

Non-Profit Organizations

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Reflections on 2009, in the Shade of The Jesse Tree



The Jesse Tree's new logo (above) will always remind us of the good things that happened in 2009. Despite coming very close to shutting the doors, The Jesse Tree is connecting, rebuilding and uplifting more lives than ever before. Everyone in Galveston County will look back on 2009 as a year of rebuilding and recovering from Hurricane Ike. Most will agree that despite catastrophic damage, things are looking pretty good again all along the Gulf Coast. We've come a long way - offering more help than ever.

Upon closer examination, most would probably also agree that there is still a lot of economic "cleaning up" left to be done in 2010. The impact and timing of the downturn in the national economy precisely as a natural disaster took its toll on the local economy could be considered the double whammy for Galvestonians. People who never thought they would be unemployed lost their jobs. People who were barely making it just can't make it anymore. People who never had to ask for help have had to ask and have started coming regularly to The Jesse Tree for everything from fresh fruit and vegetables to Christmas toys for their children. Many Galveston families are in their homes for Christmas, because we were able to coordinate mortgage payments to stave off foreclosure. Times are tough. We help people.

This year there were no funds available for a Christmas "bonus", but, The Jesse Tree staff gathered for some holiday cheer and agreed that having jobs is sufficient when times are tough. We are so grateful to all who helped, donated, volunteered or assisted in 2009. Many shared reflections on the year:

- Jim Brown, a resource coordinator remembered the difficult days just after the storm as agencies scrambled to find operating space and the frustration of working with FEMA who kept moving the agencies from room to room until Holy Rosary Church finally offered a safe, secure spot for the agencies to set-up shop and thousands of persons found relief and resources at that fountain of mercy in the wake of the storm. He recalled how staff members often bought items for those in need from their own pockets or went to their own homes for furniture and clothing to help those who had gone in circles trying to get help.

- Lola Randolph a Galveston County Senior Employment Program worker (SER) at The Jesse Tree was reminded of a family who had been left homeless by the storm, temperatures had dropped and they had no warm clothing they were out of gas and the baby was sick. The Jesse Tree's coffers were empty, but she and the other SER workers (Galveston County Senior Employment Program) Nellie, Margaret and others found warm clothes and collected enough money among themselves to fill the tank to get the baby to proper medical care.

- Ted Hanley, The Executive Director reflected on the point in April when funds were depleted. The Bills for repairs were mounting, utility bills were in arrears and it appeared that the only solution was to close the doors of The Jesse Tree. He, Jim Brennan and Sandra Sullivan (of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship) were working frantically to get a letter out to the local churches begging for whatever they could do to save the organization, when Dolph Tillotsen of the Galveston County Daily News asked Laura Elder to write a story on the critical state of affairs prompting a generous, anonymous donation. A retired educator called to say that she wanted to make a difference. She could not bear the thought of The Jesse Tree closing its doors and appreciated the fact that The Jesse Tree had found places to branch out in every area of the county where people needed help. Her generous donation kept The Jesse Tree in operation and preserved twenty-eight jobs. She made a huge difference.

- Claudia Gutierrez, a resource coordinator for the DHAP Families - reflected on the newly developed collaboration with other agencies, such as Galveston County Social Services, The ADA Women's Center, St. Vincent's House, The Children's Center, The Resource and Crisis Center and others and churches, such as St. Paul United Methodist, Greater St. Matthews in Hitchcock, Cathedral de Fe in La Marque, Spirit and Truth in League City and New Life in Galveston and many others; she commented on how much better we work together and appreciate what one another can do when we take a team approach.

- Nellie Papillion - a SER worker, recalled how despite great obstacles everyone seem to pitch in to help one another.

- Rosa Salinas shared that she had searched for a job for over a year. She had come for help for her family at The Jesse Tree, where Monica Garcia suggested that she apply for a job. She is a top notch, bilingual receptionist and credits God with directing her to The Jesse Tree.

- Darlene Cass, Nurse Educator shared her delight in joining The Jesse Tree staff after losing her job at the medical center, preserving a nine-year relationship developing the Diabetes Program. Over 2500 people attended chronic conditions management classes under her tutelage in 2009.

- The entire staff offered love and support to David Mitchell, Director of



In the past year over 50,000 people have been fed through one or more of The Jesse Tree's nutrition programs.

Programs and Services whose Dad recently passed away. His entire family has been a model of caring and compassion and an inspiration to us all at The Jesse Tree. David's music touches many lives.

- The staff has grown to over thirty, dedicated, caring individuals. The holiday reflections took us back over a year of fond memories of the widespread support shown The Jesse Tree by local schools and businesses; Leadership Texas, ushered in by Terry Bleier Paul and Beth Caplan visited Galveston in July making indelible improvements, Linn and Rodney, owners of The Third Coast and the brilliant Friday night performers raised over \$1,000 to support The Jesse Tree; Don and David of Miller's Seawall Grill orchestrated the serving of twenty five soups donated by local restaurants, Eatcetera, The Mosquito Café and others at The Unitarian sponsored Empty Bowl Event raising over \$15,000; O'Connell Consolidated High Students and Principal Patrick Danesi who worked tirelessly at Friday Food Fairs and delivering Senior Boxes; The guys from Pathway to Recovery helping us haul food and medical equipment; UTMB students taking

blood pressures and starting the "One Million Penny" collection and all those who help kick off The One in a Million Campaign with the Give Galveston a Hug Event on the Seawall. Recently, the great folks at IMC² in Dallas provided pro-bono technology upgrades of The Jesse Tree's logo, website and social media - their work is awesome and their compassion immense. What a great gift. So many of you have given your time, talent and compassion - we appreciate you!

In 2009, the value of the food distributed by The Jesse Tree will exceed \$10 million. The number of lives touched, tears dried and smiles generated cannot be counted. Your thoughtfulness, caring and generosity is making it happen. The Jesse Tree - connecting, rebuilding and uplifting the lives of those in need in Galveston County. Please consider making a New Year's Resolution to join under the branches of The Jesse Tree - thank you for helping us in 2009. May God bless you with mercy, peace, prosperity and good health in 2010. For information call (409) 762-2233 or visit the website at www.jesstree.net - Happy New Year 2010.

Name: United Way Galveston; Width: 19p10; Depth: 4 in; Color: Black; Comment: Size: 8.00 SP:MB; Ad Number: a706813; Size: 8 in

Name: A Green Earth Montes; Width: 19p10; Depth: 4 in; Color: Black; Comment: Size: 8.00 SP:VC; Ad Number: a711321; Size: 8 in

Name: Jesse Tree; Width: 19p10; Depth: 4 in; Color: Black plus Three; Comment: Size: 8.00 SP:MB; Ad Number: a710985; Size: 8 in

Name: Hospice; Width: 19p10; Depth: 4 in; Color: Black; Comment: Size: 8.00 SP:PS; Ad Number: a708298; Size: 8 in

Name: Children's Coalition; Width: 19p10; Depth: 4 in; Color: Black; Comment: Size: 8.00 SP:VC; Ad Number: a705382; Size: 8 in

Name: Community Action Cou; Width: 19p10; Depth: 4 in; Color: Black; Comment: Size: 8.00 SP:MB; Ad Number: a710543; Size: 8 in