



MEET THE O'HERON FAMILY

Friends and family members of Mary O'Heron describe her as determined and hard-working in every effort and task she undertakes. After unexpectedly becoming a single parent of two small children several years ago, many of those who don't know Mary may infer that she had every reason in the world to surrender to what might have seemed insurmountable personal circumstances.

However, Mary had a vision for a better future for her family. Her resolve led her back to an earlier decision to pursue a college education to obtain a degree in analytical chemistry – knowing that her keen interest in and capacity for this career choice would make a positive financial impact on her family. For more than six years, Mary attended classes during the day and worked at odd jobs in the evenings to pursue her education and support her young family. Having graduated with a college degree in May, 2022, and obtaining her first position as a chemist just three short months later, Mary is quick to give much of the credit for her accomplishments to her daughter, now 13, and son, nine, as well as the full-fledged support of her family.

As with many individuals and families that struggle to make financial ends meet and find affordable housing, Mary and her children were limited in their choices of a home. Renting a two-bedroom apartment had been all she could manage financially, but the cramped space did little to accommodate a family of three. In a nod to her ingenuity, Mary placed a tiny loft bed in the small, walk-in closet in her bedroom to serve as a place for her son to sleep, all the while knowing this would only be a stopgap solution for a growing boy. In addition to the apartment's ongoing plumbing issues, Mary noted the area recently had experienced a rise in transient behavior, an unfortunate development that impacted the safety of the neighborhood.

Mary is quick to share with others that she initially was not familiar with Habitat and its mission in St. Charles County to provide affordable housing that individuals and families help to build, as well as pay an affordable mortgage. "Habitat does not give away homes for free," she said. "Each potential homeowner partner goes through a rigorous selection process. If selected, they work alongside volunteers who donate their time, talents and financial resources to perpetuate a sustainable future for hard-working people," she added. "This creates a 'ripple effect' in which people feel good about helping others, homeowners appreciate the help they receive, and the combined efforts generate kindness and community."

Mary and her children will be among the first selected homeowner partners helping to build their new home in Haven Pointe, Habitat's exciting new 46-home residential neighborhood in Wentzville, Missouri. "Habitat gives good, hard-working people a chance to build on their lives to create a new beginning," Mary said. "My family will forever be impacted by this positive experience."