

Habitat Happenings



Habitat
for Humanity®
South Central Minnesota

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

FALL / WINTER 2019

Welcome to the Habitat Team Mike!



Habitat is thrilled to introduce to you our new Construction Manager, Mike Kroenke. Mike officially joined the team on July 22, 2019. He comes to us with a wealth of experience and knowledge that he acquired during his 43 years in the construction industry

Born and raised in St. Clair, Mike discovered his interest in carpentry and construction while taking two years of a building trades class in high school. He took the skills he learned in that class and went to work for a private contractor in Eagle Lake. After two years of honing his skills there, Mike started a partnership with two other builders to start Farm and City Construction where he worked for the next 26 years. After that, Mike went to work for a number of construction companies before starting his own construction company called Kroenke Construction. As the sole proprietor of that company, he focused primarily on residential construction. After tiring from the administrative aspects of running his own business, Mike started working for R. Henry Construction in 2016. Mike left R. Henry Construction to seek more personal satisfaction at Habitat helping people acquire homes.

Mike is excited about the new opportunities working with Habitat because the organization does great work, and he looks forward to working with volunteers who are donating their time for a cause. He's learning the ropes and is shadowing Habitat volunteer Terry Endresen—who has generously served as our interim Construction Manager since the beginning of May when the former Construction Manager resigned. They will be working on completing three houses that are currently under construction in Le Sueur and St. Peter. He's anxious to get the new homeowners into their homes by winter.

Mike is married to his wife—Bonnie—and they have five kids and five grandchildren between them. When he's not pounding nails he enjoys spending time with his grandchildren, gardening, hunting, fishing, and doing anything outdoors. We hope you get to meet him soon!



Connie Ireland

Letter from the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I hope everyone has had time to enjoy the Minnesota summer and has had fun with their family and friends. This has been a busy construction season with our three homes progressing daily. Our three families have been very busy working on the homes and volunteering in the ReStore and other community events. This is my first construction season with Habitat, and I truly enjoy getting to know the families and seeing the smiles on their faces. This will be a busy fall for them as we complete their new homes so they can soon be homeowners.

Words cannot express how rewarding it is to be part of this organization. The volunteers and their commitment to supporting our mission is overwhelming. The skills and talents these individuals bring to building our homes, working in the ReStore, helping with our fundraising events, and supporting our families speaks volumes to the great community we have in South Central Minnesota. We are very thankful and proud of all that they do. I want to acknowledge our Affiliate and Chapter board members and all that they do to support this organization. Their willingness to explore new ideas and opportunities for us to serve more families is admirable.

Speaking of volunteers, I need to thank Terry and Carol Endresen for their willingness to serve as our construction managers while filling our vacant construction manager position. Without them, we would have not been able to launch yet another, successful construction season. We will be ever so grateful to them for filling this void.

Please join us in welcoming Mike Kroenke as our new construction manager. We are so fortunate to have Mike on our team with his years of experience and knowledge in the construction industry. Zach Roberts who has been a member of our ReStore team is now a part of the administrative team as well. Zach will be leading our technology efforts. Zach's talents complement the team and will help us accomplish our future goals.

We are excited about exploring new opportunities to better serve individuals and families. The team will be working diligently over the next few months to develop new program opportunities to close the housing gap for workforce and affordable housing needs. Our region provides opportunities for Habitat to partner with other like-minded organizations. By developing these partnerships, we hope to better align

Director Letter continued on page 2.

Meet a Habitat Family



KARIN KOPISCHKE

The words strong, resilient, and perseverant come to mind in describing Karin—our new homeowner—who will be moving into her Habitat home in St. Peter this Fall. She

has lived in St. Peter all of her life and is ecstatic to finally become a homeowner there. Karin is no ordinary single mom of three. Her oldest child, Sabrina, who is now 17 years old, was born with Angelman syndrome, which severely affects her neurological system and has caused her to have development delays. When she was a little girl, Sabrina would experience 300-400 seizures a day. Since then, and with the appropriate medication, the seizures are now limited to 60-100 per day. Sabrina will attend school until she's 21 and receives in-home personal care assistance. In addition, her brothers Eli (16) and Tyler (9) provide all sorts of love and attention to their sister. Karin said both boys are very sweet and kind and want to help take care of their sister. The entire family is inspired by Sabrina's strength. Certainly, Karin's resiliency and perseverance is rooted deeply in seeing her daughter conquer the daily hardships she experiences as the result of her special needs.

