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DESIGN CONTEST CHALLENGES STUDENTS TO EXPRESS PERSONAL VIEW OF SUSTAINABILITY

BOSTON (October 2, 2009) – Yesterday, Boston-based organizations Merida and Artists For Humanity (AFH) kicked off an 8-week rug design contest to inspire young student artists to design sustainable textiles that explore the nature of sustainability itself. AFH's high school student artists will interact with professional interior, graphic, and product designers who will critique their designs and select three winners. Winners will each receive a Merida tufted rug of their own design, which will be manufactured from 100% New Zealand wool in Merida's Fall River weaving facility.

Merida, a designer of sustainable natural fiber textiles, and AFH, a nonprofit that works with teens to provide paid employment in the arts, developed the rug design contest out of both organizations' desire to combine the creativity and enthusiasm of the young AFH students with Merida's expertise in sustainable textile design to create beautiful, inspiring products with a compelling story.

"We have found amazing synergy with Artists For Humanity in our shared passions of art, design, sustainability, and social responsibility," said Catherine Connolly, CEO of Merida. "I am so excited to have the privilege of working with these phenomenally talented young people and cannot wait to see where this project takes them."

"Artists For Humanity's young designers are thrilled about the opportunity to collaborate with the talented design team at Merida and to compete in the exciting design contest. It is a rare treat for our youth to know that one of their designs will be out in the greater marketplace. Our young people further recognize the importance and timeliness of contributing to the sustainability movement in U.S. manufacturing." Claudia De Piante Vicin, Graphic Design Director

Artists For Humanity's graphic design students will be asked to consider the question "What does sustainability mean to you?" as they design their rug prototypes. Merida Creative Director Maegan Fee will critique the students' designs throughout the process, helping them to understand the basics of textile design and to ensure they are working within the technical specifications of Merida's tufting equipment.

Students will submit three final designs and inspiration boards to Merida in early November, when a panel of interior, graphic, and product designers will select the top three designs. Winners will be showcased at AFH's annual December open house, and will be sold through Merida starting in early 2010.

The contest kicked off yesterday at Merida's Boston office with a tour of the custom rug-making facility, a presentation on Merida's design and sustainability philosophies, and discussion of the contest's theme, specifications, and timeline. For photos, please contact ckabat@meridameridian.com.

About Merida Meridian

Merida Meridian is a design-driven company, passionate about creating innovative and fashionable floor coverings that help solve interior design challenges. Inspired by the textures and aesthetics of natural fibers, Merida uniquely customizes its products through sizing, colors and patterns and a selection of over 300 different edge finishes. Merida area rugs can be created in sizes and shapes to fit most room décors. We are committed to a tradition of integrating the finest quality natural fibers with innovative textile design and floor covering style. Merida is headquartered in Boston, Mass., maintains a manufacturing facility in Fall River, Mass. and partners with leading manufacturers and suppliers around the world. For more information, please visit <http://www.meridameridian.com>.

About Artists For Humanity

Artists For Humanity's mission is to bridge economic, racial and social divisions by providing under-served youth with the keys to self-sufficiency through paid employment in the arts. AFH has been providing design services since 1991. The organization's unique creative products and services capture the voice, vision and virtuosity of Boston's youth artists. Visit the AFH website for more information www.afhboston.com.