Central Oklahoma Habitat for Humanity®

Magazine

SPRING 2025
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INSIDE:

Comfortworks Sponsors Home Build at Cornerstone

2025 WomenBuild Chair Named

Family Stories Abound

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Moving Forward with Our Big Vision at Cornerstone Creek

Recently at a home dedication in Cornerstone Creek, I looked out over more than 20 completed homes and Isaiah 32:18 came to mind: "*My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.*"

Several recent Habitat homeowners cited peace, safety and quiet as driving factors in turning to Habitat and Cornerstone Creek. From a young family wanting to be in a safe area with good schools to a seasoned veteran of a high-crime neighborhood finding sanctuary, their hope for a "secure dwelling" has become a reality.

This vision has always been a big one, and those 20 houses are just the "tip of the spear" in our drive to create an oasis of affordable housing in far northwest Oklahoma City.

We believe everyone should have a chance to thrive and have a safe, decent place to call home. And we also know that access to affordable housing is the most cost-effective way to stop intergenerational poverty and promote economic stability for hard-working Oklahomans. That's why we're building Cornerstone Creek.

Ultimately, 450 affordable homes will rest on our 160 acres in far northwest Oklahoma City. Cornerstone Creek will provide hundreds of future homeowners the opportunity to purchase brand new, energy-efficient homes at cost and without the burden of a down payment or closing costs.

We truly believe that through affordable-homeownership, we are making Isaiah 32:18 a reality in our time, in our hometown.

However, it is essential to continue moving forward rather than resting on our laurels.

There is so much work to be done.We must raise $3 million for paving in order to complete Phase II. We need the concrete work in place to expand access so that we can build our next 210 houses.

The sheer size of the vision is breathtaking, but we look ahead in faith. We invite you to join us by giving today.

We welcome every donation and consider each one a blessing, from the proverbial "widow's mite" to very large capital gifts.

Thank you – our generous donors, supporters and volunteers – who have and continue to help us build peaceful habitations and secure dwellings right here on the Oklahoma prairie.

Blessings,

Ann Felton Gilliland
Chair/CEO

My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.

ISAIAH 32:18

COVER: *Comfortworks owners pictured at their Oklahoma City headquarters (left to right) Chris Chavez, Chris Ellis, Dan Ellis and Wes Wostal. Not pictured, Tom Fox. The company recently sponsored a home build in Cormerstone Creek.*

ARPA's $2M Allocated for Phase II's Water and Sewer Infrastructure System Development at Cornerstone Creek

Central Oklahoma Habitat has been actively pursuing funding to support its most ambitious affordable housing development, Cornerstone Creek. Habitat plans to eventually build 450 homes in the new neighborhood.

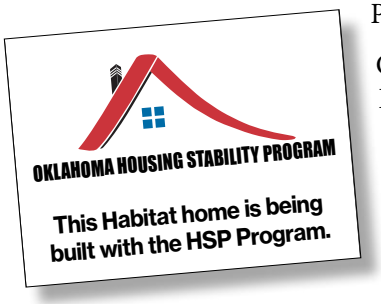
Central Oklahoma Habitat has been awarded $2 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) through the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, which is specifically earmarked for the development of water and sewer construction projects. The ARPA funds will be combined with other Habitat resources to develop the new water and sewer infrastructure – a significant part of the Phase II development plan for building 210 new homes at Cornerstone Creek.

Central Oklahoma Habitat Chair/CEO Ann Felton Gilliland said the $2 million in ARPA funds are just part of the $5.7 million needed to fully pay for and implement Phase II at the development.

"We are engaging with our donors to raise awareness about the additional $3.7 million needed in donations to complete Phase II," Felton Gilliland said. "Our donors know about the affordable-housing crisis. We believe they want to help alleviate the growing housing crisis here by supporting our efforts to build Cornerstone Creek." ■

Habitat Building 25 New Homes with Oklahoma Housing Stability Program's 0% Interest Loans

Central Oklahoma Habitat is using $3.6 million in 0% interest loans to build 25 single-family affordable homes for limited-income families at Cornerstone Creek as a part of the Oklahoma Housing Stability Program's Oklahoma Homebuilder Program.



Central Oklahoma Habitat Chief Financial Officer Reagan Carter said the 0% interest loans provide cash flow and allow Habitat to continue its ambitious construction schedule for affordable housing in Phase I of Cornerstone Creek.

"Our New Home Construction program is a good fit for the Oklahoma Housing Stability Program because its purpose is to increase the number of single-family residences available for purchase across the state of Oklahoma," Carter said. "All of the 25 homes we're building are in different stages of development and we anticipate our first home dedication soon." ■

Central Oklahoma Habitat for Humanity Chair/CEO Ann Felton Gilliland (seated, right) signing Oklahoma Housing Stability Program documents on Jan. 27, 2025. Connie Calaway with Oklahoma Abstract & Title Co. is assisting.

Johnson & Associates LLC Donates Over $43,300 for Habitat's Village Project

Central Oklahoma Habitat COO Sonja Potts (far left) poses with Johnson & Associates LLC's leadership team members and Habitat Chair/CEO Ann Felton Gilliland (third from left). Felton Gilliland helps to hold up a big check representing the more than $43,300 raised by the company and its employees during its 2024 Employee Giving program.