The family currently lives in a two-bedroom house. The living room serves as Sabrina's bedroom and therapy space. Some years ago, Karin established a five-year plan for herself and her family that included: getting through Sabrina's many surgeries; completing her own college education; and then getting into her own home. She has stuck to that plan despite numerous setbacks. Karin graduated from South Central College with two degrees while working three part-time jobs. She needed to take the next two years off to attend to Sabrina's health and therapy. After that, she re-entered the workforce and finally applied to become a Habitat homeowner in May of 2018. Nearly a year later, Karin found out that she was accepted into Habitat's program. She was elated to learn that Habitat would make adjustments to the house to accommodate her daughter's need. Those accommodations included a larger bathroom, wider hallways, a wheelchair ramp, and a therapy room in the basement. The kitchen will also be bigger to make it more comfortable for the family to eat together.

Habitat is delighted to help this family get into a home of their own. One that will ease some of the challenges that this family has managed for much too long. We hope that you join us in wishing them the absolute best in this upcoming chapter of their lives!

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programs and braid our funding to impact more families.

In closing, the team wishes you all a wonderful fall and thanks you all for your continued support and generosity. None of this is possible without all of you, and we encourage you to consider volunteering and becoming part of the Habitat family.

Care-A-Vanners

What does a nurse, electrical engineer, teacher, pilot, and sales and marketing manager have in common? You guessed it!

They are all Care-A-Vanners who came to Habitat for Humanity of South Central Minnesota to construct homes with us this summer. We are so grateful that they did! Each has hung up the restraints of being employed and are now enjoying the freedom of retirement. Five individuals—Steve Kelley from Colorado; Chris and Doug Chartrand (who are full-time road warriors), and Janet and Mike Mangan from northern Indiana—jumped into their recreational vehicles (RVs) to travel to Minnesota to apply their skills and experience in building affordable housing for families in need.

Habitat was blessed to have these five Care-A-Vanners join our construction efforts for two weeks in late July/early August. This was the second year in a row that Steve Kelley has joined our efforts.



Left to Right: Steve Kelley, Doug Chartrand, Chris Chartrand, Janet Mangan and Mike Mangan

This was his seventh Care-A-Vanners project. After retiring from his sales and marketing position, for which he traveled extensively to South America, he and his wife moved from Milwaukee to Colorado. His Care-A-Vanning is sprinkled in with his regular twice-a-week volunteering with the Habitat for Humanity in Fort Collins—where his wife works as an accountant. Chris and Doug Chartrand have spent the last four-and-a-half years living in and traveling about in their RV. They are originally from Rochester, MN, where she worked as a nurse and Doug as an electrical engineer. They do three or four Care-A-Van projects a year, primarily in the middle of the country. This was their 14th project since they began their untethered and nomadic lifestyle. Their favorite part of Care-A-Vanning is meeting the homeowners and other people they meet along the way. They are heading to Medellin, Columbia this winter—as like last—to teach English and learn Spanish. For Janet and Mike Mangan—a retired teacher and pilot—this was their second Care-A-Vanners build. They typically escape northern Indiana in late September and head to James Island County Park in South Carolina to spend three to six months working in the park and attending RV rallies throughout the country. Mike has traveled the world as a military and then commercial pilot and now they are traveling throughout the country in their RV. They took a 59-day tour to Alaska in their RV and would like to return to explore the state even more.

We thank each of them for dedicating two weeks of their time to help us on our houses in St. Peter and Le Sueur!

Annual Meeting

It's time again for Habitat's Annual Meeting.

Please join us for our
30th Annual Meeting
on Monday, October 21st
from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.
at the Blue Earth County Library
located at 100 E. Main Street, Mankato
A light meal will be provided.

