

# Chip and Becky Carter build with Annapolis red hats

*By Larry Perrault and Susan Stevenson*

Chip and Becky Carter were hard at work on a new Habitat for Humanity house Thursday, looking as though they belonged on the build site. Chip is James Carter III, the son of Jimmy and Rosalynn.

Inside the house, just beyond the two-by-four frame, the Carters were pounding and sawing.



The couple, from Decatur, Georgia, was in Annapolis for the annual Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project. They came to the site after Monday's tribute by Habitat for Humanity to the former president and his wife for their years of working with Habitat. On Friday, they will fly home, where Becky Carter volunteers her time at the Carter Center and other agencies in the Atlanta area.

Why did Chip and Becky choose Annapolis?

“Mainly from family experience,” Chip Carter said. “With my father being here and all.” Jimmy Carter graduated from The U. S. Naval Academy in Annapolis in 1946.

Chip and Becky Carter were working with a crew of “red hats”—volunteers and crew leaders with construction background and training who were working to get exterior walls done on all of the houses.

“We’re helping out here as it’s an off day for regular volunteers,” Chip said. He has been working on Habitat for Humanity build sites for about 10 years.

President Carter’s son Chip and his wife, Becky, join the work in Annapolis.  
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On the site, “we do whatever Habitat for Humanity tells us to do,” Becky said. “We do whatever needs to be done.”

And they’re committed. The couple wanted to quickly return to the build site.

“We need to get back to work,” Becky explained.

**Personalities of the Chesapeake**

The experienced hands at work on Clay Street in the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood in Annapolis were a microcosm of the richness in personality and commitment that Habitat attracts.



House leader Steve Buck, who serves on the board of directors of Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake, said it is good to be working on a Carter project in his home territory. ©Habitat For Humanity/Angel Pachkowski

**Leader with heart:** At his fifth Carter Work Project, Steve Buck, 60, is a retired executive who has volunteered with Habitat of the Chesapeake for more than eight years and serves on its board of directors. He lives in Pasadena, about midway between Baltimore and Annapolis.

Although his career was in the animal health industry, he had known about Habitat for “years and years. I knew it was a way to give back, and I always liked building stuff.” And he still does, preferring the hands-on work of new construction over “reinventing the wheel” for rehabs.

After serving as house leader in Mexico; Detroit, Michigan; and San Pedro, California, and as both a house sponsor and leader in Pascagoula, Mississippi, he said that it was good to be building at a Carter project in home territory this year. He likes the relationships with families that come from the build site and rarely tells them he’s on the board. “They have no idea. We all just build together.”

But when he speaks for Habitat as a board member, his words and voice are sincere and personal.

“I don’t have a spiel,” Buck said. “I speak from my heart. This mission is in my heart. When you love something, it’s easy to be an advocate.”

**Artist-builder:** A love of historic preservation brought Patty Berry, 26, to her job as a site supervisor for Habitat of the Chesapeake. She got a degree in fine arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art, spent two years in AmeriCorps at the affiliate and has stayed on.

Annapolis is her first experience with new construction. She has worked with rehabs on Jefferson Street in Baltimore, where row houses date from the early 20th century. She likes rehab better. “You have to follow the wall even if it’s not plumb,” she said. “There’s more creative thinking and troubleshooting in rehabs.

“I just love old buildings. It breaks my heart to see them torn down.” Someday she’d like to rehab a house of her own. Right now, new or old, she’s creating homes for others.

**The hammer’s song:** Joel Dulyea, 56, spent his first day as a civilian on Sept. 1 after 28 years in the Army. In the same week, he came to work for Habitat as part of an eight-member

AmeriCorps crew. "I'm the oldest," he said. "By a few years.

"Habitat is an emotional thing for me," he explained. "There is this vision of lifting the community up, and Baltimore needs that, and I want to be part of it."

First drawn to an interfaith build because he wanted to be part of Muslims, Christians and Jews working together, he had been a volunteer for several years.

Habitat and AmeriCorps is his transition job to civilian life after a career as a tenor in the Soldiers' Chorus of the U.S. Army Field Band, stationed at Fort Meade, Maryland. The renowned group of singer-soldiers travels to give concerts and represent the Army at historic events such as the Ford and Reagan state funerals.

But he cherishes a concert in Oklahoma on the day the Persian Gulf War ended in February 1991. The end of the war was announced during the concert, and the crowd gave the chorus an eight-minute standing ovation.

"But that's not why it has stayed with me," Dulyea said.

During the concert he noticed a mother and daughter in the front row. The morning after the concert he had gone to McDonald's for breakfast and talked with the same mom, who was working behind the counter.

Her husband was in an armored division in the Army in the Gulf, and with the war's end he would be coming home. Dulyea had watched her spirit and anxiety lift after the announcement at the concert, and now he knew why.

"She was anticipating him coming home. She knew what she was going to wear. She knew what her daughter was going to wear, and she thanked *me* for my service, and I had to say, no, thank you."

"There were times with the Soldiers' Chorus when I felt I was doing exactly what God intended me to do," Dulyea said. "But yesterday doing this, I had the exact same feeling."

**The community and us:** Michelle Dann, 23, of the AmeriCorps crew, has a heart for green building and plans for a graduate degree in sustainable development after her Habitat service is over. What she likes about working with Habitat is its community awareness.

"People know the name," she said. "I like that community aspect of it and the longevity of the projects. It's nice to know the community is behind us."

**Retirement?** "Off and on" for 20 years, Lon Slepicka, 62, has been a volunteer for Habitat, earning the coveted red hat from Habitat of the Chesapeake after safety training to keep careful watch over newer volunteers. A journalist, most recently with firehouse.com, he retired a year and a half ago, and says he's still figuring out retirement but thinks Annapolis, where he has lived since 1984, is the ideal location.

What retirees need, he said, "is something meaningful—something to keep you going. For me, Habitat is meaningful."

Building homes for families who wouldn't have them without you is motivation to get you going, he said. "It's really easy to be here."

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