When Our Lord's Lutheran Church donated some property it owned in the Village, a small independent city in the Oklahoma City metro area, church leaders knew the gift would someday bless Central Oklahoma Habitat for Humanity.

Now, years after the land was initially donated, Habitat is closer to building homes for limited-income families at the site. In 2023, Habitat submitted a development plan to the Village City Council. In spring, a public hearing was held, and the Village City Council and the Village Planning and Zoning Commission heard various voices expressing both support and concern from residents about Habitat's building proposal.

The Village Planning and Zoning Commission revised the final plat to address residents' concerns, and the city then required an extension of sewer lines and other changes. Habitat's civil engineering firm, Johnson and Associates, LLC (J&A), designed and revised the plat. In a surprise move, the J&A employees and company leaders blessed Habitat by making the nonprofit the recipient of its annual 2024 Employee Christmas Giving Program.

J&A's generous employees raised $20,000, and the company matched their gifts, raising over $43,300. Habitat Chair/CEO Ann Felton Gilliland accepted the donation from the company in January 2025. "J&A are amazing partners and have been by our side throughout this process," Felton Gilliland said. We are so grateful for the incredible gift from J&A employees and leaders. The funds raised are being used to build a detention pond and other enhancements on our Village property in preparation for the three homes we will build there." ■

Oklahoma City Police Department (OKCPD) Chief Ron C. Bacy and Capt. Michelle Henderson pause outside a new Habitat home on March 7, 2025, after attending a home dedication for Iris S. and her family in Cornerstone Creek. OKCPD volunteers were recognized for their hard work in building the home as part of Faith & Blue Weekend, an annual initiative that fosters collaboration between law enforcement and religious leaders to strengthen community bonds.

Hunter Merritt Elected to Habitat's Board of Directors

Hunter Merritt, a seasoned real estate and lending expert with 15 years of experience, has been elected to the Central Oklahoma Habitat Board of Directors. He is the principal and managing broker at Gain Mortgage Group and a Metro Mark Real Estate Realtor.

Ann Felton Gilliland, chair/CEO of Habitat, praised Hunter's appointment. "Hunter's extensive experience in residential and commercial real estate, coupled with his passion for helping families with limited to moderate incomes, makes him an outstanding choice for our board," Felton Gilliland said. "I believe Hunter will make an outstanding board member, and he's ready to help us reach the next level of service."

Merritt, a Casady School and Southern Methodist University graduate, holds a master's in business from Oklahoma City University. He's active in the community as an Oklahoma City Rotary Club 29 member and mentors with Positive Tomorrows. Hunter and his wife, Peri, are the proud parents of three boys: Sonny, Marshall and Royce. They live in Nichols Hills, Oklahoma. ■

Central Oklahoma Habitat for Humanity welcomes Hunter Merritt (right) as our newest member of the Board of Directors.

Rachel Ellis Named Habitat's Director of Research and Grants

Rachel Ellis is an expert at new beginnings. Born in Savannah, Georgia, Rachel grew up an Army brat and learned early how to be resourceful, adapt quickly and persevere in new environments. These qualities give Habitat's director of Research and Grants a step up in the development world.

"Habitat is very near and dear to my heart," Rachel said. "My mom was a Habitat homeowner when we lived in Forida and I fondly remember helping complete her sweat-equity hours so we'd have a well-built and affordable house. It wasn't just a house – it became a home, and I'm beyond grateful in my new role that I now get to pour back my efforts so that Habitat can benefit more families."

Rachel earned a business management degree from Purdue Global and began her career at the Arkansas Children's Hospital Foundation before working for the University of Tulsa. She then served the Little Light House in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and became the development director. She later managed the GiveSmartOKC program for the Oklahoma City Community Foundation. Rachel also served as the Little Light House's grant and foundation manager before working as a grant writing specialist for Integris Health Foundation.

Rachel is married to Chris Ellis. They live in Jones, Oklahoma, and have three children. ■

(above) Central Oklahoma Habitat's new Director of Research and Grants Rachel Ellis. She has worked in the nonprofit field for more than 15 years.

Pilar Cipollone Leads Habitat's WomenBuild 2025

Pilar Cipollone proves you can sometimes "temporarily" go home again.

Returning to her roots, Pilar is again making a significant impact with Central Oklahoma Habitat for Humanity. For 13 years, she served in various roles, including Habitat's Hispanic liaison and director of Family Services, expanding the nonprofit's reach into the local Hispanic community. Many homeowners today say they owe their gratitude to Pilar and Habitat.

Since moving to Oklahoma City in 2005, Pilar has held numerous leadership positions and received multiple awards. In 2023, U.S. Congressman Frank D. Lucas's District Office hired Pilar as a field representative. In this role, Pilar attends meetings and events and conducts staff outreach.

Married to Angelo Cipollone and mother to grown children, Izzy and Brandon, the busy professional also serves on Habitat's Critical Home Repair committee and leads a group of Latina women volunteers during Habitat's annual WomenBuild.

Habitat Chair and CEO Ann Felton Gilliland said that WomenBuild unites volunteers from diverse backgrounds to make a positive difference for families seeking affordable housing.

