

Habitat for Humanity®

Habitat World

May 2013



Habitat for Humanity's work with families around the world centers on your support.

- Visit well-rounded communities that Habitat has helped build
- See our circle of friends in action
- Connect the "why we build" dots

IN THIS ISSUE:

- » Celebrating in song
- » News and updates from Nashville to New Zealand

Foundations

From Habitat CEO Jonathan Reckford

Ripples of Hope



In this issue of *Habitat World*, you are going to see a lot of circles — circles that represent communities of compassion and hope. On the following pages, you'll meet individuals and groups who have joined Habitat for Humanity's global band of supporters to help those in need of adequate shelter. You'll see how our response to Superstorm Sandy convinced one volunteer that "what we really are is a huge circle of friends helping each other." You'll be reminded that Habitat brings together diverse partners in the common cause of improving the lives of others.

The image of circles also reminds us of one of the great blessings of Habitat — the ripple effect of one positive action leading to another and then another. I hope you will be inspired by the stories of two revitalized communities in the U.S. where great ideas gained momentum and led to transformation.

I have visited one of those communities — the Cherry Street area of the Boston Thurmond neighborhood in Winston-Salem, North Carolina — and have seen the amazing results. I have also witnessed

how the positive changes affected not only the residents, but all those who joined in the effort.

A police officer named Billy is a perfect example. Billy was a volunteer for the project who gave me a tour of the area. He told me if I had walked through the same streets two years before, he would have been assigned to protect me. With a grand sweep of his hand, he proclaimed, "Look at what we have done." He felt pride and ownership in the neighborhood.

The successful revitalization of Winston-Salem's Cherry Street area gave local leaders the confidence and motivation to think bigger and expand the area slated for revitalization.

Imagine that kind of ripple effect worldwide. American poet Edwin Markham wrote a classic poem about drawing people in by surrounding them with a circle of love. Can you envision the Habitat circle growing wider and wider to include family after family, block after block, community after community — taking them all in until everyone has a decent place to live?

We work toward that goal every day. We can't do it alone, however. The stories in this issue emphasize how crucial it is to engage people from many circles — from all sectors of society — to build homes, communities and hope. Thank you for inviting people into the circle of God's love. You may never know the ongoing impact of your efforts and God's blessings. ♣

JONATHAN T.M. RECKFORD
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Habitat World

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MISSION VISION

A world where everyone has a decent place to live.

MISSION STATEMENT

Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope.

WHAT WE DO

Habitat for Humanity organizations build, renovate and repair houses in partnership with people in need of adequate housing. Homeowners are selected locally by Habitat organizations based on their need for housing, ability to repay a no-profit loan and willingness to partner with Habitat. Loan repayments contribute to help build and repair additional houses. Because Habitat's loans are no-profit, they are affordable for low-income partners.

WHO WE ARE

Habitat World is the educational, informational and outreach publication of Habitat for Humanity International. The magazine is free to anyone who wishes to receive it.

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Habitat's work creates well-rounded communities that will thrive for years to come.

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Many parts come together to help create a whole world where everyone has a simple, decent place to live.



ON THE COVER

Brooklyn dad Ricardo Vasquez plays with his 4-year-old daughter Freedom in their family's home. The Vasquez family lives in one unit of a four-story building that Habitat New York City built on three vacant lots, which had previously been neighborhood eyesores. Photo by Ezra Millstein

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[LA GALLINA, NICARAGUA]

PAINTING PROGRESS

AFTER THEIR PREVIOUS house was destroyed by a flood, 21-year-old Maria Ruiz, her husband Nestor Guevara and their two young children had to live next to its ruins in a makeshift shelter of plastic and metal sheets. The dirt floor offered little protection from rainwater and helped keep the children sick. Last fall, volunteers on one of Habitat's Build Louder trips helped the couple construct — and paint — a sturdy new home. Now, Maria and Nestor will once again have safe and healthy shelter for their young family.

PHOTO BY EZRA MILLSTEIN

World News

● International updates



EPRA MILSTEIN

Habitat for Humanity International CEO Jonathan Reckford and Chris Monforton, head of Habitat Mississippi Gulf Coast, meet with the staff of Sen. Thad Cochran during Habitat on the Hill.

Habitat on the Hill

1 [UNITED STATES] In early February, more than 250 Habitat for Humanity leaders and supporters, representing nearly 40 states, gathered in Washington, D.C., to urge lawmakers to support policies that help Habitat address the issue of substandard and poverty housing.

During Habitat on the Hill, Habitat's annual legislative conference, attendees met with their representatives to champion the Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program and AmeriCorps — programs that help thousands of low-income families

gain access to affordable and safe homes every year.

“By connecting with our elected leaders through Habitat on the Hill, we share the message that low-income housing plays a key role in our communities and that supportive federal policies are essential for Habitat to assist families worldwide,” says Liz Blake, Habitat for Humanity International’s senior vice president of advocacy, government affairs and general counsel.

The event culminated with the release of Habitat’s 2013 Shelter Report, “Keeping faith: Affordable housing and strong communities.” The report focuses on housing as a cornerstone of community development and urges Americans, policymakers and all housing stakeholders to maintain their faith and confidence that low-income homeownership is a strong building block for resilient, healthy communities.

Learn more about Habitat on the Hill and Habitat’s advocacy program at habitat.org/gov.

2 [NEW ZEALAND] When children and teenagers built with LEGO blocks for Habitat New Zealand, the result was amazing creativity — and budding advocates for decent housing.

Last fall, the first-ever Habitat for Humanity Build Challenge asked participants to build a house that represented a place they would like to live. The competition, which had both online and onsite categories, attracted 1,060 entries, with winners determined by the highest number of votes cast online.

Those who built at home uploaded photos and descriptions of their homes to www.buildchallenge.org. Those who took part in event builds had an hour to complete their construction. Event builds took place in churches, schools, universities, community centers, shopping malls and even kids’ clubs.

“I believe that if it becomes a regular annual event, kids will be looking forward

to it,” says Adrian Whale, general manager of Habitat New Zealand’s Northland affiliate. “And eventually, when they want to change the world, they are likely to choose Habitat as the vehicle to do it.”

3 [KENYA] Twenty-five more families in the community of Maai Mahiu — once left homeless by explosive political violence following a contested presidential election — have received the keys to their new homes. An official ceremony in September dedicated the houses, built with volunteers and financial support from the Dow Chemical Co.

In 2007 in Kenya, more than 1,000 people were killed, and more than 600,000 people found themselves homeless as they fled the violence. A group of nearly 350 displaced families eventually combined forces and, with the help of the Kenyan government, purchased land near Maai Mahiu. They divided the land into small plots and began a new life in tattered and makeshift tents. Habitat Kenya began partnering with them in 2009 to fund and build homes.

4 [HUNGARY] In Hungary, demand for public housing has only increased during the current economic crisis, while available social rental stock is limited. The properties that do exist face many challenges: poor quality, segregated settings and management shortages. Local governments, mandated to operate most of the public housing, struggle to make such apartment buildings sustainable.

Social rental agencies can become an instrument for developing a vibrant and effective rental sector and have been at work in Belgium, the Netherlands and Ireland. These agencies rent housing units from a private rental market to needy people on special terms and guarantees, manage the dwellings, and provide work to prevent indebtedness.

