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## **Long-Awaited Housing for Homeless Women Opens National, State, and Local Leaders Gather to Celebrate**

PORTLAND, ME [May 31, 2010] Avesta Housing and Preble Street will host a Grand Opening Celebration at Florence House on **June 4, 1:30-4:00pm, at 190 Valley Street**. The program, featuring Governor John Baldacci, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan, U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe, U.S. Senator Susan Collins, U.S. Representative Mike Michaud, U.S. Representative Chellie Pingree, Portland City Councilor Jill Duson, and Homeless Voices for Justice Advocate Dee Clarke, will begin at 2:00pm.

Florence House, the second Avesta Housing/Preble Street “housing first” project, was inspired by the success of their first collaborative effort at Logan Place, which has proven to be a cost-effective solution to chronic homelessness. Florence House was conceived in response to the continued problem of homelessness in Portland, a problem which became a crisis when the YWCA closed and 68 additional housing units for women were lost, forcing Preble Street to create a makeshift shelter above the Soup Kitchen at Preble Street Resource Center.

Florence House, like Logan Place, creates permanent homes for the most vulnerable and underserved adults, who have been persistently homeless in Portland for months and years because of the lack of safe affordable housing.

Avesta Housing, Maine’s largest nonprofit affordable housing organization, built, owns, and maintains Florence House. Preble Street, Maine’s primary provider of homeless services, provides 24-hour support to assist people in making the transition to permanent housing, re-integrating into the community, and maintaining their independence.

Florence House offers 25 efficiency apartments, 15 semi-private units, and up to 25 emergency shelter beds. The building also features:

- community space for group and recreational activities
- a commercial kitchen
- laundry facilities

- convenience to public transportation
- sustainable, energy efficient design elements

The 2002 City of Portland Consolidated Plan cites the “critical need for more housing particularly . . . permanent housing with supports for persons with special needs and/or leaving shelter or transitional housing programs.”

Based on approaches to homelessness and chronic mental illness that have emerged nationally, Florence House is designed to be a solution-oriented response to the problem of chronic homelessness, a way to end homelessness, not manage it.

Support for the development and operation of Florence House represents a remarkable public/private partnership that includes Portland Housing Authority, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Northern New England Housing Investment Fund, MaineHousing, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, the City of Portland, TD Bank, Genesis Fund, NeighborWorks America, Portland Housing Authority, private grants, and corporate and individual donors.

Florence House was named for Florence Young, a long-time social worker who played many roles at Preble Street for over 20 years: intern, staff, and board member.