



## Sugar Blush Bakery: A Delicious Business and Loving Ministry Started in a Habitat Home

Photo by Jay Westcott, "Lynchburg Baker Whips up Treats for Community – for Free."  
The News & Advance, 11 June 2018.

Every Habitat home is a hand-up, not a hand-out. Families put in hundreds of hours of sweat equity to help build their homes and buy them at an affordable price. It is meant to be a launching pad to further the success of the family. For the Gerling Family, their home was the launching pad of Sugar Blush Bakery!

If you start asking around Lynchburg for the best cakes in town, you will definitely hear about Sugar Blush Bakery, and its owner Gabrielle Gerling. Gabrielle is a self-taught baker and cake decorator, whose success and popularity began in 2018 when she started giving away cakes for free. Since then Sugar Blush Bakery has exploded onto the baking scene in Central Virginia! What makes Gabrielle's story so amazing is not simply how wonderful her cakes are, but the journey she and her family took to get here – and it started with a Habitat home.

Just seven years ago, Gabrielle, her husband Stephen, and their four children were living in a small three-bedroom apartment with a mold issue. Stephen was working full-time, while Gabrielle took care of their children, all of who were under five years old. Gabrielle remembers that time, "Stephen was the only one working. So it was really difficult just to get by because we had our children back to back. We had four kids under five. That time was insane, just insane."

Then in 2014, they were approved to be Habitat homeowners and things began to change for the better. The Gerlings put in hundreds of sweat equity hours leading up to their dedication day. Gabrielle still remembers it. "We just gave thanks to God and everything He did, then we went in. And I'm telling you, it was just like a dream. So beautiful. It's such a huge blessing!"

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Our Next Homeowner:

## Renita Jackson

Renita emanates joy, with a huge smile and gracious attitude. She is a true Lynchburg native, born and raised in the Hill City. She has one grown daughter and two grandchildren and has worked full-time at Westminster Canterbury for twenty years.

Renita knows how unstable affordable housing in Lynchburg is. Twice in recent years, the houses

which she was renting were sold, and she was forced to relocate. After the last time this happened, she says she began to lose hope and get discouraged. "It was just like a breaking point. I mean are you kidding me? You never know when landlords might just put their house up for sale."

She now lives in a one-bedroom, basement apartment but says, "The cost of renting here in Lynchburg is outrageous. I had to get a part-time job in addition to my full-time job, just to make ends meet... just to survive." Renita is not alone in this. Thousands of families in Lynchburg experience the stress, depression, and hopelessness created by housing instability caused by increasing housing costs, frequent moves, and the threat of eviction or foreclosure. But through the help and support of friends like you, Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity is working to end this problem and give peace and security to these local families.

Desperate for change, Renita applied to become a Habitat homeowner. When she stopped by the office to give Greg, the Director of Family Services, an additional piece of paperwork, he told her she had been approved. She was ecstatic! She recalls, "I was jumping up and down there in the office as soon as he told me the good news. Then, I ran to my sister's job, told her the good news, and we began jumping up and down there. She was so happy for me. That day was a blessing!"

The construction on Renita's home will begin in July, but she has already put in over 150 hours of sweat equity on other Habitat homes and in the ReStore. She is looking forward to building her home, a place where her grandchildren can play safely, where she can host family get-togethers, and where she can have peace in knowing she has housing security.



Renita standing on the lot on Hillview Street, where her home will be built.

## Foundation Builders - Monthly Giving

Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity can only help local families with the financial support of friends like you. One of the simplest and most impactful ways for our donors to support us is to become a Foundation Builder, a monthly giving partner, through our secure online donation portal. By selecting "Monthly" in the donation section, you can help build homes, communities, and hope through an easy, automated monthly gift. Your contribution will be automatically charged to your debit or credit card each month, and you may change or cancel your gift at any time. Please consider becoming a Foundation Builder. For more information, go to [www.lynchburghabitat.org/foundationbuilders](http://www.lynchburghabitat.org/foundationbuilders) or call Josh Gaston at (434) 528-3774.

