

Lighting The Road To The Future

New Orleans

**Data**

**News Weekly**

*"The People's Paper"*

**Data Zone**

**Page 5**

**Data  
Around  
Town**

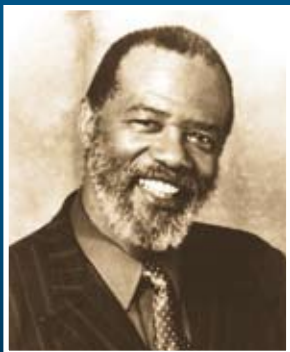
FREE  
COPY

January 29 - February 4, 2011 45th Year Volume 34 [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com)



*The Soul of New Orleans*

**Page 2**



**Trailblazer  
John O'Neal**

**Page 4**

**Happy Birthday  
Audrey Pellerin**



**Page 5**



# One Year After Haiti Earthquake, Corporations Profit While People Suffer



One year later, "less than 10 percent of the \$9 billion pledged by foreign donors has been delivered, and not all of that money has been spent. Other than rebuilding the international airport and clearing the principal urban arteries of rubble, no major infrastructure rebuilding roads, ports, housing, communications has begun.

By Jordan Flaherty

One year after an earthquake devastated Haiti, much of the promised relief and reconstruction aid has not reached those most in need. In fact, the tragedy has served as an opportunity to further enrich corporate interests.

The details of a recent lawsuit, as reported by Business Week, highlights the ways in which contractors – includ-

ing some of the same players who profited from Hurricane Katrina-related reconstruction – have continued to use their political connections to gain profits from others' suffering, receiving contracts worth tens of millions of dollars while the Haitian people receive pennies at best. It also demonstrates how charity and development efforts have mirrored and contributed to corporate abuses.

Lewis Lucke, a 27-year veteran of the US Agency for

*Cover Story, Continued on next page.*

## INSIDE DATA

Cover Story . . . . .	2	Commentary. . . . .	6
Trailblazer . . . . .	4	State & Local News . .	7
Data Zone . . . . .	5		

## DATA NEWS WEEKLY

P.O. Box 57347, New Orleans, LA 70157-7347  
Phone: (504) 821-7421 | Fax: (504) 821-7622

editorial: datanewseditor@bellsouth.net | advertising: datanewsad@bellsouth.net

**Terry B. Jones**  
**CEO/Publisher**  
Glenn Jones  
**VP Advertising & Marketing**  
Cheryl Mainor  
**Managing Editor**  
Edwin Buggage  
**Editor**  
Dionne Character  
**Arts & Entertainment Editor**  
Melanie Mainor  
**Copy Editor Intern**  
June Hazeur  
**Accounting**

### Contributors

Edwin Buggage  
Jordan Flaherty  
Dr. Joe M. Ricks, Jr, PhD

### Art Direction & Production

MainorMedia.com

### Editorial Submissions

datanewseditor@bellsouth.net

### Advertising Inquiries

datanewsad@bellsouth.net

Please call (504) 309-9913 for subscription information. Dated material two weeks in advance.  
Not responsible for publishing or return of unsolicited manuscripts or photos.



*Cover Story, Continued from previous page.*

International Development (US AID) was named US Special Coordinator for Relief and Reconstruction after the earthquake. He worked this job for a few months, then immediately moved to the private sector, where he could sell his contracts and connections to the highest bidder. He quickly got a \$30,000-a-month (plus bonuses) contract with the Haiti Recovery Group (HRG).

HRG had been founded by Ashbriitt, Inc., a Florida-based contractor who had received acres of bad press for their post-Katrina contracting. Ashbriitt's partner in HRG is Gilbert Bigio, a wealthy Haitian businessman with close ties to the Israeli military. Bigio made a fortune during the corrupt Duvalier regime, and was a supporter of the right wing coup against Haitian President Aristide.

Although Lucke received \$60,000 for two months work, he is suing because he says he is owed an additional \$500,000 for the more than 20-million dollars in contracts he helped HRG obtain during that time.

### A Symbol of Political Corruption

As Corpwatch has reported, Ashbriitt "has enjoyed meteoric growth since it won its first big debris removal subcontract from none other than Halliburton, to help clean up after Hurricane Andrew in 1992." In 1999, the company also faced allegations of double billing for \$765,000 from the Broward County, Florida School board for clean-up done in the aftermath of Hurricane Wilma.

Ashbriitt CEO Randal Perkins is a major donor to Republican causes, and hired Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour's firm, as well as former US Army Corp Of Engineers official Mike Parker, as lobbyists. As a reward for his political connections, Ashbriitt won 900 million dollars in Post-Katrina contracts, helping them to become a symbol of political corruption in the world of disaster profiteering, even triggering a congressional investigation focusing on their buying of influence. MSNBC reported in early 2006 that criticism of Ashbriitt "can be heard in virtually every coastal community between Alabama and Texas."

The contracts given to Bush cronies like Ashbriitt resulted in local and minority-owned companies losing out on reconstruction work. As Multinational Monitor noted shortly after Katrina, "by turning the contracting process over to prime contractors like Ashbriitt, the Corps and FEMA have effectively privatized the enforcement of Federal Acquisition Regulations and disaster relief laws such as the Stafford Act, which require contracting officials to prioritize local businesses and give 5

percent of contracts to minority-owned businesses. As a result...early reports suggest that over 90 percent of the \$2 billion in initial contracts was awarded to companies based outside of the three primary affected states, and that minority businesses received just 1.5 percent of the first \$1.6 billion."

Alex Dupuy, writing in The Washington Post, reported a similar pattern in Haiti, noting that "of the more than 1,500 US contracts doled out worth \$267 million, only 20, worth \$4.3 million, have gone to Haitian firms. The rest have gone to US firms, which almost exclusively use US suppliers. Although these foreign contractors employ Haitians, mostly on a cash-for-work basis, the bulk of the money and profits are reinvested in the United States." The same article notes that

to use the disaster as an attempt at further privatization of the country's economy.

Relief and recovery efforts, led by the US Military, have also brought a further militarization of relief and criminalization of survivors. Haiti and Katrina also served as staging grounds for increased involvement of mercenaries in reconstruction efforts. As one Blackwater Mercenary told Jeremy Scahill when he visited New Orleans in the days after Katrina, "This is a trend. You're going to see a lot more guys like us in these situations."

And it's not just corporations who have been guilty of profiting from Haitian suffering. A recent report from the Disaster Accountability Project (DAP) describes a "significant lack of transparency in the disaster-relief/aid

foreign aid, as administered through USAID in Haiti, basically serves to fuel conflicts and covertly promote US corporate interests to the detriment of democracy and Haitian health, liberty, sovereignty, social justice and political freedoms. USAID projects have been at the frontlines of orchestrating undemocratic behavior, bringing underdevelopment, coup d'etat, impunity of the Haitian Oligarchy, indefinite incarceration of dissenters, and destroying Haiti's food sovereignty, essentially promoting famine."

Throughout its history, Haiti has been a victim of many of those who have claimed they are there to help. Until we address this fundamental issue of corporate profiteering masquerading as aid and development, the nation will remain mired in poverty. And



A Haitian child receives medical aid after an earthquake ransacked Port au Prince on Jan. 12.

"less than 10 percent of the \$9 billion pledged by foreign donors has been delivered, and not all of that money has been spent. Other than rebuilding the international airport and clearing the principal urban arteries of rubble, no major infrastructure rebuilding - roads, ports, housing, communications - has begun."

The disaster profiteering exemplified by Ashbriitt is not just the result of quick decision-making in the midst of a crisis. These contracts are awarded as part of a corporate agenda that sees disaster as an opportunity, and as a tool for furthering policies that would not be possible in other times. Naomi Klein exposed evidence that within 24 hours of the earthquake, the influential right-wing think tank the Heritage Foundation was already laying plans

community," and finds that many relief organizations have left donations for Haiti in their bank accounts, earning interest rather than helping the people of Haiti. DAP Director Ben Smilowitz notes that "the fact that nearly half of the donated dollars still sit in the bank accounts of relief and aid groups does not match the urgency of their own fundraising and marketing efforts and donors' intentions, nor does it convey the urgency of the situation on the ground."

