



Keeping our volunteers, friends, supporters, and families informed

## Your gifts made a difference

### 'If we hadn't found Habitat, we would have no hope of ever owning our own home'

BY JEAN KRAUSE  
FAMILY SELECTION COMMITTEE

**J**amal Howard, Katrina Alexander and their four children will soon be the proud owners of a newly built Habitat home! This grateful family is currently working to help build their home alongside many devoted volunteers in Tryon, N. C.

"If we hadn't found Habitat, we would have no hope of ever owning our own home." After failing to qualify for a traditional loan and an unsuccessful attempt to purchase a



Your gifts, time, and money are helping Katrina build her home..

mobile home, this family thought they were out of options and would have to remain in their unfortunate situation. Jamal and Katrina's family are living in a rented apartment, much too small for a family of six. The three bedrooms have drafty windows, moldy window sills and there is no safe place for the children to play outside. In addition, there have been bedbug infestations in their building. "We had to throw away all of the furniture in our master bedroom that backed up to the neighbor who had the bedbugs. Right now, we are sleeping on the living room floor. All of these things have put a lot of stress on our family."

(Continued on page 2)

### Growing up in a habitat home leads to education success

BY JOHN GLOVER  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBER

**"M**y home is my heart, it is where I live, where I've raised my family and it is where I will stay."

Christina and her family have become another Habitat transformation success. Their story began in 2002 after qualifying to purchase a 3 bedroom, 2 bath home. She was then blessed by your generous donations, your volunteer time and your labor to help build that home.

Prior to the U-turn in their lives, Christina and her children were living in a 23-year-old, two-bedroom trailer without many opportunities for something better.

"Where we used to live, the young people are using alcohol and drugs. If we were still there, my kids would probably be doing the same." It

was also that way when I grew up and many of my childhood friends are now gone." Christina's desire to lift her children out of the hardships she knew as a child brought her to Habitat and into a safe home and neighborhood. "Now everything is better for them and they know right from wrong. There are positive influences here and my kids have a future. You don't see that on the street where we came from."



"My kids have a future because of our Habitat home.."

(Continued on page 3)

# Simple Rules

Hard-working families have hope because of your generosity



Ron Laughter

It is spring again and the female field crickets face a universal romantic dilemma: when to stop searching and settle down with a mate. There are pros and cons to both committing and continuing to play the field.

From a female cricket’s perspective, looking for “Mr. Right” costs time and energy, and if the search extends too long, it increases the risk that she will pass up her best option. But if she stops the search too early, she might settle for a lesser partner, when a little more patience might have resulted in a superior love match.

Female crickets benefit from mating with the faster-singing males, so in order to prove his virility, the male cricket woos the ladies by chirping as rapidly as he can. If the female chooses well, she may experience enhanced fertility and perhaps even an extended lifespan. In order to study how females search and settle on a mate, biologists constructed an environment bathed in dim red light for the males and females to meet and a video camera was set up to record the action.

The corners of the pen were fitted with speakers, and in front of each speaker, a male cricket was secured with string. Its wings were fixed so it

**FROM  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
RON LAUGHTER**

was unable to produce a chirping sound. A female cricket was then released into the center of the square pen as the speakers behind the males blared out pre-recorded cricket chirps set to various frequencies.

It turns out that female crickets favored chirp rates above three chirps per second. In her decision to stop her search and choose a mate, female crickets followed a simple rule: If a chirp rate exceeds three chirps per second, then choose that mate. The researchers also found that female crickets used another simple rule: Lower your standards if you have not come across an attractive male in a while. If a female cricket went 24 hours without hearing a fast chirp rate, she would settle for a less virile singer.

Habitat, too, has some *simple rules* about what is required to become a future homeowner in our program. Qualified applicants 1) must be currently living in substandard, inadequate, or unsafe housing, 2) they must have the ability to pay for a Habitat house, and 3) they must be willing to

partner with Habitat by providing at least

400 hours of sweat equity toward the construction of their home.

