



HabiChat

News from Pensacola Habitat for Humanity

CELEBRATING

35 years

1982 - 2017

By Charlotte Crane

Pensacola Habitat for Humanity built its first four homes in the 1980s, tallied a 300-total by 2001 and counted 800-plus by 2010 year-end.

But today – on the verge of celebrating its 35th anniversary -- the new-home builder is so much more.

And that's not just because its total homes built – just under 1,300 to date – represent a 50%-plus increase in the past five years. Nor because the 2016 total of 45 new homes ranked fifth-highest in production among Habitat International's 1,400 U.S. affiliates.

There's more.

Today's Pensacola Habitat is aiding in disaster recovery, currently helping the town of Century rebuild from a tornado.

It's revitalizing neighborhoods with home repairs and community beautification, in addition to new-home building.

It's helping area residents establish neighborhood associations, each to coalesce and identify their community.

New affiliations, new local sibling organizations and substantial national grant funding in the past five years have helped create today's bigger, busier Pensacola Habitat for Humanity, says Tim Evans, its executive director since 2011.

In those recent years:

First, there was the \$24-million grant – Pensacola Habitat's largest-ever funding amount – money from Housing and Urban Development's stabilization grant program, awarded by Habitat International in fiscal 2010 and providing locally for record construction of 373 houses over three years.

There then came the affiliation with NeighborWorks America, a 35-year-old national program which provides research, expert sources and story ideas to some 240 regional organizations to help promote community development and affordable housing.

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Finding the Unity in the Community

The new year is upon us once again, and it brings with it many things that are familiar (new desk or wall calendars and resolutions that will be broken before long) and some things that are if not wholly unfamiliar, certainly not what we've been accustomed to and most likely not what might have been expected. Maybe it's a good thing every now and then to be nudged, maybe jolted out of our comfortable complacency.

Of course I am referring to our national political scene. I have no desire to comment here on the many arguments on both sides of the spectrum forecasting either rough seas ahead or smooth sailing to a generally prosperous future. There are numerous media outlets that have been and will continue to provide all of that stimulation anyone may be desiring. However there seems to be a heightened level of division currently felt within the population, certainly amplified by the aforementioned media outlets, that presents in this new year an opportunity for an organization such as Pensacola Habitat that has the audacity to proclaim as part of our mission, to build community.

It's said all politics is local, then how much more true is it that all work in building community is local, as well? And it is in that that the strength is found. Since building community here means working with neighbors, even if they may be neighbors we don't yet know.

There once was a teacher who told a scandalous story of what it means to be a neighbor to one another. As the parable reveals in its conclusion being a neighbor has less to do with proximity and more to do with compassion. In responding to the teacher's question about who from the story met the criteria of neighbor, the wise student replied that the one who showed mercy – who acted on his sense of compassion – that one was the neighbor.

Scholars who study world religions tend to agree that at the core of most if not all major faiths, as well as humanistic philosophies, is an emphasis on cultivating and exercising compassion.

If the individual residents, the businesses and institutions of this area are the bricks and blocks needed to build community, then compassion is the mortar. Simply stacking the bricks and blocks may produce some temporary structure, but without mortar to bind one block to another the structure is not going to be resilient to those forces, without or within, intentional or accidental, that present a risk to the structure's integrity.

With the amplified sense of separation currently headlining the national discussion, it is just the time locally to focus on the unity which may be found in community – and in cultivating the compassion that makes us neighbors. Pensacola Habitat has worked for a generation, bringing together many of the faith communities in the area, as well as many of the other building blocks of this community. We commit to amplify these efforts in this new year, as we seek to be true to our mission.

Pensacola Habitat for Humanity puts God's love into action, bringing people together to build homes, community and hope.

Timothy H. Evans, *Executive Director*



▲ In 1996, Pensacola was the host site for Habitat for Humanity International's 50,000th house. The following day, the Home Shopping Network held a live broadcast of a 24 hour blitz build of one home.

▼ In 1994, Pensacola Habitat set a Habitat world record constructing a home in 5 hours, 57 minutes, and 13 seconds.



In each of the past two years, Pensacola Habitat has organized a Community Summit, broadening Habitat awareness – with reciprocity. At Summit meetings local agency representatives shared information about affordable housing, the plight of the homeless, shifts in housing funding, community development and economic growth.

The meetings, says Evans, “raised a sensitivity within the broader community about community needs.” A third Community Summit will be held in June 2017.

