



Habitat
for Humanity®
of Greater Sacramento

A Movement of Hope

Something that Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento started to break down barriers and build unity amongst people of diverse beliefs and backgrounds in Sacramento has inspired thousands across the country to do the same.

Now it's time to #BuildforUnity again!

Cover Photos courtesy of Build for Unity



Leah Miller, president and CEO of Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento is looking forward to creating even more impact with Habitat's second Build for Unity Project.
Photo by Anne Stokes

Raising Walls to Bring People Together

How Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento is building hope, homes, and unity through the Build for Unity movement

BY ANNE STOKES

It's hard to escape divisive rhetoric these days. It's broadcasted on the evening news, printed in papers and posted on social media. Today, our nation — once exalted as an international melting pot of cultures — is mired in identity politics that strike at the heart of what it means to be American. Still, many people are looking for ways to contribute positively and bridge divides within their community. With Habitat for Humanity's Build for Unity project, they can do just that.

"The idea for Build for Unity started in 2016 as an idea to use Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento as a convener to bring people together of all different faiths and backgrounds to build homes, break down barriers, and build unity. At the time, there was a substantial amount of fear, division, and Islamophobia in our community; and we wanted to combat that with something positive and give people from different walks of life the opportunity to work towards a common goal and break down some of those misconceptions which divide us, while also helping combat the current affordable housing crisis," said Leah Miller, president and CEO of Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento. "My life has become richer because of it; and I know I'm not alone in that."

Bringing people together to build homes for low-income families is not new to Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento. Over the past 34 years, the organization has engaged thousands upon thousands of volunteers who have helped impact hundreds of low-income individuals in Sacramento and Yolo County with building and preserving safe, stable, and affordable housing. But as a Christian Ecumenical Ministry, the interfaith Build for Unity project is deeply rooted in Habitat's mission to put God's love into action by building homes, communities and hope.

"Three years, dozens of homes, and 30 cities later, ...Build For Unity has taught us ... to push forward with love..."

Leah Miller
President and CEO, Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento

When the idea for Build for Unity first started, it's aim was to bring hundreds of individuals from all across the faith community together. The purpose was to raise

tens of thousands of dollars, lock arms as a community, and to build homes. The dream was to break down barriers, and showcase Sacramento as a city where differences were celebrated and united people, rather than divided them. Habitat's team wasn't sure they'd be able to pull this off. At the time, they only had about three churches that volunteered with them regularly.

Constructed in 2016, the first Build for Unity homes were literally a labor of love for the 180 Sacramento-area faith communities that collaborated to raise nearly \$180,000 to fund and complete the project. More than 1,000 volunteers gave 10,000 hours to build two new homes side by side. Now in 2019, they're doing it again.

"Three years, dozens of homes, and 30 cities later, if Build for Unity has taught us anything as an organization, it's to push forward with love, have faith, and prepare to achieve impact beyond our wildest imagination. I don't have to remind anyone about the critical need for affordable housing and unity in our community. You hear it on the news and see it on the streets every day. But Build for Unity is a battle cry to meet that need of those suffering in our community from lack of access to affordable housing and hope."

Learn how to get involved at
www.HabitatGreaterSac.org/BuildforUnity



Spreading Unity, Building Homes

Interfaith effort
to construct
2 homes
in Sacramento



Organized by
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento
in conjunction with
local faith leaders, mosques,
temples and churches

Statement in support of
diversity & inclusion
for all communities



Chance to show
actions speak
louder
than words



The ground-breaking ceremony for the newest Build for Unity project was held July 11, 2019.
Photo by Anne Stokes

Breaking Ground on a New Life

Build for Unity helps two families find forever homes

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

Early, on a bright summer morning — before the heat of the day hit — a crowd gathered at the end of a cul-de-sac in a quiet Tallac Village neighborhood. It included camera crews from local TV stations, religious dignitaries, construction workers with the requisite earth-moving equipment, a station wagon containing a cage full of white doves, and a large group of excited children circling their smiling parents.

The event was the official ground-breaking for two four-bedroom, two-bath houses — the newest projects of Sacramento’s Build for Unity Campaign, a collaborative initiative through Habitat for Humanity to bring people together to provide homeownership opportunities to low-income families.

In this case, the 1,140-square-foot, single-story houses—set back on large pie-shaped lots perfect for impromptu soccer games—will belong to Andrey and Maria Emelyanenko and their six children, ranging in age from 1 to 13, and Muhammad and Najiba Omar and their four children, ranging in age from 2 to 12. Both large families have been crammed into tiny two-bedroom,

one-bath rentals, but now have the chance to move to their own newly constructed homes in an established neighborhood.

