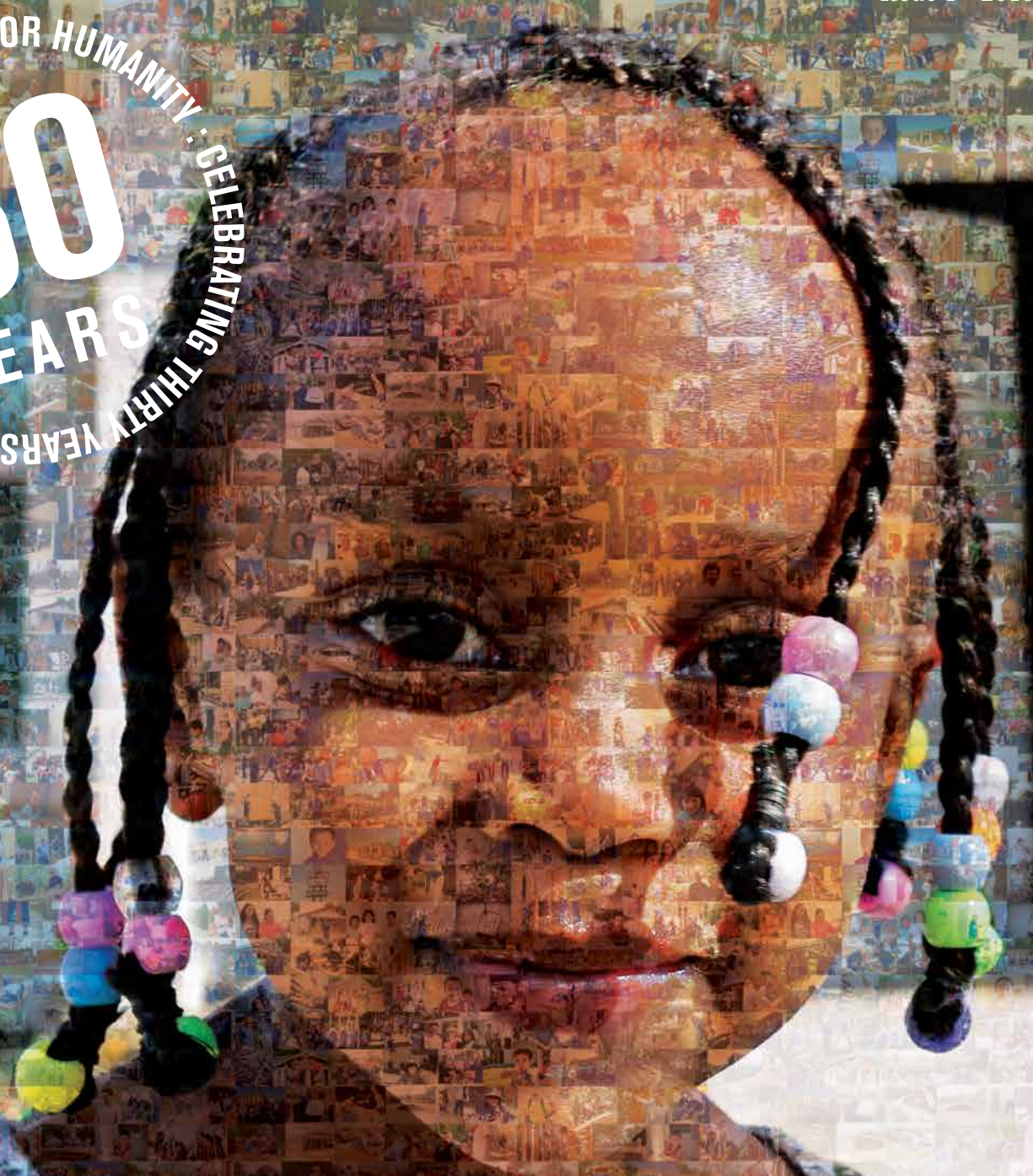


Tulsa
Habitat for Humanity®

HOME.

Issue 1 • 2018

TULSA HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
30
YEARS
CELEBRATING THIRTY YEARS OF BUILDING HOPE



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2017 - 2018

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Tulsa
Habitat
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A message from the Executive Director

As we move quickly through spring into summer, it's easy to get lost in the frenzy of the season: school is out, vacations are planned, memories are made. It's a time of activity and exploration. It's a time to move forward, to shed our old skin and become more vital people.

