



## Executive Director, Karen Blandford, retires after more than nine years at Habitat Susquehanna

*Career in housing and community development spanned more than 40 years*

Karen started her housing and community development career while in college, working at a Fair Housing Center in Milwaukee, then doing a planning project on how to spend the brand-new Community Development Block Grant money in a low-income neighborhood back in her hometown in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The city then hired her to work in their new community and economic development programs.

When she left to become a commercial-industrial appraiser, she was a neighborhood activist in her free time, heading up a city-wide association of neighborhood associations.

She fell in love and moved to Baltimore and was hired by the City of Westminster to head their Public Housing Authority and community development efforts. She was also the second President of the local Community Action Agency.

In her 17 years in Westminster, she built homeless shelters, senior housing, an adult day care center, and an arts center, and redeveloped an acre in the center of town.

She served on the Governor's Advisory Board on Homelessness, and several local



After leaving Westminster, Karen worked as a consultant to Housing Initiative Partnership in Prince George's County and was a founding board member of the Maryland ABCD Network, which is now the Community Development Network, and served as its first staff. She helped to establish a state-wide network, and successfully lobbied for the Affordable Housing Land Trust legislation.

In December 2012, she became the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna. Since then, she has overseen thirty-five new homeowners, hundreds of repairs, a new financial coaching program, the opening of the Aberdeen ReStore, the establishment of an endowment fund, and a 50 percent increase in the budget.

Boards.

She was awarded the “Humanitarian of the Year” award, and several projects won notice of merit from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials.

She started housing rehab programs, self-sufficiency programs, and the Main Street program. She attracted approximately \$10 million of new investment.

Now, after a 43-year career in community development and affordable housing, she will begin her retirement (February 2<sup>nd</sup> ).

We are extremely grateful for the tremendous impact Karen has made for Habitat Susquehanna, and wish her all the best in her retirement!

