profit organizations such as Gulf Coast Teaching Family Services, Inc. and faith-based agencies including Volunteers of America. Although the majority of member agencies are not faith-based, the data collected show that these agencies do represent 38% (thirty eight percent) of the agencies belonging to the CAAH are faith-based. It is also important to note that not all organizations who serve the homeless in Baton Rouge, particularly smaller organizations, are members of the CAAH. The total percentage of faith-based organizations fighting to end homeless in Baton Rouge may be much greater. The fact that a significant portion of those involved in fighting homelessness are faith-based helps illustrate that faith-based organization are an important part of the fight to end homelessness.

The second agency variable analyzed looks at the percent of clients served by faith-based agencies in Baton Rouge. Although faith-based agencies only account for 38% (thirty eight percent) of the agencies belonging to the CAAH, these agencies assisted 81% (eighty one percent) or 21,218 of the homeless clients served by the CAAH member agencies in the period covering July 1, 2005 through March 31, 2006. This information does seem to show that faith-based organizations have a significant role in serving Baton Rouge’s homeless population.

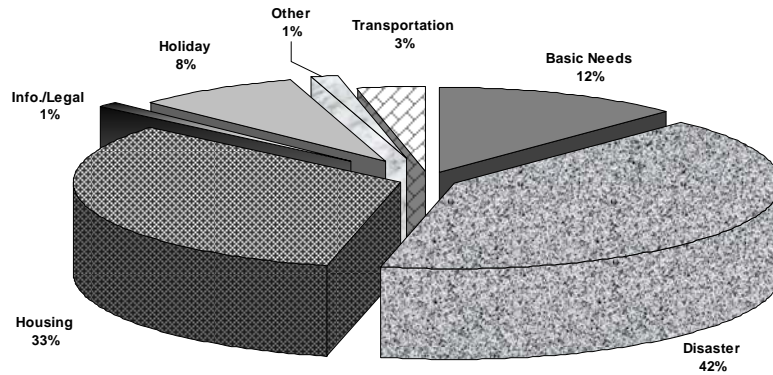
Fig. 2 Clients Served by Faith-Based Organizations



Further research with non-faith based organizations, and those not using the ServicePoint system is recommended.

The next variable analyzed looks at the services offered by homeless service providers in Baton Rouge. The services offered include shelter, food, clothing, career counseling, drug counseling, outreach, life skills training, transportation and other. These categories were pre-set in ServicePoint. After Hurricane Katrina hit in late August 2005 HUD requested that communities list separate categories specifically related to individuals affected by Katrina. The Katrina related categories were added by the Baton Rouge ServicePoint system administrator, according to Randy Nichols. This information shows the many ways agencies assist the homeless.

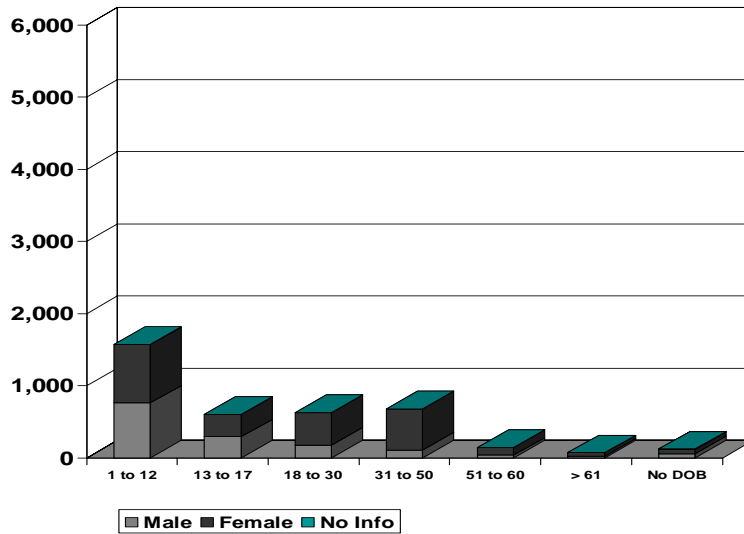
Fig. 3 Homeless Client Service Count



The data show that the majority of the services offered to homeless clients during the period 07/01/2005 – 03/31/2006 were in the areas of disaster related services 42% (forty two percent) and housing 33% (thirty three percent). It should be noted that many organizations who are not members of the CAAH and do not utilize the ServicePoint system did not provide client information for this study, therefore the actual number of services provided to homeless individuals and families was undoubtedly greater.



