United Houma Nation Wins $100K in GNOF Competition

By Cara Stonecipher and Sherry Parfait

On October 16, 2023, the United Houma Nation was named a winner of $100,000 in the Greater New Orleans Foundation’s (GNOF) Next 100 Years Challenge. The UHN was one of 10 regional organizations who received the award for demonstrating strong potential to secure additional grant funding for infrastructure and hazard mitigation projects.

Launched in March 2023, the Next 100 Years Challenge was designed to inspire and attract plans for community-centered and cost-effective infrastructure improvements in 13 parishes of Southeast Louisiana with the goal of reducing the threat of storms and other disasters. In addition to the $100K winners, five teams won $40,000 each.

Principal Chief Lora Ann Chaisson would like to thank Michael Billiot for contributing his technical assistance from his background in Urban Planning to the project. She would also like to thank the Gulf Center for Equitable Climate Resilience and Waggoner & Ball Architects as well as our community and government partners who shared their valuable time and input.

United Houma Nation Celebrations Returns December 2, 2023

By Cara Stonecipher and Sherry Parfait

United Houma Nation Citizens: Mark your calendars for a day of family, food and fun and plan to attend the 2nd Annual UHN Celebration!

The festivities will take place December 2, 2023, 10am to 3pm, and will return to the Bayou Black Community Center located at 3688 Southdown Mandalay Road in Houma, Louisiana.

The UHN Celebration is one big family reunion. Tribal citizens of all ages are invited to come pass a good time with our UHN family and enjoy playing games, winning door prizes, and eating a delicious meal. Last year, more than 400 people attended, and we expect an even higher number this year.

The White Bean Cook-off is also returning to this year’s UHN Celebration. Participants in the Cook-off will make a pot of their favorite white bean dish on site the morning of the UHN Celebration for a chance to win a cash prize.

Tribal citizens interested in participating in the White Bean Cook-off can get information and sign up at UnitedHoumaNation.org.

For more information about the UHN Celebration or to sponsor food and prizes, call Cara Stonecipher at (985) 223-3093. We look forward to seeing you there!
Greetings from Principal Chief Lora Ann Chaisson

Aletu! I always look forward to this time of year because it brings Fall, football, and a big birthday celebration for my dad, who turned 87 this year! I am so blessed to have such a great role model still guiding me. I encourage each of you to take the time at every opportunity to let the elders in your lives know how much their leadership and guidance mean to you.

This is the second quarterly edition of our print newspaper. Please sign up to continue receiving it using the form on the last page of this issue.

I’m excited to see the progress our Tribe is making. It is very gratifying to see our new Veterans’ Grant already making a difference.

Several exciting opportunities are on the horizon and we are working hard to ensure that we don’t miss these chances to improve the lives of our fellow citizens. But with this progress we also see a big challenge and that is having the capacity to fully take advantage of the opportunities that come our way. In other words, we need more staff. I urge each of you to carefully consider the article included in this newspaper that further explains the financial challenge we face which prevents us from hiring the staff we need, as well as my proposed solution.

Mark your calendars for our 2nd Annual United Houma Celebration on Dec 2nd! This all-ages celebration was a big success last year and we are anticipating another fantastic day of food, fun, and fellowship.

All of you awesome cooks out there, please sign up for the White Bean Cook Off held during the Celebration for a chance to win cash prizes! I’m looking forward to seeing everyone there!

Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me with your questions and concerns by at lora.chaisson@unitedhoumanation.org or by calling the Tribal Office at 985-223-3093. Unfounded rumors and misinformation are not unique to our Tribe, but they can be easily prevented by seeking out the truth. I remain dedicated to the well-being of all our Tribal citizens and ask for your continued prayers and support.- LC/CS

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
Bette Billiot, District 5
Roxanna Francis Foret, District 6
Jacintha Duthu, District 7
Gretchen Billiot Boudreaux, District 8
(Vacant), District 9
(Vacant), District 10
Dixie Breaux, District 11
The financial capability of operating tribal services and programs is something we typically haven’t talked enough about. The current Administration and leadership are working to address that and be more transparent with our operations.

Within the last 25+ years, the UHN has done well in seeking out funds from grant sources like federal and state government programs, as well as private foundations, to address the pressing needs of our community. Even with these efforts, the UHN Administration recognizes we still have a lot more work to do.

Many years ago, the tribal leadership recognized that nonprofit status was important to assist with the ability for the Tribe to be financially stable and ultimately self-sustaining. The Tribal Administration has been successful in grant writing efforts, which has allowed for direct service programs to tribal citizens like the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the recent addition of the Legal Services for Veterans Program.

However, with grant funding, it is important to note that the use of those funds is reserved for the purposes written and highly restricted in its use. Most grant programs do not cover or restrict general operating costs (basic overhead costs like utilities, insurance, telephone, and core administrative positions).

The total funds received after deducting the insurance proceeds from the damage as a result of Hurricane Ida was just slightly over $1 million, which is a great accomplishment for the Tribe.

It is an honor to see this kind of growth and reach for the Tribe and our people; however, the further breakdown of what is restricted versus unrestricted is a challenge for our future growth as a people. Our over reliance on grants limits our ability to grow.

