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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT CELEBRATES NATIONAL HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH WITH LOCAL EVENTS Sulphur and Lake Charles Host Events

SULPHUR AND LAKE CHARLES, June 20, 2007 – USDA Rural Development State Director Clyde Holloway was joined today in Sulphur and Lake Charles, Louisiana, for National Homeownership Month events by Washington, D.C., official David Villano. Villano serves as USDA Rural Development’s Deputy Administrator for Single Family Housing.

In Sulphur, Holloway and Villano planted a tree in Amanda Kate Farrar’s yard. Ms. Farrar, a local elementary school teacher, lost her home to the hurricanes of 2005. She recently moved into a new home financed through an innovative “construction to permanent” guaranteed home loan program that is a partnership effort between USDA Rural Development and JPMorgan Chase. This government/private partnership program was formed in response to the need to provide more affordable homes for people in rural areas.

In a rural neighborhood near Lake Charles, trees were planted at 13 homes built by homeowners through USDA Rural Development’s Mutual Self-Help Housing Program. These 13 families invested over \$132,000 in sweat equity to construct their own homes. The sweat equity serves as a down payment while a USDA Rural Development home loan closes the deal. A ceremonial check was presented to the 13 homeowners representing over \$1.2 million in home loans. Seventh District Pavilion, Inc., is the technical assistance provider for this self-help initiative.

“USDA Rural Development is hosting over 100 events nationwide to mark Homeownership Month,” said Holloway. “In Louisiana, we are spotlighting families who have worked hard to achieve homeownership in an effort to encourage others to give homeownership a try.”

The Louisiana Urban Forestry Council, GreenScape Horticulture, City of Lake Charles Team Green of Southwest Louisiana, and Camp Fire USA provided assistance in planting the trees and educating the new homeowners on tree care and maintenance.

USDA Rural Development provides a full range of rural development credit services in rural Louisiana. The USDA Rural Development State Office is located at 3727 Government Street, Alexandria, Louisiana 71302, and the telephone number is (318) 473-7921. There are four area offices located throughout the state to serve Louisiana residents. Further information on USDA Rural Development’s loan and grant programs can be obtained by visiting USDA Rural Development’s web site at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>. USDA Rural Development is an equal opportunity lender, provider, and employer. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20250-9140.

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