



JIMMY CARTER

June 15, 1985

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jimmy".

To Senator Robert Dole

For the past couple of years Rosalynn and I have been actively involved in the work of Habitat for Humanity, one of the finest and most practical efforts I have ever known for giving help to people in need and at the same time teaching them to help themselves.

There are several characteristics of the Habitat program that appeal to us. Habitat is not involved in charity, but in assisting people in need to build decent housing for themselves, aided by volunteer workers. In the process, many of them learn a useful trade. Our policy is not to accept any government funds, but to use private contributions to purchase the necessary cement, lumber, and other building materials. Whenever possible, we take our own sawmills into the forests to saw lumber, and mold our own bricks, concrete blocks and roof tiles. The homesteading families are required to make regular monthly payments, without interest, for the actual costs of their homes. This money is then used to build additional homes.

Some of our American volunteers work in overseas projects for three years at a time, receiving a monthly payment of \$300 (which they are responsible for raising from their own families, friends, local churches or civic groups). Others, like Rosalynn and me, participate in construction of homes here in our own county or, on occasion, in other communities. Last September, for instance, we led a week-long work party to the Lower East Side in Manhattan, where Habitat is rebuilding an old and dilapidated building to house about twenty families.

While walking to and from the New York work site early in the mornings and late at night we saw hundreds of homeless American citizens sleeping on the streets, some of them with their faces pressed directly on the concrete sidewalks. There were a surprising number of older women among them, the age of my mother -- all this in what is considered to be the richest city in the world.

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One of our fifty volunteers in New York was Deen Day Smith who, with her husband, founded the chain of Days Inns. Like the rest of us, Deen cleaned out garbage and trash, toted building materials, and pounded nails. She was so moved by this experience and what she saw that she later pledged a million dollars to the Habitat program. Typically, she has refused to permit any public notice of her contribution, but has agreed to let a few others know of her interest so that they might be encouraged to help.

By the end of this year we will have Habitat projects in more than 100 U.S. communities and 15 foreign countries. The cost of these modest but adequate homes in the United States is approximately \$24,000, and in other nations the average cost is one-tenth as much, with about ten occupants per home. We are now building more than one home per day, with a rapid rate of growth. In the overseas projects, there is no doubt that people see one of the finest aspects of our American way of life, and some of the foreign leaders in developing countries are using this innovative self-help approach to housing as a model for their own government's programs.

My hope is that you, as a person of means, will consider making a generous financial contribution to Habitat for Humanity - and we would of course like to have you join us at one of our construction sites if you desire. Habitat is a tax-free organization, so gifts are deductible.

Write me directly if you have any questions or suggestions. We will, of course, be pleased to furnish you with any additional information.

Sincerely,

*Jimmy*

Senator Robert Dole  
141 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510

*Bob. This may be  
of interest to you & Elizabeth.*

*J*