

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

123 State Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70118 • [www.lhb.org](http://www.lhb.org)

### **COMING HOME**

For blind employee and Lighthouse receptionist, Shirley Pratts, returning to New Orleans post-Katrina was not a question. This is her home - where her family and friends are. Her residence in Gentilly was flooded with 5 feet of water and she knew returning there was not an immediate option.

She initially evacuated to St. Louis where she stayed with her daughter. Health problems kept her from returning as quickly as she wanted, so she began researching housing for her return. She quickly realized, like many homeless New Orleanians, that there were very few housing options available, and most of those had a

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*John Vallery receives the key to his trailer*



*Lighthouse FEMA trailers*

### **A Lighthouse Client's Katrina Story**

Ten days before Hurricane Katrina wreaked her destruction on the Gulf Coast, Kelvin East, a 45-year-old blind man from Marrero, suffered a broken jaw and had arch bars surgically bolted to his face at Charity Hospital. An independent and strong willed man, Kelvin made the most of this new disability.

As the hurricane approached, Kelvin and his twin brother, Melvin, chose to ride out the storm in their home. In the aftermath, they survived on the food from their thawing freezer and water. Eventually their water supply ran out and having no other recourse, they drained the water heater to keep from dehydrating. Soon the food supply began to dwindle and Hurricane Rita was rapidly approaching.

Kelvin and Melvin decided not to chance another hurricane; they contacted a friend with

a tugboat and made their way to a relative's home in Morgan City. After their return to Marrero, the arch bars were becoming extremely painful and Kelvin was in need of medical attention. He tried to locate the original physician, but Charity Hospital was no longer an option.

After several weeks of searching for a physician who could help him with his needs, Kelvin was running out of patience. A friend suggested he contact Lighthouse for the Blind. Kelvin was reluctant but in December 2005 he called Lighthouse social worker, Elizabeth Mire, for help.

Ms. Mire worked with a local physician and eventually located a surgeon in Houma who could give Kelvin the medical attention he

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

“The Lighthouse is alive and well.” Those words sound a message that is likely the most important one we could possibly use to begin our annual report. John Jeremiah, Chairman of our Board of Directors, told me sometime back that we all would feel like we had reached a major milestone when we could go a single day without hearing the word “Katrina.” It may be years before we reach that point, but I am pleased to be able to tell you that our organization is on solid ground.

While property, business and equipment are important, our people are key and we are pleased to be able to report that we did not lose a single employee that can be directly attributable to Katrina. Every individual, however, was impacted by this disaster and the extent of this impact is still being realized. Many organizations and individuals provided much needed support to our employees and for that, we will be forever grateful. Even when I could not determine what kind of help was needed, it came in abundance. Thank you to all who contributed and kept us in your prayers.

I am really proud of our staff. In a most difficult time, our people never lost sight of our mission and made the transition from survival to operational, within just a few



**Bill Price,  
Lighthouse  
President**

weeks. They deserve the credit for our existence and would make any organization proud.

Today, the Lighthouse is different. Critical manufacturing has been temporarily relocated. Clients are now in a much larger geographic area and many employees have not returned. Our “Mission” however, has not changed. Our Board of Directors, despite storm issues of their own, has been engaged and providing guidance through professionally led strategic planning sessions. I especially appreciate their participation during difficult times.

Ms. Katrina caused us to miss our “90 Years of Service” event. The good news is, she will not cause us to miss our “100 Year” celebration.

— *Bill Price*

**THE LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND** serves people in the region who are blind or visually impaired by providing job training, competitive employment and services. Our goal is to promote individual independence and self-reliance. We are committed to the proactive development of quality products and services. The Lighthouse works in cooperation and partnership with private, public and nonprofit entities.

# LIGHTHOUSE SERVICES PROGRAMS UPDATE

The Lighthouse Services Department reopened in early November. Although staff had experienced traumatic experiences ranging from losing everything to evacuating with a newborn, we were ready to get to work.

Clients returned surprisingly soon, and needed not only the visual aids and assistance the Lighthouse always provided, but also requested replacement of household items, transportation and other critical needs. Crisis counseling was also needed and provided by Elizabeth Mire, the Lighthouse social worker. Calvin Lee, in the Information and Referral Center, helped clients to locate healthcare providers and other services, in a region where many medical services had vanished. The Low Vision Store, Magnifiers and More, quickly became busy replacing lost or flooded visual aids. The Lighthouse Low Vision Clinic also was reestablished in November.

