

Home for the Holidays



Habitat-NYC Dedicates Ten New Homes in Harlem

Deacon William Boyd (left) helps bless the home of Tawn and Tanisha Perry (right).

Ten New York City families received the gift of a lifetime this holiday season: a new home. Habitat-NYC presented ten New York City families in need with the keys to their new house in December, just in time for the holiday season.

“I consider myself truly blessed,” says Yolanda Burns, who moved into her new Habitat-NYC home with her four children. “I couldn’t even ask for anything else. It brings tears to my eyes, I’m so happy.”

Before moving into their new three-bedroom condominium, all five members of the Burns family shared a small one-bedroom apartment in Harlem. Yolanda has worked for the New York City Transit Authority for the past 16 years, but she still could not afford a space big enough for her family.

“I was looking for a really long time—reading the paper, going to all the seminars, going to open houses, making phone calls,” she says. “In the one-bedroom, everyone was tugging and pulling, but there was nowhere to go. I couldn’t afford what they’re asking for.”

But with Habitat-NYC’s help, Yolanda was able to find an affordable home big enough for her family. The Burns family moved into their new home following a dedication ceremony on December 11, 2004, along with nine other Harlem families previously living in overcrowded or substandard housing conditions.

Before moving into her new Habitat-NYC home, Tanisha Perry worried about the security of her 12-year-old son, Tawn. Her previous building was

dilapidated and unsafe, with “trash, broken bottles and graffiti everywhere,” she says. Tanisha has been a Section 8 tenant for the past ten years and has been actively searching for a new home for the past six. But her years of searching came up empty, and Tanisha says that she was starting to lose hope until she heard about Habitat-NYC.

The ten new homeowner families joined 26 Habitat-NYC families already living in the neighborhood. “I’m thrilled that these deserving families were able to celebrate the holidays in their beautiful new Habitat-NYC home,” said Roland Lewis, executive director of Habitat-NYC. “Habitat-NYC is committed to ending overcrowded and substandard poverty housing throughout New York City, and we are proud of the work that we have done and continue to do in Harlem.”

continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE



**Habitat-NYC and Harlem:
Past, Present, and Future**
Page 3

**Building on Faith
Campaign**
Page 5



**Good Morning America
Returns to Harlem - Page 4**

**THE HARLEM
ISSUE**



Harlem At Work

A spring day in the late 1980s. A freshly minted lawyer goes to visit his new client, the late Rev. Dr. Preston R. Washington, the minister of Memorial Baptist Church and the president of Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement (HCCI). Waiting for Rev. Washington in the cramped church office, the lawyer peeks down at the sanctuary and is taken aback by the sight of a lonely corpse laid out for a funeral. Welcome to the world of faith-based community development.

That lawyer was me, and that day I began my real education in law and community development. Rev. Washington and scores of other clergy leaders presided over funerals, weddings and services for their congregants, and then carried their ministry into the streets through the hard work of rebuilding our city's neighborhoods.

It was my privilege to work with Rev. Washington and other dedicated, visionary individuals who committed their professional lives to reclaim huge swaths of our city given up for dead a generation ago. Leading thinkers were advocating for "planned shrinkage"—a smaller city that would use a form of urban triage and write off places like Mott Haven, parts of Harlem and Brownsville. But the residents left in those neighborhoods, especially the churches, weren't buying it. They filled the urban development and real estate vacuum that the government and private sector had left in these neighborhoods. They countered despair with hope.

These community development corporations from the South Bronx to East New York vigorously and effectively lobbied the city to provide the land and funds to redevelop tens of thousands of affordable homes. The groups I worked with in Harlem were typical: HCCI, Abyssinian Development Corporation and the Black United Fund of New York. Starting with a few buildings each, they began to take back block after block, reclaiming and reviving their neighborhoods. Collectively, the accomplishments of these community development corporations have been awesome. As much as anyone, they can lay claim to New York's continuing renaissance.

Many are now victims of their own success, with every neighborhood in our city attracting private investors and rising home prices. As these neighborhood-based non-profits work to keep pace with the rising need for affordable housing in their communities, Habitat- NYC is proud and privileged to partner with many of these pioneering organizations to fulfill our mission in New York City. We are especially proud to carry forth the faith tradition of so many leaders like Rev. Washington, as we partner with churches, mosques and synagogues that minister to their congregations through sermons, weddings and funerals and minister to New York City by working tirelessly for housing justice.