Caught up in the excitement of summer, it's sometimes difficult to slow down and think about where we are going. This year, as Tulsa Habitat for Humanity celebrates its 30th year of building in the community, we as an organization are anticipating the promise that the new year brings: the opportunity to build even more, to discover new and more efficient means of reaching those who can benefit from our help, and to spread hope and community throughout Tulsa. We have many reasons to be excited for 2018, from the development of the Village at Whittier Heights, a 26-unit townhouse development in the Kendall-Whittier neighborhood, to the formation of Boomtown Development Co, a new construction subsidiary that will greatly increase the amount of people Tulsa Habitat is able to reach.

Even as we celebrate the wonderful developments ahead of us, we are also looking back, not just at the past year but all the way back to our formation. We are remembering all of the people who have shaped Tulsa Habitat: the homeowners who have partnered with us and who have inspired us to persevere in our mission; the organizations and individuals who have contributed monetarily; the volunteers who have spent weekends in the sweltering summer heat or the unpredictable winter weather, building a better Tulsa with sweat and a hammer; and the employees who have shared Tulsa Habitat's vision, contributing in a myriad of ways to ensure that we are a well-oiled machine. All of these people have left an indelible mark on this organization. Without them, we would not be here.

Join us as we take a brief drive down memory lane in this issue, and thank you for helping to make Tulsa Habitat for Humanity what it is.

Sincerely,

Cameron Walker
Executive Director

3 WAYS 2 HELP



Donate

Your generosity makes the work of Tulsa Habitat for Humanity possible. You are the key to opening doors and improving lives of more families in our community. To make a donation or learn more, visit tulsahabitat.org.



Volunteer

Volunteers are the heart and soul of Tulsa Habitat for Humanity. Whether you're an individual, corporate team, community/faith-based group or just a group of friends, there are many different ways for you to volunteer. Please visit tulsahabitat.org/volunteer.



Advocate

Tell your friends, family and coworkers about our collective vision for a world where everyone has a quality, affordable place to live. If you'd like to schedule a speaker to talk to a group, contact Thom Golden at tgolden@tulsahabitat.org.



1930-2017

IN MEMORY OF JIMMIE SWINDLER

As Tulsa Habitat for Humanity looks back at its 30 years in the community, we are remembering and celebrating those people who have left their mark on the organization, those who have shown immense generosity and dedication not just to Habitat for Humanity but also to the betterment of Tulsa as a whole. Jimmie Swindler was one of those people.

Swindler had a long history of service and philanthropy. In 1995, he joined the Tuesday Morning Miracle Workers, which had recently begun rehabbing and building houses for Tulsa Habitat for Humanity. As the years went on, Swindler's commitment to the mission of Tulsa Habitat never wavered. He and his wife Nancy have been the largest individual donors for the organization. Together, they provided challenge grants, contributed the seed funding for the ReStore Rack, and sponsored nearly 40 homes. Swindler also teamed up with consumer advocate Clark Howard to build six homes in Tulsa. He helped establish the Tuesday Morning Miracle Workers Endowment Fund at Tulsa Community Foundation and consistently inspired those with whom he worked. Swindler was also a veteran, having joined the army at the age of 15 and served in occupied Korea.

Swindler made a lasting and profound impact both on this organization and on those around him, and he left behind a legacy of charity and selflessness that continues to inspire. 🙏



Jimmie and Nancy Swindler (L) with Bob and Esther Sanborn in front of the first home sponsored by the Swindlers and the TMMWs.



**30
YEARS
OF
BUILDING
HOPE**

Tulsa Habitat for Humanity celebrates a milestone in its mission to help others have a better future.



The Stanton Family

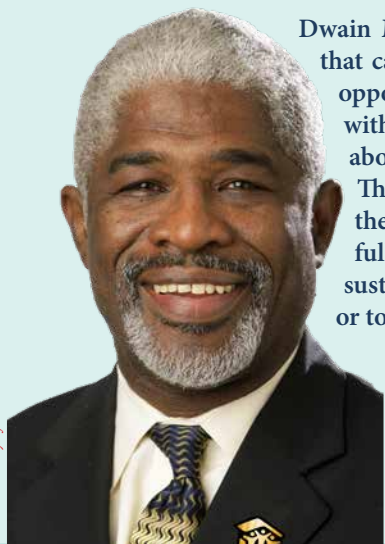
It's business as usual in the Stanton household on an unseasonably warm February evening. Music plays softly in the family room, the hub of the home. The teenagers wander periodically into the kitchen from their bedrooms in search of snacks while the children play in the backyard.

