



HOW WE STRENGTHEN STARK: HABITAT FOR HUMANITY EAST CENTRAL OHIO

Habitat for Humanity East Central Ohio believes in a world where everyone has a decent place to live. Since 1988, Habitat for Humanity has built and preserved over 570 homes throughout East Central Ohio, helping thousands of people build strength, stability, and self-reliance. Families who partner with Habitat for Humanity invest hundreds of hours of sweat equity to build their homes and the homes of others. They complete courses on financial literacy, home maintenance, and personal development to be the most successful and most confident homeowners they can be. In the end, families purchase their homes with an affordable 0% interest mortgage.

While Habitat for Humanity builds homes that help families break the cycle of generational poverty, Habitat also builds bridges between people from all walks of life. The power of partnership and the promise of dignity is at the core of Habitat for Humanity. Habitat brings people together in the spirit of what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called the Beloved Community, a land of access, equality, and opportunity for all—because empowered people can empower whole communities.

In 2016, Habitat for Humanity launched a holistic neighborhood revitalization effort called The Renewal Project: Northeast Canton, a four-year, \$3.5 million plan that was designed to reinvigorate one Northeast Canton neighborhood while helping more families and children discover the power of decent shelter. Through The Renewal Project, Habitat brought community partners together to build new homes, preserve existing homes, complete critical home repairs to help elderly residents age in place, and instill community pride through neighborhood beautification projects. In this neighborhood today, owner occupancy has increased, property values have increased, and blight has decreased.

Now, Habitat for Humanity East Central Ohio is expanding its neighborhood revitalization efforts to more communities: The Lathrop, Hartford, and Belden neighborhoods in Southeast Canton and the Tremont corridor in Southwest Massillon. Over the next several years, these revitalization efforts will invest \$5.5 million in the Stark County community and offer approximately 15,000 volunteers the opportunity to make a personal and tangible investment with Habitat.

Strengthening Stark and Habitat for Humanity have partnered together and are looking toward the future to make an even greater impact in Renewal Project neighborhoods. Together, Strengthening Stark and Habitat for Humanity will:

- Engage businesses, churches, and community organizations through volunteer opportunities in Renewal Project areas;
- Secure joint funding, such as federal grants;
- Create placemaking landmarks at the entrances of Renewal Project neighborhoods with the Quality Places Committee;
- Identify local contractors who are interested in partnering with Habitat with an intentional focus on Stark County's minority businesses through the Minority Action Committee;
- Utilize Stark Career Connect to help Renewal Project residents find employment and utilize the upskill training available through Stark State College to help residents secure higher paying jobs.

To learn more about The Renewal Project or Habitat for Humanity East Central Ohio, visit habitateco.org or call 330-915-5888.



CONGRATULATIONS, HOUSE OF G.R.A.C.E!

Congratulations to the winner of the 2020 Stark County Impact Program, House of G.R.A.C.E. Residential Services, LLC. House of G.R.A.C.E. is a minority owned, female led business founded by Audra Martin, PhD, CEO and Haydee Thomas, RN, COO. Dr. Martin is a Licensed Independent Social Worker with Supervisory Delegation with over 25 years of experience, who also has a strong passion for working with families and community change. Haydee is a Registered Nurse with over 20 years of experience who, being of Puerto Rican descent, is also bilingual and has a passion for serving and working with those within the most vulnerable and underserved populations. Since the Stark County Impact Program Showcase, they have continued their entrepreneurial journey with significant strides focused on progressing their business.



The Stark County Impact Program is an intensive 12-week business assistance program provided by JumpStart Inc. and the Canton Innovation District. The program is designed to provide focused business advising, industry-specific mentoring and collaborative learning for Stark County entrepreneurs. Being the winners of the Stark County Impact Program, Audra and Haydee took home \$10,000 to help grow House of G.R.A.C.E. This helped them move into a new office located in downtown Canton at the beginning of February.

