

This is our first annual report for Waveland's Ground Zero Hurricane Museum. A tribute to the strength and beauty of the human spirit, a cornerstone of Coleman Avenue, the city of Waveland, and the entire Gulf Coast.

# Annual Report

**Ground Zero Hurricane Museum**

**2017**



## **WAVELAND GROUND ZERO HURRICANE MUSEUM ANNUAL REPORT 2017**

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**Like us on Facebook: Ground Zero Hurricane Museum**

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PHIL BRYANT

GOVERNOR

February 26, 2013

Ms. Lili Stahler

Alderman Ward 1

P.O. Box 539

Waveland MS 39576

Dear Ms. Stahler:

As Governor of the State of Mississippi, I wholeheartedly support the city of Waveland in its efforts to create a Katrina Museum.

Although Hurricane Katrina stole precious lives, thousands of homes, and much of our state's priceless heritage, the storm also gave citizens of Mississippi great cause for pride. The vast majority of our survivors showed courage and grace under extraordinary duress. Those outside the stricken area rose to help our fellow citizens and to ease their suffering. Across our great state, Mississippians joined together, rolled up our sleeves and set about rebuilding our coastal communities, making them better and stronger than before. The world witnessed Mississippi at its best, under the very worst of circumstances.

Perhaps no place on the coast suffered more loss or displayed more tenacity than the city of

Waveland, the home of the future museum. After the storm, Waveland was often referred to as "Ground Zero." The city's civic heart, Coleman Avenue, was totally destroyed but for one historic school building. Although heavily damaged, the building was restored with a grant from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, making it an especially meaningful place to house the Hurricane Katrina Museum. The city of Waveland proposes to do just that.

This museum will serve the state in many ways. Using art, photography and audio/visual tools, it will be an informational venue so visitors can appreciate both the force of nature and the strength of Mississippians. It will give the people of the entire Gulf Coast a place to share their stories of loss, resilience and perseverance. It will be a tribute to the unprecedented volunteerism that occurred in the years after Katrina. Most of all, it will inspire future generations of our citizens by commemorating the courage and the dignity of their predecessors. I urge my fellow Mississippians to join me in support of this worthy project.

Sincerely,  
*Phil Bryant*  
Phil Bryant  
Governor



**Welcome to our first annual report for our museum. The Ground Zero Museum is not a memorial to a disaster but rather a tribute to the strength and beauty of the human spirit. Our museum is a cornerstone of Coleman Avenue, the city of Waveland and the entire Gulf Coast.**

**The museum welcomes locals and visitors to come with us and take a scenic look at our community through the lives, struggles and successes of our hurricane survivors. Waveland is a beautiful, serene yet vibrant, place to live and play. When Mother Nature brings a hurricane, many people join together to rebuild their communities better and smarter. This museum gives visitors a unique perspective on our city through the stories, art and fabric of the lives of our residents who stand up in times of trouble and adversity.**

**This annual report, like the museum, highlights the thousands of American citizens of all ages who came to our aid in the time of our greatest need. We call them “family”, and many return every year.**

**On behalf of the Museum Board of Directors, staff and volunteers, I dedicate this annual report to the citizens of Waveland.**

**Lili Stahler-Murphy,  
Board President**

## **REORGANIZATION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Our mission includes: to develop and operate a museum to commemorate past hurricanes, to educate the public on hurricane preparedness and awareness, to become a repository for hurricane history and memorabilia for the Mississippi Gulf Coast Area, to preserve and showcase the history of Waveland, and to support other charitable purposes as may be determined by the Board of Directors.

**New Board of Directors was elected in 2017. The first board meeting was held**

**June 30, 2017.**

**Lili-Stahler-Murphy, President**

**Basil Kennedy, Treasurer**

**Bernie Cullen, Secretary**

**Members: Bill Bradford, Mark Duffy, Joan Orlin and Bobbie Tate**

The Board meets regularly on a quarterly basis, calls special meetings if necessary and uses electronic communication as appropriate.

## **OPERATING HIGHLIGHTS**

2017 has been a busy year and the Board of Directors is pleased to share highlights of the year in review. The museum is a 501C3 operating under the umbrella of the Hancock Community Development Foundation (HCDF). Admission is free. Museum operations are financed solely by donations, membership dues and grants.

**Hours** in 2017: The Museum was open on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday from 10am-3pm. The museum does open for special community events.

**Staff:** The Museum Director, Linda Aiavolasiti, works part time and there are loyal volunteers who support the work of the museum.

**Visitors:** The museum continues to enjoy increasing numbers of visitors from local citizens to visitors from across the country and international visitors as well. Our visitors generously donate to the museum during their visits and many become members. If you look at Trip Advisor, our museum received outstanding comments! The visitor comments reflect the passion of our volunteers. Here are just a few:

**Visitor from South Dakota, January 2017:**

*"Pleasant surprise and very informative...Rebuilding efforts a testament to the determination of the people who call this area home. Highly recommend."*

**Visitor from Colorado, reviewed May 2017**

*Humbled experience. The city of Waveland looks great now but takes a step back in time at this great museum. We had a great tour by one of the young residents from Waveland who lived thru the hurricane and reconstruction. It was a great experience for our boys to reinforce resiliency in times of destruction. Take 45 minutes out of your day to see what happened following August 29, 2005."*

**Members:**

**Member dues support our operating costs such as supplies, pamphlets, maintenance of exhibits and museum gifts. Thank you to all who support our local museum. Dues remain \$20/person annually or \$250/person for lifetime status.**

**October is designated for our Membership Campaign.**

**Museum Partners:**

The museum is fortunate to have many local partners. A big thank you to the City of Waveland, Waveland Fire Department, Waveland Police Department, Chamber of Commerce, Hancock Tourism, Hancock County Board of Supervisors, Bay Waveland Schools and area churches.

