

helping PEOPLE help THEMSELVES

break the cycle of poverty

CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

NO LONGER MOBILE

People of Hope Create Permanently Affordable Homes

BY BETH GRIFFIN

Moises Casales borrowed money from his sister and cousins to buy his first home for \$2,500. Two years later, in 2001, he was evicted and the home was legally demolished. Although he owned the home, he rented the land on which it stood. The owner sold the land to a developer of luxury apartments—so Casales, his wife, and his small daughter were out, as were the 108 other families in the neighborhood.

Casales was living in Garden Springs Mobile Home Park in Athens, Georgia. Legally, his 1973 mobile home was too old to move, and the land underneath it was no longer zoned for any mobile home.

Casales and other residents turned to Catholic Social Services of the Archdiocese of Atlanta, which oversees the local work of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). With funding from CCHD and local church groups, they formed a non-profit organization, **People of Hope**, to relocate the community and establish it as a resident-owned mobile home park.

Maureen O'Brien, People of Hope land development coordinator, says, "Mobile homes are a very popular form of affordable housing in Georgia, and the state is a



TIRELESS COMMUNITY EFFORTS HELP RAISE FUNDS FOR THE NEW GARDEN SPRINGS DEVELOPMENT.

Photos courtesy of People of Hope

leading manufacturer of them. Most parks are small, safe, clean, stable places, but there is still a stigma attached to living in a mobile home." The attitude toward them is negative enough that Athens-Clarke County totally removed mobile home parks from the zoning code. "When a park closes, it costs \$2,500-\$5,000 to haul the home to a new place," says O'Brien, "but there's no place to go, because there is only a 1% vacancy

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FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends of CCHD:

As we prepare to enjoy the life-giving and life-renewing of spring, our thoughts are turned to the life and love that Jesus shared with us—by taking on our human nature, sharing our pains and challenges, suffering a horrible death on the cross so that he could conquer sin once

for all times, and then sharing with us the eternal life that he enjoys with his Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit. As we call to memory once again this Easter mystery, our thoughts readily turn again to the loving attention given by Jesus to the poor and vulnerable, the most marginalized and oppressed, of his own day and to his invitation that we, his followers, do the same.

Our work in the Catholic Campaign for Human Development is to promote that same “preferential option for the poor” among low-income people in the United States. We do that not by giving them material goods or emergency assistance—that is done quite well by social service agencies such as Catholic Charities. Rather, the Campaign gives a special “hand up” to the poor in our country: we reach out to offer opportunities for leadership development among them so that they can help themselves to a “place at the table” of political, economic, and social power in our country. Through CCHD support, many poor and low-income Americans experience, for the first time in their lives, the great gift of human dignity that God has willed for each and every human person. I thank you deeply and sincerely for making all this possible through your gifts of time, talent, and treasure to the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

Finally, I would like to share some news with you. Last month, I completed my work at the Catholic Campaign for Human Development after being asked to return to service in the Universal Church as Special Adviser on HIV and AIDS for Caritas Internationalis, a global confederation of Catholic social service and development organizations. The decision to accept this new position was a most difficult one since I very much have appreciated the privilege of serving as the Executive Director of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. Especially during the past few years, which have been so difficult for the Church in the United States, the Campaign stands out as a beacon of hope for the bishops (who prophetically initiated CCHD 35 years ago), for all American Catholics (who generously support CCHD each year in the annual special collection and throughout the year), and for the groups of empowered poor and low-income people with whom we partner to break the cycle of poverty in this country.

I pray that God will continue to bless all of you for your deep sensitivity to the plight of the poor in this country and throughout the world. I pray that you will be able to continue your support of CCHD well into the future.

Gratefully yours in Our Lord,

Rev. Robert J. Vitillo
Former Executive Director

WHAT IS CCHD?

Through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholics and friends of CCHD across the country help poor and low-income Americans to help themselves and their communities out of poverty.

Since 1970, CCHD has contributed more than \$260 million to more than 4,000 low-income led, community-based projects that strengthen families, create jobs, build affordable housing, fight crime, and improve schools and neighborhoods. CCHD requires that projects develop community leadership and participation so that their solutions to poverty will be long-lasting and effective and so that CCHD's investment will help break the cycle of poverty. CCHD also educates Catholics about the causes of poverty and seeks to build solidarity between the poor and non-poor.