This scene is completely unremarkable, except for the fact that three months ago, the Stanton family – Johnisha, Johnthan and their five children – was cramped into a two-bedroom condo. No yard, no garage, no personal space. When Johnthan's sister died unexpectedly last year, leaving behind three children, Johnisha and Johnthan adopted them. The young family of four nearly doubled overnight, and, in the midst of this painful experience, the family was forced to reevaluate their living situation. One of Johnisha's co-workers, who had recently entered the Tulsa Habitat for Humanity Homeowner Program, encouraged the Stantons to find out if Tulsa Habitat might offer a way for them to purchase their own home. So, armed with paperwork and determination, the Stantons visited Tulsa Habitat, hoping for good news. "We kept hearing no," Johnisha recalls. "Lending companies would try to help get us on the right track, but we needed help right then. We were tired of hearing no." That day, Tulsa Habitat said yes.

Laying the Foundation

Dwain Midget, a founding member of Tulsa Habitat for Humanity, says that the group of volunteers that came together thirty years ago had a singular mission: find a way to provide affordable housing opportunities to those who wish to become homeowners but face difficulties doing so. "We came in with an understanding of the mission and goals of Habitat for Humanity," he says. "We were excited about the prospects of addressing affordable housing for some of Tulsa's most deserving citizens." The group realized that there was a gap in Tulsa's housing market, one that could not be filled by the traditional mortgage industry. There were many hardworking Tulsa families that, despite having full time jobs, did not make enough to qualify for a mortgage. "These families had the jobs and sustainable incomes, but what they did not have was an opportunity to have a safe, stable place to live or to spend time together as a family," he says.

Midget and the others had seen the Habitat model implemented nationally, and they knew it had a proven track record. This method, they hoped, would transform housing in Tulsa, opening the door for more families to have affordable, quality homes. The first several projects the group tackled were renovations of existing properties and were paid for by a pool of donations. Midget says that the number of volunteers and amount of donations slowly grew with every successful project completed. Thirty years later, it's still growing.



Dwain Midget, founding member of Tulsa Habitat for Humanity.

Weekday Wonders



TMMW co-founders Bob Sanborn (L) and Bill Yeagle in the Tulsa Habitat wood shop

remembers the variety of challenging projects the group faced in its early days. Some homes were derelict and dilapidated. Others were damaged by fire and other natural forces. In 1996, about three years after the group's inception, the Miracle Workers undertook the first new build in the history of its organization. The project showed the group just what it took to build a home from the ground up. "We went out with no equipment. We hand-dug the footings with round-point shovels," recalls Sanborn. "Two days later, we had three inches of rain. It collapsed the ditch and floated the rebar." This was the beginning of three demanding months of work. The build was completed just before Christmas, and twenty or so volunteers attended the home dedication. It was a milestone for the Miracle Workers, an experience that ultimately would shape how the group functioned.

Today, the Miracle Workers are an integral part of Tulsa Habitat for Humanity's mission. "They build houses, they build cabinets, they fundraise," says Larry Vitt, Tulsa Habitat for Humanity's Director of Facilities and Real Estate. "You name it, these guys have done it. They're huge."

Kent Powers, the current coordinator for the Miracle Workers, says that the group currently boasts 35 to 40 volunteers. They now meet twice a week – on Tuesdays and Thursdays – to build cabinetry both for Habitat homes and for the ReStore, Tulsa Habitat's home improvement retail outlet, as well as to work on build sites. Volunteer ages range from 50 to 92. But, Powers notes, all ages and skill levels are welcome.

"You don't have to have woodworking skills," Powers says. "You don't have to be a carpenter. You can ride along and pick up these skills."

"They're de facto employees," says Cameron Walker, CEO of Tulsa Habitat for Humanity. "They provide an invaluable service to the organization."

