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habitat

The magazine of Habitat for Humanity®

Opening
doors
together



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HABITAT'S VISION

**A world where
everyone has a
decent place to live.**

We build homes, communities and hope. To learn more, visit [habitat.org](https://www.habitat.org).

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LOCATION
SPOTLIGHT



Tirana, Albania

Empowering families through strategic microlending

For years, Ergil had been building his future home on his family's small farmland in Tirana, Albania, with slow progress. Without access to traditional financing, he bought materials piece by piece, and the house remained unfinished and unlivable.

That's when Ergil partnered with a local microfinance lender. Using a specialized housing loan product designed in partnership with Habitat, Ergil finally secured the funds to finish the job. He installed the roof, windows and doors all at once, along with energy-efficient insulation. Now, even in the peak of an Albanian summer, Ergil's home stays up to 20°F cooler without added energy costs.

By equipping microfinance institutions with capital, training and tools, we change the way they serve low-income families like Ergil's – not just once, but permanently. This is the power of Habitat's MicroBuild® Initiative. ■



OUR WORK
AROUND THE WORLD

Porfirio lives with his wife and children in a sustainable Habitat home in Chiapas.*

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MEXICO ▲

Building stronger, more sustainable homes with non-recyclable plastic

A community in Chiapas, Mexico, founded by Tzotzil Indigenous families displaced by conflict, is working alongside Habitat Mexico to build smart, sustainable homes.

Partnering with a local company, we use technology that shreds and processes non-recyclable plastic, which becomes high-quality, durable blocks when mixed with cement. Compared with some traditional materials, these blocks are more cost-effective, stronger and offer better insulation, which is ideal for the climate in Chiapas. By using this method, we've kept 2 tons of plastic waste out of the landfill so far.

The forward-thinking approach earned EDGE certification, a global standard for sustainability and resource efficiency. Beyond the blocks, these homes incorporate other sustainable features, including solar-powered water heaters, rainwater collectors and wood-saving stoves.

*Photo by César Chiquito

KENYA

Community-led solution protects families from malaria

In Kenya, 70% of the population are at risk of malaria, one of the country's leading causes of death.

Many families live in houses that aren't built to keep insects out, leaving them exposed to thousands of disease-carrying mosquitoes every year.

Working together with residents of Kadenge Ratuoro village in rural Kenya, we tested a practical, low-cost solution that makes it easier for families to keep their homes and themselves safe.

By adding screens to windows, doors and gaps under roofs, we found a one-time fix that cuts indoor mosquitoes by 77%. And because these screens are made from local materials and installed by professionals in the community, the solution is easy to scale and affordable for the families who need it most.

INDIA ▶

Scaling passive cooling solutions



Our house would get so hot, we used to sleep outside. Now, we get a full night's sleep indoors," says Devi, a resident of Tamil Nadu, India.



Millions across India face severe, record-breaking heat waves. Low-income families are especially at risk, often living in homes that trap the heat and create life-threatening conditions inside. Since air conditioning costs are unaffordable for most households, these communities need a simple, affordable way to make their homes livable without relying on power.

We've turned to a proven method: heat-reflective roof paint. The challenge was ensuring this technology could be used on the types of roofs – like tin or concrete – that are often found in these communities. So, we partnered with residents in coastal Tamil Nadu to measure the paint's cooling power in these cases. The results were clear across multiple homes: Indoor temperatures dropped by as much as 9°F. This data was backed by the experiences of community members like Devi, who shared firsthand how the paint helped ease the daily burden of extreme heat.

Since it's a simple coat of paint, homeowners can even apply it themselves. Now the focus is access. We're partnering with local companies to bring the product to neighborhood hardware stores at prices families can afford.

UNITED STATES

Securing generational wealth in Georgia

When there's no will, intended heirs are at risk of losing family assets. This creates what's known as a tangled title, where heirs must go to court to prove they own what's already theirs. Without a clear title to the house, they can't get loans for repairs or even sell it, leaving the home vulnerable to being taken by the state or lost to debt. Wealth is drained instead of built.

