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LAPLACE – Three local disaster recovery organizations are teaming with the St. John United Way to form an alliance to help homeowners rebuild after Hurricane Isaac.

The River Parishes Recovery Alliance will be an unprecedented step to coordinate under one roof volunteer rebuilding efforts and raise funds targeting the difficult process of repairing the damage caused by Isaac.

The Beacon of Hope Resource Center, New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity and the St. Bernard Project will work jointly to process applications, schedule work and supervise volunteers repairing homes. The effort will be funded by money raised locally by St. John United Way through its NO Place Like Home Rebuilding Initiative.

“St. John United Way has been working in St. John Parish for over 40 years where funds raised have stayed locally to directly impact the lives of residents throughout our community,” said Trista Brazan, SJUW executive director. “Money raised through our NO Place Like Home rebuilding initiative is going to be used in St. John Parish to get families back into safe, secure and functional homes.”

The alliance will target homeowners who do not have the resources to fix the flood damage to their homes, after taking into account flood insurance, FEMA grants and SBA loans.

To ensure responsible rebuilding, the alliance will work with homeowners to obtain flood insurance to guard against future disasters. It is estimated that less than half the 7,000 flooded homes in the River parishes had flood insurance.

Between them, Habitat and SBP have built or repaired more than 1,000 homes since Hurricane Katrina, while the Beacon of Hope has led the recovery of the Lakeview and

Gentilly neighborhoods of New Orleans through education, volunteer coordination and community organizing.

“While SPB is still working on Katrina-damaged homes in New Orleans and St. Bernard, the people of St. John need our help now,” said Zack Rosenberg, founder and CEO of the St. Bernard Project. “By working with our sister organizations, we can quickly and efficiently get people home.”

"Since 1983, New Orleans Habitat staff and volunteers have embraced the mission to eradicate sub-standard housing throughout the communities we serve," stated Jim Pate, Executive Director of New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity. "Working with the rebuilding alliance supports our mission and will provide an excellent partnership opportunity to best affect the St. John community as we all work together to recover from Hurricane Isaac.

The alliance plans to open an office soon in Laplace to help homeowners navigate the rebuilding process and to manage construction operations.

"Helping LaPlace residents rebuild is now the Beacon's first priority," said founder Denise Thornton. "Many New Orleanians had a difficult time getting all the information they needed to rebuild after Hurricane Katrina. Getting boots on the ground and sharing best practices with communities facing disaster is what we do. Working together with this alliance will give us a better opportunity for success in re-establishing neighborhoods and serving even more people in need"

To donate today or for more information, visit www.stjohnunitedway.org.

For more information, contact info@riverparishesrecovery.org

BACKGROUND ON ORGANIZATIONS

St. John United Way has been mobilizing the power of the community to improve lives in St. John the Baptist Parish since 1972. SJUW supports over 24 agencies and programs to create lasting changes throughout St. John Parish in the areas of education, income and health.

Beacon of Hope Resource Center was founded by Lakewood resident Denise Thornton in her home in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. It quickly became the leading source of information and advocacy for safe and responsible rebuilding, helping homeowners feel confident that their neighborhood would recovery. They now work to eliminate blighted and abandoned homes in Lakeview and Gentilly.

New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity, an independent affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization. NOAHH builds new houses in partnership with sponsors, volunteers, communities, and homeowner families to eliminate poverty housing in the New Orleans area while serving as a catalyst to make decent shelter a matter of conscience and action. Since its inception in 1983 NOAHH has built 557 homes for low-income families in need of adequate shelter. NOAHH plans to continue to affect homeownership in Orleans, Jefferson, St. John, St. Bernard, St. Charles and Plaquemines Parishes. www.habitat-nola.org

The St. Bernard Project is an award-winning, innovative non-profit housing developer that seeks to return people to their homes following a disaster. It is a vertically-integrated organization that employs veterans and AmeriCorps staffers as well as volunteers to build quickly and efficiently. Through its Disaster Recovery Lab, it is expanding beyond its St. Bernard roots and bringing its unique model to other communities.

www.stbernardproject.org