



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
OF SAN ANTONIO

Non-Profit
Organization
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Volunteering.....From Page 3

A single mother of three, she said she and her children lived in a rented house before she purchased her Habitat home. "It was hard," she said, pausing to gather her thoughts. "Sometimes I had to get two jobs just to make ends meet. But, with God everything is possible." She applied for the Habitat program on the encouragement of a friend. "I was kind of hesitant, but when I did apply, I was happy I did," she said. "It was

so exciting when they started building it. When I saw the walls going up, I was like 'wow that is my house.'"

In the five years she's been a homeowner, she's watched two children graduate from high school and is watching as her third finishes high school. This is their home "forever," she said. Reyna plans to continue volunteering for the local program and hopes to get her children, now 19, 18 and 16 involved.

Calendar of Events

- TUESDAY, MARCH 4,** 6:00 p.m.
- Volunteer Orientation
- Habitat Office
- 311 Probandt
- No RSVP Required
- TUESDAY, MARCH 11,** 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.
- F.I.A.T. (Faith in Action Team)
- San Pedro Presbyterian Church
- 14900 San Pedro Ave.
- *RSVP to Jennifer Gonzalez
- FRIDAY, MARCH 14,** 1:00-2:00 p.m.
- Hab-i-tour
- Habitat Office
- *RSVP to Shelly LaFleur
- TUESDAY, APRIL 1,** 6:00 p.m.
- Volunteer Orientation
- Habitat Office
- 311 Probandt
- No RSVP Required
- FRIDAY, APRIL 18,** 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.
- Hab-i-tour
- Habitat Office
- *RSVP to Shelly LaFleur
- TUESDAY, MAY 6,** 6 p.m.
- Volunteer Orientation
- Habitat Office
- No RSVP required

Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio

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Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio is an ecumenical, Christian organization working in partnership with God's people in need to build simple, decent and affordable homes without interest or profit, thereby witnessing God's love in action.



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OF SAN ANTONIO



"Transforming lives through a hand up, and not a hand out"
A Habitat For Humanity of San Antonio Publication
Issue 35 November 2009

Single Mom Builds Home for Sons

For her wedding day, Loree Elliott was not spending the day at the spa for a facial or a manicure, she was working. "I want to get on that roof," she said, looking up at the roof of a Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio home. "Not today...I need you for our wedding," her husband-to-be Edwin Tamayo replied jokingly.

The HFHSA volunteers opted for a day of service in lieu of a traditional wedding. They were joined by family and friends, who worked alongside them. "We are not doing anything extraordinary.

Many people show up every weekend and give of their time for Habitat for Humanity. We just want to be among that group," Elliott said in a recent interview. "This is how we want to start our life together." Instead of worrying about last minute details for their June 28 wedding, the couple spent the day hammering, climbing up and down ladders, painting and working to finish construction of the home, which

was being built for a single mother of three. "I'm not too worried right now," said Elliot when asked if she was nervous about the wedding ceremony to be held later in the afternoon. She immediately went back to surveying work still needed on the fascia of the house.



Loree Elliott with her son Jasper and dog Lulu in front of her brand new home.

HFHSA looking out for local interests

Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio, Inc. (HFHSA), which has been working with low-income families to help them build affordable homes for more than 31 years in San Antonio and Bexar County, filed suit Friday, January 4, against Habitat for Humanity International, Inc. (HFHI). The suit seeks to maintain the local control that has been critical to the success of the San Antonio organization since it was founded in Faith Lytle's kitchen in 1976.

In its 31-year history, Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio has built more than 500 homes with families in need. In fact, the first Habitat for Humanity home constructed in the United States was built by the San Antonio group on Hidalgo Street, on the city's West Side, in 1976. It is still occupied by that first Habitat family. The average annual income of families moving

into homes built by Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio in 2007 was \$20,000. We plan to build 45 more homes this year. The franchise agreement the International organization wants us to sign would undoubtedly raise the cost of the homes we build and the sad result would be that many of San Antonio's most needy and deserving families would be priced out of these homes.

The San Antonio organization is one of the most efficient Habitat groups in the country, with 100 percent of every donated dollar going directly into the local building program. The local group raises money needed for its administrative costs through the proceeds from their three Home Centers, home improvement thrift shops that are open to the public. The lawsuit notes that the International group is trying to force a drastic and fundamental change to the

relationship between the two organizations by requiring the San Antonio organization to enter into a franchise agreement that would give the International organization control over the San Antonio group's assets and prevent San Antonio from setting its own policies and procedures. As the lawsuit states, the franchise agreement that International is trying to force on San Antonio would give HFHI "total, complete and unilateral control over a local 'affiliate,' including all of its bank accounts, donations, buildings and other property." In fact, HFHI would have the authority to amend its policies and increase the fees it requires from local affiliates at any time. For more than a year, Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio has attempted to negotiate the terms of the franchise agreement with HFHI. The International group has refused to negotiate in good faith, requiring us to sign the same franchise agreement as all other affiliates even though San Antonio has continuously operated as a separate, autonomous non-profit organization from International for more than 31 years. The San Antonio organization was content to maintain the status quo and continue its existing relationship with International. But because we refused, as of December 31, 2007, to sign the franchise agreement, HFHI is classifying HFHSA as an affiliate "not in good standing," effectively penalizing HFHSA for attempting to faithfully perform and protect its local ministry and mission "to work in partnership with God's people in need to build simple, decent and affordable homes."

