

Giving Back to Habitat

Ritza Saenz moved into her Habitat for Humanity home in the Richmond Hills neighborhood six years ago, in fact she still remembers the date: February 4, 2004. It was a wonderful day for her, her husband Durbin, and their three children, Evy, Durbin, and Jason. They left behind an unaffordable mobile home and began their lives in a well-built home of their own, and became deeply invested in their new community.

Ritza saved her sweat equity logs, a record of the labor her family put into the construction of their home, as well as the carpet samples. She keeps them in her "box of treasures." In particular, she wants to share those memories with Jason who was a toddler when they moved in.

Yet Ritza is a treasure herself to Habitat for Humanity. Even before she moved into her home, Ritza offered her skills as a Spanish/English translator to the Family Services department. Since then she has translated during application orientation sessions, home owners association meetings, and she has conducted home visits to applicant families. She's become known as a ready and valuable resource to Habitat's Latino families.

Says Family Services Director Sharron Reid, "Ritza has proven to be much more than a Habitat homeowner. She has donated countless hours to the Family Services department at Habitat. Her time bridging the communication gap by translating materials, interpreting during individual and/or group meetings and even going door-to-door to make sure that our professional relationship

with our Latino families never suffers is invaluable. I appreciate all she does to help make my job easier."

After years of service, Ritza still gets excited during the orientation sessions. She enjoys seeing the hope on the faces in the audience as well as seeing the growing diversity. "Now we have Burmese/Karen families applying to the Habitat program. The first thing I think is, 'I am

not the only one who has suffered hardship,'" says Ritza. She is referring to the fact that many of the Burmese families have spent years in refugee camps before coming to the United States. "We can't complain about our lives; we're so rich."

Much has changed since the Saenz family moved into their home. Daughter Evy is now a mother herself to two year old Naima, who shares her winning personality with Nana Ritza. Evy is also attending Alamance Community College and working toward becoming a dental hygienist. Son Durbin attends Guildford Community College, and Jason is in the second grade. Durbin continues to work in construction and Ritza is in her ninth year with the Orange County Agricultural Extension's Breastfeeding Program.

If she has any disappointments, it is that there are not enough Habitat homes for families who deserve them and that she cannot volunteer as much as she would like, due to work and family commitments. However, she has made it known she has a long-term goal; she told Durbin, "When I retire, I am going to be a full-time Habitat volunteer!"



Ritza Saenz



Phoenix Place Spring Builds

— Susan Levy, Executive Director



A year ago, Habitat for Humanity of Orange County began the process of accepting applications for our new subdivision in Chapel Hill, Phoenix Place. The response from potential homeowners who wanted to purchase a Habitat home in Chapel Hill was overwhelming. We had 100 applications for the first fifteen homeowner slots. The need was obviously great; but the economy had affected giving, and we were honestly worried about being able to build our usual dozen or so houses in the upcoming year. As we debated about our budget for the upcoming fiscal year, our board decided to budget for 12 homes knowing it would be a stretch goal for us.

Fast forward twelve months. We are starting our next round of applications for Phoenix Place. Notifications went out to 800 households on our interest list of potential homeowners. Applications were given out to 150 households, all of whom attended our orientation

sessions in English, Spanish, and Karen/Burmese. Now the Family Selection Committee once again begins the difficult, often heart-wrenching process of reviewing applications and narrowing down the field to only the fifteen most qualified families.

As we go about the selection process this year, we are less anxious than we were last year about meeting our home building goals. We have not only met our “stretch goal” for homes this fiscal year, we will have exceeded it by June 2010, when our fiscal year ends. We have been heartened and encouraged by the generous response from the Orange County community, in spite of difficult economic times. As a result, a record number of homes – nine – will be under construction this winter/spring building season in Phoenix Place. (See page 7 for participating partnerships.)

The increase in housing production, while gratifying and exciting, also brings challenges. Nine homes under construction at one time will test mightily the capacity of our experienced and talented construction staff, and we are thankful to the volunteers who have stepped up to serve as crew leaders on Saturdays, our heaviest volunteer day. We are striving to maintain the quality of the volunteers’ experiences on site, while also adhering to our equally high standards for quality of construction.

