



Build for Unity

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento has raised over \$150,000 to build hope and homes in Sacramento.

Help us raise the remaining \$17,700 needed to start construction!





Build Love, Not Fear



Imam Kamran Islam speaks at the Build for Unity groundbreaking ceremony in May, surrounded by fellow interfaith leaders.

PHOTO AND COVER PHOTOS BY TONY NGUYEN

We need your help!

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento needs to raise \$176,000 to start construction of the Build for Unity homes. We are just \$17,700 short of our goal. Construction can begin in October and homeowners can have their keys by February — but we need your help to reach this goal!

**Donate today and help
#BuildforUnity!**

HabitatGreaterSac.org/BuildforUnity

What is Build for Unity?

Interfaith effort
to construct
2 homes
in North Sacramento



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

Statement in support of
**diversity and
inclusion**
for all communities



Chance to show
actions speak
**louder
than
words**



Build for Unity is Sacramento's bold statement on religious tolerance

BY MICHELLE CARL

In Sacramento, we know diversity is our strength. We love people who were born in different countries. We have neighbors who speak different languages. We work alongside people who have different names for God.

But some in our country respond to our differences with fear, tearing down the bond we have with our fellow humans.

Here in Sacramento, we have another way of doing things: We build.

Build for Unity is our community's call for religious tolerance in support of our shared values of inclusion and diversity. A project of Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento, Build for Unity brings together a diverse group of interfaith organizations to raise \$176,000 to build two homes for local families in need of safe, decent and affordable housing. These homes, which will stand side-by-side in North Sacramento, will be a physical symbol of what our diverse community can accomplish when we unite for a single cause.

"We're all looking for a way to engage positively and counterbalance all the negative things happening in our daily lives," says Leah Miller, director of development

for Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento. "Build for Unity is a way people can come together in a safe place to do something positive and make a statement about what they stand for — a way for them to come out of their comfort zones and come across that divide and realize we're not really that different after all."

Perhaps it's natural that this idea sprung from Sacramento, a place once heralded by TIME magazine as America's most integrated city. Build for Unity is only the latest interfaith build effort from Habitat for Humanity, the international nonprofit that traces its beginnings to the ideals of racial equality and religious tolerance.

But like many communities, Sacramento bears the scars of bigotry. In 1999, two white supremacists firebombed three Jewish synagogues in the predawn hours. In 2011, two Sikh men, out for a customary evening stroll in their Elk Grove neighborhood, were shot, likely mistaken as Muslims. To date, no arrests have been made.

In the wake of these crimes, the community came together, knowing the victims were not just the members of one religion, but all Sacramentans. While it

is easy to recognize that hate led to such violence, intolerance can persist in ways we do not always see.

Imam Kamran Islam, director of youth development for the Islamic Tarbiya Institute, knows the stories: The girl who bravely wears her hijab to school, only to have it ripped from her head. Or the elderly couple who is afraid to see their doctor, because his beard reminds them of the terrorists they see on TV.

"These stories are true and reflect a problem that must be dealt with," he says.

Everyday religious intolerance begs us to start this conversation now. Sacramento is leading a charge for communities around our country to address intolerance and start their own Build for Unity. To show that actions speak louder than words. To reject hatred and unite together to give families a healthy, affordable place to call home.

And it doesn't matter who you pray to, or if you pray at all: Making the world a better place is something we all hope for.

"That's a human tradition," Imam Kamran says. "Perhaps the oldest human tradition."

Building the American Dream

Habitat for Humanity makes home ownership possible for all families

BY KATE GONZALES

The similarities between the Vozniuk and Maksymchuk families are striking. Both immigrated from Ukraine five years ago and have three children — each with a fourth on the way. Thanks to the Build for Unity effort, both families will soon have another thing in common: They will be homeowners and neighbors.

Liudmyla and Volodymyr Maksymchuk wanted a better life for their family, so they came to the U.S., where Volodymyr works as a mechanic and is studying to be an electrician. Formerly an architect in Ukraine, he dreams of continuing his education to return to the field. For now, he's supporting his family.

Dmytro Vozniuk finds himself in the same situation. He works as a driver and his wife, Ganna, is a Sierra College student who takes care of their three young children. Dmytro would also like to take college courses, but is focused on making ends meet.

"I would like to go to college one day and improve my English," Dmytro says. "But my family needs to eat and my children need clothes and we need to pay the bills."

