



# VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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## The Most Important Place

Lora Pierce, Executive Director  
Habitat for Humanity of West Virginia

Lora Pierce assumed the role of the first executive director of Habitat for Humanity of West Virginia in April 2005. A West Virginian, Ms. Pierce is an advocate for the local Habitat affiliates and families across the state. This state support organization provides training and technical support, resource development, advocacy and awareness and promotes the work of affiliates' efforts to local, statewide and national audiences.

Her position takes her all across the state, visiting affiliates and speaking to local communities about the need for safe, decent, affordable homes and the work being done by Habitat for Humanity to address this need.

Before joining Habitat for Humanity, Ms. Pierce worked for the local health department for 12 years. She is a 2006 graduate of West Virginia State University with a bachelor's degree in business administration. She is the vice chair of the West Virginia Interagency Housing Council, serves on the board of directors for Community Works in West Virginia, and is a regular volunteer at her grandson's school.

**Home.** It is where we live, laugh, learn, love and play. It establishes, like nothing else, our sense of well-being and freedom in the world. It is a safe haven. It offers security and happiness. It can define who we are, and who we want to become. It is the most important place. It is *home*.

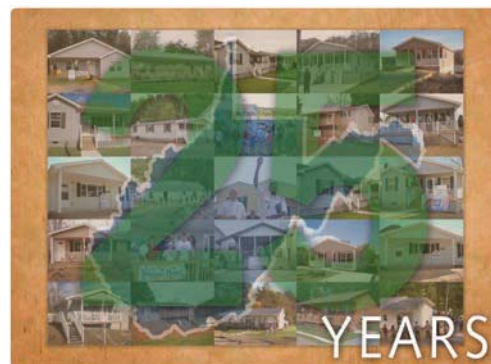
### The Hard Facts

According to the United Nations, nearly 2 billion people around the world live in slum housing and over 100 million are homeless. In the United States alone, 95 million people have housing problems.

In West Virginia, there are many who do not have a safe, decent place to call home. In January 2011, the West Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness counted 2,209 adults and 1,833 household units as homeless. The National Center on Family Homelessness ranks West Virginia thirty-fifth in the nation, with 8,305 children reported as homeless. While West Virginia reports one of the highest homeownership rates in the country, those of us who live here know that many families are living in sub-standard conditions. Thousands of families are living in homes without heat, with inadequate indoor plumbing, structural problems, and in overcrowded conditions. The high cost of housing leaves low-income families little money for repairs and basic necessities like food, clothing or health care.

### Habitat for Humanity International

Habitat for Humanity International is a nonprofit, Christian housing ministry founded in 1976 by Millard Fuller and his wife, Linda, with a belief that every man, woman and child should have a safe, decent and affordable place to live. Our Mission is to eliminate poverty housing



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY CELEBRATES 25 YEARS IN WEST VIRGINIA

and homelessness from the world and to make decent shelter a matter of conscience and action.

