FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Appalachia Service Project completes fire recovery efforts in Sevier County, Tennessee, following the construction of 24 new homes.

JOHNSON CITY, Tenn. (November 7, 2019)—On October 10, 2019 Appalachia Service Project (ASP) presented keys to one final new home recipient in Sevier County, Tennessee. This concludes a 29-month effort during which ASP built 24 new homes for Sevier County residents who were impacted by the wildfires in the Great Smoky Mountains in November of 2016.

ASP's CEO, Walter Crouch says about the effort, “Appalachia Service Project is humbled by the collaborative effort we have been a part of here in the Sevier County fire recovery. It has taken the hard work and dedication of many partners for 24 families to now have new homes to call their own after the wildfires of 2016—fulfilling ASP’s mission to provide home repair and replacement to our neighbors throughout Central Appalachia.”

These homes represent the commitment ASP made to help rebuild the area immediately following the disaster. With the 24th home complete, ASP concludes disaster recovery efforts in the county. There are many partners, volunteers, and supporters to be thanked for their help working alongside the non-profit. Each family’s path to recovery is both personal and unique. With so many families back in new homes, we wanted to share a few of their stories with you, as the Smokies community celebrates 24 homes completed for these incredible recipients.

One such recipient is Garrett Sikes, a single father who was a renter at the time of the wildfires. He and his teenage son lost everything, but ASP has made him a first-time homeowner on land he purchased in Gatlinburg. After the fires, Mr. Sikes had an injury and surgery that left him paralyzed from the waist down. After undergoing so much duress in such a short time, ASP could not be more thrilled to have him moved into a house that is accessible and safe.

Earlene Haddock is a 75-year-old woman whose home for over 20 years was destroyed by the 2016 wildfires. Like many others, all her belongings were lost in the fires. Luckily, she was assisting her elderly mother in Tampa at the time of the disaster and was spared any personal injury. She loves living in the mountains and seeing the bears around her property, so she is happy to be back home!

Joel Cox is a 22-year-old single man who, after the losing his home in the fire, volunteered and lived at a sheep farm in New York near some of his other family. Now that he has a house of
his own in his home of Gatlinburg, he has been able to secure a job helping a local plumber and has moved back to the area.

Finally, our 24th homeowner is Scott Thomas. Thomas waited the longest for his new home as ASP overcame building challenges and delays—ASP is thankful for his patience through the process and is so excited to finally have him into his new home. Thomas and his 15-year-old daughter moved to the mountains years ago to explore the Great Smoky Mountains, and he claims to have hiked every trail in the Smokies. The temporary camper Thomas had been using for shelter since the fires was falling apart around him, so we are pleased he has received keys to his new house just in time for the cooler weather.

Following the closure of the Mountain Tough Recovery Team’s operation in December 2018, funding shortfalls were identified, which necessitated emergency funding for several of the remaining homes. The Sevier County Community Fund (an affiliate of the East Tennessee Foundation), Dolly Parton’s My People Fund (administered by The Dollywood Foundation), and the Mountain Tough Recovery Team collaborated with ASP to ensure the ‘on hold’ projects were able to be completed.

Other invaluable partners include: the Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church, Mullican Flooring, Volunteer East Tennessee, AmeriCorps, American Red Cross of East Tennessee, Gatlinburg Fire, the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee, Keep Sevier Beautiful, Tennessee Housing Development Agency, Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati, Appalachian Regional Commission, Sugarlands Distilling Company, Mountain Tough Recovery Team, First Baptist Sevierville, First Baptist Gatlinburg, Tennessee Baptist Disaster Relief, Forge Construction, and Citadel Construction, Jeff Roland and Son, Lowes and many dedicated volunteers!

ASP has experience helping communities rebuild after disasters. In 2012, ASP built 25 homes for families who had lost their homes to massive flooding in Washington County, Tennessee. In 2016, ASP launched a multi-year project to rebuild homes affected by devastating floods in West Virginia. Since then, ASP has completed 74 new homes and 29 major repairs for income-qualified families in West Virginia and still continue to build. Learn more about ASP’s Disaster Recovery Program at www.ASPhome.org/DisasterRecovery.

ABOUT APPALACHIA SERVICE PROJECT

Appalachia Service Project (ASP), is a Christian ministry, open to all people, that inspires hope and service through volunteer home repair and replacement in Central Appalachia. Since 1969, ASP volunteers have been making homes warmer, safer and drier for families in need in Central Appalachia and providing life-transforming experiences for everyone involved. In
recent years ASP has expanded its outreach to include building new homes for low-income families whose homes were destroyed by fire or flooding and others whose homes are beyond repair. This year ASP will have over 15,000 volunteers working in 5 different Central Appalachia states helping over 600 families with home repairs and new construction.

MEDIA INQUIRIES
Walter B. Crouch, ASP President/CEO
(865) 368-9380 cell/text
Press@ASPhome.org

Melisa Miller, ASP Executive Vice President/Chief Ministries Officer
(423) 707-2403 cell/text
Press@ASPhome.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
Visit ASP’s Newsroom (http://asphome.org/newsroom) for a fact sheet about Appalachia Service Project, downloadable press releases, photos, and other information.

Photos specific to ASP’s fire recovery efforts in Sevier County, TN are attached to this release and available for public use.