



Volunteering 101

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WELCOME!

To meet our goal of ending substandard housing, Habitat depends on the energy and time of volunteers for home construction, office support, committee work, and retail help. We welcome volunteers of all skill levels and interests into our Habitat family. The best value and the most powerful contribution come from volunteers who want to make a difference in the community. [top](#)

[HABITAT OVERVIEW](#) [top](#)

[Habitat International](#)

- **Habitat for Humanity International** is a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing ministry founded in **1976** by **Millard and Linda Fuller**. We are dedicated to **eliminating poverty housing and homelessness** worldwide and **making decent shelter a matter of conscience and action**.
- Habitat invites **people of all backgrounds, races and religions** to build houses together in partnership with families in need.
- Idea born in Georgia (1969) to help sharecropper families. Built concrete block house purchased with **no interest, no profit 20- 30 year loans**.



- **1976** founded **Habitat for Humanity International** after success in Georgia and Zaire, Africa (now the Democratic Republic of Congo).
- In 1984, **Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter** took their first work trip with Habitat for Humanity. This brought national visibility and sparked an interest in Habitat for Humanity across the nation.
- Currently over **2,250 U.S. affiliates** and an additional **550 international affiliates in over 100 countries**.
- Through volunteer labor and tax-deductible donations of money and materials, Habitat **builds and renovates simple, decent houses** in partnership with homeowner families.
- Habitat houses are sold to partner families at **no profit, financed with affordable, no-interest 20 - 30 year loans**. The homeowners' monthly mortgage payments go into a revolving **Fund for Humanity** that is used to build more houses.
- All affiliates are asked to **tithe** - to give **10 percent** of their unrestricted contributions to fund the construction of houses in other nations.
- Every **24 minutes**, a Habitat **house is finished** somewhere in the world.
- Since **1976**, Habitat has built over **300,000 houses** in over **100 countries**; providing over **1 million people** in more than 3,000 communities with simple, decent affordable housing.
- **Typical house information:**
 - Houses are between **900 and 1200 square ft**.
 - Houses generally come with **1 - 1 ½ bathrooms**.
 - Houses may come in **many sizes and designs** - 1 or 2 story, single family, duplex, town houses.
 - Families have limited choices; **choices** usually include counter top color/design, vinyl color/design, and when possible, exterior color.
 - The **Whirlpool Corporation donates refrigerators and stoves** to Habitat for Humanity houses in the U.S. Local affiliates **purchase dishwashers, washers and dryers at cost**. [top](#)

HFH SEATTLE/KING COUNTY OVERVIEW [top](#)

- Our affiliate **operates under** the same guiding **principles of partnership** established by Habitat International.
- The **Seattle affiliate** was founded in **1986** - first house, a renovation, was completed in **1987**. The Seattle and South King County affiliates **merged** in **2003**.
- We have completed **200** houses in our service area.
- Have **built** houses in Shoreline, the Central District of Seattle, First Hill, Rainier Valley, South Park, West Seattle, White Center, Tukwila, Des Moines, Renton, Federal Way, Kent, Auburn and unincorporated King County. [top](#)
- We are currently building in the Rainier Valley, Renton, Kent and Federal Way.

HABITAT EAST KING COUNTY [top](#)

- Our affiliate **operates under** the same guiding **principles of partnership** established by Habitat International.
- Since its founding by Bob and Shirley Patterson in 1988, this affiliate has built over **115** homes.
- We have built in the cities of Bellevue, Carnation, Issaquah, Kirkland, Newcastle, Redmond, Sammamish, and Snoqualmie.



- We are currently building in Renton and Issaquah.
- Our service area is from Renton to Bothell and Woodinville, and east of Seattle including Mercer Island to North Bend. [top](#)

FAMILY SELECTION OVERVIEW [top](#)