These legal complications have disproportionately affected Black families because systemic barriers have historically cut them off from critical financial tools like estate planning.

To address this gap, Gwinnett/Walton Habitat hosts workshops that offer the legal expertise families need to protect their assets. Pro bono or low bono lawyers help community members create and notarize wills or navigate other paperwork to ensure their wealth passes down to their families as intended.

JORDAN

Upgrading water systems in long-term refugee camp

Jordan is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world. In Marka Camp — one of the country's largest Palestinian refugee camps — that scarcity is made worse by outdated infrastructure.

First built to be a temporary settlement more than 75 years ago, the community is now home to thousands of families who do not have dependable access to clean water.

Today, Habitat Jordan is partnering with residents to update the infrastructure with climate realities in mind. We're working together to install new water storage tanks and rehabilitate delivery networks to bring reliable, clean water to more homes.

Our work also accounts for the extremes of every season. In the winter, Jordan receives nearly all its rain in a few short, intense months. Because the camp was not designed to manage heavy runoff, streets and homes can quickly flood, displacing families and putting them at risk in freezing temperatures.

To address this, we're helping install new drainage systems that channel runoff away from homes, helping families remain safe throughout the year.

LONG-TERM
AFFORDABILITY



Building affordable homes for generations to come

“We finally have a place to truly call our own,” Frankie says.

Frankie is a veteran and single father of three living in Greeley, Colorado. For years, he balanced the weight of rising rent and medical bills for his daughter, who is battling an autoimmune disease.

Now, as he moves his family into the Hope Springs neighborhood, he can focus on creating a future for himself and his children.

“An affordable home means stability and a lot of peace of mind,” he says.

“We finally have a place to truly call our own.”

Designed for real life

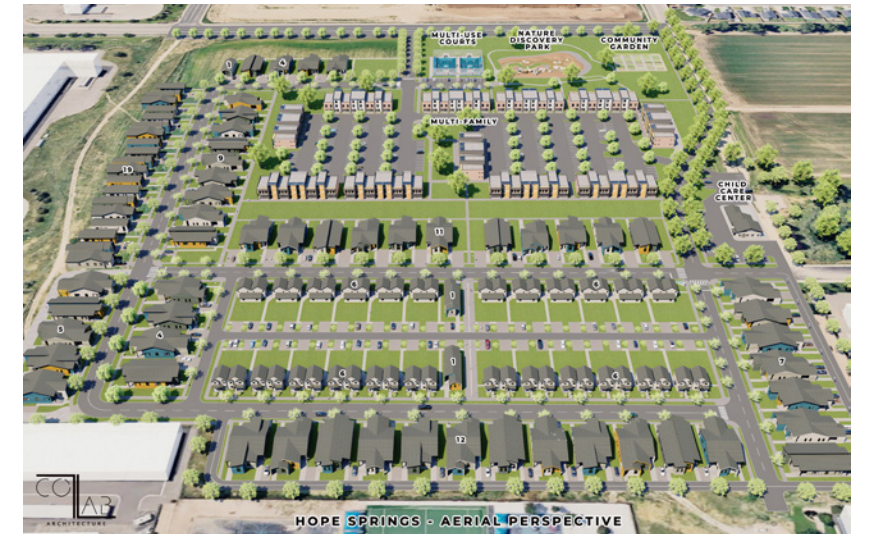
From the start, residents like Frankie helped shape the vision for Hope Springs, built with Greeley-Weld Habitat.

“Hope Springs was designed by the community, for the community,” says Cheri Witt-Brown, Greeley-Weld Habitat’s CEO. “We listened to our families to learn what would actually help them.”

To bring this vision to life, Greeley-Weld Habitat secured targeted grants and community partnerships to fund essential services and green spaces. The result is a walkable neighborhood where the logistics of daily life are easier:

- **On-site support:** A child care center and playgrounds.
- **Green spaces:** Community gardens, nature discovery parks, walking and biking trails.
- **Connection:** Residents are minutes from shops, bus stops, top-ranked schools and more.

