

Habitat for Humanity Newark Celebrates 25th Anniversary Year

Non-Profit Homebuilder Founded in 1986 Plans to Increase Construction

Habitat for Humanity Newark is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2011 with an increase in its rate of homebuilding. The organization has built homes for more than 71 hard-working, low-income families since its founding in 1986. Its goal is to build eleven more in 2011.

In addition to an increase in its rate of construction, Habitat Newark is also venturing beyond the City of Newark to work in other municipalities in 2011. In November, Habitat Newark broke ground on a home in West Orange, the organization's first home outside of Newark. Homes in Irvington and other towns in Essex County are in the planning stage.

Habitat Newark is the Essex County affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International a well known ecumenical Christian organization devoted to eradicating sub standard housing in the world.

A critical factor in the ability of Habitat Newark to achieve its goals for 2011 will be the amount of funds the group is able to raise. "We are extremely grateful to the individuals and corporations that have supported us in the past," said David R. Zurheide, executive director of Habitat Newark. "With the drastically increased need for affordable housing for families hit hard by the recession, we are asking our supporters to dig deep to help us achieve our goals this year."

One source of additional income will be the matching donations from Habitat for Humanity International's Cars for Homes program. Vehicles from Essex County zip codes donated to Cars for Homes will earn up to \$25,000 matching dollars from the program for Habitat Newark from now through June. Habitat Newark has partnered with the Habitat affiliates from Paterson, Bergen County and Morris County for the grant and will be hosting a Jersey Road Trip in the spring to promote the program.

Other events planned for 2011 will be Habitat Newark's Annual Golf Outing, a 25th Anniversary Celebration fundraiser and an architecture design collaboration with NJIT students. In 2010, the collaboration with NJIT earned a \$25,000 NCARB award for the university and generated a design for affordable, energy-efficient townhomes that Habitat Newark hopes to begin building this year.

Habitat Newark uses volunteer labor and low-cost or donated land to build safe, energy-efficient homes for partner families who put in at least 400 hours of 'sweat equity' to qualify for the home. The partner families make payments on zero-interest loans based on their income level. Incoming payments allow Habitat Newark to begin work on other homes.

"We like to say we provide a hand up, not a handout," said Zurheide. "Our partner families are selected based on their need, but they also must be employed and dedicated to staying in the home to help support the neighborhood. The children of Habitat Newark partner families have grown up and gone to college since we were founded 25 years ago. Without a decent place to call home, that might not have happened."

Two of Habitat for Humanity Newark's founders were honored at the group's Gala, held in October 2010. The Reverend Christine Leslie was a founder and was Habitat Newark's first executive director. Margaret Cook-Levy, a founding member who later became the group's executive director was also instrumental in founding Habitat for Humanity affiliates in Bergen County and Hudson County.

Habitat Newark's first project was the reconstruction of an old bank building on South Orange Avenue which now serves as the organization's office and contains several co-op units. The property was purchased from the City of Newark for \$1. "At the time, the joke was that we overpaid," said Zurheide. "It was quite a project."

Since then, Habitat for Humanity Newark has built numerous duplexes and single-family homes, suitable for larger families, several of them in 'Habitat Villages' where several Habitat Partner Families live in tight-knit communities.

Habitat Newark's latest house dedication in December was for Generosity House, a single-family home in Newark's West Ward. The home was made possible by a substantial donation by John W. Scott of Upper Montclair.

The newest Habitat for Humanity home in Newark, Women Build III, built with funds raised by Habitat Newark's Women Build program is nearly complete and will be the next Habitat Newark home to be dedicated.

Volunteers and donors can call Habitat for Humanity, Newark at 973-624-3330 or visit them online at www.habitatnewark.org.

***About Habitat for Humanity, Newark:** Habitat for Humanity, Newark, founded in 1986, is an ecumenical Christian ministry dedicated to building simple, decent homes for low income families in Essex County. Using volunteer labor and tax deductible donations of money and materials, Habitat for Humanity, Newark has helped 71 low income families move into new homes. Partner families contribute 400 hours of "sweat equity" in their home or other homes financed with zero interest loans.*