This year, supported by a grant from the



EFRA WILLSTEIN

Windows on the Work

[ACROSS THE UNITED STATES]

Women Build Week 2013

This year’s National Women Build Week is the event’s biggest showing yet, with 300 events taking place throughout all 50 states. During the Lowe’s-sponsored May 4-12 event, women volunteers will devote at least one day to the effort to eliminate poverty housing. Participating cities include New York City; Baltimore; Anchorage, Alaska; Tucson, Arizona; Chicago; San Diego; Denver; Miami; Honolulu; Pittsburgh; and Nashville, Tennessee. To learn more about Women Build and find events near you, visit habitat.org/wb.

[ANTIOCH, TENNESSEE]

Good neighbors

The Edison Park neighborhood, just outside of Nashville, sat half-finished for nearly five years. The 2007 recession had resulted in the bankruptcy of the subdivision’s developer, leaving no one left to finish the neighborhood. Working with Metro Nashville, Habitat Greater Nashville purchased empty lots, added street lights and sidewalks, and paved roads. Edison Park now has new life, with Habitat homeowners already moving into 17 completed homes.

World News

Find Habitat World online at
MAGAZINE.HABITAT.ORG

Read weekly updates at
HABITAT.ORG/BLOG

International updates

“It is really gratifying to actually witness the progress of what you’ve done. Everybody should do it.”

— Alex Stein

Open Society Institute, Habitat Hungary and the Budapest-based Metropolitan Research Institute are conducting research and advocacy work related to the potential inclusion of the SRA concept into Hungary’s official housing policy. The organizations will analyze existing SRA practices and develop feasibility studies in cooperation with four municipalities.

5 [DOMINICAN REPUBLIC] Earlier this year, 12 doctoral students from Harvard University visited the Dominican Republic as Global Village trip participants. The honor students — who represented law, neurosurgery, political science and other concentrations of study — built and painted two houses that two Dominican families in the city of San Juan de la Maguana will soon call home.

“It is really gratifying to actually witness the progress of what you’ve done,” says Alex Stein, Habitat Harvard’s chapter co-director. “Everybody should do it. One of the highlights of the trip is the cultural interaction. You can build a house anywhere, but building here surrounded by the warmth of the locals — all gathered around you and knowing you are really making a difference — makes it meaningful.”

In addition to their build activities, the students visited the presidential palace and met with political representatives to discuss Dominican housing matters.

6 [ROMANIA] In December 2012, Habitat Romania’s Big Build was honored as the best social volunteer project in Romania for the second year in a row. The award is granted to the winner of a national



COURTESY CHIPPEWA VALLEY HABITAT

[VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT]

David Arneberg

TO RECEIVE THE rank of Eagle Scout, David Arneberg needed to lead a service project. A leader from his troop knew someone who could donate a backyard playset, but David needed an organization to build for. He contacted Tim Haukeness, executive director of Chippewa Valley Habitat for Humanity in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, who says he was delighted to have David work on this project.

Together with other scouts, David organized all of the bolts, screws and lumber in his garage before heading over to the home of Olivia Wiltrott and her son Ivan. Ten scouts helped David assemble the playset, finishing in one afternoon.

David says the most rewarding part, besides putting it together, was seeing young Ivan’s face light up like the sun. He played on the playset until they left. “This project was very rewarding,” David says, “and I hope that Ivan keeps playing on it and spreading the joy throughout their neighborhood.”

From the Chippewa Valley Habitat for Humanity newsletter

WHERE WE WORK

Habitat for Humanity started in the United States in 1976, and today its work reaches around the world. Currently, Habitat is at work in all 50 states of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Territory of Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and other countries around the globe, including: Argentina | Armenia | Australia | Azerbaijan | Bangladesh | Bermuda | Bolivia | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Brazil | Bulgaria | Cambodia | Canada | Chile | China | Colombia | Costa Rica | Cote d’Ivoire | Dominican Republic | Egypt | El Salvador | Ethiopia | Fiji | Germany | Ghana | Great Britain | Guatemala | Guyana | Haiti | Honduras | Hungary | India | Indonesia | Jamaica | Japan | Jordan | Kenya | Kyrgyzstan | Lebanon | Lesotho | Macedonia | Madagascar | Malawi | Malaysia | Mexico | Mongolia | Mozambique | Myanmar | Nepal | Netherlands | New Zealand | Nicaragua | Northern Ireland | Paraguay | Peru | Philippines | Poland | Portugal | Republic of Ireland | Romania | Russia | Serbia | Singapore | Slovakia | South Africa | South Korea | Sri Lanka | Tajikistan | Tanzania | Thailand | Timor-Leste | Trinidad and Tobago | Uganda | Ukraine | Vietnam | Zambia



COURTESY HABITAT ECA

Habitat Romania's award-winning Big Build attracts international volunteers each year.

competition among nongovernmental and public organizations.

Every October, Habitat Romania brings together local corporate supporters and volunteers with visiting volunteers from Northern Ireland and other countries to participate in blitz building activities. Each year, the event starts on World Habitat Day, an October Monday set aside by the United Nations to call attention to the need for better shelter around the world. By the end of the week, volunteers finish completed

homes alongside families in need of simple and decent shelter.

Under the motto “more homes, one community,” the 2012 event gathered more than 500 volunteers and resulted in 14 Habitat houses. For the first time, the Big Build took place in two locations in Romania — Oradea and Preajba, a community near Craiova.

During the Big Build's four years, the event has helped 46 families and mobilized more than 1,500 volunteers. ▲

[CALIFORNIA]

Helping veterans

Habitat San Fernando/Santa Clarita Valley is partnering with the California Department of Veterans Affairs to build two neighborhoods for military veterans. Part of the affiliate's “Habitat for Heroes” program, the communities in Santa Clarita Valley and Sylmar will have community gardens, playgrounds, environmentally friendly homes and access to Veterans Affairs representatives. The project also includes home renovations serving the area's veterans.



[DETROIT, MICHIGAN]

Keys to success

Habitat Detroit recently got a big boost from General Motors CEO Dan Akerson. Akerson and his wife have provided the cornerstone funds for Leaders to Rebuild Detroit, a three-year Habitat initiative focusing on the revitalization of the Morningside Commons neighborhood, near GM headquarters. To garner awareness and support, Akerson auctioned his 1958 Corvette hardtop convertible, raising \$270,000 for Habitat Detroit.