Frankie expects he and his kids will be frequent visitors of the library right across the street.



Development of the Hope Springs community is underway, with 25 families already moved into their Habitat home and more coming. The neighborhood has almost 491 affordable homes, with 174 built directly by Habitat.

Creating lasting affordability

We work to make homeownership within reach not only for the first homebuyer, but also for those who come next. That’s exactly how Hope Springs is built. The homes here will stay affordable forever through a community land trust.

When we use this model, Habitat owns the land, but the family owns the house. By taking the cost of the land out of the mortgage, the price of the home drops significantly. But the benefits don’t stop on move-in day.

When a family eventually decides to move, they agree to sell the home back to Habitat or to another low-income family. This creates a cycle of opportunity.

“If I move one day, I take that equity with me,” Frankie says. “And I can help somebody else who needs an affordable place of their own.”

Hope Springs is a model we’re bringing to communities across the country. In the past two years alone, 200 more Habitat affiliates — a 50% increase — have adopted methods like this to keep homes affordable for generations. ■



Lifting our voices for home affordability

In February, nearly 500 advocates from across the Habitat network gathered in Washington, D.C., to take our mission to the steps of Capitol Hill at our annual U.S. advocacy event, Habitat on the Hill.

The conference provides a vital platform for us to connect directly with lawmakers about the urgent need for housing affordability legislation.

Amplifying advocacy through art

This year, professional spoken word poet Charity Blackwell shared her poem “We Build the Possible.”

Echoing this year’s conference theme, Our Voices Open Doors, her words illustrate how our advocacy is the “front door to the future,” where our voices help make housing affordable so that families can thrive on their own terms.

