

the **BLUEPRINT**

Spring 2023 Newsletter



everyone

needs a place to call home

Dear Friends,

I would like to share some thoughts from a colleague, Kevin Pelkey, Executive Director, Lakes Area Habitat for Humanity located in Brainerd. This is a great example of all the questions we are asked locally.

"I'm often asked why we build small houses. So many volunteers and visitors to our builds wonder why we don't just go a little bigger with an extra room for guests. I'm asked just as often why we don't include upgrades that are in nearly every home built today – things like larger fridges with water dispensers.

These are all very understandable questions. And on the open market, important to compete for value and marketability. However, that's not our game and goal. As stated by Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) and adopted locally, we are in the game of eliminating poverty housing by building as many homes for as many families as possible to provide decent places for everyone to live.

We may all disagree with what that means – simple is a fairly loose term at least for those not plugged into Habitat. For those of us who are, simple is defined in how big a home should be. Simple is defined by providing common space for the family (and guests) to gather and that private space is ok shared (ie: two brothers or two sisters in the same bedroom). Simple means a straightforward floor plan. But simple does not mean it is unattractive.

Evaluating the impact of 'small' is really a matter of perspective. When our homebuyers are preparing to move in, I like to ask what they think of the home. I'm always expecting responses of liking the color or that we provide all the appliances or the flooring choice. Consistently the most common response is: 'IT'S SO BIG'. So why should we apply today's average or industry averages to our homes when most of our families are moving from cramped, unhealthy space to a well-built Habitat home that often is twice or more the size of their current places? We are happy to keep building homes in HFHI's size criteria – the families are happy with the space and it helps us control the cost to build.

All this helps us serve as many families as possible. Keeping our focus on serving families with their basic housing needs and keeping our attention to building well matters. After all, we truly believe in the idea that everyone, everywhere deserves at least a decent place to live."

Will you join us this year and help us with our stretch goal of serving 30+ families through our homeownership and Aging in Place programs? It's a big lift for us to get there, but we believe the resources (people and money) are available. We'd love to talk to you about how you can help. Give us a call and let's work together to bring a bunch of families home this year!

Thank you for all you do,

Lori Anderson



Lori Anderson,
Habitat 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.



Because of your support, since 1997, we've served:

17th Annual Hard Hat Events



You're invited!

**17th Annual
Hard Hat Events**

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



**Happy Hour
4:30-6:30 pm**

May 10, 2023

**Broadway Ballroom
115 30th Ave E, Alexandria**

Save the date! Wednesday, May 10, 2023

Every hand helps build a brighter future for our neighbors.

The Hard Hat events play an important role in raising funds to build affordable homes and help older adults age in their homes with dignity.

Join us for an inspirational hour to connect with friends and hear from Habitat homeowners who, with your help, are building strength, stability, and self-reliance for their families.

This year's program will feature homeowner Brenda Rising and her mentor, Mona Strege. Brenda will share what having a home means for her and her family and how homeownership has impacted her life. You'll also hear how meaningful an Aging in Place project was for a local homeowner. Habitat Board Vice Chair & Treasurer, Tony Loosbrock, will serve as emcee with special messages to be shared by Habitat staff.



**Brenda Rising
and Mona Strege**

Registration is open! Whether invited by a Table Host or coming as an individual, everyone is welcome to attend. **Visit our website to register at hfhdouglascounty.org.** Please contact our office at 320-762-4255 with any questions.

Breakfast

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

Happy Hour

Doors open at 4:30 pm. Savor tasty appetizers while experiencing the musical gifts of Blonde & the Bohunk.



At Habitat, we build because we believe that everyone, everywhere should have a decent place to call home. When a family helps build or improve a place they can call home, they are also building a better community.

When you make a gift at the Hard Hat events, your donation helps build a brighter future for our neighbors.

Contact our office at 320-762-4255 with questions.

Beyond the Home: How Affordable Housing Contributes to Wealth Building



Decent, affordable housing provides a solid foundation for households, from economic stability to increased access to education. Homeownership promotes wealth building by acting as a forced savings mechanism and through home value appreciation. Homeowners make monthly payments that increase their equity in their homes by paying down the principal balance of their mortgage. Home value appreciation also helps homeowners build wealth by enabling them to realize greater proceeds if they sell the home. In addition, owning a home promotes intergenerational homeownership and wealth building. Children of homeowners transition to homeownership earlier — lengthening the period over which they can accumulate wealth — and have homeownership rates 25 percentage points higher than the rate of children of renters.



How Habitat for Humanity helps

- Habitat ensures mortgage payments consume no more than 30% of a homeowner's income and meets this goal by offering creative financial packages.
- Habitat builds modest homes and manages costs to keep the overall cost of homes low.
- Many Habitat affiliates, including Douglas County, are leading the way on permanent affordability, using land trust programs to ensure future homeowners will have the same access to affordable homeownership.
- Habitat provides financial education classes to teach helpful tools and strategies to homeowners.
- Habitat advocates at all levels of government for policies and programs to make affordable homeownership more available and support homeowners in building equity through their homes.

When parents no longer have to struggle to make ends meet, they gain peace of mind and are empowered to better care for their families. While these changes take place individually, there is a ripple effect that is real and tangible for the homeowners and the community.

