

# Building A Dream For Cobb Women

Strong women  
build strong  
communities  
through Habitat  
for Humanity's  
Women Build.

By Jennifer Todd

From left to right: Women Build Co-Chair Stacey Chapman, Habitat NWMA CEO Jessica Gill, and Women Build Co-Chair Kim Gresh.







Since 1976, the mission of Habitat for Humanity has been clear and constant: Every human being should have a decent, safe, and affordable home in which to live. In 1986, Cobb Habitat was founded by Marietta resident and trailblazer Christine “Chrys” Street. Today, known as Habitat for Humanity of Northwest Metro Atlanta (Habitat NWMA), this affiliate has built or rehabilitated more than 600 homes as part of their pursuit to provide decent, affordable housing in Cobb, Douglas, and Paulding counties. In Cobb County today, hundreds of families live in affordable, attractive homes in the communities where they work thanks to partnerships with the county’s leading corporate and faith organizations.

## The History of Pink

In 1995, the young affiliate embarked on a new project called “Women’s Work.” The house in Marietta was funded and built almost completely by women. In 1991, across the country, this project became known as “Women Build.” In 2018, Habitat NWMA successfully completed another Women Build in Marietta. Former Georgia First Lady Marie Barnes served as committee chair, and a beautiful home was completed for a single mother and son.

In September 2024, under the leadership of committee co-chairs Kim Gresh, owner and president, S.A. White Oil Co.; and Stacey Chapman, principal, senior vice president and owner, CROFT & Associates, the affiliate officially kicked off the 2025 Women Build with a one-day home build project.

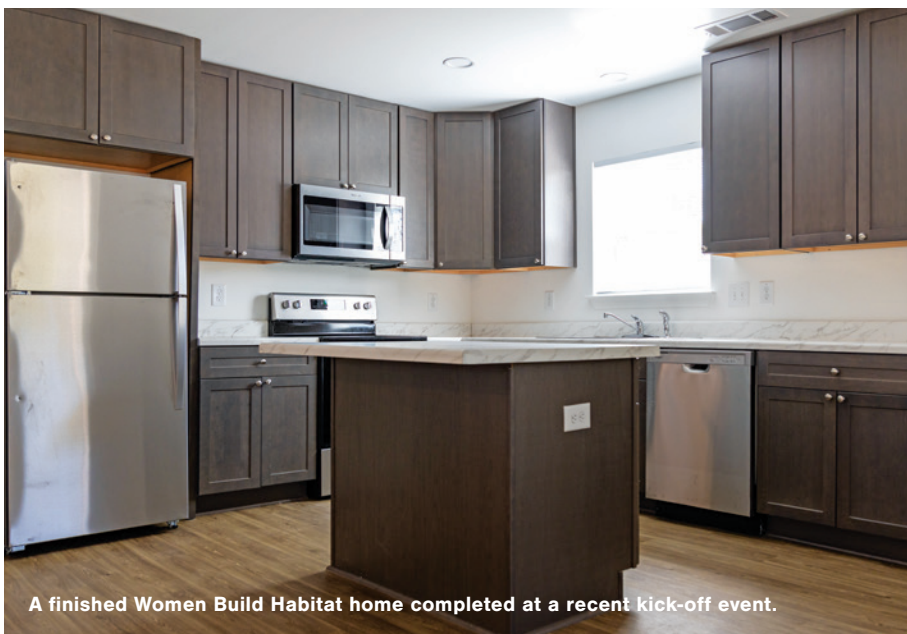
The Women Build project makes sense for this community, and that’s where Habitat NWMA CEO Jessica Gill and her team of amazing volunteers, leaders, and business partners are making a distinct difference. Gill says since 2019, 76 percent of the affiliate’s Habitat homeowners have had a female head of household (38 out of 50). “Giving hardworking women and mothers a hand-up to achieve homeownership with a zero-interest affordable mortgage allows them to provide a stable home and safe environment for their children,” she says. “This creates better outcomes for the children and generational wealth that otherwise would not be achievable.”