The Vozniuk family currently lives in a crowded two-bedroom apartment. For years, the couple has wanted a home they could call their own. They heard about Habitat for Humanity through a friend, attended a homeowner orientation and were delighted to be selected for a new home.

"We have always dreamed to own our own home and now it is happening."

Ganna Vozniuk
Future Build for Unity homeowner

"We have always dreamed to own our own home and now it is happening," Ganna Vozniuk says.

The Maksymchuk family has also longed for their own home. Though they were skeptical at first, they were overjoyed to find out they were selected for the program.

"I was amazed," Liudmyla says. "Owning my own home means a place to grow my children and to feel that I have something that I belong to."

Above-ground construction on both homes will begin in fall 2016, when volunteers will gather to do more than build a home — they will build community. Both families say they are touched and overwhelmed by the support they've received from volunteers.

"The volunteers work so hard for us and other families," Liudmyla says. "We just respect the people who work so hard for others. ... It is amazing and something we did not see in our country."

As home recipients, each family will dedicate 500 hours of sweat equity, or manual labor, building houses. If all goes according to schedule, they should be settled in their new homes by February.

Ganna and Dmytro Vozniuk and their three children can't wait to move into their new home, which will be a symbol of interfaith cooperation and love.

COURTESY PHOTO

Requirements for Homeowners



Need Adequate Shelter

Families suffer one of these problems:

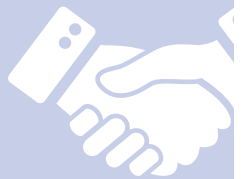
- **Substandard living conditions**, like mold, lack of electricity or major repairs needed
- **Overcrowded conditions**
- Pay more than **50% of their gross income** on rent



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%-60%** of median income in Sacramento and Yolo counties
- Receive a **zero interest** 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
- **57%** have more savings
- **48%** feel more connected to the community





An

The Keval family (pictured from left, mom Shazia, son Ayman, daughter Manal and dad Akram) believe education is key to bringing people together despite religious differences, both on a local and national level.

PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES



All-American Family

Meet the Kevals

BY ANNE STOKES

Picture an all-American, middle-class family. Dad is an account manager and mom works with special needs kids. They're raising two children — a son who's an Eagle Scout and a daughter who aspires to teach underprivileged children — in a suburban neighborhood where they're not only Neighborhood Watch members, they're the founders. They attend service regularly and are active in charitable works throughout the community.

Now imagine their place of worship is a mosque. Should that change anything?

Akram Keval and his wife, Shazia, have been married for 23 years. In 1994, they came from East Africa to make a better life for their family and provide their children with the types of opportunities America is so celebrated for.

Keval founded and hosts his neighborhood's National Night Out every year. He served as social activities director at his mosque for two years, only to give up the position last

year to join the Interfaith Council of Greater Sacramento as a representative of the local Muslim community. The council, formed in 1911, works to promote better understanding and respect among our area's diverse religious communities.

With the hateful rhetoric that is too commonly heard in media outlets and political rallies, Keval says that education is the key to bringing unity to our national conversation.

"I feel ... that they have no idea what the faith is all about. The politicians are trying to bring this hate and divide the country while we, on the other hand, are trying to bring everybody together," he says. "It's like building bridges. We have to keep doing it at a local and national level. Everyone has to teach each other and they have to educate themselves."

Keval's daughter, Manal, has learned well from her father's example. The Pleasant Grove High School senior is the president of the Muslim Student Association, a conflict mediator and AVID student. She's also an active Girl Scout, earning her Gold award, the organization's highest honor, by creating an anti-

bullying campaign aimed at helping middle school kids, something she based on her own experience.

Above all, the Kevals want to be seen as the multifaceted American family that they are.

"I'm not only a Muslim, I'm a senior in high school. I'm a Girl Scout. I'm a conflict mediator. I'm so many other things," Manal says. "I wish they would learn that we're all the same, and that just because we have a different religion, doesn't mean we're different from you. We're a typical suburban family. We're just Muslim."

"We're a typical suburban family. We're just Muslim."

Manal Keval
Daughter, high school senior, conflict mediator, Girl Scout and Muslim

Muslims Give Back

Just a few examples of the interfaith community efforts led by Sacramento-area Islamic organizations.

Ar-Razzaq Food Bank serves our community with compassion and integrity, **distributing gifts of food** from the fortunate to the needy. We provide care packages for **Mustard Seed School, Wind Youth Services and for the homeless**. We also arrange hot lunches for homeless students at schools and through a luncheon program at Sacramento **Loaves & Fishes**.

