



Imagine living across the street from a county jail and not knowing whether alarms being sounded signaled a drill or a real emergency. This fear is what Harriet Banks dealt with when she lived in her apartment across from the jail in New Haven. She vividly remembers making her kids come inside and hurrying them into the apartment for fear that a prisoner had escaped. Harriet's small apartment barely accommodated her two daughters, plus five young nieces and nephews for whom she had accepted legal guardianship.

Affording a home large enough for her family was out of the question for Harriet. Working as a Medical Assistant at St. Raphael's, and with her newly expanded family, Harriet wanted to stay in the city. After watching a news program, Harriet learned about Habitat's housing program, and shortly after she applied. In 2001, the organization acquired a large, historic Victorian home on Butler Street. The home was a total wreck after being open to the elements for years. It was a corner home with a notorious history of being an eyesore and a "problem" house in the neighborhood. Despite the intimidating situation, Harriet was absolutely thrilled with her future home and never voiced doubt through the long rehab process.

Harriet remembers encouragement and support from staff and volunteers. When asked how she feels about the volunteers, it is clear that Harriet appreciates them

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deeply. "Thanks to you, I have the opportunity to have my own home, and it would not have been possible without you. All the Saturdays you gave up, the dirty faces and boots after a hard day are all appreciated, and it touches me that people who did not know me or my family got out of their beds to help."

Today Harriet loves her home even more than the day she moved in. All the holidays are held at her house. There are enough rooms to accommodate her family. Her porch,

which allows her to enjoy her garden, is her favorite spot. Inside, the walls are filled with family photographs. It is a place where Harriet can relax after a day of work. It is Harriet's first, and, she hopes, her forever home. She sends her thanks to everyone involved with the project. "Building my home with all of you was the best experience of my life."

Like all Habitat homeowners, Harriet helped build her home with 400 hours of "Sweat Equity" and when it was completed, she purchased it from Habitat with a 0% interest, 25-year mortgage.

Our organization serves local people and involves hundreds of community volunteers each year. We have a full slate of homes scheduled to be built in 2012 and funds are needed to give qualified families the life changing opportunity to own a home. As we near the end of the year, please consider making a gift to Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven.



## 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](http://www.habitatgnh.org)  
or call (203) 785-0794

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