

## WEEK SEVEN



Habitat for Humanity International is a nonprofit, nondenominational Christian housing organization. It welcomes all people to join them as they build simple, decent, affordable, houses in partnership with those in need of adequate shelter. Since 1976, Habitat has built more than 100,000 houses in more than 80 countries, including some 30,000 houses across the United States.

### Health, Tranquility: The Difference of a Decent House

The rich natural landscape of Guatemala, with its volcanic peaks, jungles and coast, belies a housing deficit of about 1.5 million units. And though its efforts may seem small against the need, Habitat has made significant inroads in 23 years; the 10,000th house in Guatemala was dedicated last November, with 15,000 more scheduled to be completed by 2005.



Photo by Denise Muschell

“It was a very small one-bedroom shack,” Ramos says. “I slept with my parents and my three brothers. The roof was made of shingles, the walls were decomposed wood planks nailed together; [there was a] dirt floor, and every time it rained, water dripped all over the house. It was very far from school, and we did not have running water.”

When the family moved into their Habitat house, the changes in their lives went beyond physical comfort, she says.

“It has changed my life. Mom does not get sick anymore due to humidity problems. If we go somewhere, we can leave the house by itself peacefully knowing that thieves cannot break in. We have separate bedrooms. My brother and I now live closer to school. Everything is wonderful.

“We now lead a tranquil life. We have privacy, enough space and security. For me, it is a huge castle, and I am the princess.”

—with Alfredo Kiehnle in Guatemala.

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## Thought for the Day

**Sunday:** Currently there are some 1.2 billion people worldwide experiencing "income poverty," meaning they live on the equivalent of less than \$1 per day.

**Monday:** To afford the median fair-market price of a two-bedroom rental unit in the U.S., a worker would have to earn a wage of \$12.47 per hour, 233 percent of the current federal minimum wage of \$5.35 per hour

**Tuesday:** In Latin America, households need 5.4 times their annual income to buy a house. In Africa, they need an average of 12.5 times their annual income.

**Wednesday:** More than two million housing units in the U.S. have "severe physical problems." This includes 1.4 million with severe plumbing problems, and 1.6 million with one or more rooms without electrical outlets.

**Thursday:** In cities of the developing world, one out of every four households lives in poverty. Forty percent of African urban households are living below the locally defined poverty line.

**Friday:** In 1999, it cost an average of \$580 per month to rent a house. For 14.8 million U.S. households that make \$10,000 or less per year, a year's rent is about 70 percent of their annual income

**Saturday:** In the developing world, 29 percent of cities have areas considered as "inaccessible" or "dangerous" to the police. In Latin America and the Caribbean, this figure is 48 percent.

## Getting Involved

### To find out how

- ◆ log onto: [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org)
- ◆ Call Habitat at: **1-800-HABITAT (1-800-422-4828)**
- ◆ Or write: **Habitat for Humanity International  
121 Habitat Street,  
Americus, GA, 31709**

### Or contact your local chapter:

#### **York HFH**

York, PA 17405-0826  
Phone: (717)854-6168  
Fax: (717)854-1970

#### **HFH of Chester County**

Coatesville, PA 19320-0218  
Phone: (610)384-7993  
Fax: (610)384-4976

#### **Lancaster Area HFH**

Lancaster, PA 17603  
Phone: (717)392-8836  
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