Call 916-488-8110 or visit ar-razzaqfoodbank.org.

Shifa Clinic is a nonprofit, student-run medical facility dedicated to serving the diverse, medically uninsured population of the greater Sacramento area. The clinic provides **basic as well as specialized medical services free of charge** to patients of all ethnicities and backgrounds. In addition, as a teaching center, the clinic provides valuable training for medical students and undergraduate volunteers.

Call 916-441-6008 or visit shifaclinic.org.

MAS Social Services Foundation (MAS-SSF) is a nonprofit that aims to **aid families at large and the Muslim community in particular with social services**. MAS-SSF strives to be at the forefront of the community's needs and to support the community in attaining the overall well-being of individuals and families.

Call 916-486-8626 or visit www.mas-ssf-sac.org.

SAHA Health Center provides **no-cost, high-quality, culturally competent, wellness-focused basic health care** to medically uninsured and/or underserved individuals and refugees. It is operated by volunteer physicians from our community, nursing students from Sacramento State University. Soon med students from California Northstate University will volunteer in SHC. SHC is open the third Saturday of each month from 1-5 p.m.

Call 916-572-4870 or visit sahahealth.org/mission.

What Would Jesus Do?

Build

Auxiliary Bishop sits down to talk unity

Jeff vonKaenel, longtime Habitat for Humanity board member and champion of the Build for Unity project, sits down with the Most Rev. Myron J. Cotta, Auxiliary Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Sacramento, to get his take on the Build for Unity project and why everyone of all faiths should come out to support it.

Habitat is always looking for skilled laborers, particularly carpenters. If Jesus was in Sacramento now, do you think he would join with the other faiths to help us build houses?

I'm sure he would be in the midst of it. (laughs)

That's great. (laughs)

Then, just as he always does, he is going to say, well you do something, too. He always did that with his apostles and followers. He invites others to be part of his mission. ... There is always the challenge from Christ to be Christ-like and merciful, to do the loving thing.

And this is an example of how that loving thing can be manifested.

Yes. It doesn't matter if I am Catholic or Hindu or Muslim or Jewish. This is a goal we can all work on.

Around the country, there are many Habitat for Humanities and many different faith traditions. Would you encourage your fellow Catholics around the country to join us in this project?

I think it is a great invitation and a great challenge, too. People are going to continue to work within their own groups, but here is an opportunity to kind of stretch oneself and to think about the bigger picture. And how exciting is that?

"It doesn't matter if I am Catholic or Hindu or Muslim or Jewish. This is a goal we can all work on."

Most Rev. Myron J. Cotta
Auxiliary Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Sacramento

How do you think Build for Unity relates to the year of mercy?

When dealing with the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis is saying a lot about the encounter we have with God in our life. ... Then, how do we bring that encounter to those that we meet. Am I reaching out to the other person? Or am I waiting for the other person to come to me? So this project is about not getting hung up on, if I am helping a Muslim [or someone of another faith], am I betraying my own teachings or beliefs? I think what Pope Francis is trying to say to us is if you have a person in need, you help them.

Kind of like being a good Samaritan.

Yes. It's also about living the "Golden Rule," just like Pope Francis told the members of Congress when he came to visit the United States. That is what's happening here. We are being challenged to live this, not just to sit by idly. Be active, be involved. That's what this Year of Mercy is asking us to do. No matter what age you are, we can all be "disciples of mercy." So let's get our act together, in unity, and do something great with love for our brothers and sisters.



Calling All Faiths: Get Involved

Encourage your faith community to take real action to support tolerance by participating in Build for Unity.

Sign the pledge form found on the Build for Unity website (www.habitatgreatersac.org/BuildforUnity) and invite your friends, family and neighbors to do the same.

Host a fundraising event at your house of worship or make a presentation to your congregation discussing the project and ways to get involved. Volunteer at one of the build sites, by contacting BuildforUnity@HabitatGreaterSac.org.

Take a leadership role and oversee the relationship between Habitat and your house of worship. Make sure your faith does its part to promote tolerance between all faiths in Sacramento.

Keep Build for Unity in your thoughts and prayers. Together we can guarantee all people — of all faiths — feel welcome and supported in the Sacramento region.

Why Do You Support Build For Unity?

