

OPENING DOORS

A Louisiana Non-Profit Corporation

03/05/2001 – Present

230 RENEE' DRIVE

BATON ROUGE, LA 70810

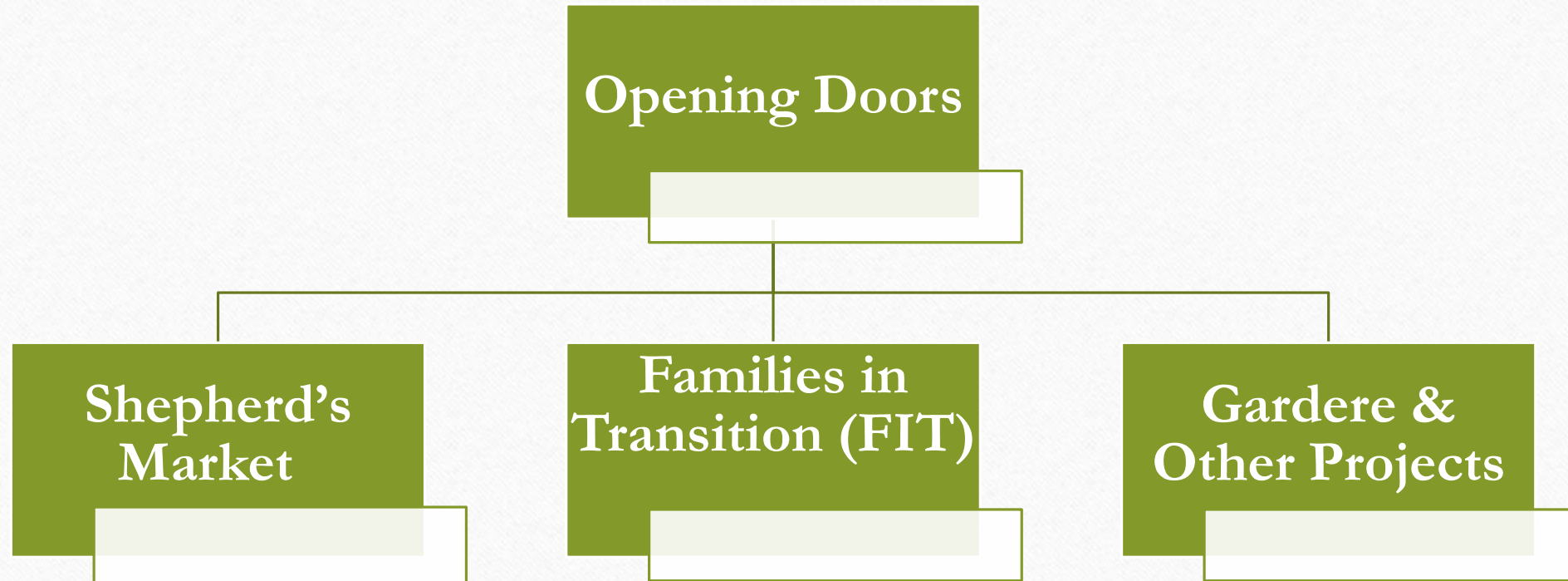
Opening Doors Mission:

To provide a way for individuals and families in the Gardere Community and South Baton Rouge to improve their quality of life through a partnership of Opening Doors and members of the Community to develop educational, vocational, financial, nutritional, and referral services that will meet identified basic needs.

Opening Doors Vision:

To be known as an organization that works with others to provide human service programs needed by individuals and families in Gardere and neighboring South Baton Rouge to meet identified basic needs and improve lives.

Opening Doors...



SHEPHERD'S MARKET

ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2023-2024

<https://www.shepherdsmarket.org>

FOOD PANTRY

- Client-Choice Food Pantry founded July 2012
- Serves over 550 families/month
- Open Mon 3:30-5:30 pm and Tues/Thurs 8:00-10:00 am
- Operations are 100% volunteer-run by 300 volunteers averaging 1,000 hours each month
- Hot meals provided each pantry shift for anyone in need of a meal
- Pantry Director is Theresa Sandifer
Contact is 225-337-1306 (cell)
or shepherdsmarket@gmail.com

EMERGENCY FUNDS

- Assisted 263 households representing 1,018 individuals
- Available to pantry clients who have been receiving food assistance for 3 months or more
- Limited to \$500 per household
- Limited to 1 time per household
- Funds distributed at the discretion of intake volunteer case managers and pantry director
- If more assistance and mentoring is required, the head of household is referred to Families in Transition program

GREAT TURKEY GIVEAWAY

- Distributed 30,000 pounds of holiday food one week before Christmas
- Fed 530 households representing 4,057 individuals
- Annual event that involves new volunteers and partnering with schools and businesses for food