**EVENTS AT THE MUSEUM**

There always seems to be something going on within the museum walls. The museum is housed in a beautiful historic landmark and it attracts people to come in and visit for a while.

***Annual Events include:***

- Christmas Bazaar
- Katrina Memorial
- Teacher Appreciation Day
- City of Waveland visit with Santa

The Board would like to acknowledge the generous donation given to the museum by the Bazaar founders, Glenn Hood and Chuck Underwood.





Pictured is L to R Tish Haas Williams, Hancock County Chamber of Commerce; Lili Stahler-Murphy Board Chair; Linda Alavolasiti, Museum Director; Bernie Cullen, Board Secretary; Bobbie Tate, Board Member; second row Charlie Piazza, Waveland Alderman Ward 4; Santa and Noah (sitting); Glenn Hood and Chuck Underwood, Bazaar Co-Founders and Mark Duffy, Board Member.

### ***HemFest in July***

Our first fundraiser, HemFest, was begun in 2017. This inaugural event honored Ernest Hemingway's love of Havana, Cuba! (He also loved spending time on the Gulf Coast) Patrons spent the night celebrating Hemingway's 118<sup>th</sup> birthday in July at the museum. The night included a four-course moveable feast and cocktail pairings from the Rum Kitchen, salsa music and dancing, a cigar lounge and Hemingway books for sale from Bay Books. There even was a look-a-like contest and won by Waveland's Bob Martin.

Everyone who attended deemed it a huge success. In the words of the master himself "Live the Full Life!" This will be an annual event and HemFest will visit many of Ernest's favorite places.

The Board was appreciative of all 92 patrons who came! A big thanks to Starr and Chappy of the Rum Kitchen, museum staff and volunteers and the Chamber for putting on such a successful fundraiser!



Participants in the Hemmingway Look Alike Contest 2017

### ***Community events***

Besides all the museum related events, the museum is rented for special events. In 2017, there were over 80 dates booked for birthdays showers, weddings, meetings, classes etc. enjoyed by local community. This old building holds many memories and continues to be a gathering place to make new memories.

Participating in the Twelfth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina its victims and survivors in a Community Prayer Service were:



Father Michael Manascalco, St. Clare Catholic Church; Mayor Mike Smith; LiLi Stahler-Murphy, Museum Board Chair; Frank Griffin III, Hancock County MS; City of Diamondhead, Mississippi; Waveland Fire Department; City of Waveland, MS; The City of Bay Saint Louis; Waveland Police Department and Bay St. Louis Police Department at Ground Zero Hurricane Museum.



Commemorating the twelfth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

In 2017 we had 2,232 visitors to the museum. We do not charge admission but have a completely voluntary donation system. These visitors made voluntary contributions of \$3,889.00.

Our other revenue sources are from HemFest, our annual fundraiser started this year; the Christmas Bazaar and dues which provided a total of \$11,045 in income.

We had expenses totaling \$8,287 giving us an excess of income over expenses of \$2,758 for the year.

We would be remiss if we didn't thank the City of Waveland for its gracious support of providing a building, maintenance and some of our staffing which allows us to stay open.

Our assets are our people first, but tangibly they include our most valuable asset- ***The Backyards and Beyond Exhibit***- which would probably be valued at well over \$50,000 on the current market. Most of our other exhibits have little market value but immense intrinsic value and even greater historic value.

#### **Family from Illinois. Trip Advisor Comments from February 2017**

"I saw this museum was something to do in Waveland. The 5 of us visited late morning on a Friday. The staff and volunteers were full on information on Katrina... Their knowledge and stories of their experiences before, during and after Katrina made for such a great visit to this museum. It is so emotional hearing their stories and being able to see through the exhibits what the people of this small community endured. The "can do" attitude of the local residents has built this community back to a great little place to live, work and raise families. Don't miss seeing this museum when in the area."

## The Future

These are priorities for the next few years:

- IT and social media enhancements to our website, Facebook page, link to the city website. There are plans to create a calendar of museum events, map and directions to the museum, and add a listing of community events to help market Waveland. We want to incorporate feature stories and hope to begin oral histories.
- Partner with The Arts, Hancock County. This historic building is a perfect venue to display the works of our local artists.
- Market the museum. Update pamphlets and increase distribution along the entire Coastal area.
- Discuss with city officials increasing hours of operations to five days per week, hiring a second staff person and recruit more volunteers.

*Thank you for supporting the Ground Zero Museum. We hope you will return to the museum often to see all the new exhibits as we honor the resiliency of our Mississippi Gulf Coast.*

**Ground Zero Museum Board of Directors**