*Come learn more about Habitat's
accomplishments and plans for the future.*

*Meet the staff and Board
who make this great organization work!*

LISTENING & SHARING TOUR

Now that our Executive Director—Connie—has her feet firmly planted in the organization, it's time for us to venture out into the community and explore what



we can do to transform old relationships and develop new partnerships. After undergoing some significant organizational changes, Habitat is now in a position to be more deliberate in designing and building our future. As part of that design and build process, we want to take the current temperature of the communities we serve and establish new baselines from which we can develop and grow. Our goal is to better understand our communities' needs and figure out how we can best fill the gaps in providing affordable, workforce housing. With this in mind, Habitat is planning to launch a "Listening and Sharing Tour." In the next few months, we aim to set up meetings with members in our communities to start the conversation of redesigning ourselves into the best possible version of who we can be. Please feel free to let us know if you would like to participate in the tour, and we will be happy to schedule a time.

Home for the Holidays



OPEN HOUSE

Instead of hosting a "Stay at Home" non-event like last year over the holidays, this year Habitat would like to encourage you to come on over to our offices on **Thursday, December 5th from 4 – 6 p.m.** to mingle with the homeowners who are "Home for the Holidays" due to your support! Please pencil us in on your calendar before the season is in full swing.

We hope you'll be able to join us for wine, hors d'oeuvres, merriment, and gratitude!



Thank You to our steadfast donors who generously gave to Habitat during the first half of 2019

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A Salute to an Extremely GENEROUS COUPLE

Generosity noun

gen·er·os·i·ty | \ ,je-nə-'rā-sə-tē

Definition: The quality of being kind, understanding, and not selfish: the quality of being generous especially the willingness to give money and other valuable things to others.

An anonymous couple who recently pledged a piece of property to Habitat embodies this definition of generosity to a "T." In May of this year, they were so inspired by the presenters at the Hard Hat Breakfast that they gifted Habitat a piece of property in Nicollet. This is not the only time that this couple has shared their kindness with Habitat. A little more than a year ago, the couple donated two adjacent pieces of property to us on which we built two houses in 2018. Currently, 10 family members—a couple with four children, and a single mom with three—now call those houses home.

When asked what inspires them to give so generously to others, they responded by pointing out a passage from C.S. Lewis's book *Mere Christianity*, which states: "The New Testament says that everyone must work in order that he may have something to give to those in need. Charity—giving to the poor—is an essential part of Christian morality." They indicated that they have worked hard in their lives and have been successful. "We now feel it is our Christian duty to help others." That's what they like about Habitat. . . "people are willing to work for what they get. They may need a little help to get started and that's where Habitat comes into play."

As the beneficiary of their kindness, Habitat is immensely grateful for the unselfish spirit of their giving! Their compassion for our mission goes beyond heartwarming. Please help us in thanking them for their generosity.

A Scorching Success

Last year we experienced rain during the Golf Tournament, and this year we suffered through the sweltering heat and humidity of July 19th. However, nothing can stop our die-hard golfers from getting in some swings! Eighty eight (88) golfers joined us this year at North Links Golf Course to raise over \$15,000 for Habitat. We are so grateful for the sponsorships we received to "drive" this event to success.

They are as follows:

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Tailwind Group
U.S. Bank, N.A.
WPS Properties, LLC

\$100 Sponsors

Hatanpa State Farm Insurance Agency
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We'd also like to thank Pub 500 who donated a fabulous lunch for our golfers and The Free Press for assisting us in marketing the event. Lastly, our thanks also goes to the individual golfers for playing with us that day.



A special thanks goes out to our hardworking Golf Committee members:

Barry Hager	Warren Smith
Will Dallenbach	Adam Huiras
Brock Thaemlitz	Tom Gengler
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We couldn't have done it without them!



HARD HAT BREAKFAST IS A HIT!

