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PRESS RELEASE

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Super Energy Efficient Habitat for Humanity Homes in Greater MN Exceed Standards Benchmark Set for Three-Year Initiative October 1, 2009

It takes a lot of partners to build 400 super energy efficient homes

With support from the Home Depot Foundation through a Habitat for Humanity International grant, Habitat for Humanity of Minnesota is expanding its Sustainable / Green Building Program for Habitat affiliates building homes in the state of Minnesota. This program, initiated two years ago, has already significantly increased the number of Habitat homeowners who now live in super energy efficient homes that exceed Energy Star 5 Star and Green Communities criteria. **Our goal is that in three years every one of the 120+ Habitat homes built annually by the 33 Habitat for Humanity affiliates in Minnesota will achieve these efficiencies and certifications.**

Habitat affiliates come naturally to their focus on building energy efficient and durable homes. They are trying to build affordable homes -- and being able to afford the heat bill and long-term maintenance are essential ingredients in successful homeownership.

A grant from the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency awarded in the fall of 2008 for a pilot program to certify Habitat homes as meeting Green Communities standards allowed Habitat affiliates to demonstrate their ability to perform to national standards. The eight affiliates selected to participate in this pilot program (Central MN, Goodhue County, Itasca County, Lakes Area, North St. Louis County, Rice County, Steele / Waseca Counties, and Winona County) are nearing completion of 18 homes that meet Energy Star standards and are built to Green Communities criteria. These homes are located in **Akeley, Aurora, Babbitt, Bovey, Brainerd, Deer River, Faribault, Kenyon, Owatonna, Pequot Lakes, Red Wing, Rushford, St. Cloud, Waseca and Winona.**

We project that nearly all of these homes will have heating bills in the \$30-\$40 per month range and we will be tracking utility usage to confirm the actual operating efficiencies. These cost savings make a huge difference to our homeowner families whose average income is \$24,000!

HFH-MN Sustainable Building Specialist Molly Berg will be providing and arranging for a variety of basic, intermediate and advanced level trainings to support Habitat affiliates' success with building these super energy efficient homes. A key element of the Sustainable Building Program is enhanced involvement from our Green Building Advisory Council, a network of experts in this field who have provided guidance supporting the green initiatives of HFH-MN.

Habitat for Humanity is an ecumenical housing ministry and grassroots organization that works to provide simple, decent, affordable housing for and with low-income households. Homeowners contribute hundreds of hours of sweat equity to build their own homes. Volunteer labor, donated materials and contributed funds are used to build and renovate homes. These homes are then sold to low-income families at a price which charges no profit and with long-term mortgage financing, provided by Habitat for Humanity, which charges no interest.

Sustainable Building Program Habitat for Humanity of Minnesota

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Habitat affiliates come naturally to their focus on building energy efficient and durable homes. They are trying to build affordable homes -- and being able to afford the heat bill and long-term maintenance are essential ingredients in successful homeownership.

The Sustainable Building Program will offer basic, intermediate and advanced level support to Habitat affiliates through a variety of delivery mechanisms: 1) One-on-One On-Site Trainings, 2) Affiliate Networking Meetings, 3) Mini-Conference Trainings, and 4) Statewide Conference Trainings. This support is designed to be readily accessible and to take affiliates to their next level of energy efficient construction. Training and networking opportunities will be tailored specifically to Habitat affiliates' needs and practices, as well as comprehensively address state-of-the-art systems, materials and techniques. We will address both green new construction and green rehab.

To achieve the necessary efficiencies and certifications, each participating home will be tested using diagnostic equipment including blower door, duct blaster and infra-red camera tools. Adherence to Green Communities Criteria, required to qualify for funding from the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, will be established by an initial design planning session as well as periodic reviews of construction progress. Confirmation of actual operating efficiencies will be evaluated by tracking the utility usage of these super energy efficient homes once they are occupied. The HFH-MN program will offer support to affiliates at all stages during this construction process and will seek to grow the network of Home Energy Rating System (HERS) raters available for the certification process.

A key element of the Sustainable Building program is enhanced involvement from our Green Building Advisory Council, a network of experts in this field who have provided guidance supporting the green initiatives of HFH-MN: Alison Lindberg of Dovetail Partners, John Harrington of the Greater MN Housing Fund, Paul Morin of the MN Building Performance Assn., Laura Milberg of the MN Pollution Control Agency, Garrett Mosiman of the Center for Sustainable Building Research, Jimmy Sparks of the Neighborhood Energy Connection, Dean Talbot of Minnesota Power, Gary Nelson of the Energy Conservatory, Doug Manthey of Conservation Technologies, and Neil Carlson of the Univ. of MN.

HFH-MN will assist affiliates with sourcing energy efficient and green building materials. Initial efforts will focus on obtaining efficient ventilation systems and low-VOC sealants and adhesives.

The Sustainable Building program will be managed by Molly Berg. Molly has served Habitat for Humanity for two years as a VISTA Volunteer, most recently as the Green Building VISTA with HFH-MN. Significant experience in residential construction pre-dates her involvement with Habitat. Molly is in the process of becoming certified as a HERS rater. Please contact Molly for additional program details. Molly can be reached by e-mail at: molly@hfhmn.org or by phone at: 877-804-3466 (toll-free) or 612-331-4439, extension 7.