



**Habitat for Humanity®**  
of Greater Charlottesville

Building simple, decent, affordable housing with low-income families and volunteers in the region of greater Charlottesville.

## Habitat for Humanity Hosts Charlottesville Learning Journey Featuring Angela Blanchard

**O**n Friday, April 24th, Habitat hosted a critical community conversation with approximately 150 local non-profit, government and community leaders. The Charlottesville Learning Journey featured special guest Angela Blanchard, President/CEO of Houston (TX)-based Neighborhood Centers Inc.

Ms. Blanchard is widely recognized for her work around Appreciative Inquiry and has pioneered a process of community development based on a core belief that people and neighborhoods should be defined by their strengths, resources, achievements and hopes — not their degree of “brokenness.” Her TED Talk, titled *You Can’t Build on Broken*, is one of the most widely viewed videos on YouTube.

“It just makes sense,” said Blanchard. “We’ve seen it work time and time again. And here in Charlottesville, Habitat is on the cutting edge. What

they are doing in partnership with their families and Southwood community members is nothing short of brilliant.”

The event was part of Habitat’s continued effort to serve more families through advocacy — working with the community to change perceptions and gather momentum for sounder housing policy and practices.



“Advocacy is an important pillar of our strategy to increase community impact, inspire fruitful collaboration and help ensure that Charlottesville can realize its potential as a place where all its citizens can thrive and achieve their dreams,” said Habitat President/CEO Dan Rosensweig. “We were extremely blessed to have Angela lead the *Learning Journey*.”

The *Learning Journey* was the culmination of a three day visit to Habitat by Ms. Blanchard during which she lead strategic planning sessions with board and staff members and spent time working directly

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Southwood community members welcomed special visitor Angela Blanchard (pictured at right), at an open house. The event provided residents such as Monserrat Monroy Flores (pictured at left) a chance to describe the traits that make Southwood special to them.



Dear Friends,

In this special edition of *The Blueprint*, you will read about a lesser-known but critical component of Habitat’s strategy to transform lives and communities. Hosting this month’s *Charlottesville Learning Journey* — a gathering of 150 local leaders and community members

— is part of our ongoing advocacy efforts.

Habitat advocacy involves equal parts education and inspiration, augmenting our homebuilding and community development work by improving the systems that create the conditions of housing poverty in the first place.

This month, we welcomed our special friend Angela Blanchard, President and CEO of Neighborhood Centers Inc., the largest charitable organization in Texas which has garnered national attention for its pioneering community development work, helping neighborhoods identify and build on their resources, achievements and hopes — not their degree of “brokenness.”

Blanchard traveled to Charlottesville to meet with residents, engage in strategic planning with Habitat board and staff and lead the *Learning Journey*, an asset based community development workshop designed for others in the area looking to make a positive difference.

Thanks to your support, in addition to building 35 new affordable homes this year and working side-by-side with the residents of Southwood to create a redevelopment plan reflecting the needs, desires, and abilities of the 1,500 people who live there, we’ll be able to continue to serve as a catalyst, convener and educator.

In this way, your support will impact thousands more local residents, helping to lay the foundation for a brighter future for your community, and making Charlottesville a better place to live, for everyone.

Best,

**Dan Rosensweig**

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**The Blueprint**

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# PROJECT IN PROGRESS

## Burnet Commons II: The Woods

Construction is underway on Habitat's final five homes at Burnet Commons II: The Woods. Deborah Tyler and her family will be among the seven Habitat homeowners in this 50-unit, mixed-income community near downtown and the Cherry Avenue commercial corridor.



dumping ground into a pedestrian-oriented, sustainably-built, mixed-income neighborhood in the heart of Charlottesville. *The Park* will feature 18 Habitat homes and 28 Southern Development homes around a central park.

