

## Welcome, Ruth Rodriguez Simons!

We are happy to have Ruth Rodriguez Simons as the newest member of our Homeowner Services staff. Ruth was born in Honduras and lived there until she was 20 years old.



“I come from a very small, close family,” says Ruth. “My dad passed when I was 16 and my mom finished raising us.” Ruth comes from a family with a long history of service to others. Her father worked for nonprofits World Vision and for CARE.

“I watched him helping to build houses for others and it was fun.”

After earning an early diploma from high school, Ruth began law school in Honduras before moving to the United States. She has lived in the area for 18 years and in Saluda for seven years. She lives with her husband Eugene, daughter Fabyana and son Reyes, along with her new grandson Benjamin, born this July.

With her bilingual skills, Ruth has added a new ability to the staff for working with partners whose first language is Spanish. Her job includes taking applications for new homes, for home repairs, and homeowner education.

In all her spare time, Ruth is studying Human Services at Blue Ridge Community College. “I love working in the nonprofit world,” she says. “It makes me happy carrying on my family’s tradition.”

Ruth may be reached at Habitat by calling 828-808-0151 or emailing [rsimons@habitat-hvl.org](mailto:rsimons@habitat-hvl.org).

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and Donate at any  
of our Habitat ReStores.**  
Your generosity goes directly to fund Habitat projects and make a difference in the lives of many.



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**Coming  
December  
15th!**

***Does preparing for Christmas leave you with little time to cook a delicious meal for yourself or your family?***

Habitat’s first annual fundraising event, called “Drive Thru Dinner” will be held in early December.

Make a donation to Habitat for building projects and drive by to pick up your gourmet meals in an insulated bag that will be warm when you arrive home. Donate to a good cause and enjoy an evening with an excellent meal!



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## Habitat “Ramps Up” Home Repair

For Timm Kurtz, helping his mother and brother in and out of their home had become nearly impossible. Kurtz cares for his mother and brother Joseph, who has had cerebral palsy since birth. Kurtz had some carpentry experience and first attempted the job himself. However, the rise in cost of materials was a challenge. As a sole caregiver, he simply did not have the time.

This summer, though, life is looking up for the Kurtz family. Dedicated Habitat volunteers and staff built a new ramp and deck. Kurtz is ecstatic. “I simply cannot believe how beautiful the deck is! For Joseph to be able to have his wheelchair outside with his dogs brings so much good to my heart. So grateful to you and all the volunteers,” he said.

Habitat has increased our number of home repairs, including issues of safety and accessibility. Home repairs may be at low or no cost to the homeowner. The goal is to allow older adults and persons with disabilities to live safely and independently.

For more information on the Home Repair programs please see the Habitat website at [habitat-hvl.org](http://habitat-hvl.org) or call 828-500-1727 for more information.



## The Bear Necessities

It’s hard to believe, but Habitat is already preparing for the Bearfootin’ Art Walk Auction of 2023 – next spring and summer! Bearfootin’ has been a growling good fundraiser for Habitat, but it does require an initial investment. We are asking if there are any Bear or art lovers who might assist Habitat in the initial cost of the bear model to be painted. If so, please send your donation to Habitat at [habitat-hvl.org](http://habitat-hvl.org) or in the enclosed envelope. Many thanks!



## Linda's Letter



Dear friends,

My first six months with Habitat have been both challenging and

amazing. I moved back home to North Carolina after living in Missouri for several years and leading the Children's Advocacy Center.

When I was in the recruitment process, the selection committee asked me why I wanted to lead a Habitat affiliate. My answer was multi-faceted.

First of all, I am a public servant. Most of my career and personal interests have been built around serving those most in need—including tackling issues related to food insecurity, healthcare, education, and child protection. I explained that I clearly understood how safe, affordable and suitable housing is a critical social determinant of health. Habitat's work, both domestically and globally, has far-reaching effects on nearly every aspect of a family's existence.

Against the beautiful backdrop of the Blue Ridge mountains, I've been reminded of both poverty and hope. A number of us have experienced living from paycheck to paycheck, and many others such as these families, are no exception. The poverty is as deep and wide as the area in which I grew up.

