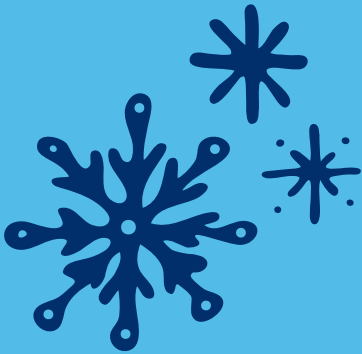


HABITAT NEWS



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Got News?

Send an email to Sophia at stimm@habitatocala.org

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January Edition

A Season of Hope: Double House Blessing

We marked a joyful milestone this holiday season by blessing not one, but two new homes for two hardworking local families. On December 19th, 2025, the community gathered on NW 14th Street as the Mann and Jones families received the keys to their new homes — each built with love, sweat equity, and extraordinary community support.

The morning began with the House Blessing for Britney Mann, the 2025 Women Build homeowner. Britney, a devoted mother of three, has spent the year working steadily through her sweat equity hours while preparing her family for the stability and security of homeownership. Her home represents the revival of Women Build in Marion County, a movement empowering women to step forward as leaders, builders, and champions for affordable housing. The walls of her home were raised by volunteers, teams, and sponsors who poured their hearts into creating a future where Britney and her children can grow, dream, and thrive.

Immediately following, Christina and Curtis Jones gathered with supporters for the blessing of their Realtor Build home. The Jones family has shown deep commitment through their Habitat journey, contributing their own sweat equity and partnering alongside volunteers. Their home was made possible through the dedication of the Ocala/Marion County Association of Realtors, whose members united last year to invest directly in solutions to the county’s housing challenges. Their work reflects a shared belief that every family deserves the chance to build a safe and stable future.





Mission, Vision, and Values

OUR MISSION:

Seeking to put God’s love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope.

OUR VISION:

A world where everyone has a decent place to live.



"We lead by serving."

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

We are committed through our actions to uplift individuals, families, and communities and to inspire others to join us in our mission.

"We take responsibility for our actions and commitments."

ACCOUNTABILITY

We are dedicated to upholding the highest standards of reliability and transparency, honoring our promises, and continuously learning from our experiences.

"We act with empathy and kindness."

COMPASSION

We honor, respect and value every person we serve by fostering a culture of care and belonging.

"We build together for generations to come."

LEGACY

We are focused on building a sustainable future where our community grows stronger, and families thrive for generations to come.



A Message from Our CEO

Dear friends,

A new year invites us to reflect on the habits we are building—both individually and as a community. At Habitat for Humanity of Marion County, we view this season as an opportunity to recommit ourselves to our core value of legacy: the belief that the work we do today should create lasting impact for generations to come.

Legacy is about more than building homes. It is about building a sustainable future where families have the stability they need to grow, where children can dream bigger, and where neighborhoods are strengthened through long-term investment and care. Every partnership, volunteer hour, and donation contributes to something far greater than a single moment—it contributes to a foundation of opportunity that will endure.

Later in this newsletter, you will read the stories of one of our Habitat homeowners whose journeys reflect this legacy in action. Their experiences remind us that when families are given the tools and support to succeed, the impact reaches far beyond four walls and a roof—it shapes futures and strengthens our entire community.

As we move into the year ahead, thank you for being part of this important work. Together, through intentional habits and shared commitment, we are building more than homes—we are building a legacy of hope, stability, and opportunity in Marion County.

Thanks much,



Rob Peters
CEO/President
Habitat for Humanity of Marion County



Family Partner News

Double House Blessings Community Support

The success of these two homes was made possible through the generosity of community partners who invested directly in local families and affordable housing solutions.

“This is what the holiday season is all about,” said Rob Peters, “Two families, two homes, and a community coming together to celebrate hope, hard work, and the promise of a brighter tomorrow. These blessings remind us why our mission matters and why we continue to build—one family, one house, one story at a time.”

Both families will begin the new year with the strength, stability, and self-reliance that homeownership brings. Their homes stand as a symbol of what can happen when a community unites with compassion and purpose.



Realtor Build Sponsor:



WOMEN²⁰²⁵ BUILD SPONSORS



\$50,000 ANONYMOUS DONATION FROM LOCAL FOUNDATION

Welcome

New Veteran Family Partner

Habitat for Humanity of Marion County is proud to welcome Doug and Thela Haynes as our newest family partners! Doug and Thela will be a part of our Veteran Build, a special initiative honoring those who have served our country.

Through this partnership, Doug and Thela will work alongside volunteers, sponsors, and community partners as they move toward the dream of homeownership. We are grateful for Doug's service in the U.S. Army and are excited to walk with them on this journey.

Please join us in welcoming the Haynes family to the Habitat community!



Workshops Appreciation

We extend our sincere thank you to Regions Bank for sponsoring our monthly financial literacy and homeownership classes for Habitat for Humanity family partners throughout the year. Through their generous support, Regions Bank not only provided the venue for these workshops, but also welcomed our families with food, and created a warm and encouraging learning environment.