The San Antonio organization seeks damages and a declaration that it can continue to maintain its independence from HFHI, as well as continue to use the name, "Habitat for Humanity" in Bexar County without being accused of trademark infringement and unfair competition.

We believe our long history of building quality homes with good stewardship of donor dollars has

Hard Hats, Hammers ... And Wedding Bells

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earned San Antonio that right. HFHSA regrets that the court system had to be involved to resolve this matter, but after prayerful consideration and consultation with counsel, our Board of Directors concluded, as a matter of law and faithful Christian stewardship, we had no choice but to protect the assets and the work entrusted to us by our donors and volunteers for the benefit of families in need in San Antonio and Bexar County. We were convinced that signing this franchise agreement would not only put in jeopardy all of the assets and good will built up in San Antonio over the last 31 years, but also that it would harm our ability to accomplish our mission, while doing nothing more than supporting a growing national bureaucracy. Signing the franchise agreement in its current form seemed to us both foolish and irresponsible.

"The average annual income of families moving into homes built by Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio in 2007 was \$20,000"

In taking this necessary action, we wish to reassure all of our supporters that HFHSA will not use any donated funds for litigation expenses. Donors can be assured their donations will only be used to build houses in Bexar County. Donors to

Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio include more than 2,000 local churches, San Antonio-area businesses, individuals and foundations.

Habitat for Humanity of San Antonio has always been part of a Christian movement and mission – to build simple, decent and affordable homes with people in need – not a franchise. We fail to see how giving up local control and being absorbed by a corporate entity helps in that mission. We believe that if we agreed to Habitat for Humanity International's franchise contract, we would sacrifice local control, hand over decision making to out-of-town overseers and watch money leave the city for the national organization, and as a result, would see fewer houses built here in San Antonio and Bexar County for needy families.

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Many people show up every weekend and give of their time for Habitat for Humanity. We just want to be

among that group," Elliott said in a recent interview. "This is how we want to start our life together." Instead of worrying about last minute details for their June 28 wedding, the couple spent the day hammering, climbing up and down ladders, painting and working to finish construction of the home, which was being built for a single mother of three. "I'm not too worried right now," said Elliot when asked if she was nervous about the wedding ceremony to be held later in the afternoon. She immediately went back to surveying work still needed on the fascia of the house. They also took time to graciously visit with a host of well-wishers and the occasional news reporter, all the while trying to keep the focus on Habitat and its work, not on themselves or their wedding. "It's been very interesting," Elliott told one reporter, who then asked if either the bride or groom had anything else to add. "I'd like to add something. I love her," Tamayo spoke up looking over to wink at his fiancé.

The couple, who met on eHarmony.com, said this choice for their wedding ceremony is a perfect tribute to the service-oriented lifestyle they believe in. "I've always thought it [Habitat] was a great thing," Tamayo said. "This is what we want our lives to be about."

Held under the volunteer tent on the construction site, the ceremony was set to the backdrop of the faint sounds of hammering from the six homes still under construction, but the couple didn't seem to mind as their pastor, Doug Robbins of Bandera Road Community Church officiated the wedding. "God has brought together this couple in a beautiful, ro-

mantic, almost spiritual kind of way," he commented as he welcomed family and guests to the ceremony. While Tamayo's children, 9-year-old Ian and 7-year-old Jordan, watched, the bride and groom seemed unphased by the sounds of construction in the background or the occasional noise of a truck passing by.

As part of the ceremony, Tamayo serenaded his bride with his own version of Natalie Merchant's "Beloved Wife." As he finished, he was joined by his children and the trio sang "Going to the Chapel" as a smiling Elliott looked on. Dressed in simple, white shirts printed with the words "The Bride" and "The Groom," the two held hands and began to recite their own personal vows. "I've been dreaming of you all my life," Elliott began, voice cracking as she held back tears.

She confessed she wasn't sure until that moment of exactly what she was going to say. And then it was the groom's turn. "If Loree agrees to marry me ... works a day out in the sun ... and listens to me sing, we are set," he laughed as he stared lovingly at his bride.

Venezuelan-born Tamayo is a local physician and has lived in San Antonio for about 15 years. Elliott moved to San Antonio from Dalhart a few weeks prior to the wedding. "We do believe God used eHarmony to bring us together. We are the people God made us to be with,"

she said. Both say that they enjoyed the experience and the construction knowledge they gained from it. They both plan to continue their volunteer relationship with HFHSA to not only fulfill their belief in service, but to help the organization continue it's mission of helping people help themselves.



Loree Elliott and Edwin Tamayo. Edwin is showing his wife how well the wood was nailed

Homeowner Gives Back Through Volunteering

Paula Reyna of San Antonio has lived in her Habitat for Humanity home for five years, and says she is just as excited today about her home as she was the first night she moved into it. "I don't think it has sunk in yet that it is MY home," she laughed recently, placing emphasis on the word "my." When approached by co-workers this spring about volunteering for the program, Reyna, who works in housekeeping for Nix

Healthcare, didn't hesitate. "Right away I wanted to join. I think it's an awesome program," she said. "I try to encourage others to both apply for a home and volunteer. I know how it feels to get something for yourself." Reyna spent a day laying the groundwork for someone else to experience that feeling as she assisted with landscaping and helping put the finishing touches on a Habitat home in the Palo Alto community.

See Volunteering...Page 4