



Habitat

Building homes, communities and hope.

Summer 2026



A Season of Progress and Possibility

By Jacob Kuntz
Executive Director

As we move into the summer months, I find myself reflecting on what has already been an extraordinary year for Helena Area Habitat for Humanity. This spring, we celebrated one of the most rewarding moments in our work: welcoming three families home. Three new homeowners

received the keys to homes they helped build alongside volunteers, staff, and community partners, marking the culmination of years of hard work, perseverance, and partnership.

The momentum continues. We currently have five homes under construction across our community, with another five homes scheduled to break ground later this summer. Every

foundation poured, wall raised, and family served brings us one step closer to our vision of a Helena where everyone has a decent, affordable place to call home.

Behind the scenes, significant progress is also being made on the Rose Hills development. The final pieces of a complex financing package are coming together, including more than \$17 million in municipal bond financing that will help support critical infrastructure for the neighborhood. The process of assembling these financing tools has been intricate and at times painstaking, requiring collaboration among local, state, and private partners. With contractors selected and key agreements nearing completion, we are moving toward financing closing later this summer, with infrastructure construction anticipated to begin in late summer or early fall.

At the same time, affordable housing organizations across

the country continue to navigate uncertainty surrounding federal programs, grants, and housing resources. We remain grateful for the federal employees who have dedicated their careers to ensuring that Montanans and Americans have access to safe, affordable housing. Their work has helped make homeownership possible for countless families.

Despite challenges, our mission remains clear. Our staff is more dedicated than ever, our volunteers continue to show up in remarkable ways, and our community's commitment to affordable housing remains strong. Together, we will continue building homes, strengthening neighborhoods, and creating opportunities for families to thrive.

ROSE HILLS

A neighborhood for everyone.

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Progress is happening on Rose Hills, our neighborhood of 1500 homes, 46 acres of parks and green space, neighborhood center, and more!

• August 2026 •

Finalization of Phase 1 financing, including the Rose Hills municipal bond and associated funding sources that will support the development of the first phase of the neighborhood, encompassing more than 100 homes.

• September/October 2026 •

Completion of final infrastructure approvals and a community groundbreaking celebration marking the official start of development activities at Rose Hills.

• Fall 2026 •

Infrastructure construction begins on Phase 1, including roads, water, sewer, and other essential public improvements. Home construction is anticipated to begin in Fall 2027, with the first residents expected to move into the neighborhood shortly thereafter.

Save the Date for...

An Evening with Habitat

A Fundraiser for Helena Area Habitat for Humanity

Join us for an evening of good food, good music, great company, and a cause worth celebrating!

September 30th
6:00pm
Helena Civic Center

Live music from the Tom Catmull Trio

RSVP: MindieM@HelenaHabitat.org
(406) 204-5602

Home Dedication Ceremony Celebrates New Beginnings



Friends, family, supporters, and volunteers gather to celebrate home dedication.

"I will never forget this experience. It taught me even more patience... it taught us sacrifice, the importance of working for something you really want in life, and truly believing in yourself," reflected Deandre after receiving the keys to his new home. A home dedication ceremony was held in May to celebrate the completion of Deandre's home and two other Habitat homes.

Moments like these remind us why this work matters: homeownership creates a foundation for people to grow, for people to plan for the future, and to build stability and opportunity.

Through Habitat's Mutual Self-Help program, three families worked side-by-side over the last 10 months, helping to

build not only their own homes, but the homes of their neighbors. Along the way they completed homebuyer education classes, qualified for a mortgage, and invested more than 1000 hours of "sweat equity" to make homeownership possible. In addition to the sweat equity put in by the families, volunteers contributed more than 3000 hours of work to bring the homes to completion.

The home dedication ceremony was an opportunity to honor this hard work and the community partnerships that make affordable homeownership possible in our community. Representative Troy Downing, and staff from Senators Steve Daines and Tim Sheeey's offices were present to celebrate alongside

the homeowners, volunteers, supporters, board members, and staff.

A special thank you to The Wall Family Power Townsend Foundation, US Bank, USDA Rural Development, Wells Fargo, and the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation for their support to make these homes possible. And thank you to the volunteers, donors, and community partners who helped get us to this milestone. Because of you, three more families have achieved the dream of affordable homeownership.

Congratulations to our newest Habitat homeowners! We're honored to have been your partners on this journey and can't wait to see all the memories you'll make in the years ahead.



Habitat board & staff pose with Rep. Downing and staff from Daines and Sheeey's offices.



Five new families partnered with Helena Habitat to begin building their homes in June.

Meet our Newest Homeowners!

