

MEDIA RELEASE

*Building
houses,
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Habitat Houses Burn in Devastating Lawrence Fire; Affiliate Will Rebuild

LAWRENCE, MA (January 21, 2008) – A fast-moving fire that engulfed a block of Market Street in Lawrence early this morning destroyed three homes that had been renovated by Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity, and were nearly ready for occupancy. Two Lawrence families, who had put hundreds of hours of work into the houses, had expected to be moving into their new homes within weeks.

“It’s a devastating loss to the families, and to the volunteers and supporters who worked so hard and so long to bring these old houses back to life,” said Larry Sharp, executive director of Merrimack Valley Habitat.

The affiliate is committed to rebuilding the Market Street site as soon as possible, Sharp said. “We know the spirit of the people of Lawrence and the volunteers we work with every week. I have no doubt that we will be able to rebuild and make things right for our partner families, and in the meantime, we will find some way to get them into decent, affordable housing while the work continues.”

The houses that were destroyed were late 19th-century homes at 382 and 390 Market Street which had been donated in 2005 by Lawrence Pumps, Inc. Volunteers and Habitat staff had painstakingly worked since then to create code-compliant interiors while remaining true to the homes’ Victorian origins.

Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity is an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International: a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing ministry. Habitat seeks to eliminate poverty housing and homelessness from the world, and to make decent shelter a matter of conscience and action. Since its founding in 1976, Habitat has built more than 250,000 homes for more than 1 million people worldwide.

The Merrimack Valley affiliate was founded in 1985 and has built or renovated 57 homes since then. It issues no-interest mortgages to people who make between

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\$22,500 and \$45,000 annually, and then uses the mortgage payments to build new houses for others. Even with donated supplies and volunteer labor, it costs \$96,000 to build one Habitat house in the greater Lawrence area. Anyone wishing to volunteer or contribute may contact us at 60 Island Street, Lawrence, MA 01840, or 978-681-8858, or on the Web at www.merrimackvalleyhabitat.org.

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