Tribe Receives VA Grant to Serve At-Risk Veterans

Tribal veterans will be able to receive free legal services thanks to a new grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The United Houma Nation was one of 79 organizations across the United States — and one of only two in Louisiana — who were awarded funding from the VA to provide legal services to homeless veterans, and to veterans who are at risk of becoming homeless, as part of the VA’s homeless prevention efforts.

The VA announced the award in a press release on June 29, 2023.

According to the announcement, these first of its kind funds will help veterans in several ways, including:

- Providing representation in landlord-tenant disputes to prevent eviction;
- Assisting with court proceedings for child support, custody, or estate planning;
- Helping Veterans obtain public benefits, including disability compensation;
- Defending Veterans in criminal cases that can prolong or increase their risk of homelessness, such as outstanding warrants, fines, or driver’s license revocation; and
- Assisting with requests to upgrade characterization of discharges or dismissals of former members of the Armed Forces.

UHN attorney Michael Billiot will provide the free legal services to tribal veterans. He can be reached at 985-873-8307.

For more information on this grant and services available to veterans, visit the Legal Services for Veterans website at https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/LSV.asp.—SP
Greetings from Principal Chief Lora Ann Chaisson

Aletu! It’s been another incredibly busy month for the United Houma Nation administration and staff as we all work to meet the needs of our United Houma Nation (UHN) citizens.

I am excited that the UHN’s printed newspaper is in your mailboxes! This has been a goal of mine for some time, so it is great to see this happening for our citizens. The newspaper will be printed quarterly and the first two editions will be sent free of charge to each UHN household.

We are in the process of developing a subscription plan to help us cover the cost of printing and mailing the newspaper after those first two editions, so be on the lookout for those details in the coming months.

It is vitally important that we have accurate addresses for our citizens, so please do your part and update your address!

We also welcome your feedback on the newspaper and suggestions for improving it. Please feel free to email your comments to the Media Committee at newsletter@unitedhoumanation.org.

I am particularly proud that the UHN has recently been awarded a new grant from the Veterans Administration that will give us the ability to provide legal services to aid our Veterans who are homeless or experiencing housing instability. It is great to have this resource to provide a helping hand to those who have served in any of the Armed Forces and it is the first program our Tribe has had that is specifically for our Veterans.

I am honored by your prayers and support as I continue to work for the betterment of all of the United Houma Nation citizens. - LC

EVENTS

AUG 12
TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING
UHN MARRERO OFFICE, MARRERO, LA 10AM

AUG 15
DEADLINE TO QUALIFY AS CANDIDATE FOR DISTRICT 5 & DISTRICT 10 TRIBAL COUNCIL SEATS

SEP 4
LABOR DAY; UHN OFFICES CLOSED

SEP 9
TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING
DULARGE FIRE DEPT., 1767 BAYOU DULARGE RD. THIBODAUX, LA 10AM

SIGN UP FOR OUR E-NEWSLETTER AT www.unitedhoumanation.org

United Houma Nation Tribal Council

Lora Ann Chaisson, Principal Chief

Adam Crappel, District 1
Clarice Friloux, District 2
Janzen M.N. Verdin, District 3
Jimmy Verret, Jr., District 4
(Vacant), District 5
Roxanna Francis Foret, District 6
Jacintha Duthu, District 7
Gretchen Billiot Boudreaux, District 8
Jason Trosclair, District 9
(Vacant), District 10
Dixie Breaux, District 11
SPECIAL ELECTION: Call for Candidates to Fill Vacant District 5 and District 10 Tribal Council Seats

The United Houma Nation Election Board

is currently accepting applications of candidacy for the vacant District 5 and District 10 Tribal Council Seats. A Special Election for these seats is scheduled for Saturday, October 14, 2023. The polling locations will be announced soon. Individuals interested in becoming a candidate for the upcoming election must qualify by 4:00 pm on Tuesday, August 15, 2023.

To be eligible for election or appointment to any Tribal Council office, candidates must meet the following Qualification Requirements:

- Be a registered tribal voter; and
- Be at least 25 years of age, and
- Be a high school graduate or have the equivalent of a high school diploma; and
- Reside in the voting district in which the person seeks office for two or more consecutive years immediately preceding the election; and
- Be free of any felony conviction and
- Not hold a tribal office, unless the person is seeking election or reappointment to that office

Potential candidates for each the vacant seat must complete an Eligibility for Office qualifying form, which is available at the UHN Main Office located at 400 Monarch Drive, Houma, LA 70364 and at www.unitedhoumanation.org.

