



## **JOINT PRESS RELEASE**

For: March 24, 2006

Mental Health Association in Louisiana

Media Contact: Terry Morse  
(225) 802-0105

### **Hurricane Choir Project Starts Filming**

Cameras are already rolling and recording the joyful sounds of the Hurricane Choir as they begin rehearsals to prepare for their performances in May and June of this year. The choir, a combination of over a thousand hurricane survivors and local residents, will sing on May 21, 2006 in a massive outdoor multi-media performance on the steps of the Louisiana State Capitol with its second performance scheduled for June 3 at the River Center in Baton Rouge. They hope to perform in New Orleans and Lafayette in June as well.

The Hurricane Choir is the brainchild of Martin Meader, Australian co-writer and co-executive producer of the \$26 million Fox film, *Paradise Road*, starring Glenn Close and Academy Award winners Frances MacDormand and Cate Blanchett. Meader is planning to make a documentary film on the Hurricane Choir and show it worldwide to raise funds for Louisiana hurricane ravaged communities. He arrived in Baton Rouge last week to begin filming and 12 weeks of rehearsals. Net proceeds from the fundraising will go to the Volunteers of America, a national, spiritually based organization providing local human service programs and opportunities for individual and community involvement.

The Mental Health Association in Louisiana (MHAL) has joined forces with Meader's Hurricane Choir to assist in a groundbreaking study to monitor the results of group singing on people's thoughts and feelings. According to Yakima K. Black, Executive Director of MHAL, "The Hurricane Choir Project will not only promote mental health through singing, but will unite communities in an effort to bring forth social cohesion. Policy makers must look to establishing community partnerships in order to meet to growing mental health needs of our state. We can no longer afford to provide healthcare in silos. Community collaboration is imperative!"

Along with MHAL, the University of Western Australia, Sentiens and The Abraham Group in Baton Rouge, have committed to provide computerized evaluation processes to choir members who wish to participate in the study. "This project has massive implications for the management of disorders (including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression and Anxiety) worldwide. Interventions of this kind can supplement traditional health care delivery and allow high volume involvement of whole communities in projects of hope and spiritual sustenance," stated Dennis Tannebaum, Sentiens consultant Psychiatrist and Executive Chairman.

Rehearsals for everyone are held on Saturdays 9:30 to 11:30 AM, for men on Mondays 7-9 PM and for women on Tuesdays 7-9 PM. This Saturday, Monday and Tuesday rehearsals will be held at the Hurricane Choir Headquarters at 551 Leeward, three blocks off Highland Road. Beginning Saturday, April 1st all rehearsals will take place at the Jefferson Baptist Church, 9135 Jefferson Highway. The first 500 Singers to arrive on April 1 will receive a “Happy Bag” of goodies donated by the Pfiser Corporation. Registration is online at [www.hurricanechoir.com](http://www.hurricanechoir.com) or call 225-810-3815. To become a corporate sponsor of the event including signage rights e-mail [daniellesings@gmail.com](mailto:daniellesings@gmail.com)

###