



Habitat for Humanity® Central Arizona

Builder's Bulletin Fall 2015



Habitat for Humanity Central Arizona is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that seeks to put God's love into action by bringing people together to build homes, communities and hope.



Interview with Roger Schwierjohn

How did you first get started with Habitat for Humanity Central Arizona?

I was first introduced to Habitat in 1995 when the bank I was president of sponsored a home with Habitat for Humanity Valley of the Sun in the South Ranch subdivision. During the build, I volunteered every Saturday along with approximately 20 other bank employees and the Rodriguez family. After the house was completed, I continued to volunteer on Saturdays because of the impact the Rodriguez family made on me and because Habitat had a whole subdivision to build with so few volunteers. In March of 1996, I was asked by my good friend Denny Mitchem to serve on the Board as a Director. And the rest, as they say, is history.



What has changed between when you first took your leadership role and now?

A lot. Since June, 2006 the organization is now much larger, with obvious increases in staff size, board size, size of service area, types of services/products offered, and number of families served. Our staff size has increased approximately 3-fold, the size of our Board of Directors has doubled to 33, families served has increased approximately ten-fold to approximately 300 per year and the service area now includes Maricopa County and Pinal County.



Our balance sheet has almost doubled and our business model is proven to be sound even in bad economic times. Our product/service list has grown to include new construction, home renovations, home repairs, reconstructs, neighborhood revitalizations, emergency home repairs, and contract services for public and non-profit industries.

The community's acceptance of Habitat has changed dramatically as well. The community has grown to not only accept, but to embrace the mission of Habitat. In the early 1990's, the community was very much against the idea of Habitat building affordable housing, as "Not in My Back Yard" attitudes permeated throughout our service area.

Continued >>

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An Interview with Roger Schwierjohn (continued)

In recent years, Habitat has been able to expand it's services to serve more local families in need. What has Neighborhood Revitalization meant to you?

It means that HFHCAZ is now able to serve more families and those families are families that we did not serve prior to offering this product. With this product, HFHCAZ can intensify and magnify the impact it makes to include an entire neighborhood. It also means that we are able to introduce more people to the Habitat organization and inform more people about options for safe, decent, affordable housing.

Can you share a favorite memory or story from your time with Habitat Central Arizona?

In 1995, Sears National Bank sponsored its first home. The home was one of the first homes built on the northern-most street, Alta Vista, of the subdivision called South Ranch. Early on our first day of construction, neighbors from across the street, circled our build site carrying banners, signs, shovels and rakes, protesting the construction of affordable housing in their neighborhood. They feared that our new homes would lower the value of their homes. I feared for the safety of my employees that day, but the Executive Director of Habitat, with the help of the Phoenix Police, was able to convince the neighbors to allow us to proceed.

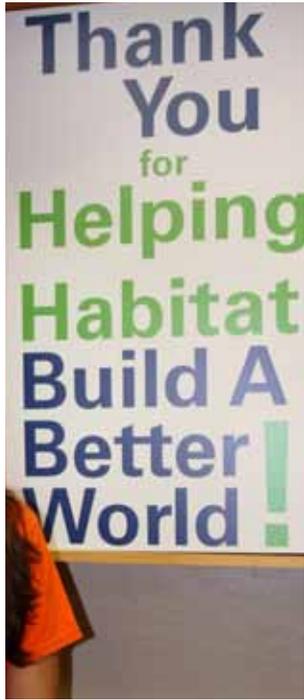
Seven years later, we were constructing the last homes in the subdivision of 195 homes on the subdivision's southern-most street, Vineyard. I was now House Leader and while doing the early-morning safety talk, I noticed a lady who did not seem to be part of the sponsor group. We chatted and I asked what group or company she was from. She replied that she was not with any group or organization, but rather she and her husband lived on the north side of Alta Vista and that they were impressed with the homes we were building. Her husband wanted to see if they might qualify to be a Habitat homeowners. She later admitted to being part of the group that had protested our work back in 1995, in the early phases of the subdivision. I knew then that we were on the right track!

"I have been blessed to be a small part of the Habitat organization. I will always remember my time with HFHCAZ. We have some really great people doing some really great things. We have a great mission and great support from our community. I am so excited about the future of HFHCAZ. May God bless HFHCAZ!"



Roger G. Schwierjohn
President/CEO

Habitat for Humanity Central Arizona



Family Spotlight

It started by chance that **Sandra Marin** picked up a flier posted at the library. It was a Habitat flier. A flier that told her decent, affordable housing was possible - even for her.

Marin, mother of three boys; a set of twins and an older son says, "I didn't know much about Habitat, so I didn't know how it worked." Although embarrassed to ask for help, she held onto the flier anyway. She was also suffering from a shoulder injury that had claimed her career in massage therapy.

Three years later, Marin was fresh out of a relationship and she and her boys were living with her mom. To say the least, it was cramped. She decided to apply for homeownership with Habitat. "I have to at least give it a shot." she says. "What's the worst that can happen?"

Her application was approved in about 30 days and the home buying process began just a few weeks later.