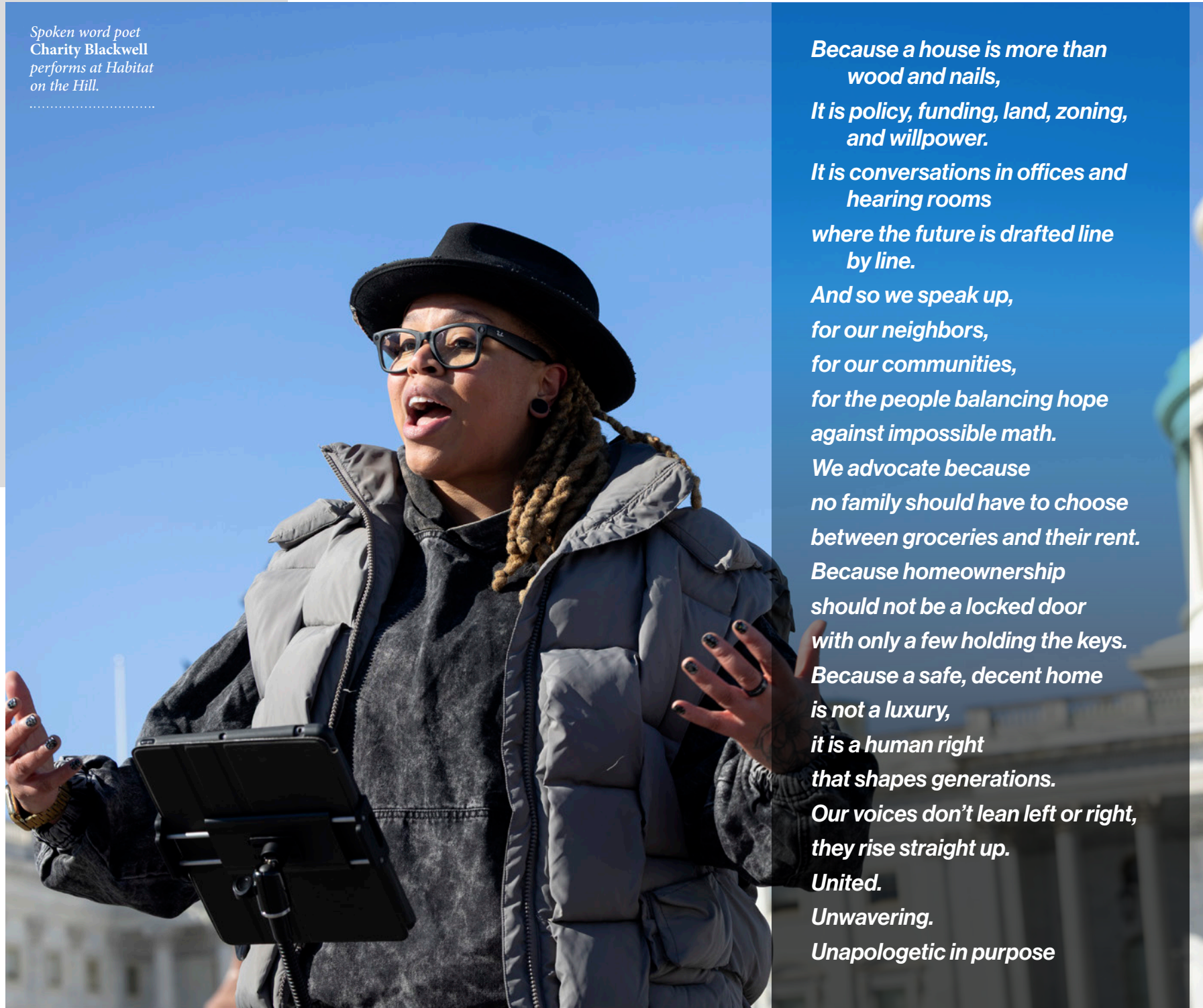
A record of impact

We have helped advocate for hundreds of policy successes at the local, state and federal levels. Habitat uses our expert resources, research and proven practices to call on policymakers and advocate for home affordability.

During the past year alone, we helped almost 1.5 million people in the U.S. gain better access to affordable homes and unlocked more than US\$6.65 billion in government funds. ■

An excerpt from “We Build the Possible”

Spoken word poet
Charity Blackwell
performs at Habitat
on the Hill.



*Because a house is more than
wood and nails,
It is policy, funding, land, zoning,
and willpower.
It is conversations in offices and
hearing rooms
where the future is drafted line
by line.
And so we speak up,
for our neighbors,
for our communities,
for the people balancing hope
against impossible math.
We advocate because
no family should have to choose
between groceries and their rent.
Because homeownership
should not be a locked door
with only a few holding the keys.
Because a safe, decent home
is not a luxury,
it is a human right
that shapes generations.
Our voices don't lean left or right,
they rise straight up.
United.
Unwavering.
Unapologetic in purpose*

Visit habitat.org/we-build-possible to watch Charity perform the full poem.

From abandoned buildings to affordable homes

In Poland, 1.8 million properties sit empty while hundreds of thousands of people struggle to find a decent, affordable home. We're closing that gap.

Through our Empty Spaces to Homes initiative, we turn these abandoned buildings into safe, energy-efficient homes in partnership with those who need them most.

By doing so, we're tackling two urgent challenges at once: the housing crisis and climate change. Saving these structures is the most sustainable way to build. Tearing down and rebuilding creates large amounts of pollution. By renovating existing buildings instead, we cut harmful carbon emissions by 85%.



I'm proud that a place once empty will be filled with laughter and joy again. We're giving these spaces a new life so that people in our city have a place to start theirs."

— Lukasz, a volunteer at the Piaseczno build

Building for long-term benefits

In the heart of Piaseczno, Poland, we are renovating a historic tenement house that sat vacant for decades. Alongside local partners and volunteers from across Europe, we are turning this once abandoned building into 25 affordable, high-quality apartments.

When we build, we focus on the long-term benefits for residents. During our renovations, we install modern insulation and high-efficiency heating systems. Because most buildings in Poland lack proper insulation, many families are burdened with unaffordable heating costs. By building this way, we ensure residents can afford to live in these homes, and to heat and power them, too.