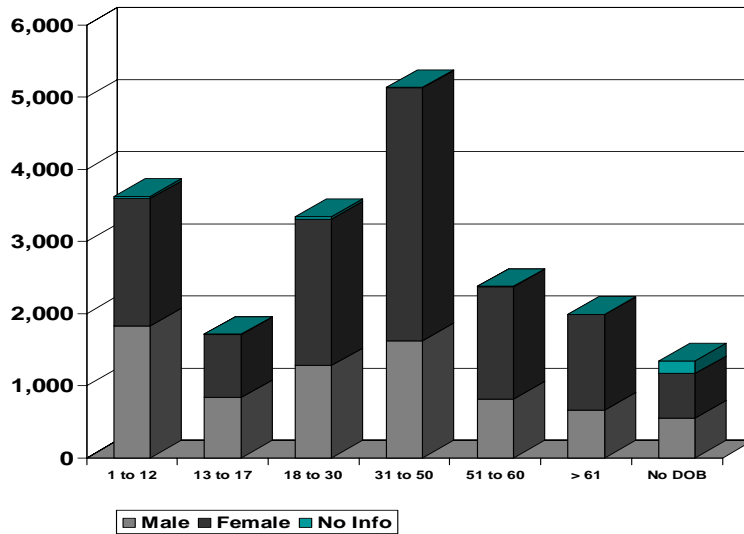
**Fig. 4 Homeless Persons in Families  
July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005**



The first client variable analyzed is age. The age groupings are categorized as follows: individuals aged 0 to 12 years old category one, ages 13 to 17 years old category two, ages 18 to 30 category three, ages 31 to 50 category four, ages 51 to 61 years old category five, and those individuals older than 61 category six.

The variable of gender is grouped as male, female, and not specified. These variables give a better understanding of whom these agencies serve. The data show that the majority of the homeless clients with family are females. This is an important statistic for those who are involved in providing services to homeless clients because it can help organizations design and implement programs addressing those needs.

Fig. 5 Homeless Persons in Families  
July 1, 2005 through March 31, 2006



Unfortunately, the data collected through the ServicePoint system only shows a small fraction of those individuals assisted by these organizations, because not all of those organizations who offered shelter have access to the ServicePoint system. It was noted that many service providers did not collect date of birth information for many clients. Getting an accurate count may be next to impossible because many of these organizations presumably did not collect client information on those helped, and many people helped may have received assistance from multiple sites. The study, although informative, was limited by the fact that only faith-based organizations who are members of the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless were contacted.

Reviewing homeless statistics may show some work that these organizations are involved in and it gives a glimpse into the large role that they play in serving homeless people in Baton Rouge, but to gain more understanding several interviews were also done in late April of 2006.

Fig. 6 Homeless Single Persons  
July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005

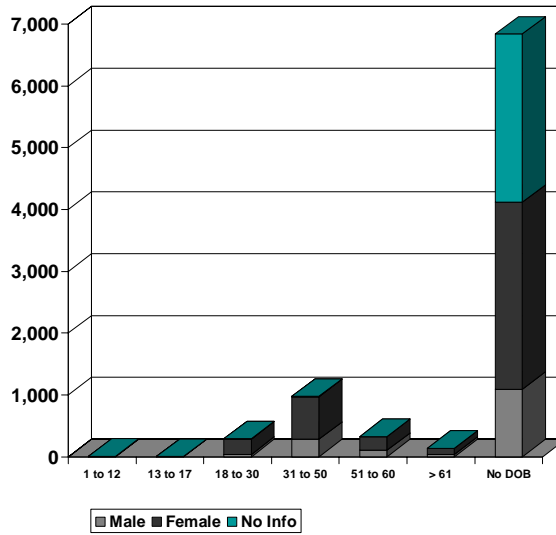
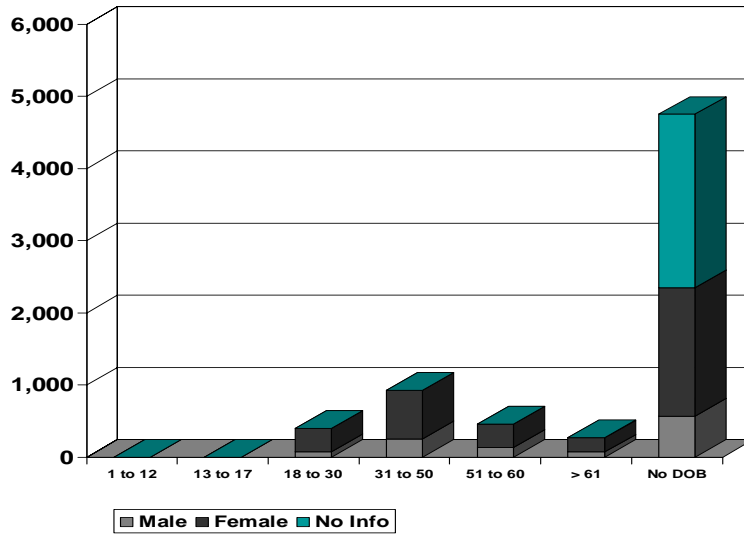


