

Land Blessing Begins New Development

For Habitat for Humanity – by Clare Altmann

A transformation is underway in the Patterson Avenue – 14th Street neighborhood area.

Talk began two years ago when Rodney Sumler, President of the Northwest Neighborhood Association, invited Habitat for Humanity of Forsyth County to their meeting. Rev. Mary Peterson, minister of St. James AME Church on Patterson Avenue, hosted monthly meetings at her church, out of which grew an exciting new project. Habitat Forsyth is now set to begin building seven new homes with 57 United Methodist churches sponsoring the financial and volunteer support.

Although construction on the new homes begins March 8th, Habitat held its first official "Blessing of the Land" Fellowship Breakfast and Worship Service at St. James AME Church on February 18th. This special service united neighborhood ministers, those 57 Methodist sponsoring church ministers, and the ministers of the seven new Habitat homeowners.

In addition to the ministers represented, those in attendance also included Rodney Sumler, Dr. Monica Lett, the Winston-Salem Housing/Neighborhood Development Director, who has been a Habitat supporter, as well as Ward Miller, a Habitat Board Member and member of St. James AME Church, and Rev. Mary Peterson, the minister of St. James who opened the doors of her church to host the service and the monthly meetings of Habitat and the Northwest Neighborhood Association.

Ivy Steward, Church and Community Relations Coordinator for Habitat Forsyth, noted that Habitat has a long-held tradition of a very meaningful House Dedication service when homes are completed, but this marked the first Land Blessing. "It completes the circle," Steward said. "The soil where the house will stand that is held and blessed during this service would not be there without God, so we thank Him for the land". Habitat is in desperate need of and is in constant prayer for, land suitable for building.

The purpose of this Land Blessing service is not only to bring these churches and this community together, but also to focus on the Biblical principles on which Habitat for Humanity was founded. Habitat homes have many sponsors – corporate, businesses, families, "we are grateful for all sponsors, and it is extra special when churches step forward," said Steward, "God should be the center of our lives and the church should be the center of the community".

At this Land Blessing were many differences, according to Steward, "gender, denominational, and racial, but we are all one." Over 100 people gathered for the breakfast fellowship and worship service, and stood on the seven prepared lots to bless the soil, pray for the volunteers and homeowners, and celebrate a transformation of a piece of land in God's name.



NEW BEGINNINGS FOR 14TH STREET AREA AND FOR NEW RESIDENTS

"A new beginning" is what Habitat Homeowner Necole Ross has in mind, as she looks forward to construction beginning on her home in a few short days.

Necole Ross, a Winston-Salem native and CNA at Forsyth Hospital, and her two sons, a 17-year-old working on his GED and a 4th grader at Kimberly Park Elementary, have lived in their current neighborhood for 12 years. Necole says it is "getting bad now with drugs and shootings. I am very excited and my kids are anxious to get their own rooms." Since her younger son was born, the boys have shared a room and now cannot wait to have their own personal space.

Necole looks forward to a new home where her youngest son can get out and safely ride his bike. She is most excited about having a new house she can decorate and hang pictures. "Nice stuff doesn't look good in a raggedy house," she said.

The new beginning Necole dreams of will change her family's life and the face of the 14th Street area – an area ridden with high crime and drug use. Necole's and six other new homeowner's homes will be a part of the seven house United Methodist Blitz scheduled for March 8-10 in the 14th Street/Patterson Avenue area.

Several years ago, Centenary United Methodist Church challenged HabitatForsyth to not only change the lives of the families it serves, but to also make a change in local neighborhoods that desperately needed revitalization. Through this encouragement, HabitatForsyth, along with Centenary and all local United Methodist churches, began building on 13th Street and changed that street for the better.

Now a few years later the Winston-Salem District of the United Methodist Churches has taken on the challenge of 14th Street. All 57 churches have joined together and raised \$360,000 to help finance these homes. The Habitat families

Continued on Page 45

THE AC Phoenix

More Than A Newspaper, A Community Institution

**An Associate Consultant's Newspaper
Established 1982**

**Rodney J. Sumler, Publisher
Sartia Stover, Managing Editor**

Ann F. Sumler
Financial Director

Gerald Green
Executive Director of Marketing

Asim Razzak, Nikki M. Boulware, Kenneth Fox, Rhonda Johnson
Advertising Consultants

Dr. Linda Bowman-Hopson
Education Editor

Ideas expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the publisher or staff. (336) 727-1171 fax (336) 723-1606 e-mail: acphoenix@triad.rr.com

Have the AC Phoenix delivered for \$25 for 12 issues.

Yes, I want to receive my AC Phoenix each month.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Return this coupon to:

The AC Phoenix, Circulation Department
2523 Patterson Ave., Winston-Salem, NC 27105

A voluntary payment of \$25 per year is requested to defray delivery expenses.

Make checks payable to the AC Phoenix. Date: _____