"I'm proud to have Pilar as our honorary chair," Felton Gilliland said. "She's distinguished herself as a Hispanic community leader. Pilar also contributes to leadership at the U.S. Congressional level.

"Pilar has accomplished so much, and we look forward to working with her during the WomenBuild and beyond."

Pilar is grateful to Habitat, especially Felton Gilliland, who inspired her early in her career.

Central Oklahoma Habitat for Humanity
WOMENBUILD

Pilar Cipollone named honorary WomenBuild Chair for 2025.

"Our WomenBuild is a great opportunity to empower all women," Pilar said. "The ladies have fun while helping others. I love it because it's so rewarding, and I always say the best day is frame day!"

The WomenBuild 2025 frame day was held on May 17, 2025, at Cornerstone Creek. Habitat thanks Supermercados Morelos for sponsoring the event and providing lunch and T-shirts for the Latina women's group volunteers. ■

THE POWERLIST
THE JOURNAL RECORD
NONPROFIT LEADERS
2025

Ann Felton Gilliland, Central Oklahoma Habitat Chair and CEO, was recently honored in The Journal Record's 2025 "Power List" for outstanding nonprofit Leaders.

Critical Home Repair Homeowner Michael M. 'Loves Life'

During recent repairs on his home by Central Oklahoma Habitat's Critical Home Repair program, Michael M., (right) who uses a wheelchair, shared that he feels blessed by his community and he also displayed a ring of his late mother's that he now wears that states "Love Life." (below)

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Michael M., a disabled South Oklahoma City resident, contacted Habitat's Critical Home Repair (CHR) program for help with his deteriorating 1925 home.

Michael stated in his CHR application that he's used a wheelchair since a diving accident left him partially paralyzed when he was 20. He asked for help with serious safety issues in his house. The divorced father of three grown children stated that he previously worked in computer programming but was laid off after 16 years.

Michael has lived in his home for 28 years but been unable to afford or make the needed repairs. When he moved into his house, contractors made his shower wheelchair accessible, but failed to reinforce the shower floor, leaving it partially hollow and filled with concrete.

Michael needed help because his shower floor started to buckle, and related plumbing problems damaged his floors. Despite the age of his house, Michael said he's determined to stay in his home as long as possible.

CHR Project Manager Erich Font emphasized the importance of safety in Habitat's repair efforts and said that the CHR Committee approved Michael's request. Habitat staff and volunteers — including the ROVERS (Really Optimistic Volunteers Enjoying Repairing Stuff) — replaced Michael's shower, fixed his kitchen floor and made other repairs over several weekends in recent weeks.

Today, Michael expresses gratitude for Habitat's CHR program and said he feels blessed by the help.

"I wanted help because my house means independence," Michael said. "Even though my house is old and ugly, it's my dwelling and I love it – even more now that Habitat has improved it." ■

Viezcas and Perrin to Fill Big Shoes

Central Oklahoma Habitat for Humanity's Critical Home Repair program recently promoted Israel Viezcas to volunteer coordinator. Viezcas has served CHR as a field coordinator for the past two years. He organizes and manages the CHR volunteer efforts in his new role, assisting low-income homeowners with essential home repairs and weatherization services. Viezcas is a U.S. Army veteran, lives in Oklahoma City and has one son.

Aiden Perrin has filled Viezcas's former position. Perrin of Bethany, Oklahoma, started full time for CHR in January. He worked as an exterminator for the past six years before joining Habitat. He is married to Darby Perrin.

Israel Viezcas (left center) with volunteers.

(above left) Aidan Perrin with Pokie Yoshida, ROVER volunteer.

Habitat's Former CHR Volunteer Coordinator Chris Hearn Finally Takes a Coffee Break

(below) Chris Hearn at his new endeavor, "Not Your Average Joe," a nonprofit focused on hiring special needs individuals.

In 2009, Chris Hearn was a local Jimmy John's manager when a friend suggested he apply for a job at Central Oklahoma Habitat. Habitat Chair/CEO Ann Felton Gilliland invited him to volunteer for the day. Chris threw a hoodie over his interview clothes, got to work and attended Habitat's Volunteer Appreciation Dinner (VAD) the same night.

Several days later, Chris joined Habitat's A Brush with Kindness program, the precursor to Critical Home Repair, and eventually became its volunteer coordinator. Chris recently joined Not Your Average Joe's leadership team – a mission-driven initiative committed to ministering and providing meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Chris Hearn's infectious enthusiasm and willingness to teach encouraged CHR volunteers.

(above) Chris Hearn with Habitat Board Vice Chair Larry Ball and Ann Felton Gilliland. He helped coordinate Habitat's VAD event for 14 years.

Chris praised Habitat's "exceptional employees" and said he learned a lot during the last 15 years.

"Habitat molded me into having a passion for helping others," Chris said. "I learned that we're always in need of someone's help, and it humbled me in a way that allowed me to see the needs of others."

Tim Herbel, the nonprofit's founder and executive director, opened his coffee shop in 2019. Chris and Tim also collaborated on a new concept, ABE's (Abilities Beyond Expectation), a coffee shop that serves as an "adventure-inspired" destination, hiring individuals with special needs full time. Chris said he joined Not Your Average Joe's in February 2025 and manages operations and the managerial team for 10 coffee shops.

