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Blueprint

FALL 2016 NEWSLETTER

celebrating **25** years of **1991** building dreams



SPOTLIGHT

Help us expand our impact in our 25th year



Volunteer

Be part of the engine that power's Habitat's mission to transform lives and communities.



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Consider a donation today to provide a "hand up" to our wonderful families. Your gift will make dreams come true and help build a better Charlottesville.



Advocate

Help put the wind in the sails of a hard-working local family or raise consciousness in support of more sustainable, inclusive housing policy.



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COMMUNITY

Celebrating 25 Years in Charlottesville

A decade ago, Elizabeth Wrenn found herself in a housing crisis. As rents continued to rise and affordable housing options decreased, she worried she would not be able to find a home that would allow her to keep her job at the University of Virginia hospital. Then she found Habitat. And after many hours of sweat equity, she was able to purchase a home on Paton Street just blocks from work.

Mingling with other homeowners and community members at Habitat's recent 25th Anniversary Block Party, Elizabeth reflected on what it means to have reached this milestone.

"My whole life has changed, I don't know where I'd be today if it wasn't for Habitat," Elizabeth said. "It's wonderful to see so many people come out to celebrate with us."

At the celebration, Elizabeth joined more than 1,000 community members for an interactive day of construction, art, music and building-related activities for Habitat's supporters of all ages. The Block Party embodied the "come one, come all" spirit driving the organization for the past 25 years.

It also provided an opportunity to reunite the thousands of volunteers and Partner Families who have helped us build 189 (and counting!) homes in our community.

But, even as we celebrate the past, we know there is still much work to be done.

"We won't stop working until all of our neighbors have access to safe, decent, affordable homes, but to do this, we'll need the support of our whole community," says Dan Rosensweig, Habitat's President & CEO. "We hope you are inspired to join us to end housing poverty in Charlottesville and Albemarle." **B**

FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



Dear Friends,

As we look back over the last quarter century, we are incredibly thankful for your support and generosity. So many of our hard-working neighbors have benefited from a helping hand up because you've cared enough to get involved.

As we've shifted our focus to developing entire neighborhoods—thriving mixed-income communities where children and families grow and learn together—one thing has remained constant: our 189 homes have each been built in partnership with hard-working Partner Families.

And their stories continue to move us. On page three, you'll meet Win Than and Ethel Magruder who "climbed mountains" to secure a brighter future for their children.

Over the course of 25 years, the sacrifice and success of Win, Ethel and the nearly 200 other Partner Families we've been blessed to work with has inspired us to ask hard questions of ourselves, to continually challenge our assumptions about how to do our jobs better and serve more people.

As volunteers, donors and advocates, you've been with us every step of the way on this journey.

You were there when we built house number one in partnership with Phyllis Meredith in 1991 and you were there when we enhanced our homeowner education with *Community Conversations*, opportunities for future neighbors and their children to get to know each other and talk about dreams for their neighborhoods. You stood with us as we became the first in the nation to redevelop a trailer park without displacing residents and you've walked side-by-side with us as we've worked with 1,500 residents of the Southwood Mobile Home Park to help them plan their dreams.

Can we count on you to stand with us as we dream even bigger?

Community redevelopment done well takes time, patience, compassion, and love; all of which are the ingredients of healthy communities. We need you to be our partner over the next 25 years as we create thriving, sustainable, and inclusive mixed-income neighborhoods and generate new strategies for making poverty a thing of the past in Charlottesville and Albemarle County.

We won't stop until every man, woman and child in this community is like Win and Ethel—able to transform hard work and perseverance into a brighter, more sustainable future for themselves and their children.

Best,

Dan Rosensweig

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and Elizabeth Giglio

PARTNERSHIPS

Celebrating Home

After entering the Habitat Homebuyer program in 2014, Win Than spent almost every Saturday on the jobsite, earning sweat equity and sharing his infectious positive personality with volunteers.

And he and his wife Stella always tried to make it a family affair.

Their two boys, Johnny and Thang, joined Win for lunch almost every week, supporting their father and keeping tabs on the progress of their new home as it was being built at *Burnet Commons III: The Park*.



In fact, the boys came to love the construction site so much that, when asked where he wanted to celebrate his 5th birthday, Johnny immediately answered, "at my new house." So Win and Stella brought pizza and decorations and worked with volunteers from Sojourners United Church of Christ to make it a day that Johnny will never forget.

"We made so many good memories building our home," said Win, who closed on his home this summer. "We are so thankful for the volunteers and the community who made this possible." **B**

PARTNERSHIPS



Ethel's Story

Ethel Magruder grew up in Charlottesville's Westhaven community and, as an adult, became unwavering in her pursuit of home ownership—a safe and stable place to raise her children.

Nearly 20 years later, Ethel still remembers how hard she worked to create her budget and savings plan. She also reminisces that sweat equity was great fun and a life changing challenge.

"I remember the day I was working on the roof of my future home, and my daughter saw me and said, 'Mom, what are you doing up there? You're afraid of heights!'" Ethel said. "I told her, 'to make a better life for us, I would climb a mountain.'"

And climb a mountain she did. In 2001 Ethel and her three children moved into their Habitat home in Charlottesville's Fifeville neighborhood.

Ethel loves encouraging others to chase their dreams, and has visited Westhaven to speak about her Habitat experience

"I still pinch myself today that I'm a homeowner," she says. "I would tell anyone who wants to join Habitat—don't ever give up on your dreams. I never thought I could own a home, and I've been in mine for 15 years. I'm so grateful." **B**

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"I HAVE MOVED SO MANY TIMES IN MY LIFE, AND IT FEELS WONDERFUL TO KNOW THAT SOON MY CHILDREN AND I WILL NEVER HAVE TO MOVE AGAIN."

– Tywana Brooks, Future Habitat Homeowner, pictured below, right

PROJECT 20

Habitat *Pushes* to frame six Crozet homes in seven days

Thanks to the tremendous enthusiasm and hard work of more than 200 community members, Habitat framed six homes in just seven days during the *Wickham Pond Framing Push*, significantly expediting construction on our first build in Crozet.

The unusually hot September days didn't slow down our diligent volunteers, and the bare foundations quickly became the beginning of new Habitat town homes, bringing our Partner Families closer to the day they will walk through the doors of a house of their own.

"I worked on my home for the first time during the *Push* with my dad, brother, and friends. It was amazing," said future Wickham Homeowner Tywana Brooks. "Watching my dad help build my house almost brought me to tears."

Setting out to frame six houses in seven days was ambitious, but the Habitat construction staff was confident that the *Push* would be yet another testament to what can happen when great people in a community work together.

"I'm so excited to be living at Wickham Pond," said Brooks. "I've moved so many times in my life, and it feels wonderful to know that soon my children and I will never have to move again."

A group from CFA Institute participated in building Brooks's home as part of United Way's Day of Caring.

Darin Goodwiler, the Chief Compliance, Risk, and Ethics Officer of CFA Institute, said that the day's work was a wonderful opportunity to work side-by-side with colleagues from across the organization.

"We were happy to spend the day with Habitat in hands-on service to the community," said Darin.

With support from developer Vito Cetta and the County of Albemarle, the Wickham Pond project will serve as the blueprint to create affordable housing opportunities throughout the Albemarle County growth area, while demonstrating that Habitat homes will enhance and strengthen new communities across the Greater Charlottesville region.

"The *Push* was a huge success, thanks to the help of lots of volunteers, Partner Families, family advocates, and the Crozet community," said Morgan Reitz, Habitat Assistant Construction Supervisor. "It was a joy to see all kinds of different people work together for a common goal. The Crozet neighbors who brought cookies, lunch and water to the job site made everyone feel welcome." **B**

Why Trailer Parks?



It was a regular weekday morning when Marion heard the knock at her trailer door. A strange man told her that she and her husband, George, had to attend a meeting at the nearby elementary school to hear an update on their community. She checked with her neighbors—they had all gotten the same ominous message.

At the meeting, an architect told the group that their trailer park had been sold to a developer who was going to build luxury condominiums. They would have to move their trailers and vacate their community of 35 years. Marion and her neighbors suddenly faced a terrifying and uncertain future.

"When they told us we'd have to move, I lost it," she said.

The challenge for Marion, like many others in the United States, is that she owned her trailer, but not the land underneath. Compounding the problem was the fact that her trailer, constructed before current building codes were established, had been built using lesser quality materials such as plywood flooring, poorly-installed water supply piping, roofing that needed frequent replacement, and poor insulation.

