



Hearts & Homes

WELCOME HOME!



Building Hope



“Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night...” So begins the postman’s motto, but it could also easily apply to Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake, where we hammer nails, hang drywall, finish floors and, most importantly, welcome new homeowners in every kind of weather. We do it because we *have* to. Because neighbors have looked out on vacant and decaying homes for too long. Because we must put the gifts we have gratefully received to use efficiently and effectively. And because our partner families have worked long and hard to make their dream a reality and cannot afford to wait any longer. They have spent hundreds of hours building their own home and others, while making significant sacrifices like moving in with relatives and increasing debt payments to ensure that they are in the strongest financial position possible when they become homeowners. Weather matters little when each passing day delays the realization of a dream for a hardworking family.

This was no more true than at our winter home dedication in December, when we welcomed three families amid howling winds and rain. Among the new families were Tamiaka, a resident of Gilmore Homes public housing who chose to remain in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood with her daughter because it is home, full of friends and family. *(continued on page 4)*



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LETTER FROM THE CEO

“We build homes, communities and hope.” I say these words at least once a day as I try to explain what Habitat Chesapeake does - usually to someone I hope can help! The first word is easy to grasp. We build homes and nearly everyone I come in contact with knows it. With such a tangible image in mind, it's easy to talk about our building process, how we engage volunteers and homeowners in projects, and how great the need is for in-kind and financial support. From there, I can explain the impact of those homes for a family: safety, stability and a chance to build a legacy for future generations.

Building communities is slightly more nuanced, as the picture differs in every place we build. Some communities have a wealth of engaged anchor institutions and stakeholders and simply need Habitat Chesapeake to bring more families and be a voice calling for additional investments. Other communities need many more resources - relationship-building with residents and other stakeholders; support for projects that improve safety, like better lighting and speedbumps; collaboration on streetscaping and green spaces where we can offer expertise, helping hands and materials; and a presence at meetings about schools, recreation centers and other assets that make a community vibrant.

And then there's hope. The most ephemeral part of our mission, which can mean so much, in so many different ways, to so many different people. As you'll read in the cover story, we build hope for families - extending a dream that they doubted they could ever achieve. We also build hope for the communities around these homeowners - some of which have waited decades to see investment, watching as vacant homes decayed seemingly past the point of no return. Perhaps most importantly, we build hope for the future. Children of homeowners have a much greater likelihood of finishing high school and going on to college. And all children benefit from living in a diverse community full of families and visible investment.

This concept hit home for me last year in Woodbourne-McCabe when I looked at the back of a house we had recently deconstructed. Over the fence just next door stood a swingset and trampoline. I could only imagine what it would mean to the children living there to have healthy homes and neighbors next door instead of empty, unsafe buildings.

The ensuing transformation, seen below, over the course of nine months, gave me faith that they, and many generations to come will be better off for the homes, communities and hope we are building. Together.

With gratitude,

Mike Posko
Chief Executive Officer



🏠 WITH FAITH & LOVE

Habitat for Humanity is rooted in faith and some of our most valued partners are local churches, mosques, synagogues and interfaith alliances that regularly volunteer, raise funds and spread the word far and wide about our work. Earlier this year, we had the opportunity to celebrate some of our most dedicated faith partners at House Blessing ceremonies featuring songs, hymns and scripture readings from both Habitat staff and clergy.

First, in late January, Habitat Chesapeake celebrated the special partnership between Woodbourne-McCabe homeowner Tanicka, the Episcopal Coalition and the North Baltimore Presbyterians (formerly known as Uptown Metro). These groups gave more than \$60,000 to build Tanicka's home and congregants spent hundreds of hours working alongside her as she completed her "sweat equity" hours! Additionally, both coalitions have been engaged in neighborhood revitalization activities that strengthen the community, including greening vacant lots, maintaining the local community garden and, in North Baltimore Presbyterians' case, sponsoring a free youth summer camp. Tanicka quietly wiped tears away as clergy members expressed their happiness for her and read Bible passages and other texts. One of the most heartfelt came from Reverend David Ware of Church of the Redeemer, who wrote an original poem that included the lines, "You are coming home, making the right turns, giving up on detours, letting go of blind alleys, looking out for sorrow, slowing down for happiness. You are coming home, opening up a new day that belongs to you."

