

Athens Area Habitat for Humanity

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Athens Habitat passes the Twilight torch, embarks on new homebuilding effort

(Athens, GA, 15 September 2016) — For the past 4 years, Athens Area Habitat for Humanity has been the driving force behind the annual Twilight Criterium bicycle race and festival in downtown Athens, providing core logistical support, coordination, publicity, and labor for the popular fundraiser that has benefitted affordable housing and neighborhood renovations in Clarke, Oconee, and Oglethorpe counties. This week, however, the AAHFH board of directors announced that they will be passing the torch to another beneficiary in 2017.

“We really love Twilight,” remarked AAHFH executive director Spencer Frye, “it’s a unique and wonderful event, and it has aided our mission, but right now we have an exciting new opportunity that’s going to keep us very occupied over the next several months, and is more directly in line with our mission to eradicate poverty housing.”

That opportunity comes from the estate of beloved Athens theater owner and builder Sol Abrams, who died this past August. Athens Area Habitat recently acquired several housing units from Abrams and will be updating and renting the homes as part of its ongoing Renew Athens program, with resulting rents contributing toward the construction of new houses for pre-approved homeowners.

“We’re building on the legacy of Sol Abrams,” says Frye, “who was a real pioneer for racial and gender equality and who, like us, believed that everyone deserves a decent, affordable place to live.”

For several years now Athens Area Habitat, along with their community partners, have focused their building efforts on creating new neighborhoods rather than constructing isolated houses, as well as revitalizing older multi-unit properties and making existing properties handicap accessible for disabled citizens, mostly seniors and veterans. Rents and mortgages are kept as low as possible, and are deposited in a revolving fund that helps underwrite new projects.

Through these programs, AAHFH can serve many more citizens than could be reached through a single-home building program.

At the moment it is not known which organization will step in as beneficiary for next year's Twilight, but director Frye is confident that there will be no problem filling that role. "It's a world class event, no doubt, and I think the entire Athens community is proud to have it here, so I'm not worried about finding someone to step in. The problem will probably be choosing who gets the honor."