

Awards Biography 2/8/08

When people think of Habitat, they think of pounding nails and building houses. This is what we do. We are really a number of businesses, from real estate to banking, a social service agency and a builder – with most of the work done by volunteers.

Our annual awards reflect the range of work done by our organization. The people and businesses selected this year are only a small number of the thousands who make the world a better place through their work with Habitat.

Staff Award: Cassie Bertke

Cassie serves as our Office and Volunteer Coordinator. She is the voice of Habitat, answering our office phone hundreds of times a week. She is our email queen staying in touch with all of you regularly via email and through our E-Builder. At times when all the lines are ringing and people are at the door, Cassie is like an air traffic controller keeping all the runways moving on time. She has built relationships with all of our crew contacts and has raised thousands of dollars for our organization through her friendly and open way. Always ready with a laugh and a smile, Cassie provides amazing strength to our organization and is a pleasure to work with. I thank her for her always-passionate love of Habitat and for willingness to see what needs to be done and to just do it. And I appreciate so much that she is always willing to go the extra mile whenever needed.

Behind the Scenes Award: Arthur Lewis

Arthur is one of our favorite facilitators in our Family Education Program. He drives to our office in all sorts of weather many evenings to run classes with our families, gently bringing out the best ideas for changes they can make to improve their budget. Arthur brings to Habitat many years of experience in the mortgage industry. He now runs his own management consulting business so he also brings self-improvement techniques and leadership techniques to the families. Art is a donor to Habitat and is a great partner in our behind the scenes work so Habitat Partner Families can be successful.

Youth United Award: Megan French

Megan is a senior at Lake Forest College. She founded the Lake Forest College Campus Chapter a few years ago and regularly brings crews to the site. Her group raises funds for our Youth United house and supports our work whenever possible. In addition, Megan organizes the LFC collegiate challenge trip to build somewhere else in the US – usually in a warmer climate! Megan currently serves as a Communications Intern in our office for Winter Semester. She plans to serve as an AmeriCorps member with a Habitat affiliate in Alabama as soon as she graduates in May. Megan is a model leader and exemplifies the best in youth leadership. She loves Habitat and is one of the bright shining stars in Habitat's future.

Church Partnership Award: St Stephen Lutheran Church

St. Stephen Church has been a great supporter of Habitat for Humanity for the past several years. When the Thrivent Builds Program started, Glen Weimerslage invited me to speak at their small church. They immediately got busy raising funds for the Thrivent Builds homes and set up crews. Since then they've invited me back several times to update the church on what we're doing and they keep on sending crews and they keep on sending money! We really enjoy our partnership with St. Stephen and thank them for their service.

Corporate Partnership Award: United Stationers Supply

United Stationers Supply pledged major financial support to Habitat for Humanity in the entire Chicagoland area in 2007. They also provided a number of crews to several of our affiliates over the past year. Here in Lake County, we enjoyed crews on 7 days, along with a fantastic donation! Our crew leaders report that the USS crews are always eager to get to work and they work hard – all day long. Our AmeriCorps members also appreciate the lunches they supply! But the support goes beyond the crews, as United Stationers staff, do even more. When I shared a brief story about our Santa Claus display from Northbrook Court, Tim Connolly and Cheryl Orłowski got the word out to people they knew. In a matter of days, one of their contacts decided to purchase it and it was out the door, bringing even more very much needed funding into our organization. Now that's partnership that goes beyond the just the basics! Thank you.

Government Partnership Award: Waukegan Police Department

The Waukegan Police Department has been a great support to Habitat for many years. In 2007 they kept us all safe on the site through their watchful eyes on increased patrols and through use of an alarm. We frequently saw police cars cruising by Carter Crossing and we had few problems all year. We especially appreciate the work of Ken Roscher who coordinates the Community Emergency Response Training Program and Community Policing Program. He worked hard with Brenda and went the extra mile to make sure the program went well for our families. The Waukegan Police Departments has made our program stronger. We believe our neighbors and our city will be stronger due to our work together.

Construction Volunteer Award: Dave Fowler

Dave is a leader in our Habiholic crew, a team of 15 people who are so in the Habitat habit that they come to the site every Wednesday. Dave and the Habiholics work wherever we most need them, often helping finish off houses and do punch list items. Over the past few years Dave has emerged as a leader as he also calls Randy and Kathie on Tuesday to find out what special work we need the Habiholics to do. He puts in this extra time to be sure the materials and equipment are ready so the crew can have a good day. Dave is also a donor to Habitat and we appreciate this financial support always. He probably does more than I even know that he does! Dave always has a smile on his face and is a great Habitat partner on our construction site.