GETTING TO THE NEXT STAGE OF GROWTH: The Road Map

To truly be able to grow and develop as needed to serve all of our fellow UHN citizens, it is imperative that we reduce our reliance on grants and create a more balanced income breakdown. So, if the funding isn’t coming from grants, where does it come from?

There are a few routes, but the more direct is from within. There are approximately 25 non-Houma individuals who contribute monthly to the Tribe and many have done so for years giving $5, $10, $20…whatever they could afford.

Tribal leadership has never asked for tribal citizens to give; however, if we expect others to see the value of investing in our community, we need to show that we see the value of investing in ourselves as well.

We are often asked about advancing Federal recognition, can we help with emergency services for tribal citizens, how do we maintain youth and elder programs, etc.

As a community, we know we have needs above and beyond the available funding, but we are the only ones that can make it happen on our own terms for our own people.

Increasing our administrative core is critical to our growth and will give us the manpower needed to pursue more funding as well as the capability to respond timely to tribal citizen requests.

If 2,500 tribal citizens gave $5 per month, it would allow an additional $150,000 annually to ensure we have the core support needed to continue to succeed.

To help with this effort and to invest in our Tribe’s success, you can sign up for reoccurring or one-time donations here: [https://unitedhoumanation.org/donate/](https://unitedhoumanation.org/donate/).

We hope you would consider giving what you are able. All donations are tax deductible!
Chief Chaisson represented the United Houma Nation at the christening of the USNS Navajo at Bollinger Shipyards in Houma, La. on Saturday, August 26, 2023. The UHN was invited by the Navajo Nation to take part in the historic event.

Dozens of Navajo tribal citizens from across the country, including some who live in Terrebonne Parish, came to see the newly minted Navajo-class towing, salvage, and rescue ship, which recognized the contributions the Navajo Nation made in military service.

Mr. Peter MacDonald, Sr., one of the last three living World War II Code Talkers, was also in attendance.

Miss Navajo Nation 2006 Jocelyn Billy-Upshaw, a vocal advocate for Navajo Nation veterans who was named the USNS Navajo’s sponsor, christened the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow. Ms. Billy-Upshaw personally invited Principal Chief Chaisson to represent the United Houma Nation at the christening ceremony.

The United Houma Nation hosted one of eight live streaming sites of the christening for Navajo Nation citizens across the United States at the Barry P. Bonvillain Civic Center in Houma. AE Technology sponsored the smart boards for the UHN event.

Following the ceremony, the United Houma Nation hosted a private luncheon for the Navajo citizens present at the Civic Center. The delicious meal was catered by Houma seafood restaurant The Shack and sponsored by Chief Chaisson, Chairman Pierite, and Tribal Solutions Group.

Chief Chaisson presented gifts to Ms. Billy-Upshaw and Navajo Tribal Leaders.

Afterwards, Ms. Billy-Upshaw shared a heartfelt speech and presented gifts to Chief Chaisson, UHN Tribal Council Members Clarice Friloux and Janzen Verdin, and Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana Chairman Marshall Pierite.

The United Houma Nation is honored to have been a part of this momentous occasion. We send a special Ahé’hee (thank you) to Ms. Billy-Upshaw and the Navajo Nation for the invitation!
Summer Food Distribution Serves 1,000 Tribal Families

More than 1,000 tribal families received food and household supplies this past summer thanks to the generous donations and volunteers from several organizations. On June 10th, the United Houma Nation hosted its first drive-thru distribution event at the Tribal Headquarters in Houma, where food and supplies were given to more than 700 families. In July, additional distribution events were held for tribal families in Morgan City (St. Mary Parish), Chalmette (St. Bernard Parish), Golden Meadow (Lafourche Parish) and at the UHN Field Office in Marrero (Jefferson Parish). Some of the donations were also distributed to the Chitimacha Tribe. Thank you to the UHN Staff and the community volunteers for working hard to make these events a success! - CS/SP

Elders Festival Returns After Three Year Break

Tribal elders from across Louisiana, including several from the United Houma Nation, gathered in Marksville, La. for the Institute of Indian Development’s Statewide Elders Festival on August 17th. The festival took place at the Paragon Casino Resort on the Tunica-Biloxi Reservation.

The United Houma Nation’s elders were driven by bus from Houma to the festival. There, this fun group participated in games for gifts and cash prizes, and enjoyed great food and socializing.

UHN elder Louise Billiot was also recognized by the Inter-Tribal Council of Louisiana (ITCLA) for her many years of service to the United Houma Nation.

Elders Festival made its return after a three year hiatus, having being shut down by hurricanes and COVID-19 restrictions since 2020. The event was free to all attendees and was funded by the ITCLA’s Title VI AOA Elder Nutrition Grant, which exists to promote well-being among older adults and provides meaningful support to help them live independently in their communities.

