



Left: Community Housing Improvement Program's Paradise Community Village (pictured this June), under construction since last October, is slated to open in September and house 36 families. Preference is given to applicants who are former residents and other Camp Fire survivors.

PHOTO COURTESY OF COMMUNITY HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Above: Jennifer Wolfe and her son, Riley, stop by their new property in Paradise, where they will help build their home via a Habitat for Humanity of Butte County program.

PHOTO BY ASHIAH SCHARAGA

unobtainable due to her single income and lack of credit. In the aftermath of the fire, she ended up on wait list after wait list for rentals, finally landing an apartment in Chico that was smaller than her old place in Magalia, didn't have a yard and cost nearly twice as much to rent.

Even then, she was only able to move in with rental assistance from the Community Action Agency of Butte County. She lost her job as a waitress at Jaki's Hilltop Cafe after it closed due to the Camp Fire; then COVID-19 caused her to lose her job at Casa de Paradiso, which closed its doors due to the impacts of the pandemic.

She's since been able to obtain a full-time job at a local nonprofit, but those months while she was searching for work and for a place were rough. Her son kept her motivated,

Go build: Habitat for Humanity of Butte County is seeking community volunteers to help Camp Fire survivors build their new homes. Go to buttehabitat.org to find out more.

she said: "I wanted to provide safety, security and stability for him."

Even though she's been out to the site of their future house many times, the reality that they'll be back

home on the Ridge still hasn't hit her yet. It's a subject that brings happy tears to her eyes.

"We've been through so much. ... It still doesn't feel real," Wolfe said. "This is the first time I can dream and plan."

'More relevant than ever'

Habitat for Humanity's team is personally motivated to make a difference in Paradise, Executive Director Nicole Bateman told the CN&R—several staff and board members were among the survivors of the deadly blaze.

After the fire, the local nonprofit received support from the international Habitat for Humanity organization and enough donations and funding to get started on its first homes for survivors coming back to the Ridge—on that quaint street that the Wolfes will soon call home. Habitat for Humanity of Butte County expanded its capacity, bringing on board a development manager, homeowner coordinator and administrative assistant. The affiliate also created two full-time positions in construction (versus one part-time) and shifted its accountant position to full-time as well.

Bateman is confident this internal expansion will help the organization be better equipped to respond to local housing needs.

"We are here for a reason," Bateman said. "And we're going to do our part to help the community heal and to rebuild and for those families to find some peace."

In the 28 years since Habitat for Humanity was established locally in Chico,

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