



Mardi Gras in October

Hurricane Katrina was the costliest and one of the deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States. The massive scale of destruction and human displacement was staggering.

One of the hardest hit industries was tourism, most visibly noted in New Orleans. Visitors to The Big Easy have long been attracted to the city's rich culture and musical heritage, from the street parades of Mardi Gras to smoky blues bars and the brass bands that march in jazz funerals. But suddenly, there were no more tourists. Musicians were left without sources of income. Their instruments were silenced.

Miles away in the Pacific Northwest, Portland entrepreneur Sho Dozono, owner of Azumano Travel, joined forces with the Portland Jazz Festival and its presenting sponsor Qwest, Portland Business Alliance, Mercy Corps, and other Portland businesses and organizations, including the Portland Oregon Visitors Association (POVA), to help displaced musicians rebuild their lives.

Together, they launched NOLA2PDX, a hurricane assistance program. In its early phase from September to October 2005, the program provided stranded musicians with transportation to Portland and, in conjunction with the Red Cross and FEMA, saw to their basic needs including housing and food. From October to December 2005, NOLA2PDX continued to welcome new musicians as word spread of Portland's invitation. Over 50 musicians came to the Rose City, some for a temporary refuge before returning to New Orleans or reuniting with friends and family in cities around the United States and others who ultimately chose to make Portland their home. A special fundraising event was held in October at Portland's famed Crystal Ballroom. Eighteen New Orleans musicians were flown in for the event, dubbed "Mardi Gras in October." An enthusiastic crowd of over 700 people attend the spirited event.