Despite the group's growth – in terms of members, volunteer hours, and financial contributions – over the years, their goal has remained the same. "The thing we do is give [homeowners] hope for the future," says Sanborn.

Growing Pains

The mid-'90s was a period of exponential growth for Tulsa Habitat for Humanity. "We built four homes for three to four years. Then we jumped to eight homes for three or four years. Then we jumped to 15 to 20 homes," says Gary Casteel, Director Emeritus of Tulsa Habitat for Humanity. When Casteel was named executive director in 1995, he became the organization's sole employee in a small office in downtown Tulsa. Casteel recalls one day, four years into his tenure, when he was driving down I-244 and noticed a sign

It started twenty-five years ago with a simple construction project. Bill Yeagle, Bob Sanborn and Jay Briscoe were tasked with building risers for a choir room in Christ United Methodist Church. After completing the project, the three retirees deemed it a success. That's when an idea struck.

Briscoe had been volunteering several weekends each year for Tulsa Habitat for Humanity, renovating houses across the city. He mentioned Tulsa Habitat's work to Yeagle and Sanborn, who became interested in helping as well. The trio met with the executive director of the organization, gathered some friends, and began reporting to housing sites each Tuesday morning to help rehab homes. The group was dubbed the Tuesday Morning Miracle Workers.

Sanborn, who was the Tuesday Morning Miracle Workers' coordinator for 20 years,



Former Tulsa Habitat CEO Gary Casteel at a wall raising with a new Habitat Family

for BOK Mortgage that read: “The Home Advantage.” His first thought was that this corporation could produce a great partnership with Tulsa Habitat for Humanity. He was right. “To get \$10,000 for a build from a corporate sponsor was a huge thing,” says Casteel. I asked for \$35,000.” Casteel’s ambition paid off. BOK agreed, and six months later Tulsa Habitat broke ground on the home, and Tulsa Habitat entered a new chapter as a professional organization with professional staff. As the number of builds increased, so did the Tulsa Habitat staff.

When Casteel hired Larry Vitt in 2000, he became the organization’s fifth employee. 18 years later, he continues to work for the organization and is the longest serving Tulsa Habitat employee. “We built 14 houses my first year,” Vitt says. “The growth was very slow in terms of production of number of houses.” Not only has home production grown during Vitt’s tenure but the breadth and scope of Habitat’s resources has as well, including the ReStore. “The ReStore has grown substantially,” he says. “This in turn helps fund our organization. The cabinet shop, when I first started it, basically had a couple of saws and that was it.” Despite the growth of Tulsa Habitat over the years, Vitt hasn’t lost sight of what drives his work. “I’ve had my hand on about 350 homes since I started,” Vitt says. “The real mission is helping people own their home, and that’s what I’m most proud of.”



Tulsa Habitat’s Director of Properties and Real Estate, Larry Vitt, stands next to a new truck just purchased by Tulsa Habitat for Humanity in 2000 (L) and again by the very same truck in 2018 (R). Vitt is Tulsa Habitat’s longest serving employee, having worked with Tulsa Habitat for Humanity for over 18 years. Fun Fact: The truck is the second longest serving employee at Tulsa Habitat.

Tulsa Revived

Kendall Whittier, one of Tulsa’s oldest neighborhoods, is experiencing a renaissance. A landmark of the city, the neighborhood had fallen into disrepair over the past several decades, with houses being damaged or abandoned and property values declining. When Tulsa Habitat’s CEO Cameron Walker took over the organization in 2015, his mission was to direct the building efforts into Kendall Whittier and the nearby Crutchfield neighborhood. The area – with its historical significance, its close proximity to schools and parks, and the availability of public transportation – fit perfectly with Tulsa Habitat’s mission. Due to the work of Tulsa Habitat and other groups such as Growing Together Tulsa and the George Kaiser Family Foundation, the neighborhood has become reinvigorated and more diverse.

In May of 2017, Randi Cowan, a second-grade teacher at Kendall Whittier Elementary, received the keys to her newly constructed home in Kendall Whittier. For years, Cowan had dreamt of owning a home, but she was doubtful she would ever achieve that dream on an Oklahoma teacher’s salary. “I’m a teacher in Oklahoma, and I can afford a home,” she says. “I never thought I would be an independent homeowner. And that feeling of pride, I’m very thankful and grateful for that.” Even though Cowan has been in her home less than a year, she has already seen the impact that her Habitat home and others have had on the neighborhood. “I had homes on both sides of me that were falling down,” she says. “Now they’ve both been torn down, and I see homes being rebuilt. I see lots of improvement.”



