

12-2024

Creative Reading: Using Poetic Inquiry in Research and Teaching

Clancy Ratliff

University of Louisiana at Lafayette, clancy.ratliff@louisiana.edu

Abdullah Al Musayeb

University of Louisiana at Lafayette, abdullah-al-musayeb1@louisiana.edu

Barja Islam

University of Louisiana at Lafayette, barja.islam1@louisiana.edu

Mithila Mumtaz

University of Louisiana at Lafayette, mithila.mumtaz1@louisiana.edu

Rosol Otear

University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Rosol.otear1@louisiana.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), [Disability and Equity in Education Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Educational Psychology Commons](#), [English Language and Literature Commons](#), [Instructional Media Design Commons](#), [Liberal Studies Commons](#), [Other Education Commons](#), [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ratliff, Clancy; Musayeb, Abdullah Al; Islam, Barja; Mumtaz, Mithila; Otear, Rosol; Richard, Simon; Smith, Noah; Tarannum, Nuzhat; and Veney, Allyssa (2024) "Creative Reading: Using Poetic Inquiry in Research and Teaching," *The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning*: Vol. 29 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl/vol29/iss1/10>

This article is brought to you freely and openly by Volunteer, Open-access, Library-hosted Journals (VOL Journals), published in partnership with The University of Tennessee (UT) University Libraries. This article has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning by an authorized editor. For more information, please visit <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl>.

Creative Reading: Using Poetic Inquiry in Research and Teaching

Authors

Clancy Ratliff, Abdullah Al Musayeb, Barja Islam, Mithila Mumtaz, Rosol Otear, Simon Richard, Noah Smith, Nuzhat Tarannum, and Allyssa Veney

CONNECTING

Creative Reading: Using Poetic Inquiry in Research and Teaching

Clancy Ratliff, with Abdullah-Al-Musayeb, Barja Islam,
Mithila Mumtaz, Rosol Otear, Simon Richard,
Noah Smith, Nuzhat Tarannum, and Allyssa Veney

All writing is autobiography.

—Donald Murray

I likely would not have experimented with poetic inquiry if I hadn't had two specific career experiences. The first was working with a graduate student whose thesis I was directing. His project argued for a genre-based approach to writing center tutoring. He proposed that writing centers keep repositories on-site of samples of many genres: grant proposals, cover letters, and more (still a good idea, I say). As I gave him feedback on chapter drafts, I reflected on the circulation of different genres of writing around me, and I realized that my mailbox is a genre box. Inspired by his genre repository idea, I decided to build my own genre repository. Close to a decade ago, I started saving what a lot of us call *junk mail*: mainly fundraising letters from nonprofit organizations, but also annual reports, push cards from electoral campaigns, legislative updates from congressional representatives, and legal dockets from advocacy groups with court cases pending. I receive at least a dozen pieces of mail a month from a variety of nonprofits on issues I care about: on feminism, civil liberties, fighting gun violence, addressing food insecurity, protecting animals, and climate action. I started collecting these genres, and I now have boxes of them. For years, I didn't know *what* I would do with them, but I was certain I would find a way to use them for my research.

The second of these career experiences was serving as co-editor of *Peitho*, the journal of the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition. As I began the editing work, I read all the back issues of the journal, including many articles I hadn't read when those issues were first published. One of them was "From Resilience to Resistance: Repurposing Faculty Writers' Survival Strategies" by Sandra Tarabochia, which introduced me to poetic inquiry. Tarabochia interviewed faculty members about their writing practices and created data poems from the transcripts. A few months later, I realized: that's what I could do with the letters from nonprofits. I did more reading about poetic inquiry as a method, particularly work by Sandra Faulkner, including her book *Poetic Inquiry: Craft, Method and Practice*. My process of creating data poems from nonprofits' donor letters is similar to how Tarabochia describes composing her data poems:

Because I was interested in exploring resilience, I paid particular attention to lines that captured adversity or faculty responses to adversity. I whittled down the file to the most poignant or impactful lines, the ones that provoked a bodily

reaction in me, and those that chillingly captured the essence of what I'd heard from other participants. Next, I grouped the lines that spoke to each other and chose lines to title those groups. Finally, I arranged the lines within each group into stanzas that addressed different aspects of the topic or communicated a feeling.

Through the process of poetic inquiry, Tarabochia arrives at a clearer understanding of what resilience means for faculty writers. She finds that resilience is constructed (based on narratives about adversity and resilience), nonlinear (not a clean progression from non-resilience to strong resilience), and discursive (situated in neoliberal discourses about academia).

