



Faith Partners
...building community
...building relationships
...building homes

Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake Interfaith Build

Christian, Islamic and Jewish partners worked side by side for a year and a half designing and implementing the first ever Interfaith Build with Chesapeake Habitat for Humanity. At its completion in May 2008, 8 Steering Committee meetings had been held, numerous sub-committees had planned 4 months of pre-build activities, a community lot in East Baltimore was transformed and two houses were built and sold to first time homeowners. In the midst of all of the interfaith activities, relationships were formed across faith boundaries, insight was shared about the three faiths and long term commitments were forged to help end poverty housing in Baltimore City. The Interfaith Build was on all levels a great success.

The Interfaith Build was guided by a Steering Committee (made up of the partners) which met bi-monthly from November 2006 through June 2008. This Steering Committee in their evaluations found their experience of sharing in that group to be a highlight of the process. They developed a manual of basic faith tenets of the three participating faiths, raised and answered questions from all sides, helped with fundraising and were the voice to their faith organizations about the build. Rabbis, imams, ministers and lay people were treated as equal around the table.

The goal of those who committed to be a partner organization was to build relationships and understanding within the partner organizations in the process of working together to build two houses. Those relationships were built as individuals from the partner organizations participated in the following pre-events:

- ▶ Sessions of study from all three faiths followed by an afternoon of work
- ▶ Youth Mixer led by Loyola College students
- ▶ College "Chat and Chew", an evening of food and conversation about how our faith affects our lives
- ▶ Worship Weekends where places of worship from all three faiths were opened to interfaith partners, attending a mosque on Friday, a synagogue on Saturday and a church on Sunday. Discussions were led by members of the faith organizations with all guests following the worship service. Bulletins were provided that explained each part of the worship service.
- ▶ Work in partnership with Civic Works on a Community Lot on the corner of Chase and Montford Street. This work was in partnership with the Raynor Brown Elementary School and we worked together to transform a vacant lot into a Faith Garden and Chess Park with trails, trees, plants and a horse shoe pit for the community. We received a City Council Resolution commemorating our work on the community lot.

The actual building of two homes spanned 10 months and involved over 200 volunteers from 14 faith organizations. When volunteers gathered, the day began with a reading from one of the faiths, kosher snacks were brought and informal conversations occurred while working and eating together. At the completion of each house, a dedication service was held that involved a house blessing from each faith, prayers and a presentation of both a Bible and a Qur'an. New homeowners shared their utter joy of owning a new home and having it built by people who were "living out their faith and sending a message to the world that Jews, Christians and Muslims could work together to change the world!"

The partners raised 62% of the funds needed and 23% of the funds were donated from foundations and religious organizations (list included). The final 15% came from an Interfaith Comedy Show that brought together three professional comedians (a Rabbi, a Muslim and a Christian) and over 800 attendees. It was a night of laughter and an opportunity to showcase what Chesapeake Habitat does with people of all faiths to bring transformation to communities and lives in Baltimore City.

This unique concept of combining study, conversation, relationship and house building received press coverage throughout the span of the program. Included is the Habitat World Magazine that featured our build. This magazine goes to thousands of Habitat supporters throughout the world. We also received coverage in the Baltimore Sun, Afro American and Jewish Times. Finally, we were featured on the Baltimore City Channel and a 45 minute show will air soon highlighting nine of our Steering Committee members and volunteers. (All of these can be seen in the links below) PBS in Washington DC has contacted us wanting to do a feature on us when we begin our 2008-2009 build. Because of this press coverage, we receive calls from affiliates throughout the country asking for best practices used so that this process can be replicated in other locations.

A new steering committee began meeting in August of 2008 to design the process for 2008-2009. We moved from building a specific house, to being an interfaith volunteer corps. We continued to be intentional about educating our partners about the three faiths. And we worked side by side on all Habitat houses, continuing to reach out in faith to the communities we serve. We updated the two manuals (Faith Resources-a basic understanding of the three Abrahamic Faiths, and Readings and Scriptures from the three faiths). We held a youth event where youth in fun and creative ways learned about the three faiths. The Steering Committee met bi-monthly and agreed to continue in 2009-2010. A new Steering committee will begin meeting in September/October of 2009. this new Steering Committee will look at what we've done in the past and ways to include Anne Arundel faith organizations in the interfaith volunteer corps. It promises to be an exciting year! We hope to bring back the Interfaith Comedy Show in January.

