Darden Commitment Exceeds $1 Million Gift-in-Kind Donations to Habitat ReStore Resale Outlets

Darden's ongoing commitment to giving back drives funding for local Habitat affiliates to build and improve homes

ORLANDO, Fla., Aug. 30, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Items donated to Habitat for Humanity's ReStore resale outlets from remodeled Darden restaurants have topped $1.2 million in value and have rapidly moved off the floors of Habitat ReStores across the nation. The gift-in-kind donations to Habitat began in 2010 when Darden began updating more than 300 of its Red Lobster, Olive Garden and LongHorn Steakhouse locations. (Logo: http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20050203/FLTH026LOGO )

To date, 150 Darden restaurants have been remodeled -- contributing art, furnishings, hostess stands and even "western-themed" decor to Habitat ReStore resale outlets. The ReStores stock new and lightly used furnishings, building materials and more for sale to help local Habitat affiliates fund the construction, rehabilitation and repair of homes within their communities.

"Darden's contribution is part of our company's ongoing commitment to giving back to the communities we serve," said Drew Madsen, president and chief operating officer for Darden. "This partnership with Habitat for Humanity helps our company live its values. By donating furnishings and other items to ReStores, we honor our commitment to sustainability and contribute to Habitat's mission of building homes and strengthening communities around the country."

The 700 Habitat ReStores across the nation operate through local Habitat for Humanity affiliates and thrive through contributions, volunteers and donations including items from product close-outs or remodels. The stores promote the concept of recycling and reuse, keeping quality items out of landfills and offering goods at a discount to the general public.

Habitat for Humanity Kansas City ReStore director Brian Alferman took in donations from seven LongHorn Steakhouse restaurants over a three-month period for an established and a new ReStore. Alferman called the items, "a tremendous boon to our ReStores. They were a great money-maker and helped to create a buzz around town about our new location."

"This partnership is boosting sales at ReStores and providing funds for Habitat for Humanity to serve more families in need of decent, affordable housing," said Larry Gluth, senior vice president of U.S. and Canada for Habitat for Humanity International. "Thanks to the commitment of donors, volunteers, communities and homeowner partners, and businesses such as Darden, we are seeing neighborhood revitalization happening across the country. We look forward to a continued relationship with Darden in the years ahead."

About Darden

Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest full-service restaurant company, owns and operates more than 1,900 restaurants that generate more than $7.5 billion in annual sales. Headquartered in Orlando, and employing approximately 180,000 people, Darden is recognized for a culture that rewards caring for and responding to people. In 2011, Darden became the first full-service restaurant company ever to be named to the FORTUNE “100 Best Companies to Work For” list. Our restaurant brands — Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Bahama Breeze and Seasons 52 — reflect the rich diversity of those who dine with us. Our brands are built on deep insights into what our guests want. For more information, please visit www.darden.com.

About Habitat for Humanity International

Habitat for Humanity International is an ecumenical Christian ministry that welcomes to its work all people dedicated to the cause of eliminating poverty housing. Since its founding in 1976, Habitat has built, rehabilitated, repaired or improved more than 400,000 houses worldwide, providing simple, decent and affordable shelter for more than 2 million people. For more information, or to donate or volunteer, visit Habitat.org.

SOURCE Darden Restaurants, Inc.: General

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