A blueprint for change

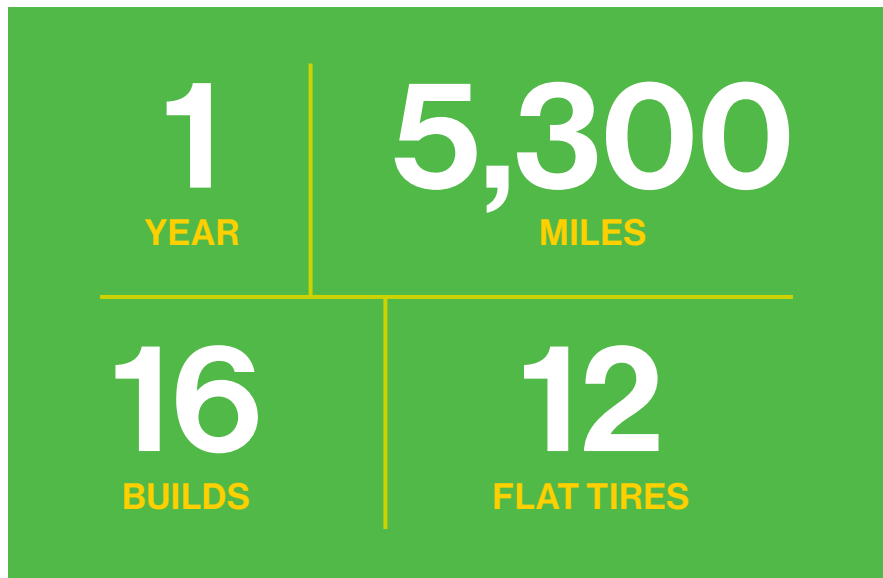
We've shown through projects like the one in Piaseczno that unused properties can become affordable, sustainable, high-quality homes. This approach offers a proven model we can continue to scale, reaching more families with affordable homes that are better for the planet.

To make that possible, we're advocating for the policies and funding needed to take on more projects and to help more builders across Europe adopt this approach. ■



A ride to remember

Donor and volunteer Ted Martin reflects on working together with communities to build homes and hope



In 1984, **Ted Martin** took an epic bike ride from Seattle to Pittsburgh to help raise funds and awareness for Habitat’s mission.

The big idea

When Ted first learned about Habitat, the then-college sophomore was impressed that Habitat offered a real solution to help families build generational wealth through homeownership.

“I said, ‘Wow, you’re going to help a family create something that’s lasting and not just a temporary fix. This is going to be community building,’” Ted says.

When Ted’s friends asked if he wanted to spend the summer biking to raise funds and awareness for Habitat, he said he could do better than that. That’s when Ted reached out to Habitat’s headquarters with his big idea to bike across the U.S. for a whole year. Habitat co-founder Millard Fuller and other staff members prepped him for his journey as a volunteer ambassador.

“They walked me through the whole genesis of Habitat, its mission, everything about it. So that when I would come to a town — whether it’s a town that was thinking about having a Habitat project or I was going to generate interest for that community to have a Habitat project — I could speak about it and give them the equipment to talk about it.”

Ride of a lifetime

Ted hit the road and averaged 80 miles a day, sometimes spending the night in churches, with family, or in the homes of community members who believed in doing their part to build a world where everyone has a fair shot at a decent home.

All in all, Ted visited 16 of the 23 Habitat builds that were happening at that time along his ride. He spoke at events to inspire people to donate, and he was interviewed by news outlets to help get the word out about our work to make homes more affordable.

Ted also made lasting memories helping families build their homes. “I think that’s what is so dang good about Habitat,” Ted says. “It inspires people to do the right thing and gives them a tangible place, a measurable place, to see the impact of what has happened as the home goes up.”

Together with supporters like Ted, we’ve built a mission and momentum. Join us by visiting [habitat.org/bequest](https://www.habitat.org/bequest) to learn more about how you can include Habitat in your will and help more families build safe, affordable homes.



Ted is still an avid cyclist.



When Habitat moves into a community, they’re not just in and out. Habitat says, ‘We’re here. We’re in your community now, and we’re going to be a part of your life.’ That’s huge.”

