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## **Knight Foundation Grant, Volunteers Support Habitat for Humanity's 25th Annual Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Work Project on the Gulf Coast**

Habitat for Humanity International

BILOXI, Miss., March 25 -- The trustees and staff of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation join former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, his wife, Rosalynn, thousands of volunteers from around the world and partner families to support Habitat for Humanity's 25th annual Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Work Project in the Gulf Coast. The five-day event from May 11-16, 2008 will serve to construct and rehabilitate 60 houses and frame up to 48 more in the host cities of Biloxi, Gulfport and Pascagoula, Miss.

To address the critical need for affordable housing, Knight Foundation is serving as the project's lead sponsor with a grant of \$1,050,000 to Habitat for Humanity of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Knight Foundation will directly sponsor eight of the houses in the work project. Independent of the foundation's sponsorship, more than 30 Knight Foundation trustees, officers and staff will contribute their own time and sweat equity to the community effort.

"As a national foundation with local roots in Biloxi and Gulfport, Knight Foundation took an early role in the post-Katrina recovery on the Mississippi Gulf Coast as a principal funder of the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal. Our funding was critical in allowing Gov. Haley Barbour to appoint the commission he needed to begin a long-term recovery led by local governments and fueled by the private sector," said Alberto Ibarguen, president of Knight Foundation. "We've never left. Since then, we've been major supporters of the Gulf Coast Business Council's regional recovery efforts, the Gulf Coast Renaissance Corporation, the Biloxi Housing Authority, the Mississippi Center for Justice and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation.

"Now, we're pleased to join Habitat, the Carters and local residents as we all, together, make a push for decent housing," he said.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita destroyed or damaged more than 500,000 houses along the Gulf Coast. Although recovery efforts continue, more than 12,000 FEMA trailers are still in use today throughout Southern Mississippi alone. This year's Carter Work Project will call attention to the ongoing need for affordable housing in the Gulf. To date, Habitat for Humanity's Gulf Coast Recovery program has completed or begun construction on more than 1,300 houses.

"Thousands of the Coast's residents are still in FEMA trailers, and this project addresses our most critical need," said Adele Lyons, Knight Foundation's Program Director for Biloxi, a lifelong resident and a Katrina survivor. "I'm really happy so many of my Knight Foundation colleagues are getting out of their offices and joining us here on the Mississippi coast to roll up our sleeves together."

In addition to building in Biloxi and Pascagoula, the Carters will work on houses and visit build sites in New Orleans and Covington, La., Bay St. Louis, Miss., and Mobile, Ala., to help raise awareness of

the ongoing recovery efforts taking place along the Gulf Coast. Houses will also be built and repaired by volunteers in several communities in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Alabama as part of the event. In total, more than 250 houses will be built or rehabilitated by the end of the year as part of Habitat for Humanity's 2008 Carter Work Project.

#### About Knight Foundation

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation promotes excellence in journalism worldwide and invests in the vitality of Biloxi and 25 other U.S. communities. Knight Foundation supports ideas and projects that create transformational change.

#### 25 Years of Building with the Carters

Former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, have been helping Habitat for Humanity shine the spotlight on the need for affordable housing since 1984. That year, the Carters led a small team of Habitat volunteers to New York City to help renovate a six-story apartment building with 19 families in need of decent, affordable shelter. A quarter of a century later, that modest effort has grown into an internationally recognized annual event that has taken place in communities around the world.

#### About Habitat for Humanity of the Mississippi Gulf Coast

Habitat for Humanity of the MS Gulf Coast (HFHMGC) serves Harrison, Jackson and Stone counties. Since Katrina, HFHMGC has completed and started construction on 170 homes. HFHMGC believes every family deserves a 'place they can call home', and as such they are committed to providing the Mississippi Gulf Coast with clean, decent affordable and safe homes. While eradication of poverty housing is a challenge in all locations, it is particularly challenging in the light of hurricane Katrina. For more information on HFHMGC and how to volunteer or donate, go to [www.hfhmgc.org](http://www.hfhmgc.org).

#### About Habitat for Humanity International

Habitat for Humanity International is an ecumenical Christian ministry that welcomes to its work all people dedicated to the cause of eliminating poverty housing. 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](http://www.habitat.org).

#### SOURCE Habitat for Humanity International

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