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**Contact:**  
Dennis Spellman  
713-260-0779 (office)  
281-881-3673 (cell)

## **EXPERIENCED PUBLIC HOUSING MANAGER APPOINTED TO LEAD HOUSTON HOUSING AUTHORITY'S VOUCHER PROGRAM**

**HOUSTON**—A leader of disaster housing relief efforts following hurricanes Ike and Katrina has been appointed Vice President of the Houston Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Mark Thiele, who was the program director for the Harris County Housing Authority's Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP) following hurricanes Ike and Gustav, will lead Houston Housing Authority's housing choice voucher program following a decade of work in the public housing sector, including work with *The Road Home* program in New Orleans following Katrina.

"Mark Thiele is dedicated to public housing solutions and has years of crisis management experience," said Tim Seckinger, Houston Housing Authority Interim President & CEO. "Mark's insight will be a major asset as HHA continues to find solutions to Houstonians' housing needs and moves forward to address the challenges of the coming decade."

Raised in New Orleans, housing and disaster recovery are personal issues to Thiele. "Everyone on our team at HHA knows that the opportunity to serve the community is a gift," said Thiele. "We all share the same streets – families, landlords, Housing Authority staff – and we're all part of one family."

Thiele has a Master's degree in International Relations from the University of Chicago and completed his Bachelor's degree in psychology and anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program provides tenant-based assistance, in the form of a voucher, to low-income families, seniors and persons with disabilities for rental units chosen by the tenant in the private market. The Housing Authority provides payments directly to participating private property owners to assist renters with a portion of their rent payment.

"We want to help our low-income families wisely and innovatively," said Thiele. "It's our job to use taxpayer funds efficiently to benefit the whole community, which includes helping working families move toward self-sufficiency."

Participants in the Housing Choice Voucher Program may participate in HHA's Family Self Sufficiency Program (FSS), which helps clients find employment, and provides other services designed to promote economic self-sufficiency. Services offered through the FSS program may range from job training to child-care and transportation assistance. FSS participants may also take

advantage of homeownership counseling, including the establishment of a family escrow account that can be used for purchasing a house through the Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program.

The Houston Housing Authority provides affordable homes and services to more than 55,000 people throughout Houston. The agency and its affiliates own and operate 25 housing communities with more than 6,500 units for families, elderly and other residents. More information about HHA can be found at [www.housingforhouston.com](http://www.housingforhouston.com).

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