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NEWS RELEASE

SIX LOCAL FAMILIES REALIZE THE DREAM OF HOMEOWNERSHIP THANKS TO USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND OZARK FOOTHILLS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

On June 6, 2008, members from USDA Rural Development, Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission (OFRPC), local businesses and members of the community were on hand to show their appreciation and support of the families that successfully participated in the Mutual Self-Help Housing (SHH) Program administered by USDA Rural Development and Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission. These six families are now the proud owners of newly constructed homes in the Ridge Meadow Estates Subdivision located just outside of Poplar Bluff city limits.

“Good housing is the foundation of stable communities and fundamental to economic development and jobs. I commend the USDA Rural Development and Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission for administering the Mutual Self-Help Housing Program and recognizing the importance of safe and affordable housing,” said U.S. Senator Kit Bond. “Thanks to a strong local, federal and private partnership and the hard work of these families, today we are celebrating the American Dream come true.”

U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill said, “What these families have achieved is a tremendous accomplishment,” said U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill. “During the housing crunch we are currently facing across the country, the Mutual Self-Help Housing program is providing an affordable way for Missouri families to move into brand new homes and I’m thrilled that these federal dollars are helping Missourians help themselves.”

Under the direction of Jerry L. Warren, Construction Supervisor for OFRPC, the families worked together to help build each others homes. The participants, along with willing family members and friends, performed approximately 65 percent of the construction work. All professional work, such as concrete, heating and air system and site preparation, were sub-contracted out by bid. The average time of construction on the homes is eight months, and no participant is allowed to move in until all of the homes are completed. The six families being recognized today are the third group to successfully complete the program, and the fourth round of five additional homes has just begun construction.



Representatives from the following agencies, organizations and businesses were present for the photo attached: USDA Rural Development; Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission; Little Dixie Community Action Agency; Ripley County Public Housing Authority; Mutual Self-Help Housing Program Participants; Brass & Oaks; Hobbs Nursery

In the fall of 2004, Rural Development presented Ozark Foothills Development Association (OFDA) with contract documents to administer the program under the supervision of Skip Hinrichs, Self-Help Housing Coordinator for OFDA. A total of eighteen families have participated in the program to build their own homes. Morris Westfall, State Director for USDA Rural Development in Missouri said, "These homes are a testament of the dedication of the homeowners that put forth such a great effort, and Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission's oversight and management of the program. I am confident the citizens of Poplar Bluff will be proud of these additions to their community."

"A special 'thank you' is extended to the following partners that have made this program such a success: OFRPC, Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Hobbs Nursery, Meeks Lumber and Brass & Oaks. I would also like to commend our congressional delegation for its strong support of this program. Without their leadership and commitment, this great program would have never been a reality," added Westfall.

Greg Batson, Executive Director, OFRPC, stated, "It has been an honor and privilege for the Ozark Foothills Development Association to be a partner with USDA – Rural Development and Little Dixie Community Action Agency in assisting families realize the dream of homeownership through the Mutual Self-Help Housing Program. Without the Mutual Self-Help Housing Program, most, possibly all, the participating families would never have a home to call their own. The USDA – Rural Development staff, Mr. Morris Westfall, State Director; Mr. Randy Griffith, State Single-Family Housing Director; Ms. Pam Anglin, Area Director; Ms. Angie Reynolds, Rural Development Manager and Kim Allison, Rural Development Specialist have worked diligently to assure the families and the Ozark Foothills Development Association, receive the resources needed. Ms. Joan Edge and Ms. Andrea Briscoe, Little Dixie Community Action, have provided exceptional guidance for effective management of the program. Without our staff, Mr. Skip Hinrichs, Coordinator; Mr. Jerry Warren, Construction Supervisor and Mr. Chad Browning, Construction Assistant, there would be no program. They have put in long hours and went "above and beyond the call of duty" to assure the participating families contribute to the project and have a quality home. All persons need an opportunity to achieve success. Mutual Self-Help Housing provides the resources necessary to offer the opportunity for homeownership where it did not exist.

The SHH program is available to families who meet specific criteria, including the ability to help with construction and the ability to re-pay the loan. The families must meet the income guidelines, have acceptable credit history and must not currently own a home. The homes are financed by USDA Rural Development for 33 years at a fixed interest rate as low as 1-percent, depending on income and the size of the family.

Anyone seeking more information about the Rural Development Self-Help Housing program, or any other USDA Rural Development program, may visit our web site at www.rurdev.usda.gov/mo/. You may also contact Kim Allison, Rural Development Specialist, at kimberlin.allison@mo.usda.gov or by calling 573-785-9679, extension 4.

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