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Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia

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Philadelphia, PA 19121

**WHAT: 2016 Habitat for Humanity Good Neighbor Award**

**Judy Berkman, Managing Attorney with Regional Housing Legal Services to receive Habitat Philadelphia's Good Neighbor Award in recognition of her commitment to affordable housing.**

**WHEN: Building HOPE Luncheon, Tuesday, April 26 (12:00 – 1:30)**

**WHERE: PA Convention Center Grand Hall**

**ABOUT: Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia Good Neighbor Award**

Created in 2010, the Good Neighbor Award honors individuals or groups that consistently give of their time, talent, voice or resources to significantly advance Habitat for Humanity's mission to build and repair homes in partnership with families in need. The Good Neighbor Award was created in loving memory of Patrick Monaghan, who volunteered with Habitat as both a way to positively impact the lives of others and also to have fun. Recipients are chosen annually by Habitat staff.

**Recipient, Judy Berkman, will be available for photos and interviews.**

For some, home is not just a place- it is also a process. Judy Berkman understands this *figuratively and literally*. For the past five years Judy has been Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia's primary legal counsel, providing pro-bono legal services from everything from vendor contracts to home settlements. As managing attorney with Regional Housing Legal Services, a non-profit law firm with unique expertise in affordable,

sustainable housing and its related components, Judy has gone above and beyond with her extensive service to Habitat and the families the organization assists.

In addition to creating and reviewing all the organizations legal documents, Judy has also been an active member of the Family Services and Critical Repairs Committees, helping to administratively shape Habitat's growing repair program. Her work around Habitat's repair program has resulted in 271 existing low-income homeowners receiving critical repairs. In addition, since 2011, Judy has facilitated home closings for 37 first-time, low-income homebuyers- helping these families enjoy the many benefits of homeownership that forms the cornerstone in the lives of families and communities.

When asked about what motivates her, Berkman offered, "I love helping my clients to resolve, strategize, and figure out solutions. I really see my job and Regional Housing's mission as connecting to possibilities. With each house sold by Habitat, there is usually some complication and I am there, behind the scenes to ensure that the issue is resolved."

Frank Monaghan, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia, states, "Judy Berkman is an invaluable asset to vulnerable families, to Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia and to our City. Her passion and tenacity for affordable housing combined with legal acumen ensures that more families have the opportunity to buy and remain in their homes."

Monaghan will present Berkman with the Good Neighbor Award at the annual Building Hope Luncheon held Tuesday, April 26<sup>th</sup> at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. The organization expects 1,200 attendees at this year's luncheon where Ukee Washington is the keynote speaker. Mayor Jim Kenney will also be speaking at the event marking Habitat for Humanity's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### **About Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia**

An affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International—the largest non-profit homebuilder worldwide—**Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia** ([habitatphiladelphia.org](http://habitatphiladelphia.org)) transforms lives and our City by building and repairing quality homes in partnership with families in need and by uniting all Philadelphians around the cause of affordable housing. Founded in 1985, Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia has built 190 homes to date. Partner families are required to contribute 350 hours of "sweat equity" in building their houses and others in order to qualify for the no-interest mortgage provided by Habitat.

Since spring of 2010 Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia has also strategically partnered with over 300 families to stabilize their homes through critical repairs and weatherization to keep homes safe, healthy and efficient.

With 3800 volunteers annually, Habitat believes we are all part of the solution to achieve affordable housing, and we welcome anyone willing to swing a hammer to help make affordable homes a reality.

**About Regional Housing Legal Services ([rhls.org](http://rhls.org))**

Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS) is a nonprofit law firm with unique expertise in affordable, sustainable housing and its related components — community and economic development, utility matters and preservation of home ownership. RHLS provides innovative project and policy solutions that help create sustainable communities offering decent, safe and affordable housing for lower-income Pennsylvanians.

Created in 1973 to address landlord/tenant issues for residents of dilapidated workforce housing in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, RHLS has grown to serve the legal needs of hundreds of nonprofit affordable housing developers and community organizations across the Commonwealth. Led by Executive Director, Mark Schwartz, and Chief Counsel, Mark Levin, the organization would grow to focus its resources toward maximizing impact by focusing on systemic issues that affected those it represented. To date, RHLS attorneys have helped to bring 6,985 units of housing to fruition, with deals totaling over \$971,000,000 in financing.

Recognizing that housing is just one “piece of the puzzle,” to building stronger communities, RHLS maintains a steadfast commitment to affecting systemic change for the benefit of vulnerable populations. RHLS has consistently acted as a driving force behind many key policy changes in Pennsylvania that benefit the disenfranchised, including Pennsylvania’s Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program and the administration of the Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP).