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MEDIA RELEASE

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Chatham Habitat Nominated for National Affiliate of the Year Award

PITTSBORO – Chatham Habitat for Humanity has been named as one of three finalists for the prestigious Affiliate of the Year Award in the small affiliate category, according to Habitat for Humanity International Communications Manager Susan Dunn-Lisuzzo. More than 500 Habitat affiliates across the country were considered.

“We were excited and honored to get the news that we were a finalist for our affiliate size,” said Chatham Habitat Executive Director Amy Powell. “This is something that reflects the work of the staff, the Board of Directors, and our many volunteers and donors. This honor is representative of the broad based commitment and dedication to our mission,” she said.

Among the criteria was the total number of houses built during the past year and the amount tithed to Habitat International projects in developing countries. Chatham Habitat has built nine houses in Chatham County over the last year – four in Pittsboro, four in Siler City, and one in Silk Hope. For each home completed, Chatham Habitat donates \$2,000 to HFHI’s tithing program. In all, Chatham Habitat has sponsored more than 33 homes over 18 years, mostly in the Africa/Middle East region. “Most recently, we directed our tithe to Haiti, one of the poorest countries in the world that has been further devastated by four hurricanes this year,” said Powell.

The Affiliate of the Year will be determined through a peer-to-peer voting process, which will open in mid-October. The winner will be announced in early December.

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There are a number of factors that have contributed to Chatham Habitat's success including the following:

- A grant of \$750,000 from the Oak Foundation of Geneva, Switzerland leveraged a \$750,000 match from the county – the first public/private partnership in Chatham County.
- The Home Builders Association of Durham, Orange, and Chatham Counties funded and completed two houses during Home Builders Blitz 2008. Olde South Homes and Garman Homes organized the project in Chatham County. Five Builders Blitz homes were constructed by HBA-DOC in 2006 and the organization sponsored an additional home in 2007 through another program.
- A partnership with the AmeriCorps program provides teams of construction crew leaders each year, three of whom have become full-time staff members. “We could not have grown as much as we have without all the hard work and talent of the three AmeriCorps members we have hosted each year,” said Construction Director Gabriela Rife. An additional AmeriCorps member is vital to the Family Services department.
- The faith community plays a very important role, donating several thousand dollars to Chatham Habitat each year and providing invaluable teams of construction crews as well as food for volunteers. The Apostles Build program completes one to two houses each year.
- The Collegiate Challenge program recruited nearly 200 college students from across the country to spend their spring breaks volunteering for Chatham Habitat. Other special projects, such as the Women's Build, have provided much-needed labor.
- Proceeds from Chatham Habitat's two resale stores generated enough income to cover construction costs for six houses last year.
- Volunteers are Chatham Habitat's backbone. They donated 19,000 hours to Chatham Habitat last year.
- Private and corporate donations, from businesses in the community such as Progress Energy and Performance Fiber, are crucial to Chatham HFH's efforts.

In the midst of so much construction, Chatham Habitat has grown in other areas as well. “We focus on empowerment of successful homeowners and communities and emphasize energy-efficient, green construction practices,” said Powell. “We have initiated a community development and skill building curriculum, combined with an emphasis on mixed income development that will create stronger, sustainable, thriving communities.” Powell has served for several years as a member of a county-wide task force that was created to identify and recommend steps to increase local government resources for affordable housing.

Rife added, "I am particularly proud that in the midst of growth and a hectic building schedule with a small volunteer base, we have managed to find affordable ways to build more energy-efficient homes with better indoor air quality and lower impact materials."

About Chatham Habitat for Humanity: Since 1989, Chatham Habitat for Humanity has worked to change substandard housing conditions throughout Chatham County by making homeownership possible for nearly 90 families. In the process, Habitat is able to transform lives, improve neighborhoods, and most importantly, give hope and strength to our communities. For more information visit our web site: www.chathamhabitat.org