"When you surround yourself with exceptional staff, there's nothing you can't accomplish," Chris said. "I learned that at Habitat. You can do anything, and that's beautiful!"

Chris continues to support Habitat by volunteering and serving on the CHR selection committee. ■

Malarkey Celebrates 500th Roof with Habitat by Framing Home in Cornerstone Creek

Over a dozen Malarkey Roofing Product employee volunteers from the Oklahoma City plant arrived early at Cornerstone Creek on April 11, 2025. Sporting company T-shirts and signature green and white ball caps, Malarkey volunteers collaborated with U.S. Navy and future Habitat homeowner volunteers to frame a new Habitat house.

Malarkey Roofing Product Vice President of Manufacturing Jay Kreft nails a frame to the base during the framing day on April 11, 2025. (right)

The recent home-framing event signifies a special milestone for Habitat and Malarkey, a top-quality U.S. residential and commercial roofing product manufacturer. Once the house nears completion sometime this summer, it will be topped off with the 500th roof donated to Habitat since 2012. Since opening its Oklahoma City location in 2011, Malarkey Roofing has proven to be a staunch supporter of Habitat, donating Class

Malarkey team members lift a framing piece into place. This summer, the home (below) will be roofed with Malarkey shingles.

IV hail-resistant shingles to the affordable housing nonprofit.

Central Oklahoma Habitat Chair/CEO Ann Felton Gilliland shared her gratitude for Malarkey's strong partnership with the Christian-housing ministry.

"Almost since they opened their plant, Malarkey Roofing has generously donated $2 million worth of shingles to support Habitat's mission of providing affordable housing for individuals and families in Central Oklahoma," Felton Gilliland said. "Their durable shingles help protect homes during severe Oklahoma weather and save our homeowners money on their home insurance. We are deeply thankful for Malarkey's partnership and can't wait to celebrate the completion this summer of our 500th home roofed with their high-quality roofing materials."

President of Malarkey Roofing Products, Dale Rushing congratulated Habitat on starting its 500th home with Malarkey shingles.

"Only two years ago, we celebrated the 400th home, and local families are still clearly in great need of home ownership," Rushing said. "We are proud to participate with an organization that puts advocacy into action." ■

Volunteers from the U.S. Navy put their back into it to lift a framing piece. (top right)

Malarkey volunteers collaborated with U.S. Navy and future Habitat homeowners to raise the frame on the house. (top left and above)

(left) Future homeowner Julie Q. earned some sweat-equity hours and got to work with Malarkey and U.S. Navy volunteers.

Leading geothermal HVAC contractor, Comfortworks, had over 25 employee volunteers who helped during the company's frame day on Jan. 25, 2025. This is the company's first home build sponsorship. (above)

(above) Comfortworks Journeyman Jose Cruz proves that it is "hammer time!"

(right) Comfortworks Vice President Wes Wostal, and his wife, Natalie, along with other company volunteers braved temperatures in the teens to participate in the home framing.

Comfortworks' First Home Build Warms Volunteers' and Future Homeowner's Hearts

Comfortworks Inc., a top geothermal HVAC contractor, has installed geothermal systems in hundreds of Central Oklahoma Habitat's affordable homes for nearly two decades.

Comfortworks Vice President Chris Ellis started the company in 2007 and recalls personally installing ClimateMaster geothermal systems in Habitat's first big green neighborhood, Hope Crossing, in northeast Oklahoma City.

Today, Comfortworks has grown to 55 employees with an ownership/leadership team comprised of Ellis, his father, Chairman Dan Ellis, President Chris Chavez, Vice President Wes Wostal, and Principal Engineer Tom Fox. Chris Ellis said Comfortworks had a successful year in 2024 and, as a company, decided to sponsor a home build at Cornerstone Creek on Jan. 25, 2025.

"It was a really good year for us as a business, and for the first time, we were in a position to sponsor a home build," Chris Ellis said. "Naturally, we wanted to give to Habitat first."

Over 25 Comfortworks employee volunteers helped build the home for Habitat and the future homeowner, Audry C., a mother of three who works hard as a paralegal.

"It was a great day for Comfortworks' first sponsored home build," Chris Ellis said. "Our employee volunteers shared camaraderie and fellowship, got to meet Audry, the homeowner, and got to know her story – we feel like part of the family."

In her Habitat application, Audry stated that she and her children were being exposed to safety issues like faulty wiring, sagging floors and rodent problems because of the age of their rental home. "I want a nice, safe and stable home for my children. Buying a Habitat home is life-changing for us."

(above) Comfortworks President Chris Chavez and his team of volunteers arrived early at Cornerstone Creek ready to frame a home in the cold.

During the home build, Audry met the Comfortworks volunteers and said it was an "amazing" experience.

"It was a great day – they are all so kind and helpful that I sent them a thank you card and invited them to the home dedication," she said. "I want to thank them for coming and for all their great support! My home is the first one they've ever sponsored, and I greatly appreciate it."

Ann Felton Gilliland said the home build underscores Comfortworks' dedication to helping limited-to-moderate-income families become homeowners.