Fig. 7 Homeless Single Persons  
July 1, 2005 through March 31, 2006



## *Interviews*

### *Randy Nichols*

Discussions with Randy Nichols offered an extensive range of information related to the role of faith-based agencies in Baton Rouge and how they help to serve the homeless community. Mr. Randy Nichols has been the director of the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless since 2004, and is the organization's only employee. This organization does not serve homeless clients directly, it is simply a group lead by Mr. Nichols and a board of directors, made up of various organizations, faith-based, non faith-based non-profit and governmental groups all working to find and address the needs of the homeless in Baton Rouge. According to Mr. Nichols, the organization is a COC (Continuum of Care) for the Baton Rouge region. He went on to state that HUD requires agencies across the country to work together in a unified group when requesting HUD funding. This is done to insure as best as possible, that programs and services are put into place, that assist homeless clients in the community receive services by agencies that best suit their needs. "No matter why a person is homeless there should some program that addresses their needs so that there is broad coverage" according to Mr. Nichols. By working together The CAAH along with its member agencies can apply for HUD funding which can address community needs such as homeless shelters, job-skills training food distribution and other various programs. Mr. Nichols works with the agencies in the community to answer such questions, as "Are there programs that try to

prevent homelessness? Are there programs that reach out to the homeless? Is there strategic planning to help end homelessness?”

The interview with Mr. Nichols offered important insight on how he interacts with Baton Rouge homeless service providers. According to Mr. Nichols the agency’s size and the number of programs offered plays a role in how he interacts with them not whether or not they are faith-based. The largest member agency of the CAAH is Volunteers of America of Baton Rouge, a national faith-based organization that operates several social-service programs in Baton Rouge and is one of the largest recipients of federal homeless assistance grants in the nation according to their website ([www.voa.org/OurServices/Homeless/](http://www.voa.org/OurServices/Homeless/)). When working with larger bureaucratic type agencies such as VOA, Mr. Nichols deals with caseworkers who may be in the third or fourth levels of the local organization, as opposed to the CEO or program directors.

The CAAH encourages all of its members to develop and implement nationally recognized operating standards. In Louisiana CAAH, members are encouraged to follow the Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations (LANO) guidelines according to Mr. Nichols. Some of the smaller faith-based non-profits choose to use a congregational model, which may mean that those involved in the homeless programs may be church staff or leadership and board leadership may not rotate as is recommended by organizational standards according to Mr. Nichols. This may limit types of funding they may apply for, and will result in a finding during program audits if they do receive government funding.

Most of the faith-based homeless service providers do offer faith as a part of their program treatments but clients are not required to practice or believe a particular type of

religion according to Mr. Nichols. According to federal guidelines, federal funds may not be used to promote a particular religion and any religious instructions must be funded by other means. Some of the faith-based groups may not decide to operating certain HUD programs such as a “Safe Haven” program according to Mr. Nichols because their treatment methods may not be in line with government requirements. With a Safe Haven program, agencies house and treat homeless clients who may have substance abuse problems, chronic mental illness or be dually diagnosed even if those clients do not follow the recommended plan of treatment according to Mr. Nichols. Mr. Nichols went on to say, “For some groups especially faith-based that is a barrier”

Faith-based agencies were some of the first to respond to the needs of Hurricane Katrina evacuees. Mr. Nichols stated, “The faith-based agencies responded fantastically, partially because of who they are....” He went on to say, “They had resources available to them in many cases the buildings that were used for church worship, schools... They had property that could on a short-term basis be made immediately available. They had a pool of volunteers who could immediately swing into action and they had sources of income that immediately came without any restrictions, contributions given to meet the needs of hurricane evacuees.” According to Mr. Nichols, “There weren’t grant applications to fill out. They had a flexibility that government just did not have.” This resulted in a huge number of pop-up shelters that moved very quickly. Some faith-based service providers are currently looking for a long-term solution to assist evacuees according to Mr. Nichols.

