

# the **BLUEPRINT**

**Fall 2025 Newsletter**



**together, we build  
the future**

*Photo courtesy of Senator Tina Smith's office*

**U.S. Senator Tina Smith  
visited the Summer  
Meadows development in  
August —see page 3**

# Dear Friends,

I am honored to step into the role of Executive Director at Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County. With more than seven years of experience in the nonprofit sector, I am grateful to have found an organization whose mission so closely aligns with my personal and professional values. Habitat feels like home.

I have deep appreciation for the strong foundation this organization has built over the past 28 years. For the past eight months, it has been a privilege to work alongside and learn from Lori Anderson. Her leadership has left a lasting impact, and I am committed to building upon that legacy as we move forward.

As we look to the future, I am driven by Habitat’s vision of a world where everyone has a decent place to live. My vision for Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County is bold and hopeful. I see us expanding our reach, deepening our impact, and serving more individuals and families who deserve the opportunity to thrive in a safe, affordable home.

This work is not possible without your support. Whether you’ve swung a hammer, made a financial contribution, served on a committee, been a mentor, or shared our mission with a friend – you have made a difference. Together, we can build a stronger community.

With gratitude and hope,

*Christine Reilly*  
Christine Reilly



**Christine Reilly,**  
**Executive Director**



## Our mission:

Seeking to put God’s love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope.

## Our vision:

A world where everyone has a decent place to live.

Through your support, since 1997, we’ve served:

211 families

94

new or improved homes

117

Aging in Place projects





# Building Momentum for Affordable Housing

Last month, we welcomed U.S. Senator Tina Smith to Summer Meadows, Alexandria's first affordable housing development since 2002. Senator Smith saw firsthand how collaboration and community partnerships are helping families achieve the dream of homeownership.

During her visit, she toured the neighborhood and spoke with Habitat homeowners and homebuyers, who shared how homeownership was only possible for them because of Habitat's programs and the various funding sources accessible through the program.

Our Habitat construction team showcased the building process, with special attention to the extra steps we take to ensure energy-efficient homes that lower costs and create long-term stability for homeowners.

Senator Smith, a strong advocate for affordable housing and lead author of the bipartisan ROAD to Housing Act of 2025, spoke about the nation's housing crisis and why programs like Habitat's are critical in reversing troubling trends. Her support underscores how important it is for leaders and communities to work together to increase affordability, expand supply, and create accountability in housing.

The Summer Meadows development has captured attention from Habitat affiliates across Minnesota and beyond. Our team has been invited to share about the project and the partnerships that made it possible. Over the next eight to ten years, Summer Meadows will grow into a vibrant neighborhood of 42 single-family affordable homes—each one a step toward a stronger, more hopeful future.

Representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Alexandria Mayor Bobbie Osterberg, Alexandria City Council, and Nicole Fernholz from the Alexandria Area Economic Development Commission also joined to highlight the vital role local and federal partnerships play in making projects like Summer Meadows possible.

Thank you to Senator Smith, our community partners, and every volunteer and donor who make this work possible.

Together, we are building more than homes—we are building a better future for local families and our community.



Contact Christine Reilly [christine@hfhdouglascounty.org](mailto:christine@hfhdouglascounty.org) for any questions about Summer Meadows or visit our website at [hfhdouglascounty.org](http://hfhdouglascounty.org).

# Celebrating our Team

## Congratulations, Lori Anderson!

After 22 years of leadership, Lori will retire from her role as Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County on September 30, 2025. As a steadfast advocate for affordable housing, Lori's journey with Habitat is a testament to her resilience, adaptability, and passion. Hired in 2004, Lori began her career with Habitat as the first part-time employee of the affiliate. Tasked with bold initiatives that transformed the organization, her early contributions were instrumental in establishing Habitat's core values and operational standards, ultimately strengthening the organization's capacity. Habitat's Board Chair, Rick Sansted, shared, "Lori's 22 years of leadership have transformed countless lives and families in Douglas County. She has contributed to building a stronger, more vibrant community through her unwavering dedication to Habitat. Her legacy has built more than homes; it has united the community around supporting the mission of Habitat to build and improve affordable homes." Thank you, Lori, for building our organization and a stronger community!

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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you for believing in Habitat for Humanity's vision: that everyone deserves a decent place to live. Your unwavering support—through volunteer hours, financial gifts, in-kind donations, and word-of-mouth advocacy—has laid the foundation of every home we've built together. As I step aside, I do so with full confidence knowing our talented team led by Christine Reilly, our passionate board, and dedicated volunteers are ready to write the next chapter.

With deepest appreciation and enduring hope, Lori Anderson



## Thank you, Denise!

After six years of helping families achieve the dream of homeownership, Denise Schapekahn, our Homeowner Services Coordinator, retired August 1, 2025.

Throughout her time with Habitat, Denise was a steady guide for homeownership and Aging in Place families, detail-oriented in every step of the process, and passionate about our mission. She fostered connections among others in similar roles, building a beneficial network of support and collaboration. Denise's dedication was top notch and has made a lasting impact on our community. We are deeply grateful for her service to Habitat and those we serve, and wish her a happy and fulfilling retirement.



## Congratulations, Heather!

Heather Smith-Ahrens has stepped into the role of Homeowner Services Coordinator. With her deep knowledge of our programs and processes, she's already bringing energy, expertise, and dedication to supporting our families on their path to homeownership.