Researching with Poetic Inquiry

This essay is a reflection on my ongoing foray into poetic inquiry, a relatively new method situated in arts-based research (ABR), and how we might use such methodology in the classroom with students to promote their creative relationship to language and help them learn about the everyday discourses they encounter. Poetic inquiry has been practiced for about twenty years, but it still isn't a widely recognized method that would, for example, be included in a seminar about research methods. Poetic inquiry is a process of creating data poems from a corpus of text, often from transcripts of interviews with research participants. There is poetic transcription, which hews closer to the original text in the corpus and retains its syntax, but poetic inquiry can also encompass taking more creative liberties with the text. Regardless of the approach, poetic inquiry should be both good research and good poetry. I think poetic inquiry can be used pedagogically as well. In a previous issue of *JAEPL*, Mariya Deykute argues for poetic inquiry's value for students who are studying sciences; she makes a persuasive case for teaching creative writing alongside and integrated with degree programs in the sciences. Deykute observes that "The pathetic appeal of poetry is not, contrary to how it may be perceived, a weakness and should not be excluded from our understanding of science and its communication...learning is enhanced when the content is connected to the emotional human core of the learner and that the objectivity of scientific communication or thought can benefit from consideration of the emotional core forming human associations with facts and discoveries" (35). Poetry connects. The focus of my essay is sharing my own journey with poetic inquiry, the data poems that my students and I have composed, and why I think poetic inquiry can be a powerful tool for engaging with texts.

I have written about using poetic inquiry to study abortion rights rhetoric, including data poems from letters by feminist nonprofits (Ratliff, "We Won't Back Down"), and I'm working on a larger project using poetic inquiry to analyze the environmental rhetoric in letters from environmentalist advocacy organizations. The data poems I'm sharing here are my first efforts, when I was practicing the method. What follows are two of my data poems: one on hunger and food insecurity using letters from food aid nonprofits, and one on veterans and the issues they face using letters from veterans' advocacy organizations. The original letters that serve as the source text for these data poems are included as an appendix.

*The Hunger Poem (letters from Second Harvest South Louisiana,
Christian Appalachian Project, and Catholic Charities of Acadiana)*

Holidays should be a time of joy and plenty
no one in our community should go hungry
Unimaginable hardship and hopelessness
the need for food has skyrocketed
far too much for them to bear

This extremely difficult holiday season
feed children in South Louisiana.
Hurricanes Laura and Delta
Those who cannot rebound on their own
Those who suffer under the burden of multiple disasters

A can of beans, a loaf of bread, a bag of rice
pleading eyes of worried parents and their children
Anything to feed their little ones
Fill empty plates with nutritious food

Another holiday of historic hunger

*The Veterans Poem (letters from the Wounded Warrior Project,
Operation VetCare, and Veterans of Foreign Wars)*

Wounded veterans who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan can't wait
More than 413,800 military veterans have experienced a traumatic brain injury
Veterans who suffer in silence
A military family that's facing a crisis
The invisible wounds of war
Terrorized night and day by the horror of post-traumatic stress
You can't "see" the nightmares or sleeplessness

An improvised explosive device detonated
Third-degree burns
More than 70 painful surgeries
Months in a coma
Nerve damage

\$11 million in emergency assistance
Make sure spouses and children receive the survivor benefits they need and deserve
Services in mental health, career counseling, and long-term rehabilitative care
change lives

Many patients do not receive visitors
Help from kind friends brings relief and hope
Financial, emotional, and physical challenges
Make a home repair
Mow the grass
Simply stay and chat
We are honored to assist our wounded warriors

What my own experimentation with poetic inquiry has helped me understand is the creative potential in reading. I already understood the conventions of the donor letter genre: the typical formula is that the organization presents the current dire conditions, but they stop short of claiming that the situation is hopeless. They point to gains their organization has made and ways they have intervened: lawsuits, or helping people by providing food or other aid. They tell readers that their financial contributions make this work possible and urge them to donate. However, when I created data poems from the letters, I was able to read letters from multiple organizations focused on one cause (for example, reproductive justice) and think about the common themes. For abortion rights nonprofits, that included conditions at clinics, Supreme Court justices, and the Global Gag Rule, among other themes, and I was able to think creatively and generatively about combining phrases from across the letters into poems. I created a new interlocutor: the speaker of the data poem. The speaker of the poem is not I, Clancy Ratliff, or the writers of the letters, but a new textual persona. I arranged the phrases into lines and stanzas for aesthetic and emotional impact.

Teaching with Poetic Inquiry

Admittedly, I have only used poetic inquiry once so far in my teaching. Still, I think it has great potential to be an engaging activity to facilitate critical reading for students. Reading has regained the attention of rhetoric and composition scholars in recent years, with a 2021 position statement from the Conference on College Composition and Communication on the role of reading in college writing classes, a special issue of *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* on reading in open-access institutions, and a new book about the history of reading in writing studies (Horning). Poetic inquiry reading activities could be integrated into a writing class using an *I do, we do, you do* procedure: the instructor briefly introduces poetic inquiry and demonstrates creating a data poem from a previously assigned reading in the class, then the class reviews an assigned reading and creates a poem together, and finally, individual students do their own data poems from sections of an assigned reading. Howard Tinberg writes about a similar activity he has done in class: bringing one copy of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" to class, putting students in groups of three or four students each, and giving one or two pages of King's letter to each group. He asks students to read the page aloud and then answer the questions: "Which passages draw you 'in'? Which passages push you 'out'?" (229). Students then underline and annotate these passages on their page, discuss reasons they felt drawn in or pushed out, and then Tinberg has them share their find-

ings with the class, from the first page to the last. Poetic inquiry would take this process a step further by assembling the passages into poems.

