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2018
ANNUAL REPORT

Website:
assistagency.org

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“We know all too well that what we are doing is nothing more than a drop in the ocean. But if the drop were not there, the ocean would be missing something.” –

Mother Teresa

A special thanks to the ASSIST Agency and its dedication to serving the weakest among us. Thank you for opening your arms to the communities in Acadiana most in need. May God bless you in the next year.

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Mission

The mission of the ASSIST Agency is to raise the standard of living and improve the quality of life for economically challenged individuals, families, and communities in Southwestern Louisiana.

Vision Statement

To have the public trust and be recognized as a leader in helping to empower people in becoming more self-sufficient and to help in strengthening local communities in becoming more responsive to the needs of the people.

The ASSIST Agency carries out its mission through a variety of means including community-wide assessment of needs and strengths, comprehensive antipoverty plans and strategies, provision of a broad range of direct services, mobilization of financial and non-financial resources, advocacy on behalf of low-income people and partnership with other community-based organizations to eliminate poverty.

FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The war on poverty continued in 2018. The ASSIST Agency provides programs that help to meet the needs of individuals, families, and communities in Acadia, Jefferson Davis, and Vermilion Parishes. While larger metropolitan areas are experiencing new growth in the economy, these mostly rural parishes are struggling to improve their economic health. ASSIST strives to make available programs that will positively impact the lives of the residents. It is not enough to just put a bandage on the problem – we must work to stabilize the households and communities. Assistance with bills is a bandage – budget counseling, applying for SNAP, Medicaid, and Medicare benefits, helping renters stabilize in their housing or transition to homeownership and case management are the cure.

The health of our communities needs our help too. Each of us must participate in helping them grow whether it is by building business, improving community resources, or simply by voting in each election. We are here to help each of you become a part of a thriving healthy community. We look forward to working with you in the coming year.



Anthony Candler, Sr.
President

Dear Friends,

We are honored to be the agency in Acadia, Vermilion, and Jefferson Davis Parishes that leads the war on poverty. Your support is pivotal in helping us achieve our mission and making our agency a success. We couldn't do it without you. Your continued support and prayers are very much appreciated. Hopefully, this year's report will give you some insight on our major accomplishments and you can find additional information about our agency on our website at assistagency.org. We welcome any suggestions you may have on how to improve and/or expand our services and remember – *Together we can do more!*

Best wishes for another year of bountiful blessings!

Sincerely,



Sharon Clement
Executive Director

PROGRAM IMPACTS AND SUCCESS STORIES

Mary – FEMA EF&S funds, Housing Counseling Programs

Mary came to the ASSIST Agency after her husband was laid off of his job. They have three children. While waiting for unemployment benefits to begin, they were struggling to pay the mortgage and utilities. The Agency was able to help pay some of the utility bills and made referrals to other agencies for additional help with utilities and food. Financial counseling helped the family develop a budget that would work with the reduced income from unemployment benefits. We discussed options available for help with mortgage payments and how to access them. Ways to reduce the costs of electricity and water were discussed and Mrs. M felt her family could put those ideas into practice. Upon follow-up in December, the family was receiving the unemployment benefits and had been able to reduce their spending to meet the budgeted amounts.

Monica – Emergency Shelter, Emergency Solutions Grant Rapid Rehousing Programs

Monica and her two children were homeless when entering the ASSIST Emergency Shelter. During her stay at the shelter, she received education on life skills that would help her become self-sufficient, including parenting skills, budgeting, acquiring and maintaining housing, and more. The ESG Grant helped her with deposits for rent and utilities to establish independent living in a safe and affordable home. Case management with Monica helped her to maintain her independent living.

Fred – Elderly Assistance Program

Fred is in his eighties and lives on a fixed income. He has Medicare benefits for most of his medical expenses. However, the total copay costs of his medicines each month take a big bite out of his income. Through the Elderly Assistance Program, the Agency helped Fred pay his copayments which helped him stretch his budget to cover the costs of maintaining his residence.

Claire – United Way of Southwest Louisiana, Housing Counseling

Claire is employed by a fast food company. She was out of work sick for four days for which she was not paid. The temporary drop in income caused her to have to choose between paying rent or utilities. She applied for emergency funds to help pay her rent which helped her be able to pay her utilities. After receiving rental assistance and housing counseling, Claire was able to get back on track and continue paying her housing costs and remain stably housed.

