

This summer I was afforded the opportunity to work as an intern in the Development Department for Chatham Habitat for Humanity (CHFHH) in Pittsboro, North Carolina. Chatham Habitat is a non-profit organization that works in partnership with God and people to create self-help opportunities for families to own affordable homes, improve their lives, and strengthen their communities. CHFHH sells homes at 0% interest to families who are in need of safe, affordable, decent housing. Qualified families go through a rigorous application process that helps CHFHH determine their specific needs. In order to qualify for a CHFHH home, a family must meet three criteria: the need for housing, ability to pay, and willingness to partner. Families must fall between 25 and 60% of Area Median Income; for a family of four that is between \$17,000 and \$41,000 annual household income. Families must also contribute 350 hours of sweat equity in lieu of a down payment, as well as attend three educational courses created by the CHFHH staff – Homeowner Education, Communication and Conflict Resolution, and Personal Finance. These courses are designed to promote financial health and responsibility so that the qualified families can learn the skills they need to be smart homeowners and live more stable lifestyles.

My responsibilities as the resource development intern included writing e-newsletters, management of social media presence, press releases, daily communication with donors, management of E-Tapestry Database, organization of special events - planning, managing invitation lists, etc., grant writing, and website content management. As the development intern, my role entailed regular updating and management over social media: Facebook, Chatham Habitat blogs, and Instagram. The dissemination of information about what our organization is

doing to combat poverty and unjust housing in Chatham County was of particular interest to me. While working at CHFH I learned that one of the major problems they face is misinformation about what CHFH's mission is. Misconceptions about CHFH inhibit their ability to raise the money and gain the help they need to help Chatham families in need. By making sure that people understand the nature and the self-help aspect of Habitat's organization, I felt that I was making a real effort to change the minds of prejudiced individuals and raise support for such an impactful organization. The social media, blog posts, and newsletters also help to ensure that people are aware of ways they can get involved and plug in to their community so that Chatham county can become a more vibrant and engaging community in which to live.

Event planning was one of the skills I developed over the summer. I was able to assist in planning two events over the course of the summer, a car show and a wine tasting. These events were designed to raise money for CHFH to provide the resources needed to construct the homes. I particularly enjoyed contributing to the wine tasting event "Grape Expectations for Chatham Habitat," which I was charged with naming. For both the car show, "Cars for Castles Cruise-In," and "Grape Expectations for Chatham Habitat" I was responsible for contacting vendors, asking for donations, addressing by hand each invitation, designing flyers, and researching other similar events held by National Habitat for Humanity to better organize our local events. During my time at CHFH I also became the manager of our donations database, Etapestry. This is a common database used by non-profits across America to log and keep track of the organization's important information: donators, volunteers, donations and pledge cards received, etc. This, as

well as the funding grants that I oversaw, is a very important skill to have will look great on an application for non-profits in the future.

One thing that Chatham Habitat taught me was the importance of creating bonds and establishing community. While the act of addressing 400 envelopes by hand is a very tedious job, I witnessed how personal touches and going to extra mile to make others feel appreciated has the power to positively impact the whole organization. The community of giving that CHFH fosters made working there such a positive experience. The kindness within the office served a ripple effect that touched the volunteers and donators and spread into the community itself. Two of my most meaningful moments at CHFH occurred when I elected to work on the build sites. Seeing the tangible impact I could make was very inspiring, especially since I worked alongside the future homeowners themselves. It felt like the most special gift that I could give someone.

Over the course of my time here at CHFH I learned that affordable homeownership has the ability to break the cycle of poverty. Children whose parents are homeowners are more likely to be healthy, successful in school, go to college, eventually earn more than their parents, and become homeowners themselves. Over the years, families whom we have served have been extremely successful in their homes, have a lower than average delinquency rate, and become active members in their communities Here in Chatham County, Habitat has the ability to build homes, change lives, and affect community-wide change. I was so honored to be a part of this work, even when I was doing things like stuffing envelopes, advertizing the ReStores on social media, or making copies I knew that allowing an organization to run smoothly and promote

positive information about the good work we were doing paves the way for bigger changes to occur. In the future I hope to continue to fight against social injustice and help combat the discrimination and prejudices that stain our society. This internship has further fanned the flame I feel to promote equality and human rights both from, behind a desk and out in the world.