

My Habitat Home Is...

I always dreamed that my family could own a home. This has been the chance of a lifetime," says Custodio Castillo.

The Castillo family landed in a homeless shelter after their apartment building was condemned. After months and months of fruitlessly searching real estate ads and knocking on doors, the family turned to Habitat-NYC. Soon, they will be moving to a new home at our Atlantic Avenue complex.

Recently, Habitat-NYC asked some of our family partners to tell us what a Habitat home means to them. Their responses underscore how hard it is to find and afford safe and decent homes in New York City—and how much they value Habitat's hand up to a better life.

Here are some of the stories our family partners shared:

"Almost every day, there is a shootout, and the crime in my neighborhood is very high," says Esther Huambo, an Atlantic Avenue family partner. *"Our Habitat home will be a comfortable living environment and a safer environment. I love*

you all for making this happen for me and others."

"Habitat will help us achieve the goal of homeownership . . . which will provide us with a place to call our own for the rest of our lives," says Narda Garcia.

Her husband Arcadio works full time, but can barely cover the rent on their modest apartment—almost two-thirds of their earnings go to their landlord.

Their future Habitat-NYC home on Atlantic Avenue will mean *"no more money wasted on landlords,"* says Arcadio, adding *"My son will have a place to call 'home.'"*

"My Habitat-NYC home is important to me because I could send my children to college, not sending them out to work full



Custodio Castillo, center, with his family

What Does 'Home' Mean To You?

Habitat-NYC is asking our friends—as well as our family partners—to tell us what "home" means to you.

Do you have a special memory about your home? A funny anecdote or moving story? A favorite home or a house of horrors?

Please share your thoughts with us. Just go to www.habitatnyc.org and click on My Home Is . . .

Your entries will be published on our website.

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Family Partner Alecia Robinson

. . . Being Able to Afford a Better Future



It wasn't so bad at first – sharing a single room with her baby boy. With the apartment's cramped quarters, poor insulation and mold, Alecia Robinson knew the situation was less than ideal. But it was allowing her to save money each month, and it was only temporary, until she had saved up enough to afford her own home.

But years passed and home and rent prices skyrocketed while her income remained static. When her son reached kindergarten age, Alecia knew she had to make a change. That's when she applied for a Habitat home.

Meanwhile, she and Devon, now aged 6, recently moved into a safer apartment with more space and less mold, where they are living today while our Atlantic Avenue homes are under construction.

But this larger, healthier temporary home comes at a steep price: rent now consumes half of each paycheck. Like so many New Yorkers, Alecia is over-burdened with crushing rent. "We've had to cut back a lot," she says, "but I didn't really have a choice."

And though she is balancing a full-time job, being a single mom and helping to build her own home, Alecia's smile is transcendent. She derives strength from her involve-

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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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From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

In these turbulent economic times, our hearts go out to all our friends and supporters across the city who are facing new challenges. The storm of uncertainty on Wall Street touches all New Yorkers—but can be especially devastating for the low-income families we serve, who always live so close to a financial precipice.

That's why, in tough times, our work is more important than ever before.

In this newsletter, you'll hear the voices of many Habitat-NYC family partners. Listen especially to our newest families—Custodio Castillo, Esther Huambo and Narda and Arcadio Garcia—who are working hard to complete their future homes in our Atlantic Avenue complex.

We know it won't be too long before these soon-to-be homebuyers experience the life-changing impact of homeownership. But until then, they must endure the burdens of crime, rising rents and overcrowded, substandard housing. Random gunshots, doubled-up families sharing too little space, unreliable hot water and heat: these are everyday realities for many hard-working, low-wage families.

In a troubled economy, these families and thousands like them throughout New York City face even greater obstacles. As inflation rises and job security diminishes, Custodio, Esther, Narda and Arcadio are struggling harder than ever before to save for their children's educations and to pay for rising health care premiums, while still trying to carve enough money out of the family budget for food, shelter and clothing.

Knowing these families personally makes the challenges they face all the more stunning and their perseverance all the more breathtaking.

