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PRESS RELEASE

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D.A. DONOVAN, HABITAT FOR HUMANITY- NEW YORK CITY ANNOUNCE JOINT EFFORT TO COMBAT FORECLOSURE FRAUD, EDUCATE CONSUMERS ON PREDATORY LENDING SCAMS

******Partnership in "Loan Rangers" Program to Raise Financial Awareness Among Staten Islanders******

STATEN ISLAND, NY - Richmond County District Attorney Daniel M. Donovan, Jr. today announced that his office has joined in partnership with Habitat for Humanity – New York City, to bring the *Loan Rangers Public Awareness Campaign* to the Staten Island community. As part of the program, volunteers from Habitat-NYC, accompanied by investigators or prosecutors from the District Attorney's office, will offer seminars to local community groups to raise community awareness of: mortgage fraud, foreclosure rescue scams, credit card debt relief programs, tax refund anticipation loans and the "rent to own" industry.

District Attorney Donovan stated, "In this economy far too many individuals are being preyed upon by unscrupulous individuals and businesses claiming quick relief for debt or easy purchases of new homes or products. Unsuspecting consumers, our friends and neighbors, often fall victim to these scams out of desperation or ignorance of their rights. I am proud to partner with Habitat for Humanity – New York City, to offer this service to our Staten Island community."

Josh Lockwood, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity - New York City, said: "We've found that too many low-income consumers are losing their homes to foreclosure rescue fraud and their hard-earned dollars to predatory fringe financial services like rapid tax loans. With critical support from District Attorney Donovan and the Staten Island Foundation, Habitat-NYC is sharing important financial literacy information with our Habitat homeowners, low-income residents of Staten Island and vulnerable communities throughout the city."

So that the greatest amount of community members can be reached, the presentations will be available to congregations, schools and community **groups that can provide space and weeknight or weekend meetings for 30 or more people.**

The presentations, which range from 20-30 minutes, will focus on:

- Escaping and avoiding excessive credit card debt by taking advantage of free or low-cost financial planning programs;
- Using layaway or lease arrangements to buy furniture and appliances, as an alternative to rent to own stores;
- Using government sponsored tax preparation resources and avoiding often expensive refund anticipation loans;
- Avoiding illegal and dangerous foreclosure rescue scams;
- How to improve your credit score, which will reduce the cost of borrowing.

As part of the presentations, participants will attend a short presentation covering a broad range of scams and fringe financial products. A number of fact sheets and fliers will be available that explain the dangers of many scams and high priced loans. Additionally, details will be provided on free and low-cost alternatives that are available to all New Yorkers in financial trouble.

Any Staten Island community organizations wishing to schedule a presentation can contact Paige Bellenbaum, Director of Advocacy at Habitat-NYC, at pbellenbaum@habitatnyc.org / 212-991-4000 x312. To learn more about Habitat-NYC's Loan Rangers program, go to: <http://www.habitatnyc.org> and click on Advocate.

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