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Don't Lose Your Holiday Spirit

TUESDAY, 12 JANUARY 2010 11:25 JEFF FARRELL

Like many service organizations, it was a difficult holiday season for Habitat for Humanity, Newark.



Not only did we face shortfalls in our fundraising goals, it was a season in which we directly felt the limitations of a non-profit organization with tight resources. From our office on South Orange Avenue in Newark, we heard from so many people in Essex County who need help and turned to us with hope. It was a sobering fact that not everyone seeking our help can be properly served.

Our staff and volunteers heard from many long-time residents losing the battle to keep their homes, and about the many hard-working families who once again celebrated the holidays in homeless shelters or facing brutal elements on the chilling streets.

As we all take down the holiday lights and pack up the tinsel, this is not the time to lose the spirit of the season. While all the costumed Santas are no longer ringing their bells on street corners, there is still enormous need can't be ignored until the next highly-publicized season of giving.

It is daunting for Habitat for Humanity, Newark. There are so many people who must have homes, yet we are constantly faced with a lack of tax-deductible donations and a limited number of volunteers to build dreams – in Newark and the suburbs.

People may not realize that we are experiencing a full-fledged housing crisis, with countless people in the greater Newark area living in substandard housing or are homeless. This is not just a local problem.

One-third of the United States – roughly 95 million people – is facing some sort of housing crisis. Perhaps they can no longer pay the mortgage, or are living in overcrowded, substandard housing. Or, maybe they are living in shelters or on the streets.

In Newark, and worldwide, Habitat for Humanity is fighting every day to provide decent, affordable homes for those in need.

Through our own programs since 1986, we have witnessed the transformational ability of good housing in Newark, and recent scholarly research confirms what we already know. A 2006 report issued by the Planning and Development Collaborative International stated, "Clean, warm housing is an essential input for prevention and care of diseases of poverty like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and diarrhea."

Good housing benefits everyone. In greater Newark, a strong housing stock attracts economic investment and development, and contributes to thriving school systems and community organizations. Good housing is a catalyst for civic activism and a stimulus for community-based organizations. Safe homes and neighborhoods, in which residents are satisfied with housing conditions and public services, help to build social stability and security. This means a better Newark for everyone.

Give your time, your financial support and even building materials to Habitat, Newark. Whatever you give will directly benefit others in your community, benefitting us all. Learn more at www.HabitatNewark.org

We can't afford for you to lose the holiday spirit.

Jeff Farrell is the President of the Board of Directors of Habitat for Humanity Newark.

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Newark, NJ

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Feels Like: 30°F
Humidity: 41%
Wind: W 8 mph
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