Tulsa Habitat homeowner, Randi Cowan, with her students at Kendall-Whittier Elementary

That Cowan lives across the street from the school in which she teaches is also a benefit, not only for her but for her students as well. “It’s really nice to be so close to my school and to be around the kids,” she says. “They see me walk home or out in the garden. They like to play around the house. It’s really been a dream come true, and it continues to feel that way.”

Walker says Tulsa Habitat for Humanity expects to complete 20 to 30 new builds in the Kendall-Whittier neighborhood this year. Much of the effort will concentrate on that part of the neighborhood located north of I-244. “We’re really hoping to pull that momentum north,” Walker says.

Building the Future

There’s an undeniable need for viable housing alternatives in Tulsa. The hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment is \$14.48 per hour, which is nearly double Oklahoma’s minimum wage. Consequently, many working families can find themselves either spending a disproportionate amount of their income on housing or trapped in substandard housing because they cannot afford another option. This lack of quality, safe, and affordable housing is coupled with the need for mixed-income developments in Tulsa. While poverty concentration in neighborhoods frequently leads to restricted educational and economic opportunities, negatively impacts health, and depresses the growth of local businesses, mixed-income neighborhoods have been shown to lead to better health and education, less crime, and more economic growth. Enter Boomtown Development Co.

In 2017, the Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation announced that a \$6.7 million grant would be awarded to Tulsa Habitat for Humanity to fund Boomtown Development, a separate nonprofit under THFH’s umbrella that will work to widen the scope of families that have a path to homeownership. Tulsa Habitat currently builds around 20 to 30 homes each year. In five years, through its work with Boomtown, it hopes to be building 125-150 annually.



Bill Major (L) announces the Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation Partnership with Tulsa Habitat for Humanity. Photo courtesy of Juan Miret.

Bill Major, the executive director of the Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation, is optimistic that this partnership will reduce the need for stable housing in Tulsa. “Based on a recent study, we have the need for 5,000 households for the area,” he says. “Our support really has to do with creating enough investment to make sure the process is able to grow and making it sustainable over the long haul. That’s where our interests and Habitat’s came together.”

Todd Klabenes, the COO of Tulsa Habitat and president of Boomtown Development, says that Boomtown will help fill that housing gap for low-to-moderate income residents through its Permanent Answers to Housing Shortages (PATHS) program. “There is a gap in housing in Tulsa for people that either can’t afford a home or are not ready to buy a home,” he says. “They are then forced to live in rental units in areas of town that may

not be suitable for them or in school districts that may not be suitable for their children. We are going to bring those kinds of people into the program and let them rent for a year or two with the idea that they will be able to own their own home.”

This fall, Tulsa Habitat for Humanity and Boomtown Development will break ground on The Village at Whittier Heights, a 30-unit townhome development located on Lewis Avenue, just north of I-244. The townhomes, with their sleek and modern exterior, will represent a grand experiment for Habitat. “At some point, there are particular individuals or families that like the idea of owning their own residence but don’t want the yards, the upkeep,” says Klabenes. “Whittier Heights provides an alternative.” The goal is to hand 30 families keys to their townhomes by summer of 2019. Klabenes adds that there’s the potential for more multi-family developments in Kendall Whittier if this project is a success. “Homeownership is still considered one of those American dreams,” Klabenes says. “Being able to go in and build homes that are going to raise property values in the neighborhood is advantageous, but neighborhood development is more than bricks and mortar.”

I’ll Be Home for Christmas

About six months after that summer day when the Stanton family entered Tulsa Habitat for the first time, Christmas lights lined the outside of their new home: a four-bedroom, two-bathroom house in Kendall Whittier. Johnisha, Johnthan, and their children stood in their front yard. Tulsa Habitat employees, community volunteers, and volunteers from Blueknight Energy, the home’s corporate sponsor, had gathered to welcome the Stanton family home. All home dedications are emotional and triumphant, but this chilly December day felt special. This house was a milestone for Tulsa Habitat and for the community: Johnisha and Johnthan were Tulsa Habitat’s 400th homeowners. “Sometimes it’s



The Stanton family receiving the keys to their new Habitat Home with Tulsa Habitat CEO Cameron Walker (R)

sod in the outdoor areas. Just a few blocks from the Stanton home in the Kendall Whittier neighborhood, Habitat recently began building a home intended for Johnisha's co-worker, the very person that introduced her to Tulsa Habitat for Humanity.

