



THE LAURA BUSH FOUNDATION
FOR AMERICA'S LIBRARIES

2006 Gulf Coast School Library Recovery Initiative First Grant Recipients

Chalmette High School (St. Bernard Unified until Aug. 2006)

Chalmette, Louisiana

Librarian: Carole "Cookie" Mundt

Amount of Grant: \$75,000

On August 15th, 2005, over 8,800 students reported to school at 15 different school sites. Just two weeks later, on August 29th, each of those students' schools, homes, churches, playgrounds and favorite restaurants and businesses were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. A very conservative, close-knit, family-oriented community was wiped out within a 24-hour period, and the lives of its 68,000 citizens were turned upside-down forever.

The Chalmette High School library, currently the library for the St. Bernard Unified School (until August 2006), dates back to the 1940's, when secondary education was first brought to St. Bernard Parish. The school enjoyed over 28,700 volumes, including an extensive research collection and periodicals. One phase of its offerings was its collection of LIFE magazines dating back to the 1940's. Students were able to research the events leading up to and during WWII from the prospective of journalists who were predicting outcomes as they lived the times. Each magazine and every volume was lost to eight-foot flood waters, which inundated the first-floor learning center of the school.

Unfortunately, every school's library/media center was on its first floor. Therefore, all 15 school sites in the St. Bernard Parish school system lost their libraries.

Andrew Jackson Elementary/Middle School (St. Bernard Unified until Aug. 2006)

Chalmette, Louisiana

Librarian: Lee Anne Harlton

Amount of Grant: \$60,000

Every public school in St. Bernard Parish lost its library/media center, because they were housed on the first floor of the buildings. Andrew Jackson and Chalmette High School have been operating as St. Bernard Unified School since Nov. 2005. In August 2006, Andrew Jackson Elementary/Middle School will reopen on its own campus and will build its own new library and book collection.

St. Mary's Academy

New Orleans, Louisiana

Librarian: Maria Consillia Saizan

Amount of Grant: \$75,000

The school was inundated with over five feet of water and lost everything in the library. The prior collection, dating back to 1998, consisted of an extensive collection of books and artifacts including 7,000 volumes of books, reference books, encyclopedias, and 30 magazines and periodicals. Included in the library were 10 computers, a copier, large screen TV and several audio visual resource materials.

The students frequented the library during and after school, and made use of the Internet for research. The teachers incorporated research papers in their lessons and a major term paper at the end of the fourth quarter.

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St. Tammany Junior High School

Slidell, Louisiana

Librarian: Jennifer Koehl

Amount of Grant: \$60,000

Prior to the storm, St. Tammany's Junior High library had a vast collection of approximately 32,000 books and materials. Sadly, the library received extensive flood damage and nothing could be salvaged. A portable building on the temporary campus has been designated as the school library. It holds the few donated materials received after the storm. Upon returning to its original site at the beginning of the next school year, St. Tammany's Junior High students will be returning to an empty library.

Prior to the storm, the library was utilized every day by students and teachers. There was a rotating schedule for classes to visit and use the library resources. Library skills were taught and students were learning how to effectively use all resources available to them in the library as well as other public libraries.

Seventh Ward Elementary School

Abbeville, Louisiana

Librarian: Joyce Gaspard

Amount of Grant: \$50,000

Prior to Hurricane Rita, Seventh Ward Elementary School Library had a collection of 8,789 books valued at \$98,843, at the time of its purchase.

After the storm, the school lost all of its encyclopedias and reference books. The video collection was lost, as was all of the computer equipment. The collection was lost because materials were not placed in a dry, clean area soon enough and the humidity ruined all the books that could have been salvaged.

The library has been moved into a room in a portable building on the campus. The books will be housed in this room until Seventh Ward Elementary School returns to its own campus in August 2006. This building is a new building that was provided by FEMA.

Gorenflo Elementary School

Biloxi, Mississippi

Librarian: Rusty Holman Hunt

Amount of Grant: \$50,000

In the summer of 2004, the staff moved into the new Gorenflo Elementary School. The facility was state-of-the-art in design, technology, and use of space. The library was the heart of the school for students, staff, and the community. On August 29, 2005, the school received six feet of water virtually destroying all of its contents. Only seven of 13,000 books could be saved. These books were returned after the storm from individuals who had no personal damage.

