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## What a year!

With an eventful 2023 winding down, I'm grateful for the chance to take stock of all that we've accomplished together this year. From celebrating Habitat homeowners paying off their mortgages, to standing side by side with the first Southwood residents as they moved out of their trailers into brand new homes, to watching in awe as volunteers helped move an entire home build by students of the Greene County Technical Education Center, it's been a year of promises kept and dreams fulfilled.

Turning hopes and dreams into reality requires bold action, extensive collaboration, and deep investment from partners across the Greater Charlottesville region. Whether through hard work – perhaps in the form of sweat equity from our Partner Families or community members and faith partners volunteering tens of thousands of hours – or the generosity of our donors and sponsors, you've been with us every step of the way.

As you take a look back through this "Best of" E-news edition, I hope you are as moved as I am to see the tremendous impact you've made in the lives of our friends and neighbors during 2023. I also hope you'll take a moment to tell us who your Habitat heroes are in the section that follows. We're eager to share those stories with you in the New Year, as we continue to dream big, *together*.

Dan Rosensweig  
President and CEO

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We kicked off **January** by spreading the good news that longstanding Habitat Homeowner and team member, Larry Scott, completed his mortgage payments! We are so proud of Larry, not just for paying off his mortgage, but for all the heart he brings to his work each and every day, paying it forward to help even more families in the Charlottesville community achieve affordable homeownership.



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In **February**, Habitat homebuyer Juan Geovanny Gaitan settled into his single-family home on Valentine Mill Road in Louisa with an intimate dedication ceremony. The house was originally



built and sold by Habitat in 2005. By maintaining a right of first refusal, Habitat was able to repurchase the property from its original owner upon resale in 2022, and update it so that Geovanny and his family could enjoy the blessings of first time homeownership.

“Having the opportunity to own a home is truly a blessing from God. I am very grateful for the chance that Habitat has given me to become a new homeowner,” said Gaitan. [Read more here.](#)

In **March**, this year’s Women Build event included more than 150 local volunteers – 100+ of whom were women. Working under the guidance of professional crew leaders, they helped local families like 40-year Southwood resident Theresa Brock build safe and affordable homes to replace their trailers at Southwood.



“We really need to do something big to support homeownership.”

-U.S. Senator Tim Kaine

In **April**, Southwood residents enjoyed an official visit from United States Senator Tim Kaine. The Senator, who sponsored a federal appropriation to help with one phase of environmental remediation of the site, came away impressed.

“You don’t get a sense of just how impressive it is until you visit,” said Senator Kaine. “The residents kept talking about their dream of homeownership. It’s really important to hear directly from people when I think through federal policy. We really need to do something big to support homeownership.”

Habitat Homebuyer and community designer Tatiana Serrato had a chance to tour the Senator through her future home.

“Meeting with the senator and giving him a tour of my home was a surreal experience,” said Tatiana. “Also I really like that I had the opportunity to tell him about how everyone participated in designing the New Southwood. It’s something that I will never forget!”

Check out the press coverage from [NBC29](#), [CBS19](#), and [C’ville Weekly](#).



In **May**, homeowners, renters and future Village I homebuyers in Southwood mixed and mingled over pupusas, barbeque, pizza and tres leches cake at the dedication of the brand new Five Pillars Park. Nearly 100 new and future neighbors of all ages enjoyed pleasant weather, conversation, and pickup soccer.



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**June** marked 20 years of success for the Habitat Store here in Charlottesville.



Over the course of two decades, annual gross sales have grown to nearly \$1.3 million, powered by more than 600 volunteers alongside dedicated staff. Our affiliate ranks among the top ten percent of Habitat store sales nationwide accordingly- where all net proceeds go directly toward our mission of building and rebuilding homes and creating pathways for safe, affordable housing.

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In **July**, a team of 20 volunteers - comprising both Habitat and market-rate homebuyers in Southwood - embarked on a trail cleanup project for Biscuit Run Park which is directly connected to the new community's internal trail system. The crew was led by Habitat staff in partnership with The Piedmont Environmental Council's Community Advocacy Manager, Peter Krebs. "I was blown away at how much the residents actually got done!" Krebs shared.



On **August 5th**, nearly 200 supporters turned out to witness history and honor the first 35 Habitat homebuyers at Southwood as well as 14 families moving into affordable rentals – joining 31 families who have purchased a market rate home. The dedication ceremony for the first new village (out of an eventual 11 villages!) took place in the newly christened Five Pillars Park in the heart of the new community.

You can review local press coverage of the event at [NBC29](#), [CBS19](#), [The Daily Progress](#), and the [C-VILLE](#)



In **September**, Habitat did some heavy lifting, moving a home built by students at the Greene County Technical Education Center from its location at the school to its new home up the road in Stanardsville. Once finished out by Habitat volunteers, the home will be sold affordably to a Habitat Partner Family homebuyer from Greene County.

“We love knowing the fact that this home is going to stay within our community,” GCTEC Director and Principal Jess Peregoy said.

To help pitch in with this home build, [email the Greene Operating Committee](#) or call 434-481-1771.



In **October**, two Habitat Partner Families, including the Mohammed family pictured here, were honored at a dedication recognizing their recent accomplishment of achieving homeownership on Coleman Street in the Locust Grove neighborhood of the City.

Both of the families were able to work their way through publicly supported housing onto a path of home ownership. Critically, their journey upward also opens two new opportunities for other families who are waiting for units in subsidized housing here in Charlottesville.

You can take [a virtual tour inside the Coleman homes here](#).

In **November**, hundreds of volunteers came together for Rake-a-Thon to rake lawns and earn money for Habitat’s building program. Now in its 10th year, this annual, family-friendly event recruits local volunteers in partnership with the Habitat for Humanity Club of the University of Virginia (HUVA) and pairs them with local neighbors who donate to Habitat in exchange for their lawns being raked.

The idea began a decade ago, in response to a vision to unite our local youth communities - including UVA and the Youth Leadership Team, alongside families, the faith community, and Partner Families - especially those with children wanting to pitch in. Rake-a-Thon intentionally activates younger volunteers in service to the mission of Habitat - raising funds for a Greater Charlottesville community where everyone can



find a decent place to live.



Now in **December**, the first two dozen Habitat partner families are moving out of aging and unsafe trailers and into their new homes, many just in time for the holiday season, including Karen David and her family. To all the Habitat supporters out there, she says, “God bless! [You] have amazing hearts!”

[Check out the latest aerial drone footage capturing recent progress out at Southwood.](#)

## Habitat Heroes

Do you have a Habitat hero?

Maybe it's a Partner Family you found inspirational.

Maybe it's a volunteer you had a chance to work alongside on a build site.

Maybe it's a pastor or other faith leader.

Whoever has inspired you this year in the Habitat community, we'd love to hear about it!

[Share your stories with us here](#), and we'll share back some of our favorites in the January issue with you.

[Make a Year-end Gift](#)

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Did you know that many Habitat supporters choose to invest in our mission through gifts of appreciated stock, donor advised funds and IRA charitable contributions? If you are considering a new way of giving this holiday season, we're happy to help! Contact Kelly Eplee ([keplee@cvillehabitat.org](mailto:keplee@cvillehabitat.org)) to make your 2023 gift or to learn how you can leave a lasting legacy.

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