District 5: Terrebonne Parish – The area of Houma (70363) north of Thompson Road along Hwy. 57 (Grand Caillou Road) and Hwy. 315 (Bayou Dularge Road) north of the Intracoastal Canal including all of East Houma, Village East, etc.

District 10: Lafourche/Jefferson Parishes – Grande Isle (70358), Leeville/Golden Meadow (70357), Galliano (70354) and the area of Cut Off (70345) south of the South Lafourche Bridge as divided by East 90th Street along Hwy. 308 and Tarpon Pass between LA 1 and Hwy. 3235

Tribal Citizens Needed for UHN Boards and Committees

The United Houma Nation is seeking qualified tribal citizens to serve on our Boards and Committees, which provide essential guidance and support for the operation and activities of the United Houma Nation. Tribal citizens are invited to apply for volunteer positions on the following committees:

- **Personnel Committee:** Coordinates with the Tribal Administrator to carry out the hiring policies of the Tribal Council and assists the Tribal Council in all personnel matters according to the stipulations of the UHN Personnel Manual. Human Resource professionals with experience in employee recruitment, benefits, compensation, and compliance are encouraged to apply.

- **Public Relations, Media and Marketing Committee:** Develops communications that are consistent with the overall objectives of the UHN in the areas of media representation, emergency communications, public relations and social media content, along with other related duties. Individuals with strong writing backgrounds, media experience, and/or marketing skills are encouraged to apply.

- **The Budget and Finance Committee** is responsible for overseeing the management of Tribal finances and provides guidance on budgets and economic strategies. CPAs, Accountants, Auditors, and other Finance professionals are strongly encouraged to apply.

- **The Education Committee** is responsible for developing education programs that are consistent with the overall objectives of the UHN. School Administrators and Educators are encouraged to apply.

- **The Enrollment Board** is responsible for facilitating the proper maintenance of the United Houma Nation membership rolls to ensure the viability and integrity of the UHN. Individuals wishing to serve on this board must be detail-oriented, conscientious and able to accurately review the documentation required for enrollment. A signed oath of confidentiality is also required.

- **The Tribal Security and Community Service Committee** develops and coordinates Tribal Emergency Response and Hazard Mitigation efforts for UHN citizens, as well as coordinate the dispensing of grant funding for community services and disaster relief. Citizens with experience in developing disaster plans and providing disaster relief services would be ideal for this committee. Members of this committee must be willing and able to provide assistance to their fellow citizens in adverse conditions.

Both the Education Committee and the Public Relations, Media, and Marketing Committee are able to meet virtually. All other boards and committees must meet in person. Meeting frequency for each committee varies.

To apply for any of these committees, download and fill out the Application For Appointment to UHN Boards and Committees on the FAQ’s page at www.unitedhoumanation.org. All committee and board members are subject to a background check prior to appointment. For more information, call 985-223-3093. -CS

Register to vote in Tribal Elections!

Download the Voter Registration Form at www.UnitedHoumaNation.org.
**Settlement School Buildings In Need of Funds, Repairs**

The historic Indian settlement schools in the coastal communities of Golden Meadow and Montegut, Louisiana suffered catastrophic damage during Hurricane Ida in August 2021. Today, these buildings sit untouched and in need of tens of thousands of dollars to repair and restore them to usable condition.

**When Hurricane Ida hit the South Louisiana coastline**

On August 29, 2021, there were reports of the storm’s winds hitting 200 mph. Like the majority of our tribal citizens’ homes, the historic Houma Indian Settlement Schools were in the storm’s path and suffered extensive damage.

An effort was underway immediately to salvage and restore the tribal records that were housed in the Golden Meadow, La. school building, which served as the United Houma Nation’s headquarters for decades.

The building itself took a severe beating from the strong winds, and today it is still in need of a new roof and repairs to both the interior and exterior. The tribe has been working to raise money for these repairs.

In July 2022, the Tribal Council approved the purchase of the Golden Meadow settlement school from the Lafourche Parish School Board, and Chief Chaisson signed the purchase agreement that same month.

**MONTEGUT**

The Montegut school building also suffered significant damage in Hurricane Ida, but it had not been used since Hurricane Katrina impacted Southeast Louisiana in 2005. The school also sustained fire damage caused by a squatter in 2009. Hurricane Ida further damaged the building, causing windows and doors to be blown out. Debris littered the interior of the building in the aftermath. Like the Golden Meadow school building, it needs a new roof and both interior and exterior repairs.

