

CAMPUS

Habitat for Humanity builds campus ties

BY MICHAEL GARCIA

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Twenty-eight years after its founding, UT's Habitat for Humanity student organization is focusing on building a volunteer base to keep the tradition of changing the lives of Austin families.

Sitting around a large square table after another late Monday night meeting is the eight student leadership team behind UT's Habitat for Humanity chapter including government senior and HFH president Stephanie Slapik, who has been with the organization for three years. The mission is still the same: how to advocate for more awareness for the organization on campus, fundraise, and grow the student volunteer base vital to constructing homes for Austin families.

An affiliate member of Austin's larger Habitat for Humanity branch, the University subchapter coordinates student volunteer days and fundraising goals throughout the semester. To help raise funding for home projects, UT habitat partners with local companies, most recently AllState, who matched a fundraising campaign totaling \$10,000 toward future construction projects. Meeting these fundraising goals means that UT Habitat can continue scheduling project days, as they cover part of the construction cost and the student organization's volunteer fees.

"We've had good fundraising," Slapik said. "We've had nine (building days) last semester and were on the road for about nine again this semester and they're long days. We get there around eight and sometimes we're there 'til around 4 p.m."

Not only do low-income families benefit from con-



Photo Credit: Courtesy of UT Habitat for Humanity

struction projects, but veterans and people who are disabled, low-income or elderly can qualify for future projects. In addition to home building, UT Habitat contributes equally to home repair projects for those who struggle with affordability as they did March 25th with a community home re-painting project. English senior and HFH secretary Natalie Barden said she fondly remembers presenting a newly painted home to an elderly woman the subchapter helped.

"She was so sweet," Barden said. "She was like, 'This looks like a whole new house. I wouldn't have had the means to do this without you guys volunteering.' It's lovely to see how visibly appreciative they are."

On April 8th, the organization will be passing on the keys to another family. For many student volunteers, it will be the first key-giving ceremony they will be attending. For new homeowners, a valuable part of the process is the opportunity to earn work equity hours by helping in the building of not only their own, but other family's homes. This cycle of contributing and volunteering helps Habitat for Humanity continue its core mission across Austin.

ORIENTATION

Students support incoming Longhorns

BY DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

Orientation is often an exciting and memorable time for new students as they begin their Longhorn journey. Not only do they register for classes, plan their academic path and transition to university life, students also learn about UT Austin programs, facilities and services. This transformational experience is why recent graduate Adelynn Garza, BA '17, wanted to lead New Student Services' Summer Orientation Support Staff.

"As a first-generation college student, I didn't know much about school when I came to orientation. The Longhorn State of Mind means being open to all the possibilities. I want to be there at the very beginning as new students transition to

Summer Orientation Support Staff member in 2016. While the full-time OA position requires a 40-hour work week and living on campus, the support team job is great for upper classman. Working fewer hours allows them to participate in an internship, second job or summer school. As a recent graduate, it's the perfect fit for Garza since she will move to Boston at the end of the summer to work for AmeriCorps.

"Being an orientation advisor was one of my favorite experiences throughout college. I wanted to see how the program works in a behind-the-scenes role," added Garza, who also served as a University Leadership Network mentor.

She and her team are also an invaluable addition to help university staff and OAs



2016 Summer Orientation Support Staff at the Help Desk in Jester West

college," shared Garza.

Made up of one dozen members, the Summer Orientation Support Staff provides information to new Longhorns and parents during 10 orientation sessions from June 5-Aug. 24. The group is part of the university community who will welcome nearly 10,000 new students to Freshman and Transfer Orientation while stationed at the Help Desk in Jester West.

Garza joined the orientation team as an orientation advisor (OA) in 2015 and

during this busy time.

"While New Student Services' staff and OAs are welcoming new students with extensive orientation programming, the Summer Orientation Support Staff is available to answer questions and coordinate logistics. Their UT Austin knowledge helps students and parents navigate the university," noted New Student Services Director Celena Mondie-Milner.

To learn more about the OAs on the Forty Acres, check out their official blog.

CAMPUS

SURE Walk sees increased requests, seeks to expand

BY CATHERINE MARFIN

Published on March 29, 2017

Two years ago, government junior Isaiah Carter spent an entire semester volunteering with SURE Walk and only received one call to walk a student home over the course of four months.

Students United for Rape Elimination, or SURE Walk, was founded in 1982 by then Student Body President Paul Begala as a means to provide students with a walking buddy to-and-from campus. Before the murder of dance freshman Haruka Weiser early last April, the organization was widely underused and unnoticed, Carter said.

"It's good that campus safety is now on the forefront of the campus dialogue, but it's a little concerning that it takes instances like (the murder) to remind students how important campus safety is," Carter said. "The end goal is to make students use the service despite instances like that."

When he was appointed Student Government chief of staff just three weeks after Weiser's murder, Isaiah Carter made vamping up the service one of his top priorities. Two years after he first volunteered as a freshman, when the organization would receive at most 10-15 requests each week, it now receives hundreds to thousands of requests each month.

Last month, SURE Walk received 2,827 requests from students. In the two months prior, nearly 1,000 walks and rides were requested, according to records provided by



Matthew McConaughey volunteers with SURE Walk.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of UT News

UT Parking and Transportation Services.

SURE Walk's transformation began last summer after SG and PTS allowed the group to secure finances for supplies such as flashlights, t-shirts and walkie talkies for its volunteers. PTS also provided the group with two cars, allowing SURE Walk to expand its abilities and begin offering rides to students.

The partnership with PTS also allowed SURE Walk to begin tracking monthly ride requests and peak operation hours, provide paid staffers during summer months and establish a permanent office in Jester Center for volunteers. Additionally, a \$20,000 donation from Begala last fall allowed SURE Walk to purchase two golf carts.

While SG was in the planning stages of amping up SURE Walk's services last spring, the UT Police Department provided an interim transportation solution.

"(After Weiser's murder), we had guards at night with vans and Suburbans to assist students," UTPD Chief David Carter said. "It was a quick response to make sure campus had some kind of a backup system as we figured

out what the future held in terms of transportation services."

UTPD continues to informally offer rides to students at night, but SURE Walk provides a formal transportation program for the community, David Carter said.

Sociology freshman Evangelina Rivera said while SURE Walk is a great service, but it still has room for improvement.

"I think it's an awesome service, but they should definitely do things like have later hours," Rivera said. "I think people stay out a lot later than midnight or two in the morning, and (SURE Walk) would be a good thing for students to have on those nights."

Isaiah Carter plans to continue meeting with PTS and the new chief of staff, who will be instated early next month, to discuss future plans for the organization. Proposed plans include expanding volunteer recruitment and serving students further off campus in the Riverside area.

To request a SURE Walk, students can call 512-232-9255 between 7 p.m. and 2 a.m. Monday through Sunday.

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