

Organization: Habitat for Humanity

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Get Involved Final Report

Habitat for Humanity is an international organization that builds homes for those in need. Not only does the organization offer a hand out it also offers a hand up. Everyone that plays a part in the organization is exposed to a wonderful experience that they will carry with them. From brainstorming a new fundraiser to working on the build site, members of Habitat for Humanity are working side by side to provide affordable housing for those who need it. The organization branches out to states, counties, communities and universities.

I sat down with two of the executive board members for the Habitat for Humanity chapter at Illinois State University to find out what Habitat for Humanity is. Zoe McGrath, a senior at Illinois State University, the Co-President of the Habitat for Humanity chapter at Illinois State University, and the student trustee on the board of directors for Habitat for Humanity of McLean county had a lot to say. “The vision for Habitat for Humanity is creating affordable housing and decent places to live so that everybody lives comfortably.” Zoe explained. “The mission is to provide sufficient, sustainable housing. Our main goal as a chapter this year is to raise 80,000 dollars. To build a home and succeed at everything that goes into building the home, we need

that money to achieve each step.” Habitat for humanity follows the same four pillars that Habitat for Humanity International follows. The pillars are educating, advocating, fundraising, and direct service. “We work with Illinois Wesleyan as a co-chapter under Habitat for Humanity for McLean County. We work with them to mutually succeed by following the organization’s original pillars.”

Victoria Powers, a junior at Illinois State University, and the Illinois Wesleyan Liaison for Habitat for Humanity explained the pillars to me. “We educate and advocate for Habitat by telling people who we are and what we do. We really have to walk the walk when it comes to representing our organization or we will not be taken seriously, and lines would be crossed. We fundraise for Habitat by doing events like Trick or Treat for change, the color run last year and even little things like handing out candy on the quad. And of course, our direct service is building the house and getting volunteers to join us.” Victoria explained that being a part of Habitat for Humanity is a great way to give back to the community. As a sole communicator for the organization, Victoria gave me run down of how Habitat for Humanity communicates to their public. “Members are asked to do a lot of word of mouth for fundraisers.” she said. “We work as a team to get as much information out there as possible.” Some media that the organization already uses are, social media, posters, fliers, tabling, festival ISU, and emailing with members of the organization to remind them of events coming up. “Communication throughout the community and our co-chapter at IWU is important so we are all on the same page when we are ready to implement our ideas to raise more money and get our word across. It’s all hands-on deck!” she said.

From interviewing Zoe and Victoria, I noticed the common theme of communication and representation in their organization. Using authenticity, the organization has been able to build itself from the ground up. The members of Habitat for Humanity link product to purpose by understanding what needs to be done within the organization to achieve goals. The members also walk the talk while working from the inside out by representing the group and acting on the main pillars of the organization on all levels of organization. Habitat for Humanity has a charitable culture within a large institution.

I attended two Habitat for Humanity meetings in the same night in Schroeder Hall room 203 at 7pm on Wednesday, September 5th. The volunteer meeting was led by the two co-presidents, Zoe McGrath and Jade Surface. This was the first Habitat for Humanity meeting of the year, so each executive board member introduced themselves and Zoe went through a power point explaining that Habitat for Humanity is a service chapter dedicated to helping those in need in our community obtain affordable housing. She went on to say that this year the organization would be building its 25th house in 24 years. Next, it was shared that there are four ways to participate in Habitat for Humanity at ISU. There are builders, restore workers, volunteers and the executive board. Zoe and Jade said they were going to send out applications via email and conduct interviews in the next few weeks. It was explained that the leadership structure is linear. All four roles can be played out by the executive board members and the other three can be played out by all volunteers. There is no role more important than the other. An icebreaker activity was introduced where everyone received dry spaghetti and marshmallows to be used for building a house. This gave the organization strength by building up members and encouraging them to work together.

The volunteer meeting ended at 8pm and the executive meeting began. The meeting started with a game called roses and thorns. Each person had to say a rose or something good about their week and a thorn, something bad about their week. After the game, the executive board started following an agenda and a timeline of what needed to be discussed. The agenda included scheduling upcoming meetings, interviews, coordinating volunteer groups to come to the build site and brainstorming strategies to help advertise their fundraiser, Trick or Treat for Change. The board members discussed reaching out to other organizations to help with the fundraiser and building days. Zoe then explained how interviews were going to be conducted. Students who were passionate about the organization, had good academic standing, exhibited leadership qualities and proved they would try their best would be considered. Zoe talked about how the world is always changing and how she wanted Habitat for Humanity to be more innovated and open to critical thinking from interviewees. She also explained that executive board members and volunteers must be there for the right reasons. Having a position is not just something to put on a resume. Being a part of Habitat for Humanity meant having drive and wanting to make a difference. Announcements were saved for the end of the meeting. Everything that was said during the meeting was kept in minutes by the secretary. The meeting ended at 9pm.

