

habitat for humanity lake agassiz

# blueprints



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**Habitat**  
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# a safe place to call home

sandy johnson

Sandy Johnson and her 8-year-old daughter currently live in an outdated apartment building in South Moorhead. There's black mold and many updates need to be done to the building. Until recently, the entry to the building was not secure and anyone could walk in and up the stairs. The apartment isn't the safe and comfortable home Sandy envisioned her daughter growing up in. They make do, but can't wait for the safety their new home will provide.

Sandy first heard about Habitat in 2015 when her niece was chosen to partner with Douglas County Habitat. She spoke highly of the process and encouraged Sandy to turn in an application. Sandy decided to apply in July of 2017 but did not have high expectations, *"I didn't think it was for me."*

*"The call from Jackie at Habitat came at the perfect time."* Sandy's daughter had been in the hospital with a blood infection — a time that was scary, difficult, and stressful for the family. A breath of relief, dreams of family celebrations, and the memories that Sandy and her daughter would be making in their very own home quickly set in. Her daughter's first question was *"will you build me a treehouse?"* She can't wait to begin working on her house (and eventually a treehouse!)

Sandy has been very involved in the whole process, especially the sweat-equity requirement for all Habitat homeowners and believes it makes the experience more meaningful. *"I'll love my home even more because I got to help build it with my own hands."*

Since being chosen, Sandy has met multiple people who have partnered with Habitat, *"once I found one person who'd been blessed, I found more and more who had been through this process or know someone who has."*

Sandy and her daughter are very thankful for being chosen to partner with Habitat, and would like to thank everyone for their time, donations, and support. They look forward to staying connected with Habitat and giving back to the community and future families because Habitat helps transform families like hers.







## supporter spotlight

### becky boyle jones

Even after being involved in more than 40 builds, Becky Boyle Jones still feels a tug at her heartstrings when she sees a family receive their keys to their Habitat for Humanity home.

It's the smallest details that really get to her. It's the family that can get a puppy because they now have a yard. It's the little girl who is thrilled to pick a color to paint her bedroom for the first time.



*"To watch little kids run around and to know that they now have a safe place to come home to,"* Becky says. *"That's a big deal."*

Becky and her husband, Robert, have volunteered with Habitat for Humanity for years. In addition to serving as volunteers, Becky has served for six years on the Board of Directors; Robert served for five.

*"It's a challenge and an opportunity to learn,"* Robert says. *"But when you get to know and work with the families, you see the impact you can make."*

Both Becky and Robert were raised in families that valued service. Both also became educators – Becky works in student life at Minnesota State University Moorhead; Robert is at The Village as a trainer. They believe deeply in giving people a hand up to improve their lives.

During their years with Habitat, they've seen the unsafe and unkempt homes where families live because they have no other choice. **They've seen closets used as bedrooms and babies sleeping near drafty windows. They've seen families use ovens to heat cold homes and walls covered with mold.**

*"It doesn't make sense to me that in a community this affluent, there are people still living in destitute conditions,"* Becky says.

So, she and Robert focus on what they can do. Becky is part of the selection committee that chooses the two to three families each year who

are eligible for a Habitat home in Cass and Clay counties.

Being a part of this process gives her a front row view into the successes: the family member with disabilities who can function in a new, accessible home, the kids who now feel comfortable inviting friends over after school.

The couple also counts the unexpected successes. Habitat's application is extensive and includes mandatory financial counseling and mentoring. One family applied for two years and didn't get chosen. But thanks to Habitat's support, they cleaned up their credit and were able to qualify for a traditional mortgage.

It's the partnerships between volunteers, community members, and the Habitat family that bring vibrancy to the program. The Jones's have seen how Habitat homes are a long-term investment in both neighborhoods and families.

When people have stable housing, their children are more likely to graduate high school. With affordable housing, they can pay for other needs like school supplies.

Any time Becky and Robert see the keys being handed over to a family, it's a good day.

