



*Tom Oswald - Worthington-Adopt-A-House volunteer*

For over twenty years, Tom has been a regular volunteer with Habitat for Humanity. He first got involved through the Linworth United Methodist Church, formerly part of the Worthington Partnership. For many years, Tom volunteered on Saturdays, hauling his own stepladder in his T-bird, and working in crews as small as three or four people. Tom recalled how back then, Habitat homes were ranches built on a slab, and volunteers worked on the drywall and roofing in addition to all the parts of the house they do now.

These days, Tom volunteers during the week, with a core group of five to eight people that include Bob Lentz and members of the Clintonville-Beechwold-Dublin-Worthington-Adopt-A-House group. Tom discovered his aptitude for carpentry early on, and says he can't think of a better use for his skills now than volunteering with Habitat for Humanity. Tom enjoys completing a house from start to finish, and working in a group with Bob Lentz, which Tom calls a genuine pleasure.

Habitat volunteers build in all seasons, and a particular memory that stands out to Tom is working on a house in its early stages in Hilltop, and chipping ice off of the floor deck so that the walls could be set. Another memorable experience was working on partner family, Keyona's home, whom Tom describes as an inspiration.

Before becoming a volunteer at Habitat, Tom worked at R.W. Setterlin Building Company as a Project Manager/VP for 20 years, and before then, for Sears Logistics for 20 years. He also served on the House Corporation for the fraternity he was in at the Ohio State University for 46 years, and continues to help with the maintenance of the house. In his free time, Tom also enjoys woodworking, golfing, biking, and working on his brand new '68 Mustang GT. Tom even extended his carpentry skills to his own home, built in 1982, on which him and his wife did much of the work.

We at Habitat MidOhio are grateful to have Tom as a volunteer, and are thankful for his many years of service!



*Kellie Vaughn - Partner Family, Family Advocate*

Kellie’s journey with Habitat began in 2010 when her family began the application process for a new home build in Newark, Ohio. Their home was built by the Licking County Habitat affiliate before the affiliate merged with Greater Columbus Habitat to form Habitat MidOhio. After becoming a homeowner, Kellie, knowing hers was one of the few Habitat partner families in the Newark area that was available to work with new partner families, continued to stay involved with Habitat, volunteering as a family advocate whenever an opportunity presented itself. Kellie first became an advocate for a family-friend, and her friend soon became Kellie’s neighbor. In addition to volunteering as family advocate and providing support and guidance, Kellie also helps with some of the “behind the scenes” work including monthly sweat equity reports.

Kellie’s altruism is long-standing. Before Habitat, Kellie, a stay-at-home mother of two children with special needs, volunteered with Operations Christmas Child, a project run by Samaritan’s Purse, an international relief organization, that delivers shoeboxes filled with small toys, hygiene items, and school supplies to children around the world, including children affected by war, poverty, natural disaster, famine, and disease, as well as children living on Native American reservations in the United States. In addition to Operation Christmas Child, Kellie also volunteered at First Community Church of Buckeye Lake, helping out with the junior church program.

Kellie knows that the process of qualifying for homeownership doesn’t always move along quickly, but from the beginning, Kellie noted that “the people involved in selecting partner families truly have a heart for improving the lives of families through providing affordable housing, and it is ultimately worth the patience and persistence to go through the process.” A special moment from Kellie’s own experience as a partner family was during a Rock-the-Block, where Kellie enjoyed working side-by-side with volunteers on her own home’s curb appeal, choosing the plants and their arrangement to create the landscape she envisioned for her home, as well as getting the chance to share her own landscaping and horticulture knowledge. Kellie, now also a part of the process new partner families go through, explained why continuing to volunteer with Habitat has been meaningful to her,

“It has provided me with the opportunity to help make the process of homeownership for several families to be just a little bit smoother than what it might have been, and because it has allowed me to help take some of the weight off of someone else’s shoulders by being willing to spend the time inputting information and freeing up that time for them to focus on more important tasks.”

Kellie talked about the importance of a partner family having an advocate, someone to turn to for support when questions or concerns arise, early in the process, “The earlier a partner family can be connected to a family advocate, or now a partnership group, the more of a relationship can be formed between them... When a partner family doesn’t feel the need to contact the family advocate, then it becomes quite easy for the only contact between the two to be during major events, such as a wall raising or the dedication of their house.”

One partner family that Kellie’s family has formed a close relationship with is Kerry Mix’s family.

“I would have to say my most memorable accomplishment of my volunteer service has been the close friendship that has developed between Kerry and I. It’s unusual for us to go more than a few days without talking or texting one another. I was the family advocate for Kerry’s family as they went through the process of having their house built. We may not have talked much before the wall-raising, but by the time the house dedication came around, we had found that we had several things in common. Amongst those things in common were our children all attending the same school and the comradery of parenting children with special needs.”

Kellie and Kerry now volunteer alongside each other, leading the Newark Partnership Group.

Kellie grew up on a small family farm in West Virginia, where she loved roaming the woods surrounding her home, and ran hurdles in track while she was in middle school. These days, Kellie continues her involvement with Habitat as well as Operation Christmas Child, leading a drop-off location during National Collection Week, and she continues to help with First Community Church of Buckeye Lake’s junior church program. When she’s not taking care of her family or volunteering, Kellie enjoys reading, playing crossword puzzles on her phone, and almost always has a new craft project to work on. Kellie’s projects include making dog leashes from paracord, sewing, using plastic canvas and yarn to create boxes and bookmarks, painting golf ball ornaments, and she has recently begun loom knitting.

“Probably the most exciting things happening in my life, outside of Habitat, revolve around my children. They are both growing like weeds, and I am looking forward to my son getting his new wheelchair before year’s end, and my daughter getting a new chair to relax in at home that will be more comfortable for her,” Kellie shared.

Kellie also wanted to add, “I just have to say that I and my family have been blessed by being involved with Habitat and that, no matter where we may end up as time goes on, we will always find a way to be involved with Habitat.”