



# Habitat for Humanity® of Greater Charlottesville

March 27, 2020

Dear Members of the Habitat Family,

We hope you are all taking care of yourselves and your loved ones during this truly unprecedented time.

Although the situation remains extremely dynamic, we are starting to re-ground ourselves in the new normal. And that process begins with redoubled support for our partner family applicants, homeowners and homebuyers and for members of the Southwood community.

## Reaching Out

We have contacted more than 300 families either in our homebuyers program, in Habitat homes or in mobile homes at Southwood. Unsurprisingly, we have been inspired by their stories of resilience and resourcefulness as well as by the valuable contributions they continue to make in the community. After the first week of the lock down, about 25% reported either suffering job loss or feeling extremely concerned about it. By yesterday, that number had reached 40%. Despite this, the majority of our families remain employed providing essential, front-line services such as health care, food preparation and maintenance services in the region. Of course, the flip side of this job security is that they are experiencing varying amounts of risk to their own health and safety as they do their work to keep our hospitals open, our community fed and our essential businesses operational.

We are here to support them as they keep us all safe.

## Continuing Our Work

On the jobsite, we are pushing forward with a skeleton crew to complete two homes in the Harmony Ridge neighborhood within the next few days so that Pandora Anderson and Sonam and Sima Lama can

### Partner Families on the Front Lines: Sharon Ross



Sharon Ross is a Habitat partner participating in the Pathways to Housing program, which works to support low-income families achieve their dreams of financial stability and better housing.

As a Dietary Aide in UVA's Encompass Health Rehab Hospital, Sharon continues to serve on the frontlines of the escalating fight against COVID-19. Every morning, she kisses her three children goodbye as she leaves for work to ensure that sick patients in our

move immediately from overcrowded, unsafe apartments to healthy homes that they own.

Our Department of Family and Community Partnerships is continuing its critical work, assisting 160 families who are in process of applying for our homebuyer program so that, once the crisis has passed, they can continue their journey toward a *forever home*. For current homeowners who lose their jobs, we will be working on forbearance plans that will allow them to delay mortgage payments until they get back on their feet.

At Southwood, we have waived late rental payment fees and are preparing to develop plans with families who might experience a loss of income as a result of the coronavirus. Additionally, we are adding to our digital meeting capacity so that we can provide virtual one-on-one financial coaching for the first group of homeowners scheduled to start building next year and move forward remotely with community planning efforts for subsequent villages.

### Helping Families Shelter Safely in Place

Additionally, thanks to the generosity of so many people in the community, we have been able to expedite a number of closings to help families get into their homes in time to shelter in place safely. Just yesterday, Jessica Gibson and her four children – all under the age of 10 -- took ownership of their new home in Esmont. Jessica was referred to us in November after she received word that the land under the trailer she had been living in for years had been sold. Just as the weather turned frigid, she was devastated to learn that they had just a couple of weeks to vacate the property.

They had nowhere to go.

That's when the community stepped in and stepped up. A local donor provided a generous contribution to support the family. Realtor Donna Goings volunteered her time to help Jessica find a home to purchase. Pilot Mortgage's Phil d'Oronzio donated his time to secure an affordable mortgage. And our Family Services team sprung into action to provide moral, technical and financial support, helping Jessica complete affordable homebuyer classes, find temporary (though substandard) shelter and close on her home. We are so pleased to share with you that, by the end of this week which has otherwise been filled with bad news, Jessica and her children will be moving from a borrowed RV without heat or running water into a new home. They will be able to weather the storm in safe, decent, affordable housing. And, more importantly, they'll never have to worry about being homeless again.

### Maintaining Safe Operations

community get the care and nourishment that they need to recover, while risking her own and her family's health. With the closure of City schools, as a single mother, Sharon has had to scramble and reach out to every friend, neighbor and family member to ensure childcare for her children.

Habitat thanks and salutes our many partner families, like Sharon, who serve as nursing assistants, Hospital maintenance staff, construction workers, food servers, in-home aides, delivery staff, taxi drivers, grocery store clerks, pharmacy workers, and other "essential" service providers that are working to sustain the health, safety and economic viability of our community.

At the same time as we stretch to support families like Jessica's, we are taking aggressive measures to maintain social distancing to help limit the spread of the virus. Although our staff is still working regular hours, primarily at home, we have closed our office indefinitely to walk in traffic. Anyone needing assistance can call the main number at (434) 293-9066 to reach Sheron Sinclair who will then route the call to the appropriate person.

Similarly, the Habitat Store is closed to visitors but has scaled up its online sales capability. People may still purchase merchandise at the Store by visiting <https://cvillehabitatstore.org/e-store/>. Purchased items may be picked up on the back loading deck in order to minimize contact.

Finally, because the state has limited the number of people congregating at any location and out of concern for the health of our supporters, we have closed our jobsites to volunteers. We are taking significant measures to avoid physical contact of staff members and contractors on site as we rush to close out the remaining homes at Harmony Ridge and stabilize the ten or so other homes we currently have under construction. As of now, we will continue to build but are reevaluating plans on a week by week basis.

## Looking Forward

Meanwhile, we are confident that Congress is on the precipice of passing a historical stimulus and relief package that will provide some forms of support for our Partner Families, non-profit businesses like ours and workers impacted by the economic impact of the virus.

We are monitoring the situation very closely and will continue to follow the events in Washington and be guided by recommendations of the Center for Disease Control as well as by orders of federal, state and local authorities.

In the meantime, as we all do our part to be good global citizens, we will try to stay connected with you virtually. So, until we "see" one another again, hang in there. Be strong, be safe and be kind.

In partnership,

Dan Rosensweig  
President and CEO

Robert Wood  
Board Chairman

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