

# HABITAT UPDATE

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY, ORANGE COUNTY, NC

AUTUMN 2005

## *Giving Back: Habitat Homeowner Volunteers in Mexico*

In December 2002, when Seandra Watson became a homeowner in the Efland neighborhood of Richmond Hills, the idea of traveling internationally to help others realize their own dream of becoming homeowners was a distant ambition for her.

"When she first applied to build and purchase a Habitat home, she asked about volunteering in another country, and during the actual application process she asked again, but I didn't think she was really serious about it," said Marckita Garrison, Family Services Coordinator at HHOC. "When the Tuxtla trip came up this year I mentioned it to her. She called me and said she had applied for a passport. At that point, I realized she really was serious about going!"

A private caretaker for a home health organization and a mother of three, Watson had never had a chance to travel outside of the country. Spending a week in San Andreas Tuxtla, Mexico, she was up early every morning to catch a bus to a Habitat work-site. Working in 107-degree heat, she rarely returned to her hotel before 6 p.m. Despite her exhaustion, Watson knew that she was making a difference in these people's lives, just as so many had helped make a difference in her's a few years earlier.

The average worker in San Andres makes about 80 pesos a day, which translates into \$8. Partner families pay approximately \$74 per month over a period of 7 years to buy their Habitat home. The home that Watson helped to build in Mexico has two bedrooms, a kitchen, a living-dining room, and a toilet or dry latrine and costs \$6,481. The average cost of a Habitat home built in Orange County is \$60,000 (materials and contracted labor only).

"The people there were so nice," she said. "They were amazed that I was there, and they would come up and speak to me. I don't speak Spanish, so I didn't know all that they were saying, but I would just say hi and smile. You could tell they were so grateful."

She noted that Habitat in Mexico was not all that different from Habitat in Orange County. "It was harder because here we have wooden walls—over there it's all brick," she said. "Each day we were out there sifting sand in order to make the cement we needed, but overall the idea and the attitude was the same. You just had to adjust to a different culture."

The trip became a chance for her to take part in that different culture first-hand. It was an experience that gave her a changed perspective. "It's life-changing and teaches you all the things we take for granted," she said. "Over there, they don't have a lot, but they are still so happy. I hope my kids get a chance to go one day because I think they'd see that you can't have everything you want. A week over there and you'll see how they're struggling just to get the things they need. I'd definitely go again," Watson concluded. "Next time I want to take someone with me so they could see all the things I did and share in the experience with me."



*Seandra (right) with new friends.*





## *From the Executive Director . . .*

Do you remember the feeling of freedom and joy you had as a child when school let out and summer vacation stretched before you, all those long, lazy days with nothing special to do? Thanks to the Habitat Board of Directors, I had the chance to experience that feeling again during a two-month sabbatical the Habitat Board generously granted me this summer. After nearly thirteen years as the Executive Director of the Orange County Habitat affiliate, juggling family responsibilities, volunteer work, and a wonderful but demanding job, I was ready to slow down the pace and enjoy a few months of peaceful relaxation and reflection. I returned rested and rejuvenated, and happy to be back in the thick of things as we gear up for another busy home building season.

Orange County Habitat is blessed to have a dedicated and talented staff and an incredibly committed and skillful Board of Directors. I never worried for a moment about how well the organization was being managed in my absence. I am especially grateful to Anne-Marie Vanaman, our Development Director, who very ably stepped up to fill in as ED, and to John Sehon, our Board President, who willingly gave of his time and wisdom to provide guidance and support to the staff during my absence. Read on to learn about all the exciting things that happened or were set in motion this summer. I may have to take a sabbatical more often . . .

— Susan Levy

## Vacation Bible School Features Habitat

Nearly 50 local children got a hands-on taste of Habitat for Humanity by participating in the United Church of Chapel Hill's Habitat-themed vacation Bible school during the week of July 18<sup>th</sup>. On Wednesday of that week, they visited the Habitat for Humanity of Orange County work site on Rogers Road to see an established Habitat neighborhood, a house under construction, and a house almost completed. "Between all the kids, the volunteers, and the parents who came along, we took about 70 people over to the site," said Susan Steinberg, Children's Ministry Director at the church. "It helped everyone to see the ideas we'd been talking about put into practice."

