



YEAR OF THE VOLUNTEER

2023

STATE OF THE SKIES REPORT

Let's take a look at what
impact we made in 2023!



WE ARE

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS



Blue Skies Mutual Aid, Inc is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Seminole, Texas and serving all of Gaines County, Texas. It is the mission of Blue Skies Mutual Aid to promote harm reduction and alleviate poverty, suffering, and inequity in all forms through local mutual aid efforts.

In the long term, the goals of Blue Skies are to make poverty as short-lived as possible for everyone that finds themselves in a harmful situation and to change the culture of Gaines County, Texas to one that encourages empathy, second chances, and equitable treatment and opportunities for all.

We began our journey in April of 2022, but in 2023 we focused on refining our internal processes and training our team.

OUR CLIENTS

DIRECT ACTION FOR THOSE IN NEED

37

total unique clients assisted with food deliveries, free groceries, hygiene kits, referrals, employment assistance, transportation, clothing, home goods, housing searches, and more!

(a 429% increase from 2022)

OF THOSE 37:

12

times we paid for a client's **groceries** or delivered groceries to a client

3

times we disbursed free **hygiene kits**

5

instances we assisted with a **job search**

4

instances when we helped with a clients **housing search**

13

referrals to other organizations that could help them

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENTS

The year of 2023 was filled with numerous instances that really showcased how we were creating positive change for our neighbors. Moments such as:

Helping a client load his broken down vehicle on a borrowed trailer by hand and delivering it to a mechanic shop in Seagraves.

Partnering with Seminole Siding to have an older widow's leaky shingle roof demolished and replaced completely free of charge to her.

Partnering with Hope and Healing Center to research and purchase a new hot water heater for a client, as well as have his home's gas filled up again so he could heat and have hot water in the middle of winter.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

WORKING TO IMPROVE OUR SOCIETY



CROCHET FOR KIDS

2023 was the second year for the Crochet for Kids Project. The project worked by coordinating local volunteer crocheters to create hand-made crochet creations. Blue Skies then donated them all to the pediatric patients at Seminole Memorial Hospital.

Spearheaded by our volunteer Lisa, the project saw twice as many volunteer crocheters and twice as many donated creations as the year before. Six volunteers created 41 animals, characters, and other crochet pieces. We look forward to this project in 2024!



FREE LITTLE LIBRARY

Work began on a free little library unit by Blue Skies volunteers Waldo, Jake, and Lisa in 2023. Made from scratch, the little library will be a place for children to drop off and take home free books 24 hours a day. Literacy is extremely important for developing minds and so Blue Skies wanted to contribute to a culture of learning in our community.

Once completed, a location will be found to mount the unit on a post within walking distance of a Seminole neighborhood.

OUR TEAM

THE HEART OF THE ORGANIZATION

10

volunteers across 5 departments.

424

hours of work by our dedicated
volunteers in 2023.

(a 410% increase from 2022)

\$1,217

of personal funds spent by our
volunteers out-of-pocket in support of
the mission of Blue Skies Mutual Aid.

(a 77% increase from 2022)