A community has grown and continues to flourish. As Tulsa Habitat commemorates its 30th anniversary, it celebrates the homes and the communities it has helped build. It celebrates the families it has partnered with, those that have inspired and influenced its mission. It celebrates the loyal workers and dedicated volunteers that have moved its goals forward. It celebrates the hard work, the hope, the time, and the love that has gone into making the organization what it is. It celebrates Tulsa, and it looks forward to its future. 🏡

kind of surreal," Johnthan says. "When we leave in the morning, we think, we have a garage? We have a yard? Neither of us have ever had that, even with our parents. We were always in apartments or living with someone. We never had something to call home, to be stewards of."

Since moving, the Stanton home has become a regular hangout for the neighborhood children. Neighbors have regularly stopped by with gifts and offers of help if the family were ever to need it. Members of the Stanton's church helped the family lay

NEW T THE NEIGHBORH D

On June 16th of last year, the de Guerra family stood in front of a new, craftsman-style home in the Kendall-Whittier neighborhood. The heavy Oklahoma heat made the day seem almost dreamlike. After hundreds of hours of sweat equity, financial literacy classes, and homeowner education, Sandra, Hilarión, and the couple's three young children finally had their first home.

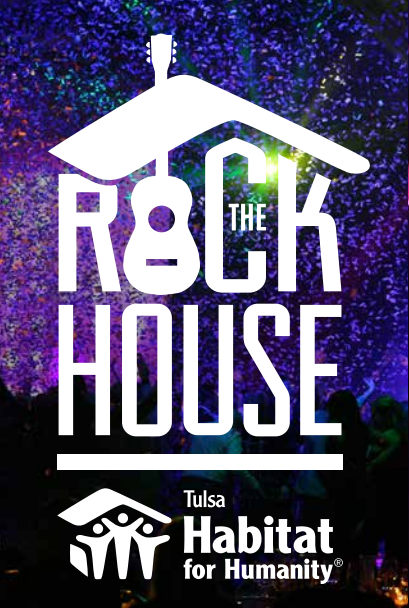
Despite living in Tulsa for thirteen years, the journey to homeownership for Sandra and Hilarión was long, requiring hard work and perseverance. In 2005, Hilarión moved to Tulsa, where he began working in construction. He was pleased to find a thriving Hispanic community in the city, and it was in this community that he met Sandra, who had moved to Tulsa from Reno, Nevada. The two later married, and they now have three children: Keyli, Axel, and Jonael.

Finding a larger, more stable home had long been a priority for the family, but they struggled to save enough money for a deposit or down payment. A friend told them that they might qualify for a mortgage through the Tulsa Habitat for Humanity program, explaining that they could earn their down payment through the completion of "sweat equity" volunteer hours, if they qualified for Habitat's affordable mortgage. The de Guerra family entered the program, began racking up the necessary volunteer hours and successfully completed all other homeowner requirements.

For Sandra and Hilarión, the most rewarding part of homeownership has been the ability to provide a stable environment for Keyli, Axel, and Jonael. "The most important thing is to have a dignified home for our children, to give them a better future," says Sandra. "Everything we do is with our children in mind." 🏡



The de Guerra family in front of their new home with Clark Howard (R) who co-sponsored the build.



