



**United Way of
Northeast Louisiana**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, January 14, 2025

Media Contact:

Meghan H. Jones
Director of Marketing & Communications
United Way of Northeast Louisiana
Cell: 318.334.4841
Email: mjones@unitedwaynela.org
Website: unitedwaynela.org

Janet S. Durden Announces Retirement as President of United Way of Northeast Louisiana

MONROE, LA (January 14, 2025) – Today, Janet S. Durden announced her retirement as the President of United Way of Northeast Louisiana (UWNELA), effective March 31, 2025. UWNELA's Board of Directors is immediately launching a national CEO search.

A native of Mississippi, Durden began her remarkable career with United Way in Vicksburg, MS, where she served as the Executive Director of the United Way of Warren County for three years. Her dedication to improving lives and strengthening communities in her home state laid the foundation for her 40-year tenure as President of UWNELA. Durden's lifelong commitment to service has inspired countless others and created a lasting impact across the region. During her tenure, she has guided UWNELA through 40 of its 68 years, leaving a lasting mark on the organization and the region it serves.

Since becoming President in 1985, Durden has championed initiatives that address Northeast Louisiana's most pressing challenges. Under her guidance, UWNELA adopted a Strategic Community Impact Plan that has transformed the way the organization tackles issues such as education, financial stability, and health.

Durden has long been committed to the outstanding day-to-day services provided through UWNELA's support. In addition to these critical ongoing services, her career is marked by several hallmarks, including:

- The 1987 launch of First Call for Help, which later (2002) became United Way NELA 211, an information and referral service providing callers access to local resource providers.
- UWNELA's establishment in Lincoln, Union, and Jackson Parishes, beginning in 1999.
- United Way's role in facilitating and providing 211 services across the state of Louisiana in response to Hurricane Katrina's devastation in 2005.
- The 2022 unveiling of UWNELA's Financial Health Center, located in the historic Miller-Roy Building in Monroe. This center serves as a regional hub for economic resources, providing critical financial services to communities across the 12 parishes of Northeast Louisiana.

Durden's contributions extend beyond UWNELA. She has been widely recognized for her leadership and service, receiving numerous awards, including:

- The **Bert Hatten Community Impact Award** from the West Monroe-West Ouachita Chamber of Commerce (2023)
- The **Legacy Award** from the ULM Women's Symposium (2020)



- The **Rambin Silverstein Award** from the Monroe Chamber of Commerce (2017)
- The **Kitty Degree Humanitarian Award** (2016)
- Grambling State University's **Martin Luther King Jr. Distinguished Leadership Award** (2015)

Durden's influence also reaches into the broader community, as well as statewide and national United Way roles. Currently, she serves on the boards for St. Francis Medical Center and Louisiana Association of United Ways.

Beyond her professional achievements, Durden is a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother. She and her husband of 29 years, Bob Durden, enjoy time with their blended family of four children and six grandchildren. They are active members of First Baptist Church in West Monroe, where they continue to live out their commitment to faith and community.

"Leading United Way of Northeast Louisiana has been the honor and joy of a lifetime and my life's calling. I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such dedicated colleagues, volunteers, donors, and community partners. For 43 years, it has been a gift that I have been able to do what matters most to me – helping people and improving community. As I enter retirement this Spring, I'm also very encouraged and excited about the future of our United Way," said Durden.

Community Leaders Celebrate Durden's Remarkable Career

As Durden prepares to retire after 40 years of leadership at UWNELA, the organization's executive committee reflects on her extraordinary contributions:

"Janet Durden has been the heartbeat of United Way of NELA for the last forty years. Her passion for our community, heart for service, and unwavering integrity have shaped our organization through countless collaborations and remarkable leadership. Her tenacity and dedication have left an unforgettable mark, positioning us for continued growth and success," said Ashley West (Progressive Bank), UWNELA Board Chair.

Daniel Taylor (Argent Financial Group), UWNELA Immediate Past Board Chair, added, "Janet is a pillar of our community and has impacted countless lives. She has done a remarkable job leading an incredible organization and has left an indelible mark on our area. She is a friend to many, is a friend to me, and I look forward to seeing what her future holds as she enjoys her well-earned retirement and continues to serve her community in a new way."

Dr. Alberta Green (ABG Professional Development Solutions), UWNELA 2026 Incoming Board Chair, shared, "Janet is a person with excellent moral character, a mentor to all, and a trailblazer of her time. Over the span of 40-plus years, her impact on children, families, and the community have changed the trajectory of Northeast Louisiana. For that, she will never be forgotten."

Sheila Snow (Discover Monroe-West Monroe), UWNELA's Marketing and Communications Chair, highlighted Janet's legacy of service: "Janet's 40 years of dedicated service to our community is nothing short of extraordinary. As a servant leader, she has exemplified what it means to work tirelessly for the betterment of others, inspiring all of us who have had the privilege of serving alongside her. Her unwavering commitment to Northeast Louisiana has transformed countless lives, leaving a legacy of compassion, resilience, and progress. She has been more than a leader; she's been a role model and a cornerstone of our community. Her impact will be felt for generations to come."



**United Way of
Northeast Louisiana**

“Janet’s leadership at United Way of Northeast Louisiana has been truly transformative,” said Amy Stegall (City of Ruston), UWNELA’s 2024 Campaign Chair for Lincoln, Union, and Jackson Parishes. “Her vision, dedication, and unwavering commitment have impacted countless lives, brought our community together, and established a legacy of compassion and progress that will endure for generations.”

UWNELA’S CEO Search

The search and selection process for UWNELA’s President & CEO will be a national search, led by a volunteer selection committee and UWNELA’s Board Chair, Ashley West. **Resumes may be submitted to United Way of Northeast Louisiana’s CEO Search at**

- **P.O. Box 2532, Monroe, LA 71207** or
- uwnelasearch@yahoo.com

For the full position description, please visit unitedwaynela.org/president

In addition to UWNELA’s website, this job posting has been shared with the following: all news media covering the Northeast Louisiana region, all Chambers of Commerce serving the Northeast Louisiana region, United Way Worldwide, and all UWNELA social media platforms.

###

About United Way of Northeast Louisiana

United Way of Northeast Louisiana works with volunteers, donors, and other organizations locally to create lasting community change in the areas of Education, Income, and Health – the building blocks for a good quality of life. For more information about United Way of Northeast Louisiana, visit unitedwaynela.org, dial 211 on any landline or mobile phone (a free call 24/7), or text your zip code to 898-211 (M-F, 8-5).