"We highly value our partnership with Comfortworks, but not just because of their home-build sponsorship," Felton Gilliland said. "Their overall support reflects their commitment to sustainable, affordable housing solutions while fostering community growth and environmental stewardship." ■

(above, left to right) Comfortworks Chairman Dan Ellis and Chris Chavez, company president, set a frame with the help of other employee volunteers during Comfortworks' frame day at Cornerstone Creek.

HOMEOWNER #1110

Akayla

Habitat Homeowner Celebrates Twice at Home Dedication

Just in time for Thanksgiving 2024, University of Oklahoma Medical Center Trauma Registrar Akayla K. celebrated her new home dedication on Nov. 21, 2024, at Cornerstone Creek, Habitat's newest and largest affordable housing development in Oklahoma City.

The week was also extra special for Akayla because it was her son Kailen K.'s eighth birthday. In addition to the large turnout by her family and friends, Akayla received numerous housewarming gifts and blessings for a safe and happy future in her new home in far northwest Oklahoma City.

Habitat homeowner Akayla K. shows off her new keys while on the porch of her Cornerstone Creek home.

In her application to Habitat's New Home Construction program, the young mother stated that she has always desired to have her own home.

After years of paying high rent for less-than-ideal conditions, she wanted a "settled environment" where she could raise little Kailen. During the home dedication, when Akayla received the house keys from Central Oklahoma Habitat Chair/CEO Ann Felton Gilliland, she excitedly said, "Whoop, yeah, yeah!" After a big hug, the young mother thanked the attendees.

"Thank you all for being here and helping us celebrate today," Akayla said. "It means a lot to me. Thank you to everyone who helped, volunteered and coached us!" Felton Gilliland said the recent home dedication was Habitat's fifth ceremony at Cornerstone Creek and commemorates Habitat's 1,110th house built in the greater Oklahoma City area since 1990.

"Thanks to our generous donors, volunteers and sponsors, we've been busy fulfilling the promise of Cornerstone Creek so that our families can be home for the holidays," Felton Gilliland said. "Cornerstone Creek is a testament to the power of community as we work to fulfill our ministry's mission of building homes, community and hope in Central Oklahoma. I'm also pleased Akayla and Kailen now have their own new Habitat home where they can celebrate the holidays, his birthday and other special occasions." ■

HOMEOWNER #1108

Adrine

Adrine W. brought her daughter, Emmanuelle Mathea from the Republic of Cameroon to the United States in 2017. She said they faced "difficult times," but she was determined to succeed in her new country.

She trusted God and earned a degree from Oklahoma State University. Today, she's a thankful U.S. citizen working as an SSM Health radiology technologist. Her daughter is now a thriving fifth grader.

Adrine celebrated her new Habitat home dedication on Nov. 7, 2024, at Cornerstone Creek. Adrine said her new home is part of the legacy she wants to leave for Emmanuelle. "It's a great opportunity for me today," Adrine said. "I want to thank America for this opportunity and being a homeowner. With inflation today, getting a house is difficult, and I'm grateful."

In her Habitat application, Adrine stated that she wanted to buy a house so Emmanuelle could feel "at home and secure" as their American dream is shaped in "this amazing country." "I want to leave her a legacy, and this house is a big part of it," she said."

HOMEOWNER #1109

Alan & Thaysarye

Alan and Thaysarye N. celebrated their new home dedication at Cornerstone Creek on Nov. 17, 2024. Originally from Vietnam, Alan met Thaysarye while he attended Oklahoma City Community College, and they later married in 2019. They also worked together at Teapioca Lounge, a boba tea franchise, and now Alan manages a local bubble tea shop.

Raising their son, Liam, age 2, they said they sought a safe neighborhood for their first home. “Safety is very important,” Alan stated in their Habitat application. Thaysarye thanked the volunteers during the home dedication. “Thank you for our beautiful home,” she said. Alan and Thaysarye fulfilled the 100 sweat-equity hours required by Habitat, and enjoyed meeting other volunteers and staff.

Thaysarye also said she is grateful to Habitat for their patience and support, especially regarding their busy lives, parenting a small child and working. The couple said they appreciate their affordable new home and the community spirit at Cornerstone Creek. “Thank you to the volunteers and everyone who has worked on our home,” Thaysarye said.

HOMEOWNER #1111

Amanda

Amanda H., described by her daughters as a “country-loving Christian” mom and grandmother, celebrated her new home dedication on Dec. 5, 2024, at Cornerstone Creek.

Amanda’s joy was evident when she received her keys from Habitat Chair/CEO Ann Felton Gilliland. A travel coordinator for the Oklahoma Department of Health, Amanda’s smile brightened further when Diamond W., the first Cornerstone Creek homeowner, warmly embraced her.

Buying a home was a big accomplishment for Amanda, but she didn’t stop there. She also recently passed another considerable milestone by earning an associate’s degree. “I’m the first in my family,” she said, “and I graduated with honors.”

Today, Amanda recommends Habitat homes for their comfort and community. Her new house also has plenty of room for visitors. “Owning my own home also helps me to provide a loving place for my daughters and granddaughter to stay for extended periods while in Oklahoma,” Amanda said. “And I can spend more time outside, walking around the neighborhood or gardening.”

