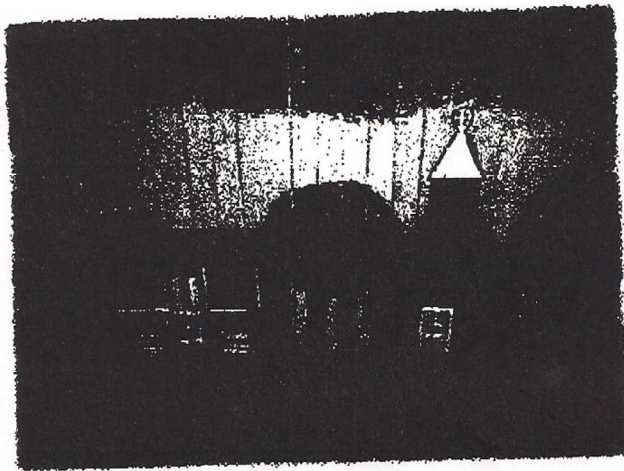


"The Little Center That Could"

Our History & Mission

Thensted Center was established in 1982 to respond to the needs of the rural poor in St. Landry Parish, Louisiana. Founded in the tiny town of Grand Coteau under the guidance of Sr. Margaret Hoffman, RSCJ, and named in memory of Fr. Cornelius Thensted, SJ, for his outreach to the region's poor that began in 1947, the Thensted Center aims to build up people of all ages and social backgrounds, without regard to race or religion, as they strive for healthier, more fulfilling and self-sufficient lives.



Unconditional Welcome and Life-Giving Support

Housed in what was once a small high school, Thensted Center administers seven different programs to serve more than 250 families-in-need annually, including children, seniors, single parents, veterans, and the homebound, with a commitment to aid any person who seeks help.

With its large, welcoming rooms Thensted Center extends its hospitality to community groups who utilize its meeting space, including the local Al-Anon support program, a local Boys Scouts chapter, the Knights of Peter Claver, the Ladies of Auxiliary, and three local schools. As a special community service to families grieving the loss of loved ones, Thensted Center offers welcome and consolation by serving as a post-funeral gathering place.

Recognized as a place for unconditional welcome and life-giving support, Thensted Center was selected as "2012 Agency of the Year" by United Way of St. Landry-Evangeline. With a full-time staff of only two people, Thensted Center programming is largely supported by the generosity of volunteers.

WHO We Serve



In the rural town of Grand Coteau, La., 30% of families live in poverty, and more than half of those families living in poverty (52%) include children under 18. One quarter of seniors aged 65+ live the daily struggle of poverty on fixed incomes (U.S. Census Bureau), and nearly half of seniors (45.6%) have the challenges of one or more disabilities.

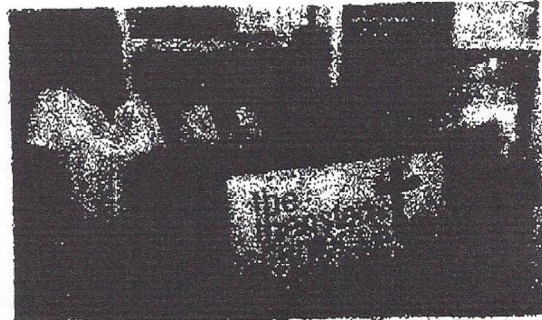
Within broader St. Landry Parish which includes Grand Coteau, 64% of Kindergarteners start school behind their peers, and only 20% of fourth graders read at grade level. Parishwide, 37% of children live in poverty which is linked to lower academic skills. (Kids Count Data Center, 2012)

"The Little Center That Could"

Thensted Center's programming targets the educational, spiritual, material and independence needs of the underserved year-round. Programming is directed by Thensted Center's Director and Assistant Director, with the help of many volunteers.