But unlike female crickets, we cannot lower our standards if a family does not meet the test. As a result, sometimes there are families waiting in line for us to begin construction of their home because there are more approved families than our construction crews can handle. Other times, we are unable to qualify enough families to support our construction schedule, and the number of homes we build is reduced.

Each year, we have more than 150 families expressing interest in our program. However, most are not able to stand up to our rigorous review and requirements.

**For this reason, you can be absolutely certain that every family who is approved by Habitat’s Board of Directors is deserving of the wonderful benefit that you have bestowed on them and will be an excellent addition to the Habitat family of homeowners.**

## Your donations to Thermal Belt Habitat are hard at work in Tryon, NC

(Continued from page 1)

“Now that we’ve been approved, we can’t wait to be homeowners” says Katrina. **“We’ve been wishing for this for years! Our rent has been \$613.00 a month which is more than our mortgage will be on our new Habitat home.”** While working full-time jobs and saving money each month, Jamal and Katrina are also helping to build their house with sweat equity.

“Our kids are so excited! When we move in, our little girl would like to plant flowers and maybe even a garden to grow vegetables. Our sons are looking forward to the privacy a home provides and possibly getting a dog!” “The security of knowing that it will be ours is really comforting for our family and the kids can be happy knowing that we won’t have to move again. We appreciate everyone who is helping us to achieve our dreams. Thank you!”

This family’s hope of homeownership has become a reality because of you! Your choice to contribute your time and finances helps build better lives, stronger families and communities. All charitable donations to Habitat remain in your particular county so you can always be assured that these are your neighbors and your community that benefit from your generosity and kindness.



**PHOTO CREDITS**

**Richard DeSimone, John Lily, Angie Hunter, John Lilley, Mel Ailiff**

# 'It's really all about the families'

BY GLENN RICHARDSON  
BOARD CHAIR

**W**ho do we – as members of our community, as part of the human family, as supporters of a non-profit organization working to create a world where everyone has a decent place to live – consider to be the neighbors who Christ so clearly instructed us to love as we love ourselves?

The answer is literally all around us, and to love those neighbors is to serve those neighbors. To strengthen ties, to offer a hand up, to build.

Each year, Habitat volunteers do just that in our community, and the ripple effects of that generosity and hard work help more families achieve the strength, stability and self-reliance they need to build better lives.

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with a Habitat volunteer to hear what motivates her to help her neighbors.

"My story isn't that interesting" says Jane DeMartini. "Most of our 'regular' volunteers have retired from successful careers. This is not the case with me. But it's really all about the families."

"I got involved with Habitat after my husband, Tom, became a construction volunteer. I'm not handy, but I do like working with numbers so the Family Selection Committee was ideal for me. It involves budgeting and numbers and getting to meet with the families." The committee also provides tools and financial advice to help improve their lives over the long term.

Seeing how decent housing affects every part of life inspires Jane DeMartini to volunteer at Habitat



When asked why she volunteers, Jane says that she believes "everyone should have a decent place to live" and she's witnessed how living conditions impact every part of life. **"I've seen children get better in school as a result of the Habitat program and communities improve as the family unit becomes more successful."**

In addition "Volunteering on the Family Selection Committee has really helped to open my eyes. **We conduct home visits to assess current living conditions and I've seen some really horrible situations. I remember one family of four paying \$800 a month for a broken down trailer with holes in it, surrounded by sewage. Until you've seen something like this, you can't imagine what these families are going through.**

**Then you get to watch these families turn their lives around by moving into a Habitat home and it brings you so much joy!"**

I recall as a board member, approving this family of four mentioned above. I recall their living conditions and how much it touched all of our hearts to have been able to help them fulfill their American Dream. Jane and so many others who have made the decision to become Habitat volunteers are doing the selfless and valuable work of serving their neighbors. By following their hearts, and using their skills, Habitat will continue to impact our community by building homes and improving lives.

If you would like to become a valued volunteer and work alongside folks like Jane, contact Mel Ailiff at 828-694-0340.

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## Growing up in a Habitat home...