We are also challenged to raise the matching funds for the nine partnerships who are building this winter and spring. Our partnerships raise \$35,000 toward the cost of building a home, as well as supply the volunteer labor. But it costs another \$40,000 to fully fund each home, and those funds must be raised from individuals, foundations, and businesses. To sustain the rate of building that is taking place this year, we must strengthen our fundraising capacity and attract new donors at the same time that we reach out to our existing donors who have the ability to give even more generously.

These are challenging times for all of us, but the challenge that Habitat is facing now is the kind that excites and inspires us. This is our mission after all, and I am confident that our Board, staff, donors, partners, and our volunteers will rise to the challenge of providing home ownership to more of the hard working families in our community who struggle with inadequate or unaffordable housing.

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What Habitat for Humanity is doing to help in Haiti

On January 12, a powerful earthquake struck Haiti and an estimated 200,000 homes were severely damaged or destroyed, leaving 1.2 million people homeless or displaced. Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) set a goal to help 50,000 families affected by the earthquake through a three-fold strategy of relief, rehabilitation and house reconstruction.

Habitat for Humanity has worked in Haiti for 26 years and is aiding the recovery process by providing 10,000 emergency shelter kits, helping with debris removal, providing transitional shelter, new home construction and home repairs. Habitat is also increasing its program in Haiti to help people learn construction and financial skills and is building “core houses,” which are small houses designed so families can easily expand them over time. To learn more, visit www.habitat.org.

HFHI is challenging all U.S. affiliates—collectively—to raise \$3 million (of HFHI’s \$60-\$80 million goal) for

Habitat’s Haiti recovery effort.

Locally in Orange and Durham counties, 100% of our ReStore’s net proceeds in March were dedicated to Habitat’s efforts in Haiti! Thank you for donating your used home goods to the Habitat ReStore and encouraging your friends to do the same.



Above: Homes and buildings just blocks from the Habitat neighborhood in Cabaret were destroyed. Of 183 Habitat homes in the area, initial reports indicate that only eight sustained damage; by comparison, it is estimated that 8,000 non-Habitat homes were destroyed in the surrounding areas.

Above right: 7 year-old Wesley Paul stands in front of a collapsed building in Port-au-Prince.

Below right: A woman leaves the distribution site with her Habitat for Humanity bucket shelter kit, which was assembled by volunteers in Santo Domingo. 462 women received the buckets, which contained a crowbar, a rope, a tarp, nails, a trowel, a handsaw, a hammer and work gloves.



All photos © Habitat for Humanity International



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Orange County Schools "Hands for Habitat"

—Jaycee Greenblatt, VISTA Youth Services Coordinator

"Hands for Habitat" is a unique community partnership between Orange County Schools (OCS) and Habitat for Humanity of Orange County. The project is engaging students in Orange County Schools in an ambitious service learning project designed to increase awareness of issues surrounding housing and affordability. The project has three components including building, fundraising, and service learning. Seven out of 13 schools in the OCS district have participated so far.

As a natural leader and pioneer, Tammy Russell, a 4th grade teacher at Hillsborough Elementary School, was excited about bringing real life issues to her classroom and utilizing them to teach state mandated curriculum. Service learning combines academic classroom curriculum with meaningful service throughout the community to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, encourage lifelong civic engagement and strengthen communities for the common good.

"Why learn if you can't do something with it? You gain more experience and strengthen learning from being exposed to real life challenges outside the classroom and applying learning to them," says Tammy.

Last semester, Tammy chose to focus her literacy unit on the theme of poverty and educated her students on housing issues that affect the Hillsborough community and the world. Additionally, she was able to persuade, encourage and energize other 4th grade teachers, Autumn Williams and Casey Nunnery, to take on this project. Once her colleagues jumped on board to help, the project was able to flourish and rivet the entire school. "It was a snowball effect and the different activities we planned just clicked into place," said Tammy.

