



THE DOORWAY

building homes, communities and hope

SUMMER 2017

FOUNDED 1988

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The American Dream: Tragedy and Triumph



Receiving a Habitat for Humanity home has been one of the greatest blessings our family has ever received. We immigrated to America with \$500 in our pockets and hopes of the American Dream in our hearts. Owning our own land and raising our family in a safe and loving home has always been central to that dream. For our family, with two of our three children having cerebral palsy, owning a space that could accommodate them was always especially important to us, but always seemed unattainable. Our first years in the US were characterized by our moves between multiple apartment complexes in low income areas with high crime rates and drug infestations. The sounds of music and gunshots were often heard through the night. We lived all cramped together for almost a decade before God gave us the beautiful gift of a home.

When we received our Habitat for Humanity home back in 2009, it was as though a decade of prayers had suddenly been answered all at once. We were suddenly transported into a safe and quiet neighborhood, into a home with an expansive garden and enough rooms to house all of us.

We had trouble sleeping the first few nights in the house as the noise we'd grown so accustomed to hearing throughout the night was no longer there. The silence was almost frightening.

Eventually we grew appreciative of the silence and began a new life in our home. We celebrated birthdays, Christmases, and got to know our neighbors. Unfortunately, in the fall of 2011, we found out that our oldest son, Yohenes, was diagnosed with terminal liver cirrhosis. He passed away in June of the following year. He spent his last days and breathed his last breath in our house and we have since turned his room into our family prayer room. Additionally, our youngest son, Yonas, graduated from high school and we celebrated his graduation from Yale University with two degrees in Sociology and Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology, in May. We will also be celebrating his successes in our home.

This house has been one of the greatest blessings we've received as a family. It stands as a monument to our family and allows us to remember where we have been and keep our eyes fixed on the promise of what God has for us in the future. This home has grown with us and shaped itself to become what we've needed – a safe refuge, a place of mourning, and a place of celebration.

Owning a home is central to attaining the American Dream and helping others to achieve their dreams is the American way. 🏠



Greetings From Your Lawrenceville ReStore

Summer is here! The time has come for many of us to begin those projects we have been putting off all year. Whether you are planning an upgrade of your kitchen or buying new furniture for your home, the ReStore is a great place to both shop and donate your replaced items.

Gwinnett ReStore offers items and bargains for your projects or renovations, never knowing what treasures or unique items you will find with each visit.

To donate your gently used items, please give us a call on our “Donation Hotline” at 770-962-4200, or schedule your free pickup online at suburbanatlantarestores.org/donate.

We want you to know how grateful we are for your continued support. As a donor, shopper or volunteer, you are helping Habitat build homes and hope for families right here in Gwinnett County and around the world. We could not be successful in our mission without your continued support.

Thank you,

Paul Ingbritsen {ReStore Manager}
+ The staff & volunteers at Gwinnett ReStore

Habitat is a Ministry

Gwinnett Habitat gets many requests from volunteers who want to help, but this particular email came from Habitat for Humanity International. The Finance Department from the international office in Atlanta wanted to volunteer with the home repair program called A Brush With Kindness. While their professional jobs may have been in finance, the volunteer group offered a variety of technical skills and were matched with a client in Lawrenceville with a variety of needs.

On the day of the project, the volunteer group showed up and some immediately started painting while others climbed the stepladders to clean the gutters before the gutters could be repaired. There were 1-2 others who started the process of installing safety bars in the bathroom while someone else replaced light bulbs. While there was lots of laughter, the volunteer group got right to work and was ready for a break when lunch arrived.

As the group invited the client to join them for sandwiches, the conversation turned to the client. She was an elderly lady with a delightful personality who was also a widow after losing her husband years ago. This woman was no longer able to maintain her house, and her daughter, who lived 45 minutes away, was only able to help when she could make the trip. The client had lost part of her leg due to various health issues years ago, but she was able to get around in her wheelchair with relative ease. The only thing that bothered this lovely lady was that she could not come and go as she pleased. While she could usually get a ride to the store or to the doctor, church was not easily accessible. In order to attend, she had to rely on her daughter to come pick her up and drive her the 45 minutes to and from.

When the team leader from the Finance Department heard this, he spoke up. “Habitat is a ministry. It is more than building or repairing homes. It is a ministry in that it cares for people and many of their needs.” With that comment, he said that he would start calling around to find a church with a wheelchair accessible vehicle and one that was closer. Within a few days, the client had a regular ride to church and a new church home. This was a nice reminder that Habitat is indeed more than hammers and nails. Habitat is a ministry. 🏠

A huge welcome to our newest staff member: Laura Rodriguez



We are so excited to introduce Laura Rodriguez as our new volunteer coordinator. She joined Gwinnett Habitat full time on May 8.

