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**Giving Thanks for Opportunity, Homes & Hope:**

**Habitat for Humanity Launches Workforce Development Program**

(BALTIMORE, MD) – Just two days before Thanksgiving, Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake and Project JumpStart are grateful for a new opportunity: the HabiCorps Workforce Development Program, which, with support from AmeriCorps, will train individuals facing significant barriers to employment for careers in the construction trades.

“HabiCorps addresses several critical needs in the city,” said Mike Posko, CEO of Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake, which has helped more than 700 struggling Baltimore-area families become homeowners over the past 35 years. “We’re providing training and support on the path to well-paying trade careers, while also building healthy, affordable housing in seriously underserved communities. It’s a 360-degree approach – investing in individuals and the neighborhoods they call home.”

The HabiCorps traineeship provides intensive, hands-on experience in the construction trades over the course of 10-1/2 months. Under the supervision of skilled instructors, HabiCorps trainees will work in small teams on a wide variety of projects, gaining hands-on experience in demolition, renovation of existing structures and new construction alike.

Key to HabiCorps’ success is Project JumpStart, which will refer graduates of their workforce development program and provide support services during the course of the program. Project JumpStart, a partnership between the Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) and the Associated Builders and Contractors of Baltimore (ABC Baltimore), operates a 14-week construction skills training program and works with ABC to place trainees in entry-level jobs and apprenticeships where they can become licensed contractors. While most Project JumpStart graduates are placed into permanent jobs, some need additional on-the-job experience or better access to driver’s license services and reliable transportation. HabiCorps offers a critical bridge for these individuals, ensuring that no one is left behind on the path to workforce readiness and success.

“This alliance with Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake is the perfect partnership and growth opportunity for Project JumpStart graduates as a bridge to apprenticeships in construction trades,” said Elisabeth Sachs, Executive Director of JOTF. “We look forward to having our graduates join HabiCorps. This partnership will lead to job opportunities and promising futures for many of Baltimore’s talented, but frequently untapped, residents. We are thrilled to participate in this great new opportunity.”

With a 75% job placement rate and over 750 graduates in just over a decade, Project JumpStart “qualifies” individuals for job placement, teaching not only the hard skills of the construction trades, which will be honed while participating in HabiCorps, but also the soft skills of being on time, teamwork and accountability.

“Workforce development programs like Project JumpStart and HabiCorps are successful not because they eventually provide jobs for individuals, they are successful because they marry capability with opportunity,” said Kate McShane, Project JumpStart Placement Director. “Our employer partners trust that our graduates are the perfect match for their company and work site projects. HabiCorps is a fantastic opportunity to build that exposure and experience, providing yet more pre-qualified candidates for great jobs in the Baltimore area.”

All HabiCorps Trainees receive a carpentry toolkit generously donated by Stanley Black & Decker and those who successfully complete the program will be placed with ABC employers in the construction field, creating a steady stream of highly-skilled workers in a growing industry. As participants in AmeriCorps service, all HabiCorps graduates will also receive an award of $5,775 to further their education. The pilot class of 10 HabiCorps Trainees launched in October and will work on homes in Sandtown-Winchester, Washington Village, Mt. Winans, Woodbourne-McCabe and Annapolis over the next year.

HabiCorps is supported by generous grants from AmeriCorps, the Governor’s Office on Service & Volunteerism, the Corporation for National & Community Service, the Dresher Foundation, the Osprey Foundation, the Viragh Foundation and Stanley Black & Decker.

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**About Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake**

Seeking to put God’s love into action, **Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake** ([www.habitatchesapeake.org](http://www.habitatchesapeake.org)) brings people together to build homes, communities, and hope. Since 1982, Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake has partnered with more than 700 families in Baltimore City, and Anne Arundel, Baltimore and Howard counties through home construction, rehabilitation and repairs, and by increasing access to improved shelter through products and services. Habitat Chesapeake also advocates to improve access to decent and affordable shelter and offers a variety of housing support services that enable families with limited means to make needed improvements on their homes as their time and resources allow.