
Old Trail Village Dedication

On a beautiful sunny Saturday afternoon last week, two Habitat Partner Families were honored at a dedication ceremony recognizing their accomplishment of homeownership in the Old Trail Village community of Crozet, Virginia.

One of the new homebuyers, Katrena Cooper, a dedicated employee of UVA dining (Aramark) for sixteen years and mother of three young adults, looks forward to “cleanliness, peacefulness, and something to call [her] own” with her new home purchase.

Her new neighbor Tanjah Wheeler shared similar sentiments, “It’s been a long, long, long journey, but I’m so happy for... my support system that’s been on my side, pushing me through the whole time...I’m so excited to start this new journey of my life. We are super excited to start living here in Old Trail.”



Old Trail Dedication
March 16, 2024

Habitat Homebuyers Katrena Cooper and Tanjah Wheeler with son Royal

“We are so thrilled for Katrena and Tanjah,” said Habitat President and CEO Dan Rosensweig. “Crozet and Old Trail in particular are wonderful places to live, but opportunities for affordable housing are increasingly challenging

there.”

Old Trail boasts ease of access to Interstate 64, with a mix of single-family and multi-family residential homes, commercial businesses, restaurants, and recreational facilities. But it has become increasingly hard for people of modest incomes to find and remain in housing in the western part of Albemarle County.

“For much of its existence, Crozet has been a reliably working-class community, home to workers at the Barnes Lumber Company and Con Agra packaged foods plant among other businesses,” said Rosensweig. “The farmland where this neighborhood now stands and in the areas around here have for centuries provided peaches, apples and other produce to the nation – To this day, hard working farmers continue to till the soil.”

“We all know that change is inevitable. And this neighborhood is a manifestation of the idea that change can be dramatic and wonderful. But along with celebrating change, we at Habitat are also grateful to play a role in preserving Crozet as a place where hard working families can continue to live.”

At the dedication, Rosensweig expressed special thanks to numerous supporters and partners who helped make Katrena’s and Tanjah’s dreams come true. Sam Craig of Craig Builders sold the lots to Habitat and framed the homes. Supervisor Ann Mallek championed the project and has for two decades been a strong voice for affordable housing on the County Board. And several foundations and institutions like the Genan Foundation, the Hunter Smith Family Foundation, the County of Albemarle and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission contributed gap funding.

“Truly sustainable neighborhoods should be attainable to more people,” said Rosensweig. “So we are always looking for new opportunities to increase the number of affordable homes that we provide, and it’s partnerships like these that can really open new doors for families who are longstanding members of the community, who want to remain here, and would otherwise be forced out due to affordability constraints.”

Check out the coverage from [CBS19 News here](#).

Planned Giving Donor Spotlight

Tom Estes – father of three and grandfather of six – is always thinking ahead.

“The secret to the wealth you need and want in the future is to save now,” said Estes, a long time supporter of and volunteer for Habitat. “That’s why I like Habitat. It’s not just a matter of getting people into a house. [It’s] getting people into a way of living that looks at the future as much as the present.”

Recently, Estes – who has been a board member, a partner family advocate and a construction site volunteer for Habitat – along with his wife Julie decided to make the kind of future focus that is so appealing to them about the Habitat program a

bedrock value of their charitable giving. As generous annual donors they have given every year since 1996. Recently, they upped their contribution by including Habitat in their estate planning.

“It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that our bequest to Habitat is simply part of our effort to be the kind of neighbor we want to have,” said Estes. “If our gift to Habitat leads to anything similar for others, the story will not end with our passing, and we will have played at least a small part in leaving behind a little better neighborhood somewhere, to be determined and enjoyed by those who come behind us.”

Tom and Julie recently downsized into Louisa County’s Spring Creek, what they describe as a “wonderful neighborhood of several hundred homes of remarkable quality and style.” For them, one of the biggest attractions of Spring Creek is the fact that Habitat families own homes in the community.



Julie and Tom Estes in Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge. “The best part of every trip is coming home,” states Estes.

To learn more about opportunities to include Habitat for Humanity of Greater Charlottesville in your estate plans, please contact Kelly Eplee by phone, 434-953-5249, or email at keplee@cvillehabitat.org.

To read more about Tom and Julie Estes’ Habitat story, [click here](#).

Piedmont Master Gardeners Partnership

The Piedmont Master Gardeners – a group that provides innovative educational opportunities, working with community partners, to ensure

environmentally responsible, science-based horticulture is valued, practiced, and enjoyed in our Charlottesville/Albemarle County communities – have been planting native plants at new Habitat homes since 2021.

For one volunteer, this partnership has provided a new lease on life.

Ralph Morini, who was diagnosed with brain cancer in August of 2022, has been volunteering with Piedmont Master Gardeners since 2017. After completing a rigorous training program, he joined the organization to get more involved with the community. And since then, the groundwork has been laid for a growing partnership with Habitat.

“I want the end of my life to be the most contributing part of my life,” said Morini.

Ralph has helped the partnership with Habitat grow from four homes landscaped in 2021 to 24 last year; 90% of what they have planted has been native species. But the partnership is not just about plantings. Volunteers have helped new homeowners learn about the value and care of native plants and even helped provide funding support.

“What I love is...the greater satisfaction with our goals,” said Morini. “Meeting the families. Meeting the volunteers. Promoting our mission in such a constructive, convenient and social way. It's just been consistently a really positive experience for everybody.”



To learn more about our next planting day volunteer opportunity with Piedmont Master Gardeners, contact Natalie Burgwin at 434.234.3498.

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