



Joan presenting a check to A Child's Place Board Members Shantiqua Neely, Sandi Buchanan and Roger Parham



That was his reality until a group of realtors descended upon his residence during the 2017 Realtors Care Day. Volunteers built a wheelchair ramp on his front door that allowed him to access his front yard. Upon completing the project, the realtors watched in amazement as he wheeled himself down the ramp and into the outdoors for the first time in years. According to Goode, there wasn't a dry eye in the crowd.

"It was a powerful moment," says Goode. "And that's only one of the many 'feel good' stories I can share. The list goes on and on. But the takeaway from that story should be that we are all capable of extending a helping hand. The ramp we constructed was a small act, but to that gentleman it was everything. And that's what we should be doing as neighbors of the Charlotte community."

When spring turns to summer, the Foundation turns its attention toward preparing for its annual **Strides for Shelter 5K Run/Walk**, an event founded by Goode. "I'm extremely proud of this event," says Goode. "It's the only Foundation event that isn't exclusive to realtors. It's open to the public and continues to grow each year. Also, it's the only 5K in the Region focused on raising funds for housing."

Since its inception in 2015, the event draws approximately 750 participants on average and raises funds to support Charlotte's housing issues. In fact, the 2016 event raised more than \$15,000 for A Child's Place, an organization dedicated to erasing the impact of homelessness on children and their education. As she looks ahead, Goode hopes to build upon this past success and make 2018's event even bigger and better than the last.

Following this event, the Foundation rounds out its calendar year with a **Grants Award Luncheon** in September; its **Project REACH** (Realtors Engaging And Creating Hope) event in October, a new addition to the organization's calendar that engages 100 realtor volunteers in hands-on community service experiences at five local non-profits; and a **Silent Holiday Auction** in December to fund its grants program.

This is an extremely important event, considering the grants program is viewed as a critical piece of the Foundation's puzzle, especially its **Community Grants Program** and **Habitat Support Grant Program**.

Launched in 2009, the Community Grants Program provides funding to area nonprofit organizations that address Mecklenburg

and Iredell counties' unmet housing needs. Its applications are rated according to community impact, project feasibility, fiscal strength and realtor support, and it's helped 79 nonprofit organizations, including Charlotte Family Housing, Charlotte Rescue Mission and Crisis Assistance Ministry, in its nine-year history.

In comparison, the Habitat Support Program provides monetary support to area Habitat for Humanity organizations located within the areas served by CarolinaMLS. In the program's 11-year history, it's awarded more than \$185,000 in grant monies to Habitat organizations located in Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Gaston, Lincoln, Stanly and Union-Anson countries.

"As you can see, there are volunteer and fundraising opportunities available for anyone," explains Goode. "We host initiatives and events throughout the year that appeal to a number of different people, with varying interests. We've made it easy for individuals to join, the struggle is having them find the time to plug in. But I'm hopeful for the future and meeting more of my peers in the year ahead to see how we can make a positive impact – not only on our fellow neighbors, but also on Charlotte – the city where we all live, work and play."

Joan Goode

– Lending a Helping Hand through the Housing Opportunity Foundation

Did you know there are more than 4,000 homeless children enrolled in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools? When you add the number of adults – without families – who live each day without a roof over their head, the number grows exponentially.

Working tirelessly behind the scenes as an advocate for the region's homeless is the Housing Opportunity Foundation (carolina-home.com/housing-opportunity-foundation), the charitable arm of the Charlotte Regional Realtor Association that has been in existence since 1985.

One of the Foundation's most active volunteers is Joan Goode, a real estate agent with Dickens Mitchener. Goode became involved with the Foundation the moment she found out about it in 2007, and for the past 11 years, she has volunteered her time and energy to help her fellow neighbors.

"There's this misconception that homeless people are lazy," she explains. "But the truth is they are some of the hardest working people I've ever met. These are just members of our community that have been faced with difficult hurdles, such as mental illness, lack of education, or a detrimental layoff. Many are working every day to turn their life around. They should be applauded for their efforts."

So how is the Foundation making a dent in Charlotte's homeless epidemic? By hosting a series of fundraising events throughout the year that empowers area realtors to become leaders of the movement.

The first event of the year, **Realtors Care Day**, takes place in the spring and is one of Goode's personal favorites. Volunteers spend the day repairing local homeowners' critical exterior inadequacies. Recently, they have also begun providing adaptive and safety modifications for the elderly and disabled in Mecklenburg County and beyond.

"Imagine more than 700 realtors from across the region coming together, one day out of the year, for the common good," she says. "Throughout that day we work on select residences to provide the homeowner with much-needed assistance, while improving the look and feel of Charlotte's neighborhoods. It's a win/win."

Goode participates in the event annually because of stories like the elderly man in poor health who couldn't leave his home. Unable to walk, his wheelchair prevented him from using his exterior stairs. He lived each day from his window, a view and life thwarted by his home's inability to accommodate a wheelchair.



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