Tricia – United Way of Acadiana VITA and Incentivized Savings Program

Tricia filed her tax return at the ASSIST office through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program sponsored by the United Way of Acadiana. She used her refund money to invest in the Incentivized Savings Program. She met with the ASSIST Agency Eligibility/Services Coordinator, who served as her financial coach for the program, each month for one year. Tricia made regular deposits to the savings account she opened with her tax refund. At the end of the year she had saved

\$4000.00. She completed all requirement of the program and the United Way of Acadiana provided her with a match of \$2000.00! Tricia was very pleased and said, “Where else could you get a 50% return on an investment? I will use this money for my retirement.”

During the Fiscal year 2017-2018 the ASSIST Agency provided services to 1803 households consisting of a total of 4,691 people.

- 40 children ages 0-5 were enrolled in Little Friends Child Care Centers
 - 21 children demonstrated improved literacy skills
 - 16 children demonstrated skills for school readiness



Little Friends
Child Care Centers
Staff: Left – Mikayla Dupre
Right – Charity Bias,
Amanda Lejeune and
Shanequa Guidry

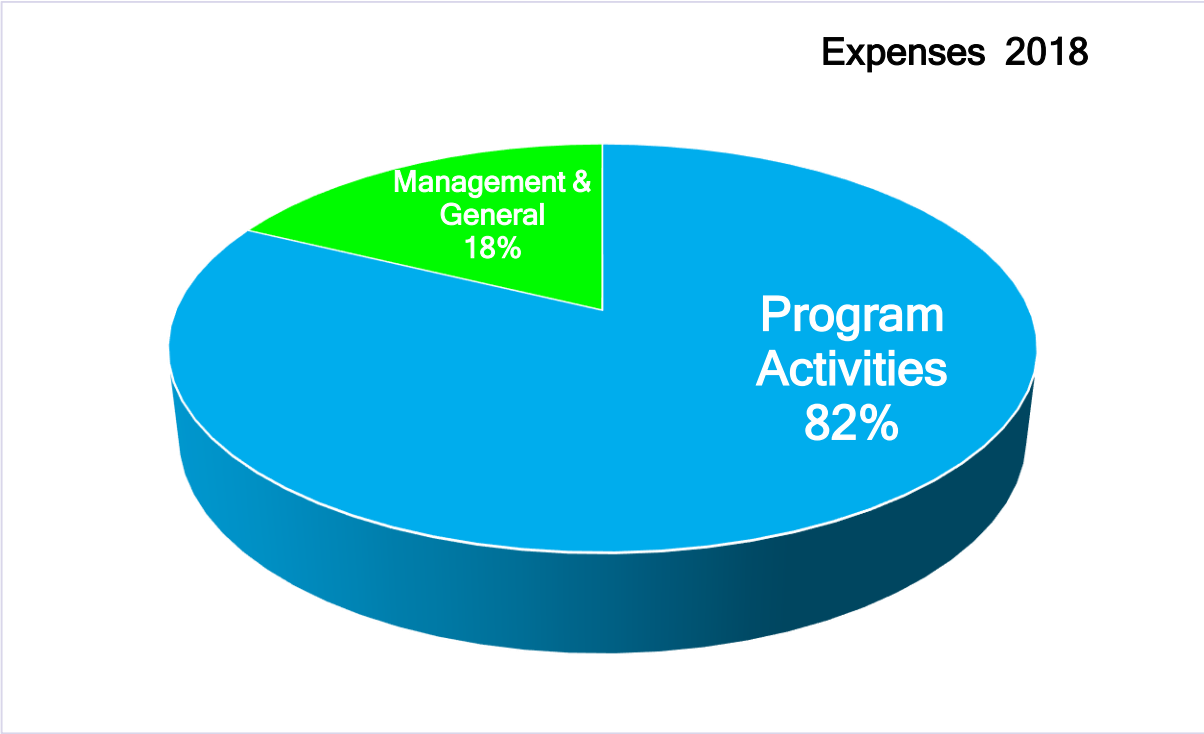
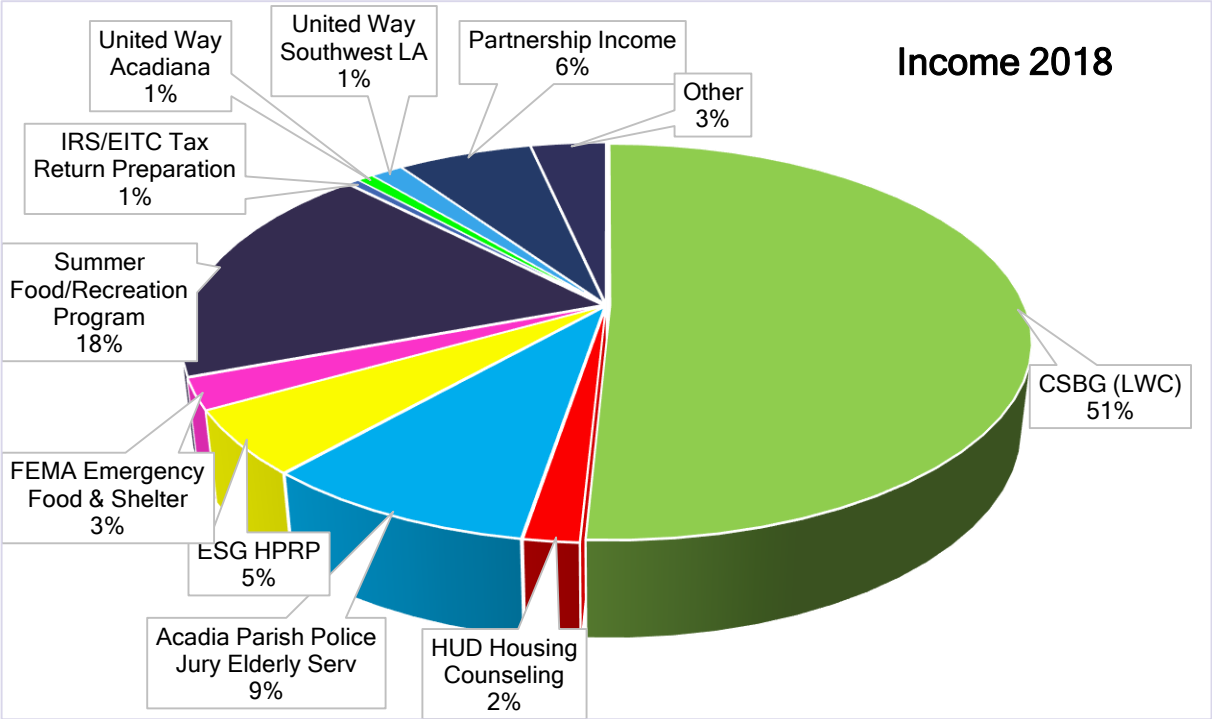
- 169 children received school supplies donated by the community
- 939 children participated in the 2018 Summer Food and Recreation Programs in Acadia and Jeff Davis Parishes
 - 7,553 breakfasts and 10,422 lunches were served to participants
 - 82% of participants in the Recreation Program improved or maintained math skills
 - 84% improved or maintained grade level reading skills
- 615 households received housing payment assistance for rent or mortgage
- 497 households received utility payment assistance
- 479 individuals/families requested placement in the ASSIST Emergency Shelter. The shelter is an 8-bed facility and many of the households were put on the waiting list or referred to other shelters or housing solutions.
 - 34 Individuals and families entered the Emergency Shelter
 - 4 residents moved from the shelter into independent permanent housing with no subsidy
 - 11 residents moved into permanent housing with family members or friends
 - 2 residents moved into Permanent Supportive Housing Programs
- 19 people participated in the United Way of Acadiana Incentivized Savings Program

