



## Habitat to get its own home

### Group purchases its first permanent headquarters on Isabella Street

BY DEBORAH GATES • STAFF WRITER • AUGUST 26, 2009

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SALISBURY -- After constructing or repairing residences that enable poor families to become property owners, Habitat for Humanity of Wicomico County, after two decades of community outreach, gets a permanent home of its own.

"We're very excited," said Rota Knott, a Habitat manager. "We're finally getting a permanent home in the community we're serving. That's why we're excited."

In October, the local nonprofit agency moves administrative offices and a ReStore warehouse for the public to shop for drastically discounted new and used building materials and appliances to a 10,000-square-foot space at 609 Isabella St. on the West Side. The \$365,000 purchase of the former William's Equipment retail warehouse for farm machinery makes Habitat a first-time owner of its headquarters and moves the agency into a facility twice the size of its current location off Snow Hill Road on Shiloh Street, Knott said.

The Habitat affiliate was founded in 1987 by local residents Alice and Wally Howard, Jim Leonard and Duke Shannahan, and to date, has added 52 new homes in the county -- structures built or repaired for owner-occupancy with volunteer labor, tax-deductible donations of money and materials and financed with affordable, no-interest loans to buyers whose mortgage payments help the agency build more homes.

The local Habitat also has financed construction of more than 50 homes in Ghana, West Africa, through Habitat of Humanity International's global building program, Knott said. Locally, the agency broke ground two weeks ago on a new residence in Kirkwood, its 53rd home, Knott said.

Bradley Gillis, a Realtor at Sperry Van Ness-Miller Commercial Real Estate who handled the sale, said William's Equipment has downsized its retail operation and relocated off Lake Street. Sperry Van Ness Realtor Henry Hanna is marketing the lease of the 5,000-square-foot Shiloh location, owned by Salisbury businessman John Savage, Gillis also said.

The Isabella location is off busy Route 50 and also gives Habitat's ReStore more visibility, said Gillis, adding that the building will be reconfigured to accommodate several offices, two bathrooms and a customer area and counter.

"The whole idea was to increase square-footage of the ReStore and gain exposure," he said. "The location increases the opportunity to have more donations. Materials were stacked from floor to ceiling, and there was not as much visibility."

Becoming a property owner gives Habitat a sense of ownership in the community it helps.

"Right now, we rent space; becoming a property owner makes us more a part of the community we're serving," Knott said. "We're here for the duration. We are part of the community and we want people to know we're here to stay and help out."

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