This semester, I am teaching a cross-listed undergraduate/graduate course in ancient rhetoric. As an in-class activity, I had students compose poems from Isocrates's "Against the Sophists." I first gave them some background about poetic inquiry and showed them some of my data poems, and then I asked them to take fifteen minutes and create a poem with phrases from "Against the Sophists," which was the reading for that day. I did the activity with them, and here is my poem:

They Are Sophists

They say they have no need for money
They pretend to know the future
They have no concern for the truth
They themselves are so senseless
They have a poor understanding
They promise to teach lawcourt skills
They say that the science of speeches is like teaching the alphabet

I explained to students that I noticed the many "they" statements in Isocrates's text and figured I would try assembling them into a poem. I asked students to share their poems, clarifying that it was voluntary and they should only share if they were comfortable doing so. These are their data poems from "Against the Sophists":

If Only

by Mithila Mumtaz

If only they had spoken the truth,
If only they'd avoided ill repute,
If only they would cease pretension—
For no one knows the truth.
Even gods, at times, are left in doubt,
Yet they are bold,
Persuading youth, the so-called 'old.'
They promise them the lie—
Money, the concern for which they cry.

Beneath the Letters

by Rosol Otear

They say they don't care for riches,
but they stretch their hands for gold.
They offer wisdom, claim to know the way,
but they know none
They demand,

but do not practice what they preach
They speak of trust,
but distrust the very ones they mold?
They liken speech to letters learned,
but they know not that the truth lies beneath the letters?

Isocrates and the Sophists

by Noah Smith

Who would not hate and despise...those who spend their time in disputes,
Pretending to seek the truth but from the beginning of their lessons to lie,
They say they have no need for money,
And they deposit the fees from their students with men whom they have never taught,
I am amazed when I see these men claiming students for themselves,
using an ordered art as a model for creative activity -
Propriety and originality none of these requirements extend to letters -
They themselves need such instruction
I think it is reasonable to despise such pursuits, idle and trivial, not a cultivation
of the soul

Unmasking the Sophists

by Barja Islam

Sophists promise wisdom, but are they aware?
They are teaching virtues while greed is showing the flare.
With hollow rhetoric, they lead us astray.
And impart grand knowledge in exchange for pay.
So let us reflect on what is right
And seek pure wisdom in the light,
For those who teach; must first be Just!
In virtue and wisdom, we place our trust.

On Against the Sophists

by Allyssa Veney

Who can fail to abhor their attempts to deceive us?
Not ashamed to hold their hands out to their disciples,
They require the opposite of what they preach.
Is it not absurd that they are blind to inconsistencies?
The teacher must set an example not found in others.

The Masters of False Goods

by Abdullah-Al-Musayeb

Their 'greater promises'
are 'lessons to lie'.
They 'persuade the young'
that 'knowledge' brings happiness
for just 'three or four minas'
And thus become 'masters of great goods'.

Shadows of Sophists

by Nuzhat Tarannum

Pedagogues who express veracity,
Never express a loss of prosperity.
Those who boast without care,
Their wiser thoughts are not near.
Those who deceive with argues and claims,
Pretend the truth but tamper it in a frame.

Stolen Wisdom

by Simon Richard

They say education is the only way,
yet only want their money.
They speak enough truth for us to listen,
then shower us with lies.
"You will be a failure without college."
As if student debt doesn't exist
Reform! Reform! Reform!

After we composed and shared these poems in class, I asked students if they had any impressions or questions about poetic inquiry. Their responses were interesting. One student had a question about how strict the guidelines are for creating data poems: do the

lines in the poems have to be the exact words in the source text, or is there flexibility? I explained that poetic inquiry is as much about good poetry as it is about good research, and scholars who use it often make slight changes to wording, grammar, and syntax to make a data poem better, as long as the meaning is intact, and that lines in a data poem don't have to go in order of appearance in the source text. Another student observed that poetic inquiry is a way to approach the text in a more nonlinear way. He said that it was interesting to take phrases from toward the end of the text and put them at the beginning of a data poem (and phrases from the beginning of the source text at the end of the data poem) to see if the argument is different.

We remember Murray's concisely worded statement "all writing is autobiography," but at the close of that essay, he also says, "That is the terrible, wonderful power of reading: the texts we create in our own minds while we read—or just after we read—become part of the life we believe we lived. Another thesis: *all reading is autobiographical*" (74, my emphasis). The lifting and arrangement of phrases from a text provide a record of what resonates with a reader and how they receive and interpret a text, an accessible entry to the text that lets students set aside worries about misreading and misinterpreting. Students are accustomed to a few ways of demonstrating engagement with reading, or, to put it more bluntly, showing that they did the assigned reading. These include quizzes, short written responses, and speaking in class discussion. In each case, students may perceive a risk of saying the wrong thing about the reading, and understandably so; comprehending complex texts assigned in college courses can require considerable background knowledge about the historical and cultural context of the text and the author's other work. Creating a data poem about an assigned reading removes some of the pressure to interpret a text *correctly*, and it makes the text accessible to students who may not have the extensive knowledge base or life experience to encounter the reading with a command of its context. Poetic inquiry can give students a point of entry that we, as instructors, can build on to give them more confidence as readers, and the exercise of playing with language can enhance students' development as writers.

