

Rotary Friendship Exchange Prompts \$3000 Gift to Opelousas Louisiana Food Bank

by Laurie Lewandowski



As a member of the District 5580 Rotary Friendship Exchange (RFE) Committee, I have been working with Joseph Hildego and Darrin Guidry. Joe and Darrin are Rotarians from Rotary

District 6200 in Louisiana, who will be hosting a RFE with District 5580 in spring 2017. At one of our early August 5580 RFE committee meetings during the time of the terrible flooding in southern Louisiana, Tom Riley, suggested the question of “how can we help” be asked of our Louisiana contacts.

Joe promptly responded that the local Opelousas Food Panty had flooded and a majority of their food had perished. Their local Rotary club had just that spring raised enough money to help the food panty purchase enough food to last through the summer into the fall. As so often is the case, those of meager funds were the ones most affected by this flood. Joe stated they would be very grateful for anything we could do to help restock the food pantry shelves.

This information was shared with the Detroit Lakes Breakfast and Detroit Lakes Noon clubs. Following approval from both boards, a fund drive was started through the community Rotary foundation called “Service Above Self”. The Service Above Self foundation kicked off the fund raising with a \$1000 donation. Knowing the funds were going directly to those in need, and not through an established national charity, helped the foundation board decide to contribute. Within a few days, a total of \$3110 had been collected to help fund the need of the Opelousas Food Bank.

The opportunity to directly serve those in need was made possible through the connections established via the Rotary Friendship Exchange. Anyone interested in traveling on the upcoming **Rotary Friendship Exchange to Southern Louisiana**, please review the information on the District 5580 website and select Friendship Exchange on the lower part of the right column, or click this connection <http://portal.clubrunner.ca/50019/SitePage/friendship-exchange>. Info on this exchange was included in several articles in Cross Currents in July and August. **Applications must be received by October 15.**

