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Habitat for Humanity joins United We Serve initiative

Transportation Secretary LaHood builds affordable homes with Habitat for Humanity - New York City to help launch summer service projects

NEW YORK (June 22, 2009) – Today, Habitat for Humanity took part in the national kick-off of United We Serve, an effort launched by President Barack Obama to engage more Americans in serving their communities this summer.

Habitat for Humanity - New York City hosted Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, who built alongside volunteers and National Service members at a 41-unit, multi-family condominium project in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, Brooklyn.

“I join President Obama in calling on all Americans to give their time to worthy service projects that will have a sustained and lasting impact on their communities. I was thrilled to have the opportunity today to work at the revolutionary Atlantic Avenue complex alongside Habitat for Humanity volunteers who are making the dream of affordable housing a reality for so many people,” said **Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood**.

Also at the build were **Rep. Edolphus Towns** and Habitat partner family **Denise Dargan** and her daughter **Clineesa**, 19. Ms. Dargan, a single mother of two, works a night shift as a U.S. Postal Clerk. She and Clineesa work alongside volunteers to help build their future home.

“Thousands of volunteers gave their labor and their hearts to help build these affordable, safe, “green” homes where we are working on today,” said **Father Mark Hallinan**, chair of the board of directors, Habitat for Humanity – New York City. “This is a brick-and mortar example of the power of people from all walks of life working together to strengthen our families and our communities. We are pleased to join President Obama, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and the millions of Americans who will be part of United We Serve.”

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In addition to being a part of today's launch, Habitat for Humanity's Collegiate Challenge will participate in the United We Serve initiative. The alternative school break program offers youth meaningful opportunities to become involved in service to communities. Volunteers also will join United We Serve through Habitat's "A Brush with Kindness," a renovation program that will highlight weatherization efforts.

"Now, more than ever, we are counting on the help of our volunteers and National Service members to join us in revitalizing communities," said **Jonathan Reckford**, CEO of Habitat for Humanity International. "Community service makes a real impact on the lives of both the families we serve and on the volunteers who join us in these efforts. We want to support opportunities like United We Serve to promote this important work."

United We Serve runs through Sept. 11, which will be marked for the first time as a national day of service and remembrance. The initiative focuses on four key areas: education, health, energy and the environment, and community renewal. It is being led by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that improves lives and strengthens communities through volunteering and service.

To find opportunities, visit Serve.gov, a Web site that allows visitors to type in their zip code to find local volunteer opportunities, recruit volunteers by posting their organization's projects, or get ideas for creating their own projects with friends, families, and neighbors. Those interested in becoming involved with Habitat's Collegiate Challenge or A Brush with Kindness programs as part of United We Serve are encouraged to visit Serve.gov.

About Habitat for Humanity International

Habitat for Humanity International is an ecumenical Christian ministry that welcomes to its work all people dedicated to the cause of eliminating poverty housing. Since its founding in 1976, Habitat has built more than 300,000 houses worldwide, providing simple, decent and affordable shelter for more than 1.5 million people. For more information, visit www.habitat.org.

About Habitat for Humanity - New York City

Habitat for Humanity - New York City transforms lives and our city by building quality homes for families in need and by uniting all New Yorkers around the cause of affordable housing. With the help of thousands of volunteers every year, Habitat-NYC has built more than 180 affordable homes in the five boroughs of New York City. Learn more at www.habitatnyc.org.