

*"Being a part of Habitat-NYC and a partner with all of you is the most powerful—and empowering—experience of my life."*

—Regina Graham

### Grahams Raise a Hammer at 2009 Builder Awards

*(See story on page 3)*

*Habitat-NYC homeowner Regina Graham, right, smiles with pride as her daughter, Lauren, raises their Family Partner of the Year Award at the 9th Annual Builder Awards Gala on November 11.*



### Family Partner Louisa Tatum

## Giving Back ... Again and Again

When Habitat-NYC renovated a long-vacant apartment building on 156th Street in the South Bronx, we helped to revitalize a century-old structure, a neighborhood—and the lives of its new residents.

Among them is Louisa Tatum, who is so

delighted to be a Habitat-NYC homeowner that she can still be found volunteering at our Atlantic Avenue complex in Brooklyn and remains a dedicated member of the Habitat family.

In fact, as president of the singles ministry at Harlem's storied Abyssinian Baptist Church, Louisa brings church

members out to help build homes for other families who will one day enjoy the security of a Habitat home.

"I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to work with Habitat," she says. "It's been a great experience to contribute my 300 hours of sweat equity and to own my home. And I like to encourage future Habitat families who are in the process of building their homes—I let them know that their efforts will



Louisa Tatum continues to volunteer with Habitat-NYC.

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## Innovation Is the Key

### Habitat-NYC Embarks On Leading-Edge Project In the South Bronx

Habitat-NYC will take an exciting leap forward early this year as we plan to launch our first co-development project with a private affordable-housing developer.

In this unique collaboration with Blue Sea Development Company, Habitat-NYC will have 12 units within a 50-unit affordable co-op building now under construction at 715 Fox Street, at the corner of Leggett Avenue in the South Bronx's Longwood neighborhood.

Blue Sea is building the exterior of the building. Volunteers and our future homeowners will work together to complete the interior finishing work for our 12 units. Our family partner homeowners will meet standard Habitat-NYC criteria, such as earning between 50 to 80 percent of the area median income, being first-time homebuyers and willing to contribute sweat equity.

"In New York City's dense, high-cost, urban environment," said Josh Lockwood, Executive Director of Habitat-NYC, "we continue to adapt the traditional Habitat for Humanity model

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Put Your



into It!

*Valentine's Day Build on Saturday, February 14th*

*(See page 5 for details)*

*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,

What astonishing times we are living in!

After the historic presidential election, and with our city and nation enduring a period of severe economic turmoil, many of us are seeking ways to step forward and offer service.

At Habitat-NYC, we are proud to be able to provide an opportunity for New Yorkers from all walks of life to join us in building desperately-needed affordable homes. On a recent Wednesday, I was on our construction site and met a number of our volunteers who were New Yorkers who had lost their jobs. Although these individuals were obviously enduring difficult personal circumstances, they were passionate about helping Habitat-NYC's hardworking, low-income families build their new homes.

Our work right now has never been more vital. In times of extraordinary distress, it is those most basic needs—food, shelter, clothing—that must continue to be provided. While as an organization, we have been forced to make difficult decisions to reduce costs, we know that it is in service of the thousands of low-income New Yorkers seeking a safe, quality, affordable home for their families.

With great challenges also comes opportunity. At Habitat-NYC, we are proud to be at the forefront of our international organization in adapting the traditional Habitat for Humanity construction model to our high-cost, dense urban environment. The co-development partnership profiled in this newsletter and currently underway in the South Bronx represents a first for Habitat for Humanity worldwide and an exciting new option to expand homebuilding in urban environments like New York City.

Our mandate at Habitat-NYC is to serve as many low-income families as well as we possibly can, and we are proud that you choose to partner with us in these efforts. We look forward to working alongside you—our volunteers, donors and advocates—in 2009.

Sincerely,

## Wells Fargo Clicks in \$65,000 Grant

What do a teenage girl's entrepreneurial dreams and Habitat-NYC homes have in common?

Both are big winners in the national "Someday Stories" contest sponsored recently by Wells Fargo.

Leah Larson, 17, of Massachusetts will receive the contest's \$100,000 grand prize after her mother entered a winning essay about Leah's efforts to start a magazine designed to empower teen girls.

