

Letter from the Past President



(Note: This article was written in Fall 2003.)

Hello, and welcome back to an exciting new year of serving your community, your state, and your nation! With fresh ideas and new faces, Cal Berkeley Habitat for Humanity has not only grown to seven times its original membership, but also in its capacity to address current issues locally, nationally, and internationally. With various building days planned, an upcoming conference in Long Beach, and a trip to Zambia, Africa this winter, Habitat makes it happen, and it all starts with members like you who want to make an impact.

In Cal Berkeley Habitat for Humanity, founded in the spring of 1999, we have addressed the lack of affordable housing in the Bay Area by participating in different activities, ranging from hosting a decal about affordable housing issues to building homes at Pittsburg, Bay Point, and Mt. Diablo housing tracts. Beyond working hard to in-

crease housing in the Bay Area, we have also made an effort to understand the people experiencing housing shortages by volunteering at homeless shelters, soup kitchens, mental institutions, and college campuses. This type of volunteering enables us to help community members get through their tough times and also to educate them on how to avoid being trapped by lack of affordable housing in the future. Moreover, we hope that by showing students the diversity of people affected by poverty housing in the Bay Area, they will realize that it is not just faceless, abstract people who end up on the street, but also people just like you and me.

While we have been successful in getting the word out throughout the Bay Area, we are now expanding our horizons by going to Africa this January to build our first international home. This has required a lot of learning on our part, as well as a great amount of fundraising and dedication. However, I am proud to say that we have succeeded and we will in fact have a group traveling to Zambia this winter break, proving that as a relatively small campus

chapter, we can have a global impact. As another layer of our emerging global quest, our chapter is currently working hard to donate \$750 to a third world country to assist them in building a home. Through research we have found that it costs only a little over \$1,000 to build a home in certain countries. Thus, our seemingly minimal donation can have a huge effect on eliminating poverty housing worldwide.

So with all these objectives in place, we truly are reaching out to all of you for help. Experience or not, everyone is welcome. The more people who join, the more likely our chapter will be to achieve these goals! Please come join us in our fight to end poverty housing, not only in the Bay Area, but all over the world. It all starts with a hammer and you.

Rhianna S. Bauer

□ Advertise with us!! BOOST your business!!
(Contact info on back cover)

All in a day's work

by Hollis Emery

The idea of a building day was a little overwhelming to me, in the sense that I admittedly tend to be one of those people that stares at her "broken" computer and calls everyone she knows before realizing that it is unplugged. I was not sure how the day would proceed when I arrived in Fruitvale with no building experience and was almost immediately handed a hammer and nails. Fortunately, I got plenty of instruction and guidance from Habitat for Humanity construction workers who actually knew what they were doing. There was one man primarily in charge who was the captain for the day. He gave us all very simple but detailed directions and came back to where I was working countless times to help me, never getting impatient. I was worried about making mistakes-after all this was

someone's house-but there was plenty of supervision and everyone was incredibly patient. Besides, I am sure I was not the only one who had to pull out her whole row of nails once....or twice.



Part of the arrangement between Habitat for Humanity and the families that get the houses is that they have to take part in the building process.

When I went, the house I worked on was for an individual from



Bosnia and his family. He worked in construction and so, unlike me, actually knew what he was doing. He good-naturedly laughed at my timid hammer strokes and crooked nails, but I felt like my presence was greatly appreciated. One simple sign of his gratitude was when he bought my friend and I popsicles in the heat of the day.

The overwhelming amount of need in today's world makes it incredibly difficult to know where to start. The beauty of Habitat for Humanity's approach is two-fold. First, it directly provides affordable housing for people in need. More importantly, it lifts the spirits of everyone involved. By helping build their

homes, the recipient families have the satisfaction of being able to provide for themselves in a world that usually makes it so hard. And we, the mem-

bers of Habitat for Humanity, have the pleasure of actually getting to do something about the inequities we see.

Of course, the problem of a lack of affordable housing extends beyond one or two houses. However, the experience of going on a workday with Habitat for Humanity fosters a sense of community both among the volunteers and between the volunteers and the families they help. It is this sense of community that will be the foundation for long-term change. We all know that addressing injustice in the world happens through small steps and Habitat for Humanity's approach does exactly that. To go on a workday for Habitat is to see the world change nail by nail, wall by wall, and home by home.

YOU can help build a home too!!!! Come find out how at our general meetings every other Tuesday from 7-8 p.m. in 170 Barrows!!!!

