REBUILDING THE GULF COAST: ENTREPRENEURS

Throughout Louisiana and Mississippi, entrepreneurs are rebuilding their communities. In this volume, you will read research that draws on interviews with over 400 people of all walks of life in Louisiana and Mississippi. This research explains what entrepreneurship is. It discusses how entrepreneurs and their businesses play a critical role in the response to and recovery after disasters. It details where and when they have played key parts.

In this volume, you will also meet six people who are using entrepreneurship to rebuild their communities. These case studies give the entrepreneurs themselves the opportunity to explain who they are and why they do what they do.

These six entrepreneurs could not differ more. Two are in New Orleans; three are in Chalmette; and one is in Mississippi. Four are men; two are women. Two are immigrants to the United States. Five had their businesses before Katrina; one discovered his opportunity after the storm. Some have families; some do not. Some are serial entrepreneurs; others have poured their heart and soul into their current work for years, even decades.

These six entrepreneurs could not be more similar. They share a talent for discovering opportunities, a passion for their work, and a love of their communities. They play critical roles in helping their neighborhoods and cities rebound after the most costly natural disaster in American history.

There is no one-size-fits-all plan for disaster recovery. A successful recovery is as unique as the disaster that precipitated it. All disaster recoveries are different.

But one crucial aspect that all successful disaster recoveries share is entrepreneurship, people acting within their communities and local economies to identify and address the needs of their fellow citizens. The entrepreneurs profiled here embody six examples of what is working in post-Katrina recovery and offer insights for fellow entrepreneurs facing other disasters.

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see page 19

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see page 36

RONDA DEFOREST  
Owner: Flour Power  
Paris Road and East Moreau Street  
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BEN CICEK  
Owner: Da Parish Coffee House  
Judge Perez Drive and Paris Road  
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