



# Volunteers

The Foundation relies on the energy and contributions of many volunteers, in addition to its Board, to serve Greater New Haven. Each brings unique perspectives and experiences that represent the very best of our community. We remain grateful and inspired by their deep-rooted commitment to this place we call home.



## A Home of Their Own

Habitat for Humanity builds homes, stability for families and neighborhoods.

Alicia Tirado and her daughter, Dalilah, shared a cramped one-bedroom New Haven apartment for eleven years. It had little privacy and was cold in the winter. "There wasn't much insulation and the furnace couldn't keep up," Tirado said. "I was always debating turning up the heat versus the higher bills." While Alicia always dreamed of owning a home that would provide a better life for her daughter, the goal seemed out of reach. "It's hard to qualify for a mortgage as a single parent with one income," Tirado said.

Their fortunes turned brighter when they were selected as one of seven families to receive a home built for them by Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven.

Habitat makes new or renovated homes affordable for families by drawing on the power of volunteers working side-by-side with the recipient families. To qualify, families must meet a defined income level, have a demonstrated need for housing and

willingness to contribute 400 hours of sweat equity. They must also complete 25 hours of coursework in homeownership — including budgeting, insurance and saving.

Requiring homeowners to participate in the construction of their home alongside volunteers has several benefits, says Co-Executive Director Jennifer Rook. "First of all, it shows families that the community cares about them and believes in them," she says. "It also helps create a bond between the home and the homeowners."

Through Habitat, homeowners also learn home maintenance skills during the construction. All Habitat projects are overseen by licensed professional staff and subject to standard inspections. Habitat homes average 1,300 square feet with a minimum of 3 bedrooms and 1.5 bathrooms. Habitat finances the mortgages, which range from \$96,000 to \$125,000 over twenty-five years at 0 percent interest. "Typically, families pay about \$380 a month before taxes and insurance," Rook says.

With a budget of \$2 million — largely funded by private donations — Habitat typically builds and finances 4 to 6 homes in New Haven County annually. Rook says that Habitat targets particular streets for revitalization. Not only do new homes create a tax source for the city, they also help create more stable communities. "When we build enough homes together, homeowners support one another, form neighborhood watch groups, and change a specific area for the better."

For Habitat families like Alicia and Dalilah Tirado, owning a home creates financial stability and a sense of belonging. Dalilah now has her own room, a backyard for the first time ever, and most importantly, dependable heat for the winter. "Everything I do is for my daughter," Alicia says. "She is the center of my world and I want her to have what I didn't."

