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## FAQs

### Desire Street Ministries (DSM) Organizational Facts

**Mission:** To love our neighbor by revitalizing impoverished neighborhoods through spiritual and community development

**Vision:** To encourage, equip and connect leaders, serving as a catalyst to help develop thriving, sustainable urban ministries

**Founded:** In 1990 by Mo Leverett when he integrated the Desire neighborhood in the Upper Ninth Ward of New Orleans. He and his wife Ellen reached one of the city's most desperately poor areas through Bible studies and youth outreach.

**Danny Wuerffel Leadership:** Left the NFL in 2004 to join DSM as Development Director. Named Executive Director of DSM in 2006 when Leverett resigned.

### Ninth Ward New Orleans

The Ninth Ward of New Orleans is one of the city's most desperately poor areas. What began as a swamp was later used as a garbage dump. During the 20th century, it became home to thousands of poor, African-American migrant families. In the 1960s, the federal government spent millions of dollars trying to improve the neighborhood by creating one of the nation's largest tracts of subsidized housing. Until the mid 1990's, thousands of people were still living in these "projects", declared unfit for human habitation, characterized by drug use, poverty and the highest unemployment rates in New Orleans.

### The Story of DSM

**Pre-Katrina:** By the time Hurricane Katrina submerged the ministry is 8 ft. of murky water, the ministry had established a church, built a junior-senior high school for 200 African-American males, partnered to provide a children's medical clinic for neighbors without adequate transportation, sponsored community gardening projects, and been instrumental in the City's demolition and replacement of the housing projects, gaining recognition and appreciation from City and State leaders.

**Post-Katrina:** Following Hurricane Katrina's devastation of the Upper Ninth Ward, DSM went to work cleaning up its facility at 3600 Desire Parkway in New Orleans, and then facilitated over 1,200 volunteers to clean-up 150 damaged homes and buildings in the area. DSM partnered with neighborhood residents in 2006 to found a community development corporation, CDC 58:12, which is now renovating neighborhood homes and building new affordable homes as funding permits. DSM also helped plant a church and community development corporation in the Eighth Ward, St. Roch Community Church. The school spent a year in temporary facilities in the panhandle of Florida, then re-located in Baton Rouge, LA. In 2009 it transitioned back to New Orleans on a very limited basis and has been discontinued due to the effect of the downturned economy.

### Current Ministry Focus

Katrina facilitated DSM's goal to expand its holistic ministry model (addressing physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs) to other urban areas in the Southeast. Today DSM is encouraging, equipping and connecting urban ministry leaders in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Montgomery AL, Lakeland FL and Atlanta GA.

### FAQs re: Danny Wuerffel



**Heisman:** Won the 1996 Heisman Trophy while playing quarterback at the University of Florida.

**Pro Career:** Known for his character both on and off the field, Wuerffel played seven seasons in the NFL for the New Orleans Saints, Green Bay Packers, Chicago Bears, and Washington Redskins, before retiring to work full-time at DSM in 2004.

**Book:** That same year, he co-authored a book *Tales from the Gator Swamp*, in which he covers his college football career at the University of Florida.

**More Info:** [www.desirestreet.org/DannyBio](http://www.desirestreet.org/DannyBio)

**Additional DSM Info:** [www.desirestreet.org](http://www.desirestreet.org) or contact Danny Wuerffel, [dw@desirestreet.org](mailto:dw@desirestreet.org), ph. 678-681-3979.