



# THE HABITAT VIEW

SPRING 2014  
WWW.ALACHUAHABITAT.ORG

## Thank You Jan LeDuc - Volunteer Extraordinaire! We Will Miss You

Jan LeDuc never slows down. Since the year 2000, LeDuc has been coming into the Alachua Habitat office multiple times a week to help with any tasks she can get her hands on. February 6, 2014 marked her last day volunteering her time at the Habitat office.

She has been described by Habitat employees as a “powerhouse” because of how effective she is at helping the office run. LeDuc has also helped in the ReStore, served on the selection, partner and construction committees and previously held the title of volunteer coordinator.

LeDuc first began her partnership with Habitat in the late 1980s when she worked on build sites with her church, Trinity United Methodist. She still remembers the first family’s house she worked



Robert Alexander, Wanda Williams, Jan LeDuc and Carol Barron



Jan LeDuc

on- the Morrison family.

Since joining the Habitat office in 2000, LeDuc went to work sites every Saturday where she had the opportunity to form bonds with dozens more families.

“When you hand a family a key to their first house, that’s why I’ve been here all these years. They’re the reason,” LeDuc said.

Before joining the Habitat team, LeDuc worked as a first grade teacher for 30 years. She became a Gainesville resident in 1972 after moving from St. Petersburg, Fla. She is the mother of two children and a self-proclaimed avid Gator fan. In addition to giving her time to Habitat, she helps with yard work every Monday at the Ronald McDonald House.

The entire Habitat staff and volunteers will miss LeDuc’s caring heart and lively spirit and we are grateful for her many years of service.



## Kristine Thompson, Family Services Director, is Habitat Families #1 Advocate

Family services director Kristine Thompson is known for putting her all into championing the families that partner with Alachua Habitat for Humanity.

“My main goal is to support families. My position is to give 100 percent support to what’s best for them,” Thompson said.

Thompson offers guidance to families in search of homes by holding monthly Home Ownership Orientation meetings, pre-qualifying families, helping families choose prospective locations to build their new homes and making sure families have the resources they need to be successful long term.

To become a Habitat family partner, families need to demonstrate a need for housing, an ability to pay a mortgage and the willingness to partner through working on sites and gaining sweat equity hours. One of the tools that Thompson feels has helped families be successful throughout this process is requiring families to help build

others’ homes as well as their own in order to instill a sense of value.

In addition, Thompson believes that the required Alachua Habitat classes in homeownership, such as the Homebuyers Education Class, can really make a difference. She hopes to one day be able to provide additional classes in home safety and budgeting.

...continued on page 3



Kristine Thompson with family partners Lewis and Shaniqua Profit

## The Spirit of Paying it Forward Reveals Itself at Women Build

Alachua Habitat Women Build volunteer Ocie Parker truly embodies the spirit of paying it forward. A new Habitat volunteer, Ms. Parker has a unique connection with Alachua Habitat for Humanity- her mother was the first homeowner of an Alachua Habitat home 25 years ago.

While Parker was already grown when her mother moved into her new home, she was still able to see the profound effect it had on her family's lives.

Parker began working on the Women Build site of the Memorial House last October after happening upon the site by chance.

"I was walking by [the site] one day, and I decided I would stop by and help out. I always said I would volunteer on a house so I grabbed at this chance," Parker said.

The Memorial House, named so because the funding came from a Gainesville family in memory of a loved one who strongly believed in Habitat's mission, marks the seventh house built by Alachua Women Build and the 113th house built by Alachua Habitat.

Parker is known on site as an extremely dedicated and hard worker who is always eager to lend a help-



Ocie Parker (center) and volunteers at work site

ing hand. Like many volunteers, she came in with no prior knowledge about construction but she quickly jumped in and started learning.

Parker likes to help others on their jobs around the site, be it handing other women tools or working in a team to complete measurements. She is quick to recognize that through helping others, she has helped herself in learning a new set of skills.

"Habitat is a great program and building this home wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. I felt like I couldn't do it but

Habitat helped me overcome my fear," Parker said.

From her personal ties with Habitat for Humanity, Parker understands the impact of contributing her time to Alachua Women Build. The house she has been working on every Saturday will soon be home to Karen Lewis and her four children.

"It's always a good idea to help someone else out that's in need. You might be in the same predicament one day," Parker said.

"It's all about helping one another out."

