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**Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County Builds Back after COVID-19 Shut Downs.
New staff and new projects will serve the local community**

FREDERICK, MD, August 2020 – Devastation from COVID-19 shut downs were swift and dramatic at Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County in March 2020. “On a Monday we had a staff meeting to talk about various precautions we could take during the spread of the virus, but then things moved so quickly that by the end of that week we were almost completely shut down,” recalls Executive Director, Ron Cramer.

That shut down included temporary closure of the Habitat ReStore, the organization’s thrift store on N. East Street. This shut off what is usually a source of consistent operational funding for the local Habitat for Humanity affiliate. Additionally, the organization’s home build and home repair programs closed to protect volunteers and clients, the majority of whom are seniors. Without the ReStore revenue, and without programs in operation, the organization was forced into financial crisis nearly overnight. As a result, Habitat’s leadership was forced to furlough the majority of staff, retaining only those with direct fundraising and financial management responsibilities to maintain the organization’s financial stability through the crisis. “Those initial weeks at the beginning of everything COVID were very frightening for those of us at Habitat. The number of losses in such a short time really threatened the work we do” reported Cramer.

While losses were real, they have been offset by support from the local community. “It is the local community who has always made the work of Habitat possible in Frederick. That has never been more true than now,” says Cramer. During the crisis Habitat received support from local residents, businesses and civic organizations who believe in the mission and work Habitat provides locally. That support included help from Lancaster Craftsman Builders who took over management of Habitat’s current home build in Middletown and with the help of numerous build partners expect to complete it this fall for a deserving family. Their work, coupled with local philanthropy and emergency funding from various levels of government, not only sustained the organization but also positioned it to now build back.

The first stage of the build back was reopening the Habitat ReStore with shortened hours on June 30th. During the reopening Habitat welcomed a new ReStore Manager, Mike Boyd. Boyd, who spent 25 years in the hospitality industry, including 18 years with Plamondon Hospitality Partners, had recently retired, but quickly decided retirement life wasn’t for him. He brings a heart for managing people and providing customer service, essential elements to managing the Habitat ReStore as it raises funds for Habitat. The Habitat ReStore has slowly been expanding their hours, working towards a full scheduled, as Boyd and his team rebuild the volunteer base that is critical to staffing the store.

Once the Habitat ReStore was open again, Habitat started bringing back other employees critical to its operations and mission. As part of this stage, Habitat welcomed another new employee, Evan Owens, as Construction Project Manager. Owens brings 10 years of experience as a General Manager at Anthony Owens Remodeling and Repair, a business big on community involvement with a long history of aiding Habitat projects. Owens earned his Project Management Program certification last year and was looking for an opportunity to combine his construction knowledge with a growing desire

to work at a nonprofit. He's looking forward to working with volunteers, staff and local partners to continue to streamline the organization's efforts as they move towards the next chapter of construction to serve the community.

That next chapter began last week when work resumed in the Habitat Home Repair program, which serves local homeowners in need of assistance. Due to the economic downturn, it is predicted that more local homeowners will be in need of this assistance as they face unexpected repairs. As Habitat reopens, they are first serving those who applied to the program prior to shutdowns to ensure their needs have been met, and then will start evaluating new applicants.

Meanwhile, this fall Habitat will use funds from a State grant to purchase a property on W. All Saints Street in downtown Frederick. In 2021, rehab work will begin on the property's existing buildings, with new construction to follow in the infill space. When completed, the project will create 12 permanently affordable housing units through the organization's Community Land Trust program for local residents seeking the stability of a home they can afford.

Due to the shifts that occurred during the shutdown and reopening, Habitat is also seeking to fill additional open positions which are critical to accomplish these projects, and serve the growing need in the community for affordable homeownership solutions. "We are in need of high caliber individuals who have a passion for changing the lives of our neighbors to fully build back" said Cramer. Those interested in joining the team at Habitat Frederick can visit the website at www.frederickhabitat.org to learn more and view open positions.

About Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County:

No matter who we are or where we come from, we all deserve a decent life. We deserve to feel strength and stability day after day. We deserve to know we have power to take care of ourselves and build our own futures. At Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County, this is what unites us. Through shelter, we empower. Our vision is a world where everyone has a decent place to live. For more than 25 years, Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County has worked toward that by providing affordable home ownership solutions to hardworking people in Frederick County. Because every one of us deserves the opportunity for a better future. **Mission:** Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope.