

Blueprint



Habitat
for Humanity®
of Greater Charlottesville

THE NEWSLETTER OF HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
OF GREATER CHARLOTTESVILLE

WINTER 2017-2018



BUILDING

Finding Peace of Mind at Home in Crozet

A few years ago, Alhena Cleveland and her son Oscar were renting a small house in Esmont. Her car was unreliable, so she couldn't travel far for work. But nearby job options were limited and Alhena's financial situation was precarious.

"Between the rent and bills, we barely had anything left to save," she says. "Our house was very cold in the winter, and we only had a stove to heat it. Refilling the oil cost around \$300, and it wouldn't even last a month."

Faced with few choices, the family moved closer to more employment prospects—but could only afford housing in an area where they didn't feel safe. Concerned for her son's wellbeing, Alhena applied to purchase a Habitat home.

"When they said yes, we were so excited," remembers Alhena. "The volunteers worked on it like it was their own house!"

Now settled into their Wickham Pond home in Crozet, Alhena and Oscar are hopeful about the future. Oscar is happy in his new school and neighborhood, where he is making friends and plowing through his shelves of books. Alhena is also working on her real estate license.

"I want to make a difference and help people who don't know they have a chance at homeownership. I want to help as many people as I can," says Alhena with a smile.

"I'm just so happy to be where I am. It gives me peace of mind. We could not be more thankful to have the opportunity to own our home."

From the President & CEO



THE SEA PRONOUNCES SOMETHING, OVER AND OVER, IN A HOARSE WHISPER; I CANNOT QUITE MAKE IT OUT. BUT GOD KNOWS I HAVE TRIED.

— ANNIE DILLARD



With these words, author Annie Dillard reminds us of the ennobling power of deep and patient listening. Although we might not always understand one another completely, the process of sitting down and hearing our neighbors, without judgement or defensiveness, is the key to unlocking our common humanity and to crafting solutions for the common good.

At Habitat, we believe that alleviating the local affordable housing crisis is not just about building houses—it is about creating entire

communities, strengthening neighborhood bonds, and forming a more inclusive and equitable society where every family can build a brighter future for their children.

This better future begins with listening.

Each realm of our new strategic plan—building, rebuilding, and housing system development—aims to uplift our neighbors by first hearing them—what they want, what support they need and, most importantly, what they are willing to do to make their dreams a reality.

At Southwood, because community members like Rose (featured on the facing page) have generously given their time to share their values and develop a vision, we are on the cusp of designing a master plan and rezoning package that reflects the community's hopes and dreams, rather than our own assumptions. Because neighbors like Amanda (page 4) have been willing to speak their truth, we are optimistic that a broad movement will emerge from a grassroots level to align policy, funding and programming. By listening to our neighbors, we can ensure that every member of our community can find their desired pathway to simple, decent, affordable housing.

Thank you so much for all of your support this year. Together we can make Charlottesville a city of true housing opportunity for all.

In partnership,
Dan Rosensweig

Vision for 2022

KEY ELEMENTS OF HABITAT'S FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN



Listen to our neighbors to understand their strengths, needs, and aspirations



Construct new affordable homes in mixed-income communities



Preserve homeownership by repairing aging homes and neighborhoods



Work with partners across sectors to create new pathways to better housing



Empower Southwood residents to design and redevelop their new community



Advocate for policy, funding, and programming that support all our neighbors



Help build a greater Charlottesville where everyone can find a decent place to live



BUILDING



REBUILDING



HOUSING SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Guiding Southwood's Progress

"Listen. That's the best thing you can do," says Rose, a Southwood community member, during a recent visit by urban planning students from UVA's School of Architecture.

"Rose showed us the importance of having dialogue in the design process—and you can see the outcome is really solid," says Jay Hyter, who came with his classmates to learn more about resident-driven planning at Southwood. "She delved into details about why they've made certain decisions and she made the process accessible to us."

