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**State Honors Nola Renz of Helping Hand House of Puyallup**

**SPOKANE, Wash.—Sept. 11, 2007—** Nola Renz, Executive Director of Helping Hand House of Puyallup, Wash., was recognized last night by the State of Washington for years of service to the mission of providing affordable housing for the benefit of Washington residents. In an awards ceremony at the Davenport Hotel in Spokane that was part of the annual Housing Washington conference attended by more than 700 peers and colleagues, Nola Renz received a 2007 *Friend of Housing* award from the Washington State Housing Finance Commission.

Nola Renz has led Helping Hand House to become one of the most dynamic responders to homelessness in the state. She has guided this nonprofit agency to become the primary provider of emergency and transitional housing, and homeless prevention in East Pierce County. Her personal compassion for homeless households shows in her organization's successes. Helping Hand House has 368 stories to tell from last year alone. Here is just one:

When Tina first entered Helping Hand House she had lost almost everything that was important in her life: her home, her car, and worst of all, her family. Child Protective Services had just taken her three sons. Drug and alcohol abuse had taken their toll. Tina had many obstacles facing her. Through the Helping Hand House program, Tina met weekly with a case manager who provided her with the tools she needed to overcome those obstacles. However, it was Tina who had to get the work done. She took the bus to all her appointments, including her Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. She found a job and began putting money into a savings account. After five months, Tina had saved enough money to get a car and an apartment. She now has her children back and is on her way to becoming a manager at the business where she works.

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368 families who were either homeless or facing homelessness found help. Some were assisted through their homeless prevention program so they could stay in their homes. Some homeless families were moved into one of the 41-housing units Helping Hand House provides; units that bring with them supportive services and case management. They changed their lives. They rebuilt their hope for the future.

On average, 75% of the families graduating from Helping Hand House programs find and maintain stable and permanent housing. As the focus shifts away from emergency and transitional housing to permanent supportive housing, Ms. Renz have taken the lead. Her organization is currently partnering with Tacoma Housing Authority, Bates Technical College, the Sumner and Tacoma School districts, and the Pierce County Department of Health to provide 30 units of permanent supportive housing: 15 units each in Tacoma and Sumner. Helping Hand House is also purchasing another 15 units of permanent supportive housing to open in 2008.

Under Ms. Renz's leadership, Helping Hand House has developed a dedicated staff that is constantly enhancing service delivery by constantly learning. In 2005 the Business Examiner ranked Helping Hand House as number 4 in "Top Places to Work." Ms. Renz credits this simple value statement with their success: "provide an environment based on compassion, honesty, respect, good stewardship, and professionalism through positive and caring relationships."

In addition to her full-time job, Ms. Renz serves as president of the Washington State Homeless Coalition, a post she has held for the past two years and has just been re-elected to another two-year term.

The Commission received a record 49 nominations for the *Friend of Housing* awards from people working in the public, private and independent sectors of the affordable housing industry. Honorees are selected for their leadership and exceptional contribution to creating or supporting affordable housing, implementing housing-related programs, creating innovative financing mechanisms for housing, supporting homebuyer education or technical training efforts within the housing community and helping to solve housing problems.

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Washington State Housing Finance Commission is a publicly accountable, self-supporting agency dedicated to increasing housing access and affordability and to expanding the availability of quality community services for Washington state residents.

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