Roland Lewis, Executive Director
Habitat for Humanity - New York City

FAMILY PARTNER PROFILE



Photo: Andrea Taylor

Carmen Rosario | From Public Housing to a Home of Her Own

Even with a full-time job as a medical assistant, Carmen Rosario could not afford to move out of the cramped, one-bedroom public housing apartment that she shared with her two daughters, Mariah, 15 years old, and Joie, an 18-month-old baby. "The one-bedroom apartment was fine for Mariah and me, a little tight, but now with Joie, the place has become too small for the three of us," Carmen says.

"The faster I worked, the closer I'd get to my goal. And with God on my side, everything worked out."

But this past December, just in time for the holidays, Carmen moved out of the overcrowded apartment that she had lived in for the past 10 years and into a home of her own, courtesy of Habitat- NYC. "Programs like this and people like this are hard to come by," Carmen says. "We need organizations like this. It's a beautiful situation."

Moving into her new Habitat- NYC home marked a triumphant moment for Carmen. In lieu of a down payment, Carmen contributed 300 hours of "sweat equity" to help build her home, and she will pay a 30-year affordable mortgage. "I set my mind to it," she says. "The faster I worked, the closer I'd get to my goal. And with God on my side, everything worked out." Carmen and her daughters now live in a two-bedroom condominium, one of 10 new Habitat- NYC homes in a renovated apartment building on West 134th Street in Harlem.

Working with Habitat- NYC has been a "beautiful experience," Carmen says. "I'm thankful. Very thankful." Carmen says that she is particularly grateful knowing that this opportunity will provide a better future for her daughters. "I used to have nothing. And now I have a little something," she says. "This is something for my children."

Continued from page 1: Home for the Holidays

All 10 Habitat- NYC families helped to build their new home, a renovated five-story apartment building on West 134th Street in Harlem. The families worked alongside more than a thousand volunteers from New York City's businesses, schools, faith institutions and community groups.

Tanisha says that she is particularly happy knowing that her new Habitat- NYC home will provide a better, safer future for her son. "This is long-term for my son, something I can leave for him," she says. "He can go to college, come back and have a place to live. It is for him."

Habitat-NYC and Harlem:

Embracing the Past and Building the Future

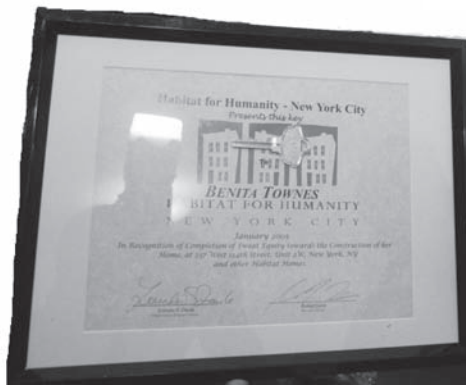
The mid-1990s were still tough times in Harlem. The crack epidemic had not yet abated. The second Harlem renaissance, though long promised, had not yet arrived. But Harlem remained the center of African-American life, and at Harlem's heart lay St. Philip's Episcopal Church. A decade ago, St. Philip's was a distinguished and determined institution on a shattered block in a neighborhood struggling with pervasive crime and poverty. Two crack houses and a string of abandoned buildings greeted St. Philip's parishioners every Sunday as they left



Jimmy Carter with Habitat-NYC in Harlem in 2000.

their historic church on West 134th Street. St. Philip's belonged to a multi-faith consortium called Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement (HCCI). In the early 1990s, Habitat-NYC approached HCCI hoping to start work in Harlem, and HCCI matched us with St. Philip's. A series of missteps and a lack of progress, however, built frustration and no homes. The Harlem Habitat group (soon to be called a Chapter) demanded action, and that call was answered with a change of management and a new beginning for Habitat-NYC's work in Harlem and across the city.

In short order, work began on three brownstones on West 134th Street. Habitat-NYC developed a unique construction method, in which professional contractors performed the technically demanding work to renovate the exterior, while Habitat-NYC volunteers completed most of the carpentry and finish work in the core of the buildings. The Harlem brownstones began to serve as



Family Partner Benita Townes celebrates receiving the keys to her new Habitat-NYC home in December.

a great backdrop for news stories about Habitat-NYC, highlighting the work of our sponsors, including Maxwell House, Mobil and Goldman Sachs. Frederick Douglass once said "Without struggle, there is no progress." This was certainly true for those first brownstone condominiums, but at the end of the day, six Harlem families had decent, affordable homes, and Habitat-NYC was off and running.