Works Cited

- Conference on College Composition and Communication. "CCCC Position Statement on the Role of Reading in College Writing Classrooms." March 2021, cccc.ncte.org/cccc/the-role-of-reading. Accessed 14 Sept. 2024.
- Deykute, Mariya. "All Scientists Should Write Poetry: Creative Writing as Essential Academic Practice." *Journal for the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning*, vol. 27, 2021-22, pp. 20-38.
- Faulkner, Sandra. *Poetic Inquiry: Craft, Method, and Practice*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2020.
- Giordano, Joanne Baird, and Cheryl Hogue Smith, eds. *Teaching Reading in Open-Access Contexts*, special issue of *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.58680/tetyc202232295>.
- Horning, Alice S. *The Case for Critical Literacy: The History of Reading in Writing Studies*. Utah State UP, 2024.
- Murray, Donald M. "All Writing Is Autobiography." *College Composition and Communication*, vol 42, no. 1, 1991, pp. 66-74.

- Ratliff, Clancy. "We Won't Back Down: Feeling Abortion Rights Rhetoric through Poetic Inquiry." In *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Feminist Rhetoric*, edited by Jacqueline Rhodes and Suban Nur Cooley. Routledge, 2024, pp. 304-314.
- Tinberg, Howard, and Matthew Davis. "Reading and the Teaching for Transfer (TFT) Curriculum." In *Deep Reading, Deep Learning*, Volume 2, edited by Patrick Sullivan, Sheridan Blau, and Howard Tinberg. Peter Lang, 2023, pp. 221-232.
- Tarabochia, Sandra L. "From Resilience to Resistance: Repurposing Faculty Writers' Survival Strategies." *Peitho* vol. 23, no. 3, 2021, wac.colostate.edu/docs/peitho/article/from-resilience-to-resistance-repurposing-faculty-writers-survival-strategies/. Accessed 14 Sept. 2024.

Appendix

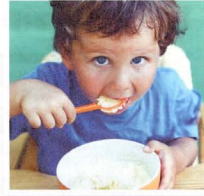


Second Harvest works in partnership with:

Clancy Ratliff

PROJECT TO DO

|||||



**For \$1, you can help
provide 4 meals for a hungry
person in our community
this Thanksgiving!**

Dear Mr. Ratliff,

Thanksgiving will be here before we know it. But extreme challenges this year means more of our neighbors than ever won't be able to afford a meal. Many are turning to Second Harvest Food Bank for the first time. Unemployment is still high. Many people are having to choose between paying for rent and utilities ... or buying food.

That's why Second Harvest partners with pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other hunger-relief organizations to make sure our neighbors have access to nutritious food this Thanksgiving — and throughout this difficult time.

Kathy and her husband have been struggling to get by on a single income ever since health concerns forced her out of work earlier this year. *"I'm doing everything I can to get back the life we had,"* Kathy said. *"But it's a scary feeling not having enough money to feed your kids. What happens to them if there's nowhere we can turn for food?"*

All across South Louisiana, the need for food has skyrocketed. And we're expecting thousands more children, families, and seniors will need our help before the year is over.

We believe no one in our community should go hungry, and we're committed to ensuring our neighbors have nutritious food to eat.

It takes a lot of support to feed so many people — but with your help, we can do it. **Every dollar you give helps provide four meals for people in South Louisiana this Thanksgiving.**

That means your gift of \$10 sent along with two of the enclosed Thanksgiving Food Delivery Tickets will help provide 40 meals to a hungry neighbor.

Your gift of \$15 with three tickets will help provide 60 meals! Or maybe you can find it in your heart to send a gift of \$20 to help provide 80 meals.

Please help feed our hungry neighbors today. I can't tell you what it means to see the relief and gratitude on the faces of men, women, and children who receive a Thanksgiving meal they did not think they would have.

Every person makes a difference and every gift counts — so please give your best gift today. Together, we can fill empty plates with nutritious food this Thanksgiving and throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Natalie Jayroe
President and CEO

P.S. Incredible hardship this year has led to incredible hunger in South Louisiana. Your gift is urgently needed to provide meals to the record-number of people struggling to put food on the table this Thanksgiving. Please give today!



Clancy Ratliff

PROJECT TO DO



For \$1, you can help provide 4 meals to a person struggling with hunger in our community this Thanksgiving!

Dear Mr. Ratliff,

Thanksgiving will be here before we know it. However, ongoing hardship will mean a lot of our neighbors won't be able to afford a meal. Many of the people who lost their jobs and livelihoods last year are still recovering. Meanwhile, the high food costs are stretching their budgets even thinner, forcing many to choose between paying the bills ... or buying food.

That's why Second Harvest Food Bank partners with pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other hunger-relief organizations to make sure our neighbors have access to nutritious food this Thanksgiving.

It's Rebecca's top priority to make sure her kids don't feel the impact of her and her husband's unemployment. For months, the young parents have been working multiple odd jobs, skipping meals, and making tough choices to keep food on the table. Because even if they can cover rent and utilities — there's not always enough for trips to the grocery store, too.

All across South Louisiana, the demand for food is high. And we're expecting thousands more will need help finding good food and meals before the year is over.

We believe no one in our community should go hungry, and we're committed to ensuring our neighbors have nutritious food to eat.

It takes a lot of support to feed so many people — but with your help, we can do it. **Every \$1 you give helps provide enough food for 4 meals for people in South Louisiana this Thanksgiving.**

That means your gift of \$10 sent along with two of the enclosed Thanksgiving Food Delivery Tickets will provide 40 meals to a hungry neighbor.