COURTESY GM

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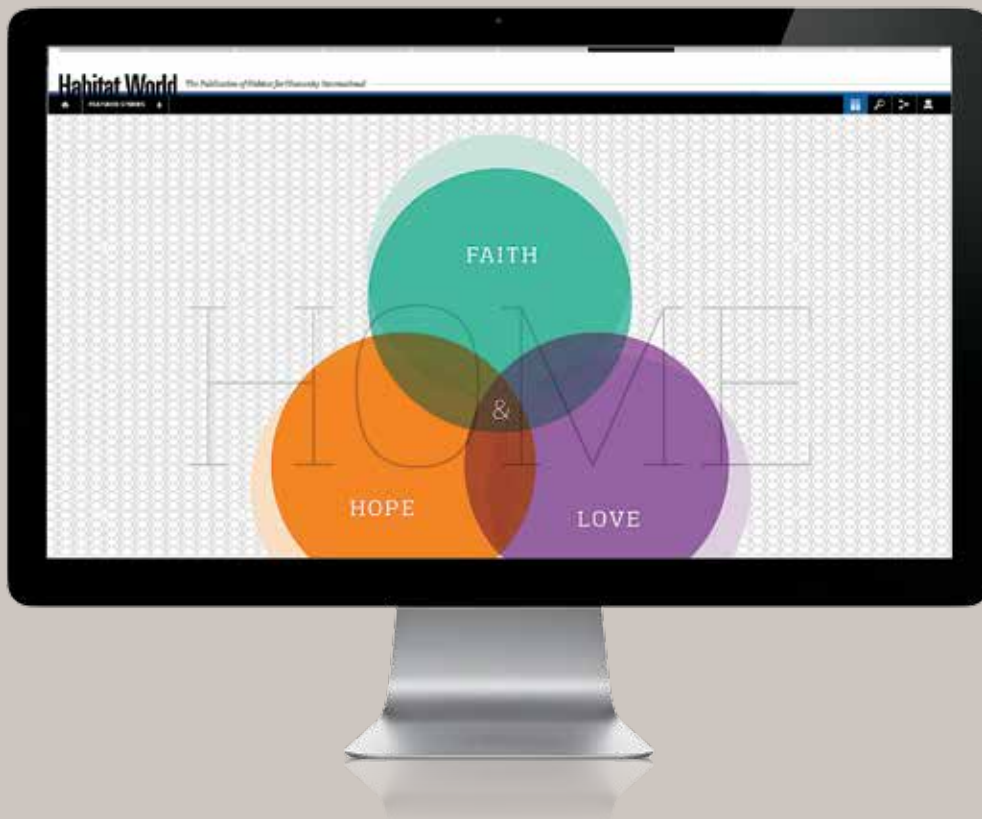
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WHAT'S NEW at MAGAZINE.HABITAT.ORG



NEW WITH THIS ISSUE

- » **SHARE** Habitat's message via a video that celebrates how a world where everyone has a decent place to live can take shape — with your help.
- » **SEE** Habitat advocates in action and hear from volunteers lending their voices to the cause of affordable housing.
- » **FIND** out how you can help BUiLD the awareness and support that helps us build with more families.
- » **CONNECT** the “why we build” dots with a video highlighting Habitat's work in Asia and the Pacific.

RECENT ADDITIONS



CREATING CONNECTIONS

Five stories create connections to Habitat's impact in the lives of families and volunteers. [▶](#)



BUILDING ON A THEME

Special themes help Habitat engage different communities in exciting new ways.



MOVE THE MISSION FORWARD

Tools you can use: a slideshow and a downloadable toolkit help you share the reasons we build.



HOPE AFTER A HURRICANE

Habitat helps send a message of renewal to disaster-affected communities. [▶](#)



THE GREEN ISSUE

Innovative Habitat projects around the world highlight Habitat's sustainable building practices.



MORE PHOTOS AND VIDEOS

See Haiti through the eyes of the 2012 *Habitat World* photo contest winner. [▶](#)

AND MORE...

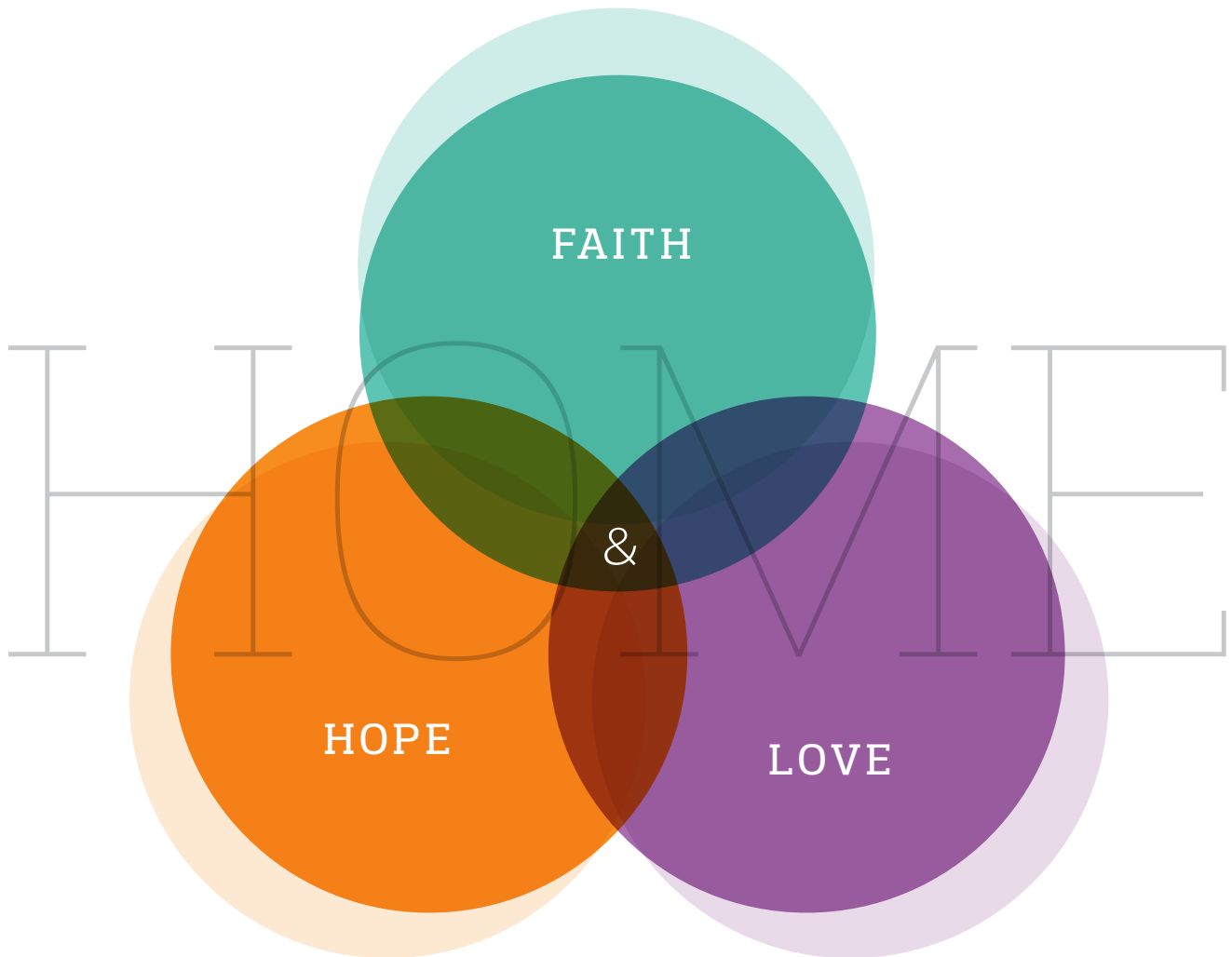
» **ENTER** the *Habitat World* photo contest for a chance to win a trip to the 2013 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project!

SHOW us photos that demonstrate how Habitat brings people together to build homes, communities and hope. Our winner will be awarded a chance to choose among this year's CWP build locations: Oakland and San Jose, California; Denver; and New York City.

FIND out more and download official rules, entry instructions and consent forms at habitat.org/hw/photo_contest/2013. Deadline is June 28.







Visit communities that Habitat has helped build and revitalize
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Meet volunteers and supporters who make our work possible
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Uncover an amazing coincidence – and a major reason why our work together matters
PAGE 26

Connect the dots
PAGE 29



Want to share Habitat's message with your circle?
Don't miss a special video celebrating this issue's themes at magazine.habitat.org.