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rate in parks in this county.” She adds that five other parks have closed since Garden Springs, leaving only 45 countywide.

From Disbelief to Land Trust

People of Hope identified a 17-acre site one mile from Garden Springs and is now developing Georgia’s first “permanently affordable” resident-designed and -managed mobile home community. It is based on a successful New Hampshire model, in which a land trust holds the deed to the property and the mobile home owners’ corporation has a 99-year lease.

The process of turning the site into a park has been slow and methodical, with both frustrations and rewards. People of Hope’s membership is largely Hispanic, with smaller numbers of African Americans and Caucasians.

They faced some resistance from the county planning commissioners when they applied for the “special use” permit required to rezone the property—but received welcome cooperation from the Athens-Clarke County public utility director and an offer to tie the new park into the county sewer system.

Raising funds has been the biggest challenge, says O’Brien. “Some of the traditional sources for financing affordable housing are reluctant to support us because

there’s a stigma attached to mobile home parks, the housing itself is portable and the cooperative ownership of land is scary to the traditional lenders.” Nonetheless, she says, “The cost of developing the land is greater than the loans that the homeowners can take out, so we are raising money from many places.” In



“I know we’ll make it to the new park, even though it won’t be soon. To people who say it’s taking too long, I say it’s not a single house; it’s a big park and it will be a good one if we keep on working.”

—MOISES CASALES

addition to seeking private and government grants, People of Hope homeowners have committed to raising \$50,000 by selling t-shirts depicting the layout of the new park through their website, have arranged a matching funds challenge with local Presbyterian and Methodist churches, and held creative fundraisers such as a sold-out gospel music concert, a soccer tournament, and a resale of gently used evening gowns. CCHD, inspired by the creative, non-traditional nature of this project, stepped in to provide grants to People of Hope for staffing and office space.



One Good Deed Deserves Another

By next fall, O’Brien says, People of Hope will have enough funding in place to request bids for installing the roads, utilities, and stormwater retention ponds for the new park. Money will still be needed to complete the development and assist the residents with resettlement costs. Of the original families, 25 have already committed to the park’s 40 sites, while 15 others are considering it; and a waiting list will easily fill the rest of

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the park. Before the first concrete is poured, People of Hope is preparing the new homeowners. “We are helping them with saving money, credit and housing counseling, and computer skills classes,” says O’Brien. “We’re encouraging everyone to open bank accounts and to learn to avoid predatory lenders.”

Many of the original Garden Springs residents have settled permanently in other places, but some are still transient. Casales says, “I know we’ll make it to the new park, even though it won’t be soon. To people who say it’s taking too long, I say it’s not a single house; it’s a big park and it will be a good one if we keep on working.” In the meantime, Casales and his wife have bought a newer used mobile home, painted it light blue, and welcomed a second daughter. Casales passes the new site every day on his way to work at the Carrier air conditioning plant. “I feel great, knowing I’m going to live there.”

O’Brien says that People of Hope has a great energy. “This is really a grassroots effort of the people. They’re no longer in crisis mode, but they’ve stuck with it.” This includes members who have made the decision to live elsewhere but continue to work for the organization. The



group is fueled by hope and the determination to own their own homes in a secure environment. 

To follow the progress of People of Hope and their affordable housing work, visit www.peopleofhope.us.

INVEST IN PEOPLE HELPING THEMSELVES

You can donate your time, talent, and treasure to CCHD in many ways:

- through our annual parish collection (the Sunday before Thanksgiving in most parishes)
 - with a cash or check donation
 - with a stock donation or a matching gift from your employer
 - by remembering CCHD in your estate planning

WHERE'S MY MONEY GOING?

All CCHD funds received are used solely for the support of CCHD's anti-poverty mission. CCHD abides by the charitable standards set by a leading donor advisory service. Our funds are divided as follows: 85% is assigned to CCHD's core program mission of community empowerment, economic development, and education programs; 5.5% is allocated to coordinate the annual appeal and communications efforts; 3.5% funds our poverty awareness campaign; and 6% is assigned to administrative costs. We thank you for continuing to empower low-income people through your ongoing support for CCHD.

For more information about CCHD, or to receive our most recent annual report, contact Mary Mencarini Campbell at 202.541.3365 or mcampbell@usccb.org. Visit our website at www.usccb.org/cchd, or explore the state of U.S. poverty, made up of nearly 36 million Americans, at www.povertyusa.org.