



MEDIA RELEASE

June 6, 2020

Thieves strike Habitat for Humanity Brant-Norfolk. Urgent donations needed to build homes for local families in need of safe and affordable shelter.

BRANTFORD, ON - Thieves broke into a construction trailer, stealing a generator and tools needed by Habitat for Humanity Brant-Norfolk to build homes. The total value of the theft is not yet known. A police report has been filed. Build Services Director, Joe Scrocco, had just returned to work days before the theft and is now in the process of comparing a pre-shutdown inventory, together with new equipment and materials needed to reactivate build projects. The local Habitat was preparing to make announcements on two projects. One is an active home renovation with a local partner. The other is a single family, three-bedroom house, with plans for a virtual celebration to kickoff the urgent need for community donations to quickly get the build underway and to introduce the new Habitat family who is working hard to prepare for homeownership. Now, Habitat also needs to replace tools required to build. Like most charities across the country, Habitat Brant-Norfolk has been hard hit by the pandemic, with revenue streams cut off due to closing of ReStores and the cancellation of fundraising events.

“It’s appalling and frustrating to me that a charity like ours had to shut down our build program for more than two months, and now has to deal with theft,” said Dan Brooks, CEO of Habitat Brant-Norfolk. “We’ve been doing everything we can to serve, beyond trying to keep people safe, while still moving forward behind the scenes to get ready to build again, with less staff, less money, less time and more demands on our service because people desperately need safe shelter and a home they can afford to live in.”

Twelve weeks ago, for everyone’s safety due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Habitat Brant-Norfolk Board of Directors closed the Affiliate Office and ReStores. Build activity in Brantford and Norfolk County was put on hold. Volunteer shifts were cancelled and some staff were furloughed. A core group of staff continued to maintain communications with homeowners, volunteers and donors to provide operational support during the pandemic and stay connected. “Mobilizing our community through service, having people work side by side from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and seeing strangers leave their first day on the jobsite or



from the ReStore as friends, is one of the most valuable things we do,” says Brooks. “We not only build houses, we provide a safe place for connections between people, and a space where everyone contributes with a sense of belonging.” During the shutdown, core staff set new activities in motion to keep people connected and feeling supported in uncertain times. Staff maintain daily contact with homeowners, volunteers and donors. Regular community updates are shared online and social media. Administrative work continues to reactivate the build program, secure permits, blueprints, source out materials and plan for new timelines with family announcements. Finances are reviewed and budgets reset, due to impact from Covid-19.

Recently, the provincial government gave Habitat for Humanity ReStores the green light to reopen their doors to the public, under new health and safety protocols. Both Simcoe and Brantford ReStores are open to shoppers and accepting pre-approved, scheduled donations. But a major portion of operating funds for the Brant-Norfolk Affiliate is secured through proceeds from their ReStores. Revenue lost over the past few months required substantial agility to keep serving local vulnerable families during the pandemic.

“Our local community has always been very generous and responsive to the needs of vulnerable people in our community,” adds Brooks. “We’re hopeful we can recover quickly to get back on the build site safely and help another local family build a better future for themselves.” A total of nine local families are anxiously waiting for the start of their home build this year. Anyone willing to make a donation or lend a helping hand (or both) is encouraged to call 519-759-8600 x527 or email communications@habitatbn.org or visit www.habitatbn.org

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