



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Volunteers with Disabilities to Help Dedicate Atlanta's First ABILITY House**

***-- Actor Max Gail to Participate in the Dec. 11 Home Dedication Ceremony  
at 1632 McClelland Avenue, East Point --***

**Atlanta, GA—December 9, 2004:** Volunteers with all ranges of disabilities, including mobility-related and intellectual disabilities, alongside BellSouth volunteers, Pioneers and retirees, have helped construct Atlanta's first ABILITY House for Kawa Talabani, his wife Amina Shaheen, who has heart disease, and the couple's four children, ages 13, 11, 4 and 10 months. An ABILITY House is an affordable, accessible home built for a low-income family in which one or more members have disabilities. What makes the ABILITY House program unique is that it utilizes volunteers with disabilities during all phases of construction. This inclusiveness demonstrates the potential of every person and empowers the community with a new level of awareness.

Max Gail, accomplished actor and director, will be attending the home dedication celebration. Gail, best known for his role as Det. Stan 'Wojo' Wojciehowicz in the popular television series "Barney Miller," has appeared in more than 50 projects between the small and silver screen and made more than 30 television guest appearances. A respected advocate for people with disabilities, and founder of LAP.org, Gail's presence will help to highlight the importance of accessing people with disabilities as volunteers and the impact programs such as the ABILITY House can have on the community. Joining Gail at the dedication are Chet Cooper, founder of the ABILITY House, and Phil Jacobs, president of Georgia Operations for BellSouth.

"We are very pleased to have Max joining us for the home dedication celebration of Atlanta's first ABILITY House," said Cooper, editor-in-chief of *ABILITY Magazine*. "Max has continued to use his celebrity to help raise awareness of those issues which continue to impact people with disabilities.

"It has also been great working with Atlanta Habitat," he continued. "This Habitat affiliate understands there is value to seeing each home not just as the house belonging to the family living in it, who may or may not have disabilities, but also as part of a wider community. Everyone should be able to visit a friend's home, including people with mobility-related disabilities. The Atlanta Habitat affiliate joins ABILITY in helping people realize that it is easy to incorporate universal design and visitability, and far more cost-effective to do so when houses are built than later on."

"Home ownership is part of the American dream and having a disability should not stand in the way of people achieving that dream," adds Mike Watson, senior director of BellSouth Corporation. "Partnering with *ABILITY Magazine* and Atlanta Habitat for Humanity on this project ensures that a family in our community is able to reach this dream."

Talabani and Shaheen are the first recipients of an ABILITY House in Atlanta. The 35-year-old Shaheen experienced a life-threatening split in the wall of one of her major arteries in November 2003. She has since had coronary bypass surgery and has an implanted defibrillator, which will shock her heart if it stops beating for too long. The device causes weakness and discomfort in Shaheen's left arm. She is frequently exhausted, and she has difficulty reaching, opening doors, and performing routine household tasks.

People with all types of disabilities, both hidden and visible, have volunteered during construction of the ABILITY House. The ABILITY House is sponsored by BellSouth and built in partnership with Atlanta Habitat for Humanity and *ABILITY Magazine*.

### **Saturday, Dec. 11 – Home Dedication Day**

8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon – House construction

12:00 noon – Home Dedication Ceremony followed by lunch and an open house.

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. – Construction resumes to finalize home.

**House site is at 1632 McClelland Avenue, East Point**

### **About BellSouth Corporation**

BellSouth Corporation is a Fortune 100 communications company headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia and a parent company of Cingular Wireless, the nation's largest wireless voice and data provider.

Backed by award winning customer service, BellSouth offers the most comprehensive and innovative package of voice and data services available in the market. Through BellSouth Answers<sup>®</sup>, residential and small business customers can bundle their local and long distance service with dial up and high speed DSL Internet access, satellite television and Cingular<sup>®</sup> Wireless service. For businesses, BellSouth provides secure, reliable local and long distance voice and data networking solutions. BellSouth also offers online and directory advertising through BellSouth<sup>®</sup> RealPages.com<sup>®</sup> and The Real Yellow Pages<sup>®</sup>.

More information about BellSouth can be found at [www.bellsouth.com](http://www.bellsouth.com).

### **About ABILITY Magazine**

*ABILITY Magazine* is an award-winning national publication distributed by Time-Warner that explores health, wellness and human potential through interviews with celebrities, political leaders and other high-profile individuals. *ABILITY Magazine* supports ABILITY Awareness, a nonprofit 501(c)3, and its hallmark ABILITY House project through financial assistance and donated staff time. For more about

*ABILITY Magazine*, please visit [www.abilitymagazine.com](http://www.abilitymagazine.com). For more information about ABILITY Awareness, please visit [www.abilityawareness.org](http://www.abilityawareness.org).

**About Atlanta Habitat for Humanity**

Atlanta Habitat for Humanity, one of more than 1,700 U.S. affiliates of Habitat for Humanity International, is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing affordable housing to Atlanta's low-income families. Since 1983, volunteers from corporations, faith-based and civic organizations have worked in partnership with qualified homebuyers to construct quality, affordable homes, which are then purchased through no-interest, no-profit mortgages. To date, more than 770 homes have been completed.

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