“We’re in a small apartment now and it’s been our dream to have our own house.”

Andrey Emelyanenko
Future homeowner

“Wow, we are so excited,” said Andrey, as his children grinned up at him. “We’re in a small apartment now and it’s been our dream to have our own house.” As he surveyed his new property, he added: “I like to do yard work and we will put some trees and bushes there...and there.”

The Emelyanenkos and Omars are required to contribute “sweat equity” on the project, something that will increase as construction begins in the fall, and they are fast becoming friends, said Muhammad.

“We already work together and the kids play together,” he said. “I’m really happy because we will have so much space and a yard — a place for the kids to run around, not in the house. And there are good schools for them — that is so important.”

On this warm summer morning, a spattering of speeches is given, with calls for people to unify across religious, ethnic and socio-economic lines. A Muslim imam, a Jewish cantor and a Catholic priest urge the crowd to understand our shared values: We all want a safe, secure place that is full of laughter, love and opportunity for our children. The white doves are released and seem off-course and lost, before gathering together to find their way home.

Then everyone donned their bright turquoise hard hats, grabbed a golden shovel and scooped up the dirt — officially breaking ground on Habitat’s newest project and a new foundation for two hardworking, deserving families.

Requirements for Homeowners

Need adequate shelter

Families have one of these problems:

- **Substandard living conditions**, like mold, lack of electricity or in need of major repairs
- **Overcrowded conditions**
- Pay more than **50% of their gross income** on rent



Partner with Habitat

Families must:

- Put in 500 hours of “**sweat equity**” helping build Habitat homes
- Attend **homeowner education workshops**
- Make timely **mortgage payments**



Pay an affordable mortgage

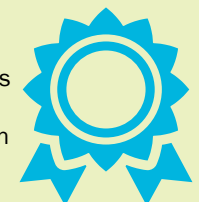
Selected families:

- Earn **30%-80%** of area median income in Sacramento and Yolo counties
- Receive a **zero interest equivalent** 30-year mortgage no more than **30%** of their gross monthly income



Since moving in...

- **76%** of families with school-age children saw an improvement in study habits and school
- **59%** started or completed higher education
- **0%** of the families previously on food stamps remained on food stamps





Akram Keval, a Muslim representative on the board of the Interfaith Council of Greater Sacramento, along with his wife Shazia, daughter Menal, and son Ayman, all strive to build a better community.

Photo by Anne Stokes

Bringing All Faiths Together

Building bridges is how we will progress as a society

BY AKRAM KEVAL

My name is Akram Keval and I am proud to represent the Interfaith Council of Greater Sacramento and the Habitat Faith committee.

I wanted to share a little about what Build for Unity means to me as a Muslim American living through the current administration's verbal attacks on my and other religious communities.

The year 2016 was a hard one for American Muslims. There were times when I felt very detached from my own community because of the rhetoric and divisiveness that

our country felt. I started my work with Habitat that same year.

Jeff VonKaenel from Sacramento News & Review brought me in to be the Muslim community's voice on the first Build for Unity project. It was hard not to be skeptical of such a project during the political climate we were in, but everyone put in their best efforts to bring their friends, families and community members together, and the Unity Build came to life. We all worked hard to raise funds for his project at every mosque, church, synagogue and temple in Sacramento.

I was proud to be able to work on such a momentous project with members of the Muslim community and my family by my side as well — putting up the walls of the home with my children and showing them a harmonious example of different religious communities uniting for one good cause. I know for a fact that after the first Build, my family and I felt much more connected to our community and other faith communities than we had before.

It is imperative that we unite for the greater good, especially when it seems like the greater good is unreachable. We have to remember that coming together and building bridges between divides is how we will progress as a society.

I am currently serving as the Faith

Committee chair with Habitat for Humanity; and what keeps me involved in this project is that it makes a difference in people's lives. It gives them hope, it gives them a future and it gives them a place they can call home. I have seen the smiles on the children's faces when they first step into their new homes. The parents can finally call a house a home.

Build for Unity is special project because it brings all faiths together. It builds bridges amongst communities and unites our society as a whole.

On behalf of the Interfaith Council and Habitat for Humanity, thank you all for supporting Build for Unity in whatever way you can.



Unity Concert

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento — in partnership with local faith leaders, elected officials, the Sacramento Gay Men's Chorus, and Sacramento Children's Chorus — hosted the "Unity Concert" to support the Build for Unity campaign which seeks to bring people together of all races, creeds, and communities to counter intolerance and build homes for local families in need.