Food Pantry

- We distribute over 28,000 pounds of food each month, with half of the poundage coming from The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank and the other half from food drives/donations and food purchases with grant funds and monetary donations
- Each week we serve 150+ households, representing 225 individuals. Our intake volunteers gather data on each household, counting each child, adult, and elderly person receiving food
- Households may receive food twice per month, averaging 55-75 pounds each visit depending upon the size of household
- Each head of household provides a photo ID and proof of residence, which is updated annually in our electronic data base
- Anyone requesting food assistance is served, even if it is an emergency bag of food and a hot meal

Emergency Funds

- Must be existing pantry clients for a minimum of 3 months
- Client must provide a current bill or lease as proof of need, most often for rent assistance (to avoid eviction), utility assistance (to avoid shut off), medical bills, transportation or vehicle repair costs, school and work clothes, and emergency shelter for homeless individuals
- Volunteer intake case managers enter details of emergency assistance into the pantry's electronic database, tracking amounts and types of assistance given
- In 2023, we distributed \$59,687 to assist 263 households, representing 1,018 individuals, at an average of \$226 per household on a one-time emergency basis
- We routinely refer individuals with more needs to other community resources, including Opening Doors' program called Families in Transition

Great Turkey Giveaway

- This is an annual event every December, where we provide 550 households with a 12–14-pound turkey, produce, homemade bread, and other holiday meal items so those families can enjoy a wonderful holiday meal
- In 2023, we provided food for 4,057 individuals at this one-day event with 76 volunteers
- The food for the Great Turkey Giveaway comes from school food drives, donations from businesses, and food purchased with donated funds
- Pantry clients receive priority at this event, but we generally have plenty of food to give to others who show up seeking assistance

FAMILIES IN TRANSITION (FIT)

Mentor/Support Families for 6 Months

- Individuals or families who are going through a transition such as a job loss or illness
- Clients who live in South Baton Rouge or are members of our congregation
- Clients who can be helped within 6 months
- Clients who have a need beyond financial assistance
- Clients who can be matched up with mentors
- In 2023 we worked with 2 individuals/families

GARDERE & OTHER PROJECTS...

Back to School
Supplies

Project SOAR

VITA

Gardere
Initiative

Christmas for
Neighborhood
Friends

Charlie
Thomas
HeadStart

Back to School Supplies

- Wildwood Elementary
- Gardere Christian School
- Charlie Thomas Head Start

Tablets, paper, pencils, crayons, glue, paper towels, construction paper, etc. are collected prior to the start of school and distributed to the neighborhood schools in early August

Project SOAR

- Building a Solid Foundation for Personal & Financial Success
- ALICE PARTICIPANTS (Asset Limited Income-Constrained, Employed)
- GOAL-To assist families in reducing their expenses during the first year and increase incomes during the second year of the program

VITA

- A program that offers free income tax preparation.
- Free income tax preparation for members of the Gardere area. Interested participants sign up for appointments to meet with these tax preparers through fliers offered at The Shepherd's Market.
- Participation in the VITA program continues to be robust.

Gardere Initiative

- Founded 2006
- Mission: Provide children and families throughout the Gardere Community fundamental services and resources that are ultimately unavailable to them.
- Programs and Initiatives: Youth Development, Afterschool Program, Project Soar, Holiday Programs, Community Garden, 8-Week Summer Program

Christmas for Neighborhood Friends

- Christmas Gifts for Schools
 - Wildwood/Gardere Christian Academy
 - Around 30 gifts were delivered to students at each school
 - Methodist Children's Home
 - Monetary donation made each year

Charlie Thomas Head Start

- **Holiday Superstore**-Parental involvement at school earns points for gifts for their child in December. We bought 83 gifts in 2023 and that included 20 bicycles with helmets. That accounted for 86% of the school population
- **Summer Backpack Program**-Each child is provided age-appropriate books, crafts and toys in a backpack before school ends for the summer. The intent is that the parent(s) will use these books and crafts to help the child continue learning during the summer months. We provided 100 backpacks.
- **Reading and Music Sessions**-Opening Doors members visit the school weekly, during the school year to engage in reading and music activities.
- **Unity in the Community**-The children, staff and families of the Head Start Center join the members and families of St. John's United Methodist Church for a special morning of communal worship and singing and the showcasing of the talents of the children of the center.

Opening Doors...

- In our community
- For our neighbors
- To serve others
- To be blessed

YOU CAN BE INVOLVED...

If you would like to volunteer with Opening Doors, please contact us:
openingdoorsbr@gmail.com or 225-766-4594.

For more information, go to our website: <https://openingdoorsbr.org/>