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**CONTACT:** Ken Wilkinson, CFA  
Lee County Property Appraiser  
(239) 533-6105

Susan Bennett, APR, CPRC  
Susan Bennett Marketing & Media  
(239) 277-5255

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**“SAVE OUR HOMES” CAMPAIGN FUNDS DONATED TO SWFAS;  
WILKINSON ISSUES CHALLENGE**

**FORT MYERS, FL** –Lee County Property Appraiser Ken Wilkinson has donated leftover funds from the successful Save Our Homes Portability campaign to Southwest Florida Addiction Services (SWFAS) to help build the new Detoxification and Outpatient Treatment Center.

The contribution comes with a challenge from Wilkinson.

“I urge political candidates who are running unopposed to consider donating unused money in their campaign accounts to SWFAS as well. Not only will they be helping our community with a serious need, but they will be providing hope for one in five families who are impacted by addiction,” Wilkinson said.

Wilkinson said \$321 was left in the Save Our Homes Portability account, which was established in 2006 when Wilkinson launched a statewide petition drive to get the portability issue before voters. The Florida Legislature, however, agreed to place the item on the January ballot, which ultimately was approved by voters. Save Our Homes Portability allows homesteaded homeowners to take a portion of their assessed value with them if they move, leading to lower tax bills.

Wilkinson also is the father of the Save Our Homes Amendment, which became law in 1992 and limits the annual increase of taxable value for homesteaded property to 3 percent or the Consumer Price Index (CPI), whichever is less.

Under Florida law, candidates for political office have a choice of returning unused campaign money to contributors or giving it to charity.

“I checked with several of my contributors who agreed that donating this money to SWFAS was the right thing to do. In a way, by contributing to the campaign to build a new Detoxification Center, we’re helping to build a home for countless folks with substance abuse issues. We’re still Saving Our Homes for this special group of residents,” he said.

The idea is not without precedent. Lee County Commissioner Frank Mann donated a portion of his unused campaign funds to the SWFAS campaign to build a new Detoxification Center following his 2006 election to the commission.

“We are very grateful to Ken Wilkinson for wanting to put the unused campaign funds to work at SWFAS. We’re hopeful that other candidates will want to follow his example. Every contribution is needed and appreciated,” said SWFAS CEO Kevin B. Lewis.

SWFAS has raised \$6.1 million toward the \$9.5 million cost of the new Detoxification and Outpatient Treatment Center, which is under construction on Evans Avenue in Fort Myers adjacent to Southwest Florida Regional Medical Center

The 44,000 square foot facility will include a 40-bed Detoxification Center, a wing for outpatient counseling, and prevention offices now located on McGregor Boulevard as well as administrative staff.

Construction is expected to be completed next spring.

SWFAS is Southwest Florida’s most comprehensive substance abuse treatment and prevention program, serving 6,000 people per year from ages 9 to 90. SWFAS offers outpatient and residential programs for both adults and youngsters from nine locations throughout Lee and Hendry counties. In addition, SWFAS provides detoxification services for adults, prevention programming for all ages, and an Employee Assistance Program for about 60 Southwest Florida businesses. Fees are charged on a sliding scale, based on family income. In many cases, private insurance is accepted. SWFAS is a United Way agency.

For more information about the SWFAS capital campaign or to make a gift to SWFAS, call Lewis at 278-7595, ext. 700.

*Photo: Lee County Property Appraiser Ken Wilkinson presents check to SWFAS CEO Kevin B. Lewis and SWFAS Board Member Kathleen Smith*