Just a few weeks later, in February, we gathered with the Anne Arundel Faith Coalition and Ellicott City-based Glenmar United Methodist Church to welcome Valerie and her two grandchildren to their new home in Severn. Contributing more than \$10,000 to this home and more than \$1 million over the lifetime of our partnerships, faith leaders and congregants worked diligently to prepare Valerie's home in just a few short months, blessing this happy family beyond measure. Valerie's cup raneth over as she addressed the guests and shared her dreams for family BBQ's in the back yard, relaxing in her new living room with her grandchildren, folding laundry in her basement and, after a series of unavoidable moves, unpacking their belongings for good!

These were the first of many House Blessings that Habitat Chesapeake will host to honor our faith partners and the special bonds they build working alongside homeowners. We are very thankful for their generous support - the perfect example of what Habitat calls "faith in action", helping to build a better future with words, resources and deeds!



This page: clockwise from top: Tanicka and son, second from right, pose with Reverend Jen DiFrancesco of Govans Presbyterian Church (far left), Reverend David Ware of Church of the Redeemer (second from left) and Reverend David Willerup of Havenwood Presbyterian Church; Tanicka and her family on her new porch; Valerie with Habitat Site Supervisor Ian Bukowski, who led volunteers at her home; Valerie's grandkids, who are looking forward to having their own bedrooms and a backyard to play in!

Opposite: Before and after pictures of a home in Woodbourne-McCabe and the backyard of the house next door - whose children will surely be better off living next to a stable home and family.



Building Hope

(cont'd from cover) Tamioka was joined by James, also a current Sandtown resident who had spent the past year going above and beyond in sweat equity, hauling trash at clean-ups organized by the Johns Hopkins Student Habitat Club and meeting with legislators as part of a national advocacy conference, Habitat on the Hill. Finally, we celebrated LaTasha, the mother of an elementary schooler and middle schooler who had worked and waited patiently for nearly four years to move into her new house in Woodbourne-McCabe.

Despite the weather, as Councilman Leon Pinkett of Baltimore City's 7th District put it, "no amount of rain could dampen the spirit and joy of today!" The crowd was treated to soulful performances by The New Baltimore Twilighters Marching Band, as well as noted local singer Paula Huggins, who belted out "I'll Be Home for Christmas" as families wiped tears from their eyes. Mayor Catherine Pugh and Councilman Pinkett gave heartfelt speeches about Habitat for Humanity's impact on Sandtown, where more than 315 Habitat families live. The Mayor also presented a citation to Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake, recognizing its impact on families and communities across the city. After the bibles, keys and wreaths were distributed, guests were treated to a lunch of roast chicken prepared by Scipio Catering, whose owner, Selena Scipio, has been a Sandtown Habitat homeowner for more than 10 years. "This is all I've ever wanted, to serve at a home dedication!" she said tearfully. I never would have been able to open this business if I hadn't become a Habitat homeowner."

Just three short months later, on a sunny, yet still cold and blustery spring day, Habitat staff and supporters gathered to welcome five more families. The happy faces included Tanicka, a new Woodbourne-McCabe resident and mother of a young son; Angela and Shamia, a mother and daughter team moving to Mt. Winans; Rickell, a young human resources manager, also moving to Mt. Winans; Valerie, who would be living in Severn with her two young grandchildren; and Andre, who was formerly homeless and now, after much hard work, would be joining the Sandtown community alongside more than 315 other Habitat homeowners. As the winds whipped through the tent, Councilman Pinkett, once again in attendance, joked that "When Habitat's having an event, weather doesn't matter. It's about the joy and excitement of welcoming new homeowners!"