Your gift of \$15 with three tickets will provide 60 meals! Or maybe you can find it in your heart to send a gift of \$20 to provide 80 meals.

Please help feed our hungry neighbors today. I can't tell you what it means to see the relief and gratitude on the faces of men, women, and children who receive a Thanksgiving meal they did not think they would have.

Every person makes a difference and every gift counts — so please give your best gift today. Together, we can fill empty plates with nutritious food this Thanksgiving and throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Natalie Jayroe
President and CEO

P.S. This will be another holiday of historic hunger in South Louisiana. Please give today to provide meals to families struggling to put food on the table this Thanksgiving. To give online, please visit no-hunger.org/thanksgiving.



Dear Mr. Ratliff,

I hope this letter finds you in peace and good health this holiday season. If you're like me, it's hard not to dwell on the many ways this season differs from years past.

But for all the uncertainty and change, there's something much worse being felt in our community right now. Hunger.

Job loss and hardship have led to record-levels of hunger in South Louisiana this year. Many of your neighbors are struggling to recover and can't afford to eat. Their health, and their children's health, are under threat.

That's why I'm asking you to please rush your generous contribution of \$40 to help provide 160 meals ... \$50 to help provide 200 meals ... or even \$75 to help provide 300 meals to our neighbors facing hunger.

In the holiday spirit of compassion and sharing, please give generously today. When you do, you'll give families who don't know where their next meal is coming from food to fill their plates, and one less worry during this extremely difficult holiday season.

Thank you so much for caring and giving!

Sincerely,

Natalie Jayroe
President and CEO

P.S. **Please give today to provide food to struggling neighbors in their time of greatest need.** You can donate online at no-hunger.org.



Dear Mr. Ratliff,

Holidays should be a time of joy and plenty. But for our hungry neighbors, the holidays make going without even more painful. The ever-increasing cost of groceries, utilities, and other basic needs are pushing hard-working families in South Louisiana beyond their means. They simply cannot provide for themselves and their families, even if they work two jobs.

For those struggling to make ends meet, there will be no beautiful decorations ... no wrapped packages ... no holiday meal shared with family and friends.

That's why I'm asking you to please rush your generous contribution of \$40 to help provide 160 meals ... \$50 to help provide 200 meals ... or even \$100 to ensure 400 meals are fed to our hungriest neighbors this holiday season.

In the holiday spirit of compassion and sharing, please send your gift today. You'll give families who don't know where their next meal is coming from food to fill their plates, and one less worry this season.

Thank you so much for caring and giving!

Sincerely,

Natalie Jayroe
President and CEO

P.S. Please send your gift today. Your gift will put food on a hungry family's table. You can donate online at no-hunger.org.

1 in 4 children
in our community
is facing hunger
this summer.

You can change
this with a
gift today.



Dear Friend,

Did you know summer is the hungriest time of year for children and their families?

For kids relying on school-provided meals, summer was already a difficult time. Now, with so many families in crisis, this summer is even worse. Parents already struggling to get by don't know how they'll cover those meals this summer and more children are going hungry.

We need your help to feed children in South Louisiana who might otherwise go hungry this summer.

Last year, child hunger increased by more than 25% in South Louisiana due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We're expecting the high need to continue through the end of 2021.

Even though hunger and the need for food in our community remain at a heartbreaking high, we often experience a decline in donations this time of year. **That's why your gift is urgently needed today. Every \$1 you donate can help provide 4 meals.**

With your donation and our resources, we can provide meals to children facing hunger all summer long. That's why I've included two vouchers. A gift in June and another in July will help for the entire season. Or, if you prefer, you can give one gift for the entire summer.

You can let hungry children in our community know you care with a gift to Second Harvest Food Bank. **Your generosity today will ensure that children and families have the food they need — all summer long.**

Thank you for caring,

Natalie Jayroe
President and CEO

P.S. When school ends, so does access to nutritious meals for many children in our community. Please give today to provide meals to hungry children all summer long. If you'd like to make your gift online, visit no-hunger.org.

What will we do next month?



Please feed a child in need in Appalachia today.

Dear Friend,

I'm writing you this letter and praying that as you read it, God will fill your heart with compassion ... because I have never seen anything like this.

For months now, our food pantry manager has been looking into the pleading eyes of worried parents and their children — who are very hungry — as they stand in long lines, waiting for nourishing food ... and praying to God we will have enough food to feed them.

Our Grateful Bread Food Pantry, which was meant to feed 300 people each month, is overwhelmed by new families in need because of the pandemic.

Every day, we see long lines of moms, dads, and grandparents waiting their turn for a can of beans, a loaf of bread, a bag of rice — *just anything to feed their little ones* — and they pray this won't be the day we run out.

And I pray that we never see the day when we can't help people in need!

That's why you'll find four mini "meal tickets" attached to your reply form. Each one shows how your generous donation can make a life-changing impact.

Did you know that thanks to food and monetary donations, we can feed a child a healthy meal for just 59¢? Just imagine how many hungry children your generous gift can feed today!

It takes so little to do so much good.

You can feed a child in need!