Haitian Poet and Human Rights Lawyer Ezili Dantò has written, "Haiti's poverty began with a US/Euro trade embargo after its independence, continued with the Independence Debt to France and ecclesiastical and financial colonialism. Moreover, in more recent times, the uses of US

future disasters, wherever they occur, will lead to similar injustices.

Jordan Flaherty is a Journalist and Staffer with the Louisiana Justice Institute. He was the first writer to bring the story of the Jena Six to a national audience, and his award-winning reporting from the Gulf Coast has been featured in a range of outlets including the New York Times, Mother Jones, and Argentina's Clarin newspaper. He has produced news segments for Al-Jazeera, TeleSur, and Democracy Now, and appeared as a guest on CNN Morning, Anderson Cooper 360, and Keep Hope Alive with the Reverend Jesse Jackson. His new book is FLOODLINES: Community and Resistance from Katrina to the Jena Six. He can be reached at neworleans@leftturn.org, and more information about Floodlines can be found at floodlines.org. For speaking engagements, see communityandresistance.wordpress.com.

# John O'Neal

## *Art and Soul Revolutionary Reflections*

by: Edwin Buggage

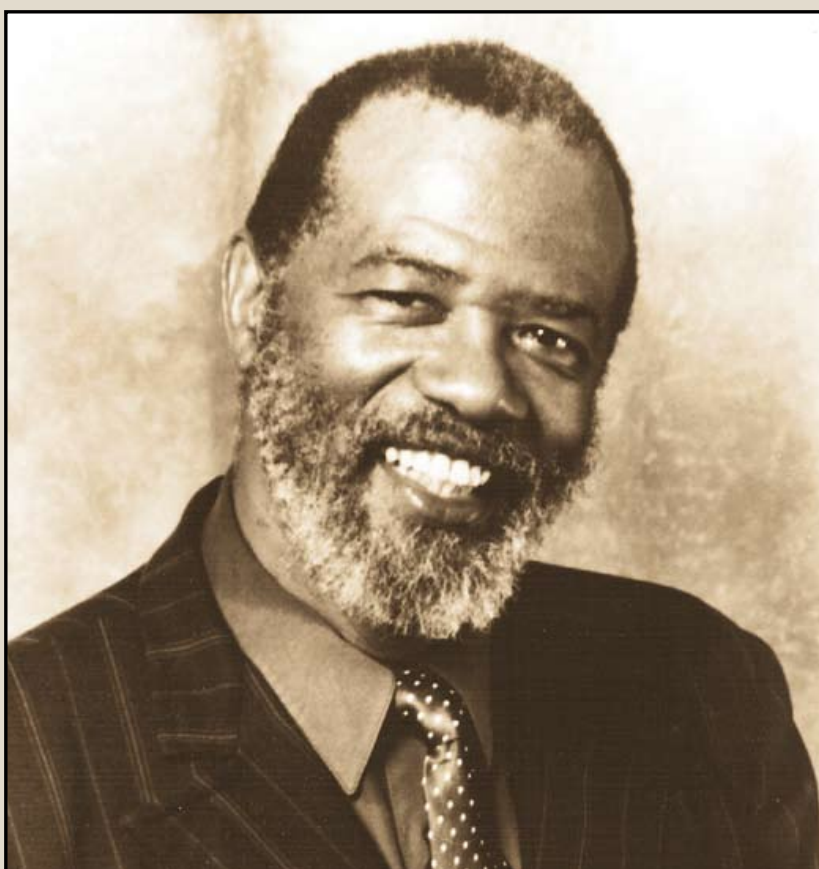
John O'Neal has used theatre as a tool to empower and uplift people for almost half a century. He arrived in New Orleans from his native Illinois in 1963 as a member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). "I am one who has lived and dedicated my life in the fight for justice and equality," says O'Neal.