Laura is a Georgia native, but spent the last few years managing volunteers with the City of Mesa and the Arizona Museum of Natural History. She brings a wealth of volunteering experience from her days with the AmeriCorps program, where she traveled across the country serving residents after natural disasters. She has a heart for serving others and loves the Habitat mission. She loves doing things outdoors like hiking, kayaking and team sports. She can also play a mean ukulele.

Laura has been working with us for over two months and is doing a great job connecting with volunteers and sponsors through her positive energy and enthusiasm. Join us in welcoming her to the Gwinnett Habitat family by sending her a note at lrodriguez@habitatgwinnett.org. 🏠

Grant Funds and Donations Bring Community Together

Low-income elderly and disabled homeowners in Gwinnett County have friends in high places who want to help them with critical home repair.

Primerica, Scott Hudgens Family Foundation, Jackson EMC Foundation and the Community Foundation for NE Georgia awarded us funding this spring to help meet the needs of these low-income homeowners by supporting A Brush with Kindness, a critical home repair and preservation program.

If those weren't enough high powered friends, Cardinal Health, Christ the King Baptist Church, Christ the King Lutheran Church, McKendree United Methodist Church, First United Methodist Church of Lawrenceville, Peachtree Ridge H.S. Habitat Club, and the Rotary Club of Peachtree Corners joined in and brought both volunteers and donations that helped complete 13 more projects for these deserving homeowners.

{ The volunteers are critical to get the projects completed and to make them affordable. }

"The volunteers are critical to get the projects completed and to make them affordable. The foundation grants and corporate funding provide us the capability to purchase materials, tools and equipment that the donations don't cover and to use contractors and licensed plumbers and electricians to complete some of the work we run into that our volunteers can't do or shouldn't do because of safety concerns," said Barry Blakely, program coordinator. Our goal is to complete between 45 and 50 projects annually.

Since July 1, 2016, 31 other projects have been completed by 21 other corporations and organizations that provided the volunteers and donated funds. All told, 32 different organizations and a multitude of volunteers joined together to make a positive impact on our community. You Rock, Gwinnett! 🏠

Help Us Find Adequate Land and Properties!

As Gwinnett County continues to grow, acquiring land for Gwinnett Habitat's home projects is becoming more challenging. If you are aware of raw land for sale, or houses for sale that are in need of repair, renovation or demolition, we would love to hear from you!

We are looking for RAW LAND that:

- Is a buildable lot for a 1,200-1,500 square foot house
- Cost under \$25,000 (20% appraised home value)
- Could be donated (donor will receive a letter of donation for tax purposes)

We are looking for HOUSES to rehab or demo that:

- Cost under \$60,000
- Are salvaged due to storm damage/fire, foreclosed or are HUD properties
- Could be donated (donor will receive a letter of donation for tax purposes)

If you know or are aware of such properties or would like to speak to us about the sale or donation of your property, please contact our Executive Director, Brent Bohanan, at (770) 826-4638 or bbohanan@habitatgwinnett.org.

Thank you for your support and for helping us to create affordable housing in Gwinnett County.





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Donate, Volunteer, Advocate

Become a HopeBuilder and help us meet the needs in Gwinnett County.

- Make a donation to Gwinnett Habitat
- Volunteer on one of our build sites
- Be an advocate: Share the Habitat story with others and help raise awareness

For more information, visit www.habitatgwinnett.org or call 770-931-8080.



Gwinnett
Habitat
for Humanity®

Contact Us:

P.O. Box 870408
Stone Mountain, GA 30087

Office: 770-931-8080

Email: info@HabitatGwinnett.org

Web: www.HabitatGwinnett.org

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Executive Director's Corner

As you know, Lynn Weekley recently retired after working with our affiliate for almost 20 years. We greatly appreciate all she has done to make our affiliate successful and for her incredible dedication to our mission. Over the last few weeks we have shown our appreciation to Lynn by recognizing her with several events and gifts. One very special gift was a memory book that included words of encouragement and photos from many of you. Thank you for sharing your memories for the book. It is something she will cherish for many years. We were also blessed to offer two special items of recognition from the State of Georgia thanks to board member, Pedro Marin, Georgia House Representative District 96. Pedro presented Lynn with the Outstanding Georgia Citizen Award from the Secretary of State and a resolution from our legislature acknowledging her great work and commemorating her retirement.

We also created the Lynn Weekley Volunteer College Scholarship, providing a long-lasting impact. This scholarship will benefit college-bound high school seniors that are children of Gwinnett Habitat homeowners or active participants in our Habitat Campus Clubs. This scholarship will continue her volunteer spirit by encouraging and continuing volunteerism among high school students in Gwinnett. We plan to offer two \$1,500 scholarships in May 2018. If you would like to donate to support Lynn's scholarship, you can mail a check designated for the Lynn Weekley Scholarship Fund to: [Gwinnett Habitat for Humanity](http://www.GwinnettHabitatforHumanity.org). You can also give on-line on our website. Thanks again for your continued support of our mission. God bless. 🏠

Brent S. Bohanan - Executive Director