

AMENDMENT

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exemption from \$25,000 to \$50,000 on taxes other than school taxes.

That amounts to about a \$240 savings for an average homeowner.

The other benefit offers a portability provision, allowing homeowners to take up to \$500,000 worth of Save Our Homes tax benefits to a new residence. It is retroactive to homes sold in 2007.

"I think that the portability will help the

market," said Susan Ritter, a realtor with Century 21 AAIM Realty Group. "Older people downsizing will be able to carry their benefits with them. It is also a selling point to people just moving here. When the market gets back to normal they can sell and move up, taking their homestead with them."

Without giving specific details on his home price, William Bell, a Fort Myers general contractor, said the amendment's portability will benefit him.

"I'm building a new house. I plan to eventually sell my old house," he said. "I'll be able to move \$500,000 in tax savings to

the new house. That should work across the board for everyone."

The amendment might not work so well in other price ranges, said Renay Montague, owner of RE/Max Sundance Realty II. The middle-class housing market wouldn't be affected.

With more than 20,000 homes for sale, Montague said, the amendment would have no effect because people are losing their homes.

Her sales force has been selling many homes short, or for less than the lender is owed, or selling homes that are already in foreclosure.

"There are 11,000 homes in Lee County for short sale or in foreclosure. People are looking at them but not buying," Montague said. "The \$240 and the portability do nothing for those (sellers). We are in a recession and we need something to stimulate the economy and get it back on track."

When the construction industry tanked, Melissa Morris and her truck-driver husband lost income.

"We are just trying to sell our house and cut back, maybe rent, maybe move out of the state," said Morris, a Bonita Springs resident. "I don't see how (Amendment 1) can help us." ■

Galloway honored for community support

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

Sam Galloway, Jr. has earned a Salute to Dealers award from Ford Motor Company.

"I get total satisfaction out of helping people," explained Galloway, president of Sam Galloway Ford, which his grandmother founded in 1927. "I feel in my heart it's the right thing to do."

Galloway is among nine North American dealer principals who will receive the eighth annual tribute at a ceremony held Feb. 8 in San Francisco. Honorees were selected from among more than 6,000 dealers across the United States and Canada.

Salute to Dealers is conducted under the guidance of Edsel B. Ford II, a member of Ford's Board of Directors. The program was launched in 2001 to demonstrate the company's commitment to its thousands of dealer principals who step beyond their showroom doors to make a difference where they live and work.

"Sam's inspiring dedication to his neighbors underscores the commitment to corporate citizenship that my great-



FLORIDA WEEKLY PHOTO

Sam Galloway, Jr.

grandfather built into the fabric of Ford Motor Company more than a century ago," Edsel Ford said. "He and fellow honorees strengthen communities, set an example for others and bring hope to thousands of people across our country. We are very proud of them."

A painted portrait of each honoree will

have a montage of philanthropic and volunteer activities that led to the award. Duplicates of the portraits will join a Salute to Dealers display in the lobby of Ford's World Headquarters in Dearborn, Mich., for year-round viewing.

One of Galloway's proudest achievements involves helping create and guide a nonprofit corporation called Community Cooperative Ministries, which has expanded dramatically since it began as a downtown soup kitchen set up by nearby churches.

In addition to serving meals to more than 300 people each day, the agency operates a food bank that provides groceries for 300 families each week and has a Faith in Action division that helps senior citizens live independently in their homes. Volunteers and benefactors help the elderly with repairs, wheelchair ramps, lawn care and other chores. A partnership with Meals on Wheels of Lee County delivers food for shut-ins, while a new affiliation offers health-screening services.

"Sam Galloway has made it possible for

people in our community to feel secure about where their next meal is coming from," said Sarah Owen, Community Cooperative Ministries' chief executive. "He sincerely believes that nobody in any community should go hungry and he puts his heart, soul and backing toward that end."

The latest expansion by Community Cooperative Ministries is a Montessori School that opened in June 2007.

To help finance the growing organization, Galloway hosts an annual "Soup, Symphony, Service" benefit at his Ford service department, converted for the evening into an unlikely setting for a pops concert by the Southwest Florida Symphony. Area restaurants cater the event for 800 benefactors. The surroundings may be humble, but the results are quite substantial. Galloway's fund-raising goal for the 2008 bash is \$198,000.

Visions for the future include a second soup kitchen in North Fort Myers. "I'd like to see five of them eventually," he said. "We're in a recession here, and more people need a hand." ■

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