Word of Habitat's revival in New York City made its way down to Habitat headquarters in Georgia. Habitat's founder, Millard Fuller, invited the New York City affiliate to host the Jimmy Carter Work Project in the millennium year and to be the site of the completion of Habitat's milestone 100,000th home worldwide. The main stage for this event was to be 233 West 134th Street, directly across the street from St. Philip's. More than 150 churches, synagogues and mosques contributed volunteers, money and prayer to see this mammoth project through. Over five days, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, Jack Kemp, Susan Sarandon, Tom Brokaw and 5,000 other volunteers completed 22 homes in Harlem and at a sister Habitat-NYC project in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn.

Habitat-NYC used the Jimmy Carter Work Project 2000 as a platform to highlight the need for decent affordable housing in our city. St. Philip's hosted the first forum for the 2001 mayoral election, with all the announced candidates setting forth their housing programs. This event became the model for our subsequent work on housing advocacy—an area that Habitat-NYC is pioneering within the Habitat world. The Jimmy Carter Work

Project also gave rise to our Builders Awards ceremony, which has grown to become a world-class event. Last year, 650 people attended the gala at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Harlem and raised more than \$700,000.

Work has continued on West 134th Street in partnership with St. Philip's and our Harlem Chapter Board. In December, we dedicated another 10-unit condominium at 237 West 134th Street. Thirty-six Habitat-NYC families now call West 134th Street home.

And we are still building. In January, we began construction on our newest building on West 128th Street in Harlem. Our work continues in the other boroughs that we serve: the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens. Habitat affiliates across the country study and emulate our urban building model and our advocacy efforts. Habitat-NYC has



Volunteers work on our newest building on 128th Street in Harlem.

helped more than 150 families fulfill the dream of homeownership. But the necessary kick in the rear to get Habitat going again in New York City came more than a decade ago from St. Philip's, a historic church in the heart of Harlem.

Photo: Anthony Collins

Photo: Enrique Cubillo

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Good Morning America Returns to Harlem

Diane Sawyer Welcomes Brenda Smith-West to Her New Habitat-NYC Home



Photo: Kimberly Rasmussen

Diane Sawyer and Robin Roberts, co-anchors of ABC's *Good Morning America*, returned to Harlem to help welcome Habitat-NYC Family Partner Brenda Smith-West to her new home.

Ms. Sawyer and Ms. Roberts helped to build the Smith-West family's new

house through Habitat for Humanity's Women Build program, sponsored by Lowe's. They volunteered in May and spent a day installing insulation and putting up drywall. This past holiday season, they returned to celebrate the fruits of their labor. The two co-anchors presented the Smith-West family with a Christmas tree, and *Good Morning America* featured their visit on December 24, 2004. "Merry Christmas and welcome home," Ms. Roberts told the Smith-West family.

The family's new home on West 134th Street in Harlem has three bedrooms and one and a half baths, a stark contrast to the overcrowded one-bedroom apartment that Ms. Smith-West shared with her four children and one grandson. "I would just like to thank everyone for this blessing," she said. "And don't forget that there are people who are still needy, who still need housing."

Building on Faith

Clergy Leaders Raise Walls and Lift Their Voices with Habitat-NYC

Less than one week before the presidential election and one year before New York City's mayoral election, faith leaders and congregants from throughout New York City joined Habitat-NYC to cast a symbolic vote for housing justice and call for an end to the city's housing crisis.

Religious leaders from the Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim traditions joined together to build a model "Home for Humanity" on the steps of St. Bartholomew's Church in midtown Manhattan on October 27, 2004, demonstrating a united effort to ensure that all New Yorkers have a decent, affordable home. "Affordable housing is a moral issue. We have an obligation to end the scourges of homelessness and poverty housing," said Bishop Joseph Sullivan of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens. "We must remember our brothers and sisters living in

substandard conditions."

Hundreds of congregants journeyed to St. Bartholomew's Church to cast a ballot calling on New York City to do more to end the city's housing crisis. The collected ballots—more than 1,000 postcards addressed to Mayor Bloomberg—will be delivered to City Hall to demonstrate the faith community's commitment to affordable housing. "Housing is a non-partisan issue," said the Reverend Dr. Calvin Butts of the Abyssinian Baptist Church. "Our conscience calls upon us to cast our vote for housing justice for all."