- Habitat homebuyers are partners in building houses and community. **Habitat is not a giveaway program.**
- **Basic Criteria** for becoming a partner family:
 - **Need - Living in substandard housing.** 25% - 60% of median income for King County (example: a family of 4 earning \$19,475 - \$38,950). This income level precludes families from obtaining traditional mortgages and lessens the chance for them to own a house
 - **Ability to repay** - Must be able to repay a 20 to 30 year loan. Habitat is a hand up, not a hand out! Monthly mortgage payments are determined **not to exceed 30% of a family's income**, usually \$550 - \$750 per month. Monthly mortgage payments are recycled through a revolving **Fund for Humanity** to build more houses.
 - **Willingness to partner** - Families help build their house and their neighbors' houses along with staff, volunteers and fellow homeowners. **"Sweat equity"**. Families with one adult must provide **250 hours** of sweat equity and families with 2 or more adults must provide at least **500 hours** of sweat equity. The adult members of the partner families also attend trainings in construction, home and landscape maintenance, budgeting, being good neighbors, etc. [top](#)

Volunteer Positions [top](#)

Habitat for Humanity Policies: [top](#)

In order to ensure the safety, value of experience, and effectiveness of all of our volunteers we practice the following policies:

- All volunteer shifts must be coordinated with Habitat for Humanity office staff and volunteers must not show up on site unscheduled. Due to the nature of the work and safety concerns, group size must not exceed that which is scheduled. (i.e., a group scheduled to bring 7 volunteers may bring only 7 volunteers and an individual volunteer may not bring additional people with them without prior coordination with Habitat office staff). Habitat for Humanity Seattle/South King County and East King County sites are smoke free and alcohol free environments.
- No one under 16 years of age is allowed on the job site for any reason.
- All volunteers under age 18 must have a minor waiver signed by a parent or legal guardian.
- All children 16-17 years of age must have an adult chaperone with them on the work site.
- All group leaders are responsible for ensuring that all members of their group have read the [Work Crew Safety](#) guidelines, have completed the volunteer application and



signed the liability waiver before arriving at the job site. Group leaders must also provide all group members with directions to the site and expectations.

- All volunteers must fill out a volunteer application, read [the safety guidelines](#) and sign a waiver. If not yet complete, this paperwork will be completed on site before your volunteer shift begins.
- If you wish to have your volunteer hours documented for **Community Service** or **Court Appointed** requirements, you must contact the Individual Volunteer Coordinator **PRIOR** to volunteering.

Habitat SKC
Martha Martin
mmartin@seattle-habitat.org
206.292.5240 x 112

Habitat EKC
Andy Varyu
andyv@habitatekc.org
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Thank You, and We'll See You On Site! [top](#)

OPPORTUNITIES [top](#)

From the very beginning, volunteers have always been the foundation of Habitat. There are a number of ways to donate your time and talent to Habitat. Whether you are skilled in construction or have other talents to share, we need you! There is **no experience necessary** to volunteer with construction.

- **Construction Site:** It takes over **2,600 labor hours** to build one Habitat house and involves over 500 volunteers from start to finish. **90% of our labor is by volunteers**, saving us more than **\$48,000** in labor costs. Volunteer labor and expertise help keep our costs low. We encourage individuals and groups to come out and help us build. It's a great team building experience for you and it helps us build homes in partnership with families at an affordable price. Space availability at the construction sites is limited. **There is more flexibility to work during the week than on Saturdays.**

Committees: There are a number of committees supporting Habitat's work in the community. There is something for everyone, regardless of your interest and skill set. Since Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit organization, we rely on a very minimal staff to manage our affordable homeownership program. Therefore we are reliant on the expertise of volunteers willing to help in many areas. Committees include family selection, family resources and training, faith relations, public relations, site acquisition, development, youth and fundraising among others. Habitat EKC also has opportunities to serve on an Advisory Board.

Office: Office volunteers are greatly appreciated. There is always a need for people to answer phones, perform administrative tasks and help keep our offices running smoothly. Additionally, there are project related functions that involve supporting a specific department or committee, or helping with a special event or periodic mailing.

Family Support/Advocacy/Selection: Teams working with Habitat partner families help select and support families through the entire process from pre to post homeownership. Each affiliate has a slightly different program but both are



invested in building successful homeownership opportunities in partnership with Habitat homebuyers.

Other Opportunities to consider

- Construction Crew leads
- Land acquisition
- Landscape/garden expertise
- Providing snacks or lunch at job sites
- Fundraising events
- Website/Electronic media
- Home Warranty and Repair
- Youth teams
- Habitat Stores

In short, without volunteers we wouldn't be able to build affordable homes. So roll up your sleeves and come join us either individually or as part of a group--you'll make a lasting contribution to your community when you do! [top](#)

Volunteer Sites [top](#)

Please click on the affiliate below to learn more about each location and get complete directions. Please note that parking is limited at most sites, so carpooling is a great idea.