The lessons included read alouds, art projects, discussion groups and research activities to help students understand and learn about poverty. While fulfilling state mandated curriculum requirements, students used their



HANDS FOR Habitat

research to write persuasive letters to parents, teachers, administrators, students, and local government. (See sidebar.) This enabled the students to learn how to tailor their writing to a specific audience, while simultaneously engaging the entire school community.

According to teacher surveys taken after the first semester of "Hands for Habitat," many teachers noticed that their students learned humbleness, empathy and the gratification of providing for others. Tammy got to witness this first hand. To gauge interest, comprehension, and awareness of this project, the student's also took a survey. In response to the question "What do you feel is the most important thing you learned through our "Hands for Habitat" project?" one of Tammy's students wrote "before this project I didn't think poverty was a big deal. It made me look at the world differently because there could be someone or a family that is living in poverty just around the block."

With the recent devastations in Haiti, teachers have now been able to speak with their students and help them comprehend the challenges faced by many countries. Stef Hamilton, an Orange High School student, witnessed this when she facilitated a Habitat activity with 2nd graders at Hillsborough Elementary School. She was astonished that students had asked if Habitat was helping people in Haiti. Thinking back, Stef Hamilton, now a senior, was in 4th grade when 9/11 occurred. She remembered knowing that something bad had happened, but no one really talked to her about it. Things are changing now. Students are becoming aware about the things that impact their community and world.

To continue expanding this project, Tammy has plans to work with her students and the videography class from Cedar Ridge High School to create and distribute promotional videos to all six elementary schools in the district. She hopes this encourages other teachers to implement "Hands for Habitat" of activities in their classrooms.



Tammy Russell

Interested in talking to your children about poverty issues? Try reading some of the children's books explored by students at Hillsborough Elementary.

Just Juice by Karen Hesse
December by Eve Bunting
Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting
The Table Where Rich People Sit
by Byrd Baylor

Castle on Viola Street by DyAnne DiSalvo
Silver Packages by Cynthia Rylant



Inspired by the Hands for Habitat partnership, 4th grader Caroline Compton wrote and presented a letter to the Orange County Commissioners.

Good evening. I am Caroline Compton from Hillsborough Elementary. I have been learning about Habitat for Humanity. They help people who are living in unsafe or unaffordable housing that may have no water or heat. People in the community work with the family to help build the house.

Poverty can mean that people don't have a good home to live in. Poverty is very serious. If you didn't have the basic things you need to live, you wouldn't be laughing about it. Imagine laying in your bed every night thinking about how you are going to lose everything you have.

Habitat for Humanity helps people that need a new house. Habitat does not build houses for people who live on the street, but for people who are living in unsafe homes who will be able to pay back the bank (sic). If they build you a house, you have to help build the house through sweat equity.



Caroline Compton

Habitat houses are not meant to be castles. They are simple, decent, and affordable for families. Many adults and teenagers from Orange

High School and Cedar Ridge have worked on the house in Orange County. They are doing this to help people live better and have safer housing. For Habitat to accomplish their goals, we need everyone to work together.

The whole 4th grade at Hillsborough Elementary raised money for Habitat. To help us fundraise, we had a basketball game with moms playing and dads cheering for the whole school. We also plan to hold a movie night for 4th and 5th graders to watch the Pursuit of Happyness. Our goal for fundraising was for each classroom to raise \$100 totaling \$2000.

We have raised over \$3,000 with all of our events. Even though our fundraising is over, we are still working to encourage the community to participate in Hands for Habitat. We would like for everyone to help with this because you will be helping someone in our community. Everyone deserves safe, affordable housing.



Come see what you helped build!
Join Habitat for Humanity of Orange County to celebrate our 25th anniversary with a street fair!

Saturday, April 17th 11:30 am – 2:00 pm
Phoenix Place subdivision in Chapel Hill
Great food • Live Music • Activities • Fun for Children

You're Invited to Be Part of Something Special

- Learn skills you never knew you had
- Meet interesting new friends
- Live the values you teach your children
- Change one family's life forever

Join like-minded women to build a Habitat for Humanity home in Chapel Hill this spring and have an inspiring experience you'll never forget! To volunteer or learn more, contact Anne-Marie at amvanaman@orangehabitat.org.