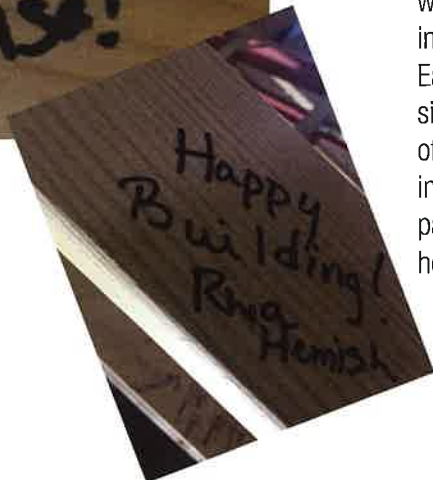
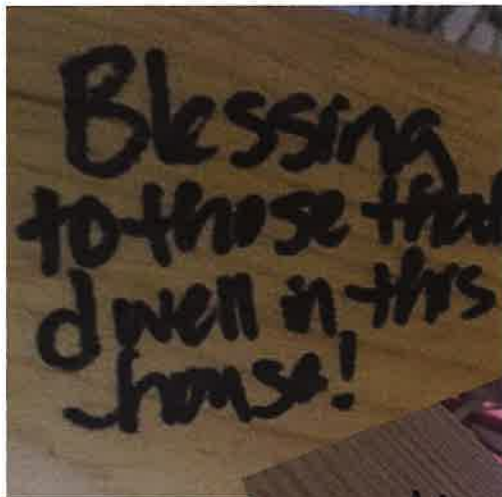
On May 21, 2019, Habitat launched its first-ever Hard Hat Breakfast at the Courtyard at Marriott. We were delighted that 160 attendees rolled out of bed early that morning to join us to hear about how Habitat impacts the lives of families in our community. Dr. Sheri Allen—the now-retired superintendent from the Mankato Area School District—delivered an impassioned keynote address about the notable effects that affordable and stable housing has on the health, well-being, and educational development of children. Abby Martin—a Habitat homeowner—drove that point home in her charming and heartfelt story of her family’s move into a Habitat home in St. Peter.



Habitat would like to thank the following sponsors who contributed to making the event a grand success:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. CenterPoint Energy | 11. HomeTown Bank | 21. Rotary Club of New Prague |
| 2. Minnesota Elevator, Inc. | 12. Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union | 22. Paragon Printing |
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In addition to the sponsors, more than half of the attendees donated to Habitat on the day of the event, and many of them were first-time donors. (Their names are integrated into the donor list on page four of this newsletter). All-in-all, between the sponsors and the individual donors, Habitat raised slightly more than \$27,000 from this event!!! Plus, one extremely generous donor pledged a piece of property to Habitat that day (see more about this pledge on page 5), which raises the total proceeds to over \$50,000. We feel blessed to have such wonderful supporters. **Thank you all so very much!**



Get on the Beam CAMPAIGN

Once again, under the skillful guidance of our dedicated volunteer—Sally Coomes—members of our community donated a whopping \$2,428 to our “Get on the Beam” campaign! Twenty-two area churches, schools and businesses participated in the campaign by displaying an eight-foot long 2 x 4 in their space. Individuals

were encouraged to make a donation in exchange for signing the 2 x 4. Each of the “autographed” 2 x 4s have since become part of the framework of the Habitat house being constructed in St. Peter. Thank you to all of the participants for surrounding our homeowner with your support!





DENNIS DOBIE

A Balanced Mix of Teacher, Musician and Construction Volunteer

Habitat for Humanity thanks Dennis Dobie for his commitment to 'paying it forward'. His volunteerism exemplifies dedication at its best. For the past ten years Dennis (Denny) Dobie has volunteered his summers using his

considerable experience, talent, time, and tools helping build homes for low-income families for Habitat for Humanity. Beginning in 2010 his summers have been filled assisting construction of dozens of homes for good people in the cities of Mankato, North Mankato, Eagle Lake, Nicollet, Le Sueur, St. Peter, and New Prague. "It's so exciting and rewarding to help people in need obtain quality home ownership."

