



(Oct. 27, 2008) – Donna Johnson and her three teenaged children, Ryan (18) and twin daughters Kaitlyn and Kelsey (16), survived the tornado that destroyed their home in Macon County in February. It was a blessing that they were not home when the storm hit. Ryan was at a friend's home, and the rest of the family was hunkered down in the family van against the wall behind a local grocery store, watching the storm pass over.

That night, the family lost everything except their lives, the clothes on their backs, and their van. Since the storm, they have lived in a cramped FEMA trailer on the five acres of land they own. Their current living situation is particularly inadequate, as Ryan was born with arthrogyriposis, a rare birth defect that affects the musculoskeletal system and seriously affects mobility. He has used a wheelchair all of his life and requires assistance with some daily tasks.

Citizens Bank of Lafayette and Nashville Area Habitat for Humanity chose to partner with each other to make the Johnson family's dream for a new home a reality. As a member of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati (FHLB), Citizens Bank was able to obtain a grant from the FHLB to provide significant "seed" money to build the Johnson/ Fishburn home. Nashville Area Habitat for Humanity has been able to raise the remainder of the funds necessary to build a home for the Johnsons. These funds will help build a Habitat home on the site of their previous home, to be constructed November 8th to 23rd.

"We are excited with the opportunity to provide the Johnson family with a new home after they lost so much in the February tornado," said Pete Williston, Chief Executive Officer of Citizens Bank. "Habitat for Humanity is a great organization and we are honored to partner with them and the MCHS Interact Club in this wonderful endeavor. We hope many Macon Countians will volunteer to assist with the building of the Johnson's new home."

The Interact Club at Macon County High School, where Ryan and his sisters attend, has made tornado relief a major emphasis this year, and MCHS Interact Club members will provide a significant amount of volunteer work to build the home. In addition to Citizens Bank, the Interact Club, and Habitat for Humanity, the home is made possible by the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee, the Tennessee Disability Housing Assistance Program through United Cerebral Palsy of Middle Tennessee, the insurance company that's doing the safe room, Week of Compassion, and many other donors. Hundreds of Middle Tennessee volunteers will assist with this effort and Long Term Recovery of Macon County will provide breakfast and lunches for the volunteers.

"Our Interact students and our Interact District officers have wanted to do something very

meaningful to help our county recover from the terrible storm,” said Jada Law, MCHS Interact co-sponsor. “To be able to help a family of our own students just makes this very special.”

Thanks to these partnerships, Nashville Area Habitat and Macon County volunteers will rebuild the home in a way that is designed specifically to facilitate Ryan’s independence and to make assisting him easier for family members or other caregivers. Special features of the home will include zero-threshold doors, lowered door locks and light switches, an automatic door opener, a customized bathroom and a tornado safe room. Since Ryan is unable to flee from threatening weather conditions, the tornado safe room was added to allay his fears and provide accessible refuge in the event of another serious storm.

“This further teaches our kids what service is all about, and these Interact students will remember this for the rest of their lives,” added Kathy Cothron, MCHS Interact co-sponsor.

About Nashville Area Habitat for Humanity (NAHFH)

NAHFH is a non-profit, ecumenical Christian organization committed to providing families with the life-changing opportunity to purchase and own decent, affordable homes. The agency consistently ranks in the top one percent of all Habitat affiliates and has grown by seven times in size since 2002. By December, Nashville Area Habitat will have built 59 homes in 2008 -- 42 locally and 17 abroad. The agency’s ReBuild program has worked on five homes and will do several more by year-end. Since 2007, all Nashville Area Habitat homes have been ENERGY STAR compliant for energy efficiency, earning the agency the ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year award in 2008. By 2010, the agency will be building to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards. To date, the agency has served more than 1,270 family members, including 800 children. Prior to becoming homeowners, Habitat partner families must complete up to 475 hours of “sweat equity” at the build site and in the classroom to earn their homes. Mortgage payments at zero percent interest range between \$350 and \$500 per month, including taxes and insurance. To request an application or to receive more information about NAHFH, call 615-254-HOME (4663) or visit www.habitatnashville.org. For information on Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity go to www.hud.gov/offices/ftheo or call the local HUD office at (615) 736-5600.