## Burnet Commons III: The Park

Framing has begun on the first six Habitat homes at *Burnet Commons III: The Park*. When complete in 2016, this Southern Development community will transform a long-time City



## Harmony Ridge

This 14-home mixed-income community is in the final stages of the approval process. In addition to bringing affordable and market-rate home ownership opportunities to the Prospect/Orangedale/5th Street section of town, this new development will provide access to a new home for the Charlottesville Abundant Life Ministries. ■

## More Than Just Homes

A unique partnership with the Blue Ridge Juvenile Detention Center (BRJDC) is proving that Habitat is about more than just homes.

Two years ago, the Habitat Store took a chance that no one else was willing to take and the results are paying huge dividends. Each week, a small group of Blue Ridge residents who demonstrate good behavior and an interest in giving back to their community, comes to the Habitat Store to volunteer and learn valuable job preparation skills. For residents who are not able to leave the premises but enjoy hands-on activities, The Habitat Store sends furniture to be assembled on-site at Blue Ridge, which is then sold at the Store.

"We are so proud to be part of this. This is such a unique opportunity to instill pride and accomplishment in the hearts and minds of young students seeking second chances and bright futures," said Caitlin Riopel, Habitat Store Operations Manager.

Last year, the relationship advanced to the next level. The Habitat Store entered into an agreement to sell plants grown by Blue Ridge students as part of their greenhouse program. More than 1,200 young plants are sold on the front porch of The Habitat Store each spring. Proceeds from the sale of these plants benefit the Greenhouse Program and Habitat. More importantly, the partnership gives Blue Ridge students a year-round productive activity aiding them in reintegration back into society. Students who participate in the program benefit from social-emotional learning experiences and work as a team to develop problem-solving strategies and critical life skills.

"For many residents, volunteering at Habitat is their first exposure to "on-the-job" training and the competent and patient staff at Habitat helps them navigate the soft skills needed for employment," said Laurie Cooper, Blue Ridge Principal. "The partnership continues to grow and we're excited about what the future holds." ■

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with Southwood, Sunrise and Belmont Cottages residents.

"I'm so jealous," she said. "Habitat gets to work with these communities that are so strong, so filled with wonderful people and so much talent."

Habitat's Board of Directors has formally embraced Appreciative Inquiry as a foundational tool to deepen and enhance its commu-

nity engagement activities throughout existing communities and with future Partner Families. Habitat is currently working side-by-side with the 1,500 residents of Southwood, the area's single largest concentration of affordable housing, to develop a plan for redevelopment of the park into a one-of-a-kind, sustainable, mixed-income and mixed-use community. ■



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## Habitat Holds First Ever New Partner Family Build Day

This month, twenty new Habitat Partner Families gathered at *Burnet Commons II: The Woods*, put on their hard hats and stepped onto the construction site for the first time. The anticipation and excitement were palpable as Habitat staff poured coffee, welcomed the families and began teaching the skills needed to thrive on the job site.

“It was really fun,” said future homeowner Deborah Tyler. “And it showed that if you work hard, your dreams will come true. Look what’s happening for me — I never thought I’d be able to own a home.”

Tyler and her future neighbors’ work counted as “sweat equity,” or mandatory volunteer hours earning families a zero interest mortgage on a home sold at no profit. Partner Families complete upwards of 300 “sweat equity” hours as part of the program. They earn their hours by helping to build their own home and the



Habitat Youth United Coordinator Lydia Prokosch joined new Partner Family Angel Turner for an exciting first day on the construction site.

homes of other families and by working in The Habitat Store and in the Habitat office, as well as by completing homebuyer education courses and Good Neighbor training.

The comradery that partners experience as well as the skills they learn often keep them returning to volunteer even after they have completed their requirements and purchased their home.

At the build day, recent home purchaser Sheron Sinclair came back to swing a hammer and share her story of overcoming fear and anxiety about the job site to encourage any partner

families who might be feeling nervous.

“I’ve gained so many valuable skills working with Habitat and I want to continue to help build homes,” said Sinclair. “Now it’s time to pass on what I’ve learned and encourage new Partner Families beginning their journey with Habitat.” ■