Nearly 600 patrons attended THFH's Rock the House gala on April 4th at the Cox Business Center. We raised more than \$400,000 for safe, quality, and affordable homes in Tulsa. 1) Rock The House patrons getting down with the get down. 2) Stage Veteran Lance Lapinski (Tony Award Winning Musical *Millian Dollar Quartet*) channels his inner Jerry Lee Lewis. 3) Dennis Lane of Thermal Windows (L) honored with the Jimmie Swindler Spirit Award presented by Tulsa Habitat CEO Cameron Walker. 4) MC for the evening, House Of Pain's Danny Boy O'Conner, addresses the crowd. 5) Bill Major and Judy Kishner rocking the house. 6) Singer/Songwriter and Broadway star Shoshana Bean serenades Rock the House. 7) Local musician Ben Kilgore reminds us through song why the 80's were so wonderful. 8) Grammy nominated Alana Davis sings us through the 90's, including her cover of "32 flavors." 9) Local Artists ZODIAC show us how fun the 70's were. 10) Event chairs Gordy and Charlotte Guest sharing wisdom. 11) Heart of Habitat award winner Bo Van Pelt (L) receiving the award from Tulsa Habitat CEO Cameron Walker.

Humans of Habitat

SPOTLIGHT

Green Thumbs and Generous Hearts



*Jerry Greenhaw - Volunteer
Britey Farms - Tulsa, OK*

On the corner of 33rd and Jamestown sits a small, sage-green house. Serving as the office of Keith Butler, a local CPA, the house is rather unassuming: driving by, you might notice several cars in the driveway – testaments to the advent of tax season on this chilly February day – and a bit more greenery than you would find at your local H&R Block or Jackson Hewitt, with sedges and trees sprinkled around the front yard. What you would definitely notice, though, is the large plot of land that borders Butler’s office.

Although largely empty at this time of year, Butler’s land – affectionately named “Britey Farms” after Butler’s daughters – soon will be tilled. Seeds will then be planted, and, as winter gives way to spring and summer, the plot will be teeming with vegetables and fruits of all varieties: from okra, peas, cucumbers, zucchini, squash, and jalapeños to watermelon, tomatoes, strawberries, and cantaloupe. In Butler’s backyard, fresh flowers will blossom in square plots, pollinated by honeybees from a hive donated by local apiarist Greg Hannaford and tended to by Bret Roberts, another local beekeeper. With luck, there will even be some honey.

What fuels Britey Farms is charity. Everything produced on the land, from the flowers to the food, is available for purchase purely on a donation basis, and the gross proceeds from these sales are split between Tulsa Habitat for Humanity and four other charities:

Stand in the Gap, Project Elf, the Little Lighthouse, and the Huruma Dolor Orphanage in Kenya. Instead of going to the Walmart just down the street from Butler’s office, people can come pick fresh, organic fruits and vegetables or clip flowers for special occasions and pay whatever they can afford with the knowledge that their money will be used to better the community.

However, Britey Farms could not exist if it weren’t for the volunteers who devote their time, energy, and expertise. Jerry Greenhaw is one such volunteer. A retiree from Okmulgee County, Greenhaw grew a green thumb as a child, helping on his grandmother’s farm in Nuyaka. Since retiring, Greenhaw has put this passion for gardening to use. He has been involved with Britey Farms since its inception in 2012, but over the past four years Greenhaw has, as Butler puts it, “run the show.” He oversees the planting process, harvests the crops and brings them inside for customers on especially hot days, and even takes his work home with him, spending nights pickling cucumbers or making his much-applauded salsa to be sold alongside the other crops at Britey.

Greenhaw beams when talking about his work with Britey, especially regarding the customers. “People ask how much everything is. I just tell them whatever is in your heart,” Greenhaw says. And, as Greenhaw will tell you, the people who visit Britey have generous hearts. Last summer, Britey Farms raised over \$5,700 for charity.

With the arrival of spring and a new garden at 32nd and Jamestown, Greenhaw’s work is in full swing. Britey farms is excited for yet another successful harvest filled with delicious fruits and vegetables and generous people. 🌱



DID YOU KNOW WE HAVE A

DECONSTRUCTION TEAM?

Renovating your kitchen, bath or home? Call Tulsa Habitat ReStore at 918-359-5555. We'll come remove your cabinets, fixtures, trim, appliances and more, at no charge!

With one call, you can have your space ready for your contractor and donate your old items for a great cause. Old cabinets, fixtures, etc. are resold in our Habitat ReStore, with all proceeds going towards our mission to build quality affordable homes for deserving Tulsa families.

Homeowner Benefits:

- All donations are tax deductible
- Save on contractor costs for labor and disposal
- Recycle your old fixtures instead of filling up a landfill
- Resale of your donated items provides funds so we can build homes for families who need them