"We wanted a place that we can be an intricate part, and also add inclusiveness and diversity, to the downtown community with the individuals we serve." Martin said while both her and Haydee were explaining how excited they were to move into the new office, also mentioned the colors inside were already the same as their business logo colors. Now being one of, if not, the only Adult Day Support services in the downtown area, both Dr. Martin and Haydee believe this is a great opportunity to grow their business alongside the downtown community. House of G.R.A.C.E. is also accepting applicants from people seeking employment as a Direct Support Professional (DSP), Training and Development, CPR and First Aid Certification, and internships in the nursing and social services fields (in partnership with Malone University and Youngstown State University Programs).

"We would love for people in the community who desire a career in human services or are currently pursuing a degree in social work or in the nursing field to take advantage of this great opportunity." Thomas said. "You need to have a level of passion for people and that's what we do on a daily basis by giving, resources, advocacy, care, and equality. That's Grace!" House of G.R.A.C.E. currently has three internships available.

The JumpStart office in Stark County is located in the Canton Innovation District HQ, where it holds programming and technical assistance for Stark County entrepreneurs and small businesses. Currently, all services are virtual, and entrepreneurs in Stark County can apply for assistance at www.jumpstartinc.org/apply/. The Stark County Community Manager representing JumpStart is Linda Hale, and can be contacted for a virtual introduction meeting after an application for assistance is submitted. The efforts put forth by House of G.R.A.C.E. is an appreciated addition to what minority-led businesses in this community can accomplish.

2020 MIDDLE SCHOOL STARK TANK WINNERS DONATE GAMES

The 2020 Stark Tank Middle School "Game Night" winning team from East Canton has been waiting and hoping that the pandemic would improve and they would be able to begin hosting some game nights between students and senior citizens. However, it appears that it will still be some time before groups can safely and comfortably get together. The students decided to donate the games to the East Canton Branch of the Stark County District library so that families can enjoy some fun activities. The students still hope that one day in the future they will be able to gather with our senior citizens in fun game night events.

Left to right- Alexia Bonner, Carter Menegay, Nevaeh Reed, Isaac Kandel and Ellie Starnes- missing Quincy Jones



MY STARK STORY



NAME:

Pastor Walter S. Moss

TITLE & EMPLOYER:

Project Director for the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence and CIRV for the office of Stark County Prosecutor.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR JOB TO A CHILD?

I get to talk to people - adults and youth - about not fighting, bullying, to make it right without a fight, do not shoot, I push peace. Sometimes in a group setting, sometimes one on one.

WHAT LED YOU TO YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYER?

I was volunteering in 2008 and in around 2011, while I was still volunteering, the position came available and I was asked to apply.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE STRENGTHENING STARK MOVEMENT?

I was invited to a meeting to hear a talk about Strengthening Stark looking to establish a Minority group, and I was all in!

WHAT DO YOU WISH OTHER PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT STARK COUNTY?

The people of Stark County have a lot of resilience we don't give up! I've seen so many people bounce back from things that happen to them. I love it.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO NEW STARK COUNTY RESIDENTS?

Drive around get to know your county to know what it has to offer! A lot is happening even outside the cities. Of course, visit the football hall of fame, the McKinley museums, classic car museums, walk up to the monument at monument park.

IF YOU WON THE LOTTERY AND COULD PURCHASE ONE THING FOR OUR COMMUNITY, WHAT WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Jackson Pool in Southeast Canton is still there but not being utilized so I would reinstate a swimming pool for that area that I grew up in!

WHAT STARK COUNTY RESTAURANT SHOULD WE CHECK OUT THIS WEEKEND?

Bravo in Belden Village!

STRENGTHENING STARK MISSION

Strengthening Stark is a community-wide movement of residents, business, government, nonprofits and philanthropists who share a vision for a vibrant, growing county. Our goal is to make Stark a great place to start and grow a business, develop one's talent and pursue a career, and live and raise a family.