

Habitat Happenings



Habitat
for Humanity®
South Central Minnesota

A newsletter for friends of Habitat for Humanity of South Central Minnesota

FALL / WINTER 2018

EXCITING CHANGES AT HABITAT

If you've stopped into the Habitat office as of late, you probably haven't recognized a few of the people you've encountered. Since May 2018, the organization has welcomed four new staff members to what has become a "Team of Ten." Bruce Bjork, Ed.D. became the new Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of South Central Minnesota in mid-June bringing 25 years of non-profit experience to the Habitat team. Since his arrival, there is a new level of cohesiveness and energy that has emerged from the integration of newly hired members into the existing staff.

Other new staff members include Darolyn Juberien as the Finance and Administration Manager; Dawn Barrett as the Resource Development Manager; Ashley Comstock as the ReStore Cashier; and Taylor Schmeling as the Program Support Specialist. These staff join Jan Ellanson, Community Engagement Manager; Ben Schmillen, Construction Manager; Jeff Devons, ReStore Manager; Shawn Warner, Assistant ReStore Manager; and Diane Harms, Customer Service Associate.



Front left to right: Diane Harms, Ashley Comstock, Taylor Schmeling, Ben Schmillen. Back row left to right: Bruce Bjork, Jan Ellanson, Shawn Warner, Darolyn Juberien, Dawn Barrett, Jeff Devons.

Please feel free to stop by the office at any time to introduce yourself, meet the staff, and take a tour. We'd love to meet you!

Letter from the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I've been the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of South Central Minnesota for less than three months, and if I've learned anything during my short tenure here, it is that there is so much that I don't know. I expected a pretty steep learning curve when I started this job, but I was confident that my twenty-five years of management experience in the nonprofit sector would allow me to hit the ground running, and that what I didn't know would be just a small part of my transition into this position.



But I was wrong. I don't know much about mortgage finance. I'm a novice when it comes to fair housing and fair lending regulations, and I didn't anticipate how little I really know about the history and ministry of Habitat for Humanity International, the founder of the movement I have become a part of here.

There is a lot that I don't know, but I know that what I do know is much more important. I know how important the work we do really is, and what a profound difference we can make in the community when we work together. I know that we provide an opportunity for our partner families that most of them would never have if it weren't for what we do. I know that lives are transformed, neighborhoods are strengthened, relationships are formed, and real community becomes possible in remarkable ways. I know that affordable housing is a challenge in every community we serve, and I know that Habitat for Humanity is an important part of the solution. We may not be able to fix it all, but our contribution is truly vital.

But most importantly, I know that the work we do together pleases God. I know that what we do is faithful ministry and a powerful expression of our shared commitment as disciples of Jesus Christ. Habitat for Humanity has its roots in rural Georgia, begun as a way for people of faith to address poverty housing, seek true justice for all, and challenge the oppressive, systemic racism that prevented African Americans from sharing the same dreams that we all have for ourselves and our children. I know that even though our mission is to provide decent, affordable housing to those who lack access to the financial resources that makes homeownership possible, our ministry together is to show the world what is possible when we truly care about one another. Our ministry is to bear witness to a God in whom all things are possible.

And finally, I know that Habitat for Humanity of South Central Minnesota will do its best work when we all feel connected to it, when we all believe that what we have to offer will really make a difference, and that whatever we accomplish, if we do it faithfully, is enough – for now.

Following Christ by serving others,
Bruce Bjork, Executive Director
Habitat for Humanity of South Central Minnesota



STACY MCKINLEY FAMILY

Having grown up on a farm outside of Gaylord, Stacy loves the idea of buying her Habitat home in the small town of Nicollet. She has been renting in Nicollet for the last five years, so has come to know the community well. Stacy appreciates the sense of community that small town living offers. It's comforting for her to know that her three young boys—Avery (7), Elliot (5), and Ryan (3)—know everyone on their block and are safe. Her current neighbor—Heather Hoffmann—is also going to be her future neighbor when both families move into their side-by-side Habitat houses in Nicollet. Stacy became intrigued with the possibility of becoming a Habitat homeowner when she learned from Heather that Habitat was looking for families for the two Habitat homes that were going to be built in Nicollet. Upon completing the paperwork and undergoing a rigorous selection process, she was delighted to learn that her family had been chosen. "It was a pleasant experience working with Habitat. Everyone knows who I am, and it's great to work with people who care!" She is looking forward to putting in her sweat equity hours, and said that "everyone needs to work for everything in life, and 200 sweat equity hours and a little bit of paperwork is well worth it when I get to move into my very own home." She is most appreciative of the opportunity that Habitat has offered her.