Thank you to Tunica-Biloxi Chairman Marshall Pierite, the Tunica-Biloxi Tribal Council, and Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana for their hospitality and for graciously hosting this event. Also, thanks to Acadiana Legal Services, Social Security Administration, LA Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs, SHIP, Louisiana Workforce Commission CSBG, and Tunica-Biloxi Education, Housing, Social Services & Health Departments. – CS/SP
United Houma Nation citizen Louise Billiot recently announced her retirement as the tribe’s vocational rehabilitation counselor. This hard-working tribal elder has helped empower, employ, and educate tribal members for the last 34 years.

Born in February 1957, and raised in Dulac, Louisiana, Louise says growing up, the community was nothing but welcoming, genuine, and loving.

“If there was a wedding, someone had a baby or a funeral, we were all there,” she recalls. We all celebrated and mourned together. Everyone was always welcome in someone else’s home.”

Louise attended a small bayou community school in Dulac, where she was enrolled from kindergarten through 7th grade, as Houma Indians were not allowed to graduate from public schools in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parish before 1962.

Today, she holds a bachelor’s degree in interdisciplinary studies from Nicholls State University. On August 29, 1989, Louise started working for the Inter-Tribal Council of Louisiana. She recently celebrated her 34th year working for the tribe.

In January 2001, Louise joined the UHN as a vocational rehabilitation counselor, where her day-to-day work includes assisting tribal members with disabling conditions to return to or obtain employment. Louise says in the Indian language, there were no words to identify disabled people of the tribe, and they were never set aside and always included.

“They accepted that that’s how God made them,” she says.

Today, Louise is a Traditional Woman’s Cloth Dancer and traditional Houma palmetto basket weaver. She co-founded the Bayou Eagles Native American Dance Group and has taught tribal dancing to the community for over 15 years.

Her other work includes presentations at numerous schools, libraries, powwows, and other community events. She said her goals were to teach the youth their history and build self-esteem.

“All I want is for people to say that I helped make their lives a little bit better.”
Emmy and Murrow Award-winning Journalist and UHN citizen Stacia Naquin is proud to share her Houma pride every chance she gets. Born in Lawton/Ft. Sill, Oklahoma to a military family, she traces her family roots to South Louisiana.

By Sherry Parfait

Her Grandpa, Joe Naquin, left the bayou and joined the Army and ultimately retired at Ft. Sill before Stacia was born. Though Joe lived far from his large family in Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana, Stacia knew how important they were to him.

Stacia’s dad would also pursue a career in the military, but instead of joining the Army, he went into the Navy and moved his family to Guam. This event would set the course for Stacia’s life as a military kid...moving around the country as she grew up. But she credits it with helping to shape her career as a journalist.

Stacia is proud of the Naquin name. Even after she got married, she officially made “Naquin” her middle name so she could continue to use it on TV.

“I love when people ask about my name,” says Stacia. “Naquin is quite unique outside of Louisiana. I’m proud to share where my name comes from and why it means so much to me to use it on-air. I’ve been fortunate to work for newsroom leaders who encouraged me to stay connected to that part of myself.”

Stacia began working in television in 2001 as a production assistant, running cameras and editing videos. She would soon become a TV reporter and news anchor in her hometown. “I never saw myself as a journalist, especially not on TV!”, she reflects. “But when I started working behind the scenes and seeing the creative aspects of this field, I really enjoyed it.”

When she was given her first shot at news reporting, Stacia realized that she could go into the community and learn something new every day, then share what she learned with her audience. She also recognized that the most powerful part of her job was giving others a voice.

Stacia earned a Master’s Degree in Communication from the University of Oklahoma. She would later move to Colorado Springs, Colorado to anchor a news program there and to teach Public Speaking and Interpersonal Communication at the University of Colorado and other colleges.

After nearly a decade in Colorado, Stacia relocated to Phoenix and ultimately to Columbus, Ohio, where she lives today with her husband and son. She has served as an evening news anchor in Columbus for nearly seven years, and after more than 20 years as a journalist, she still loves her work.

Part of that passion for news reporting stems from her military upbringing and the opportunities Stacia now has to share military-connected stories. In 2022, she developed and reported on a series called “She Serves”, which celebrates the many ways women serve in the Armed Forces.

In the Summer of 2023, she and her colleagues were honored with an Ohio Valley Emmy Award for the series, which Stacia was thrilled to win! Another career highlight for Stacia was winning the prestigious Edward R. Murrow Award for a story about an Ohio military family’s life during deployment.

Outside of work, Stacia volunteers with the USO. “As I started moving for my career, I was always grateful to connect with that extended military family,” she says. “The USO is a great way to do that.”

Ohio is the third state in which she has volunteered with the USO. Today, she volunteers at the Columbus, Ohio Airport USO lounge, where she greets service members and their families as they travel.

Stacia encourages aspiring journalists to stay curious and be creative. “Nurture those qualities within yourself! There are so many important roles in a newsroom and it’s a team effort to make stories impactful.”
Sign up to receive the newsletter at www.unitedhoumanation.org.

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November 11th is VETERANS DAY
Let’s Salute Our Veterans

The United Houma Nation is proud to honor our military heroes!

If you would like us to recognize your family member on Veterans Day, email their name, military title and their picture to newsletter@unitedhoumanation.org by Tuesday, November 7, 2023.