Rose is a member of the Community Guides, a sub-committee of the Southwood resident planning team which interacts with visitors who come to learn about the intensive redevelopment process—and the listening, learning, and commitment that it entails. The guides have presented to an array of audiences, from UVA students to state elected officials, and they are diplomats within their 1,500-member community. The guides communicate progress to their

neighbors and bring back feedback from the neighborhood at large.

"We're excited to be where we are now," Rose explains, describing the first draft of a master plan of the new Southwood community that will be the basis for rezoning next year. "We started with a blank piece of poster board and now we have a map showing what we've been working on. To actually see a road, and to know where development is going to begin—that's really exciting."

As physical planning progresses, residents are staying focused on what is most important to them—ensuring all their neighbors can remain in Southwood so the community can retain its close-knit spirit. This means going door to door, listening to their neighbors, answering questions, and inviting new members to join in the planning process.

"Everyone in Southwood has a specific need for their housing," says Rose. "We have the opportunity for Habitat to listen to us and for us to design what we really need. It's great."



WE STARTED WITH A BLANK PIECE OF POSTERBOARD AND NOW WE HAVE A MAP SHOWING WHAT WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON.



Urban planning students from the University of Virginia School of Architecture listen to Southwood residents about the community-driven redevelopment process.





Listening to Our Neighbors to Find New Housing Solutions



The windows of Amanda’s* apartment are painted shut, preventing air from circulating. Her 8-year-old daughter’s room smells of mildew and paint bubbles off the walls. The pipes in her building burst three times last winter and the family had no water for days at a time. But this apartment in Charlottesville’s Starr Hill neighborhood is all Amanda can afford.

Though she works full time, Amanda’s housing prospects are limited. Due to a combination of identity theft and medical and financial crises, she cannot pass most standard landlord credit checks. Her only option is to seek housing from small, often predatory, landlords who take advantage of vulnerable citizens.

“I feel trapped. I don’t want to complain or get legal help because I can’t lose

my housing,” Amanda confesses. She is not alone. Too many Charlottesville families are similarly trapped within the confines of housing poverty—with no path forward.

At Habitat, we know that Amanda—who works hard and is devoted to her daughter—has the potential to someday become a homeowner. Until then, our community must band together to support her and help her find other options before the hazards of substandard, unhealthy housing take a lasting toll.

As part of our strategic plan, Habitat has set out to listen to hundreds of community members like Amanda who are in search of better housing. Before jumping to conclusions about what is needed, we want to better understand their hopes, strengths, and needs. These

in-depth conversations will help us understand the breadth of the solutions necessary to create new ladders of opportunity toward lasting housing security.

But we cannot do this alone. That’s why Habitat is connecting with partners from all sectors—housing, government, healthcare, real estate, social services, foundations, and more.† Together, we are gaining new insight into our community and seeking holistic solutions to creating not just better housing, but across-the-board opportunity.

Your partnership is critical to ensuring that Amanda, her daughter, and so many other families have the opportunities they need to thrive—in their homes and throughout their lives.

**Name has been changed to protect privacy*

† To read a special report from our September 2017 strategic planning breakfast, please visit: www.cvillehabitat.org/planningbreakfastreport

Help Build the Future of Our Community

PARTNER WITH HABITAT TO BUILD HOMES AND CREATE COMMUNITIES ALL YEAR LONG



Monthly giving is a simple way to provide steady support to Habitat families. Here are a few ways that your gifts add up to build new, affordable homes throughout the year.



TO EASILY MAKE YOUR SECURE MONTHLY DONATION ONLINE, PLEASE VISIT CVILLEHABITAT.ORG

Please contact Ruth Stone, Chief Advancement Officer, to learn more about investing in Habitat for Humanity's work at rstone@cvillehabitat.org or 434-293-9066. *Thank you for your partnership!*



HABITAT HERO

Taylor Thompson, a first year student at UVA, always admired the Habitat house his mom helped build while she was in college in Texas. “The same family has been in that house for generations,” Taylor says. “I could see how one act can change so many people’s lives.”



