

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUBJECT: Vermont's Innovative State Housing Authority Reaches 40-Year Milestone

Montpelier – The Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) – the first state housing authority within the continental U.S.A. – is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2008.

Vermont broke new ground in 1968 when Gov. Philip Hoff approached the federal Agency of Housing and Urban Development with a new concept: a housing authority free to operate anywhere in the state where housing-assistance services for low-to-moderate-income residents were not available from a local authority. HUD officials in Washington extended their unanimous approval, and the Vermont State Housing Authority was created by an act of the Vermont Legislature on March 23, 1968. Other states have since followed Vermont's lead and established statewide authorities.

The model has proven its merit, as VSHA now provides services that touch nearly every community in Vermont. VSHA assists 8,000 needy Vermont families to secure and retain safe and decent housing.

VSHA has expanded its role greatly since 1968. The Vermont State Housing Authority works with private developers, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies to create, preserve, rehabilitate, and manage affordable housing for low-income Vermonters. It administers federal funds that come to Vermont for homeless assistance, and for the last two years has helped coordinate a statewide "Point-in-Time" count of homeless Vermonters – an important step toward providing housing solutions. Plus, VSHA's innovative Homeownership Program has helped more than 80 Vermont families move off of public rental assistance and become homeowners themselves – a program that has won national recognition and emulation.

In noting his agency's milestone anniversary, Richard Williams, VSHA's executive director since 1984, said housing affordability and availability have become critical public concerns in Vermont in recent years.

"This is a very poignant time for us to be celebrating our 40th anniversary," said Williams. "We are proud of what we've been able to accomplish for Vermonters over the past forty years, but the challenges have never been greater. We're inspired and motivated by the knowledge that our services are needed more than ever."

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