



Natural disasters cause devastation to communities. Hundreds of thousands of people were affected by Hurricane Katrina in the United States. In the aftermath of the tragedy, the burden of homelessness and mental health problems is growing.

The Hurricane Choir

In March 2006, Martin Meader, international choral director, Co-Executive producer and Co-Writer of the Fox movie, *Paradise Road*, which starred Glenn Close and Cate Blanchett, will visit Baton Rouge and New Orleans, to oversee and direct the Hurricane Choir Project. This project will bring together over 1000 survivors of the Hurricane Katrina and Rita disasters. Their 12 week rehearsal period will culminate in three public performances across Louisiana in June 2006.

Community Development

The Hurricane Choir project is not just about singing but also about the effects of singing on mental health. This humanitarian and philanthropic project aims to promote social cohesion and mental health as well as encourage hope for the future in the community.

Radio and television documentaries will be made of the choir from its initial stages to its final performances and it is intended to broadcast the concerts around the world. Funds raised from the concert and associated merchandise will go the charity *Volunteers of America* who will disburse funds to those most in need.

Our intention is to invite high profile performers (such as Harry Connick Jr., Reese Witherspoon and the composer, John Altman) who are sympathetic to the plight of hurricane survivors to contribute to the project.

Mental health after Katrina

Martin Meader, Perth-based health provider Sentiens, and the University of Western Australia are embarking upon one of the first international uses of an electronic health system for a disaster management project. The Sentiens' RecoveryRoad health and disease management system will be used to monitor choir members' mental health. This platform will underpin a programme of research, which will track the benefits to mental health provided by this unique recovery and community support strategy for people affected by the disaster.

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For more information on how you can assist the Hurricane Choir Project please contact:

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