E-Newsletter

Want to stay updated on Habitat happenings and go a little greener? Visit www.orangehabitat.org and click on "Stay Informed" to receive an email link to the PDF version of this and future Habitat for Humanity newsletters.





Homeowners-to-be at a recent work day: Grace and Heather Marshburn, Yin Thein, Zar Ree Wei, Hla Hla Yi, Hsar Wei

Thank You!

- Heather Blonsky for volunteering her time and talent to develop a new database as well as repair and improve an existing database
- John Mathivet, weekday volunteer who has repaired and serviced the five generators we are using in Phoenix Place
- Earl Johnson III, President of Southern Crane, for providing crane service to set trusses on three houses.
- Janet Anderson, for providing homemade chocolate cookies for the construction volunteers several days each week.
- Linda and Bruce Foster Momsen, Ellie and Bruce Meade, Margie Miller, and Rose Dunaway for serving Sunday dinner to the Wednesday Crew nearly every week.
- Wednesday and Friday Crew volunteers for working faithfully through recent terrible weather to build in Phoenix Place
- Volunteer Crew Leaders who have supervised volunteers on Saturdays

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100% of our local ReStore's net proceeds in March were dedicated to Habitat's efforts in Haiti! Thank you for donating your used home goods to the Habitat ReStore and encouraging your friends to do the same. The items you donated were (or will be!) sold to the public at discounted prices. Thank you also for volunteering or shopping at the ReStore!



Spring 2010 Partnerships

University Presbyterian Church and SHAC-Habitat building with the Htoo Kyaw and Hla Hla Yi family.

Chapel of the Cross Episcopal Church, UNC Habitat for Humanity, St. Paul AME Church, and East Chapel Hill High building the Henry T. Clark Memorial House with the Romona Morrow family.

Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity and Bank of America building the Courtland Benjamin Smith Memorial House with the Lion and Zar Ree Wei family.

The Apostles Build (United Church of Chapel Hill, Church of the Reconciliation, Community Church of Chapel Hill Unitarian Universalists, Catholic Community of St. Thomas More, Holy Family Catholic Church, University Baptist Church, First Baptist Church of Hillsborough, and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Hillsborough) building with the Lu Pu and San Mu family.

UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School, Carrboro High School, and Bank of America building with the Marian Peppers family.

Women Build volunteers, Lowe's Home Improvement, and Inspire Pharmaceuticals building with the Heather Marshburn family.

UNC Health Care building with the Felicia Weaver family.

The Episcopal and AME Build (Dickerson Chapel A.M.E. Church, Flat Rock A.M.E. Church, Gaines Chapel A.M.E. Church, Harvey's Chapel A.M.E. Church, Holy Family Episcopal Church, Hunter's Chapel A.M.E. Church, Payne's Chapel A.M.E. Church, Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church, St. Matthews Episcopal Church, St. Paul A.M.E. Church, The Chapel of the Cross Episcopal Church, The Episcopal Church of the Advocate, White Cross A.M.E. Church) building with the family the Tammy Ware family.

The United Methodist Build (Amity United Methodist Church, Carrboro United Methodist Church, Christ United Methodist Church, Hillsborough United Methodist Church, Orange United Methodist Church, University United Methodist Church) building with the Yin Their family.



Lunch break time at a recent Saturday build day in Phoenix Place, Chapel Hill.

Donating Made Easy

- Habitat for Humanity of Orange County accepts credit card donations online. It's safe, simple, and quick. Just visit our website: www.orangehabitat.org and click the "DONATE NOW" button.
- Making a gift of appreciated stock is an especially easy way to give. We maintain an account at Wachovia Securities; our DTC# is 0141 and our Tax ID is 58-1603427. Call Anne-Marie Vanaman at the Habitat office at 919- 932-7077 x 216, or Ms. Shirley Drechsel at Wachovia Securities at 919-928-8370 to receive the account number and to assure proper accounting and acknowledgement.

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**Habitat
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**331 Exchange Park Lane
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Members of UNC Habitat hoist the trusses onto the Henry T. Clark Memorial House in Phoenix place.