

City Journal

Edited by
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Katrina, a fundraiser and bad timing

Plans for the Alzheimer's Association of Central Ohio's annual fundraiser this fall were proceeding nicely. The purple invitations, highlighted by musical notes, Mardi Gras masks and other festive French Quarter references, were printed and ready to be mailed. However, that same day, Aug. 29, Hurricane Katrina began to devastate coastal Mississippi and Louisiana, including New Orleans. Talk about a potential public relations nightmare.

But the organization reacted with quick thinking and a few last-second changes. "There was a short thought of perhaps totally changing the theme—which we just couldn't do at that point," says communications director Lynn Smith. The Alzheimer's Association already had invested \$7,000—including \$1,600 for the invitations—in the \$32,000 gala. Canceling the event was out of the question. The annual fundraiser typically nets nearly 10 percent of the organization's \$1.4 million budget.

After much discussion, organizers decided to print a white card explaining that the 2005 theme had been chosen long before tragedy struck New Orleans. Before mailing the notice, an additional \$980 was spent to unseal the invitations, insert the printed card and reseal them with a white sticker that indicated a portion of the proceeds would be donated to the Red Cross.

"Because it's such a festive invitation and fun and frivolous, the only thing we could think of to do was [affix the sticker]," Smith says. "Most people understand this was done well in advance of this catastrophe. Hopefully that sticker would make people feel that we had not made a huge mistake."

The decorations were



Invitations to the Alzheimer's Association of Central Ohio's annual fundraiser—built around a New Orleans-style theme—were printed and ready to be mailed when Hurricane Katrina made landfall.

reworked, too, Smith says. "We had a much more flamboyant Mardi Gras [décor], purples and golds, and we decided to turn it into a more Southern garden type of theme. It's much more reflective of the history and legacy of New Orleans."

As of early October,

organizers were optimistic. They said that in the weeks leading up to the Oct. 28 event, phone calls and comments were positive, corporate sponsorships had increased and attendance was on track to exceed last year's mark.

▼ Alice Hohl

25 YEARS AGO

In November 1980:

- Huntington National Bank announced it would build a 40-story office tower on the site of the Neil House, a Columbus landmark hotel for more than a century.

- A single page was ripped from 17,000 OSU football programs when the Ohio State athletic department deemed it—part of a national supplement previewing the upcoming college basketball season—critical of the Buckeyes. The piece questioned, among other

things, coach "Eldon Miller's peculiar use of substitutions and the reins he tightly pulled whenever his run-loving athletes got a whiff of the fast break lanes."

- Presidential candidate Ronald Reagan, speaking to 5,000

people at the Ohio State Fairgrounds, said, "Recession is when your neighbor loses his job. Depression is when you lose your job. And recovery is when Jimmy Carter loses his job." Four days later, Reagan was elected in a landslide.