

# Anonymous donor funds Pope Francis Habitat for Humanity builds

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THE CATHOLIC MISCELLANY

**NORTH CHARLESTON**—In the fall, Juanita Porter will walk through the doors of a new home that was built because of the vision of the Holy Father.

Porter and her daughter, Sara, 16, will be living in one of three “Pope Francis houses” in South Carolina.

Last fall, a private donor gave \$50,000 toward building the house in North Charleston, according to Nancy Kuhne, director of development for Charleston Habitat for Humanity. Kuhne said the philanthropist was inspired by the pontiff’s concern for the poor, and his call for a focus on social justice and peace around the world.

The donor provided for a total of 20 “Pope Francis” houses around the country. Three of them are in South Carolina, including the one currently being built for Porter in North Charleston. The other two are in Columbia and Greenville and have already been completed with help from those local Habitat affiliates, neighborhood parishes and the Knights of Columbus.

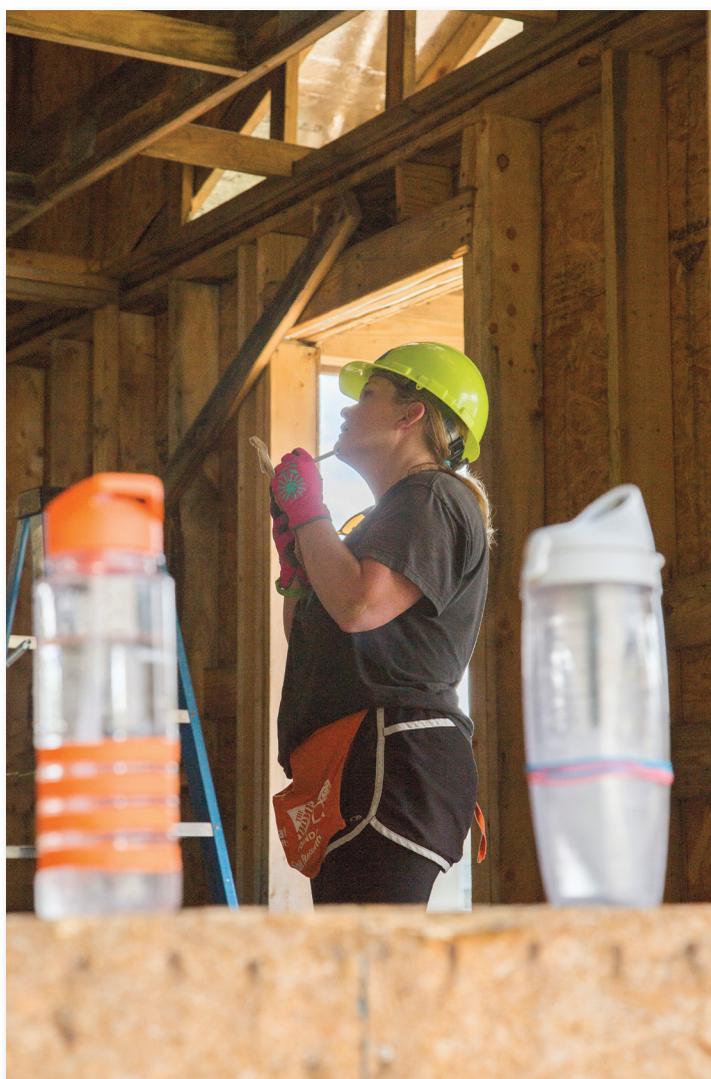
Kuhne said half of the funding for each Pope Francis house needs to come from the community. So far about \$20,000 has been donated by Charleston area residents for the Pope Francis build.

“This build has been especially inspiring because Habitat is all about showing faith through action, and that’s truly what the donor for the Pope Francis house is doing,” Kuhne said. “It’s a prime example of what we are all about.”

Porter had to submit an application to Habitat for Humanity to be eligible for the home. Requirements included that she be a first time homeowner and for the family to be willing to contribute 500 volunteer, or “sweat equity” hours. She also has taken financial literacy and other classes related to home ownership, learning how to manage a mortgage, make a budget and keep up with maintenance.

Kuhne said Habitat also helps recipients like Porter draw up a will so the dwelling will pass on to the heirs of their choice.

“This is a great experience for first time homebuyers because you don’t just jump in and have a house built



— you learn all the things that come along with it,” Porter said.

Her new home will be 1,400 square feet with three bedrooms and two bathrooms. The goal is to have it completed by the end of September.

Since 2005, Porter and her daughter have been sharing a one-bedroom apartment, a setup that has become more challenging since Sara became a teenager.

“Sara is really enjoying participating in building the house especially knowing she will have her own bedroom!” Porter said.

She puts in her volunteer work for Habitat on her days off from her job with the South Carolina Department of Mental Health. Sara, a rising senior at Garrett Academy of Technology in North Charleston, also works as many hours as she can, and family and friends have been allowed to pitch in to help reach the required number of hours.

An anonymous donor provided Habitat for Humanity affiliates with enough funds for a total of 20 “Pope Francis” houses around the country. South Carolina has two completed in Columbia and Greenville, with a third going up in North Charleston. Left, Valerie Gore, writes down measurements for beams in the North Charleston house. Right, Brian Fahey uses the table saw on June 11.



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Above, a group of employees from the Diocese of Charleston also contributed to the build on June 11. Kneeling in front is the homeowner, Juanita Porter, and her daughter, Sara.

Mother and daughter both worked at Habitat’s ReStore shop on Meeting Street in Charleston and have taken on a wide variety of tasks at their build site, ranging from digging to hammering nails, and whatever else needs to be done when they arrive.

“Working on the house with the other volunteers has been a great experience and has given me a lot of appreciation for builders and the construction field,” Porter said. “Once you have put your own hands to building something you appreciate it more. Everyone I have met through the process has been friendly and wonderful. You can tell all the volunteers on this project are working with their hearts. It’s a mission for them.”

Volunteers from the Diocese of Charleston worked on the house June 11 and will take up tools for

more work on June 25.

Lydia Doyle, diocesan director of planning and operations, was one of the employees who pitched in on June 11.

Doyle said she worked on several Habitat for Humanity projects back in high school and wanted to get involved again.

“I completely believe in Habitat’s mission of giving people a safe and clean place to live, and this project was especially important to me because it’s the Pope Francis house,” Doyle said. “It was very special to me to be able to answer the call to work on this project.”

To read more about the Pope Francis home project, visit the Charleston Habitat for Humanity blog at [www.charlestonhabitat.org](http://www.charlestonhabitat.org).