



2735 Whitney Road, Clearwater, FL 33760

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CONTACT: Taylor Ham

(703) 970-3675

**Homes for Independence and Cocoa Police Department
Honored by the MetLife Foundation**

Cocoa, FL—Homes for Independence and the Cocoa Police Department were honored by the MetLife Foundation on October 13 for their accomplishments with Operation Cocoa Cleanup; a successful effort to reduce crime and improve quality of life at Crestview Villas, a condominium complex located at 800 N. Fiske Boulevard in Cocoa.

Since the Crestview Villas property was ravaged by hurricanes Frances and Jeanne in 2004, HFI has fought an uphill battle to reconstruct the buildings and make the community safe for residents. Thirty-eight percent of Crestview's units were destroyed and abandoned during the hurricanes, making them a prime location for gang activity in the area. Operation Cocoa Cleanup was a community-police partnership formed to eradicate gang activity, open drug deals, shootings and other criminal activity on N. Fiske Boulevard in Cocoa. The effort, which was spearheaded by Homes for Independence and supported by Cocoa Police Department, the 800 N. Fiske Condo Association, the City of Cocoa Code Enforcement Division, United Church of Christ, Managers Acting for Property Safety (MAPS) and other stakeholders, brought all 48 hurricane-damaged rental units in the Crestview Villas complex back online, helping to rebuild a safe and healthy place to live for local residents.

Crestview Villas' 128 units are home to 57 youth under the age of 14 and 37 residents who are elderly or have a disability. Crestview Villas is now the only gated community in Cocoa and features an on-site police substation and resource center that provides tutoring, educational computer games and other after-school activities for youth living in the complex. "It has been a long road from heartbreaking to heartwarming," said Louella Jones, a resident of Crestview for more than ten years. "I'm pleased and proud to see all the changes—it feels like home again."

The MetLife Foundation Community-Police Partnership Award, administered by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), recognizes partnerships between community development groups and police departments that have reduced crime and spurred housing development, economic activity and improved community services in low and moderate-income communities. Homes for Independence and the Cocoa Police Department were one of six award winners selected from more than 650 applicants nationwide for their work in neighborhood revitalization.

"We are thrilled to be recognized by the MetLife Foundation for our efforts at Crestview Villas," said Lori Kreisle, Housing Director for Homes for Independence. "We are also extremely proud and happy to have had the opportunity to work with some amazing partners and witness the heart and soul of this community come to life again."

Homes for Independence is a subsidiary corporation of Abilities of Florida, a non-profit organization that provides vocational evaluation, skills training, accessible housing and job placement services to persons with disabilities throughout the state of Florida.

Learn more about Abilities of Florida on our website: www.ourpeoplework.org.

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Lori Kreisle (left), HFI Housing Director and Cocoa Police Chief Mark Klayman accept the MetLife Foundation award from a MetLife representative Ann Riley.



Young residents of Crestview Villas enjoy working on the computers in the Community Resource Center after school.



Operation Cocoa Cleanup transformed the Crestview Villas property from a hurricane-ravaged hotbed of crime into a beautiful, safe and accessible place to live.



The Cocoa Police Department substation at 800 N. Fiske Blvd. doubles as a Community Resource Center.



Members of the Cocoa Police Department celebrate their award with some of the young residents of Crestview Villas.