Art at its best can inspire and uplift a community; also it serves a mirror that reflects its plight and aspirations. O'Neal was one of the co-founders of the Free Southern Theater in 1963 which served as the cultural arm of the Civil Rights Movement and was part of what was to become the Black Arts Movement. During this time of social upheaval art was used to challenge the conventional thinking the era. "We were young people who were dedicated to making a statement and changing the world, to make people think about what was going on around them, our goal was not only to entertain but to teach and inform," O'Neal says of the 1960's.

After Free Southern Theater ended, O'Neal created another vehicle to help place a mirror on society's ills forming Junebug Productions in 1980. Since its inception he has brought quality entertainment to the stage that challenges its audience with thought provoking work. Upon founding Junebug Productions he began touring in a series of original plays most notably the mythic character Junebug Jabbo Jones, who is the embodiment of a wise, down-home Everyman.

O'Neal is passionate about playing his part in uplifting the youth in the Crescent City. Today as New Orleans suffers from many societal ills, with young Black males being disproportionately affected as victims of violent crime against one and other this is something that concerns O'Neal. He feels it is important to focus on helping young men. "Yesterday we marched and protested for access, but today the battleground is our own community where we must restore hope in our young black men and through the theater we have done much in the area of outreach to young men," says O'Neal of what he feels is the struggle of the 21st century.

He feels that today more than ever it is important to present work that can critique and promote dialog that moves humanity forward, "I think it is important that what we create can make people think about what is going on around them and inspire them to not just talk about the problems we face but do something," O'Neal says of the intended purpose of his work. He also says of the mission of Junebug Productions, "It is to create and present artwork of the highest quality



that encourages and supports African Americans in the Black Belt South who are working to improve the quality of life available to themselves and others who are similarly oppressed and exploited."

Throughout his career O'Neal has received many accolades and awards for his work as an artist and activist. "I am humbled by the recognition for my work, but more importantly it is about the young people looking at the example of those who came before them and continue the fight of today such as those centering around healthcare, adequate educa-

tion, affordable housing, crime and social justice," says O'Neal. Continuing he says, "We cannot go to sleep because some people have positions in politics, that is only one form of progress and yes we have moved forward but there is still a lot of work that needs to be done."

As the landscape of the city is changing O'Neal says that is important one remembers their roots wherever they are, "New Orleans is a very special city like no other, and while I am saddened by some of the things I see, it is an opportunity for the world to see what we have to offer through our people and their talent that sometimes went unnoticed in the city," says O'Neal. "But I feel the world today based on our struggles of the past have created new possibilities for our young people and I want to continue to put that message out there and help and inspire as many people as I can to be better and work to leave the

world a better place and build for the future." John O'Neal is a man who has used his gifts to serve his community and while there are many words that aptly describes him, we at Data News Weekly have chosen one that we feel embody the spirit of this legendary figure 'Trailblazer.'

