

Joy Ifeoma Okoro

Executive Director
Teach for America Greater New Orleans

Joy Okoro joined Teach for America Greater New Orleans in 2008 as part of a two-year commitment.

It required her to leave New York City, where she worked for the Garden of Dreams Foundation, Madison Square Garden's non-profit arm.

"I'll put in my two years in New Orleans and then head back to New York and get into the swing of things," Okoro said she recalls thinking at the time.

That was 13 years ago, and now Okoro is the executive director of Teach for America's efforts in New Orleans.

"I came in bright-eyed and bushy tailed and convinced that if a student was 15 years old, it wouldn't be that hard to quickly turn things around," she said. "I didn't at all take into consideration the reality of poverty, systemic racism, the challenges of teaching in what a post-Katrina New Orleans was like."

The notion that things could not be turned

around quickly ended up challenging and inspiring Okoro, embracing the long-range goals of an organization dedicated to enhancing educational opportunities in low-income communities.

A 2008 graduate of Temple University, where she majored in tourism and hospitality, Okoro said her job is all about inspiration.

"I'm responsible for inspiring people to want to do right by their community; it's helping them to understand the role they can play in transforming their community," she explained.

Okoro said the word "passion" most defines her approach to her work.

"If you're passionate about what you're doing, it unleashes the potential for others, and that's what power is all about," she said.

—Garry Boulard



Lacey Osborne

CEO
St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce

As Lacey Osborne celebrates her 20th year as CEO of the St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce, she remains passionate about serving as the region's voice for business.

"I am proud to have led this organization through many challenges over the years, as well as promoting business for the fifth largest parish in the state," she said.

The Chamber is involved in monitoring issues that directly affect its more than 1,000 business member stakeholders. It is one of only 202 chambers nationwide to have the distinction as a 5-star U.S. Chamber. Osborne was a 2018 Professional Women of St. Tammany Inaugural Annual Women's Choice Awards honoree.

Osborne said "power" is the best word that applies to her to help drive her success.

"The power of humility that allows me to seek help when I need it; power that comes

from experience and learning; power of knowledge – to know what I can control and what I can't; and power to influence and manage situations and people – to get things done for our community," Osborne said.

Osborne often says her profession is also her philanthropy.

"I recently served a term on the St. Tammany National Alliance of Mental Illness; I am indirectly engaged with several civic or charitable organizations through the Chamber," she said. "I have served on committees and the boards of Louisiana Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, and am still a member of the U.S. Chamber Accreditation Board and the U.S. Chamber Committee of 100."

—Tommy Santora



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