



Mommy and Me:

Building Homes for Mother's Day for Habitat-NYC

Habitat-NYC Board Member Shauna Long and her mother, Ms. Carol Jo Long joined Habitat-NYC's annual Mother's Day Women Build, as all-women construction volunteers saluted moms by building affordable homes. This is a letter Shauna shared about her experience.

Mommy and me built homes for Mother's Day for Habitat for Humanity – New York City.

As part of this mother's day build, there were press releases, TV and news coverage and articles in the newspaper. The 25 women who built that day raised over \$10,000 dollars for Habitat -NYC.

When asked, "Why do you participate in the Women Build on Mother's day?" My answer was . . .

I participate in Women Build every Mother's Day for many reasons.

My first Habitat for Humanity build was in Durbin, South Africa, in the summer of 2002. Shortly after moving to NYC in October of 2001, I read an article in the newspaper about Habitat for Humanity and I decided to spend my vacation time doing something good for others.

That summer, I flew 28 hours alone to South Africa to try to make a difference in the lives of the people there. I hadn't requested to be placed on a women only build, but I was assigned to build a brick home with a tiled roof from the ground up in five days with an incredible team of all women led by the amazing Christi Anderson of Habitat-NYC.

The house we built was for a single mom with two children. Like my mom, this South African mother was willing to do anything to make a better life for her children. I was extremely honored that I could help her make this happen. I was destined to be a part of Women Build and Habitat for Humanity from that moment forward.

Every time I participate in a Women Build I think of that South African mother with whom we built. When we gave her the keys to her home there were tears of joy and honor in all of our eyes. She changed my world and I believe I was part of changing hers.



Mom and me. Photos: Anthony Collins

I continue to participate in Habitat-NYC's Women Build every Mother's Day, because women need to support each other, empower each other and to recognize and celebrate the amazing things that we all do. Women are often expected to "do it all" and "be all for everyone." We continue to push ourselves beyond reasonable expectations. Although things have started to change, and support and recognition for women has evolved, there is no comparison to the feelings evoked by standing beside your sister, mother, daughter or girlfriend, and knowing that together we women can make a serious and long-lasting positive impact on the world.

It certainly doesn't have to be "all women all the time," but women building homes together is a very symbolic and special way to celebrate Mother's Day. A day of building will help make a life-changing impact on an entire family, which is what many moms are trying to do everyday of their lives within their own families. It is a great honor to serve others and know it will truly make a difference, especially on this day when we



Mom, the queen of the saw.

celebrate our mothers' service to us.

I was raised by a single mom, Ms. Carol Jo Long, who triumphed against all odds to raise two kids on her own with no support system, no relatives and no Habitat for Humanity. My mom managed to raise my brother and me – and get an education for herself at the same time. She did this and so much more in order to secure a better future for her children.

My mom is an amazing woman who fought for her children and for many other causes every single day of her life. My mom was able to achieve exactly what all mothers want: safety for her children; a strong education for their future; and a circle of support and love surrounding them. She raised us to believe that we could be anything, no matter where we came from, and that hard work was ALWAYS part of the formula. My mom showed me this in everything she did. Most importantly, my mom raised me to be both independent

and competent, not just in my studies, but in everything I did. The key to her very special message was to always give back.

My mom did not achieve successes without great sacrifices, nor without help from many generous strangers who gave and helped quietly, anonymously and in very profound ways. My mom always taught us to be thankful and to share and to always serve others. Nothing should be taken for granted, and serving others is one of the most important parts of life.

Mom didn't own her first home until she was almost 60 years old. While we were growing up, in each new apartment/house/shack/tent or car in which we lived, my mom always made sure to teach us how to fix and build and care for it. We left every place we lived better than we had found it.

Building a home with my mom on Mother's Day seems like such a natural thing. We have done this together at a Jimmy Carter Work Project and we have also done it all our lives. Building a home for a family is a talent my mom has shared with me, and now I share it with others.

If I am half the woman my mom is when I grow up . . . I will be satisfied. Thank you to my mom and all the moms out there who are changing the world every single day.

Peace,

Shauna



A family partner working for the future of her family.