Some normalcy has been reestablished with the recommencement of the adult adjustment to blindness program, and a new adult leisure/community integration program called Next Step will begin in June under the leadership of Jenice Heck, the Lighthouse's occupational therapist. We have two vans now transporting clients, one between clients' homes and



**Ann H. Butcher, PhD.**  
**Director of Services**

the Lighthouse for services, and one that is a fee-for-service transportation program (called Lighthouse Transportation Service, or LTS) that takes visually impaired clients from their homes to anywhere they want to travel in the area, such as to doctors' offices and for shopping. With the critical condition of the paratransit system in the New Orleans area, the LTS has been an immediate success.

Children's programs and technology training took the hardest hit from the storm, and are still in the rebuilding process.

Summer camp is being held for the fourth

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## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Workforce Development department is making a quick come back post-Katrina. Currently, while the number of Workforce Development staff has decreased from eight to five, the number of client referrals from the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services has not. By the end of February, Simone Nolan, Director of Employment Services, and one other staff member were actively assisting 10 clients in job placement and training. The number of clients being helped with job training and employment increases daily.

The influx of evacuees to the

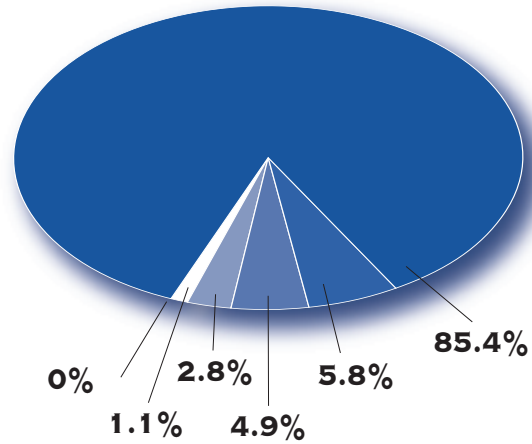
Houma/Thibodaux area created a distinct need to expand Lighthouse services to those areas. A new job coordinator has been hired for this area; he now assists 13 clients in job training and employment.

With the return of the Deaf/Blind Program Coordinator at the end of March, the program was resumed April 1st. Two individuals are currently enrolled in the 6-month course that helps train the individual for competitive employment, which includes resolution of issues with communication, mobility and one's ability to live independently.

# 2005 FINANCIAL REPORT

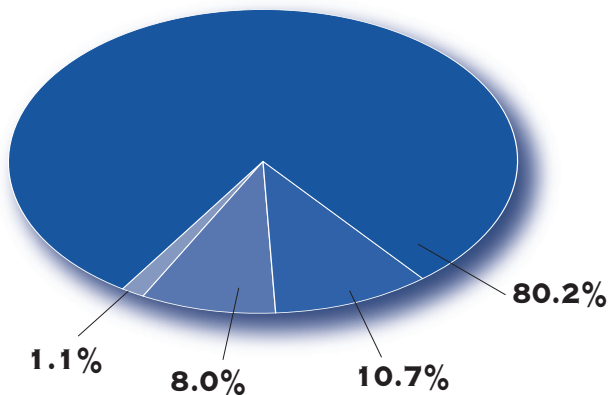


## REVENUE BY SOURCE



■ Manufacturing	\$7,965,013	85.4%
■ Fee for Service	\$536,551	5.8%
■ Grants	\$455,708	4.9%
■ Gifts (non-capital)	\$262,215	2.8%
■ Investments	\$105,437	1.1%
□ Bequests	\$2,613	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,329,583</b>	<b>100%</b>

## EXPENSES BY ACTIVITY

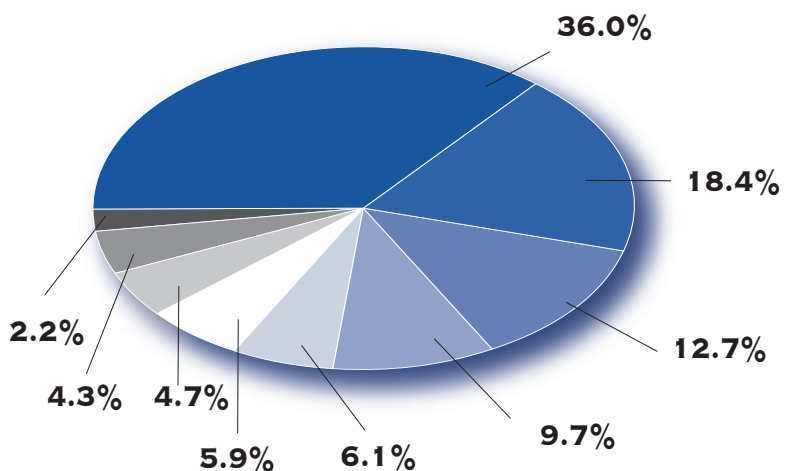


■ Manufacturing	\$7,725,866	79.9%
■ Services	\$970,525	10.0%
■ Administration	\$829,666	8.6%
■ Development	\$141,465	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,667,522</b>	<b>100%</b>