A legacy of support

Ted, now a 64-year-old retired pastor in his native Pittsburgh, has continued to support Habitat through donations and volunteering over the years. As part of his lifelong support of affordable housing, he has also been inspired to make a bequest to Habitat.

“When Habitat moves into a community, they’re not just in and out. Habitat says, ‘We’re here. We’re in your community now, and we’re going to be a part of your life. That’s huge,’” he says. ■

“From doing construction on the houses, being part of the planning, having a voice to be heard, that’s what they give me. It’s like a nice, long hug. It really means more than I can express.”

– Zachariah



Together, **we are opening doors** to better health, education and economic outcomes.

After graduating from high school, Zachariah moved into his first apartment, but it was not accessible. Even after removing several doors, Zachariah could barely move about in his wheelchair. He could only reach one burner on the stove and couldn’t use the cabinets or the closets. Community leaders in his tight-knit town encouraged Zachariah to apply for a Habitat home. Once approved, he quickly got involved, helping raise funds for his local affiliate and helping the staff with the design. His new home has windows that crank, zero-entry pocket doors, a roll-in shower and other features that allow him to fully use and enjoy his space.

Zachariah also helped build his home and four others. His work inspired him to earn OSHA certification as a volunteer leader, and he is pursuing a bachelor’s degree. Since settling into his home, he has planted a garden and added a greenhouse.

Zachariah describes his Habitat home as peaceful and says **becoming a homeowner has changed his life for the better**. “My credit score looks great,” he says. “It’s just made me happier as a person. I never thought I’d be able to afford a house, and here I am with 1,000 square feet, two bedrooms, two baths. **Habitat made that possible.**”

Please give generously before June 15!

Please give TODAY before the 2026 Habitat Challenge ends!



Return the enclosed envelope, scan the QR code, or visit habitat.org/HC to give to Habitat today.

One of Habitat for Humanity’s long-standing supporters, **Rocket**®, has provided a generous US\$550,000 contribution, which inspired the 2026 Habitat Challenge. Habitat is challenging you and other loyal supporters to give what you can before **June 15**, while your impact can be multiplied to help more people in need of decent, affordable housing.



COMING HOME

6465

Building back better after California’s Camp Fire



In 2018, Star moved to Paradise, California, with a clear goal: to provide her three children with a community where they could grow deep roots. After years of instability, she was finally close to family and ready to build a permanent foundation.

However, just six months after they arrived, the catastrophic 2018 Camp Fire tore through Northern California, destroying Star’s home. “I felt like the plan I had painstakingly built had literally gone up in smoke,” she says.

After the fire, the family eventually landed in a cramped, high-rent apartment far from Star’s parents and support system, but Star was determined to return to Paradise.

That’s when she partnered with Habitat Butte County to build a house in the community she knew was her home.

“That was my hope and dream – that we would be able to come back and stay here,” Star says. “Then, when my kids grow up and move out, they still have a home, a place filled with memories.”

Everywhere we work, we build to the local climate. In Paradise, that means constructing homes to withstand future wildfires. These homes meet rigorous safety standards, built with fire-resistant materials and ember-proof buffers.



We have a life. Not just a life, an entire community. This is my daughter’s second year in Little League, and my other daughter starts cheer this year. We have a whole life now.”

Building this way allows families to save on insurance premiums. These lower costs, paired with an affordable mortgage, give families disaster resiliency and financial breathing room.

Today, Star and her children are finally home.

“We have a life,” she says. “Not just a life, an entire community. This is my daughter’s second year in Little League, and my other daughter starts cheer this year. We have a whole life now.” ■

open the door to **/opportunity/**

Habitat has helped people around the world build, improve or finance places to call home for more than 50 years. Together with supporters like you, we've built a mission — and momentum.

Every safe, affordable home sparks wider change, leading to better health, education and well-being, more economic growth and less poverty. With safe, stable housing, families have the freedom to focus on what matters most, empowering them to build their future on their own terms.

It all starts with an **open door**.

Visit [habitat.org/open-door](https://www.habitat.org/open-door) to learn more and get involved today!