



# *the* Blueprint

Spring 2026 Newsletter



let's open the door to  
**/brighter futures/**

# Happy Spring!

Spring is such an energizing time at Habitat for Humanity, and we are excited to kick off another construction season! **The first home to be built this year will mark a major milestone for our affiliate - it will be the 100th Habitat home in Douglas County!** Our build schedule is set, and we'd love to have you out on the job site. Whether you want to volunteer on your own or bring a group, there's a spot for you.

As many of us dive into spring cleaning, decluttering, or refreshing our homes, it's the perfect time to give new life to the items you no longer need. Please consider donating your gently used furniture, building materials, appliances, and cabinets to the ReStore. **Your donations – and your shopping – directly support Habitat's work to build safe, affordable homes right here in Douglas County.**



**Christine Reilly,**  
Executive Director

**Please join us at the 20th Annual Hard Hat event on Wednesday, May 6th – everyone is welcome!** There are two options to choose from; you will find all the details on the next page. Hard Hat events are a wonderful opportunity to learn more about Habitat's impact in Douglas County, connect with fellow supporters, and discover meaningful ways you can get involved and help strengthen our community.

**Habitat's mission is made possible because of you – generous donors and dedicated volunteers!** We are deeply grateful for your partnership. In a time when the cost of housing is getting further out of reach for many, your support ensures that local families have access to safe and stable housing. Together, we build a stronger community.

With gratitude,

*Christine Reilly*

- **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:**

234 families

96 new or improved homes

138 Aging in Place projects



## Why Housing Matters

The impact of housing reaches far beyond the walls, influencing everything—children are better able to learn, health outcomes improve, and futures begin to take shape. Housing is the door to opportunity.

As prices for everything continue to soar, increasing numbers of families struggle to afford the activities of daily living. Sadly, this is a growing reality in Douglas County.

That's why Habitat's work matters so deeply. By partnering with families to achieve affordable homeownership, we build houses, and most importantly, we open doors to better futures.

# 20th Annual Hard Hat Events



**Habitat for Humanity®**  
of Douglas County, Minnesota

## Hard Hat Events **20<sup>th</sup> annual**

May 6, 2026

*Presented by Alomere Health and Geneva Capital*

Register  
by April 29  
on our website!

### Breakfast: 6:15-8:00 am

Doors open at 6:00 am. Enjoy a delicious breakfast of scrambled eggs, bacon, fresh fruit, and caramel rolls with the musical talents of The Healers.

### Happy Hour: 5:00-7:00 pm

Doors open at 4:45 pm, with social hour from 5:00-5:45 pm. Savor tasty appetizers while experiencing the musical gifts of The Healers.



**Matt & Chelsey**  
Homeowners



**Christine Reilly**  
Executive Director



**Sara Robinson**  
Director of Development



**Rick Sansted**  
Board Chair



**The Healers**  
Musicians

Enjoy powerful homeowner stories, meaningful connections, and the chance to make a lasting local impact. The events are free! Whether you join us for breakfast or happy hour, attend with a friend or on your own, you will have an opportunity to give, knowing that every dollar raised stays local.

- \* **Hear first-hand impact:** experience heartfelt testimonials
- \* **Network with the community:** connect with friends, neighbors, and community leaders
- \* **Change local lives:** every dollar raised stays local

**Why this event matters:** Your support helps individuals and families achieve affordable homeownership, creates a place to call their forever home, and ensures homeowners can safely age in place.

**Together, we can open the door to /opportunity/.**

Contact Sara Robinson at 320-762-4255 to learn more about the Hard Hat Events.

# Build Updates



## 2025 Legends Build

Over the winter months, ATCC Carpentry Program students built cabinets for the home and flooring has been installed. Siding and final finishes will be completed this spring.

Many changes have occurred since we opened doors to the affiliate in 1997. The first Habitat home in Douglas County sold for \$65,000. Today, the cost to build one of our homes often exceeds \$300,000. **What remains the same, is the life-changing impact made possible through your support. Thank you to the thousands of volunteers and donors who have transformed the lives of Douglas County families since 1997!**



## 2026 Build Plans

Our strategic plan calls for us to build and serve more. Our goal is to build an additional home this year, for a total of six homes!

The first swings of hammers this month marked a tremendous milestone for our affiliate as we began construction on the 100th affordable home in Douglas County!



Future Homeowner!

## Meet the Homebuyer!

I was so thrilled to get a call from Habitat and immediately called my family and friends to let them know the good news. I wanted to own a home and build my life in Alexandria, but prices were too steep for me and my student loans limit my spending ability. What you do is so incredibly important, a home is everything! Safety, shelter, and a place to belong. I'm so incredibly grateful to the volunteers and staff at Habitat; I'm so excited and proud to be with you building my new home.



Future Homeowner!