HEIDI HAGEN AND ANDREW FORCIER FAMILY



Heidi, Andrew, and their three children—Mercedes (18), Hunter (15), and Jackson (9)—had been renting in LeSueur for 10 years when their pastor encouraged them to apply for a LeSueur home that had been reacquired by Habitat and

needed some repairs. They had known about Habitat since Heidi's sister had purchased a Habitat home years ago. Figuring that the worst that could happen would be a Habitat denial, they started the application process in September 2017. They got the "best news ever" nine months later from Habitat's Community Engagement Manager, Jan Ellanson, that they had been accepted. They were thrilled! Heidi and Andrew immediately started to put in their 400 hours of sweat equity making the needed repairs on the house. Heidi said... "we are bringing character and life back to the house. The pride of home ownership has already kicked in." She added, "the waiting process was the hardest, but now we will be able to invest in our future through home ownership. Above all, the kids will have their own rooms." Heidi will be able to continue as a licensed daycare provider out of their new home, and Andrew will continue his work with Le Sueur Incorporated.

They would like to give a shout out to Jan Ellanson (Habitat rock star), Byron Nordstrom (Habitat volunteer extraordinaire), and Arlys Graff (Habitat Family Selection Committee member). They are also grateful to the many family members and friends who have helped them along the way.

HEATHER AND CHRIS HOFFMAN

When I called to interview Heather for this article, she and her husband Chris were excitedly shopping for kitchen flooring and carpeting for their new Habitat home in Nicollet. Heather and Chris's four children - Emma (8), Zaine (4), Gwenyth (2), and Grady (1) - were accompanying them on this excursion.



Heather grew up in Arlington and moved to Nicollet in 2014. Chris is originally from St. Peter. She is a stay-at-home mom, and Chris works at Diamond Energy Systems as a pipe insulator. They found out about Habitat's search for families in need of affordable housing through a newspaper article given to her by their daycare provider. They decided to apply (as did their neighbor Stacy McKinley—who is also highlighted in this issue). Heather stated that "it was a long and exciting process that went really fast! The waiting was the hardest part." They are so grateful that they were supported by Habitat's staff member—Jan Ellanson—throughout the process. When Jan called to tell Heather that they had been selected, Heather admitted, "I cried." We were so happy to know that we were finally going to have a home of our own." The family likes living in a small town. "We know all the teachers in the school and all of our neighbors, it really feels like family here."

The most exciting part about the entire process was helping out with the construction. Heather and Chris are required to put in a total of 400 hours of sweat equity. "It is really exciting to see all of the people who have come together to assist my family in building our house. We are so grateful. Thank you Habitat!"



205 Falcon, Eagle Lake



712 Elwood, Nicollet



708 Elwood, Nicollet



732 Wall, North Mankato



2116 Nelson, St Peter



909 Wencel, New Prague

For those of you who may not be as familiar with the Habitat for Humanity's ReStore, we sell new and slightly used building materials, appliances, hardware, and just about anything you need for your home improvement projects. In turn, we take the profits from these sales and give them to our parent organization—Habitat for Humanity of South Central Minnesota—to use to build more homes. Presently, the ReStore makes enough revenue to build one Habitat home per year plus a little extra. Our short-term goal is to generate enough revenue to build two Habitat homes per year and then expand from there.

The ReStore has been in its new location for just over a year and a half, and already many new and exciting changes have occurred. Since our opening in December of 2016, we have expanded the types of merchandise that we sell, we've filled our shelves to capacity, we've built new racking to hold more stuff, and we've hired more staff to help your shopping experience be the best it can be. The ReStore has

updated its point of sale system using Apple i-Pads for ease of use, better record keeping, and expandability.

