

IMPACT PARTNERS



OPPORTUNITIES AND UPDATES | February/March 2024

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY FINDING HER WAY BACK HOME

As a young girl, Candice found herself making wrong decisions at every turn. “I had my daughter Gillian when I was just 17. By 19, her father and I had split up and agreed on joint custody. I was moving from job to job and was back to my mom’s house often,” says Candice. “At the age of 20, I had my son, Caleb. By 25, I had been in and out of jail for traffic issues and a drug charge. As I bounced from job to job and made disappointing choices, I got married and had my third child, Elijah.”

“**Then rock bottom found me.
And so did Jesus.**”

In the midst of it all, God was moving in Candice’s life even though she didn’t recognize it. She says she received a “wake-up call” when the Department of Children and Families (DCF) knocked on her door. “Gillian was 8, Caleb was 5 and Elijah was just 3 months old. I told DCF that I knew something had to change. I agreed to grant temporary custody to my mom for the boys, while Gillian went to live with her father,” she explains.





A group of volunteers from Movement helped Candice meet her required number of Habitat service hours within weeks.

continued from front

"I felt such shame and guilt, but I still thought I could straighten it out by myself. That definitely did not work. Over the next four years, my husband and I divorced. I was doing drugs and could not keep a job due to partying. Then rock bottom found me, and so did Jesus."

In May of 2013, Candice sat in front of the hospital in labor with her fourth child, Angelica. She felt desperate and alone. "My boyfriend didn't stay with me. I knew where he'd rather be. So I called the compassionate OBGYN who had delivered Gillian, Caleb and Elijah," she says, "When his wife answered the phone, I was bluntly honest about my situation. She kindly said, 'He's on his way.' Then I called the kids' pediatrician and he came to the hospital as well. What a miracle. I said one simple prayer, 'Father, I give this child to you.' In my heart, I've always known His will is best."

When Candice's OBGYN arrived, he delivered Angelica and then also delivered some hard truths. "He definitely told me all about myself! I deserved it. Angelica was small but completely healthy. Thank You, Jesus," she says. "Then DCF came to the hospital room to say this child would also go with my mother. My mother said, 'Yes, but Candice needs to come also.' They approved. I have been sober since that day, and wholeheartedly seek Jesus to guide me in all things."

“With the opportunity to own our home, I can now pour all of myself into my children to lead them in life through Christ.”

Candice was required to attend Narcotics Anonymous meetings and found a Celebrate Recovery meeting at First Alliance (now Movement Church). She also started to attend Sunday service regularly and in 2017 became a member of the church. "By God's great grace, I was able to keep a job, pay my fines, get my license back, start technical college and be awarded full custody with Caleb, Elijah and Angelica within a year and a half! says Candice. "I completed technical school at the top of my class in automotive mechanics."

But she was still searching for stable, affordable housing so that she and her children could have a place of their own to call home. "I applied at the Punta Gorda Housing Authority (PGHA) and got approved for an apartment, but then immediately began working on meeting the qualifications to apply for a Habitat for Humanity home."

Finally, in September of last year, Candice got approved for the first phase of the Habitat qualification process. “The start of the Habitat process seemed overwhelming. There were 300 sweat equity hours required. The Habitat Volunteer Coordinator asked if I could join her at a local church to help solicit volunteer sign ups, which would count toward my hours needed. When she sent me the church address, I absolutely fell to my knees. The address was to my church! I love the reassurance that our Lord presents to us, letting us know we are loved beyond understanding.”

After that Sunday volunteer sign up, many at Movement have poured out their hearts and time in helping to complete the 300 required hours. The children and I could not be more grateful! With the church’s support we completed 300 hrs within mere weeks. We are in the final stages of the house process with expected closing this month!

The Lord continues to offer redemption for all the enemy has stolen from Candice and her children. “Up until now, I felt I was simply surviving each next day,” says Candice. “With the opportunity to own our home I can now pour all of myself into my children to lead them in life through Christ.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP OTHERS FIND HOME!

Since March 2021, people from Movement Church have given almost 900 service hours to Habitat for Humanity! This dedication to our community has helped people like Candice find safe, affordable housing.

If you’d like to be a part of how God is using Movement Church for families like Candice’s, here are a few ways you do that:

- **Assistance with the upcoming Giving Challenge on April 9th & 10th:** One easy way to help Habitat is by assisting during the upcoming Giving Challenge. The Giving Challenge is an exciting 24-hour online giving event that connects about 700 nonprofit organizations with passionate donors and community members to support diverse causes and create enduring impact in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte, and DeSoto counties. Habitat needs volunteers in their ReSale Stores that can help shoppers navigate the Giving Challenge app to **donate during these two days.** **Email Jill Symmonds at volunteers@charlottecountyhf.org for more info or to sign up.**
- **Construction Volunteers..** Help on the housing job sites is always urgently needed! No construction experience is necessary ... only willingness! **To sign up to help with a build, visit charlottecountyhf.org and click “Volunteer” from the navigation menu and then “Construction Volunteer” from the submenu.**
- **Office Help.** Can you answer phones and help with filing and other office tasks? This is a huge help for the Habitat staff, who depends on volunteers to keep the office running smoothly. **Email Jill Symmonds at volunteers@charlottecountyhf.org for more info or to sign up.**



GOOD NEWS SPREADS ACROSS SOUTHWEST FLORIDA



Our Impact Partner Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) brings the Gospel to our public elementary schools through the Good News Club (GNC) afterschool program. Movement Church has two GNC teams that reach the kids of Deep Creek and Peace River Elementary Schools each week. During this school year alone, GNC has reached **900 children**, with **146 making a decision to receive Christ** in our district chapter —CEF of SWFL!

Each week, teams from Movement Church present the Gospel to children in Charlotte County public schools.