## Meet the Homebuyer!

When I found out I was approved, I felt so many emotions all at once – excitement, relief, a bit scared for the life-changing step this is, and most of all proud that I could give this gift to my children. My main motivation is to provide my kids with a secure environment where they have room to grow and a place they can truly call their own; to have the same sense of stability that I had growing up in a Habitat home. I look forward to planting a garden, sitting around a bonfire, and making lasting memories together. More than anything, I want to show my children that through hard work, a new beginning is possible. I want them to feel the same pride in their home and their mom that I felt for my mom when we moved into our Habitat home. This isn't just a house; it is a legacy of strength and courage.



Future Homeowner!

## Meet the Homebuyer!

This homebuyer is deeply grateful to the volunteers who help build their home. Family is incredibly important to them, and they look forward to planting and growing a vegetable garden while spending time together. For them, home is comfort, a place to settle, grow, and plant lasting roots.

# Volunteers are Habitat Heroes!



April is Volunteer Appreciation Month — the perfect time to recognize our incredible volunteers who make Habitat's mission possible.

Recognition this year carries special significance as the United Nations declared 2026 as International Volunteer Year, highlighting the essential role volunteers play in strengthening communities and driving positive change around the world.



In Douglas County, we see that impact every day. Every nail hammered, every wall raised, every ReStore donation received, reflects the dedication and generosity of volunteers who uplift Habitat's mission through their service. Whether you swing a hammer on the build site, assist in our ReStore, serve on our board or committees, or serve in countless other ways, your time and talents create transformational change.

volunteers open doors to  
**/brighter futures/**

Because of our generous volunteers, local families achieve the stability of homeownership. Together, we open the doors to brighter futures. From all of us at Habitat and the ReStore, thank you for being the heart of our mission. You are truly Habitat Heroes!

## 2025 Volunteer Impact:

**847**  
volunteers

**10,837**  
volunteer hours

**\$413,539K**  
value of  
volunteer time\*

\*Independent Sector gathers data and conducts research on volunteerism in the nonprofit sector. In MN, the value of each volunteer hour is \$38.16. (The rate for the US overall was \$34.79.)

## Congratulations to the following volunteers who reached milestones last year:

### 15 years

Jerry Hansen  
Randy Meyer

### 10 years

Brandon Johnson  
Ron Lyman  
Pam Mickelson  
Andrea Olson  
Tom Sinning

### 5 years

Aaron Adickes  
Julie Anderson  
Melissa Baas  
Tim Baas

Glen Bearson  
Sara Beattie  
Bob Brillhart  
Travis Bruns  
Amy Christopherson  
Kim Dahlheimer  
Glenn Downing  
Julie Drayna  
Mike Drellack  
Jim Emter

Aaron Frederick  
Tom Hedstrom  
Kayla Heffron  
Jenna Hill  
Amanda Johnson  
Dennis Jones  
Sara Justison  
Mandy Kaatz  
Chelsey Koopman  
Chris Kragenbring  
Grace Lambert  
Mike Mohr  
Dan Olson  
Denny Paul

Julie Rambow  
Shelly Satrom  
Steve Schapekahn  
Ruth Schultz  
Scott Sievers  
Scott Threinen  
Bob Timm  
Bailey Vanderby  
Travis Vanderby  
Jeff Walsh  
Trina Wilke  
Maggie Wilson  
Ryan Witte  
Gary Zavadil



You're Invited!

### Habitat Friends & Family Picnic

June 16, 2026  
5:00 - 7:00 pm

City Park  
118 City Park Rd, Alexandria

We hope you  
will join us at our  
annual picnic!

**A special note:** Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County began as an all volunteer-led organization in 1997. While we know our founders and first volunteers contributed thousands of hours to bring our mission to life, our records begin tracking hours in 2004. **To the dedicated people who volunteered between 1997-2004, we are thankful for your vision and passion!**

# Give Smarter

We know that our community is incredibly generous, but **did you know there are ways to support our mission that actually put more money back in your pocket?**

"**Smart Giving**" is all about using strategic financial tools to maximize the impact of your gift while minimizing your tax burden. Whether you are looking to lower your taxable income, avoid capital gains, or simplify your year-end giving, the strategies below can help your contribution go further than a standard cash donation. Explore these options with your financial advisor to see how you can make a lasting difference in our community by including Habitat in your financial plans - all the while making a savvy move for your own finances.

As of **2026**, new tax rules (such as the 0.5% AGI floor for itemizers) have made certain strategies even more valuable. Below is a list of smart giving options that may work for you. Thank you for your support of Habitat's mission! ~Sara Robinson, Director of Development



## Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs)

If you are 70½ or older, you can transfer up to \$111,000 annually directly from your IRA to a qualified nonprofit, like Habitat.

**The Smart Part:** The transfer doesn't count as taxable income, which can keep you in a lower tax bracket and potentially reduce Medicare premiums. If you are 73 or older, it also satisfies your **Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)**.

## Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs)

Think of a DAF as a personal charitable savings account. You contribute assets (cash, stock, or even crypto) to the fund, receive an immediate tax deduction, and then "advise" grants to your favorite nonprofits over time.

**The Smart Part:** It allows you to "bunch" several years of giving into a single high-income year to exceed the standard deduction threshold, **while maintaining a steady stream of support for the causes you love.**

## Above-the-Line Cash Deductions (for Non-Itemizers)

In 2026, even if you take the standard deduction, you can still receive a tax benefit for cash donations.

**The Smart Part:** Individuals can deduct up to \$1,000 (\$2,000 for married couples) for qualified cash gifts "above the line," meaning it reduces your adjusted gross income (AGI) before other calculations are made.

## Donating Appreciated Securities (Stocks)

Instead of selling stocks that have increased in value and then donating the cash, you can donate the shares directly.

**The Smart Part:** You avoid paying capital gains tax on the appreciation, and you can still deduct the full fair market value of the stock (if you itemize). This often results in a 20% or more larger gift to the charity than if you had sold the stock first.

## Matching Gifts & Payroll Giving

Many employers will double or even triple the donations made by their employees.

**The Smart Part:** It's "free money" for your chosen non-profit. Supporters can also use Payroll Giving to automate small, manageable donations directly from their paycheck, which often reduces their taxable income automatically before they even see it.

## Round Up (on the Habitat website)

Connect a debit/credit card to round-up your purchases to the next dollar with every purchase and donate your change.

**The Smart Part:** It's almost like finding change in the cushions and donating it to Habitat. Small increments of under \$1 are hardly noticed by you, but can make a big difference every month to us.

*Disclaimer: The descriptions above are general in nature and intended for educational purposes only. They should not be relied upon as professional advice. Because tax laws changed significantly starting in the 2026 tax year, specifically regarding the new 0.5% AGI floor for itemized deductions, we recommend consulting with your financial advisor to see which of these "smart" strategies fit your specific situation best.*

# Welcome New Team Members!

Our work is powered by people who believe everyone deserves a safe, affordable place to call home. This fall, we were excited to welcome three new team members who bring valuable experience, energy, and heart to our mission. From the build site to the office to the ReStore, our new team members will strengthen our capacity to build and serve more.

**LeRoy Uhlenkamp** became our Director of Construction in November. LeRoy will oversee all aspects of the construction program, including project management to streamlining and improving efficiencies, and managing relationships with contractors and vendors. Prior to joining Habitat, LeRoy owned Uhlenkamp Construction for 24 years and was an agriculture teacher. Both LeRoy and his wife, Kelly, are excited to help advance Habitat's mission. For LeRoy, home is "a place to feel safe, secure, and comfortable to raise a family and take pride in owning." Welcome, LeRoy!



**LeRoy Uhlenkamp**

**Sara Robinson**, a native of Alexandria, joined the team in December as the Director of Development. In her role, Sara is responsible for fundraising, which includes working with individual donors, corporate sponsors, and faith leaders as well as planning events. Before joining Habitat, Sara was the Advancement Director at the Legacy of the Lakes Museum, chaired a high school Musical Theatre Department, and was an actor/singer. Sara and her husband, Chris, have been building their home in Alexandria. She is excited to witness Habitat's impact. For Sara, home means making memories with the people you love.



**Sara Robinson**

**Bill Teschendorf** began his ReStore Associate role in December. As part of the ReStore team, Bill will process and clean donations, and provide assistance for customers and donors. Bill has farmed and milked cows, owned a convenience store and cafe, and currently owns Magpie with his wife, Jan. For Bill, home is a place of pride, happiness, safety, and where they can have dogs in the house and nobody cares.



**Bill Teschendorf**

## ReStore Corner



When you shop at the ReStore this month, round up at the register to support Habitat's **#HomeIsTheKey** initiative. Every cent raised helps **open the door to a /brighter future/** for families in our community!



**Open to the public!**

Thank you to the Greater Alexandria Area Association of REALTORS® for filling the ReStore's Pot-o-Gold last month! They painted the town green collecting donations that will turn into real treasure: funding to support Habitat's mission to build affordable homes. They proved how real luck happens when a community comes together.

**Store hours: 9 am to 5 pm, Wed - Sat**

**Donations: Call 320-759-1989**



**Habitat for Humanity**<sup>®</sup>  
of Douglas County, Minnesota  
1211 N Nokomis NE, Alexandria, MN 56308



Let's open the door to  
/brighter futures/



EQUAL HOUSING  
OPPORTUNITY



# Together, we can open doors to /opportunity/

Your donation to Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County can work smarter and make an even larger impact.

Consider these powerful ways to support affordable housing and see savings on next year's tax return:

- \* Donor advised funds
- \* Stock contributions
- \* IRA gifts (for those 70.5 or older)



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