Families are having to choose between buying gas for their cars or groceries for their family, and

no one should ever have to be put through that. What's worse, is that there are children who can only dream of a safe bed or play space to call their own, and that takes its toll on society as a whole. I was one of these children growing up, and thus when I grew up, I was determined to make a difference in the lives of these families and their children.

I also see hope every day. At Habitat, we are humbled and grateful to see families move into the first homes that are their own. We see our mission at work each day and we believe that every family deserves a safe and secure home in which to live and fulfill their hopes and dreams.

This doesn't mean the work is easy for any of us.

We see the same challenges that many of our supporters do. COVID set back the work of our valued volunteers for over a year. The cost of our building supplies for both new homes and home repairs has jumped double digits. Finding land both affordable and buildable is becoming more and more difficult each month.

When I arrived, it was to meet a group of dedicated volunteers like no other. On a blustery March morning or a blistering July afternoon, you will find groups of volunteers building walls, laying landscaping, or sorting donated items. Whether people volunteer one Saturday a year or one day each week, they make a big difference in the lives of others. Their hard work makes our projects affordable, despite the rising costs of building supplies and materials.

I learned you don't need to be able to lift a hammer to help in our mission. We have volunteers who help in our ReStores, remembering that the purpose of the stores is to support building homes and making needed repairs for those who may otherwise not be able to. For those who cannot volunteer, we appreciate donations, either financially or in donated items. Each donation, large or small, is part of the difference.

Our staff is a dedicated team. I'm excited to work with people like Bruce Gordon, our Director of Construction who has been here for almost 25 years and has overseen the building of over 240 homes.

Another big thanks goes to Ron Laughter who served 13 years leading the agency.

Last, but certainly not least, I've been honored to meet so many members of the Henderson County community. When folks describe this area as one of the friendliest in the south, they aren't kidding!

Thank you so much for the kind welcome! I hope to get to know more of you each day—and to work hard each day to earn your trust.

Linda Saturno  
President and CEO

## Habitat Hero: Jim Krause



Jim Krause is one of Habitat's dedicated and long-term volunteers who also leads our "Shed Crew."

Jim first began his work with Habitat for Humanity in the

early 2000s in Roswell, Georgia. He and his wife Darla became involved through their church and the one-day "blitz-builds," which can literally raise the walls and the roof of a home in a day. By pre-building the walls and the roof trusses, volunteers can then erect these in one day on site.

Jim and Darla moved to Flat Rock in 2009. Soon afterward, they joined Grace Lutheran Church. It was there that they met Rob Anderson of Flat Rock, who established the "shed crew."

The Shed Crew is just one of Habitat's core group of volunteers, who are able to regularly devote one day a week or per month toward building, repairing homes, or helping in one of our ReStores. Since the current home lots are not wide enough to add a carport, a storage shed allows a family

to store items like lawnmowers, rakes, and other necessities.

Jim began volunteering in the Grace Lutheran Blitz Builds in 2009. He also became the liaison for social ministry at Grace Lutheran, in which he makes connections with nonprofit organizations all over Henderson County.

"Until COVID came along, Grace had 24-25 Blitz Builds in a row, doing one a year," says Jim. Grace will be back in full force for a Blitz Build on October 1, 2022.

In addition to pitching in to help other crews, Jim enjoys golfing and exercising every day. He and his wife Darla have children who live in Nashville, Tennessee, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

## Interested in a "Habi-Bat" House?

Our Habitat bat houses were a huge hit at the North Carolina Apple Festival last year as a fundraiser to build and repair homes. Volunteers have offered to continue taking orders for these one-of-a-kind bat houses. Installing a bat house on your property can provide a safe environment for bats, while protecting your yard from pest insects, like mosquitoes, moths, and beetles. For more information on ordering your "Habi-Bat" house that supports local Habitat projects, please call Toni Thayer at 828-500-1727 or visit us at [www.habitat-hvl.org](http://www.habitat-hvl.org).

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