Plans for new projects are also under way for this 36th Habitat year. Among them: development of a small campus of rental property for people with developmental disabilities, and, where possible, matching the purchase of new-home sites to locations where individual families want to live.

“But the biggest plan we have for 2017,” says Evans, “is to share with the community who we are now” – a Habitat that’s more.

“Habitat means kids with smiles on their faces and elderly people who happily sit on the front porch of repainted homes in Cantonment”, says Josh Womack, who for the past five years has been chairman of the Cantonment Improvement Committee, a community program which he’s recently partnered with Habitat’s Revitalization Program. He’s now a Habitat Board member and works too on the Century tornado recovery project.

“The bigger and better Habitat”, says chairman Skip Vogelsang, means “we can improve quality of life by putting a new roof on a house, rather than building a new house, or by fixing the sidewalk. We’re discussing partnerships with other nonprofits, to do housing for people with disabilities, or who need assisted living.”

Today’s Habitat is more than just building houses, says Vogelsang – more than the agency that for 35 years has been building shelter and nurturing families, providing each with a new home that at much-reduced monthly mortgage cost will be theirs in 25 years.

Says Evans, “A great legacy got us to this point, but we are doing so much more than what we used to do.”

Celebrating 35 Years continued...

Next, came the launch of Pensacola Habitat's local sibling program, the Northwest Florida Community Housing Development Corp. – “Cho-Do” in Habitat dialect – which gives Habitat builders broader opportunity to meet community needs, significantly disaster recovery and also rental housing.

And now there’s also Neighborhood Revitalization, a program within Pensacola Habitat to help neighborhoods become friendlier, prettier, safer and more organized – what most neighbors want. Habitat initially is working with three communities: Brownsville, Cantonment and Pensacola’s Westside Garden District, the latter an area between Cervantes and Garden, A Street and Pace Boulevard.

“Those new programs and increased funds provided significant local benefits in the past five years”, says board member Betty Salter, one of Pensacola Habitat’s founders and its volunteer executive director for 21 years, from 1990 to 2011.

Joining NeighborWorks brought training and funds, Salter notes. The Neighborhood Stabilization Program not only enabled construction of those 373 grant-funded homes, but in the process, says Salter, “provided hundreds of jobs for subcontractors at a time when the housing market was very slow.” And thanks to Habitat’s new local disaster recovery program and the partnering with Escambia County, Escambia Housing Finance Authority, World Renew and BRACE, Habitat expects to build 15 to 20 houses in Century for victims of recent violent storms.

Another plus, notes Salter: Better funding also has made it possible for the agency to obtain new office and warehouse space in a large, conveniently located building with plenty of parking and space for growth.

Among new events are the Community Summits.



Volunteer Spotlight - Creative Cabinetworks

The ReStore often has the unique occasion of going into homes before their demolition date and salvaging gently used materials such as ceiling fans, windows, cabinets, and doors. When these opportunities arise, the ReStore calls on a group of committed volunteers to go in and make the extractions. The ReStore sells the salvaged items at deeply discounted prices and allocates 100% of the earnings toward building affordable homes for those in our community.

One group that has partnered with us lately in this capacity is the team from Creative Cabinetworks (pictured left). The team, led by brothers Joshua and Matthew Ebersol,

specializes in custom built residential cabinets and offers a compelling alternative to the cheap, imported box cabinets you might find at your local home improvement center.

The team signed on to the volunteer salvage crew with years of building experience and knowledge of cabinet installation, but with no experience in extraction. Nonetheless, on their first salvage job this past summer, the Creative Cabinetwork team exceeded the ReStore's goals by bringing in more items than expected. In addition to their work with the salvage crew, they have led the ReStore to connect with others in our area who have donated much needed storage space.

When asked to express his motivation for volunteering with Pensacola Habitat, Joshua has this inspiring answer: "There is only so much time in this short life to join God in what he is doing in this world. I don't want to miss out on that incredible opportunity."

The cabinet shop is located within a small Mennonite community in West Pensacola. The community establishes disciplines that are intended to keep their lives simple and free from the corruption found in the world around them so they can better follow Jesus. In doing this, members of the community strive to selflessly set their own needs aside and reach out to meet the needs of those around them. Joshua states, "It's amazing the encounters we have had with Christ when we get down in the dirt and serve our neighbors."

