

Sun Lifestyle

Home Sweet Habitat

Habitat for Humanity Helps Local Homemaker with New House

BY LEE KOLB

When Janice Cabello pulls into her driveway after a day's work, it's no longer a trailer park she's coming home to.

Her home now is a neat, wooden house painted grey with blue trim, sitting on a landscaped lot in Forest Park. Thanks to Habitat For Humanity, her dream of owning a fine home for herself and her four children is reality.

She moved in Aug. 8.

For Cabello, the dream began last year when she submitted an application for a home to the newly-formed Clayton Affiliate of Habitat For Humanity, a world-wide organization dedicated to eliminating substandard housing.

She found that the organization would build her a home, if she could put \$500 worth of work into the project.

Ground was broken in early January. For the next seven months, volunteers gathered every weekend on the site to hammer nails, cut boards, paint, install fixtures and do everything else necessary to raise the structure.

"We got through it with a lot of prayer," Cabello recalled. "Lots of people were involved."

THE HOME features a kitchen, a living room cooled by a ceiling fan, three bedrooms and bath. Cabello pays for the home with about 15 percent of her monthly income.

Conveniently close by are schools for Joshua, Rianna, Sara and Christopher, who range in age from one-and-one-half years old to 10.

"I felt my children's growth was being stunted in the trailer park," said Cabello. "and the airplane noise was unbelievable."

Cabello's home marks the first project completed by Habitat for Humanity in Clayton County. The local affiliate of the international organization was created in 1987, according to Tom Baker, a teacher at Riverdale Senior High School and member of Clayton's Habitat For Humanity board.

"I saw the work that they were doing and I liked the idea. I started going to meetings. The more I learned about it, the more I liked it," said Baker.

A successful home-raising depends on a lot of things, like how much building material and labor will be donated and how much will have to be paid for, beginning with the property itself, said Baker.

The board scouted out the property on Albert Drive in Forest Park, which looked promising because the community was attractive and the lots were not prohibitively priced.

"We went to the courthouse, found the owners, and negotiated a purchase price of \$2500 per lot - but generally we try to get land donated," said Baker. "The less paid for one house will be that much more which can be put into the next one."

A Habitat For Humanity project in a neighborhood usually draws many resident volunteers eager to help build their neighborhood's physical - and spiritual - strengths.

Uniting in labor to provide a home for someone in need brings a neighborhood closer together. "The overall enthusiasm of the whole community is important," said Baker.

Also important are donations of building materials and specialized services.

EVERY plumbing fixture, as well as the labor of installation in Cabello's home was donated by a local contractor.

"The time of construction depends upon how many donations come in, if an industry will contribute a foundation, for instance," said Baker.

Overall community response to this first project was favorable, he said.

But there are still many families in Clayton County living in substandard places, waiting for a chance to move on to something better.

Baker said he plans to include some of his students in

next summer's house-building project.

The Days' Inn Foundation has donated land in Forest Park to Habitat For Humanity, which plans to eventually build eight homes there.

"We're going to start off working on four houses, and if enough contributions come in, and enough volunteers, we will increase it up to a maximum of eight," he said.

A Habitat For Humanity family selection committee reviews applications filed out by families, and takes the one that has the most need of new housing, said Baker.

"On the whole, our churches are the background of the whole organization. That's where a lot of our volunteers come from," he said.

Habitat For Humanity's work ethic is derived from the Bible, wherein it says that there are enough resources around for everyone to have a good home, not just a few.

THE ORGANIZATION is open to anyone interested in donating their time to help alleviate substandard housing, said Baker.

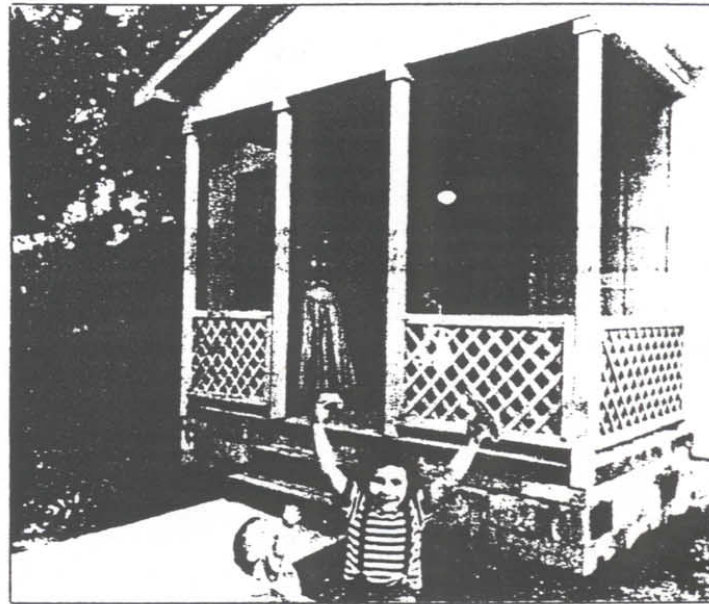
The Clayton affiliate is one of five in the area. The others are in the city of Atlanta, Cobb County, Gwinnett County, and another just starting out in DeKalb.

Habitat For Humanity has been in Atlanta five years.

And these are but five of 274 affiliates in the United States and 30-35 spread around the globe, said Baker.

The organization is making headlines today as it's 12 week, 1200 mile House-Raising Walk concludes in Atlanta.

The Walk began June 27 in Portland, Maine, with the purpose of "making decent, affordable housing a matter of conscience," said Habitat for Humanity founder and executive director Millard Fuller.



Human Habitat

Janice Cabello, with children Rianna, Sara and Christopher on the porch of their new Forest Park home.

The "House-Raising" part of the walk's title was not symbolic - the walkers and builders raised 120 houses along the 1,200 route down the eastern seaboard.

Atlantans are invited to join walkers from all over the country as they complete the last nine-mile stretch through the city Sept. 15.

"The conclusion of the walk means that 120 families that used to live in substandard conditions are now living in decent homes," said Fuller.

Baker has been invited to say some words at the ceremonies

that night at the walk's conclusion at the Civic Center.

But the walk's conclusion marks the start of "Celebration '88," the 12th Anniversary of Habitat for Humanity.

More than 30 seminars dealing with Habitat for Humanity-related topics will be held before the festival's conclusion Sept. 17.

The following day Clayton will have a Habitat for Humanity celebration of its own - the dedication of Janice Cabello's house at Fountain Junior High School in Forest Park.

Habitat for Humanity Inter-

national's director of affiliate Ted Swisher, will speak, as will the mayor of Forest Park.

OF COURSE the manyunteers will be in attendance, "which probably means between 200-250 folks," said Cabello, seated on her new porch with her son Christopher. "The other children romp on new grass at her feet."

"It feels wonderful" to have home, she says. "As long as children are alive, I'll be happy they have a decent place to live."