This partnership strengthens our Habitat programs by equipping future homeowners with essential financial knowledge and tools for long-term success which aligns with our teaching of providing a hand up instead of a handout. By investing in education and stability, Regions Bank is helping build stronger families and a more resilient Marion County. We are grateful for their continued commitment to making homeownership more accessible for the families we serve.



Homeownership Program

We partner with hardworking local individuals and families who are ready to take the next step toward homeownership — offering a hand up, not a handout — by working side-by-side with them to build safe, decent, and affordable homes with affordable mortgage payments.

Instead of a traditional down payment, families invest 350 hours of “sweat equity” by helping construct their homes, supporting Habitat’s ReStores, and completing homeownership education workshops focused on budgeting, maintenance, and long-term success.

We currently have thirteen family partners, but we are always looking for new individuals and families who are interested in homeownership to join our program! If you or someone you know is interested in applying, follow the below steps:

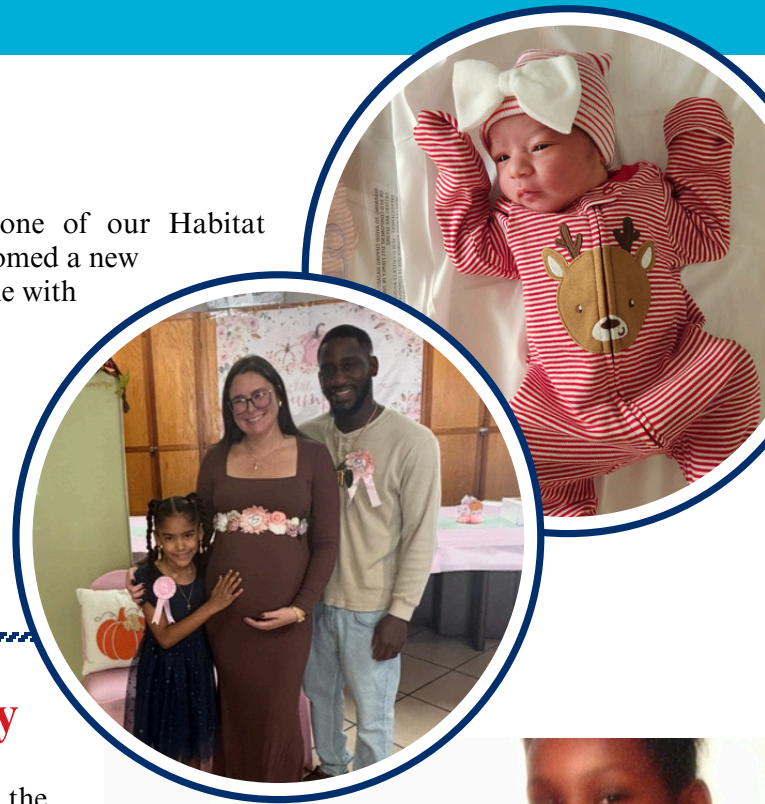


Habitat Homeowner News

Welcoming Baby Christina

We are delighted to celebrate a wonderful milestone for one of our Habitat homeowner families, the Stewarts. TJ and Kaitlin recently welcomed a new baby girl, Christina, joining big sister Zoey and filling their home with even more love and joy.

Because of Habitat and the hard work of the Stewarts family, Zoey and her new baby sister will grow up with a safe, stable roof over their heads — a place where memories can be made and futures can flourish. We are honored to be a part of the Stewart family’s journey and join our community in welcoming baby Christina!



The Council Family: A Success Story

It has been 13 years and 10 months since Habitat handed the Council family the keys to their home. Melody was a single parent of three daughters under the age of 12. She had lost her mother, been married and divorced, and had buried a 9-month-old child, making life seem rather dim. Against all odds, Melody was able to press her way forward. Even though she was at first scared, she looked for help. She needed a space to heal and be present with her children. Although employed, her paychecks were barely enough to pay the rent, electric, and childcare.

Because of the opportunities provided by Habitat, Melody and her daughters were able to have a space to grow and learn. They were afforded a safe place within the built walls where they found peace and quiet when they needed it most.

Melody is still employed by the State of Florida and is currently a student at the University of Florida pursuing a master's degree in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences. All of her daughters have earned college degrees, are gainfully employed, and have moved out of the house. Melody is tremendously grateful to Habitat for giving her a launch pad.



Community Involvement

Veteran Helping Veterans Podcast Interview

Tori Arens, our Homebuyer Services Director, joined Todd Belknap, Executive Director of Vets Helping Vets, for an informational discussion on the resources we can offer to local veteran families. In the interview, Tori describes the steps for applying to our Homeownership Program — including eligibility, support, and the approval process. Their objective was to spread the message of how Habitat for Humanity can assist local veterans with affordable homeownership. For more information, listen to the full interview using the link below!



[Click Here for Interview](#)



Belleview CEP After Hours

We had a great time at Belleview Chamber and Economic Partnership After Hours on December 11! We love every opportunity to connect with the amazing individuals and businesses that make our community thrive.

See us with Romeo, Roam Electric's beloved mascot! We are excited to announce that Roam Electric will be a presenting sponsor for our Elvis & the Legends of Country concert taking place on Thursday, January 8th.