## First Apostle's Build Home Nears Completion

While Habitat provides the building site, house plans, and on-site training, local churches provide the labor and joy during the Apostle's Build.

Apostle's Build is a coalition of 12 local churches working together to fund and build a house. The home building cost is about \$75,000 and each church contributes to the funding.

Kristine Range and her three grandchildren have been working the construction site in Robinson Heights for many months and are looking forward to moving in this spring.

This month, several churches came out, bringing an array of volunteers from the community. Olivia Mason, a 16-year-old student from Oak Hall High School, volunteered with Aletheia Church and said she had an incredible experience.

"I really enjoyed working together," she said. "I felt like we were a little family afterwards."

If you or your church is interested in joining the Apostle's Build or the next Faith Build, please call Alachua Habitat office at **352-378-4663**.



Volunteers at the Apostle's Build



Thompson has worked with non-profits for 30 years. She previously worked with Big Brothers Big Sisters, and was a member of a homeless coalition in Michigan. She was also involved with senior services and aided with welfare transitioning before joining Alachua Habitat two years ago.

When Thompson first started working with Alachua Habitat, she was both the Family Services Director and also the Volunteer Coordinator.

"Volunteers are the core and without them we couldn't build houses the way we do," she said.

Thompson's love for helping people in times of need and building stronger communities has led to the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, which she has been working on for one year. The project aims to focus on what community members themselves say they need to improve their neighborhood.

No matter what projects Thompson is juggling, she knows how important her work is.

"I know the impact that Habitat makes on families. I've seen it. I've witnessed it."

*Kristine Thompson and  
buildsite supervisor Joseph Exelbirt*



## Pat Denham's Passion for Giving Back

Passionate about Habitat for Humanity, Board President Pat Denham first came to Habitat as many do - as a volunteer. And then as most often happens with volunteers her desire to be present and make a difference in her community is what has kept her here and led to her dedication to the Habitat mission.

"Being in construction myself," Denham said, "it is really interesting to witness the Habitat process, to see how a family enters into and becomes a Habitat family partner, how the family works on and completes their sweat equity and then ultimately becomes a first time homeowner. The fact that Habitat homeowners are required to invest more of their self gives added value to their home and life in general."

A Gainesville native, Denham has lived in the Alachua County area all her life. She was raised on a large farm in Newberry. She has two children and eight of her grandchildren are in the immediate area.

"My grandchildren keep me very busy," she said. "With eight grandchildren my home is a regular stomping ground for them and



*Pat Denham,  
President of Board of Directors*

their friends. Not to mention that my husband and I also attend a lot of school activities."

Having retired in 2004, Denham started the construction company, Baseline Builders, with her husband and son. Denham is the company president, the marketing and public relations manager and handles the fiscal management of the business.

Denham said she finds her strength in the Lord and God leads her life. When others may be stressed, she said she remains calm because she knows the Lord is leading her to do and be what she needs to do and be.

Denham said she is committed to the future of Habitat and believes strongly that she can make a difference in her community and the lives of her neighbors.

"Homeownership," she said, "is freedom from being at someone else's mercy."

When she truly retires from work, she said she plans to make a quilt with the material she has been collecting for years; and she has a plan to build her dream Koi pond because it is so relaxing.



Women's Build is hosting its 7th Annual Luncheon on Wednesday, April 9, 2014 at Holy Trinity Parish Hall at 11:30 a.m. It is a celebration of the completion of the seventh house by the dedicated volunteers of the Women's Build. It will also be honoring Maureen Johnson, Paige Parkhill and Rachel Roy.

To reserve a seat, please donate \$25 on the Alachua Habitat website under the "Women's Build Donation" tab by April 1st.

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 Kristine Thompson Story

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Erika Oakvik  
 Apostle Build Story

## Hearts and Homes 5K

Despite the freezing rain, the UF chapter of Habitat for Humanity met for the Hearts and Homes 5K on Feb. 8.

The 5K was to a fundraiser for the university chapter and about 25 people participated.

Nick Bianco, a 22-year-old mechanical engineering student, won the 5K with a time of 20:08.

He is a member of the Tau Beta Pi engineering fraternity at UF, which is working on a project with Habitat this semester.



Help us break the cycle of poverty!

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I wish to be a part of Habitat's Mission. Please accept my donation of: \$25\_\_\_\$50\_\_\_\$100\_\_\_\$250\_\_\_ \$500\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

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