*"I wish we could do 10 builds a year,"* Becky says.





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## new faces in the office

meet jim, luke, & anna

Three new employees have joined the Lake Agassiz Habitat for Humanity team. In October of 2017, Jim Nelson started as the new Executive Director of Lake Agassiz Habitat. He resides in Fargo, ND. Luke Berndt is our construction intern and is a 3rd year Construction Engineering student at NDSU. Anna Buan started this summer as a Marketing Intern, and is a senior at Concordia studying Communication Studies and Psychology. Here's a little more about them:

*Luke's answers, Arden Hills, MN, Intern, Construction Engineering, NDSU*

### **What drove you to work for Habitat?**

When I was deciding on a college and a major, a large factor was what kind of impact I would be able to have on people with my profession. Working for Habitat for Humanity being able to build houses, and more importantly, being able to build someone's home was one of the top reasons I chose the path I did with construction engineering.

### **Fondest memory of Habitat so far?**

In the short time I've been here I think my favorite thing has been seeing how many

people are passionate about Habitat. All of the people in the office, the partner families, the partner family's friends, volunteers, and even subcontractors are all so excited to lend a hand in the process.

### **Something that surprised you about Habitat?**

What surprises me the most is that the process is done with such a small staff. There are so few on the payroll and everyone works extremely hard to make sure we can do the projects.

### **What do you like to do in your free time?**

I enjoy basic woodworking, exercising, learning new things, good conversation, and playing board games.

### **If you could go anywhere in the world on a Habitat build, where would you go?**

Wherever there is the most need.

### **What is your favorite part about your home?**

The people in it. Next best thing is the back yard.

*Anna's answers, Chanhassen, MN, Intern, Communication Studies and Psychology student at Concordia*

### **What drove you to work for Habitat?**

When I was a freshman at Concordia I went on a Habitat spring break trip to Pensacola, FL. I loved the experience and I loved the mission of Habitat. When I was figuring out my summer plans, I saw that Habitat was looking for a Marketing Intern and it was the perfect fit; I get to learn and work in a non-profit, and I get to make a difference in the community.

### **Fondest memory of Habitat so far?**

I think sharing the Habitat story with people who are unfamiliar with it and seeing their eyes light up when they hear about the process, and watching the family work WITH Habitat to build their home.

### **What surprised you the most about Habitat?**

Most people know that Habitat builds homes, but they assume they're free. What was most surprising to me was the amount of people who don't know Habitat's mission right away and assume that Habitat is building free housing. But, once they learn that it is not a hand out, they are quick to ask how they can get involved.

### **What do you like to do in your free time?**

I love to golf, read a good book, hang out with



“

*My fondest memory is sharing the Habitat story with someone who is unfamiliar with it and seeing their eyes light up when they hear about the process, and that the family is working WITH Habitat to build their home.*”

- anna buan

friends, and see my family as often as possible!

**If you could go anywhere in the world on a Habitat build, where would you go?**

Anywhere. It would be a blast to have the opportunity to travel internationally and help a family build a house.

**What is your favorite part about your home?**

The people I share it with and the safety and security it provides.

*Jim's answers, Fargo, ND, Executive Director*

**What drove you to work for Habitat?**

I fell in love with the mission! About 2-1/2 years ago I began the journey to change jobs. I've been in corporate jobs for over 20 years and I was intentionally looking for a more purposeful job. I wanted to align my personal values and beliefs with my day-to-day work.

**Fondest memory of Habitat so far?**

Seeing hope in the eyes of our partner families. In the 9 months that I've been in my role at Habitat, I've experienced this many times and each situation revolves around a different and unique Partner Family. I've seen hope in the

eyes of partner families when we've announced that they were selected as a Partner Family, during a Wall Raising ceremony, and during a home dedication ceremony.

**Something that surprised you about Habitat?**

I continue to be amazed by the high level of passion that our volunteers have for Habitat's mission! It's contagious and makes it easy for me to come to work every day.