**JMJ**  
Joseph M. Jones  
Continuing Education Fund



at&t



# Shoot Ya Best Shot!

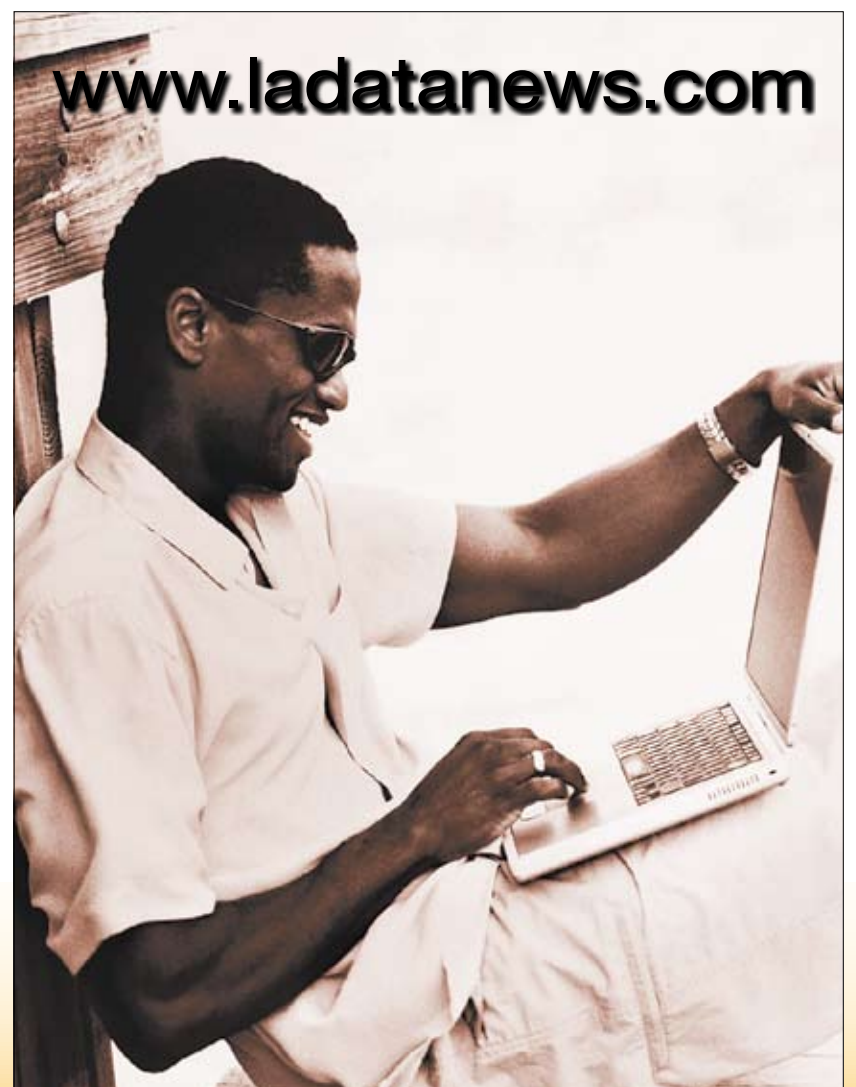
## Data Around Town

Recently, Promoter/Photographer Leo Getz celebrated his birthday. It was a event where a who's who of beautiful ebony faces came out to enjoy the night in spotlight. Cameras flashed as this grown folks affair went down in elegant style as the music went on non-stop and bottles popped.



### Happy Birthday Mrs. Audrey Pellerin!

Mrs Audrey Pellerin celebrated her 80th Birthday January 15th amongst numerous friends and family members at the Regency Reception Hall in New Orleans east. Shown above Mrs Pellerin (center) is flank by her son (l-r) Kurte Pellerin, Debrina Baham, Orelia Taylor, and her other son Jerome Pellerin.





# Politics and Business are Related but Not Equal

Joe M. Ricks, Jr., Ph.D.

A number of conversations I have had over the past few months clearly suggest that many in the African American Community are trying to assess the meaning in the fact that in a majority black city we have turned to white political leadership. A friend of mine recently asked me what I thought about it from an economic perspective for African Americans. The more I thought about this, it made me think about the more salient point that too often our community looks for political gain to translate into economic gain, yet historical data suggest that there is no clear correlation between the two.

During the 16 and 17 hundreds, African

Americans as a group were poor, however there were already some prosperous plantation owners and notables that had great achievements like Phyllis Wheatley, Paul Cuffe, and Benjamin Banneker. These and other free people of color shared some of the same rights as white property owners at the time. The advancement of free African Americans took place well into the 17 hundreds even though a mass importation of slaves was taking place causing fear to rise among the white population. Slave codes were tightened and the rights of free African Americans were being stripped. During this time and up until reconstruction the social and political environment for African Americans was regressing, however during that period the economic advancement for

free African Americans continued to progress. Despite laws banning the education of free African Americans underground schools and private instruction were somewhat common in urban centers. As early as 1820 there were day and night schools in Baltimore, records show almost 200 adults attending. In 1850 more

than half of the 2000 African American children in Boston were attending school. By 1860 one third of the students at Oberlin College in Ohio were African American.