Habitat-NYC will receive a \$65,000 grant to help build affordable homes, thanks to New York City online voters who were

invited to select their favorite essay contestant and their favorite charity.

With a total of 25,542 votes cast, Habitat for Humanity International took top place among three causes (Junior Achievement and the Boys and Girls Club of America were the other two). In turn, HFHI is splitting the grant among the three Habitat affiliates with the most online voters—New York City, Utah County and Salt Lake City.

Habitat-NYC thanks our internet-savvy supporters for their many clicks, HFHI and our longtime partner, Wells Fargo.

# Tom Brokaw Joins Habitat-NYC to Salute 2008 Builder Award Honorees

**T**om Brokaw of NBC News toasted our 9th Annual Builder Awards recipients, telling them that “we are in challenging times, but the winds of hope are much stronger and they will prevail.” Brokaw urged guests to “raise our hands and re-enlist as citizens.”

With more than 500 guests, the gala raised over \$900,000 for Habitat-NYC homes.

**Josh Lockwood**, Executive Director of Habitat-NYC, told guests:

“Never has our work been more challenging. But never has it been more important. We are so grateful that all of you are with us in our journey to transform the lives of deserving families.”

**Regina Graham** and her two children, who moved into their Habitat home two years ago, were named Family Partner of the Year. They were honored for their exemplary commitment to Habitat-NYC, affordable housing and social justice.

“Being a part of Habitat-NYC and a partner with all of you is the most powerful—and empowering—experience of my life. My son Mark was only 16, but he helped build our home, too. I’ll never forget the pride I felt the day he worked so hard his hands were covered with blisters—and his face was full of smiles,” she said.

Her daughter Lauren, 13, accepted the award with enthusiasm, proclaiming: “Habitat rocks!”

“The Grahams are extraordinary, yet their story exemplifies the hard work, sacrifices and determination of every single Habitat family,” said presenter **Deborah VanAmerongen**, Commissioner of the state’s Division of Housing and Community Renewal.

**Rabbi David Posner** of Temple Emanu-El gave the invocation. Special guests included **Jonathan Reckford**, CEO of Habitat International, and **Marilyn Gelber**, Executive Director of Independence Community Foundation, one of our most generous funders.

JPMorgan, a decades-long Habitat-NYC supporter, was saluted for its leadership role in affordable housing in New York City. **Greg Hayes**, Senior Vice President and CFO of United Technologies Corporation (UTC), Habitat-NYC’s 2007 Corporate Partner of the Year, presented the award to **Michael Carren**, National Director of Employee Engagement and Volunteerism at JPMorgan.

**Pastor Vivian Grubb**, Senior Pastor at True Holy Church in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, Brooklyn, presented Habitat-NYC’s Richard Wong Faith-in-Action Award to **Rev. Gary Simpson**, who is recognized nationwide for his pastoral work with Concord Baptist Church.

**Peter Knitzer**, Chair and CEO of Citibank, N.A. and a member of Habitat-NYC’s Board of Directors, presented the New Partnership Award to Brokers Build, an organization created less than two years ago by New York City’s real estate brokers who wanted to give back to the city.

Accepting the award was founder and chair **Stan Ponte**, President of the Coldwell Bankers Previews International division of Coldwell Banker Hunt and Kennedy, and **Mara Flash Blum**, advisory committee chair of Brokers Build and Senior Vice President of Sotheby’s International Realty.



From the upper-left, 1. Marilyn Gelber and Bob Jacobson; 2. Mara Flash Blum and Stan Ponte brandish their awards; 3. Tom Brokaw; 4. Michael Carren accepts Builder Award from Greg Hayes; 5. Board Members Shauna Long, John Kwon and Connie Sargent; 6. left, Pastor Vivian Grubb, Beverly Grubb and Rev. Gary Simpson; 7. Family Partner of the Year Regina Graham receives a warm embrace from Deborah VanAmerongen; 8. Jonathan Reckford poses with Graham Family.

Photos by Anthony Collins, Deborah Schwartz, and E. H. Wallop

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## Rockefeller Tree Gets New Lease on Life

*Lumber Will Be Used in 41 Green Homes in Brooklyn*

Christmas may be over, but for the eight-ton, 72-foot Rockefeller Christmas tree, the giving is only just beginning.