Locally, we've heard

- "I was able to pay off one of my student loans early!"
- "We had money available to pay for our kids sport activities."
- "I could afford to buy a prom dress for my daughter."
- "I know what my monthly mortgage payment will be and can plan ahead."

With your support, Habitat homeowners achieve strength, stability, and independence and local communities also benefit.



This article cites information shared in "How does homeownership contribute to wealth building?", an Evidence Brief compiled by Habitat for Humanity International. To read the complete article, visit our website at hfdouglascounty.org/volunteer/advocate

ReStore Corner

Thank you to the Greater Alexandria Area Association of REALTORS® (GAAAR) for filling up the ReStore pot o' gold during their 3rd annual donation pick-up event. The group picked up 30 donation items while spreading cheer and a wee bit o' luck throughout the community.

All proceeds from the ReStore help fund the construction of affordable housing in Douglas County.

Pictured right: Members of the Greater Alexandria Area Association of REALTORS® who volunteered on March 17.



Meet our 2023 homebuyers!



Courtney

"I am tired of being in situations where I have to worry about whether I'll be able to stay living in the place where my kids and I reside. I look forward to making new and more memories as time goes on. Thank you to everyone for helping build the house!"



Anthony

"I want to build a better life for my son. I'm excited to make new memories in our home. Our lives will be changed drastically as this will be the nicest home we have ever lived in. Thank you for helping build our future!"



Andrew

"My desire to better myself and pursue my future is why I applied. I look forward to having my own space so I can stay organized and productive. I'm also excited about a garage! My life will change in so many ways. My utmost respect and gratitude goes to all the volunteers!"



Jackie

"I applied for my son. He deserves to grow up in a good living situation. I'm looking forward to having room to grow, freedom to make our home feel like us, no worrying about loud neighbors or rent increases. We are forever grateful!"

Our Volunteers are Habitat Heroes!

Volunteers are the heart and backbone of Habitat. Since the very beginning, our community has demonstrated its incredible generosity through thousands of hours of volunteering. Together, we have provided safe, affordable housing and repairs for local families. Together, we have made a transformational impact lasting for generations. Together, we build stronger communities.

Join us in celebrating every volunteer who helped swing a hammer, be a mentor for a homeowner, serve on our board or committee, work in the ReStore or office or help in any capacity in 2022. We are grateful for your support of our mission!



every hand

helps build a brighter future for local families

2022 Volunteer Stats



Congratulations to the following volunteers who celebrate milestones with Habitat!

10 years

- Brian Berg
- Dennis Gronholz
- Ted Haar
- Nick Heydt
- Joyce Moe

5 years

- Jennifer Anderson
- Kevin Brezina
- Barb Brown
- Larry Carlson
- Mitch Doering
- Nicole Doering
- Mary Gorghuber
- Rich Hawes
- Tom Helder
- Jackie Holte
- Kelly Jenzen
- Brad Lenertz
- Stephanie Lucy
- Beth Melaas
- Chris Olson
- Rebecca Perdue
- Larry Puls
- Rich Rentz
- Amy Schlosser
- Catherine Scholer-Kliewer
- Eric Stenborg
- Catherine Stine
- Jodie Tatro
- Kevin Taylor

A special note:

Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County began as an all volunteer-led organization. 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!**



*Independent Sector gathers data and conducts research on volunteerism in the nonprofit sector. In 2022, the value of each volunteer hour was \$29.95.

Congratulations DECA!



**Pictured above:
Lori Anderson with Ben,
Jaelyn and Kylie.**

I learn about housing issues that so many of our fellow community members face. It was amazing to see the work we put in pay off, and we know that this impact would not have been possible without the amazing partnership between Habitat and Alexandria DECA."

Alexandria Area High School students Ben Swedberg, Jaelyn Miller and Kylie Lattimer chose to partner with Habitat this fall for their DECA Community Giving project. The students led the "Give Home for the Holidays" campaign, raising \$28,000! Their hard work created even greater success when they placed first in the local Project Management competition, earning them scholarship money. In addition, they placed third at state and are headed to the National competition this month. Ben Swedberg shared, "Working with Habitat for the Give Home for the Holidays campaign helped my group and

Thank you, contractors!






Habitat held its 2nd annual Appreciation Dinner for our contractors and vendors.

The dinner provided them an opportunity to hear first-hand how their work impacts the lives of Habitat homeowners. Thank you to our amazing chefs, Steve, Norma and Dave, for the delicious meal.

We are grateful for the partnership and support of this amazing group!

How You Can Help

More than boards and nails, an investment in Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County is life changing and pays dividends into the future. Ways you can donate to our mission:

-  **Secure online contributions (one-time or recurring)**
-  **Gifts on behalf of a loved one**
-  **Match your gift through your place of employment**
-  **Sponsorships**
-  **In-kind donations**
-  **Estate Giving**
-  **Donate your real estate**

**Interested in donating?
Contact Lori to learn more.
Call 320-762-4255 or email lori@hfhdouglascounty.org**



every family
deserves the opportunity to
build a better life



**Building strength,
stability and
self-reliance
through shelter.**

.....

Save the date for our Friends & Family Picnic!



Join us for a fun and festive picnic at City Park including backyard games.

Meet and mingle with the Habitat team, homeowners, board members, volunteers, and supporters.