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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**James Zecca Receives 2008 Dorothy Richardson Award for Resident Leadership**

**July 24, 2008 (Utica, NY)** - NeighborWorks® America announced the recipients of the 2008 Dorothy Richardson Award for Resident Leadership, which included local winner James Zecca. "This year's Dorothy Richardson Award honorees have demonstrated a steadfast commitment to improving the communities in which they live," said Ken Wade, CEO of NeighborWorks® America. "Their important contributions have helped to transform and enrich their neighborhoods and towns, creating lasting benefits for countless residents. We are proud to honor them for the generous service to others."

Zecca was nominated by The HomeOwnership Center and is the third of several local winners. Kelly Walters and Lucretia Hunt are past recipients of this prestigious award. "The high number of winners from our small area is an obvious reflection of the quality of our leadership training program and dedication to revitalizing and growing neighborhoods through homeownership, housing rehabilitation and community empowerment," said Janice Forte, executive director of the HOC.

James Zecca is a charter member of the West Utica Concerned Citizens block association and in 2005 was elected to the Utica Common Council. Zecca's dedication is evident in his advocacy for government responsiveness to neighborhood concerns. He actively promotes resident initiatives and ideas, including the Advantage After School Program, the Parental Accountability Ordinance and the successful effort to stop street closings and reallocate funds to other community projects. As a tireless volunteer with UNHS NeighborWorks Homeownership Center, Zecca helps organize the "Yard of the Month" Program, cited for excellence by the NYS Attorney General's Office.

Created in 1991, the Dorothy Richardson Award for Resident Leadership honors residents who exemplify the qualities of Dorothy Richardson, a Pittsburgh activist who helped advance the community-based development movement.

Chartered in 1979, The HomeOwnership Center has been the leader in housing initiatives for over 27 years. Through various programs such as Home Buyer Education, Financial Literacy and Pre-purchase Counseling, the certified and trained staff at HOC help serve low- to moderate-income families in Oneida, Herkimer and Madison counties.

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If you would like more information on this topic, or to schedule an interview, please contact Julie Howarth at (315) 724-4197 or email Julie at [jhowarth@unhs.org](mailto:jhowarth@unhs.org)