REVITALIZING

A NORTH CAROLINA NEIGHBORHOOD

Habitat brings new life to an area once plagued by crime, drugs and decay.

BY MEGAN FRANK

Sylvia Oberle has seen what it takes to awaken change. ¶ “You can focus on schools, you can focus on police, you can focus on parks, but if you have inadequate or substandard housing, then you really are unable to change,” says the executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Forsyth County.

Her experience informs her perspective. Before joining Habitat in 2006, Oberle spent seven years on the staff of one of several community organizations working to address crime and drug issues in the Boston Thurmond neighborhood of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. “Once I came to Habitat, it was apparent that if you could address that one last piece in a neighborhood — of making sure that there was quality housing and making sure people had

an opportunity to feel safe in their neighborhoods — then that really was the final piece of neighborhood revitalization,” she says.

Shortly after Oberle’s arrival, Habitat Forsyth built 27 houses on the edge of the Boston Thurmond neighborhood, where once there had been crumbling and crime-ridden housing projects. As part of its revitalization push, the city had cleared the land to make way for new, quality low-income homes, zoning some lots for nonprofit builders like Habitat.



As work progressed, it became evident that much also needed to be done to save the existing homes along nearby North Cherry Street and the adjacent blocks. Also in disrepair were Boston Thurmond's unique "Y-stair" apartment buildings, named after the shape of the exterior stairs at the front. Designed by a local African-American architect, the buildings were a pivotal factor in getting the neighborhood on the National Register of Historic Places. However, Boston Thurmond's architectural make-up and historic status meant it was more than Habitat could handle alone.

The affiliate began talks with the city and the state historical preservation office, at the same time finding private developers who would partner on a revitalization project that included the preservation of the Y-stair apartment buildings. By 2010, Habitat Forsyth had built 16 new homes on Cherry Street, and many more houses in the neighborhood had been rehabbed. Landscaping and lighting projects added to the appeal and safety of the area, and a neighborhood watch began. Crime and drug activity declined significantly.

After Habitat and the city began to focus on the neighborhood, "you would not recognize it if you'd moved away and came back," says lifelong resident Patricia Caldwell. "You'd be totally surprised at the improvements!" Last fall, volunteers helped repaint Caldwell's house, repair her crumbling chimney, and clean and reattach her gutters.

Over Labor Day weekend, neighbors and volunteers worked on home repairs, winterization and clean-up projects in Boston Thurmond. "We used this as an opportunity to talk to people about the shift from new construction to a neighborhood revitalization approach," says Kelly Mitter, Habitat Forsyth's neighborhood revitalization coordinator. Teams also refurbished a community garden and poured concrete for a walkway and outdoor teaching stations at Kimberley Park Elementary School.

School principal Dr. Amber Baker has been a valuable Habitat ally and now sits on the affiliate's board of directors. Baker has encouraged residents to attend community meetings and join Habitat Forsyth's efforts. She's been at the school for five years and remembers how depressed the area was when she arrived. Now, she



Sylvia Oberle



COURTESY: HABITAT FORSYTH COUNTY (2)

Neighbors and volunteers have helped complete much-needed home repairs, winterization and clean-up projects throughout the Boston Thurmond neighborhood.



I wanted to live in this area because I felt like I was a part of a bigger dream to make Cherry Street a 'neighborhood' again."

—SHELBY POWELL



COURTESY HABITAT FORSYTH COUNTY (2)

Before-and-after view of Cherry Street shows a marked difference in the community.

has seen the decrease in crime and loves that more of her students walk to school. She's even considering a move to the neighborhood herself. Habitat's work, she says, is "rebuilding a sense of community."

In an area where so many families have lived for generations and for which even those who have moved on to other places still harbor a strong connection, community support is important. "I was amazed when we'd be out there just starting, working on foundations of houses and different things, people would stop and say, 'We're really glad that you're here,'" Oberle recalls. "I think that was a really important message for us to hear and to protect that trust that people had that we would be doing good things and the right things."

Among those good and right things is Habitat Forsyth's work to create connections and a sense of community among the neighborhood's residents — those who have been there for generations, those more recently arrived and those soon moving in. Patricia Caldwell and other community leaders are forming a new neighborhood association. To aid those efforts, Habitat Forsyth has partnered with nonprofit Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods and is helping to organize clean-up days and neighborhood projects.

Shelby Powell, who moved into her Habitat home on Cherry Street in 2009, can see change happening with "the entire area coming together and taking pride in our community." Though she was unfamiliar with the area prior to partnering with Habitat, the community enthusiasm drew her in. "I wanted to live in this area because I felt like I was part of a bigger dream to make Cherry Street a 'neighborhood' again," she says.

Oberle estimates that new construction and home repair projects in Boston Thurmond will continue for three to four more years. She hopes that Habitat Forsyth's work will inspire the urban revitalization work of other developers and Habitat affiliates. "It's not going to happen in one building cycle, it's not going to happen in two or three building cycles, and it's very complex work," she says. "All too often people say, 'Why should we bother?' Well, you bother because its story and its future really impact everyone in the whole community.

"I get on a soap box," she adds, "but I really believe that." ●



STEFFAN HACKER

STRANGERS BECOME FAMILY IN KYRGYZSTAN

Building a Habitat neighborhood
creates lasting bonds

When they left their native village, Janbolot Beishebaev and his wife Seingul hoped to find new economic opportunities in the capital city of Kyrgyzstan. What they found were low-paying jobs and crumbling flats.

Even working several jobs each, they soon found themselves raising their two children in a one-room flat. They had no bathtub or shower and shared a toilet with four other apartments. With no gas heating in the building, winters were difficult, and there was little to protect the Beishebaev family from the extreme cold.

Luckily, Janbolot heard about Habitat for Humanity, and the family soon joined a growing community on a piece of land given to the organization by local authorities. By spring 2002, the district was already known throughout the city as a Habitat neighborhood, and a dozen houses were being built to join the original 10 constructed two years before. As the Beishebaevs worked alongside volunteers and new neighbors — building, dining, resting — those who were strangers slowly became family. The bond is still strong after all these years.

Families visit each other during holidays, arrange communal spaces and generally help each other in times of hardship. Since then, the community has expanded with children and grandchildren, the birth of the first child in the new neighborhood a warmly remembered cause for celebration.

“I hadn’t believed that an organization like Habitat could exist and that it could really help us,” Janbolot says, “but now I live with my family in the house we built ourselves with the help of Habitat.”



COURTESY HABITAT EMEA

IMPROVING LIVES IN MADAGASCAR

Community upgrades mean tangible
benefits for families

“Habitat has changed my way of living,” says Bako.

The mother of three used to live with her family — husband Manandroa, daughters Carine and Bella, son Antonio — in a three-room house owned by her brother-in-law in Toliara, Madagascar. The iron sheeting of the walls and roof stayed hot in the summers and cold during the winters of the coastal African island. It was all the family could barely afford.

Habitat Madagascar recently has been hard at work in Toliara, with the help of a one-year comprehensive slum upgrade grant from Habitat Korea and the Korean International Cooperation Agency. Because of the project’s success, work will now continue for three more years.