Anyone wishing to help with the restoration of these buildings can contact UHN Administrator Lanor Curole at (985) 223-3093. - SP
Southdown Museum Reopens Native Peoples Exhibit

The Native Peoples of Louisiana exhibit at Southdown Plantation & Museum in Houma, Louisiana will soon be open to the public for tours.

On display within the Native Peoples exhibit are crafts by United Houma Nation artists and by artists from other Louisiana Tribes, including the Chitimacha, Coushatta Tribes and Jena Band of Choctaws. United Houma Nation photos and historic documents, as well as information about the historic Houma Tribe, are also on display.

According to Museum Director Celeste Landry, the exhibit, which is housed within the main building on the museum complex, was not damaged in Hurricane Ida in August 2021, but the exterior of the building sustained extensive damage.

As a result, the collection of tribal crafts and historic documents had to be moved to storage while the building was being repaired during the past year.

The Museum recently announced that the repairs to the main building were completed. Remodeling of the Native Peoples exhibit is currently underway, and public tours will be available in the coming weeks. Landry encourages guests to schedule a tour of the exhibit in advance.

The Southdown Plantation & Museum is located at 1208 Museum Drive, Houma, LA 70360. For more information, visit https://www.southdownmuseum.org/ or call 985-851-0154. - SP

In 1892, journalist Martha R. Field, who wrote under the pen name Catharine Cole, visited and wrote an article about Southdown Plantation in Houma and Dulac Plantation, which was located on Bayou Dulac in the vicinity of present-day Old Bridge Road. The article includes these references of the Houmas Indians. The Daily Picayune newspaper in New Orleans published the article on Sunday, July 17, 1892.

The pretty and peaceful town of Houma, the most southern town in the state, is an ancient settlement, getting its name from the tribe of Houmas Indians who first had their wigwams on these fertile prairies, and who now survive in a few families living in palmetto huts on the bayous near the sea marshes.

Citizen Spotlight: Mayor Dwayne Duke

United Houma Nation citizen Dwayne Duke is the Mayor of Society Hill, South Carolina, a historic enclave located in the state’s northeast region. There, this South Louisiana native and his wife Joanne own and operate “Crazy Blessed Farm”, a bed and breakfast where they proudly fly the United Houma Nation flag.


Born in New Orleans and raised in South Louisiana, Dwayne Aaron Duke, Sr. is no stranger to the tribal community. He and his four siblings spent their childhood years living at times in Westwego, Bayou Blue and Bayou L’Ourse. His parents, Shirley Mitchell of Morgan City and Texas native Billy Joe Duke, met when Billy Joe moved to Louisiana to work in the oil field. Shirley’s parents are both of Houma descent. His only child, Dwayne Aaron Duke, Jr. and his three grandchildren live in Alabama and are proud of their Houma heritage.

At age 25, Dwayne moved to Florida for work, and there he met his wife Joanne through a mutual friend. They later settled down in Clover, South Carolina, a location near Charlotte, North Carolina and opened a coffee shop called Holy Grounds. They chose Clover since it is roughly halfway between Louisiana and Philadelphia, PA, where Joanne is from.

In 1998, Dwayne founded Duke Metalworks, a venture that was born out of his experience in welding. Dwayne learned welding from his father and later became a certified welding instructor and a Master Welder. His training and passion to help others led him to accept a job as a Welding Instructor at Bennettsville, South Carolina Federal Prison, which would move him and his family to Society Hill, one of the oldest towns in the state that has a population of 450. Today, Duke Metalworks provides welding for Society Hill-area businesses.

When the opportunity to take ownership of the 44-acre Crazy Blessed Farm was presented to them in 2016, the Dukes gladly accept it. According to their website, the property is listed on the National Historic Register as Enoch Hanford House, a home which dates back to 1803. Today, they operate the 200-year-old retreat as a bed and breakfast.

Dwayne has a love and respect for nature and the environment that he credits to his tribal heritage. In 2021, he decided to run for Mayor of Society Hill because of his concern for the environment and the area’s natural resources, especially water management. The mayoral election, in which he faced the incumbent mayor, resulted in not one, but two runoffs! The first run-off ended in a 98-98 tie. In the second run-off, Dwayne won by two votes (112-110), and on January 7, 2022, he was sworn in as Mayor.

Up until the passing of his parents in recent years, Dwayne and Joanne would visit South Louisiana at least twice a year. Since then, their visits have been limited to weddings and funerals. But their love for and connection to the United Houma Nation remains strong. –SP
Sign up to receive the newsletter at www.unitedhoumanation.org.