Still, I know that not everyone who reads this letter will be able to donate. But I hope you are able to.

Can I count on you to help feed a hungry child and their family?

That is how Christian Appalachian Project began in 1964 — in the back of a small church, with just a small group of caring friends collecting canned goods, old clothing and

(over, please)



485 Ponderosa Drive • PO Box 1768 • Paintsville, KY 41240 • 1-866-270-4CAP (4227) • ChristianApp.org

shoes, and whatever else they had to give to people in need.

During the holidays, food baskets were given out to feed children and families who were hungry and living in distressed homes in isolated areas.

Americans in most need — those living in isolation and suffering ... our brothers and sisters who are elderly or sick ... and people with disabilities — **can find a glimmer of hope to hang on to in Christian Appalachian Project.**

Today, Appalachia is a place where only the most fortunate have jobs, where once-thriving coal mines have long ago closed and manufacturing jobs have since moved overseas.

Many families are barely surviving.

The Census Bureau recently called the central Appalachian states our nation's poorest, with extreme poverty at an all-time high. For people already battling incredible need, the aftermath of a pandemic — and the unemployment it caused — means unimaginable hardship and hopelessness.

No one should have to live in deplorable conditions. No child in America should be hungry — and find the kitchen cupboard is bare.

We see the tear-streaked faces and pleading eyes of little children ... the thin, drawn hands of the elderly ... and mothers clutching babies who are weakened by hunger.

And that is why I turn to you. It takes caring people like you to help people in need: the forsaken, hungry, and suffering.

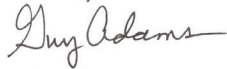
Will you be the one to provide food, clothing, and shelter to people in desperate need?

These are God's children. They need our help. I pray that knowing how much your generous gift will touch their hearts and lift their spirits will be your reward.

Thank you for reading my letter ... and for any gift you can spare.

Please pray for the people we serve.

Sincerely,



Guy Adams
President



**Seniors in Appalachia
need your help.**

P.S. I have enclosed a handy notepad as a gift for you. May we never take any item of food for granted. Please select the mini "meal ticket" that represents the gift of your choice and return it with your donation in the provided envelope. **Thank you again!**



Catholic
Charities
of Acadiana

YOUR 2020 GIVING STATEMENT

Thank you so much for giving generously to the work of Catholic Charities of Acadiana in 2020. Because of your help, we were able to extend the mercy of Christ to so many who were experiencing homelessness, hunger and poverty in our community.



8,596

Supplemental food
bags provided
through the Seven
Day Staples Project



183,000+

Meals provided through St.
Joseph Diner, in
partnership with Second
Harvest Food Bank



472

Individuals
assisted in
homelessness
prevention



500+

Homes touched
in response to
Hurricanes
Laura and Delta



1,076+

Requests for immediate
or long-term disaster
recovery assistance



153

Men, women, children
and veterans provided
safe shelter

In addition to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, we are responding to two major hurricanes that made landfall roughly 13 miles apart and within a span of six weeks. For so many in our area, this is far too much for them to bear. We respond on behalf of those who support and pray for us, responding to those who cannot rebound on their own and to those who suffer under the burden of multiple disasters. **We cannot do this work alone; it is only with the help of community partners like you that we are able to continue providing essential services to those who are at risk in our community.** Please know how grateful we are for your generosity toward those that we serve

Thank you for continuing to help Catholic Charities of Acadiana care for the sacred gift of all human life, especially the most vulnerable.

Ben Broussard
Chief Communications Officer
Catholic Charities of Acadiana

ben@catholiccharitiesacadiana.org
(337) 235-4972 x1208

Catholic Charities of
Acadiana
P.O. Box 3177
Lafayette, LA 70502
catholiccharitiesacadiana.org

Operation VetCare

A Project of the
Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States



The enclosed address labels and gift tags are a small Holiday Season **"THANK YOU!"** on behalf of the Wounded Veterans, Soldiers and Military families we serve...

Dear Friend,

This holiday season, will you help me bring hope to wounded soldiers and military families who are struggling to overcome injuries and difficulties suffered in the service of our nation?

A few \$10 Holiday Grocery Cards, like the ones I enclosed, can help deserving families at this time of year. A visit from members of the National Guard brings relief and hope to a hospitalized veteran or a military family struggling to recover from wounds, tragedy, fire, or flood.

Will you make a holiday sponsorship gift today and help us bring relief and support to those who are striving to recover from disaster or tragedy, or struggling with a service-related injury?

A gift of \$10, \$20 or \$15 can make a difference, and people tell me it's a wonderful way to remember those who served during the holiday season – the perfect gift.

With help from kind friends we can provide year-round assistance

(Over, please)

WE RECEIVE NO GOVERNMENT FUNDING. DONATIONS ARE USED TO SUPPLY THE HELP THAT IS MOST URGENTLY NEEDED AND REQUESTED. YEAR-ROUND HELP INCLUDES FREE GROCERY CARDS, CARE PACKAGES, GIFT CARDS, HOME REPAIRS, AND MANY OTHER TYPES OF MUCH NEEDED ASSISTANCE WHICH ARE DELIVERED TO MILITARY FAMILIES, HOSPITALIZED VETERANS AND VETERANS HOMES. YOUR GIFT IS UNRESTRICTED SO WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO ALLOCATE FUNDS BASED ON THE URGENCY OF THE NEEDS WE SEE. ALL WORK IS PERFORMED BY VOLUNTEERS, BUT A PORTION OF YOUR GIFT WILL HELP PAY FOR THE COST OF THIS MAILING AS WELL AS OUR LOW ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS, AND WE WORK HARD TO LIMIT THESE COSTS. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT! PLEASE SEE OUR MONEY BACK GUARANTEE.