Already, Habitat has built new houses in Toliara with 671 families, including Bako’s. Infrastructure improvements and the construction of public latrines have helped even more families, widening the project’s impact beyond the Habitat homeowners and making life better for the entire community. Drainage channels and pathways mean the children of Toliara can get to school even when there is flooding. Habitat training means members of the community know how to best maintain public spaces and water points.

Today, Bako is proud of her decent Habitat house. Bella is able to attend school, and the family is able to save and make plans for the future: a veranda, perhaps, or the addition of a kitchen to their home.

Best of all, Bako feels like she has found a new sense of community with her fellow Habitat homeowners. “We are very close, inviting each other to weddings or other family events,” she says. “We applied together, hoped together, built together. They have become like a second family.” ●



AN
UNEXPECTED
 COMMUNITY IN MICHIGAN

Macomb County Habitat for Humanity transforms a former eyesore
 into a thriving, family-centered neighborhood.

BY PHIL KLOER

For years, the parcel of land in Clinton Township, Michigan, was a dumping ground for whoever wanted to get rid of whatever.

Junked cars, broken furniture, used tires — they all found their way into the overgrown, weed-choked field near a senior center on the township’s economically disadvantaged north side.

Today, about 40 children play on the newly paved stretch of road called Howard Street.

There’s a basketball goal that’s very popular when the weather is nice. Kids rollerskate or cruise around on skateboards. Twenty well-maintained Habitat for Humanity houses line the street, with neighbors who look out for one another. Ten more Habitat homes are being planned.

Howard Street the dump is now Howard Street the community.

“When somebody graduates from high school, the family will put a sign in the yard and have a graduation party and invite the whole neighborhood. We’ll all go over

to celebrate,” says Michelle Anderson, one of the first people to move into a home on Howard Street. “Or if someone is going to prom, we all go over and take pictures.”

No one wanted to take pictures of the area in 2006, when the municipality of Clinton Township deeded the land to Macomb County Habitat for Humanity.

“We had a lot of clean-up days just to get all the garbage out of there,” recalls Karan Bates-Gasior, Macomb Habitat’s program director. “It was just a non-stop parade of dumpsters. We took four 30-foot dumpsters of just tires out. We took out old cars, enough furniture to furnish a house, shingles, asphalt, tons of trash.

“Then we cleaned out the trees and did the land balancing,” she explains. “We extended Howard Street, which had previously stopped at the edge of the land, had water and sewer put in, and the sidewalks.”

Soon after, Michelle Anderson, a family advocate for



Head Start, and her husband, Robert, a bus driver, joined three other families to start the new Howard Street community. The families worked on one another's houses, took Habitat's required money management classes together and got to know one another.

"It wasn't even a neighborhood yet, but even then we were sort of coming together in a community," says Anderson. "Each year we've gotten more houses, and our kids have made lots of new friends, but the families in those first houses are still our closest friends."

"They're a pretty tight group over there," says Bates-Gasior. When a new homeowner family starts their sweat equity, the neighbors who are already settled frequently offer to babysit their kids while they work. Howard Street families run an unofficial neighborhood watch program, get together for community clean-ups, and tend a communal garden of vegetables and flowers.

Joel Silbernagel, assistant director of planning for Clinton Township, praises the Habitat project. "It's been positive all the way around in a lot of ways," he says, "and has had a ripple effect on surrounding areas."

Bates-Gasior explains where that ripple effect can be seen: "The land had been vacant, and now there are people contributing property taxes. The families shop in the area, so there is a benefit to a wide range of businesses. These families really care about a better life for their children, so it's great to have them in our schools."

The school system has been involved in the community project as well. Four of the 20 homes built so far have been built by high school students in the Chippewa Valley Schools Building Trades Program, which includes students from two nearby high schools. The students, supervised by high school staff, build the homes at Dakota High School. When the homes are done they are moved to Howard Street, where contractors and volunteers add finishing touches and connect them to utilities. In 2012, Clinton Township awarded more than \$100,000 of a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant to the school program to help build the school's annual house.

"Habitat has found that providing families with stable shelter is very important, especially to children," says Bates-Gasior. "When children grow up in a Habitat home, they are generally healthier and more likely to graduate from high school and to go to college. We see these trends playing out in the families of Howard Street." ●



After substantial clean-up on four-plus acres of land, Habitat extended Howard Street to begin creating a neighborhood.

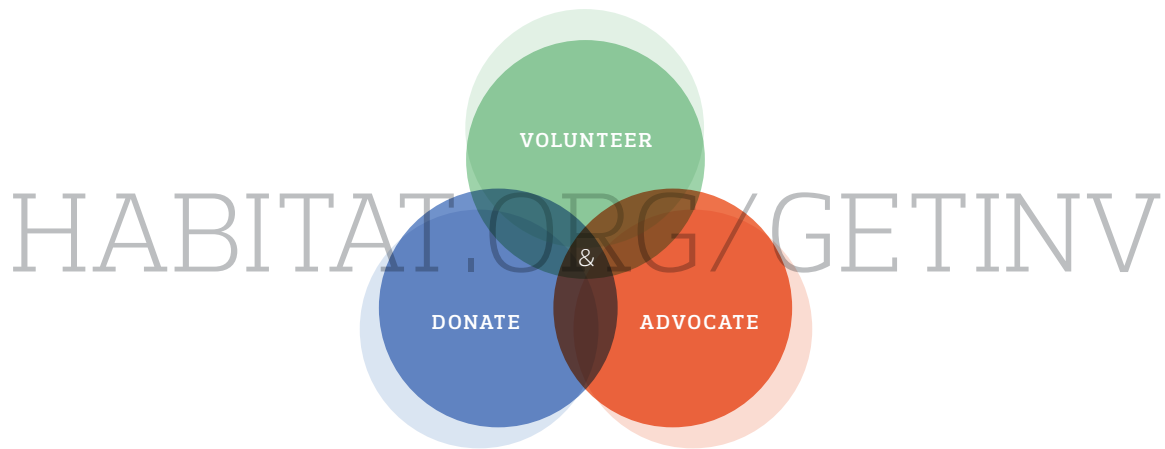


Howard Street homeowners work together to complete construction of their Habitat houses.



COURTESY MACOMB COUNTY HABITAT (3)

Next-door babysitters, neighborhood watch, a community garden — 20 Habitat homes form the solid center of a thriving community.



SPHERES OF SERVICE

CARE-A-VANNERS

RV

DRIVE, BUILD, BOND

A special breed of Habitat volunteer enjoys traveling around the United States in an RV, stopping to sightsee or perhaps camp for a couple of weeks – and helping to build houses while they're at it.

Some are full-time RV dwellers, some part-time, some are on vacation, but they all love to travel and they all believe in the same thing.

“It’s the mission that’s the glue, I think,” says Mary Vandeveld, a longtime Care-A-Vanner who coordinates the program for Habitat for Humanity International. “Our mission is to help local affiliates with their building and rebuilding programs to help get people into affordable housing.”

Many of those local affiliates depend on Care-A-Vanners to complete homes, like Jim Wells County Habitat in Alice, Texas. “We have been blessed with 16 Care-A-Vanner builds, approximately 250 unique, gifted, empathetic and

diverse individuals, ages early 20s to late 70s, from at least 20 states, Canada and the U.K.,” says affiliate president Nora Barrera Rycroft. “Without their help, we would have constantly been facing disappointment and even failure. With them, our all-volunteer affiliate is regularly invigorated and blessed.”

