Special to The Herald

Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) is the number one genetic killer of young children, and Mississippi is doing its part to help Stop SMA. August has been declared SMA Awareness month in Mississippi by Governor Phil Bryant. To honor this proclamation Stop SMA, a local nonprofit, is inviting the community to Laugh Away SMA on Aug. 4 at the Muse Center on the Hinds Community College campus in Pearl.

Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) is a fatal genetic neurological disease that causes the muscles in the body to weaken and waste away. Children with the most severe type of SMA are typically diagnosed by their third month and are given a life expectancy of two years. SMA causes bright, loving children to become so weak that they are unable to move, breath, swallow, talk or even smile. Currently there is no cure; however, researchers are working on treatments from many different angles. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) selected SMA as the disease closest to treatment of more than 600 neurological disorders. That is why Stop SMA's goal is to raise awareness and support by introducing the community to this widely unknown disease. Laugh Away SMA is needed to educate the public and make them aware that SMA can strike any family. SMA does not discriminate, 1 in 40 people unknowingly carry the gene and 1 in 6,000 births are diagnoses with SMA with no family history.

Laugh Away SMA provides a unique family friendly comedy event to the Jackson metro area, making it a desirable option for those looking for an entertaining night out. This year's show will feature Henry Cho and Jon Reep. Henry Cho has graciously offered to return for his third appearance in support of this cause. Feedback from his past two shows has been tremendous, and we are honored to have him behind our efforts. We are also thrilled to have the hilarious Jon Reep of Last Comic Standing and ABC's Rodney Carrington Show perform for our cause. We know this event will be full of laughter and a major success in the battle against SMA. The show will begin at 7 p.m. but come early and peruse our various raffle and silent auction items. Tickets are available through Ticketmaster.

For more information abut the even please visit www.laughawaysma.org. All donations are tax deductible, to learn more about Stop SMA visit www.stopsma.org.