Dennis credits his good work ethic to his farm upbringing. "There was always something that needed patching, repairing, or building on the farm." He began working for lumber companies and construction crews as a youngster in 1974. This continued through 1987. Dennis ran his own 'family and friend carpentry and painting' business beginning the summer of 1988 wrapping it up in 2009. "I still do an occasional project for people I know but Habitat for Humanity has made me feel welcome and kept my summers pretty busy!"

Dennis earned three teaching degrees from MSU-Mankato. Mr. Dobie, as he is known when teaching during the last 32 years has taught school at MSU-Mankato, St. Clair, Lake Crystal Welcome Memorial, Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton, and retired from the Maple River School District after 17 years there in 2016. Retirement lasted for only two months before he was called to fill in long-term positions twice at the St. Peter Middle School, and another again at Waseca. His love of teaching and kids brings him back to substitute teach on a nearly daily basis during the school year but his summers belong to Habitat for Humanity.

During his free time, he enjoys playing guitar. He has enjoyed a 30+ year career playing and singing with weekend bands. "I like to keep busy and enjoy so many avenues to keep me so."

Considering the future, Dennis and his wife are planning on heading south during the coming winters, but only where Habitat for Humanity has projects that he can assist on while 'vacationing'. (Of course, he'll take his guitar along too). But don't worry, he'll be back building in southern Minnesota next summer!

MIKE SMITH

Every morning—before the ReStore even opens—you can find Mike Smith getting the backroom of the ReStore ready to accept the donations of the day. Mike is a "volunteer extraordinaire," who donates 40 hours a week to the ReStore! He starts his day at 9:15 a.m. and often doesn't leave until the store closes at 6:00 p.m. "The ReStore wouldn't be the same without him. He's treated like staff... because he essentially is, but without the pay. He's been with the store longer than I have," says the ReStore Manager Jeff Devens.



Mike started his relationship with the ReStore as a customer. He was working at Kato Engineering and would stop by to see what unique items the ReStore had in stock. One day, while he was there, he noticed a sign recruiting volunteers. He signed up that day and hasn't looked back since. He started his volunteer gig working part-time on Saturdays. However, upon retiring from Kato Engineering after 38 years of working there, he got "promoted" to a full-time ReStore volunteer working 40 hours a week. He basically explains it by asking "what else do I have to do?" He likes the camaraderie it offers and the structure it adds to his days. "I'm still left with enough time for me and my family."

Mike likes helping people, and giving back to the community. People always have questions in the store and he's never been stumped once on being able to answer them. Mike's primary responsibilities include accepting donations, making out the receipts, and responding to the customers' needs. He helps keep the place clean and organized. He enjoys sorting and recycling copper, brass, aluminum and iron, which is then taken to the salvage yard for payment. Mike also serves as the main driver for the big box truck that goes off-site to pick up large items that are being donated to the store.

Mike has two adult children – a son and a daughter – and three grandchildren living in Lake Crystal. He really enjoys staying home, doing yardwork on 4.5 acres, chopping wood, and working in his shop doing woodworking and welding projects. Kudos to Mike for his long-standing dedication to the ReStore. We are so appreciative of his time!

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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

HELP US find Homeowner Applicants...

Habitat is always looking for eligible individuals and families to become homeowners. We're hoping that you can help us in our recruitment efforts. If you know of anyone who is currently renting and has a reliable source of income; but, hasn't been able to come up with a down payment, we would be interested in talking to them about whether they qualify for our homebuyer program. Families of four can earn up to \$57,866 - \$64,560 (depending on the county) and still qualify.



Three factors are considered when we select our homebuyers:

- The applicant's level of need.
- Their willingness to partner with Habitat.
- Their ability to pay a mortgage through an affordable payment plan.

We partner with our homebuyers every step of the way, and provide the education and support needed to become successful homeowners. There are many financial benefits to buying a Habitat home, including affordable mortgage payments that will not exceed 30% of the family's gross monthly income. A Habitat home is a strong foundation for a family, an opportunity on which they can build a better life. For more information on applying for a Habitat home, call Taylor at 507-388-2081 extension 6.