Available builds are posted on habitat.org for sign-up, which allows Care-A-Vanners to plan to meet friends and build together. “I think what attracts us to it is not only the opportunity to make a difference in some people’s lives, but also the friendships we’ve developed. Most of our close friends now are all Care-A-Vanners, who we meet at various places on the road,” Vandeveld says.

COURTESY DAVE AND MARY VANDEVELD



Mary and Dave Vandeveld have been Care-A-Vanners since 2001.

Diane Gravlee and her husband George have been Care-A-Vanners since 1994. “It is just a really neat bunch of people,” she says. “When we get to a build and we find someone we have not met before, we shake hands and say hello, but by the end of the two weeks, we are hugging goodbye and promising to keep in touch.”

Finding someone they haven’t met before might be a challenge at this point: The Gravlees have built with 83 affiliates in 42 states. Every winter, they meet for a build with a “reunion team” — 11 couples and one individual who bonded after Hurricane Katrina and want to keep building together. “We are very diverse politically, financially and religiously,” Diane says. “I am not sure what actually bonds our friendships, but they run very deep.”

The nature of a Care-A-Vanner build certainly fosters community. On average, people work side by side for two consecutive weeks. After the workday is done, they retire to the same campsite, often sharing meals and stories by a fire. That element pleased Lowell and Linda Lamont, who participated in their first build in West Liberty, Kentucky, in 2012. The Lamonts are retired and appreciated the chance to do some good while sharing a new experience with new friends. “I think it was very good for us,” Linda says. “It was good for us to be doing things, and we really felt like we were contributing.” Shortly after their first build, the Lamonts signed up for two more in early 2013. They may be on their way to being “hooked,” as a lot of Care-A-Vanners say they are.

“We’re travelers, and we’re looking to travel with a purpose,” says Vandeveld. “The thing about Care-A-Vanners is when you sit around a campfire and talk, you always ask where you’ve been and where you’re going.” For Habitat RV Care-A-Vanners, the ultimate destination is always helping another family build a simple, decent, affordable home of their own. ●

COURTESY LOWELL AND LINDA LAMONT



A shop teacher for 30 years, Lowell Lamont likes the educational aspects of his involvement with Care-A-Vanners. “The things I learned from the experienced builders were just really fantastic,” he says.

COURTESY GEORGE AND DIANE GRAVLEE



In 2008, the Gravlees commemorated their 100th Habitat build with four weeks of building in Alliance, Ohio. Eighty of their closest Care-A-Vanner friends joined them to build two houses, one of which was financed by the Gravlees.

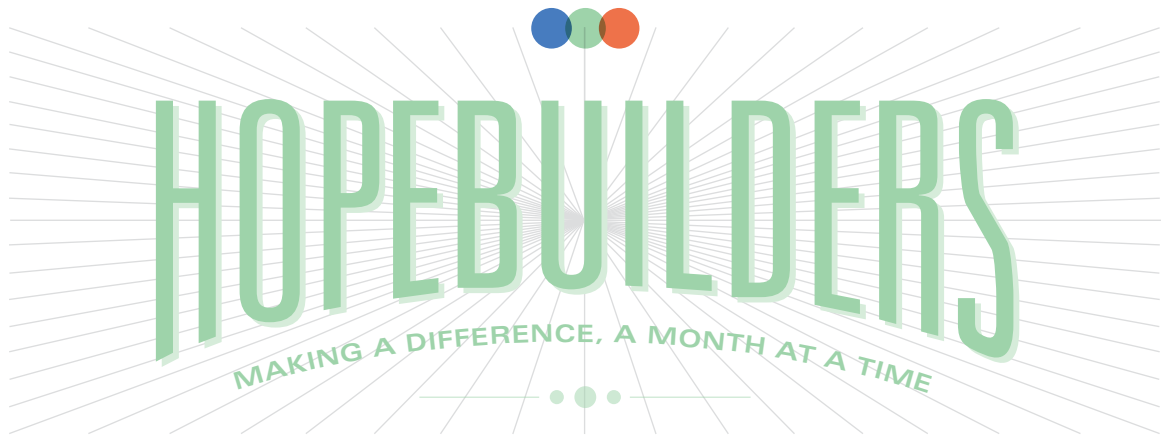
WHY CARE-A-VANNERS ARE IMPORTANT

“The Care-a-Vanners bring skills, experience and maturity to each location where they deploy. We ask for their help in a variety of situations, including disaster response, special events and affiliate capacity building. Their strong skill set and emphasis on safety is critical to our work across the U.S. On top of all that, they’re just wonderful people with huge hearts for our work.”

— MARK ANDREWS, Habitat for Humanity International’s vice president of volunteer and institutional engagement

WHAT YOU CAN DO

» Find out how to travel with a purpose — and support RV Care-A-Vanners — at habitat.org/rv.



HOPEBUILDERS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE, A MONTH AT A TIME

For about 20 years now, Habitat for Humanity has been able to depend on Pete and Charlotte Pfeiffer.

The Pfeiffers have been involved with Habitat since 1992. A new affiliate was formed in Cordele, Georgia, where they lived at the time, and the couple had been impressed by news reports revealing how well Habitat homes had fared during Hurricane Andrew. As a result, they locally contributed funds, time and Pete's knowledge as an attorney, while also becoming HopeBuilders. Through monthly donations, HopeBuilders provide Habitat with a consistent and reliable source of funding.

The Pfeiffers say that deciding to support Habitat was easy. And the automatic donation made possible through the HopeBuilders program made it even easier. "We don't have to remember have we done that this month?" Charlotte says. "Plus, I think it's also easier for the organization because the organization knows how much money is definitely coming in." And so, for years, the Pfeiffers faithfully donated \$25 each month to Habitat.

Eventually, after a trip to Habitat's Global Village and Discovery Center in Americus, Georgia, the couple decided to begin financing houses in other countries in addition to continuing their HopeBuilders commitment. "We decided we wanted to not only give that little amount each month, but that we wanted to build a house somewhere," Pete says. They liked the idea of making a difference in "the countries that we'd been to, that we knew the needs in housing that they particularly had."

The steady generosity of the Pfeiffers continues to climb. They've recently significantly increased their monthly pledge. "We're comfortable with trusting that Habitat's going to put their emphasis where that emphasis needs to be," Pete says. He explains that, though there are many reasons he and Charlotte are HopeBuilders, the

sense of community that Habitat builds is paramount. "That, to me, is really as important as the houses," he says. "People can have houses, but if they don't have a community, they still don't have much of a life." ●

COURTESY PETE AND CHARLOTTE PFEIFFER



Faithful monthly donors Pete and Charlotte Pfeiffer

WHY HOPEBUILDERS ARE IMPORTANT

"For 18 years, HopeBuilders have supported Habitat with their committed, monthly giving. Their continued involvement over the years has certainly contributed to our long-term growth and Habitat's ability to reach more families in need of decent shelter. Especially during tough economic times, it's our loyal HopeBuilders who bolster our mission and sustain our efforts to break the cycle of poverty housing. We are blessed to have such passionate and generous donors."

—KYMBERLY WOLFF, Habitat for Humanity International's senior vice president for resource development

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- » Become a HopeBuilder at [habitat.org/hopebuilder](https://www.habitat.org/hopebuilder). Any amount you share helps provide affordable housing for families around the world.