- 2 -

to members of the Armed Forces and their families when they request it – they are often desperate and facing financial, emotional and physical challenges as a result of the service they are giving to our country.

You can imagine the relief a military family facing hardship feels when we are able to help pay for groceries during the holiday season...

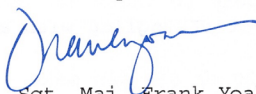
And I'm sure you can imagine the gratitude when a group of strong young guardsmen say "Good morning, ma'am, we are here to fix the roof..."

But there's something more important: When volunteers from the local National Guard show up with a gift, make a home repair, mow the grass, or simply stay and chat, they send a signal that Americans care about members of the armed forces who are struggling.

The year-round assistance we provide is only possible because Operation VetCare receives help from concerned friends like you – we are 100% reliant on contributions and receive NO GOVERNMENT FUNDS.

As the holidays approach, could you find it in your heart to make a holiday gift of \$15, \$10, \$20 or more and help us provide grocery cards, assistance in rebuilding homes, emergency fuel, children's clothing or whatever assistance will make the most difference – and continue providing the other forms of assistance we offer?

Sincerely,



Sgt. Maj. Frank Yoakum, U.S. Army Ret.
Executive Director

P.S. The labels I enclosed are yours to keep – a small thank you on behalf of a soldier. Will you help me keep up with the requests we receive? If you possibly can, will you make a special Holiday Season Sponsorship Gift today?

P.P.S. Especially this year, we offer thanks and support to all the National Guardsmen and their families for all they do to serve our communities.



KN6763

Office of the Adjutant General

www.vfw.org/HelpVeterans | vfwfundraising@vfw.org

November, 2020

Dear Clancy Ratliff,

When we began sending out these free special edition VFW Totes, gifts and check for \$2.50, people said we were crazy!

"You can't do it - the VFW will go broke!" many doubters said. "People will use their totes and cash the check, but you'll never hear from them again."

But it didn't turn out that way at all. In fact, thousands of people like you have chosen to help us serve our nation's veterans - many seriously disabled. I'm counting on you to keep helping us prove the doubters wrong ...

But first, what do you see in your mind when you read those words: **seriously disabled**?

Do you picture a young man or woman in a wheelchair like the one shown here? Maybe you see a veteran with amputated limbs ... a hero with a horribly burned face ... or a veteran who is without speech, lying helpless in a hospital bed.

But what about those veterans who suffer in silence - those who carry the invisible wounds of war?

To pass them on the street you would never know they're terrorized night and day by the horror of Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS). You wouldn't be able to tell they might never hold a job again. You can't "see" the nightmares or sleeplessness.

And you wouldn't know the pain and confusion they feel from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

But that doesn't mean those injuries aren't there.

The truth: more than 413,800 military veterans have experienced a TBI ... many of them in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even more young veterans now suffer from crippling mental illnesses like PTS.

For more than 121 years - since 1899 - the VFW has been there for veterans who need help getting the justice they deserve. We are there for veterans of every generation, of every war, who might otherwise just fall through the cracks. The VFW is on the front line in the fight for education, jobs, health care and justice FOR VETERANS ... because **EVERYTHING WE DO, WE DO FOR VETERANS.**[™]

(over, please)

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

90722LRC3-A

National Headquarters | 406 West 34th Street | Kansas City, MO 64111 | 833.VFW.GIVE (833.839.4483)



We also believe in honoring the service of all veterans by displaying the United States flag, especially on patriotic holidays. And we hope you do, too.

"Old Glory" is still the greatest symbol of our national unity. Displaying the United States flag proudly shows your support for our American values and for those who fought, and are still fighting, to defend them.

When these wounded young veterans who have come home from Iraq and Afghanistan see the flag displayed, it will mean a lot to them. I say that as a veteran myself – and someone who knows just how much the simple appreciation of fellow Americans really means.

You can visit heroes.vfw.org/Flag and print a free flag poster for you to display at your home.

But the best way to show you care for our veterans is by sending your tax-deductible gift to the VFW today.

America's defenders rely on the VFW. **NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.**

We need patriotic citizens like you to step up to help these veterans whose lives are forever changed by war. Your donation will support critical VFW programs that give veterans a voice on Capitol Hill, help them fight for their hard-earned VA benefits and offer assistance applying for financial relief to cover rent, food or other essentials.

And for those heroes who don't come back, we work to make sure their spouses and children receive the survivor benefits they need and deserve.

If you know of a veteran or family member who could use our help, please tell them to visit our website at vfw.org. We want to make sure that no one who is suffering and needs our assistance is overlooked. You don't have to be a VFW member to receive our help.

I know you care. But it's important that you care enough to take action. The thousands of wounded veterans who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan can't wait.

