

Habitat St. Vrain Supports a Resident-Led Covid-19 Response



Habitat for Humanity of the St. Vrain Valley supports a resident-led COVID-19 response

Residents of Dacono, Colorado, partnered with Habitat for Humanity of the St. Vrain Valley in 2017 to form the Pride of the Glens, a coalition of residents and community partners who care about and take pride in their neighborhood. The group has facilitated collective action through neighborhood clean-ups, gardening projects, transportation advocacy, block parties and housing repairs.



The Glens is a tight-knit neighborhood in Dacono, founded in the 1960s with primarily manufactured homes by homeowners who own their land, distinct from mobile home communities where pads are typically rented. St. Vrain Habitat began building single-family new construction homes in the Glens neighborhood in 2010. St. Vrain's investment expanded into home repairs in 2016 in conjunction with launching a neighborhood revitalization initiative to serve a greater number of families and partner together with the community to realize change.

Caption: Rickey Wittman and Micaela Chacon deliver a food gift card to a family in the Glens. Photo credit: Kathy Wittman

Habitat has invested over \$300,000 in the neighborhood since 2018, in addition to new home construction. St. Vrain Habitat has completed 15 critical home repairs replacing roofs, modifying bathtubs to accessible showers, replacing water damaged floors and installing ramps and grab bars. Homeowners contribute social equity, similar to sweat equity, by giving of their time and talents. Some have participated in activities led by Pride of the Glens.

St. Vrain Habitat's neighborhood revitalization work in the Glens has always sought to follow the lead of resident leaders while offering significant financial and capacity-

building support. A core group of residents lead Pride of the Glens' action teams that host events, improve beautification and increase neighborhood connections. Working together with the City of Dacono, local businesses, churches and agencies, there are many possibilities to continue to impact neighborhood improvements that benefit the entire community.

When coronavirus shut down the economy, many residents struggled to pay rent and access food. Rickey Wittman, a leadership team member of the Pride of the Glens, describes the reason the group decided to provide COVID-19 relief. "We're there to help, and we're part of this community. It wouldn't be right to let people struggle alone."

The first step was to transition leadership meetings online. The group accessed coaching from Rachel Dahlke, a community development consultant with Habitat for Humanity International to facilitate setting group norms, adopting a decision-making process, capturing ideas into Google slides during meetings and distributing roles among coalition members.

During their first meeting, the Pride of the Glens voted to reallocate \$12,000 in funding earmarked for community events and neighborhood beautification to COVID-19 relief. Leaders organized themselves into roles to write the phone script, recruit volunteers, make phone calls, design mailers, research community resources and create accountability protocols. The team subsequently met weekly for two months to share progress and make decisions.

When the Pride of the Glens sent out mailers to find people affected by COVID-19, the floodgates opened with residents asking for help with rent and housing. The Pride of the Glens partnered with the Carbon Valley Help Center to distribute rental and utility assistance. Rickey and Habitat's Homeowner Support Coordinator, Micaela Chacon, took on the food assistance by approving applications and delivering food gift cards to eligible recipients. "People were really appreciative. A few of them said they didn't know where their next meal was coming from. We connected them to food banks and other resources to help them get through," Rickey said.

After their first successful distribution of \$12,000 in housing and food assistance, the Pride of the Glens has received additional funding for COVID-19 relief. For Rickey, helping others feels good. "I am so passionate because I want to see the community prosper," he said. "It makes my heart feel so good that my wife and I, being Christians, can serve our brothers and sisters. It makes us feel good and part of that community."

More about the Glens

Leaders of The Pride of the Glens are dedicated to caring for each other, and working for a better future for their community. For decades, the Glens of Dacono was a small rural town surrounded by agricultural land. Located along the Interstate-25 corridor just north of Denver, Dacono and the surrounding front-range communities are now experiencing significant growth and welcoming new housing developments.

Homeowners are proud of the quiet and friendly neighborhood they've developed over generations. The most persistent desires of residents are that the history, diversity and beauty of their small-town neighborhood provide a good place to live for the seniors, families and youth who live there. Seniors are often alone and lack the financial and physical ability to maintain their manufactured homes that are well beyond their useful life. Residents, especially the youth, need things to do, places to gather and have fun. The first project residents completed was to landscape and plant a barren berm in the city park with over 200 native perennials. Residents in the Glens take pride in the history of their town and commissioned a local muralist to honor the origin of the city's name, "Dacono" on the side of the town's local grocery and hosted block parties to build the sense of community.

Learn more:

[Habitat for Humanity of the St Vrain Valley](#)

[Sign up for a consulting call with Habitat for Humanity's Community Development Consultants. This free resource is available for Habitat affiliates.](#)

Do you have a story of a Habitat organization and resident group responding to COVID-19? Please email rdahlke@habitat.org to submit your story for a future Block Talk.