## SALES BY CATEGORY

■ Paper Plate	\$3,059,421	36.0%
■ Paper Cup	\$1,566,416	18.4%
■ Paper Towel	\$1,080,458	12.7%
■ Service Contracts	\$824,223	9.7%
■ Textiles	\$520,710	6.1%
□ Assembly	\$504,789	5.9%
■ Mops and Brooms	\$399,786	4.7%
■ Fee for Service	\$362,781	4.3%
■ Resale	\$182,968	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,501,552</b>	<b>100%</b>



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## A Lighthouse Client's Katrina Story continued from page 1

needed. Through a Lighthouse grant from Guide Dogs for the Blind, Kelvin was able to make many trips to Houma. The help didn't stop there. Grant money from the Lighthouse for the Blind Auxiliary purchased a large button telephone, so he could stay in touch with his doctor and the Lighthouse, and a walking cane for him. Funds from the Ernst & Young Foundation grant were used to purchase household items for Kelvin since



**Kelvin East and Elizabeth Mire**

Katrina had damaged most of the roof on his house and destroyed a good portion of his belongings.

With the arch bars removed, Kelvin is finding life a bit more comfortable. He still resides in Marrero, living in a FEMA trailer on his property. He continues to work with Ms. Mire on several other goals. His experience has made him rethink his initial reluctance about contacting the Lighthouse, stating, "If you're blind or visually impaired, you need to contact the Lighthouse. The services have been wonderful and if it wouldn't have been for Ms. Mire's persistence, I would still have that "iron thing" in my mouth!"

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## Lighthouse Services Programs Update

*continued from page 3*

year in a row. Our technology specialist had to move following Katrina, but recently the Lighthouse hired a new person to teach adaptive technology.

One of our biggest current challenges is to adapt the provision of services so that we can reach not only clients here at the Lighthouse but also those who have relocated to surrounding areas due to the storm. We are working together to do so and are confident that we will succeed.

# Coming Home

continued from page 1

higher monthly price tag than she could afford. With this in mind she began the process of trying to acquire a FEMA trailer – but if she was able to get one where would she put it?

That's where the Lighthouse stepped in. Lighthouse staff was aware of the fact that many employees wanted to return but could not due to the lack of adequate housing. Rick Krohn, Lighthouse Director of Industrial Operations, contacted FEMA regarding FEMA trailers being placed on Lighthouse property. After many phone calls and hours of meetings and planning, the work paid off.

The trailers were delivered in late January - well before the facility groundwork was completed. Contractors worked diligently for over a month leveling the ground, installing water and sewer lines and electrical boxes on the S. Front Street side of the property. By early March, the grounds were ready for the installation of the twelve trailers plus one laundry unit.

Additional security lighting was installed; a handrail system was built around the trailers to provide the blind and visually impaired a guide to and from their trailers; a gate was also installed for added security.

Maintenance is provided by FEMA at no cost to the tenant. The electricity and water are also provided at no charge. The only living expense that the tenant must incur, besides personal items and food, is propane gas.

John Vallery, blind from an accident he had in his early 20's, has been a Lighthouse employee since 1957. He lost all of his belongings when his home in Mid City flooded. After evacuating to his brother's home in Texas, Mr. Vallery went to River Ridge to reside with a cousin while deciding what he needed to do next.

Mr. Vallery received word from Mr. Krohn that a FEMA trailer would be set up for him and his son. In November, they were offered an apartment located on Lighthouse property as a temporary dwelling while they waited for their FEMA trailer to be ready.

Living and working at the Lighthouse has many positives as far as Ms. Pratts and Mr. Vallery are concerned. Getting to work is much quicker for them, but also the Lighthouse is conveniently located to area stores. They know their way around which makes them feel more comfortable and at ease. With sincere gratitude in his voice, Mr. Vallery commented, "The Lighthouse has been really nice and good to me – they take care of us."

## 8 LIGHTHOUSE NEWS

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