

Pathways

JULY, 2024

A Message from President & CEO, David K. Kneipp



Welcome to our new fiscal year 2024-25! As we reflect on our agency's impact over the previous 12 months, we are happy to have served more than 39,000 individuals in 27 parishes. We are so thankful for God's grace, our dedicated employees, and YOU for partnering with us to improve lives throughout South Central Louisiana. Like any three-legged stool, without all three of these components, the end result would be failure.

Those we serve continue to face increasing headwinds with higher rent and utilities, more expensive grocery and fuel prices, and limited funding from our Government partners. This is why we need your support more than ever. Prayerfully consider donating your time, your treasure, and even food, toiletries, clothing, and household goods. With these gifts, we can continue to change peoples' lives for the better.

Continue reading this newsletter to get more details on the exciting new programs and activities we're working on and how you can help in those efforts. As always, we will keep you in our prayers and ask that you do the same for us.

God Bless,

Dave

VOASCLA Welcomes New 2024-2025 Board

VOASCLA Board of Directors and staff gathered for our **Annual Meeting** in June. One of the highlights was welcoming our new Board Officers and two new Board Members to their new roles. We are delighted to have ***Craig Livingston*** and ***Dr. Pamela Ravare-Jones*** join our team and we are looking forward to working closely with ***Board Chair Justin Langlois, Vice-Chair Antoinette Patterson, Secretary Jill Couvillon, Treasurer Scott Lazarone, and Immediate Past Chair Ted Firnberg***. A big thank you to outgoing board

members *Drew Sellers, Mike Nizzo, and LaDonna Williams* for their many years of service. We appreciate them and all of our board members for their their commitment to helping others! Also, a big congratulations to *LaDonna Williams* who transitioned onto VOA's National Board of Directors earlier this month.



Celebrating Community Partnerships

VOASCLA is thankful for new and ongoing community partnerships that allow us to continue the work we do daily and enable us to begin new projects that positively impact our communities.

Just last month, VOASCLA was awarded a **\$50,000**

Empower Grant from the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation to fund a new project for our Partnerships in Child Care team called *Build Literacy - Build Community* in the North Baton Rouge area. The primary objective of this program is to improve early childhood literacy in childcare centers by implementing evidence-based programs and providing essential resources to educators, children, and their families.



In Central Louisiana, our agency received a Community Investment Grant of \$10,000 from the United Way for our *Rapid Rehousing Program* and a \$49,000 grant from the Rapides Foundation for our new *Strengthening Families Program*. SFP is for high-risk families and teaches parenting and life skills intended to help children do well in school, stay addiction-free, and ultimately succeed in life.



Last, but certainly not least, VOASCLA continues to be thankful for the Capital Area United Way's 3-year \$300,000 Innovation Grant benefiting the *Reilly Counseling Center*.

Championing Early Literacy



Once again this year, our School Readiness Tax Credit donations have allowed us to continue to fund children to receive books each month through *DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY*. This is our 4th year serving as the affiliate for Dolly in the 10-parish Greater Baton Rouge area. Of course, it's a bit of an undertaking, so we are so thankful to our corporate and **Community CHAMPIONS** for helping us fund this program to get books into the hands of children. And, we have several new ones on board to help with that!

This spring, **CF Industries** donated \$33,000 raised through its annual Employee Charity Golf Tournament to provide books for children in Ascension Parish, while the **West Baton Rouge Public Library** is funding ALL children in West Baton Rouge Parish. **Rotary Club of Baton Rouge** awarded us a \$7,500 grant to fund children in EBR parish this year. Thanks to their support and the support of existing champions like **Feliciana Bank & Trust** and **DEMCO**, we will be able to continue improving early literacy for Louisiana children in the parishes we serve.



Local Businesses Fund Classroom Makeovers Through Tax Credit Donations



VOASCLA'S *Project PlaySmart Classroom Makeover* program made a splash this year thanks to the local businesses that support the Louisiana School Readiness Tax Credit program!

This year our Grand Prize Winners were May's Miracle Learning Center in Baker, Safe Harbor Learning Center in St. Amant, Peculiar Kids Learning Center in New Iberia, and Little Me Learning Academy in Sulfur! All four of these wonderful childcare centers received a **\$15,000 classroom makeover** featuring high-quality furniture, shelves, and educational toys and materials for their brand-new art, science, building, dramatic play, and literacy centers.