For more information on being a supporter of this exciting "put your faith into action" effort, contact Jayna Powell (410) 366-1250 ext 117 or email Jayna@chesapeakehfh.org.

Note on the Peace by Piece Logo:

Our logo was designed by a Loyola college Senior Graphic Design student. Our committee chose this design because they felt that it immediately shows the equal partnership of the three Abrahamic Faiths and that together they are building a house. They chose Peace by Piece because they felt like what we are doing is much more than "just" building a house. We are working together to build bridges of understanding and tear down walls of indifference and ignorance between the faiths. So, stating that we are building Peace, piece by piece seemed to sum up who we are and what we are about. Thus the name and the logo was chosen. The logo has been seen internationally when we were highlighted in the Habitat for Humanity World Magazine and many other affiliates have asked to use it.

Partners in the First Chesapeake Habitat Interfaith included:

Muslim Community Cultural Center
Islamic Society of Baltimore
 Al Rahma and An Nur Mosques
Morgan State- Muslim Student Association
Har Sinai Congregation
Chizuk Amuno Congregation
Baltimore Hebrew Congregation
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregations
 Christian Temple
 Lansdowne Christian
 First Christian
 Mt. Olivet Christian
 The Gathering
Maryland Province Jesuits
 Loyola College Campus Ministry
 Loyola College Center for Community Service & Justice
St. Paul's School
St. Timothy's School
United Church of Christ congregations
 First and St. Stephens
Civic Works

2007-2008 Donors

All partner organizations
MD Affordable Housing
The Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger
Fund
Meyerhoff Family Charitable
Funds
Carmelite Sisters
Sisters of St. Francis of
Philadelphia
Cardin School

2007-2008 Interfaith Build Steering Committee Members

Akbar Ansari- Islamic Society of Baltimore and Masjeed Al-Noor
Renee Jorisch- St. Paul's School
Debbie Frosch- Har Sinai Congregation
Jennifer Arndt and Miriam Foss- Chizuk Amuno Congregation
David Caldwell- Disciples of Christ
Patricia Salaam and Haleem Abdul-Rahman- Muslim Community Cultural Center
Elissa Sachs-Kohen- Baltimore Hebrew Congregation
Murtaza Ahmed- Morgan State Muslim Student Association
Cheryl Goldsmith- First & St. Stephens UCC
Mike Wallens- St. Thomas Church
Kristin Looney- St. Timothy's School
Marya Howell- Loyola College Center for Community Service & Justice
Emily Rauer Davis- Loyola College Campus Ministry
Earl Millett- Civic Works
Jayna Powell- Faith Relations Coordinator- Chesapeake Habitat for Humanity

2009 Interfaith Volunteer Corps Partners (Steering Committee Members):

Muslim Community Cultural Center (Haleem Abdul-Rahman, Patricia Salaam)
Islamic Society of Baltimore (Akbar Ansari, Abu Kamal)
 Al-Rahma Mosque
 An-Nur Foundation
Morgan State Muslim Student Association (Abdul Rahman)
Progressive Muslim Network (Tabassum Rahman)
Chizuk Amuno Congregation (Jennifer Arndt)
Baltimore Hebrew Congregation (Gregory Hill)
Christian Temple (David Caldwell)
First Christian Church (Jay Smith)
 Mt Olivet Christian Church
 The Gathering
 Beth Tikvah
 St. Andrews
St. Paul's School for Boys (Renee Jorisch)
St. Timothy's School (Abigail Cooley)
First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ (Cheryl Goldsmith)

2009-10 Interfaith Volunteer Corps Partners (Steering Committee Members):

Muslim Community Cultural Center (Haleem Abdul-Rahman, Patricia Salaam)

Islamic Society of Baltimore (Akbar Ansari, Abu Kamal)

Morgan State Muslim Student Association (Abdul Rahman)

American Muslim Interactive Network (Ridah Sabouni)

Chizuk Amuno Congregation (Jennifer Arndt-Robinson)

Baltimore Hebrew Congregation

Christian Temple (David Caldwell)

First Christian Church (Jay Smith)

Mt Olivet Christian Church

The Gathering

Beth Tikvah

St. Andrews

St. Timothy's School (Abigail Cooley)

First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ (Cheryl Goldsmith)