



Fall 2023

A WORD FROM OUR CEO

JENS CHRISTENSEN



A few weeks ago, at our Raise the Roof lunch event, we shared the story of the Ayai (said “eye eye”) family. 15 years ago, they were refugees in Nigeria. Ten years ago, they became Habitat homeowners in Chattanooga. Since then, two of three daughters have graduated from Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy (the third is there now); the older two, Abby and Annie, are away at college, both on full scholarships - one at Vanderbilt and the other Columbia.

The week after Raise the Roof, my own family set off on a Fall Break vacation to the beach - my wife, Christy, 14 year old Ezra, and three year old Luke (I went too!). This was our first family trip without 18 year old Maggie, who is now a freshman in college. We chose a beach close enough to Maggie’s school that she could possibly join us for a couple of nights - and that is exactly what she said she planned to do Thursday.

Tuesday night, as I was closing up the beach house for the evening and Christy was putting Luke to bed, I looked in the driveway and saw a different car - at first, I thought, hmmm, wonder why someone parked in our driveway? I soon realized that the car looked a lot like Maggie’s...seconds later, Maggie rounded the side of the house!

That night, sitting on the porch with waves crashing in the background, we caught up on her experience so far. We talked about classes, friends, activities - the explorations she’s made and the independence she’s felt. As she was talking, Maggie also mentioned how strange this particular trip felt for her - it was the first time she didn’t have to ask anyone if she could go or coordinate with anyone else - instead, she grabbed her stuff, jumped in the car (turning off her location on her iPhone so we couldn’t see her coming and ruin the surprise, ha) and hit the road.

As Maggie shared, I thought about the Ayai family and their daughters who literally fled civil unrest with their family at a very young age to find asylum in Tennessee, where after a couple of years they found Habitat and became homeowners, giving these girls, as they put it, a place to call home. That stable home, a strong education, a challenge from their parents - these are the things that Abby, Annie and my Maggie had in common. And now, they have the college experience and a world in which they will soon become leaders.

And that’s what we, as parents, work for, right? We want strong children who we’ve raised to be independent, yet present, and successful in their own ways. This year, Habitat Chattanooga is building our 300th home. 300 families like the Ayais. 300 homes with daughters (or sons) like Abby and Annie who are finding their own paths. 300 life-changing, transformational opportunities that you’ve made possible.

Today, as we move toward the next 300 homes, we are blessed by the support of many folks - people like Donna Williams who is challenging her peers to match her own personal pledge of \$50,000 to help others find their way home. And, people like you, who have been a part of these 300 family stories, of transformation, of hope, and of course, the building of homes that build the future of our community.

For this, I thank you.

Learn more about the Ayai Family by scanning the QR Code



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CELEBRATING 300 HOMES

The 300th Habitat home in Chattanooga represents more than just a place of shelter; it is a symbol of hope, resilience, and unity. It highlights the tireless efforts of volunteers, donors, and the dedicated Habitat team who have worked together to transform lives and neighborhoods. Beyond the tangible structure, it is a testament to the strong spirit of collective action, that has empowered 300 families to build a brighter future and strengthening the bonds of community in Chattanooga.

We are grateful to Publix Super Markets Charities for generously donating \$75,000 towards the construction of Tangela's home, providing safe and affordable shelter for her family and future generations and we are grateful to you for partnering in our work to build home, communities and hope.



Meet Tangela

Habitat's 300th home is being built for Tangela and her family. For Tangela, 2021 was a tumultuous year full of hardship that felt like a "rushing storm." Her sister passed away unexpectedly, her brother had a stroke, and her marriage came to a sudden end, all in the span of a few months. After many tears and prayer, she felt it was time for a change.

With encouragement from her kids, grandkids, and mother, Tangela applied for Habitat's housing program in the fall of 2022. Since then, Tangela has blown through 200 sweat equity hours, all the while working overnight shifts at Sanofi and being a mom and grandmother. Tangela sacrificially supports her family and community, but now as she says, "God has given her a turn" through the Habitat homeowner program.

"Over these last few years, I felt like I was living through a storm. But finally, my storm has come to a calm," Tangela says. "I am living the Habitat mission: better homes, better community, and a better world. It feels like a fairytale for me."

Since the groundbreaking on October 5th, we are now working alongside Tangela to build her home while simultaneously celebrating the 299 other families before her whose lives have been changed through the safety and security of homeownership.



Learn more about Tangela's story by scanning the QR Code



Envisioning our Future

In a heartwarming act of generosity, Drs C.Y. & Ruth Liu have recently donated nearly 5 acres of property off of Shallowford Road to Habitat for Humanity of Greater Chattanooga. With no significant affordable housing in the area, we are excited about the possibility of developing homes in a neighborhood rich with good schools, good jobs, and accessible transportation. Thank you Ruth and C.Y.!

Stay tuned as we develop our vision for the project and for more information on how you can get involved! And, if you or someone you know might be interested in following the Liu's lead and donating property for future builds, please reach out to our CEO, Jens Christensen at jchristensen@habichatt.org.



VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of the dedicated volunteers who selflessly contribute their time and skills to further Habitat for Humanity's mission of building homes and hope, including:

ELLIOTT DAVIS

ROTARY



CHI MEMORIAL ORTHOPEDICS

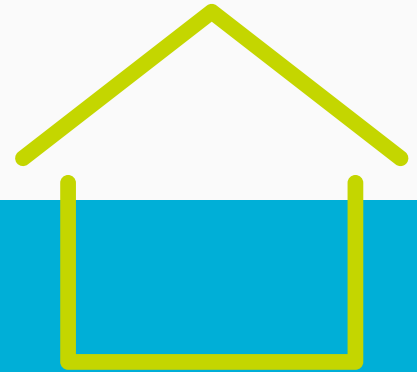


BOBBY STONE FOUNDATION





1201 E MAIN ST
CHATTANOOGA, TN 37408



THANK YOU FOR BEING A PART OF OUR FIRST 300 HOMES BUILT IN CHATTANOOGA!