In monetary term there are documented cases of African Americans leaving estates valuing in the tens of thousands of dollars, and in one case an estate valued at \$100,000. Records also show that in 1860 in North Carolina alone more than fifty free African Americans were had property valued from \$2600 to \$36000. Just to provide some context, \$2600 to \$36000 in 1860 is valued at \$62000 to \$931000 in today's dollars. Records indicate that in 1837 the property value of free African Americans in New York City was worth 1.4 million dollars, in Cincinnati a half million, in Charleston three quarter million, and in New Orleans the taxable property belonging to free African Americans was 15 million dollars. In 1860 the total estimated value of property owned by free African Americans was valued at 50 million dollars, 1.3 billion in today's dollars.

The Reconstruction period following the Civil War was the high point of political power for African Americans. There was more political representation by African Americans than any time in American history, however economically there was little progress made amongst African Americans. In fact some of the skilled artisans economically regressed during this period. However, following Reconstruction, even with the lost of the political power and the vast majority of African Americans working in agriculture from 1890 till World War 1 there is evidence of African American economic gain. For example, a growing portion of African Americans owned their own houses and farms; in 1890 it was 19 percent; by 19Politics and Business are Related but Not Equal

A number of conversations I have had over the past few months clearly suggest

that many in the A13 it was 25 percent. For a detailed discussion of these issues read Race and Economics by Thomas Sowell.

Clearly from a political power perspective as a race we have taken a step backwards and the cause of this backwards step need to be assessed. The question for African Americans that we must address with brutal honesty is; are recent election results a move away from racial politics and looking at candidates as individuals, or a vote of no confidence in African American political leadership. The answer to this question has huge implications for African Americans in local politics. While we ponder our political future the good news is that political leadership does not have to look like you or even be supportive of you as a group in order to progress economically. History tells us that through the toughest of circumstances and in the absence of basic human rights, when African Americans understood the value we brought to the market and participated in the market place we were able to progress economically and build wealth. In the present day we see the example of our Vietnamese citizens acquiring assets and progressing economically with no Vietnamese elected representation until the election of former Congressman Cao.

When Booker T. Washington said "At the bottom of education, at the bottom of politics, even at the bottom of religion, there must be for our race economic independence" I believe he was telling us that progress in all areas are based on an economic foundation; not the other way around. In other words the key for economic progress for African Americans here in New Orleans, as well as around the country, is not to put too many resources into gaining political power but putting enough resources into economic activity. I'm pretty sure economic progress will lead to all of the political progress we would want.

## NEW ORLEANS RECREATION DEVELOPMENT

The **New Orleans Recreation Development Commission** meetings will be held the 2nd Tuesday of every month (with the exception of March, this meeting will be held on the 3rd Tuesday) at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 1300 Perdido Street, New Orleans, Louisiana.

### The dates for the Commission meetings are as follow:

February 8, 2011  
March 15, 2011  
April 12, 2011  
May 10, 2011  
June 14, 2011  
July 12, 2011  
August 9, 2011  
September 13, 2011  
October 11, 2011  
November 8, 2011  
December 13, 2011

\*\*\*\*\*

The **New Orleans Recreation Development Foundation** meetings will be held the 1st Monday of every other month, starting in February, 2011 at 6:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 1300 Perdido Street, New Orleans, Louisiana.

### The dates for the Foundation meetings are as follow:

February 7, 2011  
April 4, 2011  
June 6, 2011  
August 1, 2011  
October 3, 2011  
December 5, 2011



Find us on facebook  
Data News Weekly

# Mayor Landrieu and Regional Transit Authority Announce French Quarter Streetcar Expansion

Today, Mayor Mitchell J. Landrieu and the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) of New Orleans announced plans to extend streetcar lines through the French Quarter between the Canal Streetcar line and Press Street. This expansion will include a tie-in to the existing Riverfront

Streetcar line via Elysian Fields Avenue. The expansion will encompass approximately 2.48 miles and will have 13 stop locations.