**What do you like to do in your free time?**

I'm an avid fisherman and on the weekend, I can be found fishing or thinking about fishing.

**If you could go anywhere in the world on a Habitat build, where would you go?**

I love to travel and I would go wherever there is a need.

**What is your favorite part about your home?**

The dining room table because it's the one place where my entire family gathers and we can share time with each other.



jim nelson



luke berndt



anna buan



# executive director

jim nelson

When you align your vocation with your values, it unlocks the potential for great things to happen. I joined Lake Agassiz Habitat in late October of 2018 after making the decision to move away from corporate work and move toward a more purposeful workplace. My first nine months at Habitat have provided me with a very rewarding experience. We've held 2 home dedication ceremonies, from the 2017 build season, and two wall raising ceremonies so far this summer. What I find most rewarding is working with Partner Families and realizing the transformative impact that the Habitat program will have on their lives.

We're in the middle of the 2018 build season now and we have three homes planned this year. The first home, in West Fargo, is nearing completion and we've just begun framing on the second home, in North Fargo. The third home in Dilworth will begin in late August, and

all three homes are targeted for completion by Thanksgiving. Each of the Partner Families this year are single mothers and they've each exemplified the term 'partner' through their high level of involvement with Habitat as they work to meet our 250 hour sweat equity requirement of each adult family member.

My goal for this year is to set a trajectory to grow our production level to serve more local families. Last year we built two homes and this year we're building three homes. Next year we plan to build at least four homes but we can't do this without your help. We need to create new energy and new excitement about our mission and about the good work that Habitat does in our community. Unfortunately, the demand in our community for affordable homes is far greater than our ability to build them. We've planned a Blitz Home Build project in June 2019 where we will build three homes in 10 days. This is just one example of new energy and excitement about our mission. We're planning to add Habitat crew leaders and ReStore crew leaders to help us reach our growth goals. Please consider giving of your time or your treasure to help those in our community who are in need.