Every Habitat home has a story, and every family who partners with Habitat brings their own hopes, challenges, and dreams for the future. In June, five new families began their partnership with us to begin building their new homes and a brighter future. We're excited for you to meet them:

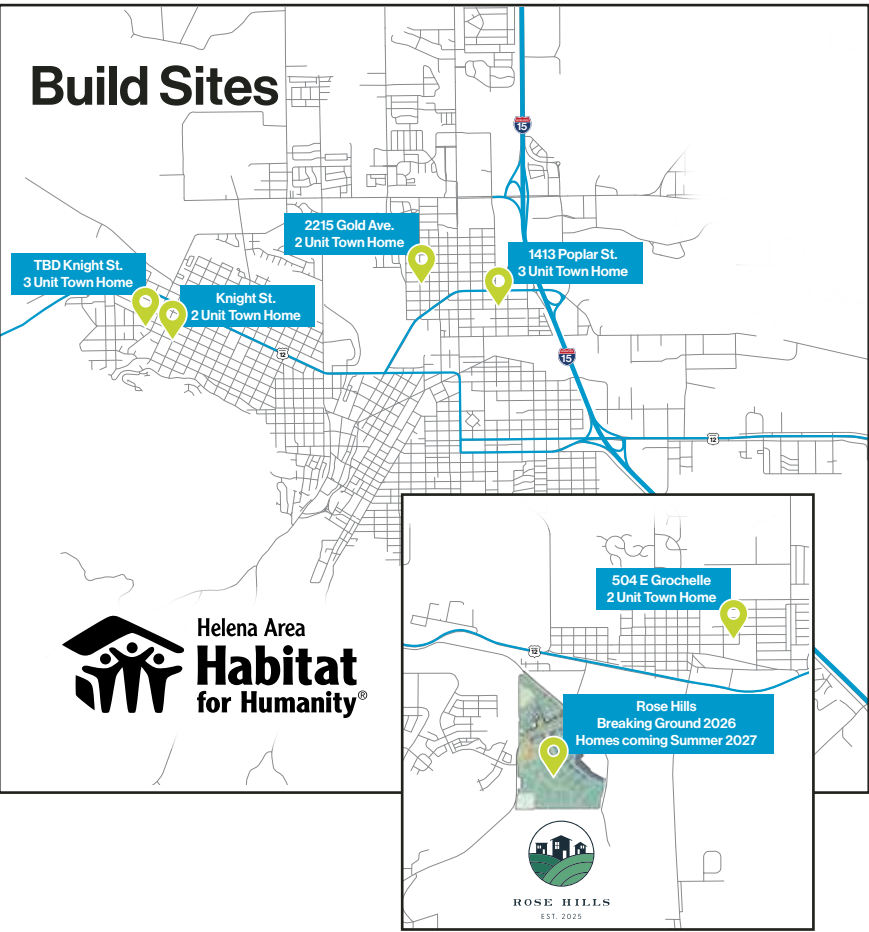
Emily Wray — Emily is thrilled to be building a place she can truly call home for herself, her dog Odin, and her cats. This opportunity marks the fulfillment of a dream she once thought was beyond reach and a chance to honor the memory of her brother, Evan.

Justine Christianson — As she prepares to welcome her first child, Justine is excited to be building a home where her family can grow and thrive for years to come. A lifelong Helena resident and educator, she is grateful for the opportunity to strengthen her roots in the community she loves.

Shannon Doom — Shannon is embracing every step of the Habitat journey with enthusiasm and gratitude. She looks forward to building not only a home of her own, but also lasting connections with volunteers, neighbors, and the community that is helping make her dream possible.

Cassandra Nieto — For Cassandra, Habitat homeownership represents the culmination of years of hard work, perseverance, and hope. She and her husband, Tony, are excited to create a safe and welcoming home where they can build their future together with their beloved cat, Gato, and enjoy the security of homeownership.

Jaute Loftin — Jaute is excited to gain hands-on experience throughout the construction process while working alongside dedicated volunteers and community partners. She looks forward to opening the door to a home of her own and the opportunities, independence, and stability that come with it.



Check Out Where We're Building!

Over the next year and a half, we're building 12 homes on five scattered sites throughout Helena and East Helena and breaking ground on the infrastructure that will support Rose Hills—our neighborhood of 1500 homes, 46 acres of parks and green space, a neighborhood center and more.



Solar array on the roof of the ReStore building.

Here Comes the Sun

Earlier this spring the ReStore became 100% solar powered! Thanks in part to a grant from Northwestern Energy, Helena Habitat was able to install a 35kW solar array, producing enough power to offset all the building's energy needs.