A little known fact about the ReStore is that we divert tons of building supplies and other materials that would otherwise go to the landfill. Sometimes items are beyond their life cycle. With those items, we recycle what we can getting these items to the recycling facility. In fiscal year 2018, the ReStore diverted 238.75 tons of products and made \$5,630 in recycling revenue.

We would like to thank all of the donors, customers, and especially the volunteers who have made the ReStore a phenomenal success! Without the support of a community like ours, we wouldn't be where we are today. Even with Bassett Drive currently being under construction, our donors, customers and volunteers are finding a way to get here to support the ReStore.

Volunteer Spotlight



DICK BEEBLER *ReStore Volunteer*

Dick Beebler grew up on a farm near Wells, MN, which taught him vital lessons on how to wring as much life out of items as one possibly can. Maybe that's why volunteering at the ReStore suits him so well!

Dick started volunteering at the ReStore in November of 2016 after getting bored upon retiring from farming in 2010. He came by the ReStore to donate some things and happened to inquire if they needed some help. "When can you start?" was the response that he received. He's been putting in 15 to 25 hours a week ever since. Upon his two-year anniversary with the ReStore, Dick will have donated the equivalent number of hours of that of a full-time position!

Working on donated lights and other electrical items has become Dick's specialty. When asked where he acquired that skill, he assuredly said that it came from his life in farming. . . "where you learn to do everything." But mostly, Dick says his satisfaction comes from helping people and also from the camaraderie that exists among ReStore staff and volunteers. "They are all just great!" Dick's enthusiasm for his volunteer work makes him a wonderful ambassador for the ReStore both on and off the job.

When he's not volunteering with the ReStore, you can find him spending time at the lake with his wife—who also lives by the reduce, reuse, recycle, and repurpose philosophy in her role as the manager of a thrift store in Wells. Together they have three daughters and eight grandchildren.

OWEN VIKER *Construction Volunteer*

Owen Viker became familiar with Habitat for Humanity of South Central Minnesota while working at Appraisal Services of Mankato, a firm who had donated some of their services to Habitat. He started volunteering with Habitat about



two years after his retirement upon hearing that it was a good place to volunteer. Until then, Owen's carpentry skills were limited to woodworking projects that he had taken up as a hobby. Even though Owen was never a carpenter by trade, Habitat welcomed him onto the construction site. "The construction staff made me feel welcome. They showed me what needed to be done and taught me how to do it. They were very supportive and provided coaching along the way. They never asked me to do anything that I was uncomfortable doing. I definitely enjoyed the camaraderie of the team."

Since he started volunteering with Habitat, he has had the opportunity to frame a house, put up rafters, install siding, hang dry wall, put in a ceramic floor, and complete trim work. "It's quite rewarding, especially because you can see immediate results from your work." Owen typically puts in about 12 hours per week. He's worked on eight different Habitat houses, some of them alongside the homeowner. Owen finds it inspiring and encouraging to work next to homeowners. "The experience makes it undeniable that the homeowners are striving to make a better life for their kids."

When asked what else he liked about volunteering as a crew member, he responded by saying. . . "It keeps me from having to work out at the gym!" Owen loves to travel, and he and his wife winter in Arizona.

NATIONAL WOMEN BUILD WEEK

Habitat for Humanity South Central Minnesota and Lowe's hosted its annual National Women Build Week in May 2018. This co-sponsored event brought together dozens of women volunteers and Habitat homeowners to help construct one of the two houses being built in Nicollet. National Women Build Week encourages women nationwide to devote at least one day to help



build decent and affordable housing in our local communities. "We know women working together are an unstoppable force for creating meaningful change in our communities," said Colleen B. Penhall, Lowe's vice president of corporate social responsibility. "At Lowe's, we believe that a safe, stable home is an important source of strength, pride and security for families."

CARE-A-VANNERS

This summer Habitat for Humanity had the privilege of working with two separate groups of RV Care-A-Vanners who traveled to Mankato to volunteer their time to build Habitat homes. The RV Care-A-



Vanners program is coordinated through the Habitat for Humanity national headquarters in Americus, GA. It matches volunteers who travel in recreational vehicles with local Habitat affiliates in need of volunteer support.

