

## MESSAGE FROM COMMUNITY IMPACT



### Did You Know...?

Only one in five people who qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) take advantage of it. Many do not even know they qualify. That's why MyFreeTaxes and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) promotes important tax credits like the EITC and

Child Credit.

**MyFreeTaxes.com** provides free federal and state tax preparation and filing assistance for qualifying individuals and families with income of \$60,000 or less. It is the first online initiative allowing free federal and state tax prep and filing in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Since 2009, MyFreeTaxes and VITA sites have helped millions of U.S. taxpayers save more than \$10 billion.

The **VITA** program offers free tax help to people who generally make \$62,000 or less, persons with disabilities and the elderly taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. VITA volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals. All of our VITA volunteer tax preparers and instructors are required to complete training and pass IRS certification.

When people are able to provide for their families and save for the future, they and their children are more likely to enjoy healthy lives and succeed in school. Everyone benefits, because financially stable individuals and families lead to a more competitive workforce and a stronger community.

To learn more about our free tax assistance programs, call United Way of Central Louisiana. If you are interested in volunteering at our VITA site, please contact us.



## CORPORATE CORNER: CLECO



Cleco is one of our largest contributors and has an amazing corporate culture of giving back to the community. This year, they increased employee giving by over 20%!

*"Together we are united! Cleco believes in serving our community and what better way to do it than by partnering with United Way."*

*I am thankful for the existence of United Way because Cleco's contributions are used to support well-needed services throughout our community. United Way touches the lives of many. If United Way is not able to directly provide services that are needed for an individual or family, they will help find an agency that can."*

*-Kea Martin, Cleco Employee & United Way Community Investment Volunteer*

*"Cleco and the United way work together to help impact our community as a whole in a positive way, especially where Education, Income, and Health are concerned. As a donor, you have the choice to decide which United Way program receives your pledge, ensuring your donation goes toward the services you feel need it the most."*

*-Patti Holmes, Cleco Employee*

*"Giving to the United Way is such a great way to help our neighbors in need. When I give through the United Way, I am confident that my donations are carefully spent on effective programs for my local community. I also like that I am helping so many different organizations – from education programs for kids to shelter for battered women."*

*-Cathy Butts, Cleco Employee*

*"Being in a position to help others is very rewarding... every dollar truly helps!"*

*-Vanda Willis, Cleco Employee*

## SEASON'S READINGS



On Saturday, November 14, 2015, United Way, along with the City of Alexandria and Rapides Early Childhood Network (RECN), will host our 2nd Annual Season's Readings.

Please join us in the Downtown Alexandria Mini Park from 11:00 am—1:00 pm. Children will enjoy fun activities from 11 child care and learning centers throughout central Louisiana. We will also have storytelling, snacks, face painting, and free books for the children to take home.

Hope to see you all there!

Sponsored by:



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## HOLIDAY WISH LIST

Volunteering is one of the major focuses of United Way, and we want to give our community as many opportunities as they can to give back. The holidays are a time to spend with family and friends and give thanks for all the things in life for which we are grateful. It is also a time that many want to give back to those less fortunate than themselves or those who are doing great work to make our community the best place it can be.

If you are interested in giving back this holiday season, we have compiled a Holiday Wish List to see what volunteers and donation opportunities are available in central Louisiana.

The complete Holiday Wish List will be on our website by the end of the week.



United Way  
of Central Louisiana



# 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL WILD COOK-OFF

October 15, 2015, marked our 15th Annual United Way Wild Cook-Off. We had 15 cooking teams compete in Wild Game, Cajun, Ribs and BBQ categories. This was our most successful event to date grossing over \$12,000. The cook-off serves as an awareness event for United Way, while raising some funds to help our organization.

We are excited about continuing to grow this event and are so thankful to all the teams who take so much time and energy to cook amazing food each year. This event wouldn't happen without you!

# UNITED WAY



# WILD COOK-OFF



## 2015 WINNERS

### BBQ

1. Southwest Beverage
2. YPG of Central Louisiana/Walker Automotive
3. The GEO Group

### Cajun

1. Southwest Beverage
2. Rick Ducote, Rapides Parish Assessor
3. Compassionate Care Hospice

### Wild Game

1. Sean McGlothlin, Police Juror & Pepe Rizzo
2. RoyOMartin
3. Diamond B Construction

### Ribs

1. RoyOMartin
2. Southwest Beverage
3. Rick Ducote, Rapides Parish Assessor

**Best Presentation:**  
RoyOMartin

**People's Choice Award:**  
Southwest Beverage

**Presented by:**

**Media Sponsor:**



**National Waste Management  
Louisiana, Inc.**



## FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER



Part of any local United Way's mission is to assess local needs and create a local dialogue to meet those needs. Domestic violence (DV) is sadly a real issue in Central Louisiana, so when the only local DV shelter closed four years ago, it was a real concern for many.

At the end of February, 2013, our United Way partnered for the first time with two dozen law enforcement officials and nonprofit DV experts.

The group researched different models for addressing domestic violence and found that a new model only ten years old worked best. A Family Justice Center (FJC) is a multi-agency collaborative, located in one place, where survivors of domestic violence can find whatever help they need: counseling, support, or even legal help on things like restraining orders. The different agencies form a team with the survivor's unique needs placed squarely in the middle. A new board of directors was formed to shepherd the new model into reality here.

The Family Justice Center of Central Louisiana will be located on the grounds of the former Huey P. Long Hospital in Pineville. It's the old "doctors' building" built in 1948, when Jimmie Davis was governor according to the plaque out front. The FJC board just recently obtained the keys and is now working to renovate the building - expanding a restroom, replacing worn-out flooring, and giving the place a much-needed coat of paint. Several grants and donations are making the work possible, such as the \$5,000 grant from the Ladies' Auxiliary at Rapides Regional Medical Center for security cameras.

Keep an eye out for the grand opening! It will be a great day for Cenla.

## FOLLOW US:



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## PARTNER AGENCY SPOTLIGHT



Faith House, serving 7 parishes, is a not-for-profit agency committed to protecting victims of family violence and to educating victims of violence so that they can avoid violent relationships in future. Faith House employees also provide free-of-charge in-services for any interested agencies. In addition, Faith House advocates help write restraining orders, accompany victims to court and to police stations or hospitals. Some provide counseling sessions with adults and children.

“We want to make clear,” said Henrietta Lewis, Rapides Outreach Advocate, “that we don’t do psychotherapy. In our counseling sessions, we educate victims on the dynamics of family violence and teach them how to keep themselves safer.”

Says Kayla Vidrine, Child Advocate for both Avoyelles and Rapides, “My goal is to help children who grow up in violence express themselves in healthy ways and to give them someone safe to talk to, to reaffirm their right just to be children.”

At a recent public symposium all 4 presenters—Numa Metoyer III, prosecuting ADA from Rapides; Crystal Scrantz, Faith House program director; DA Charles Riddle, Avoyelles; and Preston Mansour, 9<sup>th</sup> JDC hearing officer—all agreed that domestic violence is a serious problem that profoundly affects Louisiana’s citizens as well as its legal system.

In partnership with law enforcement and other community agencies, Faith House employees strive every day to make Louisiana a safer place for its families. For help in Rapides Parish, dial 448-0884; in Avoyelles, 253-2383. In the rest of the state, call the statewide crisis line at 1-888-411-1333.

Submitted by: Faith House