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**Habitat for Humanity of Seminole County and Greater Apopka
revisits past with mortgage burning**

ALTAMONTE SPRINGS, Fla.; October 10, 2013 – Twenty years ago this month, Habitat for Humanity was in the midst of a Blitz Build encompassing six counties in Central Florida. The home being built in Seminole County was for the Johnson Family, only the 11th family to do so with the local affiliate. The family was looking forward to celebrating their first Thanksgiving in their new home that year. Twenty years later, Robert and Janet once again have something very special to celebrate this holiday season. As of this month, their mortgage will be paid in full and the home that the Johnson family built with Habitat for Humanity all those years ago will be theirs, outright. After diligently fulfilling their commitment to sweat equity hours and monthly mortgage payments on a 20 year note held by Habitat, the Johnson's are now mortgage free, a great accomplishment for any family.

In celebration of their success, Habitat for Humanity of Seminole County and Greater Apopka and homeowners Robert and Janet Johnson will hold a mortgage burning ceremony at their home on 2300 Water Street in Sanford on October 17, 2013, at 6:00 pm.

Robert and Janet Johnson, along with their children Katarshia, Robin, Robert Jr. and grandson Samuel, had always dreamed of having a home of their own. Their rental house was in desperate need of repair, with holes in the floor caused by termite damage and covered up with pieces of plywood. In 1991, after hearing about the Habitat program during an information session held at St. Stephen's Lutheran Church in Longwood, the Johnsons weren't sure about the program or their ability to qualify. At the very last minute, they decided to apply and two months later received news that would change their lives forever. They had been accepted as a partner family with Habitat for Humanity.

Just the beginning of their journey into home ownership, the entire family worked together to complete their required 500 hours of sweat equity. Robert devoted his time to working on construction of the home with his oldest daughter, Katarshia. Janet spent her weekends working at Habitat's ReStore, while her then 11 year-old twins, Robin and Robert Jr., helped by sorting stamps at home.

The Johnson's home was one of six constructed during a Blitz Build in October of 1993. The project spanned six counties in Central Florida, lasted 27 days, and engaged more than 5,000 unique volunteers. In fact, there were so many volunteers that in addition to completing homes with our partner families,

they were able to assist in the revitalization of surrounding homes. Entire communities were galvanized into building a better future, for themselves and their neighbors.

Sponsored principally by The Home Depot and WESH TV, and supported by Lynx, Disney and Burger King, the October 1993 Blitz Build was one for the history books. And on November 1, 1993, the Johnson home at 2300 Water Street in Sanford became the 11th house dedicated by Habitat for Humanity in Seminole County.

“The Johnson family has given us a glimpse of our affiliate’s history and its connection to our future,” said Habitat for Humanity of Seminole-Apopka Executive Director Penny Seater. “As we prepare for a week long Blitz Build event in June of 2014 in Casselberry, we are reminded that the foundation of our mission has remained constant. Our program focuses on creating partnerships that bring the community together. It worked for the Johnson family and will continue to work for many more families to come.”

On October 17, just shy of 20 years later, Robert and Janet Johnson will once again celebrate their journey, one that changed the lives of their family. They hope that many of the people that gave their time and talent so generously to make their dream a reality will be able to join them.

Habitat for Humanity of Seminole County and Greater Apopka has completed more than 136 homes throughout the community. The affiliate’s construction capacity has more than doubled over the last year, with as many as 14 homes expected to be completed by the end of June, 2014.

Habitat for Humanity is a global, ecumenical housing ministry that seeks to build and renovate safe, decent and affordable houses in partnership with very low- to moderate-income residents of communities. The ultimate goal of Habitat for Humanity is to eliminate poverty housing and homelessness by building adequate and basic housing. To date, Habitat for Humanity of Seminole County and Greater Apopka has built and renovated more than 130 local homes. Incorporated in 1991, the offices are located in Sanford, Fla. To learn more about Habitat Seminole & Apopka or to make a donation, call (407) 696-5855 or visit <http://habitatseminoleapopka.org>.