Like all of our 41 Atlantic Avenue family partners, Custodio, Esther, Narda and Arcadio juggle child care, school and job commitments. Still, they give 300 hours per adult in "sweat equity" to take hammer in hand to build their own homes so they can achieve their dream of owning a safe and affordable home.

Without Habitat-NYC, Custodio, Esther, Narda and Arcadio would be mired in poorly maintained rental housing, living in dangerous conditions and paying exorbitant rents that make it impossible to save for the future.

But thanks to your generous support, Habitat-NYC is offering these deserving, hardworking families hope at a time when they need it most. For that, all of us here at Habitat-NYC, and especially our family partners, are deeply grateful. Perhaps Esther Huambo expressed it best as she tells us: "I love you all for making this happen for me and others."

9th Annual Builder Awards Dinner is Nov. 11

This year's festivities will be at the elegant Capitale in Lower Manhattan, with cocktails at 6:30 pm and dinner at 7:30 pm.

Honorees include:

- JPMorgan, Corporate Partner of the Year;
- Brokers Build, New Partnership Award;

- Rev. Gary Simpson and Concord Baptist Church, Richard Wong Faith-in-Action Award; and

- The Graham Family, Family Partner of the Year Award.

For more information or tickets, please contact James Andrews at (212) 991-4000, ext. 330 or via email at jandrews@habitatnyc.org.

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.

Brooklyn to Botswana

Habitat- NYC Construction Chief Takes a Holiday—Building Habitat Homes in Africa

When Paul Thibault vacations, he foregoes chaise lounges and frosty beverages for hammers, hard work and malaria medication.

Paul, Habitat- NYC's Director of Real Estate and Construction, recently returned from a two-week busman's holiday—building affordable homes in the Republic of Botswana in Southern Africa, through Habitat for Humanity International's (HFHI) Global Village program.

This is far from his first Global Village trip – he has traveled to 17 different countries, building homes and changing lives. “These builds are a challenging, but fulfilling experience . . . vacations with a purpose” he says.

Botswana is a world away from Brooklyn, where Paul currently oversees the construction of our cutting-edge, green affordable-condominium complex. With 41 homes, this is Habitat's largest multifamily project.

A small rural country, Botswana may be most familiar to Americans as the setting for Alexander McCall Smith's *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* books. Its economy is fu-

eled by mining, diamonds, cattle and tourism, and about half of its 1.8 million residents live on less than \$2 a day.

Botswana is comprised of a network of villages connected by dirt roads. Homes (called *rondevals*) are traditionally constructed of earth, water and cow dung, covered only by roofs of thatch. During the

\$4,000 each. (In contrast, our Brooklyn complex is a two-year project, and each unit will cost about \$320,000 to build.)

“The beautiful thing about Global Village trips is that most volunteers are people who have an interest in social justice, affordable housing and a desire to adventure-travel,” Paul says. “Everyone has a

compelling experience and decent homes are created.”

He adds, “There is camaraderie and a true open group spirit on Global Village builds,” which is just like the spirit that grows at our Brooklyn builds.



four-month rainy season, these modest huts are barely able to withstand the constant bombardment of water and wind.

The homes Habitat builds are concrete block, with concrete floors and corrugated aluminum sheeting for roofs. Window screens are one of the most important safety features in Habitat-built Botswana homes, Paul notes—because they keep malaria-carrying mosquitoes outside.

On the Botswana trip, Habitat homes were erected in just two weeks, at a cost of

Find Out More About Global Village Trips

HFHI has affiliates in 100 countries and many of them host short-term, volunteer Global Village teams. Costs of the trips vary by the country, its Habitat host affiliate and the length of the trip. To find out how you can join a Global Village trip, go to www.habitat.org/gv.

NYC's Real Estate Powerhouses Don Hard Hats and Build



Some of New York City's top real estate brokers – who typically ink multimillion-dollar deals with the rich and famous – put down their BlackBerries this summer and picked up hammers to help build Habitat- NYC homes.

These broker-philanthropists are members of Brokers Build, an organization that helps fund and build affordable homes for New Yorkers in need.