Non-faith based agencies were not as quick to start up because they did not have available cash resources or space in most cases according to Mr. Nichols. “They were

operating programs that may have been funded by an annual campaign or grants, so they had to find their funding through grant writing in most cases.” They had to do applications and reporting that required weeks and months where as faith-based organizations, particularly locally based organizations, were operating shelters after days or weeks according to Mr. Nichols.

Most of the government funds that are distributed to faith-based groups are done through federal dollars issued through local government. These are Community Development Block Grants (CBDGs) and they are required by local governments to not exclude faith-based agencies. Frequently many of the smaller faith-based agencies run in to issues related to navigating through the application process, and that is where Mr. Nichols and the CAAH come into play. HUD has many documents published to assist faith-based groups apply for these funds. Frequently there is a self-imposed barrier in the churches because of their beliefs. FEMA made known that churches could apply for reimbursement but many groups refused federal funding because they feel that it’s the churches “mission” to help those in need according to Mr. Nichols. The motivation for why certain groups do this would make for a very interesting study according to Mr. Nichols.

### ***Baton Rouge Faith-Based Program Information***

Much more knowledge related to faith-based programs in Baton Rouge can be gained by gathering information from those individuals most closely involved. Several individuals who work with faith-based programs assisting the homeless in Baton Rouge were interviewed in April of 2006. Whether they work with large national/ international

organizations, or local faith-based groups, these individuals are doing a great deal to assist homeless people in their struggle to gain a more stable, safe permanent living situation.

Julie Stafford a homeless program director with Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge offered valuable insight on the role that her organization plays in serving the homeless. “Volunteers of America sees a need in the community and tries to fill that need, be it though emergency shelters, transitional housing, permanent housing or supportive independent living ...” according to Ms. Stafford. They have housing programs for just about every population that one can imagine including; abused and neglected children, youth through elderly noted Ms. Stafford. The Volunteers’ literature points out, once Volunteers of America engages homeless individuals, youth, and families with children, they stay with them for as long as it takes to return them to self-sufficiency. This may include– providing assistance that ranges from paying a first month’s rent check to offering permanent supportive housing so that people with disabilities can become stable and productive members of their communities.

([www.voa.org](http://www.voa.org))

The Volunteers of America supportive housing programs managed by Ms. Stafford serve homeless disabled in Baton Rouge and surrounding areas. She pointed out that a lot of the success that she sees comes from clients getting setup in a church and making those connections with the community. Not all clients are interested in religious participation and religious participation is not a part of the official program set up by their case managers. Approximately 98% of the clients involved in her program are chronically mentally ill, but she believes that faith along with counseling can help those



individuals adjust to becoming set up in a permanent housing program. Ms. Stafford also wanted to make it clear that in no way does a person's religion or religious beliefs affect a person's eligibility, participation or spot in a particular homeless program.

According to information published by the Volunteers of America, they have a long history of helping those individuals in society who are most disadvantaged. According to the Volunteers of America web site, this faith-based organization was founded in 1896 by social reformers Ballington and Maud Booth who organized day nurseries and summer camps, provided housing for single men and women, and established the nation's first system of halfway houses for released prisoners. It was also reported on the Volunteers of America web site that the organization is one of the nation's largest and most comprehensive human services organizations, touching the lives of nearly 1.8 million people each year in communities across the United States ([www.voa.org](http://www.voa.org)). Many people may argue that having a long history in providing these type services gives faith-based organizations an advantage over newer non-faith-based organizations because they have a history of successfully helping others.

The Salvation Army also has a long and illustrious history of serving people in need as many people may already know. In 1865, William Booth, an ordained Methodist minister, aided by his wife Catherine, formed an evangelical group dedicated to preaching among the people living in the midst of appalling poverty in London's East End according to the organizations web site. The information goes on to say that, Booth's ministry recognized the interdependence of material, emotional and spiritual needs. In addition to preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, Booth became involved in the feeding and shelter of the hungry and homeless and in rehabilitation of alcoholics according to

the web site. The Salvation Army reportedly has membership consisting of 3,500 officers, 60,000 employees, 113,000 soldiers, 430,000 adherents (adherents are people who have elected not to be enrolled as soldiers but consider The Salvation Army to be their place of worship), and more than 3.5 million volunteers.

