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Mental Health & Wellness: Helping People Access Safe Harbor Post-New Orleans Disasters StillSitting Officially Partners with St. Bernard Project

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: SAN FRANCISCO, CA — Once upon a time, in a culture where mental health disease was relegated to the most severe cases, seeking help was stigmatized and closeted. But when tens of thousands of residents in the relatively small **New Orleans** area chronically couldn't find refuge from floods, housing problems, oil spills and unemployment before the next disaster struck, that perfect storm for broken spirits, psyches, mental and physical illness to take root changed everything. CNN's Dr. Sanjay Gupta reported that New Orleans and St. Bernard parish's countless in-need residents who, even when they could find help from organizations like the Presidentially recognized non-profit **St. Bernard Project (SBP)**, are put on a waiting list. The overwhelmed disaster rebuilding non-profit can't get to everyone immediately. An accessible, self-paced online de-stress program like **StillSitting** is one partner's (free to SBP's clients) contribution to helping more people help themselves start to rewrite their personal coping and wellness story.

The St. Bernard Project is a nonprofit disaster rebuilding organization that serves residents in St. Bernard and Orleans parishes. Embracing an all-under-one-roof model, SBP's mission is to remove physical, mental, and emotional barriers for vulnerable families, senior citizens and disabled residents who are struggling to recover from the devastation and trauma caused by Hurricane Katrina and, more recently, the oil spill. To date SBP has rebuilt 309 homes with help from over 26,000 volunteers and 500 AmeriCorps members and currently provides 75 hours weekly of free evidenced-based mental health services to uninsured residents in St. Bernard and Orleans.

Mental health and wellness assistance is not only beneficial but crucially needed. St. Bernard Project Director of Development and Co-founder Liz McCartney explains the challenges, "This community has relied mostly upon their support system of family, friends, church and social groups. In the past, mental health services were people with more severe issues. But housing, job loss, financial struggles, children and family issues, loss of support groups, loss of loved ones, trauma related to Katrina and now the oil spill have left a legacy of PTSD, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, ADHD, borderline personalities, and bi polar disease.

"All this made it necessary for St. Bernard Project to provide wellness and stress relief group sessions for our clients but StillSitting's online program is complementary to our same services, and will help those who work and can't attend the sessions during the day, those who have issues with transportation and also those who aren't ready to use the services we have because of still dealing with the mental health stigma. StillSitting.net will help us reach those who are not ready to come to the center, or those who come to the center but can't attend the wellness group sessions." StillSitting.net is free to St. Bernard Project's clients.

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ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP: Less Stress More Life (Still Sitting dot net) is proud to help St. Bernard Project (dot org) to restore the hard-working, family-oriented communities in New Orleans and St. Bernard parish to a level of vibrancy and self-sufficiency. StillSitting offers people the skills to create a respite from the storm within, in the moment when stress flares up, by learning to use the tools we all have—breath, body and imagination—to calm, de-stress and re-set.