ADVOCATES

FROM VOLUNTEERS TO VOICES

Part of Habitat's work to make decent, affordable housing a reality for everyone is advocacy: working to change the policies, attitudes and behaviors that lead to inadequate housing and homelessness, both in the United States and abroad. "We need to be able to change systems," says Habitat advocate and volunteer Amy Miles. "Advocacy is the way that I see more can be done in less time."

The Port Huron, Michigan, resident has been involved with Habitat for 25 years, mostly on a local level until 2001, when she began taking Global Village trips. She says her international travels made her very aware of the scope of poverty around the world — and that change was needed in the systems keeping people trapped in that poverty.

She learned about Build Louder trips at a Global Village leaders' conference and became interested in how the trips aim to create a deeper understanding of Habitat's legislative priorities and the issues that affect the organization's work around the world.

After two Build Louder trips — one to Nicaragua and one to Guatemala — Miles feels she has a better understanding of how advocacy at home can help elsewhere. Her involvement with Habitat's advocacy work has helped her gain an understanding of the importance of U.S. policies and how talking to leaders at home can help create change in other parts of the world. "One thing that really struck me," she says, "was that there were just a few things that, if the government would take much more bold or quicker action, it could make a huge difference in raising some people out of poverty."

Though Miles makes advocacy a central part of every Global Village trip she leads, she believes that helping can be as simple as signing a petition or talking to anyone she can. "I can talk to my friends and my peers," she says, "and get them to understand that the click of a mouse can start a chain reaction that really can make a difference around the world."

For Miles, advocacy reaches beyond any political

boundaries. It's a call to her Christian roots. "I believe part of my call as a Christian is to go beyond simply giving aid," she says. "I need to be able to change the systems, and advocacy is the first step in changing systems." ●



EZRA MILLESTEIN

"The click of a mouse can start a chain reaction that really can make a difference around the world." — Amy Miles

WHY ADVOCATES ARE IMPORTANT

"Habitat can contribute a lot to the conversation about affordable housing, what is important and what is needed. We can share what we have learned with people who can make a difference and advocate for a better world. Our advocates have the tools and means to join their voices together."

— JOSE QUINONEZ, Habitat for Humanity International's director of advocacy capacity building

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- » Learn more about how you can use your voice for Habitat at habitat.org/gov.
- » Hear more from Amy Miles and see examples of advocacy in action at magazine.habitat.org.



One out of every four people on the planet is homeless or lives in poverty housing. Because Habitat for Humanity believes this is unacceptable – and believes that every one person can make a real difference – we BUiLD.

BUiLD is a growing community of supporters who employ fun and meaningful new tools to help raise awareness of housing needs and increase support for Habitat's mission. ¶ Share information and updates with your friends and family. Take the pledge. Donate. Participate in special promotions that help us raise much-needed funds and awareness.

Help us BUiLD more homes, communities and hope.

WHY BUILD IS IMPORTANT

"Habitat believes that each individual has the power to make a difference in another person's life. Most often, we come together to raise walls and lay bricks, but the beauty of our work is that, truly, we can BUiLD wherever we are. We empower individuals to support our work — and raise awareness for it — by taking simple steps that help spread our message. Everyone who BUiLDs says, 'I believe in a world where everyone has a decent place to live.' Do you?"

—LYSA RATLIFF, Habitat for Humanity International's senior director of corporate relations

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- » Take the pledge at habitat.org/build.
- » Download a BUiLD toolkit at habitat.org/build/toolkit.aspx.
- » Find out about JCPenney's May customer donation campaign at habitat.org/partnerships/Cause_Marketing.aspx.





“
CIRCLE OF
FRIENDS
”

A storm, a story and an unexpected connection
BY SHALA CARLSON



WILLIAM NEUMANN

The sense of strength and support that runs through all of Habitat's efforts is a very important part of why we do what we do.

SCOTT LIMSTATTO

Habitat supporter Susan Ryan recognized the ruins of her Breezy Point family home in this photo — and the encircling nature of the work we all do.



Habitat helpers begin a day of volunteering in Union Beach, N.J., with a prayer.



ou struggle to know just what a storm has brought.

It's easy to think it's the waterlogged piles of mementos, belongings and debris that start to accumulate outside ruined houses. Or that it's the grit in the air and the odd sweet smell that lingers during demolition and clean-up. At times, you wonder if somehow you've gotten it wrong. Maybe the storm really doesn't bring anything; it only takes.

Every so often — right as I'm waking up, in the split second before I open my eyes — there are still mornings when I think I'm in my apartment in New Orleans. Not that long ago, I spent more than an hour rummaging through a closet, looking for a family photo I was sure I just couldn't find before remembering that I don't have it any more. Katrina does.

After that massive storm hit the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005, everyone in my home state of Louisiana talked a lot about the "new normal." The truth, of course, was that

normal was gone. Katrina had claimed it and left us instead with a strange new now.

In October 2012, families in towns and cities all along the East Coast crossed that same threshold. The winds and water of Superstorm Sandy damaged and destroyed homes and businesses and forever changed communities. Part of what makes these storms so difficult for those in their paths — part of what I felt and definitely part of what I saw when I visited the hard-hit town of Breezy Point, New York, a week after Sandy — is that they don't only happen to you individually. They also happen to everyone and everyone around you.

There can be solidarity in that fact, but it's also very easy to feel, when everything familiar is suddenly and constantly so unfamiliar, as though you are just another one of the things tossed about by the wind and rain and water. As though you and yours are adrift and the rest of the world, with its business as usual, is somewhere out there, very far away.



The bad came in, but the good is here, too.”



What’s amazing is how people you don’t even know can help mend that connection. After every storm, I always found it a little bit thrilling to see the power trucks from surrounding states heading south to help get the lights back on. Multiply that times infinity when it’s Habitat volunteers and donors, church groups, AmeriCorps members, all coming together to help try to put back this place that you and your family have loved for so long.

Returning home from Breezy Point, I wrote stories for our ongoing *Why We Build* series and the *Habitat World* blog. The small shoreline community in the New York City borough of Queens seemed to provide a perfect example of the hope that Habitat volunteers can bring. In my short visit, I met first responders, school teachers and city workers who were struggling to help themselves — and each other. As I saw on the Gulf Coast, as I’ve seen in locations around the world, Habitat’s presence buoyed Breezy Point and gave the people I met faith that their struggles would not be forgotten.

Shortly after our stories published, we received the most wonderful gift of an email. A woman named Susan Ryan had seen the story and realized with shock that the accompanying photo was the rubble of her family home. A lifelong and third-generation resident of Breezy Point, Susan also happens to be a veteran Habitat volunteer. Splitting her time between New York and Orchid, Florida, Susan is part of an active group of fundraisers and builders who support Indian River Habitat. In the past 15 years, the group has completed 20 houses, hosting events, gathering donations and sending a crew of volunteers every Thursday to help out on build sites. Susan and her fellow volunteers have helped raise walls, insulate, paint, install siding and hurricane braces, and celebrate the joyful dedications of new Habitat homes.

Calling the photo from Breezy Point an “amazing coincidence,” Susan then went on

to describe a second one: “The first people I met after I returned to check out the damage were Habitat people asking if I needed help! So what we really are is a huge circle of friends helping each other.”

