

Special points of interest:

- Three gate-keeping programs about which the participants received information and their contact information are:
- Yellow Ribbon  
[www.yellowribbon.org](http://www.yellowribbon.org)
- ASIST and SafeTALK:  
[www.livingworks.net](http://www.livingworks.net)
- QPR:  
[www.qprinstitute.com](http://www.qprinstitute.com)

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# INSIDE



## Gate keeping as a suicide prevention strategy

Reports of a number of suicides in the state following the hurricanes prompted concern among mental health professionals and others that this might be a growing problem, which led to the convening of a Suicide Prevention Summit on April 6<sup>th</sup> in Baton Rouge. Key stakeholders and decision makers from across the state were invited for a strategy planning day where they received information about the scope of the problem and heard from founders and directors of three nationally recognized suicide prevention gate-keeping programs.

Approximately 130 participants attended the morning session and a smaller group spent time in the afternoon, session working on action plans to implement prevention plans for their organizations when they returned home.

The Summit was sponsored by Louisiana Spirit and national partners including the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, The Suicide Prevention Resource Center and the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration. The two crisis call centers in Louisiana, the Baton

Rouge Crisis Intervention Center and VIA-Link in New Orleans also were sponsors.

Participants included mental health professionals, social service providers, medical personnel, emergency services personnel, educators, and members of faith-based communities.

A common question from these participants and from reporters who covered the Summit concerned the actual

See Suicide Prevention, p. 4

## Welcome to Inside Louisiana Spirit

Welcome to the first issue of Inside Louisiana Spirit, an on-line newsletter for all the people across the state who work in the mental health hurricane recovery program and our state and federal partners. This is intended to be a method of internal communication, although we hope you share the information about our work with many people in your various communities.

We will use this forum to provide information about the activities of all the contract provider programs as well as those of the staff in the Louisiana Spirit Office in Baton Rouge.

The next issues will carry program highlights from all Louisiana Spirit providers. We want to include success stories, photos of staff, inno-

vative activities, helpful contacts, and anything you will find useful in doing your jobs. Our newsletter staff will contact you to discuss your input.



LA Spirit introduces our newest communications tool.



## Introducing the Louisiana Spirit Executive Leadership Team

### **Anthony H. Speier, Ph.D**

Tony is the Director of Disaster Mental Health Operations for Louisiana Spirit and the primary contact and liaison for the Dept. of Health and Hospitals for disaster related functions of state and federal operations.

### **Charles G. Cook, LSW**

Charlie is the Executive Director of LA Spirit and manages all programmatic aspects of Louisiana Spirit and assists Dr. Speier in representing the disaster mental health needs of Louisianans with state and federal partners.

### **John G. Daniel, B.A.**

John is the Deputy Director

of Internal Operations and performs executive program review and coordination of internal Crisis Counseling Program activities relative to the integrity of operational policies and procedures. Mr. Daniel has been designated as the executive liaison to the Louisiana Family Recovery Corps.

### **Gilda Armstrong-Butler, LCSW**

Gilda is the Deputy Director for External Operations for LA Spirit and performs executive review and coordination of Crisis Counseling Program activities relative to the operation of program providers and their relationship

to the larger community and its stakeholders. She provides functional supervision of overall program implementation of CCP provider agencies.

### **AlMarie Ford, LCSW**

AlMarie Ford is the Cultural Competence Officer for the Office of Mental Health in the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals. AlMarie dedicates 50% of her time to LA Spirit in-kind as the Cultural Competence Officer to assure that all crisis counseling services are provided in a way that is comfortable and appealing to all Katrina and Rita survivors.

## Next Steps

In early June, we await news of approval to begin the "Regular Services" program (RSP). The funds, which are awarded through a longstanding partnership between SAMHSA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), will enable LA Spirit providers to address the ongoing counseling needs of Louisianans adversely affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. We hope to announce our next award in our next issue.

In the meantime, LA Spirit

Executive leadership have begun weekly conference calls with our sister states that have received evacuees and are providing crisis counseling services through their own awarded ISP/RSP grants. Through these phone calls we are learning that the most current needs and concerns of dislocated Louisiana survivors are about their ability to return home. We are also realizing the passion with which other states are implementing their programs and their recognition that they

need to provide unique culturally specific programming. Another goal is to share information and cut through red tape to enable all survivors to be successful on their journey of healing through self direction, empowerment and hope for a better tomorrow.