Brokers Build members aim to get 1,000 of their colleagues to raise \$1,000 each for affordable homes. To date, these real estate leaders have raised more than \$135,000, which will help towards funding our Atlantic Avenue complex.

The broker builders who turned out to build this summer are pictured below left. Real estate broker Alan Pfeiffer of Halstead Properties is shown at top right, and Claudia Fox of Coldwell Banker Previews International is practicing with a power drill at bottom right.

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State Housing Officials Build Habitat-NYC Homes

Housing employees will tell you that supporting affordable housing in New York City is hard work. But it doesn't usually make them sweaty, hot and covered with dust.

That changed on July 18 – one of the hottest days of the summer – when a team of 25 employees from the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) measured, cut and drilled for hours, installing drywall and insulation in Habitat-NYC's Atlantic Avenue homes.

They were led by Commissioner Deborah VanAmerongen.

"Everyone at DHCR is thrilled to be personally involved in this historic Habitat build and to demonstrate our commitment to affordable housing and community revitalization," said Commissioner VanAmerongen. "Habitat is transforming a vacant block in Brooklyn

and breathing new life into this neighborhood, and we commend them for their hard work and vision."

The DHCR team worked alongside Habitat-NYC family partner and future resident Alecia Robinson, who is keenly aware of the need for safe, affordable housing in

the small, run-down apartment she shares with her six-year-old son.

"Habitat is helping me reach my goals sooner than I could have alone," said Alecia. "It is giving my son and me a new, fresh start and setting us up for endless positive opportunities." (Read more about Alecia on page 1.)

And DHCR is helping Habitat-NYC to reach our home-building goals.

Executive Director Josh Lockwood saluted the agency for taking "innovative steps to create affordable homes throughout New York State."

Lockwood added, "They understand that decent, secure homes are essential for all New York families and that investing in affordable homes helps our economy flourish . . . DHCR has created effective, innovative housing policy and successfully fought for greater funding for desperately needed affordable homes."



Employees from the state's housing department (DHCR) typically spend their days financing affordable housing and crafting public policies. This summer, DHCR staffers pictured above built Habitat-NYC homes at our Atlantic Avenue project, as well.

New York City. An administrative coordinator with an employment agency, she currently pays half her salary in rent for

Affording safety and security

Continued from page 1

ment with Grace Reform Church, where she has been a member for almost two decades. And Alecia still finds time to help with a cherished cause, I Am Somebody's Adored Child (IASAC), which benefits teachers and students in rural areas of her native Jamaica.

The 27-year-old administrative coordinator is excited about building a better future for herself and Devon, saying that "Habitat-NYC is giving me the opportunity to provide a safe and secure home for my son."

Owning an affordable Habitat home will change her life in another way: "It gives me the opportunity to complete my education sooner and without all the financial concerns."

Alecia continues, "Habitat is such a blessing that I cannot put it into words. They have helped so many families, and I am blessed now to be a part of this extended family. What they do goes beyond securing a home."

Help Habitat-NYC through Your Workplace

You can help build Habitat-NYC homes without even leaving your job!

Sign up with a United Way workplace giving program and designate Habitat-NYC as your charity.

Fall is the workplace giving season for government employees, so if your agency participates, you'll receive information soon with pledge forms and an option to select the charity of your choice.

Habitat for Humanity-New York City's codes are:

City Employees (CMC and CUNY): 0765

State Employees (SEFA): 51-1674

Federal Employees (CFC): 20514

If you make a fall pledge, paycheck withholding begins in January. Habitat-NYC will receive money quarterly beginning in April and ending in January of the following year.

If you are a private-sector employee, your company may offer United Way workplace giving, too. Check with your human resources office for details. To designate Habitat-NYC, use our EIN number: **11-2857055**.

No matter how you give, your gifts to Habitat-NYC are tax-deductible.

Your support is crucial through the year, and we offer heartfelt thanks to you for helping to build decent, affordable homes.

Children and Charity: Making Every Penny Count

One group of five civic-minded businesspeople recently created a special fundraising initiative for Habitat- NYC, raising \$17 to help build homes. In a note accompanying their gift, they wrote, "We earned money for you by selling lemonade and trying to learn how to become entrepreneurs."