In all of Habitat’s disaster response work — in the Gulf, after the tsunami, in Haiti, now along the East Coast of the United States — there’s the obvious need to repair and build houses alongside affected families. But I believe that the sense of strength and support that runs through all of those efforts is a very important part of why Habitat does what we do. We are a circle of friends, ever widening, ever working. And what we bring — to communities affected by disaster, to families living in unacceptable conditions, to neighborhoods struggling to revive — is a presence that helps re-root them, a solid way forward that settles their spirit. Our work tells people like Susan that we will take the next steps with their communities.

One of my favorite quotes, one you’ve seen in the magazine before, is Rabindranath Tagore’s “Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark.” I think hope is a bird of a similar feather, one that starts to sing as soon as the storm has passed. As Habitat’s response to Sandy continues — in places like Breezy Point and Staten Island and coastal New Jersey — it’s a song that only needs a strong circle of friends to carry forward.

With your help, we’ve carried that song to New Orleans and places all along the Gulf Coast. I’ve seen how it’s still there, its chorus strengthening as neighborhoods, communities and families continue to heal. Now, there are others who need to hear it, too, others who have been forever changed — by the storm, but also by what the storm has brought. ●

» **VISIT** habitat.org/SuperstormSandy to view photos and videos and to learn more about Habitat’s ongoing response efforts.

» **DONATE** in support of Habitat’s work at habitat.org/sandy.

As part of its response to Superstorm Sandy, Habitat for Humanity International launched its first-ever fleet of Mobile Response Units. In late December, 24 vans donated by Chevrolet and specially outfitted with tools and supplies donated by Lowe’s and the Robert Bosch Tool Corporation departed Atlanta to assist in communities in New York and New Jersey.

Upon its arrival, the Habitat fleet was immediately put into service in Staten Island, New York, and Union Beach, New Jersey, where volunteers already were working to help clean up and begin rebuilding.

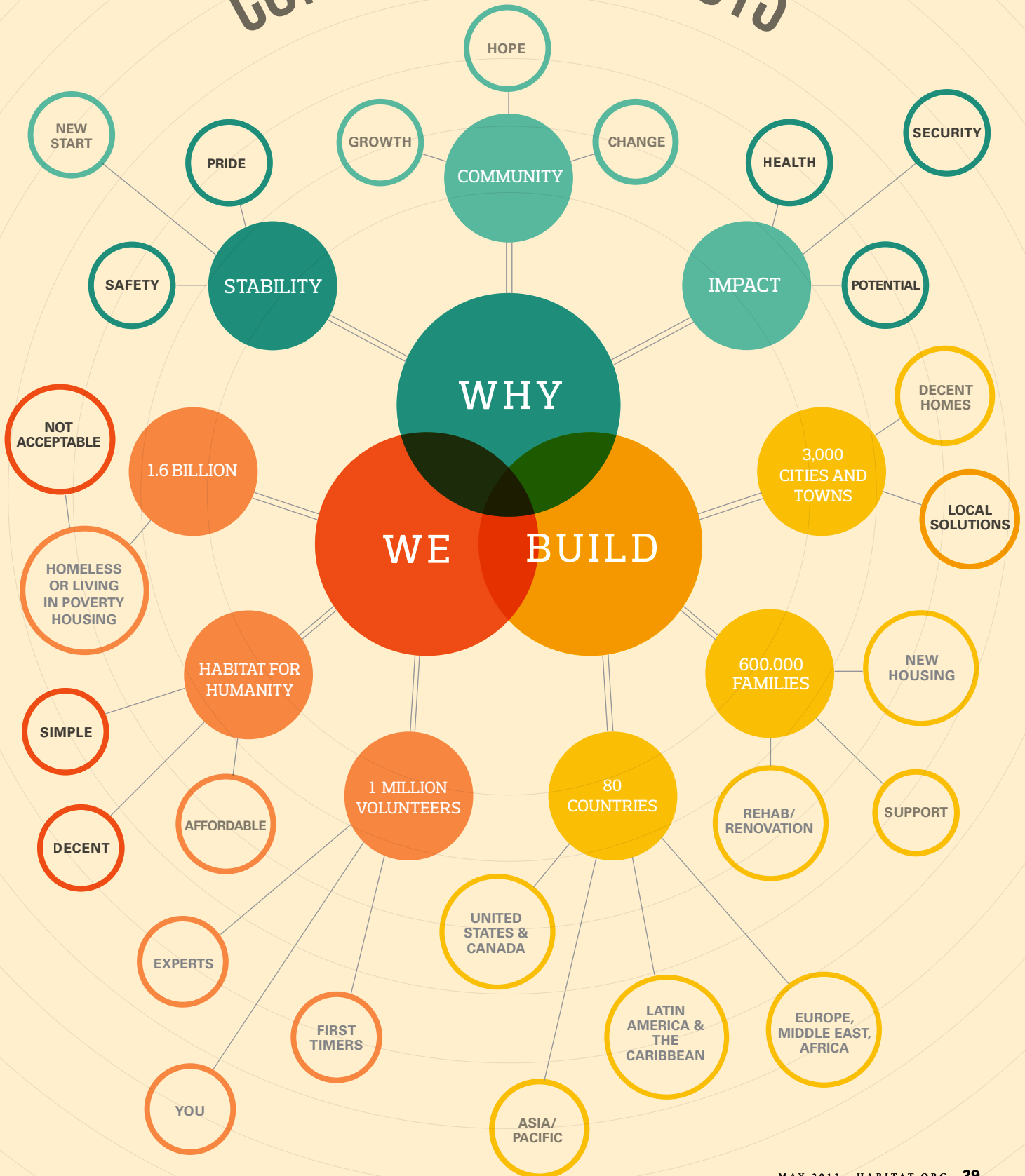
Homeowners welcomed the caravan’s additional resources — and volunteers. In Union Beach, Habitat helped homeowner TamiLynn Willoughby inspect the damage to her home and begin repairs. “I feel so grateful that you’re here,” she said to the assembled volunteers. “The bad came in, but the good is here, too.”

Some of that good stayed — the Mobile Response Units have been deployed to a dozen Habitat affiliates in the greater New York metropolitan area to help continue extensive clean-up and repair efforts.

» **LEARN** more about the contents of each Mobile Response Unit at habitat.org/SandyMRUs.

» **SEE** reports from the December road trip at habitat.org/blog/article125.aspx.

CONNECTING THE DOTS



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Coming Home

The camera captures a moment in time



HOME TO STAY

“A HOUSE IS LOVE,” sang 7-year-old Ashlee Centamore during her family’s Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity home dedication. The performance was mostly impromptu, says her mother Jessica. “She practiced a little in the car on the way over there, but it’s only a 15-minute drive,” she laughs. Though she’s never had any lessons, Ashlee has “always liked music,” Jessica says. “She loves to have a microphone and be in front of everybody.”

When older sister Alyssa plays the keyboard, Ashlee likes to join her on guitar. The keyboard, though, has been one of many items left

in storage — the family has moved five times in the last four years, including stays in Florida and Oklahoma before returning to New Jersey. Much of that time has been spent in cramped apartments, with no room for the girls to play.

“With the house, I can give my kids stability,” says Jessica, adding that the girls don’t fully grasp the changes in store. “I’ll just be really happy when they realize we don’t have to move again. It breaks my heart.

“They had to leave their friends at the other places we lived, and it was really hard on them. They won’t have to leave their friends again.” ▲

PHOTO BY ERIC SHICK

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