Gorenflo temporarily occupies 13 FEMA trailers on the Beauvoir Elementary School campus. Teachers are sharing classrooms. Beauvoir Elementary School is sharing its library collection and teaching space.

Many of the staff have also lost their homes in the hurricane, but still come to work each day with a smile and a hug for each student. They have made the children their priority every day, regardless of the circumstances. The children have experienced difficulties of constantly moving from one school building to another, on top of having lost their homes and family members. The students still come to school everyday, because they are provided with a safe environment to learn in, where they receive a loving smile and compassion, and receive support for their family and the community.

Our Lady of Prompt Succor

Chalmette, Louisiana

Librarian: Kathleen Doody

Amount of Grant: \$50,000

Our Lady of Prompt Succor School was devastated by Hurricane Katrina in August, 2005. Prior to Katrina, the school served nearly 600 students. The school reopened its doors on March 1, 2006, with an enrollment of 24 students, five teachers, and one administrator. As of March 15, the school had 40 students enrolled and a projected enrollment of 300 for 2006-2007.

Katrina severely damaged the campus; more than three feet of water covered the campus for nearly a week. The eight school buildings are completely destroyed. The first wing of five classrooms was renovated in February, with another ten additional classrooms planned for renovation over the summer. Over the course of the next two years, the school will build a new multimedia center, replacing 12 classrooms that are scheduled to be demolished due to heavy storm damage.

The school lost more than its buildings and books. Rita Drury, the school's former Certified Librarian, regretfully drowned when she attempted to remain in St. Bernard during Hurricane Katrina.

Second Street Elementary School

Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

Librarian: Marianne Higginbotham

Amount of Grant: \$10,000

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, Second Street Elementary library consisted of approximately 6000+ books. Everything was lost to the storm. The library is currently housed in a FEMA classroom/office trailer, where it will be housed for the next few years. There will also be enough tables and chairs to accommodate one classroom of students.

Only 20% of the library collection was covered by insurance. The district is currently waiting word from the insurance company regarding what will be paid. At this time, the district has no money for replacing the library collection. They are working through donations and grants. The tax base is projected to only be 50-65% of what it was prior to the storm until families and businesses can build back.

Some of the students took their library books with them when they evacuated for the storm, and have gradually returned them to the library, explaining how they kept them safe. This only amounts to a handful of books, but is touching nonetheless. The students constantly inquire as to the status of the library, and ask when they can resume having library time.

Our Lady of Lourdes

Slidell, Louisiana

Librarian: Frances J. Faciane

Amount of Grant: \$50,000

Our Lady of Lourdes' library collection was ruined by seven feet of flood waters from Hurricane Katrina. The entire school complex was only insured for \$50,000 of flood insurance and there is no money to cover new library books. The school is accepting donations of books and money to help replenish its collection of library books. To date, the school has received approximately \$15,000 toward the purchase of new books.

Our Lady of Lourdes' main priority is to rebuild books for the primary level, reference books, and to acquire books on specific reading lists. There is storage space on campus, so the school can begin ordering books.

North Bay Elementary School
Bay St. Louis, Mississippi
Librarian: Jo-Dell Beckham
Amount of Grant: \$20,000

Prior to Katrina, North Bay Elementary School's library book collection consisted of 9,000 books and other media and equipment listed on inventory. Nothing in the school could be salvaged after the storm. The library is presently in a converted trailer and most of the books on the shelves have been donated. The school currently has 2,000 books; however, the school needs to start ordering books that will support its curriculum. The North Bay Elementary School library collection was not covered by property insurance.

The Importance of School Libraries

School Librarian Marianne Higginbotham had always stressed to her students the importance of taking care of their books, especially their borrowed library books.

When the Second Street Elementary School reopened its doors after Hurricane Katrina, fourth and fifth graders came carrying their school library books. Most of the students lost their homes and possessions in the storm, but they saved their library book when they evacuated.

The students were very proud that they had saved their books, and were even a little worried that they might have to pay a library fine.

A lot of the students are anxious to have a library again...so they can put their library books back on the shelf at Second Street Elementary.