Gill says her master’s degree in public health, and the poor social determinants of health within pockets of our community have driven her desire to work for Habitat for Humanity. She says the Women Build initiative works because the construction industry still tends to be dominated by men. When women come together, amazing things happen. “There is something to be said when a team of women raise all of the money and then actually build the house.”

## Women Building the Dream

Habitat NWMA has a long history of women leaders, starting with its founder, Chrys Street. The affiliate has many female crew leaders, construction volunteers, board members, and staff. Gill says the initial Build Committee has City of Marietta employees, Habitat homeowners, Cobb citizens, judges, and our former district attorney. “I hope we can continue to have the support of Marietta council members, Cobb commissioners, and other influential community members. We have a full-time female construction manager on our staff, and she will be doing the quality assurance portion of this build.”

Habitat NWMA’s Women Build committee leadership consists of Barbara Moses, secretary; Susan Chang, treasurer; Allyson Moyer, volunteer recruitment; and Lisa Lewis and Sontonia Sloan, catering managers. The goal is to raise \$165,000 to build a complete house in 2025, which will be in the City of Marietta. Throughout the winter, committee members will work to raise funds. The walls of the home will be raised in May, and the building of the house will continue for 10 weeks. More than 250 volunteers will work with skilled volunteers to construct a three-bedroom, two-bathroom home.



A finished Women Build Habitat home completed at a recent kick-off event.

To start the process, a crew leader will explain to volunteers the jobs they'll carry out to contribute to construction. "To some, it's as simple as showing a volunteer how to use a hammer or drill. In the end, volunteers will build — literally — a strong foundation to help make a deserving Women Build recipient's dreams a reality. Workers will participate in raising walls, insulating, adding siding, painting outside and inside, and landscaping," says Gill.

"I'm sure it doesn't surprise anyone that the cost of construction materials and labor has increased by 40 percent in the last five years," Gill says. "Financial resources help us to maintain consistency among our housing projects. We anticipate a cost of about \$165,000 for an entire build in 2025. We also need breakfasts and lunches sponsored, and ice and drinks to keep our volunteers fed and hydrated."

Regarding recipients, Gill says Women Build follows all Fair Housing Act laws. "With that being said, 'special populations' of applicants may exist, and the land that we are building on has been donated by the City of Marietta. The homeowner will be a Marietta

city employee who works in the police department. They must meet financial criteria, complete 300 hours of sweat equity, be a first-time homeowner, and live in substandard housing."

Gill says Gresh is a shining example of putting that power to work for the future of Cobb County. Gresh has been involved with two previous Women Build projects with Habitat for Humanity. In 2018, she sponsored the Women Build in Marietta, which she says was an amazing opportunity. Then, in September



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— Jessica Gill,  
Habitat NWMA CEO

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Raising the walls of a Habitat house.



“Businesses can participate in a Women Build for Habitat for Humanity in a variety of impactful ways,” Chapman says. “Financial support through donations or sponsorships can help fund specific phases of the build, such as the foundation, roofing or landscaping. Contributions of construction materials, including lumber, paint, hardware, or appliances from retailers or suppliers can significantly reduce costs.”

Chapman says companies also can engage their employees by organizing volunteer teams to provide hands-on labor, fostering team bonding while supporting the build. Businesses specializing in architecture, engineering, or trades can offer professional service insight to ensure the project meets safety and design standards. Promotional support through company platforms and social media can raise awareness and encourage community involvement.

Additionally, businesses can host fundraising events or drives, match employee contributions, or partner in other creative ways to generate resources. Small contributions, such as meals on the build days, construction gloves, and hard hats are meaningful donations throughout the process as well.

Sponsors and partners from different industries are paramount in bringing the Women Build project to fruition. The Cobb community benefits from companies who align with the mission of providing affordable housing, giving back to the community, and understanding the dedication and expertise required to design and build a home.

“Many of our ideal partners are women-owned construction and design firms that have been trailblazers in creating

2024, she worked with the Women Build kick-off project in Austell. “We installed all of the windows in the home and framed out all the interior walls,” says Gresh. “This was a spectacular day with all the women working together and doing something out of their comfort zones.”

