

## SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

# Businesses give back through Habitat for Humanity

By Patricia Reynolds  
Business Journal Writer

Though they continue to struggle themselves, businesses continue donating time and supplies to Habitat for Humanity Stanislaus.

"We have been surprised that local businesses have continued to support us generously," said Anita Hellam, executive director for Habitat for Humanity Stanislaus. "If anything, businesses, that were too busy to come out and build or to work with us; finally, have some time and have been making the most of a difficult situation."

Chris Courtney, President of Oak

Valley Community Bank believes companies are obligated to actively participate in bettering the community where they do business.

"It is a civic responsibility to give back to the community," he said. "It's doing the right thing."

Oak Valley not only provides lines of credit that enable Habitat for Humanity to operate while awaiting grants

and donations, the bank encourages employees at all levels of the organization to contribute their time and work on a build.

"Some of our employees worked on a build and were there when Habitat dedicated homes to four families," said Courtney. "They were very touched by the experience. It was a feel-good thing."

Habitat for Humanity has operated in Stanislaus County for 20 years, either renovating or building new single-family houses. At any given time, about half of the homes under construction are new while half are renovations.

Hellam said every Habitat-built home has been sold to a family earning below than 55 percent of the average median income for the area.

Between 1989 and 2008, an estimated 30 homes were built or renovated in Turlock, Modesto, and Ceres neighborhoods. Hellam said Habitat's efforts in distressed areas have inspired other nearby homeowners.

"While our primary interest is to improve the quality of life for our

Anita Hellam, executive director of Habitat for Humanity, and Chris Courtney, president of Oak Valley Community Bank, at Hope Village.

Steve Kosko/The Business Journal



# Habitat

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*Evan Yoshino of Applegate-Johnston helped Habitat for Humanity develop a project management system. The system improved Habitat's efficiency and gave the organization a better understanding of the business side of construction.*

partner families," she said, "we do know that the entire community benefits when neighborhoods are revitalized."

Construction of Hope Village, a 20-unit subdivision in West Modesto, began this year. In addition to finishing Hope Village, Habitat hopes to rehabilitate another 10 scattered sites, develop a couple of four-unit housing complexes and acquire additional properties.

But to achieve those goals, Habitat will need help from the business com-

level that has made Applegate's involvement worthwhile.

"It's a huge reward on an individual level because of the families you're helping out," he said. "It's a way for Applegate-Johnston to be an active part in turning the community around one family at a time."

Continued commitment from companies like Applegate-Johnston and Oak Valley Community Bank is especially critical today.

lies ready to occupy the finished Habitat homes.

"We surprise the families by filling their pantries and cupboards with paper products, cleaning supplies, and everyday consumable household products," said Sherri Magallanes. "We also provide the families with \$100 gift cards so they can purchase perishables as well. Our goal is to take the burden off the cost of moving into their first home."

Helping Habitat, said Magallanes, is positive for her business because people get to know the Grocery Outlet name and what their company is all about. But, she added, it is her family's background and helping the community that motivated her to become involved.

"My husband and I were raised in low-income families. We know how hard parents struggle. It is personal and passionate for us to help," she said. "It is our responsibility to give back to the community that gave to us."

The Magallanes have helped build about 10 homes over the past three years.

Sherri Magallanes said the couple's three sons, and several co-workers, have joined in and attended the dedication of each of the houses they helped build.

Grocery Outlet's work with Habitat, she said, also satisfies a responsibility she has directly to her customers as well. "They want to know that the hard-earned money they spend is also help-

ing build the future of the community in which they live."

Support and help from local businesses has enabled Habitat to build several homes a year, said Hellam, as opposed to the organization's early years, when only one or two were constructed. In turn, she added, businesses have felt a strong link to their work and community.

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**- Sheri Magallanes  
co-owner of  
Grocery Outlet in Modesto**

"We have been fortunate to dedicate six homes in the past two weeks," she said. "The businesses that helped make this home ownership dream a reality for these six families were touched. Several corporate partners have called to thank me for reminding them why they go to work every day."