Habitat Seattle/South King County

- Rainier Vista (South Seattle)
- Kent
- Westway (Federal Way)
- White Center
- Habitat Store
- Habitat Office (Renton)

Habitat East King County

- Magnolia Village (Issaquah Highlands)
- La Fortuna (Renton)
- Habitat Office (Redmond)

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TYPICAL CONSTRUCTION DAY [top](#)

There are experienced staff, volunteers and AmeriCorps members to help lead volunteers through daily activities. All are welcome, no construction experience necessary to volunteer.

Schedule

- 8:45 am Sign-in and complete all necessary paperwork
- 9:00 am Safety briefing, construction site orientation and work assignments.
- 9: 15 am Work on construction site supervised by site staff and crew leads.
- 12:00 pm Lunch will be provided with a Habitat Q&A session
- 1:00 pm Afternoon shift begins working supervised by staff and crew leads. (at Habitat SKC sites only)



4:00 pm Clean up and sign out.

Remember to dress appropriately for the construction site: Wear sturdy shoes, preferably boots. No sandals. Dress in layered, comfortable work clothes that may get dirty. Dress for all weather conditions. We work rain or shine. Please bring work gloves and a refillable water bottle.

Enjoy your experience! [top](#)

Construction FAQ's

What if the weather is really bad?

If construction sites are closed due to inclement weather and/or road conditions you will be notified by a Habitat staff member via telephone, so please be sure to include your number when you register with the Build-a-Thon. If you are volunteering with a group, the group leader will be contacted. You may also call the Habitat SKC Office at 206.292.5240 x 112 or the Habitat EKC Office at 425.869.6007 ext 242 for site status updates. Obviously conditions can vary depending on where you live. Please volunteer at your own discretion and just leave us a message if you need to cancel. Your safety is our number one priority.

How will I know what to do?

The Site supervisor will present the tasks for the day and ask for volunteers for each task. Your site supervisor and/or Team Leader will ensure that you have the necessary materials and supervision to accomplish the task.

What if I don't know how to do my assignment?

The Supervisors and Team Leaders on site will teach the correct construction method and answer any questions that you may have.

What if that particular assignment or task is something I am not able to do or am fearful of?

Please feel free to speak up. We do not want you to attempt any task that you find uncomfortable, such as working on scaffolding or using power tools. We also don't want you doing something that could aggravate an injury, such as lifting heavy objects. Let your Team Leader or the Site Supervisor know about your limitations and we can accommodate them.

What to Wear and Bring

What should I wear?

- Sturdy shoes, preferably boots
- Comfortable clothes that may get dirty
- Layers for all weather possibilities
- Rain jacket



Should I bring any tools?

We can provide tools for all volunteers unless otherwise specified. You may bring your own tools if you wish; some people are happier with their own tools. Please do not bring power tools. Please clearly mark any of your personal tools. We suggest bringing:

- Tape measure (25ft)
- Retractable utility knife
- 16 or 20 oz. hammer
- Marking pencil
- Work gloves
- Water bottle

We have hardhats, ear protection and safety glasses available onsite, but you may be more comfortable bringing your own.

What about Lunch?

Lunch will be provided at the Build-a-Thon. On a non-event construction day volunteers are asked to bring their own lunch. [top](#)

SAFETY [top](#)

OVERVIEW

- Please **read Work Crew Safety guidelines** before signing waiver and re-read before first day on site.
- **3 principles of safety**
 - 1) The construction site can be a dangerous place. **Be aware of your surroundings** at all times.
 - 2) **Work within your comfort zone.** Even though working at a Habitat for Humanity construction site is about doing something new, inform the site supervisor/crew lead if you feel uncomfortable with the assigned task. You could put yourself and others in danger.
 - 3) **Be patient** with yourself, with others, and with our staff. It is important for your safety and productivity.
- **Use protective devices** on site - hard hats, eye protection, ear protection and dust masks when needed. Always know where the **First Aid Kit** is located.
- **If you** are tired take a break, if you are thirsty stop for water, if you are uncomfortable with the task you are given, ask your leader for a new task.

THANK YOU! HAVE FUN!



