

The Journey to Homeownership



"Somedays it was difficult to motivate myself to get out there and swing a hammer, but when you get to the site, there are all these volunteers from all over and they're not complaining, they're excited to be there, excited to meet us, it just makes you happy."

Jahaira Malave-Reyes

The Malave-Reyes family is one of more than 100 families who own a Habitat for Humanity home in New Haven County. Each home built by Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven is a collaborative, community effort. Habitat homes are built with funds donated from the local community and through the generosity of more than 2,400 volunteers each year.

Dedication day, the ceremony marking the completion of a Habitat home, at 84 Clifton Street in New Haven last April was a joyous day. Angel and Jahaira and their three children, Nerelyn (14), Angel Jr. (8), and Adrian (4), stood on the porch of their new home and said "thank you" to the crowd for the opportunity to own a home of their own. Seven months later, the Malave-Reyes family's gratitude and joy has grown even deeper as they experience the positive changes that come with living in a Habitat home.

Angel and Jahaira grew up in West Haven and New Haven. They met as co-workers at Honeywell (where Angel still works, 17 years later). At the time they applied for Habitat's program they were renting a three-bedroom apartment in New Haven that they could

afford. However, as often happens with people living paycheck to paycheck, the tradeoff for affordable rent is often unsafe and substandard living conditions.

Their apartment was located on the first floor of an old, poorly maintained building. The sewer system would back up when the rains were heavy. The plumbing in the building was neglected to the point where the pipes were leaking behind the walls and a serious mold problem developed. They searched for safer apartments with rent they could afford, but obstacles stood in their way: high rents, one of the highest occupancy rates in the United States, a lack of rental units that can accommodate families, and the difficulty of coming up with funds for a deposit. Angel and Jahaira were unable to convince the property owner to fix the plumbing and mold problem, even when they sought an attorney's help.

Sadly, their youngest son, Adrian, developed severe asthma and other respiratory problems that they and their doctor felt were at least partially attributable to their apartment. Members of their church told them about Habitat's program and they applied. Angel said, "I didn't dare hope that our application would be approved. It seemed too perfect and I didn't want to be disappointed." After two rounds of applications, a review of their financial and work history, and two interviews, including an interview in their home at the time, the family was approved by the Habitat Board of Directors. Angel and Jahaira described the notice of approval as one of the best moments of their life.

Angel and Jahaira began volunteering at the site of their future home in January, the coldest time of the year, along with hundreds of community volunteers and led by Habitat's construction staff. Every Saturday Angel, Jahaira and



The Malave-Reyes home: 84 Clifton Street, New Haven

(continued on back)

Help Us Build Community

...one house, one family at a time

For more information about Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven, Inc. visit www.habitatgnh.org or call 203-785-0794

\$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$35

Other \$ _____

You can make your tax-deductible gift to:
Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven, Inc.
37 Union Street, New Haven Connecticut 06511

Check Credit Card: Visa MasterCard AmEx

Amount \$ _____

Name (as it appears on card): _____

Card Number _____

Exp. Date _____

Phone _____

Signature _____

Email: _____

Please return this form in the enclosed envelope, or contribute online at www.habitatgnh.org. Thank you!

If you wish to be removed from the HfHGHNH appeal list, please return this form with your request or email jrook@habitatgnh.org

Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven does not sell, rent or give away names of donors.

their parents and siblings would volunteer. "It was COLD" said Jahaira, laughing. "Somedays it was difficult to motivate myself to get out there and swing a hammer, but when you get to the site, there are all these volunteers from all over and they're not complaining, they're excited to be there, excited to meet us, it just makes you happy." As Angel says about the volunteers. "We were there to build something together and they didn't even know me. I can't express how much that means to me." Angel and Jahaira had supportive employers that allowed them to take all of their personal and vacation time in blocks to work on the house.

Since moving in last May, Angel described how he feels about the house: "The house has changed me. I know my kids are safe and we're secure now. We may never be rich, but we will be okay and we're making plans for the future. It's everything that matters." The kids are attending school in the neighborhood and they've settled into the Fair Haven community. Nevelyn, now a 9th grader, invites friends over frequently. The younger kids love being outside, Jahaira says it's still a novelty for them. "In our old apartment", Jahaira said, "the backyard was a paved parking lot." Best of all,



Top: Nevelyn & Jahaira; Above: Angel & Adrian

Adrian's asthma has dramatically improved since moving and some of his respiratory issues have resolved themselves. He will soon turn 5, and his future is brighter than ever.

The Malave-Reyes family purchased their home from our organization with a 25-year, zero percent interest mortgage. A typical Habitat home sells for \$96,000 with a monthly mortgage payment of \$300, excluding insurance and taxes. Owning a well-built, Energy Star certified home provides stability and allows families to launch themselves into a cycle of progress, possibility and a better quality of life. Homeownership rekindles hope and allows families and our community to thrive.

There are many hard-working families that qualify for Habitat's program. We need your help to serve them. Please help us by donating today.

2016 is Habitat for Humanity's 30th anniversary year. We are privileged to be builders, not only of houses, but of families, lives and hope. With your support, we can continue to work side by side with those who need it most to build a home of their own.



Habitat News

Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven | WINTER 2016

ReStore

In 2013, HfHGNH opened a ReStore, a donation-based retail store, located at 286 South Colony Road, Wallingford. Proceeds from the store are used to build Habitat homes in New Haven County. The ReStore sells new and gently used building materials, appliances, furniture and home improvement items such as windows, doors, cabinets and more. The ReStore has successfully attracted a strong following of customers and donors.

Store hours are Tuesday-Thursday, 10am-6pm and Friday-Saturday, 10am-4pm.

Items may be donated by calling (203) 774-7560 or emailing restore@habitatgnh.org. Pick up service is available for large items.

Volunteer!

Every year volunteers donate thousands of hours to HfHGNH. The support of individual and group volunteers helps us achieve our goal of building affordable, decent homes for qualified working low income families.

Construction: Habitat volunteers build and rehab houses from start to finish under the guidance of our professional construction staff. No prior construction experience is necessary!



ReStore: At the ReStore in Wallingford, volunteers help with customer service, merchandise display, price research and other tasks as needed. Contact the Habitat Volunteer Coordinator at (203) 785-0794 or register and sign up via Volunteer Up on our website at www.habitatgnh.org

Cars for Homes

We are able to help more low-income families thanks to donations of cars and other motorized vehicles through the Cars for Homes Program. Have a car, RV, boat, motorcycle or other vehicle you want to get rid of? All conditions accepted! The program is easy and convenient. Call 877-277-4344 for more information or to schedule a pick up. In return, you will be provided a tax receipt, and all proceeds from your donation will help build Habitat homes in New Haven County.

Helping Veterans

In 2015, Habitat GNH launched a Veterans Build program that provides homeownership opportunities for veterans in need. We completed the first home for Cheryl Eberg, a veteran of the U.S. Army and Connecticut National Guard. Construction of our second Veterans Build home will soon be underway. The future homeowner is Michael Doyle, a former U.S. Marine sergeant, who is currently employed by the West Haven V.A. as a Peer Specialist. Mike's home will be completed by late spring 2017.

 Like us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/habitatnewhaven/>

Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven | 37 Union Street, New Haven, CT 06511 | (203) 785-0794 | www.habitatgnh.org