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For Immediate Release

Northrop Grumman Marks Start of Construction on Habitat for Humanity House with “Keel Laying” Ceremony

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Nov. 23, 2004 – Northrop Grumman's Newport News sector and the United Steelworkers of America (Local 8888) held a “keel laying” ceremony today to kick off construction of their house for the Peninsula Habitat for Humanity.

“This is probably the first house in America that started with a keel-laying,” said Danny Hunley, Northrop Grumman Newport News director of Trades, Education and Training. “Our ships, much like this house, will come together as the engineers and designers apply their vision on paper, only to be turned into the product by the hands of the craftsmen.”

A keel laying ceremony is a shipyard tradition that celebrates the laying of a ship’s first timber and can be traced back to the first ship built for the U.S. Navy. During the ceremony, the ship's sponsor or special guest authenticates the keel by inscribing his or her initials onto a metal plate. A welder then welds the initials onto the plate, and the plate is permanently affixed to the ship.

During the Nov. 23 “keel laying” ceremony, Maleka Copling, the future homeowner of “Labor Management House,” inscribed her future street number onto a metal plate. Shipyard welder Neal Metcalf then welded the numbers onto the plate, which will be permanently be affixed to the house upon the completion of construction. “I always dreamed of owning my own home,” Copling said. “But I never thought I’d be this blessed.”

Representatives from Northrop Grumman Newport News, the union, Habitat for Humanity, and the Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority attended the ceremony.

Northrop Grumman Newport News, headquartered in Newport News, Va., is the nation's sole designer, builder and refueler of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and one of only two companies capable of designing and building nuclear-powered submarines. Newport News also provides after-market services for a wide array of naval and commercial vessels. The Newport News sector employs about 19,000 people.