Work Safety Guidelines [top](#)

INTRODUCTION

Construction sites can be extremely dangerous. Safety is everyone's concern and is always an important consideration at any construction site. Everyone must pay particular attention to safety. Be aware of the safety of others as well as your own. An observer can often see danger better than the person involved in the project. Be cautious at all times and ask questions. Do not proceed with a task if you are uncertain as to how it is done or if you are unable to do it.

Safety is based on knowledge, skill and an attitude of care and concern. Supervisors should instruct each volunteer on the correct and proper procedures for performing a task. Also, volunteers should be made aware of the potential hazards and how hazards can be avoided.

GUIDELINES FOR A SAFE ATTITUDE

- Think before you perform your work or task.
- If you are uncertain how to perform a task or how to operate a power tool, ask a Site Supervisor.
- Concentrate on your task and eliminate distractions.
- Know the location of the First Aid kit and how to get emergency help.
- Inspect all power tools, hand tools, ladders and scaffolding on a daily basis.
- Advise your Site Supervisor immediately of unsafe conditions or hazards.

PROPER SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Proper clothing is as essential to safety as the proper selection and use of tools. Wear clothes and gloves that are appropriate for the work and weather conditions. Loose clothing can be dangerous when using power tools.

Volunteers should wear **substantial footwear** at all times when on a construction site. No sandals, flip flops, or high heels.

Hard hats are to be worn on job sites at all times.

Protective glasses will be available to volunteers when required. A volunteer must wear protective glasses any time he/she is operating a power tool or otherwise instructed by a supervisor.

Each volunteer must wear a **dust mask** when installing insulation, sanding or when instructed by a supervisor. **Earplugs** must be worn when using a power tool for a prolonged period of time or when instructed by a supervisor.

Hard hats, protective glasses, dust masks and earplugs are available on construction sites.

POWER TOOLS AND OTHER ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

A supervisor will instruct volunteers on the proper use of power tools. The volunteer will use the power tool in the presence of the supervisor until otherwise instructed.

- Never lower or carry a power tool by its cord.



- Clean tools daily. Power tools should be checked for defective switches, cords, plugs and proper grounding. Defective tools should not be used and should be reported to the supervisor *or* labeled and promptly brought to the tool room for repair.

To avoid electrical shock the following rules should be followed:

- Electric power tools should have a three-pronged plug.
- Extension cords should not have frayed insulation, be fastened with staples, hung from nails or suspended from wires.
- All temporary lights must be equipped with non-conductive guards.

HAND TOOLS

- Always select the correct type and size of tool for your work. Also, be sure the tool is sharp and properly adjusted.
- Guard against using any tool if the handle is loose or in poor condition.
- Dull tools are hazardous to use because excessive force must be used to make them cut. Oil or dirt on a tool may cause it to slip and cause an injury.
- When using tools, hold them correctly. Most edge tools should be held in both hands with the cutting action away from you.
- Avoid using your hand or fingers as a guide to start a cut.

HANDLE AND CARRY TOOLS WITH CARE.

- Keep edged and pointed tools turned downward.
- Carry only a few tools at a time unless they are mounted in a special holder or carried in a tool belt.
- Everyone working with a hammer should wear a hammer loop or tool belt. When not in use, the hammer should be kept in the loop or belt.
- Do not carry sharp tools in your pockets. When not in use tools should be kept in special boxes, chests or cabinets.

SAWS

- Don't bend the blade of any saw. When cutting long panels, the blade may bend and the saw may catch and kick back towards the operator. Use small wood wedges or shim shingles to spread the saw cut as you go.
- Keep the blade guard working. A spring blade guard can often become bent and won't slide quickly, or the spring can become stretched so the return is slow. Repair any damage to the guard as soon as it happens and **never** tie the guard back out of the way.
- Properly support what you are working on. Never attempt to cut something that could tilt or fall and cause the saw to slip.

LADDERS

- Inspect a ladder before you use it. If the ladder is unsafe, don't use it. Look for wear and tear, loose rungs and other defects.



