

For Immediate Release

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Students Spend Spring Break Swinging Hammers with Habitat for Humanity of Greater Portland

PORTLAND, Me -Forget Daytona Beach. For many students from across the country, Portland Maine is the place to be during Spring Break 2010. And rather than hit the slopes, these young men and women will spend their "days off" on the construction sites of Habitat for Humanity of Greater Portland.

Thanks to the internet and a national Habitat for Humanity program called Collegiate Challenge, student groups from across the country can register to volunteer with participating Habitat for Humanity sites during their vacations throughout the year. Throughout its 21-year history, Collegiate Challenge has sent approximately 170,000 students in the US and Canada to build Habitat houses in over 210 locations.

Habitat's local affiliate, Habitat for Humanity of Greater Portland, will be home to spring break students throughout February and March, and will also welcome groups during summer vacation weeks. Biddeford High School kicked off the program earlier in February, and were followed by Brandeis University. St. Thomas high schoolers from Dover NH are in town this week. March's visiting volunteers include Providence College, George Mason University, the University of Wisconsin, and Ohio State University.

A typical day on site will consist of hands-on construction, renovation, and deconstruction labor. Today, St. Thomas students are insulating the "Green Bean" house in Freeport. This service seems relevant when considering that throughout Greater Portland, approximately 75% of households cannot afford the median home price (Maine State Housing Authority, 2008). "It's exciting to think about the progress that will be made on Habitat homes thanks to these students," says Executive Director Steven Bolton. "By the end of each group's stay, not only have the students learned basic construction skills, but hopefully this starts them thinking about the challenges they too will face. They're the next generation of homeowners, and the grim reality is that our nation has a shortage of affordable housing. My dream is that student volunteers leave Portland understanding the importance of providing decent housing for every hard-working family at an affordable cost".

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About Habitat for Humanity of Greater Portland

Organized in October 1985, the Greater Portland affiliate has completed 50 simple, decent and affordable housing units, with projects currently under way in Freeport and Westbrook. By utilizing volunteer labor and donations whenever possible, HFHGP can generally build a three-bedroom home for between \$115,000 and \$120,000, about half the value of the house. On a typical house there will about 800 volunteers sharing in the building of the house with the family. Each house is then sold to a qualifying family at cost by means of a no-interest 30-year mortgage.

About Habitat for Humanity International

Habitat for Humanity International is dedicated to the cause of eliminating poverty housing throughout the world. Since its founding in 1976, Habitat has built more than 250,000 houses worldwide,

providing simple, decent and affordable shelter for more than 1 million people. For more information, visit www.habitat.org.