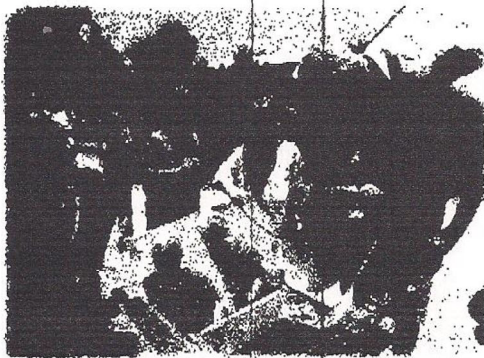
HOW We Serve

In 2014, Thensted Center provided more than 9,900 meals for seniors and children and administered more than 4,000 social services through seven programs:



Volunteers with Julia Richard, Director (3rd from left) and Sr. Betty Renard, RSCJ (far right)

After School Tutoring aids an average of 25 students in grades K-4, Monday - Thursday, who require academic assistance. Teachers in local schools identify students who would benefit from additional help and refer their parents or caregivers to Thensted Center. Parents have the option to enroll children in tutoring sessions with two teacher volunteers. A snack is provided.



Summer Renaissance engages as many as 160 vulnerable youth, ages 6-17, in six weeks of academic, cultural, social, and recreational activities spanning June and July. Children participate in a rotating curriculum of 45 minute classes, Monday - Friday, led by six core teachers, several aides and volunteers who guide children through art, science, drama, writing, math, languages, and swimming instruction. The program is able to offer wholesome breakfast and lunch with funding from the Louisiana State Department of Education because the vast majority of the

Sr. Bonnie Kearney teaches students about solar energy by baking cookies in the "Sun Oven" (Photo: Leslie Westbrook, The Advertiser)

children are from homes of low income.

Empowering Seniors welcomes as many as 65 seniors at bi-monthly gatherings, usually on the mornings of every other Thursday. Staff and volunteers lead seniors through various activities including art, music, and health screenings. Lunch is served. Participant names and activity totals are recorded, and an oral evaluation of each session is solicited. Weekly, volunteers visit the homebound, with medical personnel when warranted, to ensure they are receiving the care they need. A written report of their state and wellbeing is provided to Thensted staff. The program also offers an annual three-day retreat for senior citizens at the neighboring Jesuit retreat house.



volunteers, shops, and household necessities year round to people in need, providing a small annual revenue of \$5,000 for Thensted Center.

"The Little Center That Could"

Food Pantry, supported purely through donations, feeds 200+ families annually who are unable to make ends meet. Staff completes intake forms for all families seeking Food Pantry aid in order to assess appropriate levels of support and to connect them with additional services. A log of aid provided is maintained.

The **Budgeting and Representative Payee Program** guides approximately 28 participants through individualized budgeting plans to help them become and remain financially stable and independent.



Individual participant files are maintained to help staff monitor fiscal stability and needs. Limited funds are available for emergency assistance to those who qualify, and emergency financial assistance is logged. Staff complete intake forms for all families who seek emergency assistance in order to assess appropriate levels of support and to connect them with additional services.

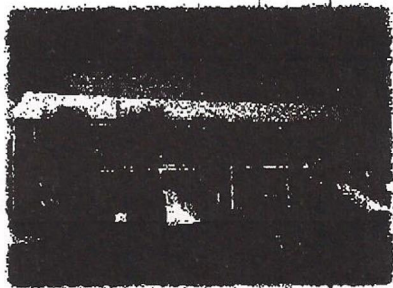
Additionally, staff give on-going assistance to 8 persons with mental or physical disabilities to coordinate their finances and benefits with the Department of Social Security to ensure their housing, health, and personal needs are met so that they can live as independently as possible. Individual participant records are maintained.

Thensted Center houses a **Children's Library** - a novelty within the community, as many local public schools no longer maintain and staff libraries. Staff and volunteers supervise children who visit the Center's library and maintain a book check-out and return log.

Our Community Investment

Thensted Center programming keeps the Center buzzing year-round. Operations and programming are funded through the charity of individual contributions, the generosity of local businesses and organizations, and grant funding. We anticipate our 2015 community investment to match that of last year - \$181,127.

Formerly a ministry of neighboring St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Thensted Center is now an autonomous tax-exempt organization.



We welcome your support of our programming for more than 250 vulnerable families. Please consider a donation to Thensted Center, spending time with us as a volunteer, or contact us to learn more about the people we serve and how you can help.

Thank you for this opportunity to introduce Thensted Center, and for your consideration of support for Thensted Center!