- 18 improved their credit scores
- 18 increased their net worth
- 644 households received financial help with rent and/or utilities through funds from the United Way of Southwest Louisiana, United Way of Acadiana, CSBG, Emergency Solutions Grant, fundraising and donations
- 374 households who were seen by the Agency received financial coaching/counseling to improve their housing stability.
- 27 households obtained safe and affordable housing through the Emergency Solutions Grant Homeless Prevention/Rapid Rehousing funds.
- 56 households avoided eviction as a result of participation in ASSIST Agency programs.
- 18 households experienced improved health and safety due to improvements such as smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and handicap accessible modifications through funds from the Acadia Parish Police Jury and the Red Cross.
- 452 seniors (ages 60+) maintained an independent living situation as a result of assistance from the Agency
- 311 individuals with disabilities maintained an independent living situation as a result of assistance from the Agency
- 15,448 meals were served to over 325 children ages 5-18 in the 2018 Summer Feeding and Recreation Programs in Acadia and Jeff Davis Parishes
- ASSIST Agency is part of Acadiana Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD.) In 2017 the Agency participated in disaster recovery for the evacuee's in the path of Hurricane Harvey which affected East Texas and Southwestern Louisiana.



Members of St. Joseph Baptist Church Purse Ministry deliver love offerings of purses filled with hygiene items for the Emergency Shelter residents.