- **Use a ladder that will reach the work.** An extension ladder should reach three feet above the work level. If both of your shoulders are extended outside the ladder width while you are working you are reaching too far. When using an extension ladder use the four to one rule: for every four feet of height move the bottom of the ladder one foot away from the wall.
- Place your ladder on solid footing. If there is a danger of the ladder moving while you work, tie it down. If there is a danger that the ladder will be hit, barricade it.
- Never use an aluminum ladder in the vicinity of electrical lines or while doing electrical work. Never use a ladder outdoors during inclement weather or on windy days.
- Carry tools and materials in proper carrying devices. Keep your hands free for support. When climbing up a ladder always face the ladder.
- Step Ladders: Never stand on top or next to top rung of a stepladder. Check that all four legs are on solid footing and that the latch is in place.

SCAFFOLDING

All scaffolding that is elevated 4 feet or more must be equipped with a safety railing. A scaffold must be designed to support four times the weight of a person and the materials resting on it. Scaffolding components that are not designed to be compatible should not be mixed.

Inspect all scaffolding each day before using it. Never use damaged or defective equipment. Avoid rusted parts as their strength is unknown. When erecting scaffolding, provide adequate sills for the scaffold posts, and use base plates. Use adjusting screws and not blocks when on an uneven grade. Make sure you plumb and level scaffolding, and do not force end braces when constructing the scaffolding.

Defective planking causes many scaffolding accidents. Use only properly graded and inspected lumber for planking. Inspect planking daily for splits and knots and remove defective or damaged planking.

CLEAN WORK SITE

A clean work place is a safe work place. This refers to the neatness and good order of the construction site. Maintaining a clean work place contributes to the productivity of the construction site and is important in preventing accidents.

- Place building materials and supplies in an orderly manner to allow adequate aisles and walkways.
- Clean up all rubbish and scrap materials on a daily basis.
- Do not permit blocks of wood, nails, bolts, empty cans, pipe, wire or other materials to accumulate on the work site. They interfere with work and may constitute a hazard.
- Keep tools and equipment that are not being used in chests, panels or toolboxes. Never leave a work site unless all tools and materials have been properly secured.

POISONS AND TOXIC SUBSTANCES



Poisons and toxic substances that are most often found on a work site are asbestos, lead oxides, animal feces and solvents. Special care should be taken when you come in contact with any of these substances or any unfamiliar substance.

If you discover asbestos fiber being used as pipe, boiler or heating duct insulation, contact your supervisor immediately. Do not attempt to remove the asbestos fiber on your own.

Scraping exterior woodwork, demolishing lead painted walls and stripping old millwork are the principal ways that volunteers can be exposed to lead chips, dust and particles. Contact your supervisor **immediately** if you discover any lead painted surfaces. **Masks are the best protection** against breathing in harmful particles.

THIS IS A CONSTRUCTION SITE. YOU WILL BE OUTSIDE ALL DAY IN THE ELEMENTS AND WITHOUT COVER. PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

PORT-A-POTTIES WILL BE ONSITE FOR YOUR USE. [top](#)



WAIVER OF LIABILITY [top](#)

To be read and signed by all persons intending to do volunteer work for Habitat for Humanity of Seattle/South King County or Habitat for Humanity of East King County.

I, for myself and on behalf of my heirs, successors, and representatives, do hereby knowingly and voluntarily waive any and all of my rights and claims to hold Habitat for Humanity of Seattle/South King County and East King County liable for any personal injury, property damage, and/or economic and non-economic losses which I may suffer. I also hereby knowingly and voluntarily waive any and all rights and claims that my dependents or their heirs, successors, and representatives may have to hold Habitat for Humanity of Seattle/South King County and East King County liable for any personal injury, property damage, and/or economic and non-economic losses which such dependents may suffer. I represent that I am duly authorized to execute and deliver this Waiver for myself and for the above-mentioned people.

I understand the effect of this waiver and recognize my right to seek legal counsel before signing.

Photo Release: Volunteer does hereby grant and convey unto Habitat all right, title, and interest in any and all photographic images and video or audio recordings made by Habitat during the volunteer’s activities with Habitat, including, but not limited to, any royalties, proceeds, or other benefits derives from such photographs or recordings

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the **Habitat for Humanity Work Crew Safety Guidelines**; that I have read it and reviewed it and that I understand its contents.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Habitat for Humanity of Seattle/South King County/East King County is an equal Opportunity housing agency and employer. It is our policy that employment and housing opportunities be made without discrimination regarding gender, race, color, creed, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or disability.

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