There was definitely much joy and excitement to be had! After eloquent remarks from public officials and local clergy (see sidebar for a few highlights), Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford took the stage to talk about homeownership's ability to strengthen families and communities alike. When the new homeowners themselves spoke, they thanked Habitat staff, donors, volunteers and community members who had rallied around them. While their backgrounds and journeys to homeownership were unique, every family radiated happiness and relief at the prospect of starting a new life, in a new home.

For Angela, moving to Mt. Winans with her daughter and grandson, and Valerie, moving to Severn with her two young grandchildren, their homes meant stability and good times with family. Said Angela, "We got paint on our clothes, paint in our

VOICES OF HOPE



"There's a Bible passage that says we should glory in tribulations because tribulations worketh patience, patience worketh perseverance and perseverance worketh hope. All of these partners came together to make sure that their hope in being a homeowner and part of a vibrant community would not be a shameful or frustrating hope, but a hope fulfilled."

-Councilman Leon Pinkett



"While houses are being torn down and boarded up, there is a place that is building up. So God, we thank you for Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake, a place that says "we will help." Homelessness never helplessness for these families. Thank you for giving them help - and hope."

-Pastor Melvin Lee



"Homeownership, as cliché as it sounds, is the American dream. When you are low-to-moderate income, it can seem hopeless and very far out of reach. It definitely seemed out of reach for me. I want to thank Habitat for making the dream attainable for me."

-Rickell Sheppard, Homeowner

hair, but it was worth it. Homeownership means your own front door, grandkids coming over, playing in the backyard." Valerie agreed, saying "I have a lot of joy in my heart – too much to tell. I thank God that me and my grandchildren have a home!" Tanicka, who felt the benefits of Habitat as a child when her mother became a Habitat homeowner and moved from a violent neighborhood to a more stable one, thanked her "Habitat family for everything." Rickell reflected on homeownership as a long-held dream that only Habitat could help her achieve. Perhaps none were more emotional than Andre, though, who overcame homelessness and drug addiction to become a recovery counselor with local substance abuse treatment center Tuerk House. "My journey was a messy ride, but I stand here today blessed beyond measure. Thank you to Habitat, the HabiCorps crew who worked on my house and to all the people who donated their time and money. Thank you, God, for this community. I'm a homeowner, y'all!"

Even as hundreds gathered to celebrate and cut the ribbon on Andre's new home, our construction staff and volunteers remained hard at work on other houses just a few streets away. Because they *had* to. There are 10 more families currently enrolled in the Habitat Chesapeake program, working hard to finish their "sweat equity" hours and achieve their own homecoming. Dozens more apply every day. And so we build on. Because when the need for decent, affordable homes and stronger, more vibrant communities is this great, nothing else matters. We cannot waste a moment.

Above, left to right: Tanicka with flowers at her dedication in March; Tanicka with her pre-rehab Woodbourne-McCabe home in December 2017 and below, her home today; James' pre-rehab home in Sandtown; James doing sweat equity hours; his completed home and at his dedication in December; Andre and his home in Sandtown in March.

Cover, top row, left to right: Tamiaka and her daughter in Sandtown; Tanicka hugs Habitat staff at settlement; Families cut the ceremonial ribbon at a March dedication; Valerie with Homeowner Services Coordinator Kyle Tilghman at her homeowner education graduation; Andre filled with emotion. **Bottom row, left to right:** LaTasha and Director of Homeowner Services Lauren Hughes; Shamia and son with Kyle at graduation; Rickell receives her keys at settlement; Lauren and James at settlement.

TOOLS TO BUILD



Above: An APEX team poses in Woodbourne-McCabe in May 2018 as part of their annual Week of Service. This year, the group will also volunteer with other home-building experts at our Home is the Key Build in April.

