

NEIGHBORHOOD

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EXTRA

Rotary 14, Habitat for Humanity help immigrant family of seven

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for the Neighborhood Extra

A woman from Africa and her six children will soon have a new home in Lincoln thanks to Rotary 14 and Habitat for Humanity of Lincoln.

Construction will begin soon on the home for Martha and her children, giving them a place to live that isn't cramped and will have a yard for the family to enjoy. Martha's salary can only afford a two-bedroom apartment, but with the help of nearly \$40,000 from Rotary 14, Habitat for Humanity will be able to construct a three-bedroom home on a lot in Lincoln that she can afford to buy.

"We were overwhelmed at the support and donations we received during the event," said Kate Holman, who along with Penny Johnston co-chaired "Rise.Shine.Give," Rotary 14's annual fundraiser. "Sponsorships, silent auctions and a lottery drawing resulted in more than \$86,000 raised at our event



PHOTOS BY RANDY BRETZ

Construction will begin soon on the home for Martha and her children.

on Saturday, Feb. 12." After a year off because of COVID-19, nearly 100 people gathered at Nebraska Innovation Campus for the event. Jon Gayer, Mike Wortman, Karen Barrett, Joel Stoltenow and Mark Stephens were part of this year's organizing team.

"Each year, our club president nominates a nonprofit organization that will receive half of the money raised at our event," said Christina Usher, 2021-22 president of the downtown club. "I wanted an organization that was focused on building community, one that is helping provide affordable housing, so Habitat for Humanity was my recommendation to participate in this year's event."

"Every year we pick a theme that exemplifies our areas of focus for that year," Usher continued. "Our theme during my year as president has been 'Building Community, Sharing Smiles.' We build community every week by gathering Tuesday noon over lunch, and we build community serving meals at The Gathering Place, filling Little Free Pantries, hosting a picnic for international students and activities at Everett Elementary, among so many other things. And no matter where we are and what we're doing, we're always sharing smiles."

The "Rise.Shine.Give" event was initiated several years ago when then-President Mark Stephens asked club members Erin Dobesh and Brett Ebert to put



LEFT: Christina Usher, Rotary 14 president, speaks Feb. 12 at "Rise.Shine.Give," Rotary 14's annual fundraiser. **RIGHT:** Josh Hanshaw, CEO, Habitat for Humanity of Lincoln, speaks at "Rise.Shine.Give."

together a brunch event. They conceived a plan to seek corporate sponsorships, silent auction donations and a lottery drawing for a special prize. The formula has worked well, raising money for community projects as well as the Rotary 14 Foundation.

In recent years, the event has provided funding to refurbish the playground at Everett Elementary School, support the South of Downtown project, help build a home in the Everett neighborhood and provide a new HVAC system for The Gathering Place.

Habitat for Humanity in Lincoln was founded in 1988, and since that time the nonprofit has built, rehabilitated or repaired nearly 200 homes for needy families. Each home constructed involves oversight by a professional construction company with help

from hundreds of volunteers. Many of the furnishings in those homes come from the organization's ReStore, which will have a new location at 56th and Highway 2. Josh Hanshaw, CEO of the organization, shared his excitement during the Rotary event.

"I was thrilled at the amount raised by Rotary 14," Hanshaw said. "It will help us finance the construction of the new home for Martha and her family. They will actually buy the home, which helps give them pride and encourages them to maintain it."

Hanshaw talked about the family and how involved the children are in their school activities and sports during his presentation at the event. He also said that all six of the children, who are in elementary, middle and high school grades, want to go

into medical careers that will give them an opportunity to help others.

Rotary 14 is the oldest and largest service club in Nebraska. The nearly 300 members represent a cross section of business, education and nonprofit companies and organizations in Lincoln. The club's foundation not only supports projects such as this one for Habitat for Humanity, but has funded major renovations of the Elliott and Everett Elementary School playgrounds, installation and maintenance of facilities in several of Lincoln's parks, and is a major contributor to the Cascade Fountain renovation nearing completion at 27th and Capitol Parkway. The club meets Tuesdays at noon at Embassy Suites Hotel. For more details, visit www.rotary14.org.