

Habitat of Forsyth Honors Volunteers at Annual Volunteer Celebration



Habitat for Humanity®

It may have been delayed one week because of bad weather, but Habitat's Mardi Gras Volunteer Celebration was no less festive! About 150 attendees gathered to honor those who have volunteered at least four times for Habitat for Humanity of Forsyth County in the past year.



James Collins, a Habitat volunteer



Dwayne Thompson, Director of ReStore Operations, with volunteer Patricia McGill

The normal bright lighting of the Habitat ReStore on Coliseum Drive was dimmed, and the room was lit instead with thousands of white Christmas lights. Hundreds of pieces of furniture, appliances and building supplies for sale in the ReStore were cleverly concealed behind backdrops depicting the famous wrought iron-trimmed balconies of the French Quarter.

A number of volunteers who had donated at least 75 hours of their time in the last year received the President's Volunteer Service Award from the Corporation for National Community Service. Bronze awards were given for 75-150 hours of service; silver awards were given to those who volunteered 150-250 hours; and gold awards were given to those who had served more than 250 hours.

Sylvia Oberle, executive director of Habitat Forsyth, presented the Corporation's most prestigious award – the Lifetime Achievement Award, given to those who have devoted at least 4,000 hours to one organization – to longtime volunteer Dan Pearson. Oberle also announced that Habitat's new warehouse will be named the Dan Pearson Construction Technology Center. The warehouse is part of Habitat's new Housing Education Center complex on 14th Street, that is currently being remodeled. The expanded office and warehouse space will allow Habitat to offer many more classes on home repairs and maintenance to its homeowners.

Oberle also used the occasion to honor two other longtime, devoted volunteers – Bob Doty and Nell Cavanaugh – by announcing that the Center will include the Bob Doty Community Workshop and the Nell Cavanaugh Family Classroom. Habitat also recognized Wells Fargo with its first Corporate Volunteer of the Year Award.

James Collins, who was among the volunteers honored, is a regular ReStore volunteer. "I originally thought I would help with construction, but as I got older, I realized the ReStore was a better option for me," he said. "I had heard about Habitat for years and really wanted to get involved in some way." At the ReStore, he does a little bit of everything – from helping customers to hauling donated items out to the floor.

Karen Bass, who attended along with her husband Bob, was among those who received volunteer certificates. Bass, who has been a frequent volunteer for the last two years, said working in the ReStore is a way to have fun while meeting many nice volunteers and shoppers. "It's a new store every day," she said. "I enjoy seeing all the new items that come in and helping to arrange them." One of her favorite activities, she said, is refurbishing the frames and backing of wall art that has been donated.

Frances Wilson, who has led the effort to establish the used book section of the ReStore, attended with husband Gene. Frances said she got involved

with the ReStore "because I enjoy keeping books in order and organizing them by subject matter so that people can find what they want when they come in. I am also really in to recycling – and that's what the ReStore is all about."

Habitat Forsyth is marking its 30th anniversary this year. Since its founding in 1985, the organization has served about 400 local families through constructing new houses and revitalizing existing homes, and through its tithing program to Habitat International, supported the construction of homes for more than 100 families in Latin American countries, said Peter Juran, chair of Habitat Forsyth's Board of Directors.

Habitat could not accomplish its mission of helping local working families purchase affordable, quality housing without the help of volunteers, Oberle said. "The cost of hiring people to perform the more than 25,000 hours of work that volunteers donated last year alone would cost the agency tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars," she said.

Volunteers – both individuals and groups – are always needed. If you're looking for a rewarding opportunity to serve in our community, contact Habitat of Forsyth.

For more information about Habitat for Humanity, go to www.habitatforsyth.org.