I LIKE THAT I CAN PUT IN MY HEART AND SOUL AND CHANGE PEOPLE’S LIVES BECAUSE OF HABITAT.



So when his mom passed away from breast cancer in 2014, Taylor raised \$85,000 and spent 16 Saturdays working to build a house just two blocks from the one his mom had worked on so many years ago.

“She always wanted me to make a difference,” remembers Taylor. “I felt like this was an amazing way to honor her memory. Habitat is just not the key to a new home. Habitat is the key to a homebuyer’s future.”

Taylor feels strongly that each Saturday he spent working on the house in Texas was a rewarding experience. He likes that Habitat allows people from different walks of life to learn from each other.

“I was able to work side by side with a homeowner and really listen to her story. I think I was able to help rebuild some of her confidence. But she also taught me about what it means to be courageous and a good parent. The relationships that you can develop through Habitat are amazing.”

Since coming to UVA, Taylor has already joined the Habitat family here in Charlottesville. Every Friday, he works on the Habitat construction site on Charlton Avenue.

“I like that I can put in my heart and soul and change people’s lives because of Habitat. I’m excited to continue to learn from people that are equally passionate about safe and affordable housing.”



Rake-a-Thon Breaks Records and Brings Communities Together

Tears rolled down Christian Johnson’s face as an auditorium of 500 friends sang her “Happy Birthday.” Christian, a Habitat homebuyer and mother of two, was the star of a new video about the hard work that goes into purchasing a Habitat home. The video premiered on Saturday, November 18th at the kickoff event of the 2017 Rake-a-Thon, Habitat’s signature volunteering event.

For five years, the Rake-a-Thon has brought community members together to rake leaves, collect donations, and raise awareness for Habitat’s work. This year’s event was bigger than ever. Over the course of a week, this record-breaking campaign saw more than 650 volunteers join forces to rake 120 lawns and raise more than \$45,000 to support Habitat’s work.

Just as importantly, the dedicated volunteers helped raise awareness of the need for more affordable housing options in the Charlottesville community. Through volunteering, fundraising, and sponsorships, hundreds of students, families, businesses, churches and civic groups came together to support their neighbors in need of better housing.

“Our goal was to increase the University population’s awareness

of the struggle for affordable housing happening right here in our neighborhood,” says Jess Chandrasekhar, Fundraising Chair for Habitat UVA, a student group that coordinates fundraising and volunteering efforts for Habitat at the university. “We saw so much philanthropy from the University and Charlottesville community and the event exceeded our expectations. I think that volunteers came to understand the importance of what Habitat does.”

Jess and her fellow Habitat UVA members (including Taylor, featured on page 6) worked for months to coordinate this successful campaign, including securing a \$20,000 matching grant from State Farm. UVA was one of only two schools in the nation to achieve this award.

Rake-a-Thon proceeds will benefit Harmony Ridge, Habitat’s newest mixed-income community. Located off 5th Street Extended, the neighborhood will include ten Habitat homes that will be purchased by hardworking families who have gone through the same rigorous program as Christian.

“That’s what hard work does, it pays off,” declares Christian in the new video. “I’m proud to say that this is my house.”

Couldn’t make it to the Rake-a-Thon? You can watch and share our special new video on Habitat’s homepage: www.cvillehabitat.org



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**EQUAL HOUSING
OPPORTUNITY**

Blueprint

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What will you build?

LEARN MORE AT CVILLEHABITAT.ORG



VOLUNTEER

Help build the future of affordable housing in Charlottesville, side by side with your friends and neighbors.



ADVOCATE

Voice your support for programs and policies that support better housing for everyone in our community.



DONATE

Invest in Habitat's innovative work so that more families can achieve the dream of homeownership.