She had scrimped to pay high utility bills during cold winters and sweltering summers and had lived in fear of a trailer fire because the electric panel could barely accommodate her daily electrical needs. And, with plumbing leaks and wood construction, Marion was constantly battling mold and mildew. But, despite these shortcomings, her trailer was affordable and this was her home—the place she and George had raised their children.

Once her community was slated for demolition however she appeared to be out of options. Her trailer had become a negative asset—it would cost more to move or dispose of than it was worth. And, even if her trailer could survive the move, there was no place to go. Land prices had skyrocketed as more and more people moved to the area, wanting to live close to their jobs and urban amenities.

Tragically, Marion's story is not unusual. Nearly 20 million people live in trailer parks in this country. Many work two or three minimum wage jobs just to make ends meet. In almost all cases, families face the same uncertain future given that they own their trailers but not the land underneath.

When Habitat found out about the plight of Marion and her neighbors, it became determined to change the narrative. It

purchased the contract from the developer, told the long-time community members they could stay for the rest of their lives as it transformed the neighborhood and the rest is history. The new Sunrise was completed in 2013 and became the nation's first trailer park conversion into a community of market-rate and affordable homes *without resident displacement*.

"The view is better from up here," said Marion recently as she showed visitors the vista from her new, affordable and energy efficient apartment just 100 feet, but a world apart, from where her trailer once sat.

And since 2007, Habitat has built on its experience at Sunrise to work side by side with community members at Southwood—a 120-acre, 342-pad trailer park, home to 1,500 residents—on a long-term effort to redevelop the park in the growth area of Albemarle County.

The redevelopment process takes time and patience; it began with emergency maintenance repairs on roads and plumbing systems, and has progressed to establishing trust with the residents and identifying neighborhood leaders who will be at the helm of physical redevelopment of the park. When finished, Southwood will be a mixed-income community, with space for businesses and recreational amenities. Most importantly, it will be a product of the vision of the residents themselves.

Contrary to common misperception, Southwood is so much more than a story of degrading trailers and vulnerable residents.

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Southwood Back to School Festival Brings Community Together



As many of us have experienced, the close of summer and back to school preparations can be bittersweet for parents and children alike. At Southwood it has become a time of celebration and anticipation. The annual Back to School Festival, hosted by Albemarle County Schools, brings together families, teachers, police officers, and community organizations for festivities, food, and a distribution of school supplies and backpacks, with donations provided by Walmart.

Since its inception eight years ago, the Back to School Festival has become a beloved community event, both for Southwood families and the partners who participate.

The festival is also a chance for parents, teachers, children and community partners to meet and ask questions so that students and their families start off the new school year feeling ready and connected.

Continued from page 6

Michelle Crawford, a 23-year resident of Southwood describes the neighborhood as "the kind of place you want to live."

"The people are wonderful, said Michelle. "Everyone helps each other out."

Despite decaying trailers and outdated infrastructure, Michelle's Southwood is the story of possibilities, of future redevelopment without displacement, of a vibrant community and engaged neighbors, of hard-working people from diverse cultures coming together to build their dreams.

But Habitat can't do it alone. It's going to take this whole community to make the redevelopment of Southwood a sustainable reality. Whether you volunteer on the construction site, or stand with families as an advocate, or donate to the cause—in the coming years we will be asking, *what will you build?* **B**

"WE HAVE CELEBRATIONS THAT MANY COMMUNITIES AROUND CHARLOTTESVILLE DON'T. I LIKE THAT WE'RE LIKE A BIG FAMILY, INSTEAD OF JUST A COMMUNITY."

– Guadalupe Monserrat Monroy Flores, Resident at Southwood

"For communities where there is a cultural or language difference, families may have a harder time engaging with the schools," said Gloria Rockhold, Community Engagement Manager for Albemarle County Public Schools. "This event is a bridge to help connect them."

Guadalupe Monserrat Monroy Flores, a student at Burley Middle School who has lived in Southwood for the past seven years, reflects "My friends who live in other neighborhoods don't really get what we have. We have celebrations that many communities around Charlottesville don't. I like that we're like a big family, instead of just a community." **B**