Learn more about the concert at habitatocala.org/concert.



Ocala CEP After Hours

We had a blast with friends and partners alike at the Ocala Metro Chamber and Economic Partnership After Hours hosted on December 18 and was sponsored by Gulf Atlantic Bank. Members of our team were able to attend and even get a picture with Santa Claus!

Thanks to the Chamber for having us.



K-Country Radio Interview

On Sunday, December 21, K-Country 93.7 featured an interview with our Events Manager, Lauren Lewis. In the interview, they highlighted what to expect at the Elvis & the Legends of Country concert, as well as heartfelt motives for being a part of the Habitat team. If you weren't able to tune into the interview in time that's okay. You can still listen to the full interview following the link below:



[Click Here for Interview](#)



Bring the Harvest Home

Habitat for Humanity of Marion County was proud to attend and support the 15th Annual Bring the Harvest Home, a charitable event held on Friday, December 5th, at Ocala's Downtown Square. This long-standing community tradition brought residents, local organizations, and nonprofits together with one shared goal: helping local food pantries restock their shelves in time for the holiday season.

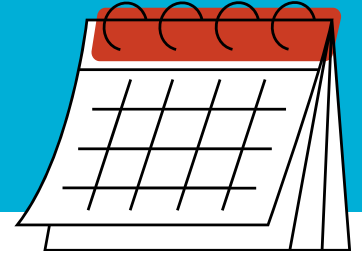
Leading up to the event, donations were collected throughout Marion County at fire stations, law enforcement offices, government buildings, and public libraries, making it easy for residents to give back. The response from the community was overwhelming. This year's drive collected more than 30,000 pounds of food, ensuring that families facing food insecurity had access to essentials during the holidays.



In addition to food donations, the event raised more than \$34,000, which was split among the four benefitting nonprofits: Brother's Keeper, Interfaith Emergency Services, the Salvation Army, and Veterans Helping Veterans.

Habitat for Humanity is honored to stand alongside these partners and the many volunteers who helped make Bring the Harvest Home a success. Events like this reflect the strength of our community and reinforce our shared commitment to supporting neighbors and building a stronger, more stable Marion County for all.

Upcoming Events



ELVIS CONCERT - Elvis & The Legends of County - January 8th, 2026

STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL - March 7th, 2026

SOUTHEASTERN PRO RODEO - March 20th & 21st, 2026

For more Information:
habitatocala.org/events/

Habitat for Humanity of Marion County PRESENTS

ELVIS & THE LEGENDS OF COUNTRY

Cote Deonath as Elvis Presley

THURS., JAN. 8, 2026

SHOW BEGINS AT 6:30 PM
 DOORS OPEN AT 5:30 PM

CIRCLE SQUARE CULTURAL CENTER
 FROM THE HEART OF COUNTRY TO THE HEART OF OCALA,
 JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE THE KING'S BIRTHDAY.

TICKETS START AT \$15 | SCAN THE QR CODE AND GET YOUR TICKETS NOW

HABITATOCALA.ORG/CONCERT

Artists featured: Samantha Chambliss as Dolly Parton, Michael Collier as Johnny Cash, Alex Mitchell as Garth Brooks.

HABITAT OCALA STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

Want To Become A Sponsor at one of Marion County's largest festivals? Scan here!

March 7, 2026
9AM-5PM
McPherson Complex
 601 SE 25th Ave, Ocala, FL

Sponsor Today To Help A Local Family In Need!

- 235+ Vendors
- 15k-20k in Attendance
- Supported by 700+ volunteers
- Car Show
- BMX Stunt Show
- Pie Eating Contest
- Live Music & Entertainment
- Kid Zone + Petting Zoo

@HFHMCstrawberryfestival | habitatocala.org/strawberry



ReStore Updates

Habitat for Humanity of Marion County

ReStore
Habitat for Humanity of Marion County

FILL A BAG

Back Porch Sale

\$5 FILL A BAG

Every Friday - 9am-4pm (weather permitting)

JOIN US FOR OUR PORCH SALE EVERY FRIDAY, WHERE EVERY BAG IS JUST \$5, AND YOU CAN FILL IT TO THE BRIM. IT'S THE ULTIMATE TREASURE HUNT.

Fill-A-Bag Sales: Every Friday!

Looking for a treasure hunt? Every Friday from 9am-4pm (weather permitting), shoppers can grab a bag and fill it to the brim for just \$5! You never know what gems you'll find — home decor, clothing, hidden treasures, and more! Please note that only items in the designated sale area are allowed to be filled.

Locations:

- 10800 SW 91st Ave, Ocala, FL 34481
- 926 NW 27th Ave, Ocala, FL 34475

Make sure you follow our ReStore Facebook pages! We regularly post about treasures you don't want to miss out on...

- 27th Ave ReStore: [Follow Here](#)
- 200 ReStore: [Follow Here](#)



Save 50% & More Off Retail!



Donate



Shop



Volunteer



Proud Supporter of the Habitat ReStores:



We don't just paint. We Protect.