*(Continued from page 1)*

With much joy, Christina shares her pride in ownership. "I never thought that I would be a homeowner. Now, we are one of the first members of my family to own a home! I take really good care of it and I worked hard for it. When you build your own home, you take pride in it." Christina refers to the 400 hours of sweat equity labor all Habitat homeowners are required to put in.

In addition to helping build her own home, another goal Christina has attained is learning how to manage her money. "I've learned how to set up a budget every week for all of my bills. Prior to owning a home, I didn't have a

clue. When I get paid every two weeks, I take out what I can and put that into savings. I let my savings build and I don't touch it because I don't know when I might have fix something.

"I've told my sons that 'one day this house will belong to you.' They know how important it is to keep it up, clean and nice. I've told them that you couldn't ask for anything better and I've tried to provide that for them, to give them better than what I came from."

One way to see the positive outcome of families living in safe, affordable homes and communities is by looking at the children. "I'm really proud of my kids and I can say that I'm raising them in a good environment.

**My oldest son is a straight 'A' student! He is going on to college to become a journalist. I can't wait to say that he's graduated from high school because he'll be the first in our family for a long time to actually walk across the stage and get a diploma! Not a GED."**

Christina is now recently married to Jose who works for Todd Anderson Landscaping. Together they are happily raising their family in their Habitat home and feeling thankful. "We appreciate every opportunity we've been given and are very grateful. We work hard and don't take anything for granted. We are very happy and can't wait to see what comes next!"

# Your Home Preservation donations improved lives

BY RICH DESIMONE  
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**“Truly Fantastic”**

That’s how Pastor Branton Burleson describes his experience with the new Home Preservation Program at Habitat.

The Burleson family of six, have lived in their 1,400- square- foot home for nine years in a well maintained neighborhood on the north side of Hendersonville. As the family has grown, and with Pastor Branton assuming an additional role as a Professor at Fruitland Bible College, it has become harder to keep up with home maintenance. Jobs such as deck repair, storm door replacement, and work on stucco and gutters are challenging and can be expensive.

It quickly became clear that hiring a local contractor was beyond the Burleson’s family budget. So they turned to Habitat. The work needed on the house fit nicely with the aim of Habitat’s Home Preservation Program.

In discussing the proposed work with the family, the program supervisor, Jon Lilley, found the deck in "terrible shape", with rotting railings, unsafe stairs which were too steep, too narrow and not up to code. For safety reasons, they decided on a complete teardown followed by a properly designed and constructed replacement deck.

New front and rear storm doors



would also be installed, for winterization and appearance. In November of 2017, after meeting the property and family eligibility requirements, the work on the Burleson’s home began.

A large elevated deck is a formidable project, but work proceeded nicely in spite of the coldest winter weather in years which limited the number of days the crew could work. The homeowners were pleased that the dedicated crew showed up to work on "any reasonable day." Supervisor Jon notes that the family was extremely appreciative of all the work done by Habitat volunteers and even the building inspector complimented the quality of the workmanship.



The Burleson family appreciates your support.

Thanks to your support of this new program and your considerate donations, the Burleson's deck went from a rarely used, unsafe place that was "just out there," to a valuable new space for the whole family to enjoy. A newly acquired barbecue grill is just waiting to be fired up as soon as the weather gets warm, and the kids are looking forward to playing on the new deck with their beloved pet Jake.

Projects like this are just waiting to be tackled all around Henderson County! We continue to appreciate your thoughtful financial gifts and your faith in Habitat and in programs like the Home Preservation Program. Your loyalty allows us to continue to expand our reach in your community; helping more and more of your neighbors like the Burleson family. To make a contribution to this program, please write "Home Preservation" on your donation.

**Your donations are needed now to buy these things for a family!**

**\$120 — paint for a child’s bedroom.**

**\$240 — living room window.**

**\$600 — a Whirlpool refrigerator**

**\$1,200 — a washer & dryer.**

**Habitat is building 12 new homes this year for families who need your help! Your donations buy materials to build homes and those homes are the foundation of healthy communities!**