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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake launches partnership with the Women's Housing Coalition of Baltimore**

**Baltimore, MD**—(January 13, 2010)Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake announced today that they will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Women's Housing Coalition (WHC) in an effort to provide low income women and children with clear pathways out of homelessness and into safe, permanent housing. The MOU will be signed at an upcoming home dedication ceremony and witnessed by the new homeowner. Members of the general public are invited to join the celebration for homeowner Paris Turner on Saturday, January 16th, at 3:00 p.m. on 2408 Fayette Street.

Paris Turner, who will receive the keys to her new home on Saturday at the Dedication, is a terrific example of how the partnership between Habitat and the Women's Housing Coalition can work. For 24 years Paris struggled with drug addiction and was incarcerated several times. When she left jail for the last time in 2007 she went to Marian House, a transitional and supportive housing program for women located in Baltimore City.

After 10 months she was able to move on to the Women's Housing Coalition where she had more freedom and more responsibility. At the WHC she was able to take classes toward employment, budgeting and finance, learning to "dress for success," and she received counseling.

Paris has had a job at Mercy Hospital for 18 months and has applied for a more advanced position. She plans to go to school through a hospital-sponsored program and become a Surgery Tech. And on the 16<sup>th</sup> she will move into her new home on E. Fayette Street with her son, Malachi, 17, a dream that she never believed would come true.

Now she has a car, a job and will have a home with her son in a wonderful community. She tells everyone about her journey from Marian House to the Women's Housing Coalition to Habitat of the Chesapeake—everyone has the chance to better their lives and own their own home. About her experiences over these last couple of years and how she overcame her addictions and destructive lifestyle she says her favorite quote is "If it is to be, then it's up to me."

While Paris inspired the two organizations to formalize their partnership, Habitat of the Chesapeake and the Women's Housing Coalition have worked together informally for some time. "The WHC believes that self-sufficiency can lead to homeownership. That's why this partnership is so important. It's a mindset change. We want our residents to understand that

subsidized housing, while so critical to their stability with us, doesn't have to be forever," says Joann Levy, Executive Director of the Women's Housing Coalition.

Mike Mitchell, CEO at Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake noted, "We have had several Habitat homeowners come to us when they had achieved stability through the Women's Housing Coalition, so we are very excited about the partnership. Together we are creating a seamless pathway from homelessness to homeownership."



### **About Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake**

Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake is a non-profit housing organization which provides simple, decent and affordable homeownership opportunities in partnership with people in need. Homes are sold with no-interest loans to qualified homebuyers who earn 25% to 50% of the area median income and live in current conditions of need. Future homeowners contribute 350 hours of "sweat equity," working on Habitat of the Chesapeake construction sites alongside other community volunteers.



### **About the Women's Housing Coalition:**

The Women's Housing Coalition is dedicated to breaking the cycle of homelessness for women and children by providing affordable housing and supportive services to enable them to sustain social and financial independence. Poverty, homelessness, addiction and mental illness, alone or together, can place enormous barriers in the paths of both women and their children. The WHC believes that the best response to such barriers is permanent housing combined with the targeted supportive services that help women stay on the path of personal development and growth.

For more information:

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