The faith leaders came together in support of Habitat-NYC's Housing Covenant, which sets forth clear housing policy goals and serves as a call to



Photo: Kimberly Rasmussen

A participant casts her vote for housing justice.

action for all New Yorkers to address the city's housing crisis. The Covenant's goals include ending homelessness, building more affordable housing and ending housing discrimination. More than 175 religious leaders have endorsed the Covenant.

continued on page 6

FAITH PARTNER PROFILE



St. Philip's Episcopal Church

Since Habitat-NYC's first entrance into Harlem in 1995, St. Philip's Episcopal Church has served as a critical partner in our ministry to provide decent, affordable housing for all New Yorkers. St. Philip's support has never wavered, beginning with the selection of the very first Habitat-NYC Family Partner on West 134th Street through the dedication of our 36th Harlem home, held in December. St. Philip's understands the importance of homeownership to families and to the Harlem community.

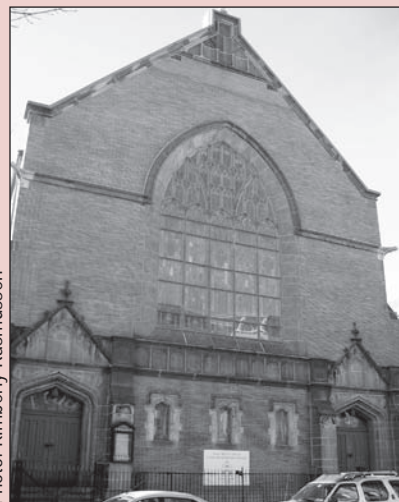


Photo: Kimberly Rasmussen

The church's efforts to improve the health and well-being of the community did not begin with Habitat-NYC. For almost 200 years, St. Philip's Episcopal Church has been an institution of major spiritual and civic importance in New York City. First located downtown, the church moved in 1910 to its present location in Central Harlem and became the first African-American Episcopal parish in the city of New York. St. Philip's was one of the first institutions to draw African-

Americans to Harlem. Members of St. Philip's have played an important role in shaping the city and the nation. Several of the Civil Rights movement's most prominent leaders, including A. Philip Randolph and Thurgood Marshall, were St. Philip's parishioners, and the church maintains an active program of community involvement.

Habitat-NYC first began working with St. Philip's in 1995. Habitat-NYC and St. Philip's shared a common vision—to transform vacant buildings around St. Philip's into new affordable homes—and forged a partnership to transform that vision into action. Since that time, St. Philip's has provided us with gifted Chapter Board Members like Alice Cheseborough, Emily Frye, and Charles Williams, who take on the critical task of identifying and selecting candidates for the Habitat-NYC homes that we build. The church also continually provides much needed space for Habitat-NYC's activities. Last year, for example, St. Philip's hosted Habitat-NYC's Martin Luther King Jr. "Building on the Dream" event, bringing together more than 350 people to celebrate Dr. King's message of social justice.

Ten years and 36 houses later, the partnership between Habitat-NYC and St. Philip's is still going strong under the current guidance of the Rev. Dr. Cecily Broderick y Guerra. St. Philip's is a critical partner, giving us insight into the Harlem community, providing leadership to help carry out our mission, and reminding us that with faith anything is possible.

Continued from page 5: Building on Faith



Photo: Kimberly Rasmussen

Faith Partners on the steps of St. Bartholomew's Church.

"Habitat-NYC provides common ground to build affordable homes and fight for social justice," said Rabbi Joseph Potasnik of the New York Board of Rabbis. "All New Yorkers and people of goodwill throughout the world—faith institutions, non-profit organizations, businesses, and elected officials—must come together to ensure that everyone has a decent, affordable home."

If you would like to get involved in Habitat-NYC's advocacy efforts, please visit our website at www.habitatnyc.org.

Tsunami Aid

Habitat for Humanity International is playing an active role in reconstructing the areas devastated by December's tsunami. Habitat has begun a campaign to build thousands of transitional homes in Sri Lanka, Thailand and India, some costing as little as \$200.

Here in New York City, Habitat-NYC has increased our annual contribution to fund overseas building. To help with the relief effort, we have specifically earmarked \$12,000 to support re-building activities in Sri Lanka.

If you would like to learn more about Habitat for Humanity International's relief efforts, please visit www.habitat.org.

Save the Date!

On February 12, 2005, Habitat-NYC will dedicate 13 beautiful new homes on East 150th Street in the Bronx. We invite everyone who has supported our work—by volunteering, donating resources or materials, or participating in our advocacy efforts—to join us for a celebration with the 13 new Habitat-NYC homeowner families.

Please visit our website www.habitatnyc.org for more details. We hope to see you there!

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Habitat for Humanity - New York City transforms lives and our city by uniting all New Yorkers around the cause of decent, affordable housing for everyone.



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Founded by Millard and Linda Fuller in 1976, Habitat for Humanity is a Christian organization that welcomes people of all beliefs to join in its mission.