

# CAUSES



Volunteers celebrate on site. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

# BUILDING SUCCESS

## HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RAISES RECORD \$534K DURING 2024 WOMEN BUILD

Special to Fort Myers News-Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Habitat for Humanity of Lee and Hendry Counties recently concluded its most successful season of Women Build. Fundraising teams, local companies and individual donors raised a record \$534,000 to support Habitat's homebuilding efforts for female-led households, the largest single-year fundraising total in Women Build history for Lee and Hendry counties.

Women Build is an annual initiative to engage women in the effort to provide safe and decent homes for families in need of affordable housing. During the 2024 season, 180 volunteers contributed 1,216 hours on 16 different



Taryn Manning, Women Build 2024 homeowner, Joanne Marriott and Karen Pati.

homes for female-led families. Habitat also celebrated the support of 158 SuperPeople, each pledging at least \$250 annually for five years to support Women Build's mission in Lee and Hendry counties.

A portion of funds raised during this year's Women Build will cover the construction costs of a new affordable home for a local mom, her two young children and fully disabled mother. Through her partnership with Habitat, the future homeowner will put in 300 hours of sweat equity, attend more than 20 hours of homeownership classes, contribute to their closing costs and pay an affordable mortgage set at no more

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## Doc Ford's donates \$3,000 to The Sanibel School

Special to Fort Myers News-Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille donated \$3,000 to support The Sanibel School's 2024 Blue Ribbin Classic Golf Tournament and Gala in early May. All event proceeds go towards The Sanibel School programs and services.

"We are proud to support The Sanibel School," said Joe Harrity, a partner with HM Restaurant Group, the parent company of Doc Ford's and Dixie Fish Company. "We believe it is important to invest in the future of our island students by contributing to The Sanibel School programs."

Part of Lee County Public Schools, The Sanibel School serves approximately 325 students in grades kindergarten through eight. Students live on Captiva and Sanibel islands as well as the mainland of Southwest Florida. The school is dedicated to providing a challenging academic curriculum with an emphasis on environmental education and community connection. For more information, visit [sbl.leeschools.net/home](http://sbl.leeschools.net/home).

HM Restaurant Group owns and operates Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille and Dixie Fish Company. Open daily from 11

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Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille donated \$3,000 to support The Sanibel School's 2024 Blue Ribbin Classic Golf Tournament and Gala in early May. PROVIDED BY DOC FORD'S

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# School

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a.m. to 10 p.m., the restaurants are renowned for delivering a legendary guest experience.

Award-winning Doc Ford's offers food with a unique balance of flavors inspired by the Caribbean Rim. Known for its sauces, spices and passion, Doc Ford's is a local and visitor favorite for spectacular seafood. Established on Sanibel in 2003, the restaurant has expanded from its original location to three others: Fort Myers Beach and two in St. Petersburg – on the St. Petersburg Pier and in Jungle Terrace. A perennial Tripadvisor Travelers' Choice winner, the pier restaurant was named the No. 1 Best of the Best Restaurants for Everyday Eats in 2023.

Philanthropy and community outreach are engrained in HM Restaurant Group's company philosophy. Proceeds from specialty cocktails at Doc Ford's raise money for children's hospitals and water quality issues. HM Restaurant Group also supports local nonprofits dedicated to conservation, community and the environment. The "Ding" Darling Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament has raised nearly \$1.2 million for Sanibel's J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge since 2012. The 12th annual tournament is May 10, 2024.



**Women Build High Heel Award – Donna Aldrich, Women Build 2024 homeowner Melissa C. and Dede D'Arcy.**  
PROVIDED BY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

## Habitat

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than 30% of their monthly income.

"We are so grateful that our supporters recognize the increasing need to provide safe, decent and affordable housing for families in our community," says Elisha Baird, vice president of strategic partnerships for Habitat for Humanity of Lee and Hendry Counties. "The overwhelming support from the community, along with the hard work of our volunteers, has set a new standard for what we can accomplish together for female-led families through Women Build."

On May 16, Habitat for Humanity celebrated the successful completion of its 14th Women Build season with a Thank You Party at the Habitat ReStore on McGregor Boulevard in Fort Myers. Each year, Habitat's coveted High Heel Award is given to the captain of the top-earning fundraising team to honor their commitment to Women Build. The winning team, led by Dede D'Arcy and Donna Aldrich, raised a record-break-

ing \$74,275 during this year's Women Build.

Since 2011, Women Build has partnered with 29 female-headed families to build strength and stability through local fundraising and volunteer efforts. This year, Habitat is set to build 68 affordable homes, with female-headed households making up 75% of its future homeowners.

Women Build 2024 was generously sponsored by Title Sponsor FineMark National Bank & Trust, Aubuchon Team of Companies, Edison National Bank, Royal Palm Coast Realtors Association, Habitat ReStores of Lee and Hendry Counties, Suffolk Construction, Suncoast Credit Union, Victory Layne Chevrolet, Zonta Foundation of Southwest Florida, Inc., Legends Golf & Country Club, Mark Loren Designs, Sanibel-Captiva Rotary Club, Sun Country Homes of Florida, The Landings Yacht, Golf and Tennis Club, Alan Einhorn & Vicki Cooper, John & Lesley Hill, Robert & Ann Arnall, George Byam, Cundall Family Fund, Ed & Connie Lizak and Schenian Family Foundation, Inc.

To learn more about Habitat for Humanity of Lee and Hendry Counties or to get involved, visit [Habitat4Humanity.org](http://Habitat4Humanity.org).

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