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Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna appoints new head of Repair Program
Cara Middendorf encouraging individual donors to “pay it forward” by helping low-income homeowners with their house repairs

BEL AIR, Md. (February 22, 2021) -- Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna has a new Manager for its Repair Program, Cara Middendorf. Her first order of business will be to raise additional funds for the program by encouraging people who are grateful for their homes to pay it forward and help a neighbor in need. The Repair Program assists low-income homeowners in Harford and Cecil counties with critical home repairs, weatherization, and accessibility needs and modifications.

“Due to COVID-19, the Repair Program has been adversely affected in several different ways,” said Middendorf. “Programmatic and material costs have increased, lead time for ordering materials has increased, all impacting waiting times for people desperate for help. As costs have risen, so has our need for more funds to help our families in achieving a safe living environment. As grateful as we are for the grants we currently receive to support our program, there are more people needing help with costly repairs than the funds we have available to help them. We’re doing our best trying to serve as many people as we can. Everyone deserves to live in a warm, safe and stable home.”

Which is where the Lent Build fundraiser comes in. Lent Build follows a 40-day calendar (found on the Habitat Susquehanna website) which raises awareness and appreciation for all things concerning a house. For instance, on Day 1, a homeowner would set aside 25¢ for each year of having lived in their home. After 40 days, participants would send



in the daily pocket change they've collected and make a donation to Habitat Susquehanna's Repair Program.

"Whether or not you observe the Lenten season, this is a great way to set aside money that could help someone less fortunate than yourself. It's a fun activity that the whole family could do in the spirit of "paying it forward," or a project for students looking for a community service activity during the pandemic, or something a church group might want to contribute towards helping a neighbor in need," said Middendorf.

Middendorf is no stranger to Habitat Susquehanna; in fact, her ties to the nonprofit have been eight years in the making. Before taking on this new role, she was the Manager of the Aberdeen ReStore (a home improvement store whose proceeds help fund Habitat Susquehanna's mission). The connections don't stop there. Middendorf was previously a member of AmeriCorps — a domestic version of the Peace Corps — and served with Habitat Susquehanna for a year. Before that, Middendorf was a Habitat homeowner.

"I never imagined that I would be in the position to be able to give back to the community and serve the same organization that helped our family and so many others achieve homeownership," said Middendorf. "I derive a great deal of enjoyment and fulfillment helping the families in our local community, whether they are shopping at the Aberdeen ReStore, applying to buy a home through our Homeownership Program, or receiving help fixing or weatherizing their homes through our Repair Program."

Cara and her husband, Chris, first applied to Habitat Susquehanna's Homeownership program when they, along with their two-year-old daughter, were living together in her grandparents' house.

"We heard about an upcoming build partnership between Mountain Christian Church — our home church — and Habitat. Mutual friends and members of the congregation shared the information with my grandparents. We had been praying and hoping that an opportunity would arise, and we felt compelled to apply. With little else to lose, we



applied,” said Middendorf in her *Family Story* provided to Habitat Susquehanna during the Homeownership application process. (The Middendorfs sold their Habitat house in 2017 to buy a home closer to family.)

“Habitat’s main roots focus on building -- building from the ground up, building community, and building relationships,” said Middendorf. “My family and I received a hand up when we needed one. By staying involved with Habitat, as an AmeriCorps volunteer and then as a staff member, I was given the opportunity to give a hand up to others and help them build a better life.”

To date, the Repair Program has served 442 homeowners with 653 repair needs. The program receives funding from a variety of sources (which vary each year) such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA), The Maryland Agriculture Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Drescher Foundation, and, Video Lottery Terminal (VLT).

For more information on the Lent Build calendar and how to participate and help contribute towards the cost of repairs for low-income homeowners in the community, visit the Habitat Susquehanna website at: <https://habitatsusq.org/support-us/lent-giving/> or mail a Lent Build donation to the Repair Program at Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna, 205 S. Hays Street, Bel Air, MD 21014.

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About Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna, Inc.

Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna, Inc. is an ecumenical Christian housing organization devoted to building, renovating and repairing houses in partnership with the community in Cecil and Harford counties. Since its inception in 1993, Habitat Susquehanna has served over 700 families through its Homeownership, Repair and Financial Literacy programs. For more information, call 410-638-4434 (Harford County) or 410-398-3399 (Cecil County), or visit www.habitatsusq.org.