"We looked at different vacation bible school curricula, but the Habitat curricula seemed most substantive and relevant for our congregation," said Steinberg. "We wanted the kids to learn that it's important for Christians to care about people who need a safe place to live." Sam Hudson, Volunteer and Partnership Coordinator for HHOC, visited the church to introduce the kids to Habitat's mission and the children divided into five work crews: plumbers, roofers, carpenters, painters, and electricians. They spent the week on five different "work sites": Hard Hat—arts and crafts; Survey—videos and stories about Habitat; Habitat—learning what volunteers do; Blueprint—exploring a Bible story for the day; and Break Time—snacks and playground time.

The children volunteered directly on a new Habitat home by painting some shelves for a Chatham County Habitat homeowner, Mirna Rodriguez. "All the kids signed their names," Steinberg said. "We gave the shelves to Mirna in our worship service on July 24." They also contributed directly to HHOC through an offering that was taken every morning. The children dropped their change through the window of a cardboard house that was made for the event. Recounts Steinberg, "one 5-year old boy was so intent on bringing in his offering that he asked his mother if he could walk the dog to raise more money."



*The children were keenly interested to tour a house under construction*

## Partnership Update

Habitat for Humanity, Orange County establishes partnerships among all people to give a helping hand up to working families who are unable to afford their dream of home ownership.

Partnering with Orange County Habitat for Humanity gives congregations, companies, civic groups, and individuals an opportunity to work together to help strengthen our community. Through volunteering with Habitat, congregations find a way to put their members' faith into action. Organizations involve their members or employees in a meaningful team-building activity. All of our partners see the tangible results—a new home and a grateful family—for their contributions of time and treasure.

The Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce raised the funds and gathered 250 volunteers from 23 businesses to work with Charles and Bonnie Rogers to make their dream of home ownership come true. Dana McMahan, owner of the Laughing Turtle Home store and a Chamber of Commerce member issued a \$5000 challenge grant to support the partnership's efforts. Thanks to the volunteers from the Chamber's membership, the house is near completion.

When Charles Rogers moves into his home in Rusch Hollow he will be coming home. The Rogers family will live a block from the road named for his people. Charles Rogers expressed his gratitude and pride in once again having his family own property in the community where he grew up.

Many thanks to the following partners and sponsors building this fall:

- Rambus and the "Building Hope" Partnership: the Catholic Community of St. Thomas More, the Newman Catholic Student Center Parish, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, and the Community Church of Chapel Hill building in partnership with the Roberson family on lot 2 in the Rusch Hollow neighborhood
- The Chapel of the Cross Episcopal Church, UNC Habitat, UNC Department of City and Regional Planning, and St. Pauls AME Church building in partnership with the Nickens family on lot 3 in the Rusch Hollow neighborhood. Matching funds provided by the Strowd Roses Foundation



- The Presbyterian Partnership—University Presbyterian Church, The Church of Reconciliation, and New Hope Presbyterian Church with UNC Health for Habitat (SHAC) building in partnership with the Li family on lot 7 in the Rusch Hollow neighborhood
- NC Hillel, sponsored by Tobee and Leonard Kaplan, building in partnership with the Brown family on lot 4 in the Rusch Hollow neighborhood
- Sports Endeavors building with the Bocanegra family in the Richmond Hills neighborhood.

The following build is part of the Northside Initiative, a collaboration between Orange Community Housing and Land Trust, the Town of Chapel Hill, Orange County Habitat, and EmPOWERment, Inc.:

- UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School building in partnership with the Shah family in the Northside neighborhood. Matching funds provided by the Wachovia Foundation and the Habitat Hand-Me-Ups Store.

## HELP WANTED

*Habitat for Humanity seeks land to build the American Dream.*

Each year Habitat for Humanity of Orange County builds an average of 12 homes in partnership with working families and generous volunteers. But 12 homes a year does not meet the need that exists in our community.

In order to offer homeownership to more families, Habitat must have land on which build, which we all know in Orange County is both expensive and scarce. Our first priority is to acquire lots that are ready to build on—either in a new or existing neighborhood or subdivision, with public water and sewer. We are also looking for raw land we can "bank" for the future. Donating property or selling it to Habitat below its appraised value for a tax deduction is often an attractive option for donors.

If you have information about property, please contact Susan Levy at 932-7077 ext. 11 or email [slevy@orangehabitat.org](mailto:slevy@orangehabitat.org).

If you don't know of any available property but wish to help Habitat raise funds to purchase land for future homebuilding, please send in a contribution today marked "land" in the memo field of your check, or contact Anne-Marie Vanaman at 932-7077 ext 16. or [amvanaman@orangehabitat.org](mailto:amvanaman@orangehabitat.org) for information on making a donation of stock.



# Habitat Hand-Me-Ups Store Celebrates Ten Years

From funky to fabulous, playful to practical, the Habitat Hand-Me-Ups Store is *the* place to shop. As we celebrate ten years in business this September, it just keeps getting better!

Hand-Me-Ups has a little bit of everything, unique and commonplace, and the merchandise changes everyday. We specialize in quality, gently used furniture, appliances, and household goods. From rugs to chandeliers, and all the furniture and goods in between, the selection is incredible. As you can see from the pictures, our goods coordinate well with your own decor.

The best reason of all to shop at Hand-Me-Ups is that the proceeds go to Habitat for Humanity in Orange and Durham counties to build affordable housing. At our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration we presented a donation check for \$30,000 to Habitat for Humanity Orange County, to be used in building a house in partnership with the Kenan Flagler Business School.

We are just a short hop from Target and Sam's Club. Visit us at

3710 Shannon Road, Durham

Tuesday thru Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm,

Thursdays to 7 pm

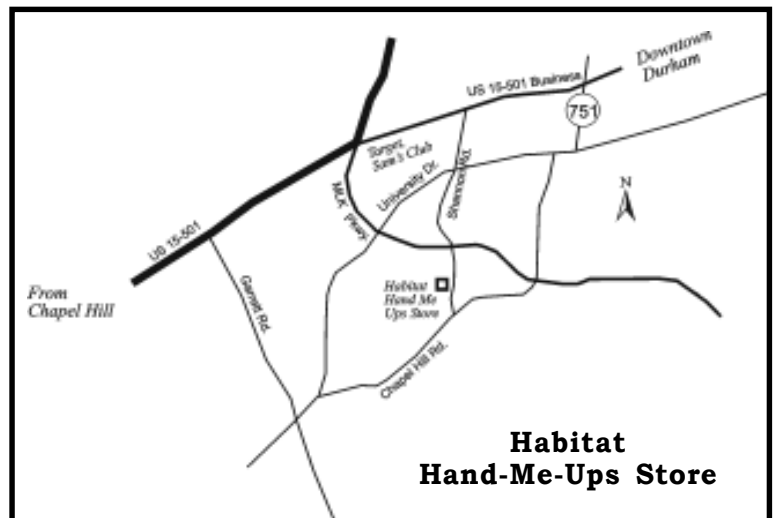
403-8668 ; Online at [www.hhmu.org](http://www.hhmu.org)

Donations are tax-deductible and can be made any time the store is open. In addition, we provide a free pickup service for furniture and large appliances. We even deliver your purchases (within Orange and Durham counties) for a small fee.

Be a shopper! Be a donor! Be a volunteer! Come join the fun!



*One of our Board members furnished her house with purchases from the store (above and below).*





## Fall for Habitat Music Returns

The opening concert of the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual “Fall for Habitat” Family Concert Series at University Baptist Church (100 S. Columbia St., Chapel Hill, NC) will be held Friday, October 7 and feature George Hamilton IV— pop star of the 1950’s turned country music legend, 40 year member of the WSM Grand Ole Opry, and “International Ambassador of Country Music” for his performances around the world. Among many other “firsts”, he was the first American Country singer to appear in Russia and Czechoslovakia back in 1974! The concert will begin at 8 pm with an opening set by “Mitzi Brooks and Gospel Grass” ([www.mitzibrooksandgospelgrass.com](http://www.mitzibrooksandgospelgrass.com)). Suggested donation is \$10 for adults, \$5 for students. Donations support the Orange County Habitat for Humanity fund at this church, which has helped build three Habitat houses in the past five years. For more information, call University Baptist Church @ (919) 942-2157 or visit [www.ubc-ch.org](http://www.ubc-ch.org).



## Hurricane Relief — What You Can Do

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, we have received calls from people asking: “What can I do to help?” For more information of upcoming relief efforts and donation options for people directly affected in the Gulf States, please visit the Habitat for Humanity International website [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org). The HFHI website will have updated information as rebuilding efforts get underway in the months ahead.


As you consider how you personally will respond to this national crisis, please also think about making a long-term investment right here at home. Annual commitments of time and money will help to strengthen Orange County. Lending a hand-up out of poverty secures a brighter future for working families in our community and creates more resilient communities when disaster strikes. Consider a regular gift to your local Habitat affiliate or consider joining our Wednesday or Friday Construction Crews. Get involved in building safe and decent homes for people who need them, right here in your own community. You can start today. Call Sam Hudson at 919-932-7077 x 15 to volunteer. Call Sarah Washburn at 919-932-7077 x 20 for more information about donation options.