Photos courtesy of Build for Unity



Sacramento Vice Mayor
Eric Guerra (District 6)
facilitated a \$30,000 donation
from the City of Sacramento
to assist with infrastructure
costs on the project.
Photo by Anne Stokes



Creating a Thriving Community

One city leader explains why he's supporting Build for Unity

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

Revitalizing a neighborhood takes more than just a lawnmower, a weed eater and some buckets of paint. It even takes more than building a new house.

These community efforts — which also include public gardens, holiday light displays and home repairs — have proven increasingly successful at knitting people together and lifting entire neighborhoods. So much so that leaders, such as Vice Mayor Eric Guerra, take a larger message from them.

“All the ills of the world can be solved if we get to know our neighbors,” he said, as he walked down a Tallac Village sidewalk with his 2-year-old son, Javier, and greeted “Sarah” and “Randy” by first name — Sarah McCamman and Randy Stannard, who run the 1-acre Root 64 Sacramento urban farm out of their 64th Street backyard. The vice mayor and farmers chatted amicably while Javier delightedly patted Olive, the friendly farm Labrador who ambled down the driveway.

In fact, Guerra says this is the uncomplicated goal: standing around talking casually, as well as sharing food, working side-by-side, or sitting on a porch watching your children ride bikes and kick soccer balls together. It wakes people up to their shared humanity

“All the ills of the world can be solved if we get to know our neighbors.”

Eric Guerra
Sacramento Vice Mayor (District 6)

— despite different religions, cultural backgrounds and economic status. It is also something Guerra understands on a personal level: Born in Mexico, raised picking produce in Esparto with his family, he credits his own rise from poverty to a broad swath

of teachers and employers who gave him a hand up.

“It’s simple things: We all want a home that is comfortable and safe and we can afford,” he explained. “We all want a good school for our children, a job that lets us control our future.”

But Guerra is not just committed to lofty ideas. “Look, an empty lot isn’t doing anyone any good,” he said. “It encourages illegal dumping and other illegal activities, and it sure doesn’t support the tax rolls. We’d like to get that message out to property owners who are holding onto empty lots.”

Habitat for Humanity would be happy to construct some pretty little houses on them instead, improving the entire community.

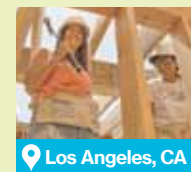
“When we pull together like this, that’s really what we’re trying to do — we’re building a house,” Guerra said. “But it’s also a little bit of everybody helping another family get a start.”

Spreading Unity, Building Homes

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento’s pilot Build for Unity project started in 2016 as an idea to bring people together of all different faiths during a time of great fear and division. The idea has since sparked a movement which has spread nationwide.

“It’s nice to be able to come together as people and inspire that beyond our community, beyond our city limits, across our state limits and then go coast to coast,” said Leah Miller, president and CEO of Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento. “It’s been really incredible to see what we as people can do when we come together.”

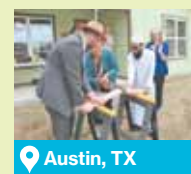
- Central Arizona
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- New Orleans, LA
- Susquehanna, MD
- Central Minnesota
- Truckee Meadows, NV
- Albuquerque, NM
- New York City, NY
- Burlington, NC
- Forsyth County, NC
- Wake County, NC
- Mid Ohio
- Winston-Salem, OR
- Kingsport, TN
- Memphis, TN
- Nashville, TN
- Austin, TX
- Houston, TX
- Tri Counties, WA
- Vancouver, WA



Los Angeles, CA



Sacramento, CA



Austin, TX



New York City, NY

Why do YOU support Build for Unity?



**Co-pastor
Matt Smith**
*The Table at Central
United Methodist Church*

“The Table UMC is committed to reaching out in love and we deeply appreciate the opportunity to work alongside others as part of Habitat for Humanity’s multifaith initiative. We were thrilled to join others in the initial Build for Unity and we’re hopeful many more efforts will follow. This is a small step in the **larger effort to address housing instability and homelessness in Sacramento** and we believe it is a critical one.”



**Reverend
Amy Kienzle**
St. John’s Lutheran Church

“I hope that they build some real connections with people they’ve never met before ... whether it’s mingling at the concert or hammering nails next to someone or painting a wall. **We don’t often have those opportunities to interact with people so different.**”



Rabbi Mona Alfi
Congregation B’nai Israel

“Build for Unity gives Sacramentans from different faith groups the opportunity to **come together and live by our shared values in a very real way.** It truly allows us to do for others as we would want them to do for us. It has been a privilege for us to do this sacred work together.”



Susan Ramsden
*Director of Public Affairs,
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,
Sacramento Stake*

“I stand united with religious leaders, and Sacramento community members, in support of the Build for Unity homes as an acknowledgment that **we are all God’s children, and all deserve a safe, welcoming home** where we are free to live, work and practice our religion.”



