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CONTACT:

Meg Ducey
Director of Development and Marketing
Franciscan Center
410-467-5340 ext. 117 OR 410-852-4540 (cell)
mducey@fcbmore.org

VOICES FROM THE HEART: A MAGICAL MUSICAL EVENING TO BENEFIT POOR AND HUNGRY CITIZENS OF BALTIMORE

Baltimore, Maryland – August 29, 2013

On Saturday evening, September 28, 2013 from 6:00 - 10:00 p.m., the Franciscan Center will host its 2nd annual ***Voices from the Heart*** Gala, a magical musical evening to benefit men, women and children in need in our community. This unique and exciting event will feature cabaret-style entertainment by award-winning vocalist and performer Chrystal E. Williams and pianist Jose Melendez, as well as cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and dinner. Proceeds will support the work of the Franciscan Center, a non-profit organization sharing dignity and hope in the Baltimore community since 1968.

Voices from the Heart will honor Injured Workers Insurance Fund (IWIF), soon to be Chesapeake Employers Insurance, for their longstanding partnership in the Franciscan Center's mission of service to Baltimore's most vulnerable citizens. IWIF will be the first recipient of the Franciscan Center's ***Spirit of St. Francis Award***, recognizing organizations and individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary commitment to serving the poor and the disenfranchised.

WBAL Radio personality Clarence M. Mitchell IV, known as "C-4", will serve as Master of Ceremonies for this very special evening, to be held at the Scottish Rite Masonic Center, 3800 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218. A VIP reception will take place from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m., featuring an exclusive meet and greet with Ms. Williams, Mr. Melendez and "C-4" as well as beautiful piano music by Mr. Antonio Caldwell, a friend and client of the Franciscan Center.

Voices from the Heart is a celebration of the people who built and supported the Franciscan Center over the past 45 years, as well as those whom the Center has served. The Franciscan Center is partnering with the Order of Malta in hosting this event.

Founded by the Franciscan sisters of Baltimore in 1968, the Franciscan Center was one of the first human services agencies in Baltimore. Our programs provide emergency assistance and supportive outreach to poor and hungry citizens of Baltimore, designed to assist them in realizing their self worth and dignity as

people of God.

What began with the Sisters handing out sandwiches and coffee to “street people” at the back door of the orphanage they operated on Maryland Avenue has grown to serve every Baltimore zip code, offering a range of services that is unique in our community. In fact, the breadth of services we provide has made the Franciscan Center one of the most-referred agencies on the United Way of Central Maryland's "211 Emergency Hotline."

The Franciscan Center's dining program serves a hot, nutritious meal to as many as 600 men, women and children daily, five days a week throughout the year. In recent months we have partnered with United Church of Christ (UCC) to add a Wednesday evening meal, our "Supper Club" program, in an effort to reach the working poor.

Unlike many other soup kitchens in Baltimore, the Franciscan Center's meals are prepared on-site using fresh ingredients. The Center is committed to improving public health in the Baltimore community by offering fresh, healthy foods to the men, women and children whom we serve. In fact, we are the first soup kitchen in the United States to participate in the nationwide "Meatless Monday" initiative, offering a delicious vegetarian meal each Monday. Through gleaning from area farms, produce markets, stores and restaurants, the Franciscan Center is able to include fresh vegetables in the meals we serve every day.

The Franciscan Center's emergency food pantry is the largest direct-to-client food pantry in Maryland, providing more than 7,000 bags of groceries a year to families and individuals in need. Our pantry bag includes enough food for a family of three for three meals a day for three days. In keeping with our commitment to making healthy food available to those we serve, we also offer a "Healthy Choice " pantry bag that includes the same amount of food, but lower fat, lower sodium items, whole grain products, frozen ground turkey and fresh or frozen vegetables. We are thrilled to report that nearly 40 percent of our clients are now opting for this "Healthy Choice" bag.

The Franciscan Center is all about empowerment. In addition to our food programs, the Center offers free, seasonally appropriate clothing, toiletries and a broad range of emergency assistance and supportive services designed to help our clients become self-sufficient. Our Responsive Services department offers financial assistance with energy bills, eviction prevention, medical prescriptions, dental procedures and transportation, as well as help securing birth certificates and Maryland State identification cards. The Center's Technical Resource Center offers our clients one-on-one assistance in gaining basic computer skills, setting up e-mail accounts, building resumes and applying for jobs and benefits. On average, we are helping 5-7 people a month find jobs.

Our "Attire 4 Hire" program was the first of its kind for men in the Baltimore area, providing free professional clothing for job interviews, graduations and other important life events. We partner with "Suited 2 Succeed" to assist our female clients.

Proceeds from the Franciscan Center's 2nd Annual *Voices from the Heart* Gala will help to provide basic human needs - as well as dignity and hope - to Baltimore's most vulnerable citizens.

Tickets for this very special event are \$100 each. VIP tickets are \$125, and include a special reception and "meet and greet" with Ms. Williams and "C-4". A portion of each ticket is tax deductible. For more information, contact Meg Ducey at: 410-467, 5340, ext. 117, or at: mducey@fcbmore.org. You can also visit our event website, at: www.franciscancenterbaltimore/voices.

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