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Johns Family Finds New Hope with Transylvania Habitat for Humanity After Devastating Loss

Brevard, NC – Twenty-five years ago, Donna Johns and her family achieved the dream of homeownership through Transylvania Habitat for Humanity. But that dream was shattered when Hurricane Helene took their home. Now, in the midst of unimaginable loss, the Johns family has once again found hope, thanks to the same nonprofit that first gave them a chance at stability.

The devastation was twofold – the loss of their home and the near loss of their grandson, Jamie, who was airlifted to Atrium Health in Charlotte after medical complications. Despite these heartbreaking events, the family’s story of survival, community support, and resilience spread across North Carolina and the nation. Within days, Transylvania Habitat, with the help of dedicated volunteers and donors, located and fully furnished a safe, temporary home, giving the Johns family a much-needed place to regroup and heal.

“We are heartbroken for Donna’s family and the many others who have been impacted by this disaster,” said Angie Hunter, Executive Director of Transylvania Habitat for Humanity. “Our commitment to our homeowners doesn't end when they receive their keys. When their home was destroyed, we were determined to step in and provide the shelter and support they needed to survive this storm.”

Longtime supporter Nancy Richards offered her vacant rental property in downtown Brevard to house the Johns family. From there, the community rallied—donating furniture, food, and even including a plan to build a fence for the family’s dog, Tucker. The response has been a testament to the power of compassion and collaboration.

In addition to providing temporary housing, Transylvania Habitat is actively raising funds to help the Johns family purchase another affordable home. One generous donor even paid off the remaining balance on the Johns' original mortgage to ease their financial burden.

When Donna Johns first stepped into her temporary home, her reaction was one of overwhelming gratitude. “I walked in and saw this beautiful furniture and thought, ‘Why me?’” said Johns. “But I thank the Lord every day that we survived something beyond our control.”

The work, however, is far from over. Transylvania Habitat for Humanity acknowledges the tireless efforts of other nonprofits, businesses, government entities, and community members who have joined forces to support those affected by Hurricane Helene.

“This is truly a countywide effort,” said Hunter. “From Sharing House, The Haven, El Centro, and Housing Assistance Corp. to local churches, businesses and individuals who have donated supplies—this recovery process will take months, and we’ll be here every step of the way to ensure that everyone has a safe, decent place to call home.”

Transylvania Habitat has also established a Hurricane Helene Relief Fund to help more victims with housing solutions. As part of this effort, Habitat is utilizing its available land to install three RVs to serve as temporary housing for families displaced by the storm. Electricity is expected to be up and running within two weeks, but the organization is urgently seeking three RVs that can either be donated or sold at a discount to Habitat so they may provide safe shelter for these families.

Reflecting on the journey ahead, Johns expressed a humble resolve. “We’re taking things day by day. Transylvania Habitat was a blessing to me 25 years ago when I bought my first home, and they’re a blessing again today.”

To support the Johns Family Recovery Fund or the Hurricane Helene Relief Fund please visit www.transylvaniahabitat.org/donate. If you or someone you know needs assistance with home repairs or flood cleanup, please call 828-884-3906 and leave a detailed message.

About Transylvania Habitat for Humanity:

Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2024, Transylvania Habitat for Humanity is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring everyone has access to safe, decent, and affordable housing. To learn more about homeownership opportunities, donating to the ReStore, or applying for critical home repairs, visit www.transylvaniahabitat.org or call 828-884-3464.