I believe that you're the type of American who, when called upon to do the right thing, will come through every time. Please help the VFW do right by those who need our help after serving our country so bravely.

Thank you and God Bless America.

FOR VETERANS,



Kevin C. Jones
Adjutant General

P.S. The enclosed special edition VFW Totes and other gifts, designed exclusively for patriotic supporters of the VFW like you, are yours to keep. Please let me know you received them by returning the Program Participation Form. And please return the \$2.50 check along with your special gift to help us reach even more veterans who need the VFW.

P.P.S. With your gift of \$15 (or more) by the date on the Program Participation Form, you'll receive your FREE Shopping Bags! See enclosed insert for more details.

90722LRC3-B



From the desk of
MICHAEL S. LINNINGTON

Dear Friend,

For Edil and his family, things were getting desperate. “My family and I were struggling to pay the oil delivery, trash, groceries, and my electric bill as well.”

But thanks to friends like you, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) came through for them with help when they needed it most.

Edil is one of more than 11,000 veterans who received direct financial help from WWP to get through the COVID-19 pandemic. In less than three weeks, we distributed over \$11 million in emergency assistance!

Many of these heroes wrote to tell us the grants came just in time. Edil said:

“Please know that the Covid-19 grant money received did go to our family, and we are eternally grateful. I thank WWP’s entire staff, donors, supporters, and sponsors who made this possible. God bless you all!”

I can’t imagine where our nation would be without heroes who serve to defend our freedom. We are honored to assist our wounded warriors when they need help. With your support, we will continue to be there for them with life-changing programs and services to help them overcome their injuries, get through tough times, and thrive again. Thank you.

To honor and empower,

Michael S. Linnington
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army, Retired
Chief Executive Officer, Wounded Warrior Project

"He who wears the Purple Heart has given of his blood in the defense of his homeland and shall forever be revered by his fellow countrymen."

— GEORGE WASHINGTON



Dear Caring Friend,

It was his third deployment, this time to Afghanistan, when an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated, leaving Anthony Villarreal's body badly burned.

Unimaginable agony ... third-degree burns over 70 percent of his body ... more than 70 painful surgeries — this is what awaited Anthony upon his return from service.

After he finally awoke from months in a coma, Anthony faced a long and excruciating recovery that continues even today.

Heroes like Anthony can overcome their injuries and succeed again. As a veteran who served for more than 30 years, I've seen them triumph time and time again! ***But sometimes even the strongest heroes need help.***

That's where Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) comes in. Since 2003, we've been tireless advocates for our nation's finest, improving the lives of over a million warriors and their families!

Warriors never pay a penny for our programs — because they paid their dues on the battlefield. Our free programs and services in mental health, career counseling, and long-term rehabilitative care change lives.

Because I believe you care about our nation's wounded warriors, I hope you'll use the enclosed **notepad, bookmarks, and set of personalized address labels** to show your support.

I also hope Anthony's story will inspire you to give back to the service-injured veterans who gave so much for you and me.

Will you please send your special gift of \$10, \$15, or \$25 to WWP today to help more injured veterans like Anthony?

Just think of the tragic injuries our heroic servicemen and women suffer from as they fight for our freedom. *Traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) ... amputations of their arms and legs ... burns covering their bodies and scarring their faces ... nerve*

(over, please)



Purple Heart recipient Anthony Villarreal was severely injured while serving in Afghanistan.

4899 BELFORT ROAD ★ SUITE 300 ★ JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32256 ★ woundedwarriorproject.org

damage that puts them in wheelchairs for life.

They gave their all for our country — for you and for me.

That's why we must be there for them now. ***And you can help!*** With your support, WWP is transforming the way America's injured veterans are empowered, employed, and engaged in our communities.

Transitioning from military to civilian life is a journey, and that journey is different for every veteran. Those who have sustained severe injuries face the greatest challenges of all.

That's why WWP offers a wide range of free programs and services to support our heroes, no matter what their journey looks like.

We're committed to helping injured veterans achieve their highest ambitions. And your support makes that possible.

As soon as you send your gift, your kindness will start reaching our injured heroes in hospitals overseas, even before they return to the United States for more surgeries, care, and rehabilitation. You'll assist them in rebuilding their lives.

I urge you to go to our website, **woundedwarriorproject.org**, to learn more about the veterans and families you'll be helping.

You'll find lots of ways to participate in our mission and help spread the word about the needs of our brave warriors who sacrificed so much for our freedoms.

But the best way for you to help our heroes right now is by providing your financial support.

Anthony has experienced the impact of WWP programs firsthand. Today, he has a job, a loving family, and a positive outlook. And he's putting his knowledge and experience to work to help other heroes do the same!

Your gift of \$10, \$25, or maybe even \$50 will change the future for an injured veteran. So please be as generous as you possibly can. Thank you for joining Anthony and me in this great cause today!

Saluting your kindness,



Michael S. Linnington
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army, Retired
Chief Executive Officer, Wounded Warrior Project

P.S. *Warriors never pay a penny for our programs — because they paid their dues on the battlefield. With your support, our free services in mental health, career counseling, and long-term rehabilitative care change lives.*

P.P.S. **Please also take a moment now to sign and return the enclosed thank-you card along with your best gift today. I'll make sure your message is delivered to a veteran whose spirits need a lift.**