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**Renée Rooker of the Walla Walla Housing Authority  
Honored with A Friend of Housing Award**

Spokane, Wash.— September 30, 2009—Renée Rooker, Executive Director of the Walla Walla Housing Authority, was honored last night for her outstanding service in expanding affordable housing resources for the benefit of Washington’s low-income residents. Before an audience of 350 colleagues, Ms. Rooker received a *Friend of Housing* Individual Achievement Award presented annually by the Washington State Housing Finance Commission. The awards ceremony took place on Sept. 29 at the DoubleTree Hotel Spokane City Center as part of the 2009 *Housing Washington* conference.

“Renée is a champion, not only for what she does but also for whom she champions. She is a leader, mentor, activist, and someone who, deep down, passionately cares about every person’s right to have a safe, decent, and affordable home,” said Kim Herman, executive director of the Commission. “We are grateful and honored to recognize her with a 2009 *Friend of Housing* award.”

For years, Ms. Rooker has been an advocate for people of all walks of life who need affordable housing. She has worked tirelessly on both the state and federal fronts to bring resources to the state’s communities to address the growing affordability gap.

On top of her significant work as executive director of the Walla Walla Housing Authority, her leadership activities with the Affordable Housing Advisory Board (AHAB), the Association of Washington Housing Authorities, the Washington Low-Income Housing Alliance, and, currently, as the president of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) has helped foster change at the local, state, and national levels.

Not only has she developed housing in Walla Walla for many low-income families, as legislative chair of the Association of Washington Housing Authorities and in her role in AHAB, she worked to maintain housing as a legislative priority in this state and she was in the forefront with NAHRO in helping to establish the National Housing Trust Fund.

“Renee is a true local and national leader. She mentors those coming into the field and is an inspiration to all who work with her,” said Chris Pegg of the Longview Housing Association. “She not only shares her passion for this mission with others, but she lives it each and every day.”

As its executive director, Ms. Rooker has guided the Walla Walla Housing Authority’s development of innovative, attractive and affordable housing for homeless veterans, families, the elderly, and disabled, which have received numerous awards. Her colleagues credit her as being in the forefront of utilizing the tax credit program in Walla Walla. She has also helped create cottage communities and affordable housing opportunities for low-income families in cooperation with private sector developers.

As an active NAHRO member for over 20 years, Ms. Rooker has worked closely with industry groups and elected officials to secure funding and initiate reform legislation to improve housing programs across the United States. In her current role as NAHRO President, she also travels to other countries to study how affordable housing is provided around the world. NAHRO’s “Housing America” campaign is another project with Ms. Rooker’s mark on it.

The Commission, based in Seattle, presented a total of five *Friend of Housing* awards to two individuals and three organizations. Honorees were 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.

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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