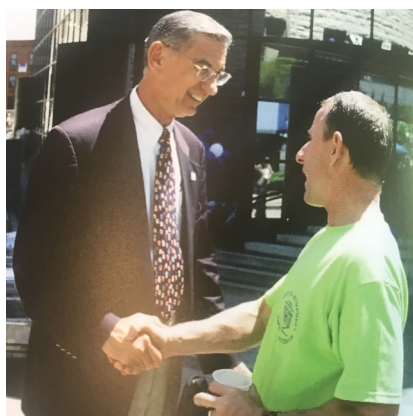
|                      |      |         |       |
|----------------------|------|---------|-------|
| ONE TIME             |      | MONTHLY |       |
| \$25                 | \$50 | \$100   | \$250 |
| \$ 30                |      |         |       |
| ♥ DEDICATE THIS GIFT |      |         |       |
| DONATE \$30 MONTHLY  |      |         |       |

## In Memory of Our Fathers: “Renita's House A Very Very Very Fine House”

### A word from the Home Sponsors, Jan and Zeb Gray

We are so pleased to help provide resources to build a house in memory of our fathers. Our dads were both craftsmen and civic-minded men. It would delight them to know their example serves as the inspiration for our support. Jan's father was Carmelo Tripodi. He was a tailor and a furrier. In his spare time, he built furniture, rehabbed houses, and loved to cook. Whenever Jan's high school needed a helping hand to host an event, he was always the first to volunteer. Zeb's dad was Clayton Gray. He became a builder with an artistic eye for detail. Clayton founded a construction business in North Carolina that became a prominent local building company. He was the president of the Civitan Club and impressed upon his sons the responsibility to serve others. We would often hear him say: “I complained I had no shoes until I saw a person that had no feet.”

We volunteered on Habitat projects in the past. For nine years we called St. Paul, Minnesota home where Zeb worked for the Hubert H Humphrey Job Corps Center. Job Corps was involved in several Habitat for Humanity projects in the Twin Cities. It sponsored a house in St. Paul. Every Wednesday an instructor would take twelve Job Corps students to the job site to work. It was an excellent “teachable moment” project that instilled the value of service in the Center's economically disadvantaged young people. As singer Bob Dylan said, “when I was deep in poverty you taught me how to give.” Thank you St. Paul Habitat. The Culinary Arts class of Job Corps cooked hot dogs for about five hundred people at an event in Minneapolis to honor Habitat Co-Founder Millard Fuller. They provided lunches for St. Paul's Habitat Annual Women's Build project. It was a win-win experience for all! We believe in the mission of Habitat and are impressed with the passion and compassion of Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity.



Zeb Gray with Habitat for Humanity International Co-Founder Millard Fuller.



Zeb Gray assisting a Job Corps student volunteer at a Habitat Build in St. Paul, MN.



## Volunteer Opportunities Join Us!

Volunteers with no experience or with great experience make the Habitat for Humanity model work beautifully. They are critically important to furthering the organization's mission in our community. Through the different places one can help, Habitat volunteers impact many local families each year.

### Mid-Week Crew

Do you have time during the week and want to help the local community? Consider joining the Habitat Mid-Week Crew. We build homes every Wednesday and Thursday from 8am-3pm.

### Saturday Build Volunteer

Looking to make your weekends impactful? We are building homes for local families nearly every Saturday and would love to have your help!

### ReStore Volunteer

Want to help Habitat, but do not feel comfortable on a job site? Consider volunteering at the Habitat ReStore to greet shoppers, assist with product inventory, preparation, and display.

For more information, please go to [www.lynchburghabitat.org/volunteer](http://www.lynchburghabitat.org/volunteer) or reach out to the Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteer@glhfh.org](mailto:volunteer@glhfh.org) or call (434) 528-3774.



## Our New Truck!

Thank you to all who helped us purchase our new construction truck!

Last fall, we let our supporters know that our old van had reached the end of its usefulness, and they responded in a big way.

Our truck is an essential tool for our mission to build homes, communities, and hope. It is used to tow heavy trailers, haul machines, and tools, and transport building materials to and from each job site. This 2021 Ram 2500 will be one of the biggest tools to build homes for local families in need for years to come!

Thank you to our donors and to the Pacific Life Foundation, the Greater Lynchburg Community Foundation, and the Truist Foundation for their contributions towards this beautiful truck!

## Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity ReStore

The ReStore is a non-profit retail store that sells new and gently used home improvement goods. It's main purpose is to raise money to help build safe and affordable housing for people in need in our community through the homeownership program.