**December 11, 2005**

For both running enthusiasts and those looking for a refreshing Sunday afternoon walk, try the 2nd Annual Southern Village Holiday 5K and Family Fun Run presented by Harrington Bank. Pre-race activities start at 1:00 pm on December 11, 2005 by the Market Green in Southern Village in Chapel Hill followed by the 5K race at 2:00 pm. Last year’s race raised \$15,000 for Orange County Habitat for Humanity, thanks to the registration fees of over 300 runners, 120 walkers, and the generous contributions of our race sponsors. In addition to Harrington Bank, this year’s sponsors include: Rhonda Stults and Cindy Gudeman of Tony Hall and Associates, O2 Fitness Clubs, the Chapel Hill Herald, Lisa Plourde of Fonville Morisey, and 1360 WCHL. For sponsorship information and more race details visit the webpage at <http://www.southern-village.net/5K>. Don’t miss this great opportunity to get outside and support Orange County Habitat for Humanity!

*“Habitat Builds Hope” Wristbands  
Available at Laughing Turtle Home!*

HABITAT  BUILDS HOPE wristbands are on sale at Laughing Turtle Home store. Show your support and help raise money to build simple, decent homes for hard-working families in Orange County. All proceeds from sales of the bracelets go to Habitat for Humanity of Orange County. So for \$3.00 each, buy one or 100 and, with our partners and families, build a better community one home at a time.



LAUGHING TURTLE HOME

105 East Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27514



# A Busy Summer at Rusch Hollow

Several of the homes in our new Rusch Hollow neighborhood off of Rogers Road in Chapel Hill have been completed and occupied. Several more are nearing completion. It was a busy summer of 2005 at Habitat work sites.



**RUSCH HOLLOW** 



### Tom Finn joins HHOC as Construction Coordinator

For the last few years, Tom Finn has built additions, screen porches, kitchens and bathrooms. Now he will get to build entire houses. Tom joined the HHOC staff as Construction Coordinator this summer.

Tom fills the position left by John Clark, who was here for six years. John and his wife Kathleen had their first child this spring, and John left Habitat at that time to pursue other opportunities.

Tom has run his remodeling business, My Husband, Inc., for the last six years. He managed the food service of Granville Towers for nine years.

Tom and his wife Judie Birchfield have lived in Chapel Hill since 1990. They have two children, Shawn, 16, and Chelsea, 15.



### Three New AmeriCorps Members Join Construction Crew

HHOC welcomes three new AmeriCorps Members this fall. They join Andy Strauja, who is returning for a second year of service.



The AmeriCorps Members attended an orientation session in Georgia earlier this month with hundreds of members from around the U.S. Their training has continued here, and they are now working on the new houses as well as finishing the four houses started in the spring. The new members bring a host of skills to HHOC.

Meredith Costa, a UNC graduate, spent the summer in Mbale, Uganda helping build a nutrition center sponsored by the UNC Hunger Lunch program. A native of Chapel Hill, Meredith has volunteered at the IFC shelter and has worked at Whole Foods Market.




Becky Mullins moved here from Kalamazoo, Michigan. She has been an advocate for union members and other causes at Western Michigan University, her alma mater. She has studied policy and planning and is interested in community organizing. Becky and her dog live in Efland.




Loren Clemens brings valuable experience as a house painter. She has studied art at UNC, and has lived in San Francisco and Washington D.C. Loren plans to return to school after her AmeriCorps service.



### Thanks to . . .

 **Kimberly Lee**, a communications major at UNC-Chapel Hill. She turned down other internships to volunteer her time with us this summer to write press releases and news stories. She wrote the feature newsletter story on Seandra Watson's volunteer efforts in Mexico and the story on Vacation Bible School with Habitat for Humanity. She has been a welcome addition to our team.

 Many thank yous to **Anne and Otis McCovich**, their family, friends, and loved ones! Rather than receive wedding gifts in honor of their recent marriage, Anne and Otis asked that donations be given to Habitat for Humanity of Orange County. The generosity of Anne and Otis and all of their loved ones raised almost \$4000 to help put a roof on a house for someone who needs one. Thanks so much for your wonderful inspiration!

### Cars for Homes

Turn your used car into a new home.



When you donate a car, truck, boat or RV to Habitat for Humanity's Cars for Homes™ program, you are helping our local affiliate build homes in partnership with families.

It's quick and easy and your donation may be eligible for tax deduction purposes if you itemize (consult the IRS or your tax advisor for details).



Call 1-877-277-4344 or check out this website to donate today! <http://www.habitat.org/carsforhomes>

# HABITAT UPDATE

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Habitat for Humanity  
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