**Dr. Tony Speier**

Director, Disaster MH Operations

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*"No matter where you are or what challenges you are facing, you can have a life filled with satisfaction, peace, joy and enthusiasm--not just for a day, or a week, but for the rest of your life!" Joel Osteen*

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**Charles Cook**  
Executive Director LA Spirit

## COOK'S CORNER Charles Cook, Executive Director LA Spirit

First I want to welcome every member of our Louisiana Spirit team to this incredibly complex endeavor and ask that you take a moment to recount what we have accomplished. Overall, we have over **five hundred people making Louisiana Spirit work**... five hundred plus individuals who collectively have served hundreds of thousands already, who have taken the risk of becoming a helper in a situation that seems much too big for any individual to make a difference. So please take a moment as you read this to remember the faces of those you've spoken with, listened to, offered a helping hand and cried with. Each of them is important; each is worth the effort. You do make a difference in whatever role you play for Louisiana Spirit.

Over the past fifteen years I have worked with nearly every State and Territory in the United States on disasters, terrorism or the planning process for responding to tragedy. This is truly different from any other event in its scope and circumstance. But you already know that, perhaps better than I. What you may not realize is that you are part of a pioneering effort in

the mental health response to disaster. You are making history as you attempt to help the people of Louisiana heal. It is that, which I hope you think of each day as you do your work. I am very proud to play some small part in this and I hope you take pride in your part, your work, and your commitment to the survivors of these incredible traumas.

It's hard to believe that it has been eight months since Hurricane Katrina made landfall, and nearly that since Hurricane Rita hit: hard to believe there is still so much damage, still so much pain in the eyes of survivors, still so much to do. No one in Louisiana, perhaps the entire United States is untouched by these disasters. The vision of Louisiana Spirit needs to encompass that reality. The mission is to help everyone manage the recovery in a healthy way. We can't fix everything or take away every pain, but we can help give people the strength to manage their own personal recovery and the recovery of the communities that support them.

Include yourself in that vision and our mission. You will

not be much help to others if you are too stressed out to make good decisions or be an effective listener. I know we have been fortunate enough to hire a number of direct victims of the hurricanes. The stress may be even greater for you if you are a helper and a victim yourself. Please don't burn out - we need you.

Again, take pride in what you do, every time.

Charlie



From Left to Right: Almarie Ford, MH Cultural Competence Officer; Gilda Butler, Deputy Director of External Operations; John Daniel, Deputy Director for Internal Operations

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*"This is truly different from any other event in its scope and circumstance. . The mission is to help everyone manage the recovery in a healthy way."*

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Assisting our friends, family and neighbors with recovery back to a state of normalcy.

## LA Spirit teams up with National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

The Lifeline system operates 24/7 with a total of 114 crisis call centers that are part of this network. Each call center has designated its own area with at least one in every state. Each call center has an established tiered back up of 3-4 call centers. Callers will never reach a busy signal. They would hear music or ringing. Calls to 1-800-273-8255 are routed to the

next available crisis call center closest to the caller by the magic of technology. Nearest is determined by area code (225) and next three numbers. Calls are rolled over to the next center after 6 rings. The caller hears part of the message and music while waiting to be connected. Each center is part of the Lifeline intra-net and information can be

shared with 114 crisis call center. Calls can be 'warm transferred' from one center to the next, without disconnecting the caller. Both of the LA call centers have 211 Information & referral lines as well.



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides a helping hand.

## Suicide Prevention, from page 1

number of suicides post-Katrina and whether this represents an increase from previous years. However, this cannot be answered yet. Typically suicide data are reported with a two year lag, and are expressed as a rate of the population. Some raw data have been reported and they indicate the actual numbers of reported suicides are lower than the previous year but, we know that many evacuees still are living out of state and we don't know the population of either New Orleans or Baton Rouge or other areas of the state. We do know that many risk factors are present and believe that a proactive approach of educating as

many citizens as possible about the signs of suicide and appropriate intervention methods will save lives. Many of the participants asked to be part of a list serve to keep informed of activities relating to prevention and some expressed a desire to serve on a newly created task force. A previous task force that focused on youth suicide prevention, whose work was interrupted by Hurricane Katrina, will be reactivated. And the state has applied for a Youth Suicide Prevention grant. If that application is approved, we will receive funding for 3 years that will provide much needed resources, primarily for the

parishes most impacted by the hurricanes.



Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program®

Yellow ribbon encourages those in need to ask for help.

“We do know that many risk factors are present and believe that a proactive approach of educating as many citizens as possible about the signs of suicide and appropriate intervention methods will save lives.”