OUR LEADERSHIP

Jake Froese

- Administration Director
- Chair of the Board of Directors

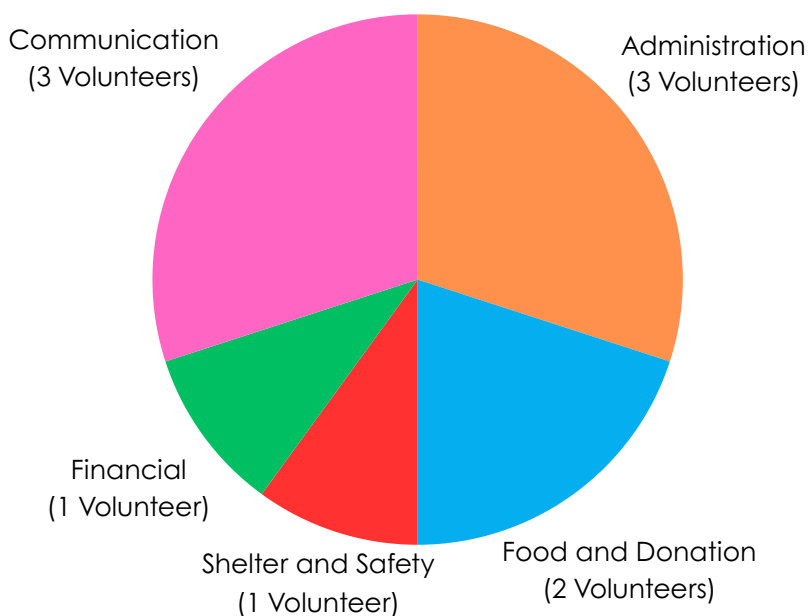
Waldo Klassen

- Food and Donation Director
- On the Board of Directors

Lisa Anderson

- Shelter and Safety Director
- On the Board of Directors

OUR 5 DEPARTMENTS



Team Fact: Of our current 10 volunteers, half of them have been with us since the very first day we officially began on April 19th, 2022!

Team Fact: All of our volunteers work with Blue Skies on their own time even though all of them have full time careers or responsibilities. The passion of our team is second to none when it comes to helping others.

FOOD AND DONATION

T H E R E I N T I M E S O F N E E D

IN 2023, THIS DEPARTMENT'S MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE:

- Building custom storage shelves into the Blue Skies storage unit where we store our clothing and home good donations.
- Arranging a storage building location to store our bulky non-perishable food donations.
- Building a relationship with Porters in Seminole and accepting our first donations from a business donor.
- Holding a Community Giveaway and Storage Unit Sale event at our storage unit to give away items and sell some items to raise funds for Blue Skies. The event was a huge success with nearly sixty patrons and \$300 raised from selling items ranging in price from \$0.50 to \$1.00 a piece. The event also helped to rotate our stock of donations and spread the word of the organization itself.
- Creating an internal system where we could use official Blue Skies debit cards to meet and pay for groceries for our clients at a local supermarket.

SHELTER AND SAFETY

PROTECTING WHAT'S MOST PRECIOUS

IN 2023, THIS DEPARTMENT'S MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE:

- Getting some of our team trained in adult and child CPR and AED in partnership with Seminole EMS.
- Creating and maintaining a "Housing Options" spreadsheet with information about housing options in Gaines County, Texas. This information proved very useful for our clients when they were looking for a place to stay.
- Investigating 13 possible locations for Blue Skies to set up a base of operations, as well as a shelter and food pantry operation. Also contacted were 5 possible building companies and countless individuals.

ADMINISTRATION

EFFICIENCY AND LEADERSHIP FOR ALL

IN 2023, THIS DEPARTMENT'S MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE:

- Creating a collection of online training courses for volunteers that are self-paced and come from a variety of sources for professional development.
- Creating a "Family Services" team to provide services and support to infants, children, youth, parents, and families.
- Creating and maintaining a "Childcare Options" spreadsheet to keep track of options in Gaines County when it comes to childcare facilities, caregivers, and all of the relevant details.
- Creating our end-of-year report titled "The 2023 State of the Skies Report" with all of the relevant statistics and information of the past year.
- Surveying all Blue Skies volunteers about their experiences volunteering with the organization and any improvements that could be made.
- Creating profiles on sites like Glassdoor, Trustpilot, Candid, Guidestar, and Great Nonprofits to encourage feedback and transparency.
- Producing a document titled "Resources in Gaines County, Texas" that lists all of the resources we know of that might be useful to our clients.
- Partnering with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas to become a member of their "Blue Corps" program. This program allows employees of the insurance giant to volunteer with Blue Skies. We also gained access to a grant from them that's available each year.
- Organizing a guest speaker from Sheri's House of Hope to present to us.
- Recruiting numerous remote volunteers from the website Catchafire.