It is that generous attitude and their willingness to join in and get their hands dirty that has greatly impacted the work we do at the ReStore. Thank you Creative Cabinetworks for your service to Pensacola Habitat and to our community!

Journey to Malawi with Habitat

Mumderanji has two children, 8-year old Jeffrey and 11-year old Modestar. She lost her husband in 2011. Mumderanji is also taking care of her four younger siblings, following the death of her mother. She used to live in a small, dilapidated house and could not maintain it as she was often sick and therefore unable to earn income. She explains: "It was raining heavily that night. We woke up and stood in the corner of the house when we heard a loud bang. One of the corners of the house fell in. We ran outside and in a few minutes, the whole house collapsed. We lost everything."



Journey to Malawi with Habitat continued...

Luckily, following the collapse of her home, Mumderanji was able to partner with Habitat for Humanity Malawi's Orphans and Vulnerable Children's Project to receive a decent, affordable place to live and raise her children. Mumderanji says, "The new house comes at a time we need it most. We thank Habitat from the bottom of our hearts."

In a country where over 15% of children are orphaned before they turn 18, Habitat's work is playing an important role in providing housing and security for children. This August, Pensacola Habitat for Humanity will partner with Habitat Malawi to support homebuilding efforts for these vulnerable families. A team of 12 local residents will travel to Salima, Malawi where most homes have a thatched roof and dirt floor. During the trip the team will work to build an adobe brick or cinderblock home for a family in need. On their off day, participants will visit the Kungorni Cultural Center to visit a game reserve and participate in traditional dances.

This will be PHFH's seventh Global Village trip since 2012 and spaces are still available to join this once in a lifetime opportunity to serve. The team will depart Pensacola on August 3rd and spend August 5th-12th with Habitat Malawi, returning to Pensacola on August 14th. The cost of the trip is \$1,700 per person (which includes all meals, lodging, local transportation, guides and translators, and trip medical insurance). Airfare to and from Lilongwe International Airport in Malawi (estimated \$2,400) is not included. Online fundraising opportunities are available through PHFH and small scholarships may be available to those who qualify. For more information, please contact Melanie Jacobi, Director of Volunteer Services at (850) 434-5456x140 or mjacobi@pensacolahabitat.org.



▲ ▼ Join us for Pensacola Habitat's seventh Global Village trip to build with Habitat Malawi in support vulnerable families living in Salima, Malawi.



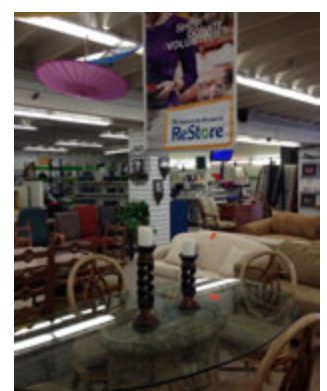
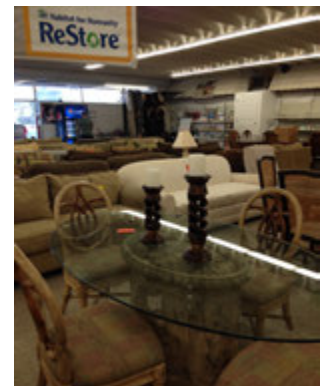
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Interfaith Initiative Begins Discussions for Advocacy, Understanding, and Service



Nearly fifty leaders and members from diverse faiths gathered at Temple Beth-El on Tuesday, January 24 to begin discussion and make plans for an interfaith initiative that will provide a voice for advocacy as well as direct service to help those in need.

“At a time when it seems divisions between countries and cultures are becoming more profoundly defined, tolerance and acceptance of each other more frequently questioned, and conflict and fear more worryingly heightened, we are reaching out to join together as an expression of unity,” noted Hailey Braden Lynch, Associate Pastor for First Presbyterian, Pensacola and one of the founding members of the interfaith initiative. “This local interfaith initiative is developing to provide our community with opportunities to come together and foster greater understanding and acceptance as well as take action to serve our community in clear and powerful ways.”



Pastor Hailey was joined in leadership by Pastor Carl Reeves of Greater Mount Lily Missionary Baptist Church, Rabbi Joel

Fleekop, Temple Beth-el and Dave Donaldson from the Baha’I Community. Twelve faith communities were represented at the event, which began a dialogue and plan for action to solidify and grow the movement.