To date, the solar array has produced 13.7 megawatt hours of clean energy—enough energy to power the average home for more than a year. These energy savings

will reduce operating expenses at the ReStore, allowing more resources to be directed toward building affordable homes for families in the Helena Valley.

Helena Habitat plans to install an interactive display inside the ReStore that will show real-time solar production, environmental benefits, and energy cost savings to shoppers.

Stop by and check it out!



From Scrap to Spectacular

In its second year, five incredible teams took on the SponCon (Spontaneous Construction) challenge of transforming upcycled materials into imaginative, functional creations, and they absolutely *delivered*.

Creations included everything from a kitchen island to an outdoor food dehydrator! Judges

"Judges Choice Award", and a team from Opportunity Bank was selected by fellow participants for the "Participant Choice Award."

Then in June, creations were made available for purchase at the ReStore, with proceeds from their sale going to support the work of Helena Habitat and



2026 SponCon Participants.

awarded each item a grade for their use of upcycled materials, creativity, functionality, and team. A team representing Helena College was awarded the

Rotary Club of Helena. Shoppers voted for their favorite item and awarded Montana Woodworkers Guild the "People's Choice Award"!

Building Homes, Building Community

We had the pleasure of hosting the team from Montana Legal



Staff from Montana Legal Services Association prepare yards for landscaping.

Services Association out on the build site, and they brought an incredible amount of energy, teamwork, and heart with them.

As a part of their annual "All Staff Meeting" the MLSA team spends time giving back to their community. More than 40 MLSA employees chose to spend the day with Helena Habitat. Because of their hard work, we were able to move these homes one step closer to the finish line, helping prepare them for landscaping and for the upcoming home dedications in just a few short weeks. Every task completed brings us closer



Staff from Montana Legal Services Association put final touches on the porch of a home.

to welcoming new homeowners into safe, affordable homes built through the support of our community.

Are you part of a group that is interested in volunteering together to make a difference in our community? Get in touch with Jeremy Ingram, our Volunteer Coordinator at JeremyI@HelenaHabitat.org, or call (406) 204-5669.

The Heart Behind the Hard Hat

If you've been on one of our build sites, chances are that you've met Brad Lancaster. Brad has been a dedicated supporter and volunteer for Helena Area Habitat for Humanity for years. Week after week, Brad generously shares his time, skills, and positive attitude to help build and repair homes for families in our community.

During his time working at Wells Fargo, Brad participated in some Helena Habitat volunteer days. "After I retired, I still participated in some Wells Fargo volunteer times, which allowed

me to get to know Mark Leland, the Construction Director at Helena Habitat. Soon I found myself showing up at build sites every week, which I've been doing for 10 years now. Why? Well... I liked working with Mark. Later, Craig, became another favorite, and one of the most patient coaches I've met," said Brad.

Beyond his work on the construction site, Brad is a wonderful ambassador for Habitat, helping introduce new volunteers to our mission and encouraging others to get involved. "Through



Brad Lancaster (in the hard hat) volunteers on a Helena Area Habitat for Humanity repair job.

the years I've met and enjoyed a growing and fantastic crew of 'co-volunteers', smart people who like helping others as a team and are fun to work with," said Brad.

His commitment to serving others and strengthening our community embodies the spirit of Habitat for Humanity.



Three Community Banks. *One Big Impact.*

At Helena Area Habitat for Humanity, we know that strong communities are built when people invest in one another.

That's why we're especially grateful to Valley Bank, Intrepid Credit Union, and Opportunity Bank of Montana, and Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines for their generous support through the Member Impact Fund.

These partners believe in showing up, building relationships, and investing in the communities they call home. We see that commitment in action through their

support of affordable homeownership and their ongoing investment in organizations working to strengthen Montana communities.

Through the Member Impact Fund, these local member banks were able to leverage their contribution through a match provided by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines and support Helena Habitat's work creating safe, decent, and affordable homes for local families. Their support comes at a critical time, as rising housing costs continue to

place homeownership out of reach for many hardworking households across the Helena area.

We are deeply thankful to Valley Bank, Intrepid Credit Union, and Opportunity Bank of Montana for choosing to invest in Helena Habitat's mission. Their support demonstrates a shared belief that everyone deserves a safe, affordable place to call home and that housing is fundamental to healthy families, vibrant neighborhoods, and a thriving community.

Helena Area Habitat for Humanity

Building homes, communities and hope.

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The Newsletter of Helena Area Habitat for Humanity



Stories of Home, Hope, and Impact

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