This summer, our affiliate hosted a total of 10 Care-A-Vanners from Florida, Missouri, Arizona, Colorado and South Dakota. These volunteers donated more than 750 hours of work building homes... oftentimes, alongside the new homeowner. Care-A-Vanners stay for two weeks and pay their own expenses to travel to these organized Habitat building projects. While here, the Care-A-Vanners camped at the Sawmill Campgrounds and worked on five separate Habitat houses at different stages of construction. One experienced Care-A-Vanner couple from Florida who volunteered with us this summer has worked on a total of 600 Habitat houses across the United States since launching this lifestyle upon their retirement. What started as recreation has resulted in relationships and homes being built across the country! We are enormously grateful for all of the Care-A-Vanners and their dedication of time, labor and love!

25 SPONSORS, 68 GOLFERS

...and one rainy Friday

Thanks to 25 sponsors and 68 die-hard golfers our 16th Annual Golf Tournament was a whopping success (despite the rain that soaked us the first half of the afternoon!) We'd like to recognize and share our appreciation with those sponsors who contributed \$500 or more to the success of this event. *They include:*



Center Point Energy
(Title Sponsor)

Pub 500 (Lunch Sponsor)

Builders FirstSource
(Birdie Sponsor)

Evenson Concrete Systems
(Birdie Sponsor)

Best Life, LLC

Community Bank

Cram Concrete

Farrish Johnson Law Office
ISG Architecture & Engineering

Jetter Clean, Inc.

Lindsay Windows

Old National Bank

Southern MN Construction

Tailwind Group

United Prairie Insurance

WPS Properties

Meet & Greet OPEN HOUSE

Habitat is holding a Meet & Greet Open House on Thursday, September 27th from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. Come meet our staff, chat over appetizers, network with others, tour our offices, and shop at the ReStore! Come on over to 1730 Bassett Drive... ***we'd love to meet you!***

UPCOMING ANNUAL MEETING



Please join Habitat for Humanity of South Central Minnesota for our 29th Annual Meeting on Monday, October 22nd from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. at the Blue Earth County Library located at 100 E. Main Street, Mankato. Come learn more about Habitat's accomplishments and meet the people who make this great organization work. A light meal will be provided.



**Habitat
for Humanity®**

South Central Minnesota

1730 Bassett Drive
Mankato, MN 56001

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Mankato, MN 56001
Permit No. 701



OUR VISION:

A world where everyone has a decent place to live.

OUR MISSION:

Habitat for Humanity of South Central Minnesota is a non-profit, Christian housing ministry dedicated to building decent and affordable housing for families in need.

507-388-2081 • www.habitatscmn.org

This year, Habitat for Humanity is trying something different than its usual *“Evening of Elegance Holiday Dinner.”* Like other nonprofits across the country who are trying to shake up their fundraising efforts, Habitat has also decided to join in the fun! Rather than diverting staff energy and organizational funds towards hosting a formal holiday dinner, we’ve decided instead to host a quirky *“Stay at Home”* non-event fundraiser.

We know that people are extremely busy around the holidays; and, we want to respect that by giving them the opportunity to stay home, curl up on the couch, eat some popcorn, and watch their favorite holiday movie on tv! We hope that the money our supporters would normally spend on attending a formal gala—a trip to the stylist and nail salon, a new ensemble, a less than appealing meal, and the purchase of unnecessary silent auction



items—will instead be donated directly to Habitat. What a wonderful tax-deductible gift that would make at the end of the 2018 charitable year!

We also hope that our donors will appreciate that we’ve decided to concentrate our resources and efforts on building more decent and affordable housing, rather than diverting time, energy, and funds towards hosting a formal dinner. While the event is non-existent, all donations will be used to

directly fund the very *“real”* work we do in providing families-in-need with opportunities to realize their dream of home ownership.

**Look for more details to come
and the cheeky invitation you will receive to
“Stay at Home” on behalf of Habitat!**

ice

No ballrooms, no average food, no silent or live auctions, no new outfits to buy, and no need for a babysitter!