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**MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMERS LANDSCAPE THE EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE AREA
FOR THE ANNUAL SELMA-MONTGOMERY MARCH CELEBRATION**

MONTGOMERY – Individuals served by the Cahaba Center in Selma, Alabama, have for many years “given back” to their community through their landscaping activities. Cahaba Center Executive Director, Lafon Barlow explained, “They are particularly busy at this time decorating the town and the areas around the Edmond Pettus Bridge for the 15th Bridge Crossing Jubilee to be held March 7-9, 2008.” The Jubilee commemorates the anniversary of “Bloody Sunday” which occurred on March 7, 1965. The march across the Edmond Pettus Bridge from Selma to Montgomery and the events surrounding it brought national attention to civil rights issues raised by leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King and others.

A multitude of celebrities and political figures are scheduled to be on hand this year including Judge Greg Mathis, Judge Mablean Ephriam, Congresswoman Maxine Waters and Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. Cahaba Center workers diligently began weeding and fertilizing flowerbeds on every corner of downtown Selma February 19, and have continued to work in preparation for the nationally publicized event. Knockout roses were trimmed, yellow and purple pansies and assorted tulips were planted at the foot of the bridge. Planters in the “Songs of Selma Park” were filled with snapdragons, sweet William, dusty miller, tulips and pansies.

According to Linda Harrell, Cahaba Center Greenhouse Manager, everything should be in full bloom for the occasion. The garden and landscaping crew is composed of persons with mental illness and intellectual disabilities. Individuals in this program have maintained flowerbeds for the City of Selma for over 10 years. Harrell said, “The crew loves the work and the money they earn. However, it is the pride in giving back to the community and seeing the beauty that they create that seems to motivate them the most.” One can observe workers walking the streets, checking the flowerbeds and hearing citizens praise them for a job well done.

Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Commissioner, John Houston stated, “More than 98% of people with mental illnesses and intellectual disabilities are not in institutions, they are living in cities and towns across the state. They want to be accepted and included in their communities and neighborhoods and they want to give back. The multi-year landscaping service of individuals from the Cahaba Center to the city of Selma is a testimony to that fact and a model for others to follow.”

For more information about the Cahaba Center go to <http://www.cahabamentalhealth.com/>, contact the Public Information Office of the DMHMR at 334-242-3417 or access the Jubilee website through <http://www.800alabama.com/things-to-do/events/details.cfm?ID=6154>.

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