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- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -

VOLUNTEERS ACCOMPLISH WHAT FEW BUILDERS ACHIEVE

Exclusive green-building certification awarded to Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas County homes for going above and beyond to build better for families and the environment.

DUNEDIN, Fla. – Five townhomes in Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas County’s Shady Grove development recently received LEED Certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). The nationally recognized standard for green building, this LEED designation means the nonprofit has built, in partnership with community volunteers, more than half of all the certified homes in the county, according to the U.S. Green Building Council.

In 25 years of building, Shady Grove represents many firsts for the nonprofit, including the first multi-family development and the first two-story townhome design. Now Shady Grove, located at the southeast corner of MLK, Jr. Avenue and Howell Street in Dunedin, boasts the first LEED Certification as the nonprofit’s most environmentally responsible homes. Most notably, Habitat Pinellas has achieved this designation building with volunteers.

“The multitude of volunteers who constructed these high quality homes are an inspiration,” said Ron Spoor, COO Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas County. “In partnership with Habitat and the homeowners who will purchase the homes, the volunteers have shown an exemplary commitment to community and environmental stewardship.”

The townhomes’ highly efficient design goes above and beyond building code requirements with features that include concrete walls, metal roofs, water-saving toilets and Florida-friendly landscaping that preserves the site’s mature trees. These sustainability measures will lower insurance and utility rates, an estimated \$1,035 yearly savings for homeowners.

One of the LEED Certified townhomes has been designated the Showcase Home, a model which will be open to the public to showcase the green features of the homes while the development is being built out. An open house on Saturday, July 31st from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. offers a first-hand look for those interested in learning more about the Habitat program. Professionally decorated by Decorating Den Interiors, the Showcase Home expands on Shady Grove's green efforts by using furniture from Habitat's ReStore.

Additionally, Habitat for Humanity recently achieved the rank of No. 8 on the *Builder 100* list, marking the first time the nonprofit, due to the combined building efforts of U.S. all the local affiliates, has been among the top 10 biggest builders in the United States. The Pinellas County Habitat affiliate contributed to this ranking with 29 closings in the 2009-10 fiscal year, up from 22 in the prior year. Despite a down economy, Habitat Pinellas has continued to build to address the growing need for affordable housing in our community thanks to the support of donors and volunteers. Just last month, Habitat Pinellas was one of the top five builders for pulling the highest numbers of construction permits in Pinellas.

More about Shady Grove

Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas County's first multi-family subdivision, Shady Grove soon will be home to 19 households. Formerly the site of a public housing project, Habitat Pinellas is repurposing the property to house families through a nationally successful, affordable homeownership model. Each townhome will be about 1,300 square feet with three-to-four bedrooms, a single-car garage and a front porch. Located a short walk from Dunedin's downtown, the development boasts an architectural design in keeping with the city's quaint flavor. Like all other Habitat homes, the future homeowners will pay a zero-profit, zero-interest mortgage. Habitat Pinellas purchased the land through a county grant. Although five homes are now complete, monetary donations, volunteers and future homeowner candidates are still needed. Local sponsors include: Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners, Progress Energy, Habitat ReStore, Decorating Den Interiors, Davis Bews Design Group and Dan Stowers, P.E.

More about Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas County

Since 1985, **Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas County** has constructed 197 homes for struggling families in Pinellas County, using locally raised funds. Volunteers and the future homeowners construct the homes, which are sold at no profit and financed with a zero-interest loan. Habitat Pinellas homeowner candidates earn 30 to 80 percent of area median income. For Pinellas County, that translates to as little as \$17,800 a year for a family of four. Candidates must also demonstrate need for adequate shelter; ability to pay back a zero-interest loan and willingness to partner with Habitat Pinellas to invest 250 to 350 sweat equity hours. Mortgage monies are used to build even more homes, making each donation to Habitat a perpetual legacy to the community. Habitat believes that home ownership contributes to family stability, leading in turn to community stability. Additionally, Habitat Pinellas raises funds through their ReStore, a home improvement outlet where donated household and building items are sold to the public. **For more information about Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas County, contact (727) 536-4755 or visit www.HabitatPinellas.org.**