HOMEOWNER #1112

Antwanette

Timbers Skilled Nursing & Therapy Staffing Coordinator Antwanette O. and her family celebrated her new Central Oklahoma Habitat home dedication on Dec. 6, 2024, in Cornerstone Creek.

Antwanette is a single mother with three children, Stephen, age 10, A’Mariana, age 5 and Love, age 3. When Antwanette applied to buy a Habitat home, she stated that her children were frustrated by the small place where they lived in Spencer, Oklahoma. “I have outgrown the house where I live now, and I’m ready to become a homeowner,” Antwanette stated. “I have three amazing children who mean the world to me, and I’m dedicated to giving them better opportunities than I had growing up.”

When Antwanette accepted her keys from Habitat Chair/CEO Ann Felton Gilliland, she wiped away tears a few moments before being reassured by the crowd, eventually making her laugh. “I’m going to add construction to my resume!” Antwanette said. She also thanked friends and family for helping her to fulfill her sweat-equity volunteer hours.

HOMEOWNER #1113

Tyisha

State of Oklahoma Financial Analyst Tyisha A. has wanted to buy a new home since her children were toddlers. As the years passed, she discovered the math didn’t add up until she partnered with Central Oklahoma Habitat. “Owning a home is a desire that we all equally share within our household,” Tyisha stated in her Habitat application. “My goal was to give my children a forever home. No matter how old they are and where life takes them, there will always be a road that leads back home.”

Tyisha and her children, Taniya, 20, a Redlands Community College student, and Antoine, 17, a student at Mustang High, celebrated their home dedication on Dec. 12, 2024. “Though my children are older now, being a homeowner someday has always been the topic of discussion when we spend time together,” she stated. “I’m looking forward to living in a Habitat neighborhood with those who share some similarities and the desire to provide a safe and affordable place to call home sweet home.”

FAMILY ALBUM

HOMEOWNER #1114

Isabella

Christmas arrived early for Middle School Teacher Isabella M. on Dec. 19, 2024, as she celebrated her new home dedication in Cornerstone Creek.

In her Habitat application, Isabella shared that she grew up in Oklahoma City and Edmond, graduating from the University of Central Oklahoma before becoming a science teacher and volleyball coach at Edmond's Sequoyah Middle School. Struggling with high rental costs, she sought homeownership despite her modest salary.

A family friend introduced her to Habitat, inspiring her to apply. "I never wanted to stray too far from family, and the desire to establish a solid foundation grew," Isabella said. "I was taught the importance of investments, and buying a house is one of the best investments you can make. Becoming a homeowner was my next dream after graduating."

She also valued her lessons learned while fulfilling Habitat's sweat-equity hours. "When you figure it out and get that 'aha' moment that I can accomplish this, especially when people are backing you and making the process fun," she said.

HOMEOWNER #1115

Roderick

Local Soul/RnB Singer/Songwriter Roderick "Rod" P., who performs with Shortt Dogg and the Canterbury Choir, has a new reason to belt out a happy song. The singer and property management services employee became a new homeowner during his Central Oklahoma Habitat home dedication on Dec. 27, 2024, in Cornerstone Creek.

Several local TV stations also interviewed Rod. During the event, Habitat Chair/CEO Ann Felton Gilliland said, "It is a great day when you know a new homeowner will move into their new home before the end of the year."

Rod wrote in his application that becoming a homeowner has been a lifelong goal. "I love to cook and put smiles on the faces of the people I love," Rod stated. "I look forward to hosting holidays, various family functions and seeing my little nephew and dog run around the backyard."

He expressed gratitude for the help and guidance he received and for "making my dream come true." When asked what he liked best about his new home, Rod said, "The fact that it is mine."

HOMEOWNER #1117

Pierre

Pierre L., left his homeland of the Republic of Cameroon in Central Africa more than six years ago and came to America, chasing the American dream. The soft-spoken and devoted Catholic settled in Oklahoma City, after finding work in law enforcement for Oklahoma County.

But Pierre's life journey wasn't over. He worked hard, saved money and was reunited with his wife, Annette, in 2021. After joining her husband, Annette eventually found work as a nursing assistant at a local nursing home. Meanwhile, the couple's son, Yvan, now 13, began attending school in Oklahoma City.

The family wanted to buy a house, but found it challenging because few affordable homes were available on the market. The family heard from a friend about Habitat's New Home Construction program and decided to apply.

When applying for the program, Pierre's son Yvan stated that his family is "very respectful" and attends St. Eugene Catholic Church in Oklahoma City. On Jan. 16, 2025, the family celebrated their home dedication at Cornerstone Creek.

HOMEOWNER #1118

Dania

With three beautiful children attending Santa Fe South charter schools and working as a Health Alliance for the Uninsured referral coordinator, Dania H. is one busy lady.

Despite being a single, hard-working mom, Dania has always dreamed of providing her family with a new home in a great neighborhood. Dania's dream came true when she and her children celebrated their new Habitat house dedication at Cornerstone Creek on Jan. 23, 2025.

