SIDEBAR: Katie York, Habitat Homeowner 8 years later

*From barista to Board member, Katie York’s journey of homeownership through Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna’s program included significant life changes and milestone achievements.*

This year marks Katie’s eighth anniversary as a Habitat homeowner. When she and her husband Dan first applied to be considered for the Homeownership program, they were working as a barista and gas station attendant, respectively, and, along with their baby daughter, were living with Dan’s relatives.

“The initial application process overall wasn’t difficult,” Katie said. “I started gathering the paperwork as soon as I got home, and put it all into a red binder with tabs to make sure it was as easy as possible for whoever reviewed it to see that all the paperwork was there. If we were denied, it sure wasn’t going to be due to missing paperwork!”

Katie was so committed to the possibility of owning a home that she volunteered at any available Habitat build site even before receiving news that their application for homeownership had been approved. (Homebuyers are required to contribute at least 250 sweat equity hours and work alongside volunteers on the construction of their -- or another’s -- Habitat home.) Once approved, the couple, with the help of family and friends, quickly accrued the necessary sweat equity hours.

“We worked on a few different sites besides our own,” said Katie, “and it was great to meet so many people. There were several “core” volunteers who worked with Habitat on a consistent basis and showed me how to use lots of different tools.”

She joined Habitat Susquehanna’s Board of Directors and became an active member for several years. In 2017, her husband Dan earned his associate’s degree and started working in the IT department at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) where Katie also worked.

It was around that time that fellow Board member John Moore built Aberdeen’s first Little Free Library (LFL) as part of Habitat Susquehanna’s A Brush With Kindness efforts in the Swan Meadows neighborhood where Katie and her family live.

“I have wanted to have a Little Free Library since we moved into our home,” Katie said of the free book-sharing box. She volunteered to be the LFL’s steward and, since then, has been responsible for keeping the library stocked with books while also maintaining its social media platforms. Donated books for the LFL come from various sources including the Aberdeen ReStore.

“Moving here, we’ve been able to get more involved with the community,” said Katie. “Now that my daughter is older, we’re a member of 4-H; we’re a member of the Girl Scouts; she goes to the local Girls and Boys Club; we’ve been able to do some community clean-ups with the City of Aberdeen; and, through that we’ve met the Mayor of Aberdeen.”

Their daughter just completed the fourth grade at Halls Cross Roads Elementary where she is an honor roll student.

“This house gives her the stability to know that this is her personal space, that she has a connection to the community, that this is a place that she can come home to, a place that’s not going to change next week or next month just because of some temporary living situation, no matter how good it is,” said Katie.

She recently accepted a full-time position as a program coordinator at the CCBC Essex Campus.

“When I look at my house now,” she continued, “I still see the people that helped build it. So many people worked on it before I found out it was ours, and after we accepted it, so many more assisted us. We truly could not have done it without dozens of people working behind the scenes and in the home.”

Katie has rejoined the Board to serve a new term.