([www.salvatoarmyusa.org](http://www.salvatoarmyusa.org))

Chuck Bragg who has been employed with the Salvation Army for ten years and currently heads up the in-take department for their Baton Rouge shelter for those recovering from alcohol and drug dependency, believes that when organizations have a history of programs that work that is something that should not be overlooked. Mr. Bragg pointed out that several employees of the Salvation Army have had a history of alcohol dependency, and they credit the Salvation Army with keeping them clean and sober. “I found that the component that was lacking for some in the multiple country club treatments centers... was that they lacked the faith-based thing” Mr. Bragg stated. Some of those working with homeless clients are not just employees but they have worked their way up from “the gutter”, something most would agree shows their understanding of the importance of programs offered by The Salvation Army.

Mr. Bragg also pointed out that faith-based organizations play a large role just in sheer numbers of clients they served in Baton Rouge. “In Baton Rouge they are pretty much the only game in town” according to Mr. Brigg. He went on to note that it would not surprise him if 80% of those people who received homeless services in Baton Rouge were assisted by faith-based organizations in some way. This theory is supported by the data presented in Fig. 2 in this thesis.

It is worth noting that as with Volunteers of America the participants in Salvation Army programs are not required to profess certain religious beliefs to remain in the homeless programs according to Mr. Bragg. They do offer religious services and Bible study to all program participants according to Mr. Bragg. They look at serving all people in need as a part of their mission according to Mr. Bragg, and the Salvation Army's programs offer assistance to individuals that many other agencies shun (drug and alcohol issues, criminal records).

Like other homeless programs in the Baton Rouge area, the Salvation Army had several clients who were affected by Katrina according to Mr. Bragg. The program his organization established houses homeless individuals suffering with substance abuse issues, and he feels that the assistance offered by the government actually may have hurt many people with addition issues. When the FEMA money started to come in, twenty of the fifty people, they were housing left the program and ended their treatment for substance abuse. "You can't dangle a \$2,000 - \$4,000 check in front of somebody new in recovery" according to Mr. Bragg. He went on to say that due to the stress of losing everything including family and material possessions, many of these people may come back in worse shape then before entering the treatment program. "We will be seeing the affects of Katrina on the homeless population for years to come" Mr. Braggs points out.

Hurricane Katrina also affected many other faith-based organizations in Baton Rouge. Mr. Corey Dyer, who works with Winding Chapel Baptist Church's homeless program, reported that their church collected cash contributions food and clothing for evacuees. "The church has a small congregation and has helped the homeless for many years, but Katrina required more of everyone involved." Although the congregation only

numbers eighty members, they were able to assist many homeless evacuees with the donations collected. Before Katrina, the church had no plans to apply for government grants to assist the homeless, but currently they are considering the idea of applying for federal funding to open a new more structured homeless program. During that time of need, it became critical for all faith-based organizations to help in any way possible according to Mr. Dyer, and if getting federal assistance can allow his organization to assist more people he supports the idea.

For Ms. Stafford, Katrina did not affect her particular programs directly, because her grants only allowed her to service a certain number of clients and it operates under a strict budget. Katrina and the increase in the disabled homeless population only increased those individuals on her waiting list.

It was also noted that Healing Place Church, which is the parent organization of Church United for Community Development joined with other ministries to form PRC Compassion according to Ms. Yvonne Bourgeois, the Administrator of the homeless program operated by Church United for Community Development. The PRC Compassion website states that the organization is an inter-denominational cooperative network of more than churches and ministries from the United States and all over the world that formed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Rita designed to address community needs, distribute relief, and provided much needed aid in devastated regions along the gulf south. It was also noted on the website that from August 29, 2005 through March 31, 2006, PRC Compassion helped deploy 14,092 volunteers, logged 490,379 volunteer hours and served 2,853, 100 at relief sites in the gulf coast. ([www.prccompassion.net](http://www.prccompassion.net))

Clearly, the work to help those affected requires faith-based, non-faith based and governmental agencies working together to help during such a catastrophic event.