When Dania applied to Habitat's New Home Construction program, she wrote that she wanted her children to "feel safe" in their new home. "I've been renting for almost four years," Dania stated. "Owning a home means having a safe space for me and my loved ones. We are a very united and large family that always supports each other and are very happy."

She stated that owning a Habitat home means her family will be more stable, secure and have a higher quality of life. "Thank you very much for this opportunity that you have given me and my family," Dania stated. The McLaughlin Family Foundation sponsored Dania's home build.

HOMEOWNER #1119

Jaden

An insurance professional, Jaden C., used to live in Edmond, Oklahoma, but has enthusiastically embraced her new Habitat home in Cornerstone Creek. She celebrated the dedication of her home with Central Oklahoma Habitat and community members on Jan. 30, 2025.

In her application to qualify for a Habitat home, Jaden stated she experienced a variety of transitions during her early life and other challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I was adopted when I was 2, and grew up on the beautiful island of Guam before moving to Washington state at age 18 to pursue better educational and career opportunities," Jaden stated. "However, the outbreak of COVID-19 brought unexpected challenges that led to me losing two jobs and stopping my schooling. In response, I decided to move to Oklahoma to be closer to my birth family."

During her home dedication, Jaden said she appreciates her new home at Cornerstone Creek. "I'm grateful to everyone here," she said. "We're very grateful. Thanks so much!" Jaden's house is the 1,119th home built by Central Oklahoma Habitat since 1990.

HOMEOWNER #1116

Amanda & Tammy

Family Finding Better Days at Cornerstone Creek After Moving into Forever Home

Photo courtesy of the family.

If there's ever an award for overcoming enormous odds, Amanda and Tammy G.-E., married now for 20 years, might walk away with the trophy. Today, happier times are finally here after celebrating the new home dedication of their Habitat house on Jan. 10, 2025, at Cornerstone Creek.

Yet, homeownership once seemed far away after the couple experienced separate devastating car accidents on the same day in 2010. Amanda hit black ice and crashed into a concrete barrier, unknowingly suffering a brain-fluid leak. She called Tammy, who was dropping off their children at daycare. When Tammy arrived, a car going 55 mph struck her, pinning her between vehicles before Amanda's truck pivoted and ran over her legs. Both women were rushed to O.U. Medical Center.

Doctors told Amanda that Tammy would never walk again and needed a double-leg amputation. "I fought for her not to lose her legs," Amanda said. Determined, Tammy regained her mobility after 18 months, though she's permanently disabled. Amanda also suffered long-term complications, sending their finances into turmoil. "We lost everything," she said. Over the years, the couple also battled unreliable landlords, soaring rents and neighborhood crime.

Last year, Tammy was diagnosed with leukemia. While up late researching chemotherapy, she discovered Central Oklahoma Habitat's new Cornerstone Creek development. "God's calling is that we need a forever home," she told her family. She said that from day one, Habitat made the process seamless.

Nervous about construction, the couple quickly learned from the Habitat construction crew how to help build their own and others' homes, and their family pitched in to help complete their required sweat-equity hours.

Amanda posted online after their home dedication: "Thank you, Habitat, for blessing our beautiful family with a home. From foundation to framing, writing prayers on the walls—it's been an amazing journey." ■

HOMEOWNER #1122

Alexander & Stephanie

Blended Family Finds a 'Home to Call Our Own' with Room for Everyone

When Stephanie met her future husband, Alexander, several years ago, they quickly bonded over their love of vintage cars. Still, they soon discovered that their connection ran much deeper. Both came from large families, were divorced and raising children from their previous marriages.

Photo courtesy of the family.

"We were nervous at first about opening our hearts," Stephanie stated in their Habitat application. Today, the couple is married and the T. family consists of "the perfect idea of yours, mine and our children," including Elijah, age 9, Eliee, age 5, and Xander, age 2.

The family celebrated the home dedication of their new Habitat house on Feb. 28, 2025, in Blanchard, Oklahoma.

"Alexander and I grew up with large families, including him being one of nine children and myself having nine brothers and three sisters," Stephanie said. "With such big families, we never got a space of our own, and that's something we, as parents ourselves, strive for now. We want to give them a space within our home to become the best versions of themselves."

Stephanie is now a stay-at-home mom, allowing the family to manage rising daycare costs while Alexander works full time. Stephanie said that affording a new home in today's economy felt impossible, but Habitat helped make it happen.

"We're able to provide a safe space for our children to grow and become the people they will become," Stephanie said. "We'll be able to create new memories in a new, never-lived-in-before space – best of all, Habitat can help provide that to us.

We've looked at so many different ways to try to give our children the life we wish we could have had, and Habitat is allowing us to help fulfill one of the best things in life – a home to call our own. Thank you tremendously for helping us to find our happily ever after!" ■

HOMEOWNER #1120

Andrea

New Central Oklahoma Habitat Homeowner Andrea J. and her daughter Avery are now settled in their new home at Cornerstone Creek. But before moving into Habitat's newest and largest affordable housing development, Andrea said they moved often due to rising rental prices. "We moved to Oklahoma City to be closer to my older daughter and mother," Andrea stated. "Once I got settled into my job, we found an apartment. Since then, we've moved about once a year because of high rental prices."