### Habitat for Humanity in West Virginia

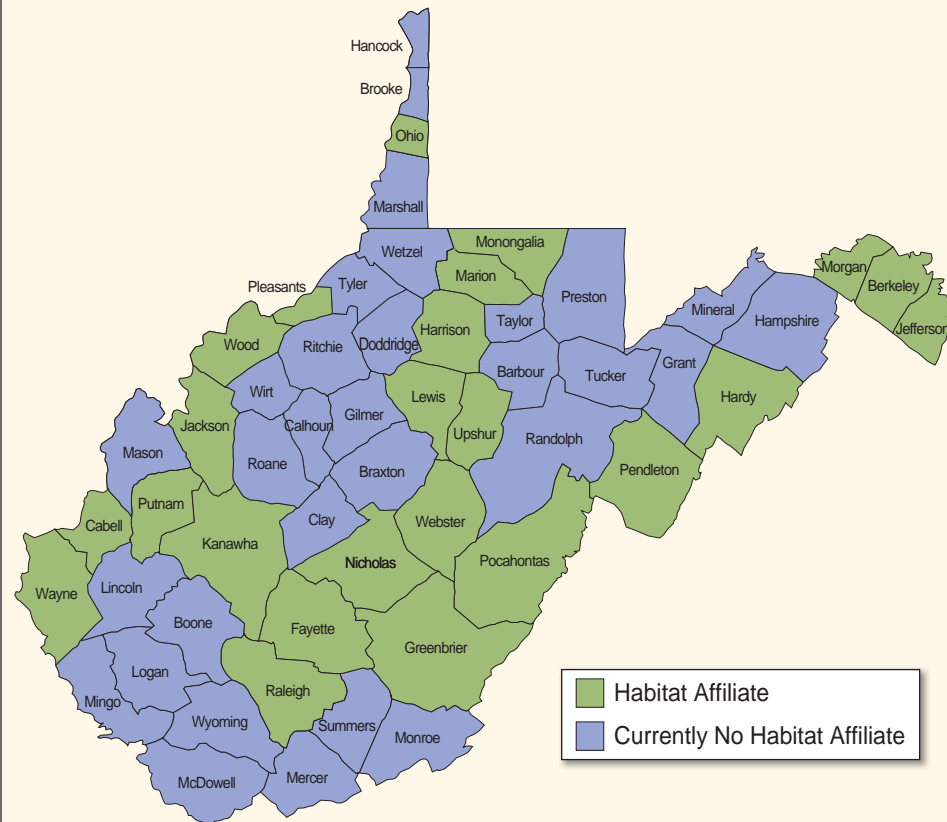
Habitat for Humanity has 18 local affiliates serving 25 counties in West Virginia and builds 40 to 45 new homes each year. The first affiliate was established in 1987 in Preston County, and the first family to move into that Habitat house still resides in their home, 25 years later. This year, we will celebrate 25 years of building decent and affordable houses with deserving West Virginia families and reach an important milestone: the completion of our 700th West Virginia Habitat home!

### The People We Serve – Setting The Record Straight

Habitat for Humanity does not give houses to poor people. It is a “hand up,” not a “hand out.” Homeowners are selected based on their **need** for housing, their **ability to repay** a mortgage and their **willingness to work in partnership** with Habitat. In addition to a down payment and the monthly mortgage payments, applicants must attend homebuyer education classes, and are required to invest hundreds of hours of their own labor – “sweat equity” – into building the houses of others as well as their own Habitat house. They receive an interest-free loan, and pay for their homes the same way everyone else does, including taxes and insurance.



## West Virginia Affiliate Map



Habitat serves families earning below 60 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). In the areas in West Virginia served by Habitat, that amount ranges from \$16,000 in Webster County to \$39,000 in Jefferson County. The reason families can afford to purchase a home through Habitat is because we use donated land and materials, volunteer workers, and we charge no interest. Construction is financed by new homeowners' house payments, donations, sponsorships, and money earned through fund-raising activities.

### Our Success

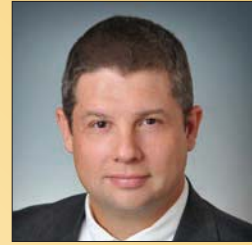
Habitat for Humanity International recently celebrated its 500,000th Habitat home and is currently the eighth largest builder *in the world*. In fiscal year 2010, Habitat helped 74,960 families secure decent, affordable housing. That is not just 74,960 roofs. It is dignity and pride. It is improved health conditions. It is a more successful school and work environment. It is increased consumer spending and increased tax revenues. That number is a record for Habitat, but it is only a beginning. Faith, hard work,

dedication and thousands of supporters continue to keep Habitat for Humanity on its successful course of being a true world leader in addressing the issues of poverty housing.

### Celebrating our Twenty-Fifth Anniversary in 2012!

Anyone can do the math. We're never going to eliminate poverty housing without help. This year, Habitat for Humanity West Virginia is partnering with affiliates throughout our state to promote and support the building of 25 special "Anniversary" Habitat homes. Many exciting events will be happening this year, including an on-line raffle for a 2012 Toyota Corolla or \$10,000 cash! Please visit our website at [www.habitatwv.org](http://www.habitatwv.org) for all of the ways that you can help to build the most important place in West Virginia: Home! ♡

## CONTRIBUTING TO THE VITALITY OF OUR COMMUNITIES



**Justin M. Harrison**  
Charleston, WV

Justin is vice president of the board of directors of Habitat for Humanity of West Virginia, whose vision is to provide safe, decent, affordable homes for all West Virginians. He was a member of the Class of 2009 of Leadership Kanawha Valley.



**Paul L. Hicks**  
Parkersburg, WV

Paul is an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church, USA, West Virginia Diocese. He is the president of the Mid-Ohio Valley Estate Planning Council and a member of the Parkersburg Area Community Foundation. He also is a member of the Good Samaritan Clinic.