On January 10, the famous Norway spruce was taken down and fed through a massive mill set up right in the middle of Rockefeller Center. The wood will be used as lumber for shelving in the 41 affordable Habitat-NYC homes now under construction in Brooklyn.

Habitat-NYC family partner Esther Huambo and her children, Dalila Santiago, 12, and Jose Santiago, 4, were featured on NBC's TODAY Show

accepting the donated wood on behalf of Habitat-NYC.

"It feels awesome to be part of history," said Huambo, who works full-time as a student accounts assistant at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy. "I'll be able to open up my cabinets and say, 'This is part of the Rockefeller Christmas tree.'"

The family currently shares one bedroom in Esther's grandmother's home in East New York, Brooklyn.

Habitat-NYC thanks Tishman Speyer, owner of Rockefeller Center, for donating the wood from the tree.



*Esther Huambo, left, with son Jose and daughter Dalila standing in Rockefeller Center, in front of the former Christmas tree.*

*Photo by Anthony Collins.*

# Volunteers Unite for a Day of Giving & Building

During these uncertain economic times, a few New Yorkers gave a very special holiday gift—they donated an entire day to helping to build and fund affordable Habitat-NYC homes for 41 families in need.

On a frosty day in December, Habitat-NYC celebrated our first Day of Giving build and fundraiser, with 17 warm-hearted individuals volunteering to paint, lay flooring and lug plumbing equipment up and down stairs. They also raised more than \$5,000 toward construction costs, which will be matched by over \$31,000 from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

“No one should ever take for granted the ability to go home at night to one’s own home,” said volunteer **Sarah K. Cohn**. “This is a great hands-on way to help improve the lives of New York City families.”

For a number of the volunteers, this Day of Giving had an extra special meaning. Volunteer **Bryan Ramm** was recently laid off, but gave his time to help less fortunate New Yorkers.

Ramm had been working in the design and construction sector of the real estate industry. “I made the decision that, while I searched for a new job opportunity, I was going to put my skills to use for the benefit of others,” he said.

**Denise Matamorose** was downsized from a position in the high-end architectural design industry and grabbed the opportunity to fill a longtime dream of building with Habitat. “Many of us have come from well-paid jobs, and it’s difficult for us in these times,” she said. “I can imagine what it’s like for people who don’t have resources.”

The turmoil in financial services forced **Jessica Olivera** out from under the umbrella of her marketing position at Citigroup. “This is good for my community, and I’m not sitting at home watching TV.” She said. “I’m impressed with how much is getting done here!”

Some volunteers were still very much employed, and took a day off during this holiday season not to shop or visit family, but to help build Habitat homes.



*Top left, Bonni Marcus assists Bryan Ramm in measuring metal studs. Top right, David Aracena installs a door frame. Bottom right, Yolande Rose and Chris Glady take a brief break to pose for a picture.*

*Photos by Deborah Schwartz*

**Chris Glady**, a physician from Canada who has been living and working in New York for only two years, volunteered because “I want to help contribute to the growth of this city and the people who live in it. It means a lot to me to be actively involved and to work side-by-side others working toward similar goals, getting to know them and feeling a sense of making a difference.”

**Jackie Miller** was moved by meeting a future Habitat-NYC homeowner. “You see that we’re helping him create a future for himself and his family—that’s what it’s all about,” said the retail manager for Coty cosmetics. “Today, I did some painting,” she added. “Next time, I may step out of my comfort level, step it up a bit, and lay flooring.”

Future Habitat-NYC homeowner **David Aracena** worked alongside the volunteers. Aracena, who works as a porter in a luxury Upper West Side apartment building, will be moving to his new home with his wife Idaliza and four-year-old son Louis. The family currently lives in an overcrowded apartment with his sister and her family.

“Thanks to Habitat-NYC, I have a very positive outlook for my family’s future, and getting the opportunity to own my own apartment is a very big piece of the puzzle,” he said.



## Build with Your Valentine

**Come Build with Habitat-NYC on Saturday, February 14**

New Yorkers and their special Valentines can swap hearts and flowers for hammers and nails this year by participating in a special Valentine’s Day fundraising build with Habitat-NYC.

The build will be Sat., Feb. 14, starting at 9:30 am at our Atlantic Avenue construction site in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, Brooklyn. You and your valentine will put your hearts into helping to build 41 affordable homes.