What's the deal with affordable housing?

by Maria Fan

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) generally defines affordable housing as requiring payments of less than 30 percent of a household's annual income. If individuals have to pay more for housing, they may suffer when it comes to providing other basic needs such as food, clothing transportation, and medical care. This situation is unfortunately the case for nearly 30 million American households. Oftentimes, housing that financially reasonable for a family is inadequate, sometimes lacking in basic amenities such as electricity and hot water, other times in sheer space.

In 1997, HUD reported 5.4 million households in "worst-case" situations: renters receiving no government assistance, making less than 50% of the median income in their area, and spending more than 50% of their annual earnings on housing or living in conditions of severe physical inadequacy. Moreover only 4.4 million affordable rental units are currently available despite 7.6 million households with an annual income of less than \$10,000. Though statistics like these about the deficiencies in housing are known, still

more statistics reveal that the situation is not improving. In 1991, 47 affordable rental units were available for every 100 extremely low-income households; in 1997, 37 such units were available for every 100 such households. Similarly in 1993 11 percent of renters could afford a modestly priced house, one whose cost is in the 25th percentile of houses in an area, compared to 10 percent in 1995. The 1995 U.S. Census Bureau identified 3 major causes why people cannot afford to buy their own home: lack of cash for the down payment and closing costs, not enough income to make mortgage payments and, most significantly, high debt that drains any available income.

Solutions for this pervasive problem have proved difficult to find. Possible answers cannot be individually implemented, and recommendations for action must take many factors into account. As of right now, hope and resources are being funneled into efforts working to enact changes, including lowering interest rates and amounts of required down payments, encouraging better funding from both government and industry sources, and building more creatively in order to save on costs and maxi-

Information from:

[http://www.habitat.org/
how/stats.html](http://www.habitat.org/how/stats.html)

[http://www.hud.gov/
offices/cpd/
affordablehousing/
index.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/affordablehousing/index.cfm)

Kaswan, Jacques and Ken Norwood. "Revitalization of Urban Communities: Affordable, Ecologically Designed, and Resident Controlled Housing." Berkeley: Shared Living Resources Center. 1989.

Savage, Howard A. "Who Could Afford to Buy a House in 1995?" U.S. Census Bureau. 1999.



Winter Break Trip to Zambia

by Brett Dalton

(Note: This article was written in Fall 2003.)

When I tell people that I am going to Africa this winter, the first thing they ask me is if I am going for business or pleasure. Well, it is certainly not going to be a luxury cruise. Along with eleven other Berkeley students, I will be investing long hours of arduous labor, battling a merciless African sun, facing an array of possible infections, and sacrificing any semblance of luxury to build houses for less-fortunate Zambian families. A



bit dramatic, maybe. But we will certainly not be sunbathing during the day and going for quiet strolls in the evening.

These efforts are all part of Cal Habitat for Humanity's first ever Global Village project, an endeavor that takes the organization's goal of helping neighbors in need to an international level. And, in keeping with Habitat for Humanity's emphasis on community service, the ultimate goal of our two-week efforts is to construct sound and functional homes. Indeed, part of our trip will be indulging in tourist activities, but that is not what we are there for. So I cannot exactly say that this is purely a pleasure trip.

But it is not a business trip either. As with the other participants, my involvement in this international adventure is on a voluntary basis. Beyond the mere assembly of walls and roofs, I am on this trip to learn more about the wider world, Zambian people, and myself. I want to culturally enrich my mind. I want to spread the hope of a better tomorrow on a global scale. And I want to not only explore my ability to change the world, but help find my place in it.

I suppose, then, our two-week voyage to Zambia this winter is a mixture of business and pleasure. Sure, we may have the business of building homes but we also have the pleasure of putting smiles on faces and expanding horizons. And, ultimately, we have the greatest pleasure of all: making a difference in the lives of other human beings.



A Note from the Editors

by Vandana Kapur and Katie Wintermute

Hello and welcome to the Cal Habitat for Humanity newsletter! We hope you enjoy the first edition of this newsletter since Fall 2002. We look forward to making this publication even better in the future, and welcome your questions, comments, and suggestions for improvement. If you would like to contact us or any other Habitat for Humanity officer for this or any other reason, you can reach us at:

Cal Berkeley Habitat for Humanity
University of California, Berkeley
505 Eshleman Hall, #4550
Berkeley, CA 94720
<http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~habitat>
habitat@ocf.berkeley.edu (General Board)
calhabitatnews@hotmail.com (Newsletter)