Inside the ReStore, a small four-person team strives to offer excellent, above-and-beyond customer service five days a week. We also have a wonderful team of long-term volunteers whose service and time are essential to our mission.

At the ReStore, we succeed because of the kindness and generosity of people in our community. The items you see here in the ReStore are donations from friends like you, who see our common goal and have chosen to be selfless and donate their possessions to the ReStore. Without our donors, shoppers, and volunteers we could not fulfill our mission to build homes, communities, and hope.



Habitat for Humanity  
**ReStore**

**10%  
OFF**

On Donated Items Only

Receive 10% off your next purchase at the Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity ReStore!

All donations and purchases at the Habitat ReStore go towards helping local families build and own safe and affordable housing!

360 Alleghany Avenue, Lynchburg, VA 24501 - (434) 528-5155 - [LynchburgHabitat.org/Restore](http://LynchburgHabitat.org/Restore) - Valid through 9/1/2021

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Gabrielle felt God leading her to begin giving cakes away for free for a year in 2018. Up to this point, she had never thought of baking as ministry or business, but she listened to Him. For a year, every Tuesday, she would set up her computer, record herself baking and decorating a cake in the kitchen of her Habitat home, and post it to Facebook. Then, she would give the cake away to a Facebook follower. Soon, word of her cake videos and giveaways spread, and Sugar Blush Bakery was born.

Now, three years later, the business has outgrown the kitchen in their home, but it is still very much in the family. Stephen, Gabrielle's mother and aunts, and even the kids help out. Gabrielle does not simply see this as a business, but as a ministry to share God's love. Gabrielle's customers may say her success is because of the deliciousness and beauty of her cakes, or her positive, joyful attitude. But Gabrielle says, "The reason why we're here today is for God to receive the glory for this. That's why He's doing what He's doing in elevating this business."

Lastly, Gabrielle wanted the volunteers and supporters of Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity to know how grateful she is.

"I would like to say thank you for your service and giving. It's huge! There's no way you're ever going to be able to trace the impact of what you've done in your community and people's lives. It changes everything... And that's what these volunteers are doing. That's what these donors are doing. There's so much good that comes from it- it radiates! And I would just say thank you and keep doing it because it's just going to make a world of a difference."

If you would like to learn more about Sugar Blush Bakery, please visit [www.sugarblushbakery.com](http://www.sugarblushbakery.com).



The Gerling Family

New Staff Member:

## Brian Stanley

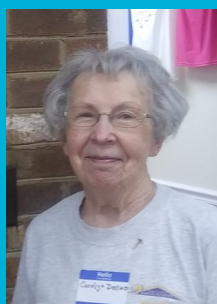
Construction Manager



We are pleased to introduce Brian, our new construction manager! He brings over 27 years of home building experience to our team - both in the private industry and as a construction manager at another Habitat affiliate. Let's build some homes and make a difference!

**"I'm excited to take on the position of construction manager at Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity. I've already been made to feel very welcome at the affiliate and in Lynchburg. We are all looking forward to getting back to a normal home building schedule! Our next project will start soon on Hillview Street - See you there!"**

- Brian



## Pioneer Builder Making a Big Move

Carolyn Dellwo stopped by the office recently for a bittersweet goodbye. She's moving to Maine to be near two of her children. She and her late husband, Phil, were construction crew members from the earliest of days. They took numerous trips with the national housebuilding circuit (circus?) known as the Habitat Road Trip Crazies. Tom Gerdy of the Crazies says, "She's still the tallest vertically challenged person I know," of course referring to Carolyn standing tall and firm on the foundational principles of Habitat for Humanity. Carolyn was a "real pioneer" in the early days, showing the way for other women to join the construction crew. Bob Hahn, a midweek crew member, says, "She's famous for being a perfectionist. Her own work was absolutely perfect." He's going to miss her as they've been friends for a long time. "She and Phil were so faithful to the crew. They worked more days than any of us. Carolyn was the spark plug on the ground."

For those who'd like to stay in touch with her, Carolyn's new address is  
**9 Alumni Drive, Apt. 112P  
Orono, Maine 04473**

Carolyn, we are happy for your next adventure!  
There's a Habitat for Humanity nearby in Bangor!