## Join Our Team!

With several team transitions underway, we're excited to continue growing and strengthening our team to support Habitat's mission. We are looking for passionate, mission-driven professionals to help us expand our impact and ensure every program continues to thrive. Visit our website for complete details: [hfhdouglascounty.org/about-us/careers](https://hfhdouglascounty.org/about-us/careers)



# Donor Impact



**Geneva Capital**  
Your equipment finance *solution*.

**Happy Hour Presenting Sponsor**

## Presenting Sponsor Benefits:

- \* Reserved table at event
- \* Name on all publicity
- \* One build day for up to 16 people with lunch provided

## Questions about sponsoring?

Contact Christine Reilly  
at 320-762-4255.

Home is the foundation on which we build our lives. It's where we feel safe, raise our families, start businesses, make memories with friends, and have peace of mind. Together, we build vibrant communities.

That's why we're grateful for the generous support Geneva Capital provided this year as the Hard Hat Happy Hour Presenting Sponsor. Committed to investing in the community where their team members live and work, and a leader in their industry, Geneva Capital's values align closely with Habitat's belief that everyone deserves a decent place to live.

"A huge (if not the largest) part of our company culture revolves around giving back to the communities we call home," shared Andrew Cavers, President, Geneva Capital. "Our stewardship approach is two-fold: giving of time and talents (volunteering), and giving of financial resources

(monetary support). For several years, we've chosen to partner with Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County on both fronts - supporting their mission of providing safe and stable homes for families in our community. From summer interns to the Leadership Team, our crew has been lucky to put boots on the ground and participate in numerous builds. It's been a great way to come together for the community, but also come together as a team to build stronger relationships with each other outside the walls of our office. We're already looking forward to dusting off our hard hats again next summer!"

With their support, Geneva Capital is helping more families achieve the stability of homeownership—and that makes the entire community stronger. Together, we are building more than homes—we're building hope.



## Donor Advised Funds\*

A tax-advantaged charitable giving account.

- 1 Establish a donor advised fund.
- 2 Make a tax-deductible donation.
- 3 Designate beneficiaries and successors.
- 4 Grow the donation tax free.
- 5 Support charities with grants.

## Donor Advised Funds 101

A donor-advised fund (DAF) is a tax-advantaged account that makes charitable giving easier and more impactful. Think of it like a 401(k) for philanthropy—it allows you to contribute funds, receive an immediate tax benefit, and recommend grants to charities over time.

Anyone—individuals, families, or companies—can open a DAF through a provider. These accounts have become increasingly popular because they help maximize giving potential while simplifying the giving process.

For more guidance, talk with your financial or tax advisor.

**69%** of DAF\* gifts are < \$1,000

-2025 DAF Fundraising Report by Chariot

## Build Site Milestones



### House #1

Construction is nearing completion and the final steps are underway before the family purchases the home and receives their keys. The support of every volunteer, donor, and community partner has built more than walls, it has built hope, opportunity, and stability. Together, we are building not just homes, but strong beginnings and brighter futures.



### House #2

As the school year kicks off, this family began a new chapter in their very own home! With a safe and stable place, the children can now focus on learning and growing and the entire family can thrive. This milestone was made possible by the dedication of volunteers, donors, and community partners. Thank you for turning hard work and generosity into lasting change.



### House #3

In just one month, this home transformed from a cement slab to fully framed walls all the way through sheetrock! We will return mid-fall to complete interior painting and finishes, with every step bringing the family closer to the day they'll call this house home. Thank you to everyone who has laid the foundation for the bright future ahead!

## Meet Ashley, Leah and Raven!



Current  
construction

### Future Homeowner!

Ashley had been searching for a home to buy for over a year but could not find anything reasonable in her price range that did not require a lot of work. She thought she would be stuck renting. "I look forward to having a permanent home for my family, making lasting memories, and creating a warm home for my family and friends. I am elated to have a place to call mine. Thank you to everyone who has helped along the way and to every hand that made this possible for me!"



Current  
construction

### Future Homeowner!

When her family reached a point where they needed something stable and lasting, Leah realized that Habitat could be that life-changing opportunity. "For me, this is about so much more than bricks and walls—it's about breaking generational cycles of instability. This home is a foundation not just for shelter, but for healing, growth, and creating a legacy of strength and resilience for my children. It's a symbol of hope and progress. Thank you for the miracle you are making happen for my family!"



Current  
construction

### Future Homeowner!

When her family moved to MN to be closer to her mom, Raven quickly discovered buying a home was not possible on her own. "Now, my family absolutely loves it here and all the activities the area offers. We look forward to making the house our own—creating happy memories and putting height measurements on the walls. We are grateful for the opportunity to create a safe and loving home. Thank you for taking the time to help build a home for my family!"



# Volunteer Highlights



Our volunteers are the heart of Habitat's mission, turning hard work into hope for families in our community. Every hour they give, every skill they share, and every smile they bring to a build site helps create safe, stable, and affordable homes. We couldn't do this without their dedication, energy, and passion. Simply put, volunteers make dreams into doors—and futures into homes.

Last year, 548 volunteers spent 5,907 hours on our build sites, an average of 134 volunteers with 1,436 hours per house!



## ReStore Round Up

### Closing the cabin? Visit the ReStore!

Donations we take... and...

...budget-friendly items for purchase:



✓ Chairs



✓ Cabinets

Shop:

Wednesday - Saturday  
9 am to 5 pm

Donate:

Call 320-759-1989  
to schedule.



together, we build  
vibrant neighborhoods



Together,  
we can create  
a legacy.

No matter where you are on your life's journey or how much wealth you have, you can write your will to ensure your assets are distributed to the people and organizations you choose.

Make a will today in just 20 minutes at no cost through our partnership with FreeWill.

Learn more at [hfhdouglascounty.mygiftlegacy.org](https://hfhdouglascounty.mygiftlegacy.org)

