

The Habitat Scoop



Volunteers Return to Construction Sites!

After 19 months, three weeks and one day (but who's counting!?), we were thrilled to welcome our volunteers back to our construction sites on November 4th, 2021!

Over the course of three days, we welcomed 36 volunteers from LibreMax, Credit Suisse and the RTW Charitable Foundation, who worked to rehabilitate the site of a single-family home in Queens.

Maybe it was the nearly two years of pent up energy, but our volunteers worked hard! They engaged in demolition, filling up two 20-yard dumpsters – that's about 12,000 pounds of construction debris!

It could have just been all the dust, but seeing New Yorkers out on site, getting their brows sweaty and their boots dirty brought a tear to our eye.

Welcome back, volunteers! We sure are glad to see you. You and donors together are helping build affordable housing for New Yorkers! ■



Above: Volunteers assist with demolition in Jamaica, Queens. Photo courtesy of Mark Jaworski Studios.

Left: Before and after our volunteers began rehabilitating a single family home in Queens—what a difference!



“I did all of the right things and I still got sick.” One Homeowner’s pandemic experience

Habitat Homeowner Christian A. is an essential worker at one of New York’s top hospitals, who worked throughout the pandemic while her three children virtually attended school. She wrote about what her COVID experience was like, before her family moved into their new home in Sydney House in 2021. Her journey to homeownership would not be possible without generous donors like you.

I contracted the coronavirus in early April 2020. I do not know exactly how I contracted the virus but I suspect it was at work. Why me? What had I done wrong? I did all the right things and I still got sick. By day three I felt horrible. I was told to avoid going to the emergency room at all costs.

My symptoms included intense pressure in my chest, racing heart, shortness of breath, foggy brain, irritated eyes, body chills and soreness, stuffy nose, and zero appetite. I had to write how I was feeling daily because as the days went by my symptoms would change and I could barely keep up with them. It was probably the

COVID has changed everything, from standing in line just to get into the supermarket, to making sure I have the proper PPE to not get sick again, to the stresses of working a full-time job while managing virtual learning and submitting homework daily.

I am a believer that there is a season for everything. The light at the end of this tunnel for me has always been the path to be able to provide a better life for my children. **My focus on homeownership is to provide that better life for my children so they have space to move around and not be all over each other.** ■



Left: Christian’s boys attending school remotely on the computer

Below: Christian ready for work in PPE

worst I have ever felt but not worse than having to have to quarantine away from my children.

Thankfully none of my children contracted the virus. After making a full recovery, I was able to go back to work. So back to business as usual... but not really.





Oh, what a night! The 2021 Habitat House Party

October's 2021 Habitat House Party, a two-night party comprised of a virtual event and an in-person gala, was a smashing success, ultimately raising more than \$830,000 for hard-working New York families! And thanks to the generous underwriting of our gala by Doug and Claudia Morse, every single cent of the money raised directly supported our programs, building and preserving stable, affordable, healthy housing across the five boroughs and Westchester County.

This year's House Party theme was Housing for a Healthier New York. Night One of the House Party, held on Tuesday October 26th, was a free, virtual celebration of our supporters and volunteers, open to any and all who wanted to learn about Habitat NYC and Westchester's work. Then, on Wednesday October 27th, nearly 200 Habitat NYC and Westchester supporters, donors, volunteers and staff safely gathered, masked and socially distanced, at the beautiful Guastavino's for good food, good friends and a good cause.

Night Two speakers included CEO Karen Haycox, honorees Doug and Claudia Morse, and Habitat Homeowner Ariana J., who shared her story of how moving into her new apartment changed her life during the pandemic. "Sydney House has aided in making me a healthier person. Access to affordable

homeownership does make us healthier as humans and as a city. Especially in a pandemic when health is the number one priority. Without this home, I wouldn't be as healthy and as well as I am today and I am thankful for that," she said.

The evening capped off with an intense auction, which raised more than \$80,000! Thanks to all of our supporters, we exceeded our fundraising goal, and raised a total of more than \$830,000 to help build and preserve housing for hard-working families. ■

"A healthier New York is a city and a region that strives for equity, that works to close the racial wealth gap and provides every New Yorker the opportunity to benefit from the strength, stability and self-determination that home ownership provides," Karen Haycox, CEO, said.

Advocacy Win! Governor Hochul signs AHC Bill

After years of advocacy from you and other Habitat supporters across the state, in December of 2021, Governor Kathy Hochul signed the Affordable Housing Corporation Bill, effectively building thousands of homes for ownership from Buffalo to Brooklyn.

New York State's Affordable Housing Corporation (AHC) helps affordable housing developers, like Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester County, to build safe, decent, affordable homes by subsidizing their construction costs. The subsidy for a rental unit? \$125,000/unit. For a home for ownership? \$40,000/unit.

Homeownership funding has not seen significant funding investment since the 1980's. ...until now!

The AHC Bill, introduced by Assemblywoman Latrice Walker and Senator Jamaal Bailey, passed both houses earlier this year with overwhelming bipartisan support. With the Governor's signature, the AHC subsidy for homes for ownership will increase from the current \$40,000 to \$75,000 per unit! This increase will help build thousands of new homes across the state, including the 140 that we will build in Central Brooklyn alone!

Thank you to Governor Hochul, and to every Habitat NYC and Westchester supporter who used their voice to make this change happen! ■



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Welcome to New Board Leadership

We're thrilled to welcome Anthony Montalto as chair of our Board of Directors. We also welcome to the board as vice chair, Melva Miller; as secretary, Andrea Himmel; and as treasurer, Brian Smalley. We also introduced two geographical subsidiary boards, with Peter Murray as inaugural chair of Westchester County Habitat for Humanity and Diana Reyna as inaugural chair of New York City Habitat for Humanity. ■

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