Couples are asked to raise \$300 to participate. It’s easy, using our online “Friends Asking Friends” service. Your donations will help fund these homes.

For details, or to register, go to [www.habitatnyc.org](http://www.habitatnyc.org) and click on Events or contact James Andrews at 212-991-4000, ext. 330, or [jandrews@habitatnyc.org](mailto:jandrews@habitatnyc.org).

# Louisa Tatum Keeps 'Giving Back'

*Continued from page 1*

turn into something beautiful.”

Louisa’s quest for homeownership began when her landlord refused to allow her to remain in the apartment she had been sharing with her mother. Rather than jeopardize her mother’s tenancy, she began a frantic apartment hunt. On her salary as a paralegal, finding a new home that was both livable and affordable was difficult.

Her search ended with Habitat-NYC and the one-bedroom South Bronx condo Louisa was able to afford with the combination of income and sweat equity. “This opportunity opened the doors for someone as young as I am to become a homeowner in New York City. Most of the people I know either have to live with their parents or go straight to renting,” she says.

Louisa describes her small condo apartment as “quaint,” with the original exposed brick wall. She wakes up to the sound of birds chirping on her fire escape—and except for the elevated subway rumbling a

few blocks away—can almost imagine she’s living in the country. An avid cook, she is happiest in the kitchen, giving the stove a good workout.

These are only a few of the benefits of a Habitat home, Louisa says. “It gives you the ability to get to know your neighbors, to feel like we’ve become a family unit. I’ve gotten great skills. I can put up Sheetrock; I can measure and drill; I can put up my own shelves.”

She adds, “It’s great that Habitat advocates for affordable housing.” Louisa got a first-hand introduction to advocacy when she joined Habitat-NYC on a trip to Washington to meet with Congressional leaders to talk about the city’s housing crisis.

Most important, owning her home has given Louisa the security and comfort to be able to start fulfilling a lifelong dream. Hers is to become a high school teacher, and Louisa’s next goal is to make that dream come true.

## *Innovative Bronx Project*

*Continued from page 1*

to ensure that we can serve as many hard-working low-income families as humanly possible. This remarkable new project in the Bronx, the first of its kind for Habitat for Humanity in the United States, will enable us to share the burden of high construction costs, while still using our volunteer model and working with families in need.”



*Rendering of Fox-Leggett co-development project in the South Bronx.*

“In these challenging times, Blue Sea is proud to be able to collaborate with Habitat for Humanity – New York City on this green, affordable housing project,” said Les Bluestone, who is a partner in Blue Sea. “The work of Habitat for Humanity volunteers will help to defray certain construction costs, and Habitat-NYC will play a valuable role in identifying qualified homebuyers for the project, the first co-op building to be built in this neighborhood over the last 20 years.”

This collaborative building model is not the only unique feature of the Fox-Leggett Co-operative Apartments.

It will be energy-efficient and environmentally friendly. A community facility space will be built on the ground floor and leased to a not-for-profit organization, and residents will enjoy a top-floor community room and landscaped roof designed for recreation.

Habitat volunteers will be welcomed to the site in April. Construction on the project began this past July and is ongoing.

Bronx Councilwoman Maria del Carmen Arroyo said: “We are delighted to have Habitat-NYC back in the South Bronx for this exciting project. Habitat-NYC’s involvement in the project will ensure that Bronx residents will be able to roll up their sleeves to help better our community, and hardworking Bronx families will have an opportunity to become owners here.”

## Take a Video Tour of a Habitat-NYC Home

**O**n his application to Habitat-NYC, Sam Ansah penned a desperate note: “I just had quadruplets a month ago, and I occupy a one-bedroom apartment!”

Overnight, Sam and Esther Ansah’s family exploded from two members to six. Neither their home nor Sam’s salary could expand enough to accommodate this sudden increase.

In 2006, Sam, Esther, Sam Jr., Simon, Naomi

and Nora moved into their Habitat-NYC home in the South Bronx.

Now they welcome you into their bright and lively home to see for yourself how Habitat-NYC has changed their lives.

For a video visit, go to [www.habitatnyc.org](http://www.habitatnyc.org) and click on *The Ansahs* at the bottom of the homepage.



*Sam and Esther Ansah with their four children, Sam Jr., Simon, Naomi, and Nora in their Habitat Home.*