ReStore Volunteer Award: Dean Chaney - Recruit Training Command – Great Lakes

Dean is our contact with the Recruit Training Command of the US Navy . And he is an excellent ReStore volunteer recruiter from the Navy. Tim and Dean are best buds and Dean always comes through for us. Dean regularly recruits folks from the base to help at the ReStore. These regular crews help Tim keep caught up on pickups and the crews help organize the store when needed. They know how to work hard and they get things done. Although Dean isn't always at the ReStore, his leadership has helped increase our ReStore sales in a major way this past year.

ReStore Volunteer Award – Steve Klein

If you enter the front door of our ReStore you will likely see Steve's smiling face since he volunteers almost every day, Steve is often as cashier but he also helps customers find things and explains what items are. He's been known to go online to check prices, to unload trucks and to just jump in and help where needed. Steve makes it possible for staff to go do pickups and to do other projects in the store since he provides extra hands. He is missed whenever he is NOT there since he brings the donuts to start the day!

ReStore Donor Award – Northbrook Court

Northbrook Court Mall is our partner through a wonderful relationship developed this year with General Growth Properties – or GGP. As part of our partnership, GGP offered space in the mall for our “house” display and also gives us all the coins from their fountains. Also the mall donated regularly ReStore material for most of 2007. As stores empty in the mall, Jennifer Madden and Tim schedule a pickup and we've received a multitude of great shelving, some furniture and other goods from them. As the mall remodeled their Food Court, we received kitchen items, furniture and funky signs like 2 Baskin Robbins signs. Finally, the mall donated their entire Santa Claus area which brought in a cool \$3000!

Building Community Award: Brad DeSent

The short version of our mission is “Building Homes, Building Community.” Our homes are what we see, feel, touch and count. Each year I report our house count to HFHI and to the world. Less measurable is the second part of our mission statement, “Building Community”. All of our awardees and probably all of you actually help build community in some way. At this awards ceremony, however, each year we honor a person who demonstrates the spirit of Building Community in a special way. This award is one of the most important awards we give. This year I am delighted to present this award to: Brad DeSent

Brad is a wonderful friend of Habitat - both as a volunteer on our site and as a donor to our organization. Brad first volunteered 6 years ago on a house sponsored by his church. Then, two years ago, on his own, he put together a small crew of friends - just because. The crew became known as Brad's Building Buddies. Since then, about 4-6 times a year, Brad continues to invite different people into his crew. Gradually he's built a great team that do a great job. Besides the hard work on site, all together Brad's Building Buddies have donated over \$11,000 to our organization! We love that Brad is such a team player and that he helps build our community out in his world.

Family Partnership: Angel and Roxie Gomez

The Family Partnership Award goes annually to a family who has already completed their sweat equity and is living in their house, and who continues to volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. This year we are proud to present the Family Partnership Award to: Angel and Roxie Gomez

Angel and Roxie are incredible Habitat partners. They moved into their home at Carter Crossing in December. Angel and Roxie are always ready to answer the call for help from our office or from their neighbors. Angel helps with events, managing the kitchen set up and clean up with ease and by bringing ice. He pays attention to his neighborhood and helps his neighbors with anything they need, including snow shoveling, fixing small problems and just being there. He recently helped Kathie solve some punch list items. Roxie is always ready to jump in too with help with PR and Spanish. She is one of our presenters at our Spanish Family Applicant Orientation Meetings. Angel and Roxie have made choices to improve their lives and the show God's love in everything they do. They provide an example of what partnership really means. We are so happy they are part of our program and look forward to great years ahead.

Board Award: Joan Coleman-Almond

The Board Partnership Award goes annually to a board member who serves Habitat with professionalism and with diligence. This year our Board Partnership Award is presented to: Joan Coleman-Almond.

Joan has served on the Board of Directors for 7 years. She is a social worker with the North Chicago Schools and also a teacher at the College of Lake County. Joan brings professional insights into many of our governance issues and especially into issues related to Habitat families. Joan began her Habitat service as a volunteer on the Family Selection Committee. She has served as a presenter at our Applicant Orientation Meetings, review applications for housing and completed home visits to help identify families for our program. Joan has continued her support of our families for many years by facilitating classes and providing advice to our staff and our Family Service Team. She served as a professional advisor to our Social Work Intern for a school year. Joan lives in North Chicago in the community where we have built houses so she serves as a voice for Habitat with North Chicago governmental leaders. At our board meetings she always asks questions to make us think. Our organization has been enriched by Joan's involvement over these years and I am proud to present this year's Board Award to Joan Coleman-Almond.