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For Immediate Release

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**QUEENS RESIDENTS LEARN VALUABLE HOME REPAIR
SKILLS IN INNOVATIVE HOME MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP**

Women and Men Empowered by Self Sufficiency in Maintaining Their Homes

Far Rockaway, NY October, 2011--Dozens of women and men are gaining the skills to repair their own homes in an innovative community outreach program in Queens.

The Home Maintenance Workshop, organized by two non-profits, provides hands-on instruction in basic tool skills, carpentry, tile installation, plumbing repairs, drywall installation, taping and spackling, painting, wallpapering, electrical safety tips, energy efficiency upgrading and other home maintenance techniques. Before graduating and receiving a certificate, students in the Home Maintenance Workshop program demonstrate their newly gained skills working with lumber, sheetrock and other materials by building finished rooms, complete with electrical and plumbing systems.

The free program is offered by the Housing Partnership Development Corporation and the Margert Community Corporation to assist homeowners and prospective first-time home buyers in maintaining their home investment.

Classes are limited to 25 persons “in order to maximize the learning experience,” said Walter Mullins, a home repair expert who conducts the Workshop. Two-thirds of the students are women. The Workshop is a beginners' course to learn the basics. All materials and tools are provided without charge.

“Our goal is to provide community residents with the ability to maintain their homes and enhance their value,” said Dan Martin, Chairman and CEO of the Housing Partnership, which developed the program. “The Home Maintenance Workshop is consistent with our objective of providing opportunities for individuals and families to maintain existing valuable housing stock and revitalize their neighborhoods.”

“The Home Maintenance Workshop is an integral component of the post-purchase housing counseling services we provide to first time homebuyers. The Workshop is designed to provide individuals with the skill set needed to do their own home repairs and preventative maintenance. This knowledge also empowers them with the ability to understand the extent of work required, and to evaluate costs when contractors and other professionals have to be hired for larger or more complex projects,” said Joe Barden, Executive Director of Margert Community Corporation. “This unique program is a great success and potential homebuyers are also encouraged to attend. We are very pleased to be able to help people in Queens maintain their investments in their homes,” said Barden.

As a member of Gifts In Kind International’s worldwide network of nonprofit organizations, Margert Community Corporation partners with the Home Depot Retail Donation Program, through which it receives tools and home repair materials for use in the Workshop. Graduates are eligible to “shop” these items at no cost in order to exercise and reinforce their new-found skills.

“Students in the Home Maintenance Workshop are motivated by their pride in their homes and the community as a whole, as well as the need to save money while keeping their homes in good shape,” said Walter Mullins. “As a homeowner, I know how important it is to be able to maintain your own home,” he said.

The weekly two-hour sessions are held in a workshop built in the St. Gertrude’s gymnasium at 307 Beach 37th Street, Far Rockaway run by the Margert Community Corporation.

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About The Housing Partnership

The Housing Partnership serves as New York City's primary intermediary for development of new, affordable homeownership housing on both public and private sites. And as a partner in fulfilling Mayor Bloomberg's housing plan, the Housing Partnership works with the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development to produce about 1,200 affordable housing units each year.

The Housing Partnership's mission is to create affordable homes and revitalize neighborhoods through community development promoted by a dynamic partnership involving the public and private sectors.

Established in 1982 by David Rockefeller and the Partnership for New York City, The Housing Partnership has developed more than 22,000 new affordable units and completed 8,000 renovations of rental apartments. The Housing Partnership's developments have leveraged more than \$2.6 billion in private sector financing in over 50 neighborhoods.

About Margert Community Corporation

Margert Community Corporation administers federal, state and city housing programs to assist low and moderate income tenants and homeowners in the NYC metropolitan area.

Margert Community Corporation is a New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal Neighborhood Preservation Company, and a HUD approved housing counseling agency, providing comprehensive assistance to persons who want to rent, buy or already own a home, and who seek to be responsible renters, buyers and owners.

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