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**For Immediate Release**

**French Heritage Society's "Katrina Heritage Rescue Fund"  
Provides Fundraising to New Orleans**

**New Orleans, LA (March 1, 2007) – Princess Marie-Sol de La Tour d’Auvergne**, President of French Heritage Society, today announced the organization’s successful fundraising events to date on behalf of New Orleans. “Our **15 Chapters** in the US and in Paris have been extremely dedicated in aiding our on-going ‘Katrina Heritage Rescue Fund’ campaign to help bring a sense community and cultural life back to this city devastated by Hurricane Katrina,” she explained, underscoring the rich cultural French history which exists in Louisiana.

To date, **French Heritage Society** has raised **\$192 000** thanks to the efforts of chapters in Northern and Southern California, Dallas, Philadelphia, Palm Beach and Paris, as well as les Vieilles Maisons Françaises delegates throughout France, the Florence Gould Foundation and private donors.

Often throughout its history, **French Heritage Society** has come to the aid of regions struck by national disaster, whether it be French colonial architecture in peril after the Mississippi River flooded in 1993 or French châteaux, parks and even Versailles after the major storm in 1999 in France.

The devastation inflicted by Hurricane Katrina severely damaged the foundations and buildings that celebrated a rich history, centuries of culture and diversity bringing together influences from France, Africa, the Caribbean and Spain – and has placed the safeguard of that heritage in peril. For the French heritage in particular, some of the last vast traces of the French presence, its architecture, culture, language and way of life face the very real threat of being lost forever. **New Orleans’** cultural status as one of the world’s most unique cities is alone worthy or a major effort to preserve that rich tradition. The city of New Orleans, along with the Gulf Coast, is listed on the National Trust’s list of the 11 most endangered sites in the US.

**French Heritage Society** is collaborating with the **National Trust for Historic Preservation**, the **Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans**, the **French Ministry of Culture** and the **French Consulate in New Orleans**. Its sponsored restoration projects address community and private residential needs to bring back to life a district with functioning community and cultural services, as well as private houses that will encourage further restorations and enable more residents to return to the area.

Restoration projects include:

**New Orleans and its Treme quarter** have become the primary focus of **French Heritage Society’s** efforts to help this still devastated city recover her architectural treasures along with the sense of neighbourhood and community that existed before the ravages of Katrina scattered the city’s inhabitants across the country.

- **The African-American Museum** – Situated in the Treme quarter, home of the oldest urban African-American community in the US, the Museum’s restoration will revive this important cultural center as a meaningful focal meeting point for its residents. **French Heritage Society** has contributed funds for the restoration of **Passebon Cottage**, representative of a typical mid XIXth century Creole Cottage which is part of the museum.

- **Saint Augustine Church**, recently saved from closure, has long served as a unifying “gathering point,” representing the heart and soul of the community. Due to Katrina it suffered \$ 400 000 in wind damage. The church belongs to the archbishop, who also oversees Old Ursuline Covent.

- **Private houses** – As Treme was one of the areas in New Orleans where French was spoken for the longest period, the French cultural and historic roots are strong. A number of private houses are receiving restoration grants that highlight the diverse architectural styles: Creole Cottages, Shot Gun Houses and brick constructions. Two residences have been identified by the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans: a Creole Cottage on Barracks Street, and a brick house on Treme Street. The Maria Sgna Durette Creole Cottage is being restoration in conjunction with the National Trust.

**The Edgar Degas House** will receive a grant so that it regains the elegant appearance which Degas himself enjoyed during his stay in New Orleans. Built in 1852, the only known home or studio of Degas in the world that is open to the public, the Degas mansion was the home of his maternal relatives, the Musson family, prominent cotton brokers in New Orleans. Degas' mother, Marie Céleste Musson, was a Creole born in New Orleans.

**Old Ursuline Convent**, the oldest building in the Mississippi River Valley, completed in 1752, it is also the longest surviving example of the French colonial period in the United States. One of New Orleans' most prestigious French monuments, it is known as the “treasure of the archdiocese.”

**The Sydney and Walda Bestoff French Sculpture Garden** of the **New Orleans Museum of Art**. In the cultural realm, funds raised at a recent Palm Beach event will finance a grant for the five-acre sculpture garden which suffered \$ 2 million in damage in the wake of Katrina. Among its impressive collection, the garden features works by French sculptors Jacques Maillol, Auguste Renoir, Antoine Bourdelle, Jacques Lipchitz, etc.

#### **Laura Plantation (Vacherie)**

More than two years after a devastating fire nearly destroyed the historic manor house dating from 1805, and despite further hardship after Katrina, Laura Plantation has risen from the ashes and stands restored in all her vibrant Creole colors. The painstakingly accurate restoration of the 17,000 sq/ft.structure, recently completed, utilized over 35,000 board feet of centuries-old cypress and pine.

**French Heritage Society’s « Katrina Heritage Rescue Fund »** campaign has raised \$ 192 000 to award the following grants:

Passebon Cottage - African-American Museum	\$ 50 000
Edgar Degas House	\$ 30 000
St. Augustine Church	\$ 30 000
Barracks Street Creole Cottage	\$ 10 000
Treme Street Creole Cottage	\$ 10 000
Maria & Sgna Durette Creole Cottage	\$ 10 000
Old Ursuline Convent	\$ 10 000
New Orleans Museum of Art French sculpture gardens	\$ 22 000
Laura Plantation -Vacherie	\$ 20 000

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