The journey of building a Habitat home begins with a single hammer and nail. When you're building 25+ houses each year with 6,000+ nails in each, the costs begin to add up! Fortunately, Habitat Chesapeake has generous corporate sponsors like Apex Tool Group (ATG), who donate dozens of hammers, nails, saws, drills, and more each year in-kind. ATG also supplies volunteers as part of their annual Week of Service in May and has given more than \$25,000 to support operating costs like building materials and construction staff salaries. The partnership comes naturally says Cindy Sachse, Senior Director of Human Resources. "ATG is committed to building today's communities, building tomorrow's skills and rebuilding in times of need. The passion our associates show during our community build events is displayed in our #ATGCares tagline. We are proud to partner with Habitat for Humanity to help make our vital communities even stronger."

This year, APEX will also sponsor our annual *Home is the Key Build*, which brings together a wide range of contractors, manufacturers, realtors and mortgage lenders to do what they do best - build dream homes! *Home is the Key* is a national Habitat for Humanity campaign that runs every April to raise awareness of the need for affordable homeownership options and the impact that homeownership can have on a family. Thank you, Apex, for supporting this vital cause and consistently putting your tools and talents to good use!

POWERING ON!



A lot goes into preparing a family for homeownership and one of the most important steps is budgeting. When a family applies to our program, we carefully review their budget to ensure that they can afford a Habitat mortgage alongside other current living expenses. Mortgage and homeowner's insurance must equal no more than 30% of their income to ensure that they are not overburdened with housing costs. Once accepted, we monitor homeowners' finances on a monthly basis and continue honing their budget to ensure they are on track to build a strong financial foundation as a new homeowner.

One expense that's critical to budget for is utilities. Fortunately, thanks to a three-year, \$225,000 grant from Baltimore Gas & Electric and parent company Constellation, all of our homes are built with a wide range of energy-saving features that keep families' bills as low as possible! Among the components included in every home are energy-efficient windows, doors and appliances, Energy Star HVAC systems, direct exterior ventilation and lots of airsealing and insulation inside walls to retain heat in winter and keep cool in summer.

We're happy to report that this grant was recently renewed, ensuring that at least 60 more homes over the next three years will be Energy Star 3.0 certified! The news comes just as we are bidding farewell to long-time board member and BGE Vice President of Regulatory Policy & Strategy, Mark Case (center, top photo). He led many BGE volunteer efforts like the ones pictured and was a tireless and dedicated board member for over 10 years. Thank you, Mark, for your service and BGE/Constellation, for your continued partnership!

THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Now in its third year, our workforce development program, HabiCorps, provides 10.5 months of intensive, hands-on training in all aspects of construction. While many job training programs have sprung up over the past few years, HabiCorps is unique in that it is longer than most and offers much-needed pay and benefits thanks to funding from AmeriCorps and lead sponsor Aerotek. Additionally, the program offers case management support, job placement assistance, and - perhaps most importantly - the opportunity to learn while doing meaningful work, building homes for families in need and transforming communities that need investment.

HabiCorps can be life-changing for trainees like LeShawn (right) who grew up in West Baltimore's Sandtown neighborhood - a tight-knit community filled with generations of families and hundreds of Habitat homeowners. Unfortunately, the neighborhood also struggles with criminal activity that many young people get caught up in. At age 16, with a 1-year-old daughter at home, LeShawn was involved in an attempted crime and sentenced to 20 years in prison.

He spent the next twelve years reflecting on his actions and taking every class the prison offered in an attempt to prepare for life after incarceration. When LeShawn was granted parole in 2018, he immediately got to work rebuilding. While in prison, he reconnected with a childhood friend who he then married and they had a baby, joining his now 13-year-old daughter. He quickly got a job at Home Depot, and began spending his nights at Project JumpStart, a 14-week construction trades training program. Project JumpStart is able to place approximately 75% of their graduates in jobs immediately, but the remainder need more time to address life challenges and LeShawn was one of many that were referred to HabiCorps.