Father Michael Vaughan
*Vicar General, Roman Catholic
Diocese of Sacramento*

“It’s very easy to see in Sacramento that **one of our strengths is coming together, breaking down barriers, and loving each other as we are** — each one of us created by God individually. Build for Unity is about trying to help a family have a nice place to live, but also at the same we can see that it’s brought us all together; and we thank God for that.



Imam M. A. Azeez,
President of Tarbiya Institute

“For me, the Build for Unity project directly **confronts Islamophobia and bigotry** by calling upon all people of faith to make an investment into the ideals of community. We all make that investment so that our children will see the return!”

Build for Unity Timeline



August 2019
Unity Concert



September 2019
*Volunteer Scheduling
Begins*



October 2019
*Above-Ground
Construction Begins*



**November 2019 -
Spring 2020**
Build Days



Spring 2020
Home Dedicated



Home Ownership



ReStore



Volunteer

How Your Donation Goes Further BY ANNE STOKES

A hand-up, not a hand-out. Habitat focuses on empowering families, engaging volunteers and stretching donor dollars further

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento's mission is to bring people together to build homes, communities and hope. Their ultimate goal is to help create a world where everyone has a safe, decent and affordable place to live. But they can't achieve that goal without the help and support of volunteers. You can support Habitat's mission and programs in many different ways.

Home ownership

Habitat works to make home ownership possible for low-income families. The nonprofit organization not only builds homes, but helps finance them with 30-year, zero interest equivalent mortgages. Volunteers contribute **90%** of the labor that builds these homes. Habitat Partner Families are also required to put **500 hours** of sweat equity into the home. Donate your time, expertise or building materials to help Habitat create homes for low-income families in your community.

Home repairs

While creating new homes is important, so is maintaining existing affordable homes. Many low-income homeowners may be able to keep up on mortgage payments but have trouble affording critical maintenance work like roof or structure repairs. That's why homeowners put in sweat equity and pay **0% interest** for repair costs. **Habitat's Neighborhood Revitalization and Home Preservation Programs** primarily focus on critical structure repairs and accessibility.

ReStore

The ReStore is Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento's retail outlet. Open to the public, the ReStore (much like a "Home Depot meets Goodwill") sells donated new and used construction materials and home furnishings at 30-70% off retail prices. All sales support Habitat's home build, repair and community projects. This past year, the ReStore raised \$1.1 million in sales and diverted 950,000 pounds of usable materials from landfills. The ReStore accepts donated goods from individuals, organizations, and companies. Located at 819 North 10th Street Sacramento, CA 95811. Open Tuesday-Friday from 9am-6pm and Saturday from 10am-5pm. Follow the ReStore online at www.Facebook.com/SacHabitatReStore to keep up with ReStore Fresh Finds!

Volunteer

Every year Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento engages over 2,500 volunteers to help on Habitat construction sites, in the ReStore or on special projects! Volunteer on your own or as a group. No experience is needed and Habitat provides all the tools, training and supervision.

Must be at least 16 years of age. Opportunities include:

- Construction
- ReStore
- Office Work
- Special Events
- Habitat Young Professionals
- Committees

Find out more at www.habitatgreatersac.org or email volunteers@habitatgreatersac.org or call 916-440-1215 x1105

Donate

While Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento needs hands-on volunteers to build homes in Sacramento and Yolo counties, donations also go a long way toward helping families build stable lives in their new homes. Consider a tax-deductible donation to keep the building going!



For more information, visit www.habitatgreatersac.org



Fundraising Goal:

\$220,000

(only \$15,000 left to go!)

\$150,000

\$100,000

\$50,000

\$0



take action

Build for Unity continues to stand as a model for collaboration in the Greater Sacramento area. Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento needs to raise \$15,000 more to start construction of the Build for Unity homes. Keep reading to find out how these homes can change the lives of local families while setting an example for cultural and religious tolerance in Sacramento.



Spread the word

using the #BUILDforUnity hashtag across social media platforms, sharing posts from facebook.com/habitatgreatersac and encouraging organizations and communities to join the cause.



Volunteer

as an individual or with a team for the upcoming build project. Email volunteers@habitatgreatersac.org to register.



Donate

at habitatgreatersac.org/buildforunity, every amount is significant!



Habitat
for Humanity®
of Greater Sacramento

habitatgreatersac.org/buildforunity

For more information,
please contact Kaitlyn Bathke:

Kbathke@HabitatGreaterSac.org

916-440-1215 x1112

connect with us!

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Christian Brothers High School
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St. Mark's United Methodist Church
Miriam McCormack •
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