Marin's biggest concern was finding an available lot in Chandler, where she currently lives, so her children wouldn't have to switch schools.

She was in line behind two families to select her home. Both families already lived in Chandler, so the odds weren't great. But, as the selection process went forward, to Marin's surprise, she was offered a lot in Chandler!



"It's perfect! Better than what I had hoped for."

Her new home will be a short distance from her mother and even closer to the library that her family frequents.

Building for Marin's home will begin October 24th. Currently, she has begun to take home buyer classes and is putting in her sweat equity doing office work at Habitat every week.

"Going through the home buying process - It's a lot of fun!" she said. **"Having your own place is just a blessing."**

Marin is looking forward to having a home she can share with her family and friends and the boys are excited to get a dog for their new backyard.



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Central Arizona

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Through the sale of new and gently-used furniture, home goods and building materials, **our five Valley discount home stores are supporting the Habitat for Humanity mission** of building, renovating and repairing homes in Central Arizona for deserving families in need of decent, affordable housing.

New Habitat Homeowners

Baca - Phoenix

The Verdes'
Habitat for Humanity Project



Lopez - Avondale

Fund for Humanity

Bigirimana Revokata

Helms Briscoe
JP Morgan Chase
Mighty United Methodist Coalition
Northeast Valley Lutheran Coalition



Medina - Chandler

City of Chandler HOME
PCL
Saint Andrew the Apostle Catholic
Faith Community,
Sun Valley Community Church,
Wells Fargo

Burgos - Phoenix

Southeast Valley Lutheran Coalition
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City of Glendale HOME
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Thrivent Builds Global Village

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Fund for Humanity



Rojas - Peoria

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Gerstner - Apache Junction

Superstition Coalition



Vail - Peoria

APS
City of Peoria

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City of Phoenix Youthbuild



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Lutherans Building for Christ
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Vicario Hernandez - El Mirage

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In Memory of Bill Herr



Volunteer Spotlight

As Habitat for Humanity Central Arizona expands new endeavors such as its Home Repair program it seems only fitting that new additions to the Habitat family help take the reins of these projects. One such example is **Camille Perez**.

Camille's first experience with Habitat came in 2012 when she joined her sister on a build. "At the time," Camille remembers, "the company my sister worked for, Total Transit, was sponsoring a home. After finding out I decided to

tag along and help out." Camille would join her sister repeatedly when she could, but after a year of being off site she decided to start volunteering on her own.

When she returned to Habitat in 2014 she was fortunate to work with House Leader Joe Genovese and his crew. Of Joe and his team **Camille says "I could not have asked for a more welcoming, encouraging, supportive group to be a part of. Everyone on that team encouraged me to continue working alongside them."** This attitude helped her to decide to take the step and become a Team Leader in Training.

Camille works in accounting in her real job but fittingly says Jimmy Carter is one of the reasons she's with Habitat. When asked why she volunteers, Camille cites Carter's quote about a faith that demands people try to make a difference the best way they know how. Similarly, **the satisfaction she gets from Habitat is from "the joy of being around like-minded people that just want to make a difference... It really is God's love in action."**

Camille and Joe, along with Steve Gibbons, Michael O'Connor, Ned Earley, Les McWhirter Dale Kollars, Pam Steber and Suzanne Eldredge served as the main leadership group during the first season of the Canyon Corridor Project, a multi-year venture where Grand Canyon University is subsidizing home improvement jobs around the school's campus. Camille is impressed with what GCU is doing and says "It has been awesome to see a Christian university put forth the effort to help raise up the community around them." On the first day of the project, 150 GCU volunteers helped Habitat complete eight projects south of the school's main gate. That day has been the most memorable for Camille so far.

At Habitat we're always impressed with what our new leaders like Camille and long-time regular volunteers are capable of. **Everything we do at Habitat would be impossible without our dedicated leaders and recurring volunteers.**



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Donor Spotlight

The Verdes' Habitat for Humanity Project isn't new to sponsoring builds. They have been building since 1994, and this year they embarked on their 20th home sponsorship!

The late **Jim Isaacson** has always been the face of **The Verdes'** group. In 1994, he came to Habitat wanting to make a difference and when asked how he was going to come up with \$65,000 from the community to sponsor a home, he replied, "We'll write a letter." Not only did the letter work that year, but it's been working ever since.

"He [Jim Isaacson] was the one that rallied the troops," says Habitat Assistant Director of Development, Liz Pabst-Wanless. Isaacson spearheaded the project, and now the rest of The Verdes' want to continue his legacy.



They still come out every Tuesday and Thursday to build and always have a great turn out. Not to mention, their notorious "Donut Fund" is never empty. But, what really resonates about The Verdes' group is the impact they have on their homeowners.

Jessica Ruemler is one of those homeowners impacted. The Verdes' built her family's Phoenix home in November 2013.

"We felt like our home was in the hands of a caring, loving group of people," Ruemler says. "It was such a blessed experience. We look back on that special time with them, and are grateful to have had it. Jim and his crew are **special people and they will forever live in our hearts, and in our home!**"



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