If I were in the organization Habitat for humanity on the ISU campus I would fit in as the social media executive. I am familiar with most outlets and know how to write persuasively in a correct, concise, clear, and complete manner. I would benefit the organization with my knowledge of players and publics and how to reach them. I would also help the organization stay diverse and always changing by keeping track of data, outputs, outtakes, and outcomes. I would

be a good asset when it comes to pitching and public speaking to large groups about the organization in a structured manner like an elevator pitch or a speech. Being in the organization would benefit me by educating me about larger organizations and how they work, giving me opportunities to try out different media styles and reaching the public different ways and teach me authenticity through connecting with a public that builds off its self through community outreach and comradery.

Habitat for Humanity sees the organization creating affordable housing and decent places to live so that everybody lives comfortably (Vision) and will provide sufficient and sustainable housing for those who need it (Mission). To fulfill this mission and this vision, Habitat for Humanity at ISU wants to raise 80,000 dollars this year (Goal). To raise 80,000 dollars the organization is to fundraise (Objective 1) and communicate with the publics the organization wants to reach (Objective 2).

Fundraising

- The Let Your Colors Fly event (Strategy A) will take place at the build site once only the walls are up. This event would include offering two dollars per paintball to be thrown at the wall to relieve stress (Tactic A1). Volunteers with fill balloons with paint beforehand (Tactic A2)
- Ginger Bread House Building with President Dietz, ten dollars a house (Strategy B) will be a fun activity to raise money and represent the cause of needing to build a house. To accomplish this fundraiser, the organization must acquire ginger

bread making tools (Tactic B1) and ask President Dietz to join in on the event (Tactic B2).

- Habitat for Humanity have their volunteers build houses with dry spaghetti and marshmallows at their first meeting to see who would build the best house. Now, they will take the challenge to the quad where teams can race to build the best house for one dollar (Strategy C). The team that wins will receive a box of donuts. Volunteers must set up the tables on the quad (Tactic C1) and advertise the competition through all types of media (Tactic C2).
- Habitat for Humanity will have a fundraiser by playing Bigger or Better (Strategy D). Volunteers are to go to the local neighborhoods starting with a pencil and will knock on doors to see if residents can either give them change or something bigger or better than the pencil. The volunteers then move to the next house trading items bigger or better or collecting donations. The item the volunteers end up with would be donated to the restore location where furniture for the house is found. To go through with this fundraiser, the volunteers must warn the neighborhoods of this event in advance (Tactic D1) and gather people to go out and play the game (Tactic D2).

Communication

- Habitat for Humanity is going to have a public forum in the Circus Room at the Bone Center to explain the process of building the house and giving it to the family who needs it to the community (Strategy E). The organization must reserve

the Circus Room (Tactic E1) and prepare speeches and facts to be shared with the public (Tactic E2).

- Fliers will be given out all over campus before build days to bring in volunteers (Strategy F). Habitat for Humanity should create eye catching fliers (Tactic 1F) and send each member of the organization out into the community to hand them out or put them up wherever they choose (Tactic 2F).
- Habitat for Humanity could partner with local media outlets on the build site to raise awareness of the cause (Strategy G). The members should contact media outlets like tv, radio, newspapers and online media outlets (Tactic 1G) and prepare a factual message like an elevator pitch for those to easily remember (Tactic 2G).
- The Habitat for Humanity chapter at ISU will book a room at the Normal Public Library and hold a small, educational event for patrons to learn about the organization and what it is doing for their community (Strategy H). An advertisement should be posted and sent to the library for them to advertise (Tactic 1H) and a power point should be made for patrons to follow as the volunteers explain (Tactic 2H).

Objective 1: Each fundraising event was measured by funds raised and attendance that was kept track by the secretary and treasurer of Habitat for Humanity. There was a sign in sheet at each event and a board being updated of how much money had been raised to keep track of success.

Objective 2: At each public speaking event minutes were kept to keep track of the questions and answers. A sign in sheet was provided at each event and the success was measured by how many volunteers that were gained.

After researching and observing Habitat for Humanity I have learned that there is more to an organization than just business. It's also about growth, planning, diversity, brainstorming and purpose. This organization has opened my eyes to global change right here on my college campus. I am proud to have been a part of it by learning about it and now communicating the mission and vision to others.

“A house is just a building. A home is more than that. It's more about the family who is going to receive it. It's going to change their life. Having an affordable home and an affordable place to live in this wonderful community is a really big deal.” – Zoe McGrath