Looking to find an affordable home, Andrea struggled to save money while raising her 14-year-old daughter. "We love the Oklahoma City area, and I've always wanted to buy a house, but being a single mom made it tough to save for a down payment."

After hearing about the Cornerstone Creek neighborhood, she applied. Andrea now enjoys working from home for a call center, and she says she's happy about the new neighborhood and the opportunity to host family and friends during the holidays. "I'm looking forward to meeting our neighbors and making new friends through this experience."

Pictured above with the homeowner is Alba Santiago of Gateway Mortgage.

HOMEOWNER #1121

Gabriel

Gabriel G. and his beloved mother, Margarita, celebrated a significant milestone on Feb. 27, 2025, by joining Central Oklahoma Habitat staff and community members to dedicate his new Habitat home in Cornerstone Creek.

Gabriel grew up happy in Durango, Mexico, as the seventh of 10 children, but needed better opportunities. "I left my home in search of a better future and to fulfill the dreams that everyone has in life," he said.

After moving to Oklahoma City, Gabriel worked in factories before pursuing a career in cosmetology, a field he enjoyed but felt was missing something.

"Something was missing – the ability to be with my family, especially my Mom," he said.

Reuniting with his family six years ago, Gabriel works as an assembler at Balon Corporation, which has helped him financially.

Determined to further his goals, he pursued his GED while working toward homeownership. "That's why I'm here – to achieve one more dream, a bigger dream – my new house," Gabriel said. "I know I'm in the best and most trusted hands with Central Oklahoma Habitat for Humanity."

HOMEOWNER #1123

Iris

Iris S. celebrated her Central Oklahoma Habitat new home dedication with several local dignitaries on March 7, 2025, at her house in Cornerstone Creek. Oklahoma City Police Department (OKCPD) Chief Ron C. Bacy and Capt. Michelle Henderson attended as part of the National Faith & Blue initiative.

Habitat Chair/CEO Ann Felton Gilliland recognized National Faith & Blue Weekend's mission to unite law enforcement and religious leaders. "We are so grateful to Capt. Henderson, who has led OKCPD's Faith & Blue involvement for the past five years, and to Chief Bacy for his department's dedication to community involvement," Felton Gilliland said. OKCPD volunteers helped Habitat by framing Iris's future home.

Iris, a Walmart team lead in Yukon, Oklahoma, expressed gratitude for her new home. "I liked the Habitat journey," Iris said. "It was easy, and they (Habitat) help you throughout the whole process."

Today, Iris lives in her home with her daughter and disabled sister. Her daughter, Miracle, was the most excited because she now has her own room and a backyard where she can play with her dog, November (named for her birthday month)."

HOMEOWNER #1124

Adrieanna

Adrieanna R., a dental assistant, and her son, Noel, 9, celebrated the dedication of their new Habitat home on March 20, 2025, at Cornerstone Creek.

A single mother, Adrieanna wrote in her Habitat application that she sought a permanent home to provide Noel with "his own space and yard to play in and grow up in a great neighborhood."

She credits Habitat for teaching her valuable skills and connecting her with a supportive community. "Having our own home allows me to mold and shape Noel into a more responsible young man with things like mowing, trash duties and helping a neighbor," Adrieanna stated. The proud mom states that her son loves and participates in several sports activities. The pair also attends a local church, where she volunteers with small children.

Adrieanna said she already likes some other homeowners and is learning their stories. "Habitat has supported my journey; everyone is friendly and helpful," she stated. "I look forward to continuing to help others build their dreams – none of this would be possible without God."

HOMEOWNER #1125

John

A big sister sometimes knows best. That's what John L. of Edmond, Oklahoma, believes after taking his older sister Emilia's advice to apply for Central Oklahoma Habitat's homeownership program.

"My sister told me about Habitat," John said. "I decided to give it a try. I have always listened to her, and she has always been right." He previously lived with his big sister and her family for several years after earning an economics degree in the Republic of Cameroon. "It was a little overcrowded with me there, so I thought applying was a great idea," John stated.

He's been a certified nursing assistant at Veraden Senior Living in Edmond, Oklahoma, for over two years. "I feel it will be a perfect way for me to start a decent and happy life," John said, since he's considering starting his own family.

"Homeownership will significantly impact my life and my family, especially regarding stability," he stated.

Members of John's family helped celebrate his home dedication at Cornerstone Creek on March 27, 2025. He now lives at Cornerstone Creek with his 10-year-old nephew, Jeffrey.

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May 20	**CHR Committee**	Noon-Habitat Office
May 22	**Board of Directors**	Noon-Habitat Office
May 26	**Memorial Day Holiday**	Habitat Office Closed
June 8	**Homeowner Zoo Picnic**	
June 17	**CHR Committee**	Noon-Habitat Office
June 18	**Finance Committee**	Noon-Habitat Office
June 26	**Board of Directors**	Noon-Habitat Office
July 4	**Independence Day Holiday**	Habitat Office Closed
July 15	**CHR Committee**	Noon-Habitat Office
July 24	**Board of Directors**	Noon-Habitat Office
Aug 19	**CHR Committee**	Noon-Habitat Office
Aug 20	**Finance Committee**	Noon-Habitat Office
Aug 28	**Board of Directors**	Noon-Habitat Office

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