After Katrina many churches in Baton Rouge and surrounding areas worked together to help those so devastated by the disaster. According to Ms. Yvonne Bourgeois of Church United for Community Development, her organization that is a part of the Healing Place Church has assisted homeless individuals since 2000, but Katrina has affected their efforts. There is more need for homeless services in the community according to Ms. Bourgeois. The shelter operated by Church United for Community Development, called Ascension is unfortunately only able to serve between ten and twelve individuals at a time as Ms. Bourgeois pointed out.

Hurricane Katrina saw an increase in the homeless population but not all of the increase is directly related to former New Orleans residents now homeless according to Ms. Bourgeois. She stated, “There are of course individuals who were homeless in Baton Rouge before Katrina. There are individuals who are homeless from New Orleans who lost their homes and have relocated to Baton Rouge but have been unsuccessful in finding housing and there are also individuals who were citizens of Baton Rouge before Katrina and they were bordering on homelessness and as a result of the skyrocketing rental rates, they have now become homeless.”

As with all the faith-based organization contacted for this study, a persons religious beliefs does not affect whether or not that person will receive assistance from Church United for Community Development according to Ms. Bourgeois. Ascension House, the twelve-month residential homeless shelter and program for men including those with drug/alcohol abuse problems has assisted clients regardless of religious

affiliations or beliefs noted Ms. Bourgeois. She went on to state that the goal of the program is not to merely offer a place to live, but to also offer life skills training and counseling to help the men become productive and useful members of society. Although religious services and counseling is available to participants, they are not required to profess any particular beliefs to remain in the program.

There are several similarities between faith-based organizations and non faith-based organizations discovered during this research. The first similarity noted is the fact that faith-based organizations and non faith-based organizations come in various sizes and organizational structures. Organizations such as Volunteers of America and The Salvation Army are just as bureaucratic and structured as large private non-profit organizations or governmental agencies. There are also smaller, less structured organizations fighting homeless, who are in some cases faith-based, in other cases non faith-based.

It should also be noted that faith-based organizations and non faith-based organizations offer their services to clients regardless of the clients' religious beliefs or affiliations. It is clear based on every interview conducted, that if a client is homeless and needs services that person would not be turned away because they share different religious beliefs or does not practice any particular religion at all. There does not seem to be an effort to only serve those individuals who share similar religious beliefs.

The most noticeable similarity between faith-based organizations, and non faith-based organizations is the fact that these organizations have a desire to end homeless and offer programs to address the needs of homeless individuals in several ways. All of these organizations realize that homelessness has multiple causes and therefore there should be

multiple solutions to address the needs of these individuals and families. Faith-based and non faith-based organizations offer services that range from food and shelter, to job skills training and counseling programs designed to assist homeless clients into a safe stable permanent home.

The people contacted in this study expressed a belief that there are differences between faith-based and non faith-based organizations. The first difference noted during the interviews was the issue of the flexibility of faith-based organizations. It was mentioned several times during this research process that after Katrina, faith-based organizations were able to set up shelters and offer services in a much timelier manner than non-faith based agencies. In some cases, these organizations had no formal homeless programs, but they saw a need in the community and were able to swing into action. With non faith-based organizations, it took days and weeks for some people to be helped.

Another difference noted was the availability of resources to many faith-based organizations not seen with non faith-based organizations. It was noted by several of those contacted, that these organizations receive donations from citizens, including cash and other items on a regular basis. These organizations also tend to have available land and structures that make them a great resource to the community in a time of need. Another available resource to these faith-based organizations is the many hours of volunteer labor. Labor is a major expense for any organization, so when an organization receives volunteer labor they can help a greater number of citizens.

Faith is seen as a major part of the success of many of these programs. In some cases the contributions made to these organizations, and the hours of volunteer work are tied to the individuals desire to fulfill a religious obligation on their parts. For the

homeless individuals assisted by these programs, they may benefit from being involved in a religious environment. For the people who work with these programs, even though faith and worship is not a required part of participation, the fact that it is offered tends to benefit many of the clients served.

### ***Future Study Recommendations***

There are several areas to consider in future studies. Future studies should be done to include organizations faith-based and non faith-based who may not be members of the CAAH. This would help those interested in learning more about those offering assistance to the homeless in Baton Rouge get a better understanding of more organizations working in the community.