From left to right; sitting then standing: Tierney Toussaint, Tanya Williams, Renea Thomas, Margaret Culbertson, Henry Yennie, Dr. Christine Turin, Valerie Branch, Bernetta Guy, Moremi Singleton, Lauren Guttzeit, John Daniel

## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers on the road to recovery

**Question:** How can my family prepare for the next storm?

**Answer:** Children naturally look to parents for reassurance; the more quickly it comes, the faster the emotional wounds heal. When children are afraid, they are most fearful of being left alone so include them in your activities following a hurricane. This will help alleviate a “clinging” behavior. When children see you coping, they will adapt too.

**Question:** Sometimes children have unfounded insecurities, what then?

**Answer:** Do not minimize or

ignore their feelings. When they feel their parents are not understanding of their fear, children tend to feel ashamed, rejected, unloved and then even more afraid. Explain about the disaster in words they can understand. It’s okay to let them know you are afraid, too. Remind them you are together in this.

**Question:** How can you tell when children are stressed?

**Answer:** When we feel threatened, our body and minds will make changes in the way we think and respond differently to events and how our body works. Following a traumatic event, your child

may be: Agitated or overactive; Confused or afraid; Sad, nervous or anxious; Scared or guilty; Withdrawn Afraid to be alone; Avoiding situations or places that remind them of trauma.



We ask that you submit any questions to any person listed as a contributor.



*“Following a traumatic event, your child may be sad, nervous or anxious”*

“The curriculum typically focuses on a different topic each day: preparation, evacuation, life in transition, signs of new life and hope for the future.”

## Camp NOAH creates new opportunities

LA Spirit and Camp NOAH are collaborating to provide week long recovery camps for children.

Camp NOAH is an ecumenical program owned and coordinated by Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota; it is offered in partnership with other social ministry and disaster response organizations. Camp NOAH is a week long faith based day camp for children in grades K-6 & youth leaders (7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades) who have experienced disaster. Each camp typically serves 50 campers and 10 youth leaders. The youth leaders also serve as campers as well.

The week long sessions will occur between June 11 & July 28<sup>th</sup>.

The camp is free to families; lunch and snacks are provided daily. The camps generally run from 9a.m.-4p.m. & child care can be provided before or after camp. The curriculum typically focuses on a different topic each day: preparation, evacuation, life in transition, signs of new life and hope for the future.

LA Spirit contract agencies will provide mental health support for these camps. This will include: assisting with the orientation on Sunday evening, daily staff debrief-

ings, being attentive to mental health needs during the course of the day for campers, parents and staff. Our Spirit contract providers also may assist Camp NOAH with identifying local needs and resources as these camps are established. As our providers continue outreach activities in their areas, they will refer children, youth and their families to the established camps.

We are looking forward to working with Camp NOAH this summer to provide recovery support to children & youth. Catch them on the web at [www.campnoah.org](http://www.campnoah.org)



From left to right: Angela Marshall, Jill Farr, Ricky Armelin

## Employees and others can access a variety of recovery resources

You may cry, feel cranky or helpless or you may not think clearly. You may have trouble sleeping or just feel tired. You have family and friends and that's a good thing. You can help each other through this but when your friends or family can't help, reach out to a professional.

### LA Spirit Contacts

LA Spirit (800) 273-TALK

Anytime Day or Night  
Associated Catholic Charities  
of the Archdiocese of New Orleans (504) 581-4991

Harmony Center, Inc.  
(225) 336-5294

Volunteers of America of  
Greater Baton Rouge  
(225) 387-0061

Options for Independence  
(985) 868-2620

### National Contacts

FEMA Travel Trailer  
(888) 294-2822

FEMA Application  
(800) 621-3362

FEMA Help Line  
(800) 525-0321

Substance Abuse Mental  
Health Services Administration  
[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov)

(866) 295-6495  
(800) 789-2647

Center for the Study of  
Traumatic Stress  
[www.centerforthestudyoftraumaticstress.org](http://www.centerforthestudyoftraumaticstress.org)

After the Storm  
[www.7-dippity.com/other/After-TheStorm.pdf](http://www.7-dippity.com/other/After-TheStorm.pdf)

The National Institutes of  
Child Health & Human  
Development (NICHD)  
[www.nichd.nih.gov](http://www.nichd.nih.gov)

National Child Traumatic  
Stress Network (NCTSN)  
Downloadable Resources  
[www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)

American Academy of Child  
and Adolescent Psychiatry  
[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

American Psychiatric  
Association  
[www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org)

National Institute of Mental  
Health  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

National Black Child  
Development Institute  
[www.nbcdi.org](http://www.nbcdi.org)

### State Contacts

Baton Rouge Crisis  
Intervention Center  
(225) 924-3900  
(800) 273-TALK

For information on food,  
clothing, health and dental  
care, call 211, a Statewide  
Resource and Referral Line  
(800) 749-COPE

Grief Recovery  
(225) 924-6621

Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana  
(PCAL) [www.pcal.org](http://www.pcal.org)



Nicole Harrell  
Fiscal Analyst



“When family isn’t enough,  
reach out to a professional.”