"HabiCorps was like a family from the beginning," says LeShawn. "People are pushing you in the right direction." One of the most important people, he says, is his HabiCorps Instructor Leroy "EZ" Smith, who he knew growing up in Sandtown. "He's like a brother in that he'll sit and listen and try to help me work through things. At the same time, he teaches us how to do things the right way, not just to get them done." The respect is mutual, says EZ. "I knew him from when he was this high," he says, motioning to his knee. "Like a lot of young men, he got in some trouble, but he's back now on the right path, doing what he needs to do. One of the things I respect the most about him is that he's a family man."

It's not always easy, says LeShawn, noting that many people told him he would be back in prison soon. Fortunately, his family and HabiCorps give him strength. "I feel like I'm breaking the cycle and I can see myself staying in construction long-term. It keeps you thinking outside the box and I had to do a lot of that in prison - looking beyond the present." Like many trainees, he appreciates the sense of accomplishment that comes with the work and the meaning behind it - preparing a home for a family in need. "It overwhelms me to think how this will affect someone. When I frame a wall or install a floor, I know that a family is going to live there. It makes me happy to do good things for others. My mother always said when you give someone something, you get a blessing back."

We are grateful to LeShawn and all of our HabiCorps crew members for their teamwork and shared purpose, building homes and hope!



"When I frame a wall or install a floor, I know a family is going to live there. My mother always said, when you give someone something, you get a blessing back."

-LeShawn, HabiCorps Trainee



Top: LeShawn at the HabiCorps Kick-Off in November 2018. **Bottom:** LeShawn, far left, with his teammates (left to right) David, Instructor Leroy "EZ" Smith, John and Dorian. HabiCorps trainees work in two teams of five to ensure that everyone receives adequate guidance and instructors emphasize the importance of teamwork. EZ's motto is "One Band, One Sound," meaning everyone cooperates, collaborates and works in harmony to produce the best quality work and end product!



A NEW HOME FOR “THE STORE THAT BUILDS HOMES”



It's official: Habitat Chesapeake's Columbia ReStore is open for business again! Just before 9 a.m. on Saturday, March 30, more than 100 shoppers anxiously lined the parking lot of the new location, which is in the same building at 8909 McGaw Ct., Columbia, MD 21046, just around the corner from the old one. They all had just one thing on their mind: great deals for a great cause!

Upon entering the spacious 15,000+ square-foot sales floor - newly refurbished thanks to architect James Lloyd, contractor Harkins Builders, paint donor and expert Sherwin Williams and dedicated volunteers from Aerotek, Blueprint Robotics and other local companies - shoppers were instantly presented with steals and deals galore on furniture, appliances, lighting, flooring and housewares. It didn't take long for the check-out line to grow, sometimes even wrapping around the store! Outside, Habitat Chesapeake staff fired up the grill with hamburgers and hotdogs and the sense of fellowship that every Habitat event brings. There was not a moment when customers weren't chatting with each other, ReStore staff members making small talk while loading new purchases into vehicles, or onlookers complementing someone on their great new find.

On March 30 alone, shoppers spent more than \$26,000 – an amount that it would usually take two weeks' worth of business to generate! All profits go directly to Habitat Chesapeake's mission to build decent, affordable homes for families in need, so it's no wonder ReStore has been nicknamed “the store that builds homes.” Three cheers for the Columbia ReStore's successful grand reopening and a big THANK YOU to all of the shoppers, donors and volunteers who made it happen!

We Need You!

BUILD OR BUST



Help us make the most of the good weather coming! Make a gift online at habitatchesapeake.org/donate to supply much-needed funds for drywall, doors, windows, flooring and more!

SPRING INTO ACTION



ReStores rely on dedicated volunteers to pick up and process donations and assist customers. Contact 410-297-5226 or volunteers@habitatchesapeake.org to schedule a shift at a store today!

LEAVE A LEGACY



Where there's a will, there's a way to build homes, communities and hope! Contact Chief Advancement Officer, Gregg Mitchell at 410-366-1250 to explore legacy giving options.

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