If you’re wondering why a powerful, busy community leader like Gresh sees the importance of this fundraising endeavor, the answer is simple: she understands the progress that like-minded, motivated women can harness. “Habitat is an incredible non-profit and working with this fantastic group of women to build a home for a deserving family is so satisfying,” she says. “Getting to see the power of women coming together is something we need to see more often.”

### The Power of Women

As a woman in the design and construction industry and a Cobb resident, Stacey Chapman sees Women Build as an extraordinary opportunity for local businesses to make a meaningful impact in the Cobb community.

“Cobb businesses should consider getting involved, because this initiative directly addresses critical needs: affordable housing, community development, and empowerment for women in traditionally male-dominated fields,” she says. “Women Build projects are more than construction efforts; they are a celebration of collaboration and servant leadership. By participating, businesses can

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demonstrate their commitment to strengthening the local community and aligning with a cause that resonates deeply with residents. Supporting this project showcases a company’s dedication to improving lives right here in Cobb County, while fostering pride and unity among employees and clients.”

In addition, businesses in construction, design or related industries can lend expertise and highlight their role as community builders. Companies outside these industries can partner through sponsorships, donations or volunteering, connecting with the broader community in a hands-on way, says Chapman.

opportunities for women in this field,” she says. “We also seek partnerships with companies across complementary industries, including engineering, real estate, manufacturing, and suppliers of construction materials. These partners not only bring vital resources and expertise to the project, but they also amplify the Women Build mission by demonstrating a commitment to empowering women and strengthening communities.”

### Building Pride

Without a doubt, there’s more to be gained from Women Build than an affordable, safe and healthy home for a deserving Cobb recipient. The spillover to community strength and pride is an intangible, but important, added benefit.

“I want to show that a strong group of women can accomplish anything they put their minds to,” says Gresh. “We hope to complete a well-built home for a deserving family who, without Habitat for Humanity, would probably never have achieved home ownership and the pride that comes with it.”

Gill adds that such projects also bring together individuals and community leaders who otherwise may not know each other but who give tirelessly to many non-profits in the Cobb community. “Women who may normally never know one another get a chance to work together and learn,” she says. “Building an entire house is daunting, and the ‘Rosie the Riveter’ mentality — working for a common purpose — brings strength at a time when many people seem divided.”

The cause is more than worthy as it carves so much opportunity for Cobb’s motivated community of volunteers and leaders. And, though much has been accomplished, there still is much work to be done. Linda Beggs, a Cobb County Habitat founding board member, participated in Women’s Work (the area’s first Women Build) in 1995.

“I’m gratified to see Habitat still thriving after all these years,” Beggs says. “Habitat’s longevity proves the strength of the model: providing opportunities for people willing to work hard for their American dream. I’m excited for the chance to pick up a hammer again and build with some of Cobb’s finest women leaders.”

Methany, a Cobb resident and teacher at Marietta Middle School, became a Habitat homeowner in 2023 and was the first recipient in the Marietta Public Service Housing Program. The program is a partnership between



Habitat NWMA, an independent, locally operated organization, is responsible for its own funding, family selection, and education, as well as land acquisition and development, home construction, and mortgage origination and servicing. Since 1986, Habitat NWMA has built, rehabilitated, or repaired more than 600 homes in Cobb, Douglas, and Paulding counties. Through volunteer labor, and a zero-interest mortgage, homeowners are able to achieve financial stability and build generational wealth.

To learn more or donate to the Women Build: [give.habitatnwma.org/ge/womenbuild](https://give.habitatnwma.org/ge/womenbuild)



the City of Marietta and Habitat for Humanity to build Habitat homes for City of Marietta public servants. Methany strives to pay it forward as a teacher and now lives minutes from where she serves.

“Thank you for all that you do in the community for people like me,” Methany says. “You truly are God sent, and I pray that as you continue to bless others, God will bless you even more.” ■



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