Hearing from our local faith leaders



"Right now, people are letting **bias and prejudice come to the surface**, and so it is important for the faith community to **set an example of a higher way**, and show that we are not a people of hate and division, but rather love and community."

Rev. Leslie Welton, St. John's Lutheran Church



"This project not only benefits families in need, but is a symbol of people from different cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs uniting for a common cause. **If we can be an example of acceptance and understanding for others to follow**, then we have done far more than provide a home for a few families."

Gordon Nitta, president of Buddhist Church of Lodi



"There is so much divisiveness, hatred and vitriol in the world right now that anything we can do to bring people together in mutual love and support, I am eager to be a part of. **This is a spectacular incarnation of God's dream for humanity.**"

The Very Rev. Brian Baker, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral



"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."

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



"During my childhood in India, I grew up with all faiths: Muslim, Hindu, Christian – everybody. So for me, **all faiths living together and sharing** and learning from one another **is interfaith**. This project is a very good example of that and in God's order."

Darshan Mundy, Sikh Temple Sacramento



"Jews immigrated to America seeking a better a life, a place where people from different religions, cultures and ethnicities could dwell together in peace and friendship. **When we come together to build houses and provide shelter for those seeking refuge**, we strengthen our community and fulfill the shared teachings of our different faiths."

Rabbi Mona Alfi, Congregation B'nai Israel



"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!"

Imam M. A. Azeez, president of Tarbiya Institute



"Build for Unity is a wonderful opportunity for us to overcome our fears and embrace the beauty in every human soul. Loving others is what our faith is all about, and I am pleased to join this expression of **God's love for our community.**"

Pastor Rick Cole, Capital Christian Center

Building Foundations of Unity

Q&A with Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento CEO Rob Kerth



How did the Build for Unity Project get started?

The project sprouted at a Habitat for Humanity board meeting earlier this year when, in light of some recently nationalized division, [SN&R CEO] Jeff vonKaenel had the idea to bring various faiths together to build two Habitat homes as a demonstration of unity within our local Sacramento community.

Why is it important for the public to see interfaith efforts such as this, especially in today's social and political atmosphere?

Actions speak louder than words. Millard Fuller, the founder of Habitat, once said, "If you just yell, there are no homes getting built. When the yelling is over, you gotta pick up that hammer and start driving nails." I think there will be some people surprised to see a bishop and imam swinging hammers together, but that's what Habitat and Sacramento is all about.

Right now in this country, we hear a lot of people talking about differences and separating communities into us and them. But you know, I have never met a person who enjoyed living in an apartment that leaked or had holes in the floor. Decent housing is one of our most basic needs and it reminds us that regardless of our religion, race or background — we're not so different after all.

How will this project impact our community?

Obviously both homes will have a life-changing impact on the two families. To a larger issue, we hope that this project will be a tangible example of the tremendous good that can come when we work together in unity.

Do you think that the fact that Sacramento is one of the most diverse cities in the nation makes it a good place to start this project?

I think the history and composition of Sacramento makes it a great place to start. When the Jewish synagogue and school were firebombed, representatives from faiths throughout the Sacramento region came together to help rebuild it. When Jimmie Yee's house was firebombed while he was a council member, our entire community came together to support him. It's part of Sacramento's DNA to step up when somebody is being treated unfairly.

Do you hope this serves as an example for other cities across the country?

Perhaps, but we hope to be more than an example. We want this to be something that reverberates from coast to coast within every city, with every Habitat, and every person.

How can people get involved?

Visit the website, www.HabitatGreaterSac.org/BuildforUnity. There you will find information on how to support the Build for Unity effort in a variety of ways including volunteering and donating!

"I think there will be some people surprised to see a bishop and imam swinging hammers together, but that's what Habitat and Sacramento is all about."

Rob Kerth
CEO, Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento
PHOTO BY TONY NGUYEN

We need **YOUR** help to **Build for Unity**



www.HabitatGreaterSac.org/BuildforUnity

**Just \$17,700 left to
reach our goal!**

Give

We need to raise \$176,000 to start construction, and we're so close!
Find out how to contribute at
HabitatGreaterSac.org/BuildforUnity
916-440-1215 ext. 1131

Volunteer

Your time and talents are needed in support of Build for Unity. For opportunities, e-mail BuildforUnity@HabitatGreaterSac.org.

Pray

Keep Habitat Greater Sacramento in your thoughts and prayers.

Share

Spread the word and show your support!



www.facebook.com/HabitatGreaterSac



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