

helping hands



Life is full of injustice, both near and afar. While it's easier to turn a blind eye, many in our community are committed to making a difference in the lives of our children. With this issue, *nola baby & family* is happy to launch a new feature, turning the spotlight on local non-profits which are dedicated to improving the lives of those less fortunate.

Boys Hope Girls Hope of New Orleans

New Orleans ranks 47th among all states in public high school graduation rates. Those without proper education face significant hurdles to success; some 85 percent of children whose parents dropped out of high school live in low income or impoverished households. These children, in turn, are less likely to graduate from high school themselves, extending the cycle of generational poverty and poor academic achievement.

Boys Hope Girls Hope New Orleans is part of an international organization—with chapters in 14 other U.S. cities and four foreign countries—which seeks to help at-risk children rise above their circumstances. For 30 years our local chapter has provided at-risk boys with a stable “home” environment with fulltime, live-in residential counselors, education at high performing schools, and the support needed to reach their full potential. Eight years ago, it began helping at-risk girls as well.

With an holistic approach, Boys Hope Girls Hope addresses the needs of the whole child: intellectual, spiritual, physical, and social. Participants (scholars) reside in a supportive residential facility, while their parents or legal guardians remain involved, retaining custody and becoming partners in their child's efforts. Boys Hope Girls Hope scholars enroll in top-rated schools in safe neighborhoods, and are matched to the college preparatory curriculum best suited to their needs. Additionally, the faith-based program requires all students to participate in community service activities.

A full 100 percent of all Boys Hope Girls Hope of New Orleans scholars enroll in college and receive academic, financial, and spiritual support throughout their college careers. Almost all Boys Hope Girls Hope scholars graduate from college.

For information on how you can support Boys Hope Girls Hope New Orleans, please call 504.484.7744 or visit boyshopegirlshope.org

HeartGift New Orleans

Congenital heart disease keeps one in 100 infants born in developing countries from ever reaching adulthood. Medical professionals have reached out to those in need, offering life-saving surgical interventions to infants and children who would otherwise not survive.

The HeartGift Foundation, established in Austin in 2000, brings children from across the globe to the United States for treatment to repair their hearts. Medical professionals donate their services

completely free-of-charge, and HeartGift pays the hospital a set fee for each child; the recipients and their families do not pay anything to come to our shores. Since its inception, the foundation has helped more than 100 pediatric patients from 20 countries across five continents.

Earlier this year, HeartGift opened a chapter in NOLA—the foundation's third chapter, and its first outside of Texas. Partnering with Children's Hospital, HeartGift New Orleans welcomed its first patient this past February, eight-month-old Pasha from Kenya. Joseph Caspi, M.D., a cardiothoracic surgeon at Children's Hospital and a HeartGift New Orleans board member, successfully treated Pasha for patent ductus arteriosus (PDA). The infant returned to Kenya in April.

HeartGift New Orleans, like all HeartGift chapters, has its own Medical Selection Committee to review cases and select patients who qualify for the program. Among the guidelines are that patients should be under 14 years of age, have had no previous cardiac surgery, have a condition that can be repaired with a single surgery, and be in urgent need of the repair. These criteria help HeartGift ensure that it will meet its ethical responsibility to serve children who will go on to lead normal, healthy lives after surgery, returning to their homes with little or no follow-up care required.

The local chapter expects to bring a second patient to NOLA for treatment later this summer. Eventually, HeartGift New Orleans hopes to perform at least six life-saving surgeries on its international patients each year.

While medical professionals and Children's Hospital generously donate their services to HeartGift patients, additional expenses incurred by the foundation include travel and lodging for the child and caregiver. For more information on how to support HeartGift New Orleans, please visit www.heartgift.org.