## Providing Services to help maintain Louisiana's well-being

The providers are the key components to LA Spirit’s success. Outreach work done



by each organization helps to insure no one falls through the cracks. Door to door en-

counters enhance the possi-



bilities of finding those in need. Continued efforts to



meet contacts from other organizations aid in the process of finding resources for our participants. The jobs done by



**Options for Independence**



Brass band at Baton Rouge Airport 2 FEMA trailer park.

## Cultural and Linguistic Competency a Core Value

Louisiana Spirit conducted nine Cultural Competence Focus Groups in New Orleans this March. A total of 92 people from across the state participated in the groups which included four groups with crisis workers, three with team leaders and administrators and two with staff from human services districts. A major theme that emerged from the groups is an overwhelming request from the participants to develop training that provides strategies that can be used to address the issues that they encounter on a daily basis. The respondents provided suggestions regarding the specific topics that should be addressed by

training, the preferred format that should be used and the desired outcome of this activity. Those wishing to review the complete report can contact AlMarie Ford for a copy.

### June Cultural and Linguistic Competency Training

will be conducted by national experts in cultural and linguistic competence and disaster behavioral health. 2-day sessions will be held around the state at various locations. All LA Spirit staff are expected to participate, so please prepare to attend these exclusive training sessions beginning the second week of June. **Watch for notification of dates, times and locations!**



**Cultural and Linguistic Competency is a core value toward making sure that no one is forgotten.**



Danita LeBlanc  
Child/Youth Crisis Services  
Coordinator

## Training takes center stage

The LA Spirit Training Program has been designed to meet the statewide training needs of LA Spirit providers, disaster workers, and emergency responders, who are charged with providing crisis counseling services to help meet the mental health needs of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita survivors.

Training and orientation for all LA Spirit staff are a vital part of establishing and ensuring consistent services throughout Louisiana. Each LA Spirit staff member must be well

versed in the Crisis Counseling Program model, goals of LA Spirit and the ethics of professional interaction in the field.

The LA Spirit Training Program will be providing a number of federally mandated training programs by nationally recognized experts in their field throughout the remainder of the Immediate Services Program and the entire Regular Services Program.

Over the past few weeks, LA Spirit staff has experienced training on: formal data collection techniques, Participant

Feedback Surveys and, Priority Populations.

The LA Spirit Training Officer is also available to work with LA Spirit providers to develop and provide training targeted to meet specific needs.

For more information, contact Lauren Guttzeit, Training Coordinator at 225-362-5021.



*“Training and orientation for all LA Spirit staff are a vital part of establishing and ensuring consistent services throughout Louisiana”.*



Trailers headed to New Orleans, LA. FEMA delivers an average of 500 trailers each day.

## LA Family Assistance Center continues search

The search for persons missing after the hurricanes still goes on at the Louisiana Family Assistance Center. The center opened on September 7, 2005 and moved to its present location at 2084 S. Sherwood Forest Blvd. in Baton Rouge on October 8.

Currently about 100 people work there each day. This includes Louisiana Spirit staff, State Police who staff their missing persons unit on-site, Dr. Louis Cataldie, a DHH employee who serves as the State Medical Examiner, and geneticists.

Henry Yennie, Executive to the State Medical Examiner, has been there since the be-

ginning. He reports that more than 45,000 calls have come in to the center. Of those cases of persons reported missing or deceased, 10,511 have been found alive, 1,296 Louisiana victims have been confirmed deceased, 1,416 have been transferred to other states (typically Texas and Mississippi) and 297 still are missing.

In May, the center received 34 new calls about missing persons.

As people return home, they begin to look for family, friends and neighbors, and it is estimated that more than 200 new reports will occur.

The DNA Identification Pro-

ject began on December 6 and will end on June 30. More than 70 volunteer geneticists from across the country have participated in processing DNA from victims and reaching out to next of kin to obtain reference samples to aid in the identification process.

Yennie stressed the importance of calling the center, at 866-326-9393, when persons reported missing, or their relatives, are found.



