

PRESS RELEASE

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ROCK MY SOUL DEBUTS AT SEACOAST MENTAL HEALTH CENTER COFFEE HOUSE

Portsmouth, NH—July 19, 2004—Rock My Soul, a new, interfaith gospel choir in the seacoast area, made its debut by sharing a little light and a lot of joy at the Seacoast Mental Health Center in Portsmouth on Monday evening, July 19. Fifteen members of the choir gave their all through high-energy, uplifting spiritual and secular songs, and audience members responded by clapping and singing along. The free performance was part of SMHC's Coffee House.

Wendy Segit, Coordinator for the Community Bridges Program, organizes the coffee house for adult clients of SMHC. The program offers very affordable opportunities for socialization and recreational activities that these clients would otherwise not have access to, such as camping trips and an annual boat trip to Star Island. The Portsmouth-based Community Bridges Road Race is an annual fund raiser that helps support the program. The coffee house typically includes entertainment by local musicians. The Rock My Soul Choir generously donated its talent to this event.

"If we can reach just one person and make his or burdens a little easier to bear, we've done our job," said Dawn Boyer, one of the choir's soloists. "We all crave a way to connect and feel joy, and singing this music is our way of helping to make that happen." Sharing this music with others is DFGP's way of building that connection; helping to rebuild the sense of community that appears to be dwindling in our fast-paced, technological era. The music is also a medium to reach out to those in the community who may be marginalized due to illness or other debilitating circumstances.

Rock My Soul is a part of the Diversified Faith Gospel Project, a nonprofit organization developed to bring diverse communities and individuals together through performance, charitable outreach, and other community-building activities. Boyer, who is also President of the DFGP, stated, "A big part of our mission is to perform regularly in nursing homes, hospices, hospitals, and the like for either a nominal fee or gratis. Because we're nonprofit, we're able to bring the music to people who can't always come to hear it. That's why we were excited when Seacoast Mental Health Center asked us to perform at their coffee house. It gave us the chance to give back to the community, and the

rewards of that are immense. There's no way to describe the feeling we get when we look out at an audience member and see the transformation that takes place because of the music. It's magical and very profound."

The evening's show also had an educational side to it—soloists shared brief stories about the traditional spiritual "Hush, Somebody's Calling My Name," the "lost" black gospel song "I'm Tired," and the familiar secular song "Let It Be," to name a few. Audience members learned interesting facts about what tradition the song came from, why it was written, and what it's about from the author's point of view. "Many people don't realize American spiritual music's impact on creating positive change in our culture," Boyer said. "It's inspiring, and gives us all hope."

The group, now with over 20 members and musicians, was formed in late April and is directed by TS Baker, a well-known seacoast area musician and songwriter. Those interested in finding out more about Rock My Soul and the Diversified Faith Gospel Project can call 207-384-8318 or email mail@dfgp.org. Those interested in the services of Seacoast Mental Health may call 603-431-6703.