As always, *Project PlaySmart* is made possible thanks to the more than 120 business owners who contributed to the **Louisiana School Readiness Tax Credit** in 2023! To date, we have awarded a **total of 55 classroom makeovers** through this program thanks to these generous donors who've supported us over the years!





Know Someone Who Might Be Interested?

Help Us Get the Word Out About Louisiana's School Readiness Tax Credit (SRTC) Program!

If you know someone who owns a Louisiana business and might be interested in helping children in our community and receiving a **100% refundable tax credit up to \$5,000** through this program, please refer them to us. Donations can be made any time, but no later than December 31, 2024, to be claimed on this year's taxes. Contact Shannon Abney, VP, Chief Development Officer, at 225-408-3794, by email at shannon.abney@voascla.org or simply donate online at voascla.org/SRTC or **CLICK HERE**. To download the *2024 Contribution form*, click [here](#).



Big Turnout for Our Annual Fundraiser

VOASCLA hosted our 15th Annual

Celebration for Change fundraising event at the Manship Theatre on Tuesday, May 7th. Over 275 of our supporters, community partners, board members, and their guests attended the event where they learned about our life-changing programs and services in the community and how their support helps people in need. The evening began with a cocktail reception followed by a one-hour program in the theater.



This year we highlighted the story of Lynnette Allen and Aaden, a medically fragile child she fostered through VOASCLA's *Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) Program*. [*His Name is Aaden*](#) tells the story of Lynnette's journey through the training to take care of Aaden, her experience working with the VOA staff, and the fight she faced for the life of the child she eventually adopted. The response to this heartwarming story was amazing. We at VOASCLA are so thankful to all of our sponsors, donors, and everyone else who made the evening and the work we do every day possible.



YOU CAN CHANGE A LIFE!

*From hunger and homelessness to health and safety,
we need your support to help our neighbors in need.
Big or small, each donation helps!*



Click Here to Give Hope
TODAY!

If you or your business would like to volunteer with our clients or fund a volunteer project to help those most in need, we welcome your support! VOASCLA is in dire need of household items and donations of non-perishable food items for families transitioning out of homelessness into housing. Please get in touch with **Sarah Eunice** at development@voascla.org for details.

VOASCLA Volunteers and Donors: Making a Real Difference

So many of our volunteers continue to make an impact in VOASCLA's efforts to be a positive force to those most in need in the communities we serve.

In May, we saw a big turnout of young people as **Jade Vinett** from the **St. Amant High School Beta Club** made wonderful gifts for our *Supported Living Participants* in Baton Rouge, while up in Alexandria, members of the **Grant High School Fellowship of Christian Athletes** spent an entire day assembling outreach bags for our clients and sorting and organizing donated items there!



And that's not all! Members of **Calvary Baptist Church of Alexandria** went above and beyond in May, donating more than 1,100 diapers to our drive to help families in need with small children. Our **Hydration Drive** was also a big success this summer thanks to generous members of the Alexandria community including the **Zeta Lambda Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.**



Speaking of summer, **Baton Rouge Woodworkers Club** members came through with four amazing gliders for our **North Maiden Community Group** home for adults with disabilities. Our residents, pictured below, absolutely love them! If it weren't for donors like these and countless others, and supporters like YOU, we could not do what we do every day!



For more information on how to become a VOASCLA volunteer, [click below](#).

[VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES](#)

National "Child First" Initiative is Growing at VOASCLA



VOASCLA'S *Reilly Center for Children and Families* continues the standard of excellence in helping children and families with the addition of the nationally acclaimed *Child First* program earlier this year. *Child First* is an intensive, early childhood, home-based mental health intervention that works with young children (prenatal – 5 years) and their families to build strong, nurturing relationships.

It's a known fact that when young children grow up in environments where there is violence, neglect, mental illness, or substance abuse, the stress can be toxic to their developing brains. The goal of *Child First* is to have these children's young brains focused on learning instead of survival.

Our *Child First* team, which now includes Clinical Director Bree Spielfogel, four Licensed Mental Health Clinicians, and four Care Coordinators, is to identify at-risk children and caregivers as early as possible to give caregivers the support and parenting skills they need to make their families stronger and keep them together. We can't wait to see and share how this program will make a difference in our community!

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