*“Hurricanes hit us pretty often here in South Louisiana”*

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*“Of those cases of persons reported missing or deceased, 10,511 have been found alive, 1,296 Louisiana victims have been confirmed deceased, 1,416 have been transferred to other states (typically Texas and Mississippi) and 297 still are missing.”*

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## Encounters from Crisis Counselors

“We meet with a lady at her FEMA trailer in Grand Lake after she called the Louisiana Spirit office asking for help. When we arrived she broke down crying and began telling her story. She said he husband of 20 years left her during the Hurricane Rita evacuation and he filed for divorce this month. She shared that they had problems before the hurricane but, it was the evacuation that provided her husband with the “out” to separate from her, leaving her with no help to recover from the storm. Even though, she has a 16 year old son living with her, she feels alone and scared, with no one

to talk to. She was encouraged to vent, and was provided emotional support and guidance to empower her. After two hours, she seemed stronger and less confused and seemed to have concrete plans to get together again next week for follow up.”

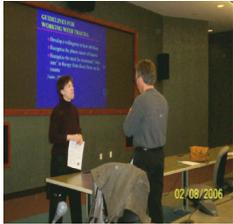


Talking to counselors can make a world of a difference.



Janice Jeanice and Regina Candies, Outreach Workers in Lafourche Parish

## How can parents and other traumatized adults help themselves?



Excerpt from “Helping Children and Families Cope with Hurricanes”  
Presentation by Joy D. Osofsky, PhD and Howard J. Osofsky, M.D. PhD

It is very important that adults help themselves when they are traumatized and engage in self care. If

they are also parents, getting support and assistance will be particularly important as they will be better able to listen to their children and give them the understanding and support that they need to heal.

What adults can do:

Return to day to day structure as soon as possible

Spend time with others

Seek out support from friends and colleagues

Keep a journal

Participate in activities that may distract you or feel good to you

Try to be patient with others who are also under stress

Give yourself permission to feel moody, nervous, or blue

Try not to make any major life changes during a stressful time

## First hand conversation with survivors

“We met with two children who were two and four when Katrina hit. They were stuck on an over pass for about four days in New Orleans after wading in the water that was to their chins. They had no food or water for most of that time and were forced to eat their own regurgitated foods to stay alive. They eagerly talked to me about what happened to them, especially since they knew that their mother did not want to talk about it. What struck me the most was that, although they went through this horrific ordeal, they were telling me that the thing that

they remember the most was people sharing food and water with them. I will continue to



Children at recovery shelter.

work with them in order to assist them in understanding that their parents did not put them knowingly in danger and debriefing them from the negative details of their situation. I will work with the mother to reduce her guilt over their pain, so she can be more available to them.”



Children's counseling room.



Providers interacting at a recent priority populations conference.



Anya Carter, Children Supervisor at Options for Independence



Much information was shared at the priority populations conference.



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Ste. 2779  
Baton Rouge, LA 70805  
Telephone (225) 922-3251  
Fax: (225) 922-3252

Coming soon to the Web!  
[www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?](http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?)

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Keeping the spirit of Louisiana alive!

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## Self wellness is the first step to community wellness

Caregivers tend to put others first. Here are a few tips for taking care of ourselves.

- Take a long walk.
- Breathe deeply.
- Do something different.
- Take a new route home.
- Make a collage of family photographs.
- Eat a familiar meal.
- Laugh.
- Give yourself a break.
- Play with your favorite pet.
- Read a book.
- Have an extra conversation with your child.
- Notice the clouds.
- Offer help to your child's school.
- Learn something new today.
- Feel more comfortable.
- Rest more.

Make a family hurricane evacuation plan.

- Take time to get to know someone new.
- Email a relative or friend.
- Reflect on times when you're most relaxed.
- Go window shopping.
- Watch a relaxing movie.
- Attend a sporting event.
- Do something physical like bowling, running, roller skating or take a brisk walk.
- Talk to your children's teachers.
- Encourage someone who is feeling low.
- Plant a garden.
- Get a bouquet of flowers for yourself.
- Visit a museum.
- Snack on a piece of fruit.
- Re-remember the funniest thing that ever happened to you.

Share a special story with someone you love.

- Tell your family how much they mean to you.
- Re-think alcohol and caffeine and consider cutting down on the amount of consumption.
- Take care of yourself before you take care of others.
- Believe that you're important, because you are.

This public document was printed in-house by the Department of Health and Hospitals/Office of Mental Health's Louisiana Spirit Hurricane Recovery Program, 2751 Wooddale Blvd., Ste. 2779, Baton Rouge, LA 70805. It was printed in accordance with standards for printing by State Agencies established pursuant to R.S.43:31.