

From: [Ron Turner](#)
To: [Staff](#); [Craig Brown](#)
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Ashely Tolbert, from left, Alijah Wilson and Ailianna Tolbert stand in a bedroom at their family's new Habitat home. They expect to move into the house in mid-September.



Angela Buckner, from left, and her children Alijah Wilson, Ailianna Tolbert and Ashely Tolbert, stand in front of their new Habitat home in Washington Park neighborhood in Palmetto on Sunday.

The Bradenton Times

Home dedication celebration opens a new chapter for three families

Soon, hundreds of hours of hard work will lead to new homes from Habitat

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by [Erica Newport](#)

PALMETTO -- Ashely Tolbert, 7, might have been too young to help build the new home, but she knows that her favorite room is her new bedroom.

On Sunday, Manatee County Habitat for Humanity's three-home dedication celebration recognized the families who will move into their homes, the volunteers who helped to build the homes and the businesses that sponsored the homes.

As cars lined 2nd Avenue West and 25th Street In Palmetto, children skipped from house to house with cake-filled hands and adults spoke with enthusiasm about the structure and layout of the new Washington Park neighborhood.

Ron Turner, the organization's executive director, is pushing to have the 100th home built by the end of the year.

"We are completing our 92nd home with this celebration," he said.

Manatee County Habitat for Humanity has been operating for 15 years and its funding comes from the generosity of owners, companies, churches, public charities and individuals.

But the organization hasn't been immune to the tough economic times over the past year.

"We are certainly fortunate to still be building and have tightened our belts, like everyone else, to be more efficient and streamlined," Turner said. "We are still able to provide, and the need is still there."

Angela Buckner, a single mother raising three children, including Ashely, was one of the three families honored today and couldn't believe they may all be able to play outside in their yard and go trick-or-treating in the neighborhood this fall.

Where they currently live, until their September move-in day, is not safe for the children to play outside and the plumbing doesn't work.

"This is our new home with space for all of us, and it is safe," Buckner said.

Buckner's home was started in September 2008 and she has more than 400 sweat-equity hours invested while working full-time.

"It's going to change our lives," she said. "We'll spend our first Thanksgiving together in this new neighborhood."

Each family honored today has put in between 300 and 500 sweat-equity hours, which means they have worked next to the volunteer builders for hundreds of hours. They have also raised the money to make a down payment on their new home.

"It's all part of the entire experience," Turner said. "All of the families have compelling stories and it has been a joy to work with them and the volunteers."

Another family moving into a new Habitat home is Tereso and Silvia Carmen and their six children. They too had endured the hardships of subpar living conditions, including broken windows and faulty plumbing and air conditioning.

Eric and April Gates and their four children were were homeless before the organization helped them. Theirs is the third family moving into a new Habitat home.

Publix Super Markets Charities, the River Club Golf Course and River Club residents sponsored the three-home celebration.

As Buckner's three children ran through their new home to their mother's master bathroom, they were eager to play in the large walk-in shower. After a pose to smile for the camera, they all ran back through the house and out to the backyard.

"Maybe I'll get a swing in my new backyard," Ashely said.