For more information about the interfaith initiative, contact Hailey Braden Lynch, Associate Pastor, First Presbyterian Church Pensacola at (850)488-9619.

Celebrating Ms. Brooks’ New Home, Rain or Shine

We had a wonderful time at the Publix Build Home Dedication honoring our new homeowner, Vanessa Brooks (pictured right with Publix Managers)!

It was pouring rain Saturday morning as guests gathered inside to be a part of the blessing of the new home (pictured bottom right). Ms. Brooks walked in with many family members and friends by her side, who joined several dozen volunteers, donors, and Publix employees. Everyone was filled with joy as Minister Whitehurst graciously opened up in prayer, which led into a beautiful hymn by Veronica Rosa.

During the presentation of the gifts, each of our volunteers added a special touch to their message, whether it was a simple hug or encouragement for Ms. Brooks to continue to put God’s love into action. Publix Supermarkets and Publix Supermarket Charities went above and beyond their sponsorship of the new home. Publix’s Store Manager, Patrick Lascell, talked about how excited they were to be partner with Habitat to build the home and to be able to give back to the Pensacola community.

The Publix team brought a beautiful arrangement of flowers, refreshments and a delicious cake. Vanessa Brooks was so excited to celebrate her home dedication surrounded by friends, family, and the countless other volunteers, donors, and Publix employees. The rain cleared and the sun shone through as everyone left Ms. Brooks new home that day.



Neighborhood Revitalization



As Pensacola Habitat for Humanity celebrates 35 impactful years throughout 2017, our Neighborhood Revitalization Program is only now celebrating its 5th birthday. Although youthful in comparison, Neighborhood Revitalization has grown in leaps and bounds since it first came to Pensacola Habitat.

And while Neighborhood Revitalization joins many in looking back and celebrating our rich history, it also looks forward at what's to come.

We look forward to five, to thirty-five, more years of helping communities, neighborhoods, and most importantly – the people that make them what they are.

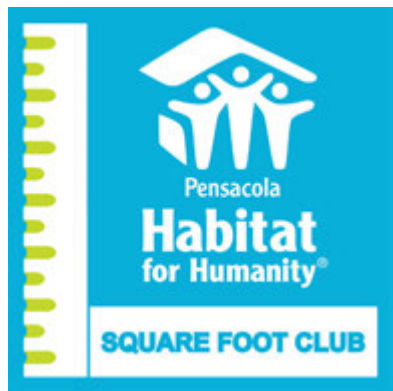
As we move forward, Neighborhood Revitalization strives to offer more low-income homeowners access to the affordable repair services they need to stay in their homes, so they can continue to live comfortably and

▲ A College of Coastal Georgia student working on NR's "Green Up Brownsville" project in early 2016.

safely in a house that they already own. We look forward to expanding the number of handicap ramps we build, so that our disabled neighbors, friends, and family members can live a less confining life. We look forward to painting more homes, cleaning more yards, and beautifying more properties, so that the folks can be proud of where they live and work. We look forward to continuing to work with community groups and neighborhood associations so that they can organize and advocate on behalf of the needs and desires of their respective communities.

As we look forward, we hope our successes will be as bountiful as our aspirations. We hope to empower more people to get involved with their communities and grow into leaders; to help neighborhoods not only develop, but achieve mutually-shared visions. We hope to create opportunities for economic development and advancement, and we hope to, in some way, improve the quality of life for everyone we serve.

Here's to another 35 great years.



Commit to more sustaining contributions to Pensacola Habitat for Humanity and become a member of the Pensacola Habitat for Humanity Square Foot Club!

Donors pledging recurring or multiple (four or more times per year) donations to Pensacola Habitat for Humanity are welcomed into our Square Foot Club! Square Foot Club members will receive unique benefits like car decals, exclusive ReStore coupons and exclusive invitations to special events.

Pledge your support for helping to create homes, community, and hope.

Sign me up for the Square Foot Club!

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Address _____ City, State _____ Zip _____

- I pledge \$ _____ per month/quarter (circle one)
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We are currently recruiting food trucks and sponsors for the Second Annual Pensacola Hot Wheels Food Truck Festival at Plaza de Luna!

Food trucks featuring a variety of cooking styles and flavors will come together in Downtown Pensacola. This free event will feature an eclectic mix of food, beverages, and live music.

Pensacola Hot Wheels Food Truck Festival is a charity event to benefit Pensacola Habitat for Humanity.

pensacolahotwheels.org



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