

House the 9

A Program of the Lower 9TH Ward Homeownership Association

www.lower9thwardhomeowners.org

August 23, 2013

Dear Friend:

On August 29, 2005, the world saw the façade of American prosperity ripped off. In the richest society on earth, disfavored citizens sat on their roofs for days waiting for rescue from the floodwaters. One neighborhood—the Lower 9th Ward—came to represent our nation’s failure to take care of its people.

Eight years later, the people of the Lower 9th Ward are still waiting. But rather than receiving help, they have confronted barriers—National Guard troops that kept them from their homes long after other neighborhoods had reopened, a city that shut off their water for the express purpose of improving water service elsewhere, a state grant formula that paid more in wealthy, white neighborhoods than in lower-income, African-American ones.

Eight years later, as a direct result of these obstacles, only 25% of the residents of the Lower 9th Ward have made it back home, compared with a return rate for the rest of the city of 80%. Yet before the flood, the 9, as its residents call it, was a vibrant, hard-working community. Children grew up surrounded by aunts and cousins and grandparents, living in family homes that had been passed down from generation to generation. In a neighborhood that was 98% African American, 59% of families owned their homes and 56% of homeowners had no mortgage.

This is a story that repeats itself over and over again, from red-lining when white soldiers were buying homes under the GI Bill to the seizure of homes of black families during urban renewal. In the 9, there is still a chance to break this pattern. **In large part due to the persistent advocacy of the Lower 9th Ward Homeownership Association, Louisiana has just released \$110 million for grants to displaced homeowners.** These are the last funds that will be available, the last chance to make sure residents are able to rebuild their homes and return to the neighborhood they love.

But to get these grants, homeowners will need to make it through the state bureaucracy. The House the 9 program is therefore committed to seeing that all homeowners have advocates by their side to make sure that this time they get the funds they’re entitled to. This time, with your help, they will not be left waiting on the rooftops.

With an investment of just \$250,000 to hire housing advocates, we can leverage an estimated \$30 million in direct grants to bring 600 displaced Lower 9th Ward families home.

As the centerpiece of our fundraising campaign, we are collaborating with Washington, DC’s All Souls Unitarian Church

to host a New Orleans Jazz concert in October with clarinetist Evan Christopher.

We need your help in sponsoring the concert—all proceeds of which will go directly to help Lower 9th Ward families rebuild their homes and their lives. Please contribute at the highest sponsorship level you can, as outlined on the next page. In return, we would like you to accept an offer of our appreciation.

House the 9 Benefit Concert Sponsorship Levels	
Levels	Benefits of Support
Royalty \$ 10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tickets for 8 to concert with reserved seating • Listing as “Royalty, Krewe of House the 9” in concert program, on website, and in publicity materials throughout the year • Gift bag, Krewe of House the 9 • Concert poster signed by clarinetist Evan Christopher • Signed copy of <i>The House of Dance and Feathers</i>, by Ronald Lewis
Celebrity Guest \$5,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tickets for 6 to concert with reserved seating • Listing as “Celebrity Guest, Krewe of House the 9” in concert program website, and in publicity materials throughout the year • Gift bag, Krewe of House the 9 • Concert poster signed by clarinetist Evan Christopher
Marching Band \$2,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tickets for 4 to concert with reserved seating • Listing as “Marching Band, Krewe of House the 9” in concert program, website, and in publicity materials throughout the year • Gift bag, Krewe of House the 9
Flambeaux \$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tickets for 4 to concert • Listing as “Flambeaux, Krewe of House the 9” in concert program • Gift bag, Krewe of House the 9
Float Rider \$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tickets for 2 to concert • Listing as “Float Rider, Krewe of House the 9” in concert program
Lining Route \$100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listing as “Lining the Route” in concert program

If you have any questions or would like to discuss our efforts further, please contact me at (240) 893-6107 or masheehan504@yahoo.com. If you are unable to sponsor the concert, but are still interested in helping us reach \$250,000, you will soon be able to donate at <http://www.lower9thwardhomeowners.org>.

On August 29, 2015, the eyes of the world will return to the Lower 9th Ward. Will they see an empty field scattered

with overgrown lots and abandoned shells, with just a few small pockets of homes, as they would today? Or will they see a neighborhood befitting this nation, a thriving community where children again run around the corner to visit their grandparents? Your gift will determine the answer.

How's the 9? This is the question by which the recovery of New Orleans must be judged.

Sincerely,

M.A. Sheehan, Director, House the 9 Program