## current builds

940 Ashley Drive  
West Fargo

1148 8th Street  
Fargo

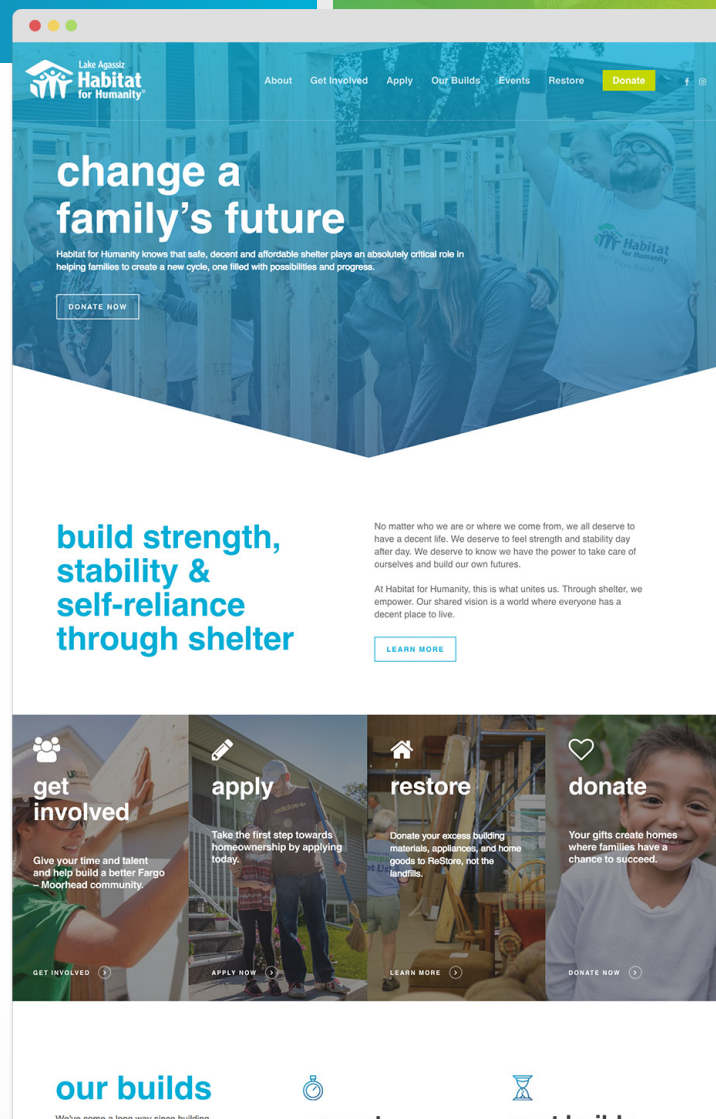
12 Marion Street  
Dilworth

## new website!

lakeagassizhabitat.org

We decided it was time to give our website a refresh! When you visit [www.lakeagassizhabitat.org](http://www.lakeagassizhabitat.org), you'll find lots of pictures, easy to find information, and a blog to highlight partner family stories.

**Check it out!**





# breaking news

## blitz build pete christopher

Three homes built... in 10 DAYS! Are we crazy?! Maybe. But that is exactly what we are going to do next summer. However, we won't be doing it alone...

We are extremely honored to have been selected by the Blitz Home Builders (BHB), as their 2019 partner! This group of dedicated volunteers from around the country selects one Habitat affiliate per year to partner with and perform an expedited build.

Pete Christopher, our Resource Development

and Marketing Manager, traveled to Morris County, NJ, in June to check out the blitz build that was happening there.

"I've been on many Habitat sites, as a volunteer, board member, and as a staff person. Seeing the excitement and energy that the Blitz brought was truly amazing! The crew from BHB did a phenomenal job sharing their experience with the local staff and did a wonderful job engaging local volunteers," Pete said. "I am excited to be a part of a project that has never been done in this area before."

The Blitz Home Builders have two goals with this build: **1) Build three homes in 10 days, and 2) help garner excitement for the mission of Habitat so that the local affiliate can gain donors and volunteers in order to serve more families well into the future.**

We can't do this build alone. To make this event a success, we will need people to help plan, donors to help fund, and volunteers to help build. For more information, visit [www.lakeagassizhabitat.org/blitz](http://www.lakeagassizhabitat.org/blitz)

## Statistics about the need for stable housing:



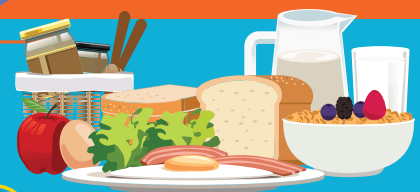
**591**  
homeless  
in Fargo and Moorhead

NUMBER OF HOMELESS YOUTH / FAMILIES

A study done in 2015 by the FM Coalition for the Homeless, counted 591 homeless in Fargo and Moorhead. Nearly 30% are one paycheck away from being homeless.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE HUNGRY

Habitat Minnesota reports there is at least a 15% point reduction in every type of government assistance program used except for disability, which is expected to remain the same after families move into their Habitat home.



HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVE IN POVERTY

In Moorhead, 14.9% of the population is at or below the poverty line. In Fargo, the percentage is similar at 14.6%.



BELOW POVERTY LINE

**14.6%**  
Fargo

+/- 21,200 people

**14.9%**  
Moorhead

+/- 5,560 people



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habitat@lakeagassizhabitat.org

## upcoming events

**wall raising**  
dilworth build  
september 12th  
11:30 am

**hard hat lunch**  
fall 2018  
time tbd

**giving hearts day**  
february 14th, 2019

**blitz build**  
june 19-29th, 2019

A photograph of a young woman with dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, smiling as she works on a roof. She is holding a hammer and is in the process of nailing a piece of wood. In the background, another person wearing a hard hat and safety gear is visible, also working on the roof. The roof has dark shingles, and the sky is clear and blue.

**calling all young professionals!**

Join the new Habitat Young Professionals Network Facebook Group for more details