

## Funds Raised in SC Presented to New Orleans Public Library

The following article was written by Jim Johnson who spearheaded efforts to raise funds in our state to help rebuild the New Orleans Public Library (NOPL). The fund-raising effort on behalf of the Association of Public Library Administrators and FOSCL raised over \$21,000. Jim presented a check to the New Orleans Public Library during the American Library Association Annual Conference held in New Orleans in June.

"I attended ALA's Conference in New Orleans recently. It was a strange experience to walk through the exhibit hall knowing that last September people had died there. Outside, ALA attendees waited for shuttle buses where people stood huddled together without food or water for days.



*Jim Johnson, middle, presents check to NOPL Board President Tania Tetlow, to Jim's right.*

The people of New Orleans were truly happy to welcome ALA. Banners and posters acknowledging the association's presence were to be seen in many stores and restaurants. For those attendees who only saw the French Quarter and the area around the convention center, they probably wondered what all the recovery fuss was about. Anyone who ventured by car outside the central business district and the Quarter saw another world, one that looks ten months after Katrina pretty much the same way it did the day after the hurricane—like a scene from a Hollywood disaster movie. Three fourths of the city remains devastated. There are pockets where people are trying to rebuild, but it will be decades before New Orleans fully recovers—if it ever does.

Million dollar homes, middle class areas, housing projects, and slums alike were destroyed in Katrina's aftermath. Many remain so. Homes remain abandoned; cars remain abandoned; yachts at the marina are still where the storm tossed them like matchsticks last August.

Close your eyes for a moment and picture your community under similar circumstances. Picture Charleston with only the Battery intact; how about Columbia with just Five Points and the University area; Rock Hill with the area around Winthrop; Greenville with only the main street area. It's not a pretty picture to imagine, is it?

The people still in New Orleans have a belief that the city will rebound. A great deal of energy and enthusiasm exists whenever you talk with a native. They are trying to get their lives as well as their city back together.

I presented the check for \$21,700 to the New Orleans Public Library on behalf of APLA and FOSCL. These dollars will go to rebuild the Children's Resource Center, a small Carnegie era branch in uptown New Orleans. It is estimated that it will take \$30,000 to complete the repairs. As I presented the check, ALA volunteers were painting the building getting it ready for a dedication a few days later. Next door, ALA volunteers including the incoming president were busy sorting books. Board members, NOPL Foundation members, and staff that I met were enthusiastic in expressing their thanks to South Carolinians who contributed to this endeavor. Other than Gates and the Bush-Clinton fund, this is possibly the largest contribution the library has received.

I still have people who said they intended to send money for this project. I'll continue to receive money for the foreseeable future. In fact, I received a check today from a state senator. If you have contributed, please consider doing so again. Like Dwight McInvaill said at a recent APLA meeting, most contributions were made in the last tax year. Consider giving again this year. We have received contributions from several public library friends groups; however, we haven't heard from the largest friends groups—those with sizeable treasuries. I've talked with library staff members across the state who didn't know about this effort. They said their director hadn't shared this information with them. Please share this with your staff, board members, faculty, friends, and neighbors. Like the City of New Orleans, the New Orleans Public Library will need our help for years to come. Perhaps, the most famous jazz song is "When the Saints Go Marching In". One of the refrains in that song talks about "being in that number, When the Saints Go Marching In". I hope you will be in that number for this very important project.

Checks can be sent to: FOSCL, P.O. Box 11121, Columbia SC 29211.

If the NOPL is not high on your list for a contribution, consider giving to church funds, the Red Cross, Catholic Charities, Habitat for Humanity, etc. I was impressed by the number of teenage volunteers from church groups from throughout the nation who were giving up part of their summer vacation to help others. Its things like this that give the people in NO hope.

Thanks for all your support and help."

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"Perhaps no place in any community is so totally democratic as the town library. The only entrance requirement is interest." *Lady Bird Johnson*