These eighth-graders are among New York City's youngest philanthropists. Their generous contributions of pennies, nickels, dimes and dollars quickly add up to a lot of brick and mortar.

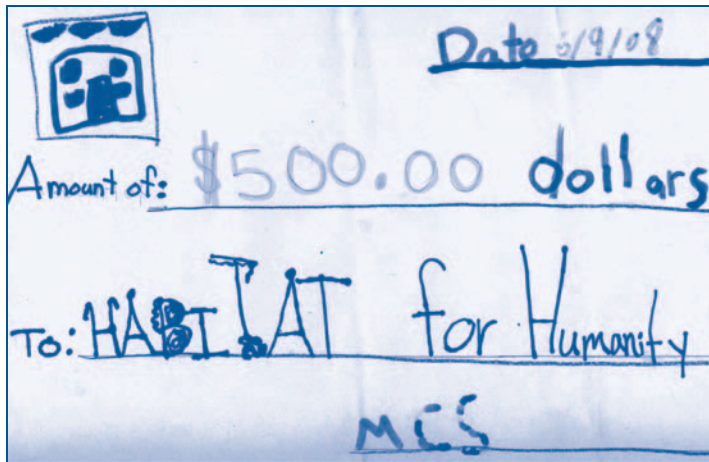
One of the largest organized charitable giving programs for school kids is Com-

mon Cents' Penny Harvest program, which generated almost \$4,000 for Habitat- NYC through the efforts of students at a dozen schools.

Under Penny Harvest, students collect pocket change, then form "Philanthropy Roundtables" to discuss issues close to their hearts and to choose the causes they want to support. At the end of the school year, students deliver grants to community organizations of their choice.

In 2008, more than a dozen New York City-area schools, representing all five boroughs and kindergarteners through high schoolers, opted to donate grants to Habitat- NYC. These schools raised between \$150 and \$540 each, which will be used to help build homes.

For low-income families who desperately need affordable homes, these gifts truly are pennies from heaven.



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- PS 289K in Brooklyn
- P.S. 92 – Adrian Hegeman School, Brooklyn
- Sheepshead Bay High School, Brooklyn
- P.S. 55, Staten Island
- East Woods School, Oyster Bay

"I hope with this donation, you can get one step further in helping others. I hope that one day you will be able to change the world."

—Anthony S.

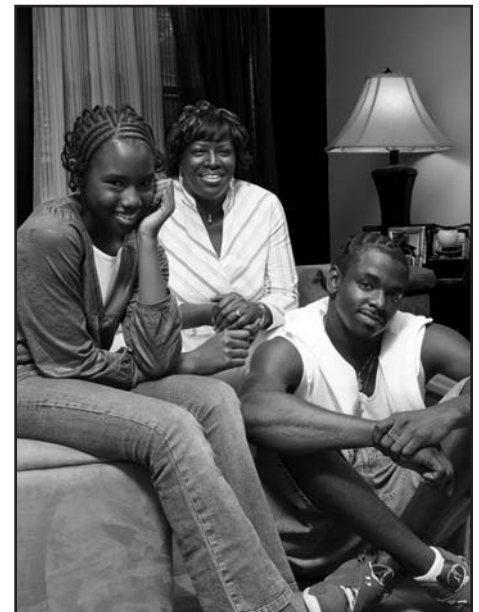
My Home Is . . . (cont.)

time just to pay the rent," says Laurel Copeland. During the five years she has lived in her Habitat home in Brooklyn, Laurel was able to put three kids through college. Today, she beams when she reports that her daughter is a teacher and her sons both own businesses.

"Now my children and I feel safe," Regina Graham says. She applied for her Habitat- NYC home in Harlem after a man was murdered in the stairwell of her old home.

"I have security for my family. I have stability, and most of all, I have homeownership," says Roberto Leon. Roberto and his family have been in their Habitat- NYC home in the South Bronx for four years.

"I am blessed to have some place to call my own," Leon adds.



Shown clockwise from top left are Habitat homeowners Roberto Leon, Regina Graham with her son and daughter (above) and Narda and Arcadio Garcia.