Mayor Mitchell J. Landrieu

stated, "The Regional Transit Authority continues to improve

services to better meet the needs of our residents. This expansion brings streetcars back into our neighborhoods, providing affordable and reliable transportation to a large segment of our community." He added, "This expansion represents a viable new mode of transportation that reconnects us to our rich history and heritage."

"The RTA Board of Commis-

sioners is committed to making public transportation accessible for all of the city's residents," said Barbara C. Major, Chairwoman of the RTA Board. Adding, "With this project, we are providing a significant portion of our residents with transportation to pursue employment opportunities, creating a better environment for economic development along the expanded rail lines, and building the local business community."

The agency will finalize environ-

mental documents for the French Quarter Rail Expansion Project in April 2011, with the design phase scheduled for May 2011 - Spring 2012. Construction of the corridor will take place from Spring 2012 - Fall 2013 with revenue service beginning in Fall 2013.

The French Quarter Rail Expansion Project is a segment of a larger RTA rail expansion program.

The agency will begin construction on the Union Passen-

ger Terminal (UPT)/Loyola Avenue corridor in April 2011 with revenue service of this segment scheduled for June 2012. In addition, the agency has future expansion plans that will continue to grow the transportation system and provide world-class transit service to the residents of New Orleans.

For more information about the Regional Transit Authority or any of its projects call 504-827-8300 or visit us online at [www.norta.com](http://www.norta.com).

## Greater New Orleans Foundation Hosts First Of Its Kind Virtual Giving Circle

Five organizations announce their partnership in an online giving circle called The Neutral Ground. This will be the first-ever giving circle conducted entirely online. The participating organizations are the Greater New Orleans Foundation, the Human Rights Campaign, Puentes, the Vietnamese American Youth Leaders Association, and the Urban League of Greater New Orleans. The pur-

pose of the giving circle is for participants to engage in an online dialogue about inter-community issues relating to race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, and to support through grantmaking important work in this area.

"We live in a multicultural society," said Albert Ruesga, President & CEO, Greater New Orleans Foundation. "The Neutral Ground offers a place for open di-

alogue—a place where members of the giving circle and the public can learn together about the many ties that bind us together as one community. It's a place where we hope connections with others will result in a stronger community for all."

Topics to be explored include: the special cultural character of New Orleans, the challenges of immigration, black/brown is-

suues and gay/straight issues. Apparently the first of its kind, The Neutral Ground giving circle has members who have contributed \$200 each to a pooled fund that has been matched by the Greater New Orleans Foundation for a total of \$10,000. Giving circle members will issue grants to organizations

supporting projects addressing inter-community issues.

Organizations and projects awarded grants by the giving circle will be announced on Cinco de Mayo.

To learn more, visit <http://www.theneutralground.net>.



The New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC) is currently accepting applications for the following positions:

**\*\*Laborer**

**\*\*Recreation Leader Assistant**

**Senior Lifeguard**

**Recreation Supervisor**

**Recreation Maintenance Supervisor**

**Recreation Coordinator I (Tennis)**

Applicants may apply in the Department of Civil Service, 1300 Perdido Street (7<sup>th</sup> Floor), New Orleans, Louisiana, Monday-Friday, 9:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., 504-658-3500

**\*\*Applicants for these positions should apply at the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC), 800 Race Street, New Orleans, Louisiana Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., 504-658-3000**



# *My* Medicare Health Team



“Thanks for all your services. They could not be any better.  
I’d say thanks and thanks again. Thanks to Peoples Health.”

— *Julia Edgerson, Peoples Health plan member*

**PEOPLES HEALTH**

Your **Medicare Health Team**

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

**1-800-398-5672**

TTY/TDD users call 1-866-475-6868  
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Si prefiere discutir sus opciones de Medicare en español, favor de llamar al 1-800-226-4290

*Peoples Health is a Medicare Advantage organization with a Medicare contract.*