



BBB serving Northeast and Central Louisiana and the Ark-La-Tex

# News Release

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**FOR RELEASE**

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## **Opportunities Inc. Earns Accredited Charity Status**

**Texarkana special education services provider is first in the area to meet BBB's nationally-instituted Standards for Charity Accountability**

**Shreveport, LA, November 26, 2024:** Better Business Bureau President Bob Davis announced today that Opportunities, Inc., also known as Texarkana Special Education Center, has been certified as compliant with the 20 national standards for charity accountability. The organization, thus, has the distinction of being the first Texarkana-based nonprofit organization to earn Accredited Charity status, and the tenth in the region.

Opportunities Inc. is an organization of dedicated, committed people who believe in the promise and potential of children and adults with disabilities. They strive to build a community where each person belongs; where each person is accepted, welcomed, and given the chance to participate in the community, regardless of disability. It all began in 1966 as Texarkana Special Education Kindergarten, a part-time kindergarten for children with disabilities at the First Presbyterian Church Building. The organization has grown to a comprehensive services provider to children and adults, offering therapies, school readiness programming, family support, nutritious meals, transportation, and even living arrangements that are customized to individual needs and preferences.

Following notification of the austere accomplishment, Chief Executive Officer Brad Bailey remarked, "We are honored to be recognized by the BBB as the first accredited non-profit in Texarkana."

Accreditation is granted by the BBB for a three-year period. Thus, Opportunities, Inc. will be reviewed again in November 2027.

As Giving Tuesday approaches next week, it is good for supporters and potential supporters to know they can be confident in the effectiveness of their contributions to Opportunities Inc. Bailey continued, "We believe in our mission to help individuals with developmental disabilities, and we thank all the many individuals, organizations, and businesses who support Opportunities, Inc. to help make that happen each and every day."

To earn the distinction, the organization cooperated in having its operations reviewed against the 20 standards prescribed by the BBB/Wise Giving Alliance as listed at Give.Org. The standards help to

assess (1) the integrity of how the organization is governed; (2) the integrity of how the organization evaluates its own productivity; (3) the integrity of its financial management; and (4) the integrity of claims the organization makes to the public about itself.

“All nonprofits within the area are anticipated to be reviewed, and never at any cost to them,” Davis said. “Nor is there any cost associated with earning or maintaining accreditation, so even the smallest nonprofits can aspire to becoming accredited. All of the upfront expense is borne by the local office, seeing it as a community service.

“Our board believes there is no sector of any local economy that is any more vulnerable to public concerns than the nonprofit domain, and we needed to take responsibility to formally establish a program. At the end of the day, it is all about building trust, and that is the very essence of what Better Business Bureau tries to accomplish in everything we do.”

Better Business Bureaus in the U.S. have conducted charity reviews since the late 1920s, and the current standards were established in 2001 when the BBB’s Philanthropic Advisory Service merged with the National Charities Information Bureau to form the Wise Giving Alliance. However, locally, charity review is a relatively new endeavor, having gotten started in September 2022. The new status for Youth Enrichment Program is cited at Give.Org, a BBB online domain specifically designated to provide nonprofit information, as well as the BBB website. It also will appear in the upcoming issue of the Regional Wise Giving Guide that is published three times annually.

According to Charity Review Director Greg Thompson, about 200 of the most visible and impactful nonprofit organizations in the area are at some stage of the process toward being reviewed. It is estimated that there are 1,100 nonprofits operating within the I-20 corridor from border to border of north Louisiana, and the I-49 corridor extending from the Texarkana metro area in the north to Alexandria in the south.

The process is not onerous, according to Thompson. “If an organization is eager to gain accreditation, review can be achieved in a matter of weeks,” he said. “When an organization achieves accreditation through BBB, it allows supporters an added measure of confidence that their dollars and/or time are being used well. Or, even when an organization merely starts their journey toward earning accreditation, that is progress. These are not just standards for the sake of standards, after all. Each one of the 20 standards met signals the organization takes seriously their own integrity.”

Dr. Thompson is the former executive director of the Institute for Nonprofit Administration & Research at LSU-Shreveport, having extensive experience both in the nonprofit sector and higher education. He has been associated primarily with nonprofits that focus on the welfare of families and children, including the Boy Scouts of America, and Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children. Thompson holds a M.S. in Human Services from Murray State University, and earned his PhD in Family Studies from the University of Kentucky. More recently, he became credentialed as a Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy through the American College of Financial Services.

“We need to make it easier for people who are generous at heart—and by that, I mean all of us in that state, not just the ultra-wealthy—to connect with and to support the good causes that are able to distinguish themselves as being responsible and effective,” Thompson said. “There are a handful of endeavors aspiring to stimulate and sustain effective generosity that are being pursued right now in our region. Upstream of those efforts, a widespread mechanism for nonprofit accountability is a fundamental step toward that goal. For donors, it is key to help efficiently identify nonprofits deserving support. For nonprofits, it sets baseline expectations, raising the tide for all ships.”

For more information about the charity review program and assistance with pursuing accreditation, nonprofit directors and board members may reference details provided at Give.Org, or contact Dr. Thompson directly at his BBB email address: [Greg@shreveport.bbb.org](mailto:Greg@shreveport.bbb.org).