FINANCIAL

FUELING THE GOOD FIGHT

IN 2023, THIS DEPARTMENT'S MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE:

- Filing all necessary paperwork each quarter and at the end of the year.
- Distributing "Thank You" baskets with goodies to various businesses around Gaines County and forming relationships with business donors.
- Creating a donation-processing system with a phone app that will be used for in-person fundraising.
- Creating a reimbursement policy and forms for volunteers.
- Applying for various grants in the South Plains and Permian Basin region.
- Creating a new WTNB bank account with debit cards.
- Implementing a new donor management and record keeping system.
- Creating a business donor tiers system and spreading the word of it.
- Maintaining our great relationship with 12th Street Bookkeeping and making sure the invoices for their services are paid promptly.
- Filing out Form 990-EZ with the IRS at the end of 2023.

COMMUNICATION

THE VOICE OF CHANGE

IN 2023, THIS DEPARTMENT'S MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE:

- Communicating our monthly meeting recaps to the Seminole Sentinel.
- Beginning work on a new and revamped website for Blue Skies.
- Implementing a new phone number and system for the organization.
- Producing a document titled "Gaines County Poverty Report" that has statistics about poverty and needs in our community.
- Creating identification badges for Blue Skies volunteers.
- Producing and distributing "Thank You" cards and goodie bags for all of our volunteers.
- Forming a relationship with the photographer from Armendariz Photography.
- Distributing new branded T-shirts to volunteers in partnership with InStitches in Seminole.
- Creating a LinkedIn profile and YouTube channel for Blue Skies.
- Creating a branding guide for the organization.

VOLUNTEERING EVENTS

PARTNERING FOR POSITIVE IMPACT

The year of 2023 was truly the year of the volunteer. The Blue Crew participated in 7 different local events in Gaines County. We worked with some amazing organizations, including Feed My Starving Children, the Seminole Ministerial Alliance, Gaines County Library System, the Seminole Chamber of Commerce, and Seminole Rotary.



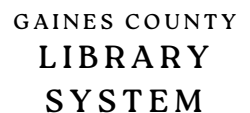
FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN



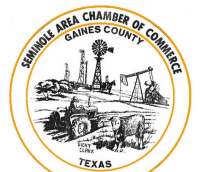
SEMINOLE STRONG



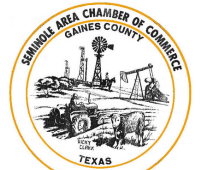
SUMMER READING PROGRAM KICKOFF PARTY



FREEDOM FEST



CITY-WIDE CLEANUP



SNOW PLACE LIKE HOME



MEMORIAL DAY FLAG DASH



CONNECT

WITH US



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BLUESKIESMA.COM



THANK YOU

TO OUR COMMUNITY ALLIES OF 2023

**THE
BLESSING
BOXES**



Rotary
Seminole, TX



**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**



**GAINES
COUNTY
LIBRARY
SYSTEM**



**SEMINOLE
MINISTERIAL
ALLIANCE**



SEMINOLE HOSPITAL DISTRICT



**TEEP
RV &
STORAGE**



**BOB LEWIS
MISSION**

**FIRST
BAPTIST
CHURCH**



**Seminole
Sentinel**
Serving Gaines County Since 1907



HOPE & HEALING CENTER



12th Street Bookkeeping
BOOKKEEPING | ACCOUNTING | CASH FLOW SPECIALISTS
BY NANCY FRIESEN

The background features several thick, diagonal brush strokes in blue and grey. A large blue stroke runs from the top right towards the center. A grey stroke runs from the top left towards the center. Another blue stroke runs from the bottom left towards the center. A grey stroke runs from the middle right towards the bottom right. The text is centered in the white space between these strokes.

We are proud to announce that in

2023

THE

STATE

OF THE

SKIES

IS

BLUE