2018 INCOME AND EXPENSES



DONORS MAKE MAGIC HAPPEN

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St. Joseph Baptist Church Purse Ministry

Excelsior Chapter #84 of the Eastern Star

Retired Teachers Association

Crowley Garden Club



The Excelsior Chapter #84 of the Order of the Eastern star generously donated supplies for the ASSIST Emergency Shelter



Woodmen Life, represented by Alberta John (standing), presents a donation to the ASSIST Emergency Shelter. Seated is Edna Semar, ASSIST Community Services Director.

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- Past member of Jefferson Davis Parish Police Jury for 8 years

FAMILY

- Son of Marcelette Lejeune Guinn and Loyd Guinn
- Married 41 years to Rosalie Conner, daughter of Valerie Conner and John L. Conner
- Father of 10 children and Grandfather of 15

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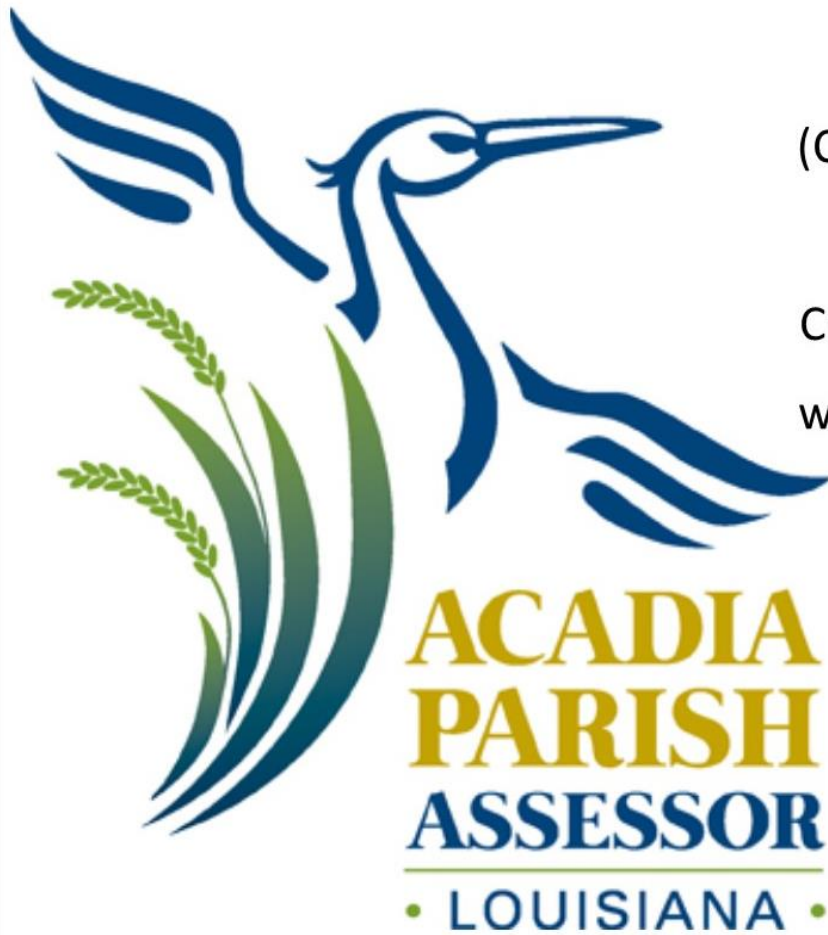
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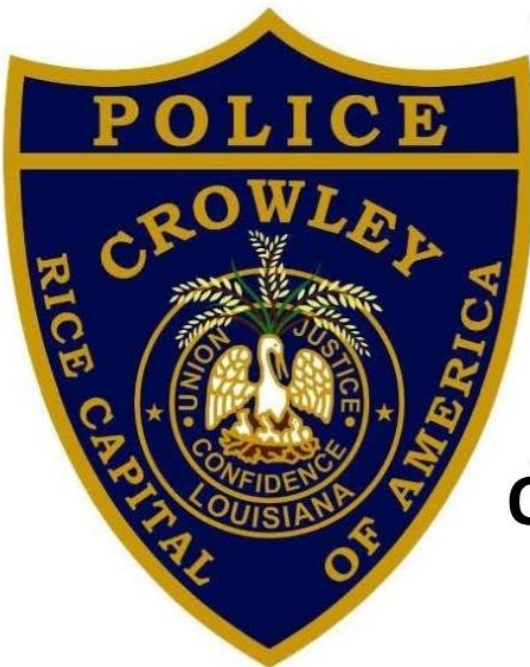
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Thomas*

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-Dr. Jack Gupta

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