Whether or not faith helps those in need may be an additional area to consider in future research. According to several of those contacted for this research, faith does assist many in the recovery process. Future larger studies that may even include participants of the programs would be very valuable to those studying these issues. Most policy makers and administrators would agree that faith-based organizations may not be the only answer to solving homelessness, but they do play a role in helping the homeless. More research on exactly how effectual these programs are as opposed to secular programs would be beneficial.

It was also noted in this study that several faith-based service providers have opposed using government funds to operate homeless programs. Reasons given included such comments as “It’s a part of the organizations mission to serve”, or “They prefer to



operate without the additional strings that may come attached to federal funds” according to Mr. Nichols of the CAAH.

The results of this study call attention to the fact that many people who are homeless in Baton Rouge Louisiana receive assistance from faith-based organizations and it does not appear that government funding that goes to these organizations represents any particular conflict for those receiving services as it relates to the separation of church and state. However, organizations such as the ACLU may still disagree. Future studies may address possible discrimination issues that relate to employment and hiring practices for those working with faith-based organizations. It is clear that not all areas of possible concern can be addressed in one thesis.

## **CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS**

The focus of this thesis research is the role of faith-based homeless providers in Baton Rouge, and their role in helping the homeless. The data collected helps illustrate the fact that these organizations play an essential role in providing services to these individuals. Overall, the findings in the study indicate that faith-based organizations offer a wide range of services to homeless individuals and their history of service along with available resources make them valuable. This study revealed that not only do these organizations provide both temporary and permanent housing and shelters, but also food, job-skills training and counseling services to those dealing with chemical dependency. In the case of Volunteers of America, and The Salvation Army these organizations have been assisting homeless individuals for over one-hundred years.

The results of the present analyses indicate a strong level of involvement by faith-based organizations in the fight against homelessness and one may conclude that those involved in policymaking decisions should take note if they are want to effectively deal with the issues involved in ending homelessness. It is clear after discussions with those involved in providing services to homeless individuals and families that many people have been served and will continue to be served by faith-based organizations.

In terms of disaster assistance and rapid response during and after hurricane Katrina, faith-based organizations were a very important link and they should be included as a part of future disaster preparation. The data show that thousands of people were assisted by faith-based agencies after Katrina. Because many of these organizations have,

available resources such as buildings, volunteers and cash donations they were able to set up shelters very quickly according to those involved with the agencies. In future crisis situations, local governments should have greater contact before during and after a disaster to get a better understanding of available resources to those in need. According to some of those contacted, people who were sleeping in cars or bussed as far away as Houston could have been assisted by churches and other religious institutions in the community who had opened their doors to those in need.

Those groups and organizations who oppose government funding of faith-based organizations based on the presumption that the government is sponsoring religious discrimination should take a closer look at the work these organizations are doing. In the cases of those organizations contacted for this research, homeless clients are assisted regardless of religious affiliation or beliefs. Everyone contacted for this study mentioned this point. It should also be noted that all federal grant guidelines require that these programs not use federal funds to promote particular religious beliefs or discriminate against clients based on religious beliefs. There was no evidence found that individuals withhold services or assistance because of a clients religious background. In some cases, these organizations do offer or recommend that homeless individuals participate in some type of religious services, but it was never shown to be a requirement for their continued participation in the various programs.

Unfortunately, much of the debate on federal funding of faith-based programs has not seemed to focus on the actual work that these organizations do in the community. “Framed by the legislative battle, the debate was susceptible to, and dominated by, sound bites, distortion, mischaracterization, and manipulation” (Black 2004, 277). Regardless of

the religious and even political beliefs of those viewing this issue, the value of these organizations should be measured by their outcomes and decades of dedicated service. Policy makers should not look at these organizations as government sponsoring of religious teaching, because as we have found through this research, although these organizations do offer religious guidance to those who may be interested in receiving it, the primary goals of these organizations is to assist people in need and that should be the focus of review. According to John P. Pelissero, policy decisions should be “based on formal knowledge, professionally learned policies and procedures, and a detached, technical and scientific approach to problem solving” (Pelissero 2003, 208).

