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Contact:

Adam DeWitte

Community Outreach Manager

Transylvania Habitat for Humanity

828-884-3907

[Adam.dewitte@transylvaniahabitat.org](mailto:Adam.dewitte@transylvaniahabitat.org)

### **Habitat completes first 1-bedroom home in Transylvania County**

(Brevard, NC) Thomas Aiken, a native of Transylvania County, was a month shy of 60 when he learned he needed to find another place to live, yet again. He had rented for the past 42 years and was living in a mobile home at the time. "The amount of money I had given landlords over the years was overwhelming and there I was facing homelessness," said Aiken.

With rents starting at \$1100, Aiken was in a market he could no longer afford. He tried unsuccessfully to buy a small home but didn't meet the qualifications and had a mailbox full of denial letters. Aiken thought he may be forced to leave the town he grew up in and loved.

Aiken receives disability from a work-related injury and has a part time job to help pay the bills. He had always dreamed of owning his own home but with each passing year that dream seemed to slip further and further away.

"One day when I was at my lowest, I picked up the paper to see if there were any affordable housing options and I saw an article that Habitat for Humanity is building one-bedroom homes in Rosman. I didn't think I could qualify but I was encouraged because I had always thought Habitat was for families, not single people. I was wrong. I applied and did all the things they asked of me but in the back of my mind, I still thought there was no way they would approve me," said Aiken.

Earlier this year, Transylvania Habitat for Humanity began building one-bedroom units as a result of rising costs in building materials and real estate. Habitat also knew that one and two-

person households dominate in Transylvania County, one-bedroom units rank as the highest priority, and Transylvania County has some of the highest median rents in the region.

“I don’t remember what I said or half of the conversation the day I received the approval call from Habitat. All I remember was the words your approved then hanging up the phone and crying my eyes out,” said Aiken. “I was on my knees thanking God and the people of Habitat. I am forever blessed to have come in contact with everyone who made this dream come true.”

To qualify for the one-bedroom cottage by Habitat, the household size must be one or two individuals with a one-person household income between \$13,900 and \$37,050 and a two-person household income of \$18,310 and \$42,350; applicants must currently live or work in Transylvania County, and have a need for housing (such as living in overcrowded or substandard housing, paying more than 30% of their income on rent, living in public housing, or unable to obtain a traditional mortgage). Future homeowners must partner with Habitat throughout the process, performing sweat equity helping to build their own home or work in the ReStore. Applicants who are disabled can receive modifications on sweat equity hours based on their ability to perform. Applicants must also meet certain citizenship requirements, have a steady source of income, demonstrate financial responsibility, and have recurring debt less than 43% of their income.

For more information about housing, please visit [www.TransylvaniaHabitat.org](http://www.TransylvaniaHabitat.org) or call 828-862-5117. Applications for housing are on the website, at the ReStore and at the Habitat Housing Ministry office located at 692 Ecusta Road.