

Hammers Plus Hearts Equals Homes

Description

Article by Edda Berglund

“Bang, bang, bang-OUCH (expletive deleted)!”

Turns out, I’m more skilled at making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches than I am at swinging a hammer. But, as my volunteer thumb screamed at me to put aside the unyielding carpentry tool and pick up the butter knife, I realized something important: a Habitat for Humanity volunteer does not have to possess construction expertise to help make the dream of homeownership come true. In fact, those that can masterfully and efficiently produce PB & J sandwiches for a hungry crowd of site volunteers are treated as royalty. Let me share a little bit about what makes Habitat for Humanity so unique and worthy as a community-based charity.

The realization that a willing pair of hands is just as important as construction skills is what makes Habitat for Humanity so special. Most folks know the history of Habit thanks to President Jimmy Carter who was a popular advocate for the charity. President Carter was a dedicated supporter, but he wasn’t the founder of Habitat. The charity was founded in 1976 by Millard and Linda Fuller. The concept of housing as a partnership took root on the Koinonia Farm in Americus, Georgia. The Fullers along with biblical scholar Clarence Jordan developed the idea that people in need of affordable shelter could work alongside volunteers to build safe and affordable homes. [\[1\]](#) This grassroots effort grew into a worldwide organization that has helped millions of families build strength, stability, and independence through homeownership.

Habitat means more than trusses, nails, and power tool proficiency. Habitat means partnership. Its guiding principle of “a hand-up rather than a handout” requires a committed partnership by all involved. Families purchasing Habitat homes contribute sweat equity by working alongside volunteers and helping build not only their own homes, but homes for other deserving families. Over the course of a day, complete strangers become teammates and friends as they drill holes, stack lumber and wipe the sweat off their brows.

For those like me who are motivated to help but lack construction expertise, Habitat offers countless ways to help. Volunteers can prepare lunches for their teammates, provide them with cold water or pick up discarded construction material. Participants can also greet volunteers at check-in tables, take photos for social media or help with office paperwork. On the building site, volunteers can paint walls or plant flowers. This charity accommodates anyone who simply wants to offer that hand-up and contribute to a worthy cause. Motivation to serve one’s community is the only prerequisite.

As a Habitat volunteer myself, I am always impressed with the esprit de corps of my fellow volunteers.

They are lighthearted, welcoming, and very tolerant of those like me who frequently ask if it’s finally time to break for lunch. There are also more experienced crew leaders who patiently guide the less experienced through tasks. And, when help is needed because the nail is now bent in three different directions and removal is not an option, a crew leader just laughs and remedies the insult to the fascia

board. In fact, laughter may be one of the most common sounds on a Habitat build site. Volunteers are constantly encouraging one another and championing the cause of affordable, safe housing.

How does someone become a Habitat volunteer? That's simple. Most towns, cities or counties are aligned with Habitat affiliates that serve their local communities. All of them need weekend warriors to sign up and contribute in some way. One can also form a collective of volunteers and work with statewide or national Habitat building projects. For example, I belong to a collective of volunteers known as The Habitat for Humanity Road Trip Crazies. Our specialty is the blitz build, building a house in two days' time. Yes, vacant lot on a Friday and a house under roof by Sunday-craaaaaazzy (Our slightly off its rocker group of Crazies travel to destinations across the country- next stop, Williamsport, PA). The VLTA as an organization can also form a collective of members to provide a hand up, maybe The VLTA Volunteer Squad-just a thought.

The magic of Habitat for Humanity is that it serves to build not only homes but relationships. Those relationships then build stronger communities. Strong communities make a positive contribution to the world. The gift of volunteerism keeps giving and giving. In closing, don't miss out on a Habitat for Humanity experience that, for me, went something like this:

My volunteer thumb was sore, my feet hurt and my admiration for construction workers had increased dramatically. But I also walked away understanding why Habitat for Humanity continues to inspire so many people. One does not need construction skills or experience to help build a home. All it takes is a spirit of giving to build a house or simply build a delicious PB & J sandwich for a fellow Habitat for Humanity volunteer.







[1Habitat's history | Habitat for Humanity](#)



Edda Berglund, Agency Representative for the DC/MD/VA and WV, has worked with Fidelity National Financial for the past 10 years. Prior to FNF, Edda worked in the mortgage industry as an underwriter and originator. Altogether, Edda has over 30 years of experience working in the real estate space. Edda's bias for action serves to provide strategic resources and support for FNF appointed agencies. Edda is also a member of the VLTA Education Committee. Edda attended UVA as an undergrad and graduated with her BA from NAU. In her spare time when not spending time with her

very large family, Edda volunteers for Habitat for Humanity. She has volunteered for various affiliates and collectives over the last 25 years. In June 2026 Edda and her husband will travel to Williamsport, PA to volunteer with the Habitat for Humanity Road Trip Crazies. As members of the Crazies, Edda and her husband will participate in a building â??blitzâ?•, building a Habitat home in 2-1/2 days-crazy!

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Author

vltaexaminer

VLTA Examiner