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Web Sites:

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[www.homelessnessinbr.org](http://www.homelessnessinbr.org)

[www.HUD.gov](http://www.HUD.gov)

[www.salvatoarmyusa.org](http://www.salvatoarmyusa.org)

[www.servicept.com](http://www.servicept.com)

[www.socailresearchmethods.net](http://www.socailresearchmethods.net)

[www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org)

[www.voa.org](http://www.voa.org)

[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

# APPENDICES

## Key Terms

- Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless (CAAH) - A coalition of diverse agencies providing Housing and Support Services for homeless persons in the greater Baton Rouge area.
- Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) – Data collection software that enables homeless service providers to collect uniform client information over time
- Bowman Internet Systems - a pioneering software company providing a full suite of software products and services to the Health and Human Services industry through ServicePoint.
- Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – Federal agency that promotes and organizes affordable housing and promoting economic development.
- Chronic Homelessness – An unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. Disabling condition is defined as a diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions. To be considered chronically homeless, a person must have been sleeping in a place not mean for human habitation (e.g. living on the street) and/or in an emergency homeless shelter during that time.



## Consent Form

### 1. Title of Research Study

An Analysis of Faith-Based Homeless Social Service Providers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and their role in helping the homeless.

### 2. Project Director

Willie Edward Green, Jr.

(504) 365-1301

(504) 875-8956

Dr. Denise Strong, Faculty Supervisor

(504) 280-7103

### 3. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to examine the role and involvement of faith-based social service providers in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana area in providing services to the homeless.

### 4. Procedures for this Research

This research will entail an open-ended interview of the homeless service providers. The participants were selected based on their roles within the homeless service organization. Participants in the study include the director of The Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless; two (2) directors of large faith-based homeless programs affiliated with national organizations; and two (2) directors of smaller grass roots faith-based homeless assistance programs.

Participants will be asked to take part in one interview. Each interview is expected to take not more than one (1) hour. Interviews are to be conducted between April 10<sup>th</sup> 2006 and April 17<sup>th</sup> 2006.

### 5. Potential Risks or Discomforts

There are no expected risks for participation within this study. The decision to participate in the interview process does not obligate the participant to share any information that they would deem private and harmful to the participant or the participant's organization. The participant is free to withdraw consent to the interview, either in whole or in part at any time during the process.

### 6. Potential Benefits to You or Others

There will be no direct benefit from participation within this study.

### 7. Alternative Procedures

Non-participation is the only alternative procedure within this study. Participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequence.

**8. Protection of Confidentiality**

Within the study identification by organization and professional title is possible. Participants who wish to remain unidentified within the study can make a request during or after the interview is conducted. All notes and transcriptions from the interviews will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

**9. Signatures**

**I have been fully informed of the above-described procedure with its possible benefits and risks and I give permission to participate in this study.**

Any additional questions I may have can be directed to the director of this study indicated in #2 of this form.

_____ Signature of Participant	_____ Name of Participant (Print)	_____ Date
_____ Signature of Participant Obtaining Consent	_____ Name of Participant Obtaining Consent (Print)	_____ Date

## Interview Letter

April 10, 2006

Dear Colleague:

I am a University of New Orleans student in the Masters in Public Administration program. Currently I am conducting research necessary to complete my thesis, *An Analysis of Faith-Based Homeless Social Service Providers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and their role in helping the homeless*. As a part of my research I would like to interview people in the Baton Rouge region such as you, who can offer valuable insight into the important role that these agencies play in the fight against homelessness.

The interview process will be approximately one hour, and will take place in Baton Rouge at a location convenient for you. I should also mention that I am employed by Gulf Coast Teaching Family Services, Inc. as the Grants and Special Projects Accountant. This interview is not directly related to my work with Gulf Coast. This study will provide valuable information related to the active role that faith-based organizations play in providing services to homeless individuals and families, information critical to those involved in helping to end homelessness.

I will contact you by phone in the next few days to discuss your possible participation in this voluntary study. I look forward to your participation. Should you have any questions please feel free to contact me at (504) 365-1301 or via email at [willieg@gctfs.org](mailto:willieg@gctfs.org). Again, thank you for your participation and support.

Sincerely,

Willie Green

## **VITA**

Willie Edward Green, Jr. was born in New Orleans, LA on November 5, 1970. Mr. Green received a B.S. in Accounting from Xavier University of Louisiana in 1993. Since 1993 Mr. Green has held several accounting and managerial positions. Currently he is employed at Gulf Coast Teaching Family Services, Inc. as the Grants and Special Projects Account. After Mr. Green receives his graduate degree, he plans on remaining in the field of accounting and management in the nonprofit sector.