

AROUND TOWN

SGV Habitat for Humanity celebrates a great year

It's a banner new year for San Gabriel Valley Habitat for Humanity. The



Anissa Rivera
Columnist

Monrovia-based non-profit started 2023 with a celebration marking year three of its "Expanding the American Dream" campaign.

High notes include 81 families moved into new homes they helped build, with a record 100 families set to get keys to new beginnings this year.

"With your help, we are not building homes, we are changing lives," said Bryan Wong, executive director of SGV Habitat. "Instead of families worrying about rent increases, unsafe living conditions and overcrowding, they get to focus on building a future and enjoy the stability of being a homeowner."

Just this month, 11 lives will be changed, ten through home ownership and one through home preservation.

Johnny and Nely used to live in a one-bedroom apartment with their three sons. They will move into their three-bedroom, two-bathroom Habitat for Humanity home this month. Nely works at Children's Hospital and is studying to become a nurse. Johnny is in school to become a social worker.

The first home preservation project of the year begins this week for a Pasadena woman who is 72. She is on a fixed income, lives alone and is recovering from recent back and shoulder surgery. She can't afford to pay for home repairs, so SGV Habitat will help.

Wong said Habitat aims to make the world a place where all can afford to live, both first-time home buyers and longtime residents.

"The need for affordable housing in the area is overwhelming," he said. "Our goal is to dramatically increase the number of affordable home ownership opportunities in the San Gabriel Valley."

SGV Habitat's "Expanding the American Dream" campaign is a \$28 million investment in the community that has already seen nearly 300 families served since the group was founded in 1990.

Johnny and Nely's neighbors include Elizabeth and Rene and their three children. They will move out of their one-bedroom apartment, where they've lived for 21 years. Rene is a United States Army veteran and Elizabeth works for the city of Pasadena.

Rene volunteered with SGV Habitat, donating almost 400 hours, before finding out he and his wife were chosen to purchase one of the two Howard-Na-

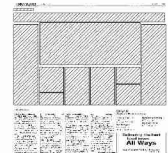
varro houses at the corner of Howard Street and Navarro Avenue. Their children call their new home "the house that Dad built."

Habitat officials said this month's kickoff is just the beginning. Next month, SGV Habitat will start the first build project in Altadena, with projects following in Azusa, Baldwin Park and El Monte.

On March 9, 10 and 11, the group's Women Build happens, where women raise funds, recruit other volunteers and build homes. This year's Women Build is set in Altadena, and registration is open at sgvhabitat.org

SGV Habitat serves families in more than 21 cities and five unincorporated areas of the San Gabriel Valley, including Arcadia, Duarte and Monrovia. Their office is at 724 E. Huntington Drive, Monrovia. For more information, 626-387-6899.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF [SAN GABRIEL VALLEY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY](#)

Left: Future homeowners and volunteers raise the walls at the Howard-Navarro project in Pasadena. The project was completed this month. **Middle:** San Gabriel Valley Habitat for Humanity's Executive Director Bryan Wong celebrated year three of the nonprofit's "Expanding the American Dream" campaign, which will help 100 families in the San Gabriel Valley buy homes. **Right:** New homeowners, Johnny, Nely and sons, at SGV Habitat's recently completed Howard-Navarro project, part of the "Expanding the America Dream" campaign. They are one of two families moving into Habitat homes this month.