

A MESSAGE FROM DEBBIE YOW, HABITAT FOR HUMANITY KEYNOTE SPEAKER

We all know life delivers surprises, both those welcome and unwelcome. Most recently, one such surprise has come to all of us in the name of COVID-19, also known as Coronavirus, which is the sole reason Habitat for Humanity has deemed to wisely make an electronic appeal for financial support rather than attempt to host the annual breakfast.

Like you perhaps, I have asked myself the following question: "What if I were to contract COVID-19"? The single most comforting thought that has followed that question was this: "I would stay at home and recuperate." HOME. I have one. But there are so many who do not. If they contract COVID-19, where will they go to recuperate? It is a troubling thought on multiple levels, but the most basic level is that those individuals are without a house, an apt or a mobile home. Instead, they search daily for a safe place to try to sleep, whether at a shelter, under a bridge, in a tent or with relatives or friends.

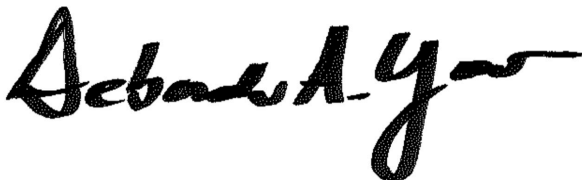
I have assumed that I would always be sheltered. Perhaps you have too. After all, in a progressive nation like ours, it seems almost implausible that people struggle to have such a basic need met. Yet, that is happening right here in Wake and Johnston Counties where far too many live daily without the security of knowing where they will sleep each night or are forced to use a disproportionate percentage of their income to be sheltered, foregoing necessities like healthcare, food, transportation and education. These are choices that no one should have to make.

Our local Habitat for Humanity goal is to build 60 homes this year, making safe and affordable housing a reality one family at a time. For those 60 families, life will change dramatically for the better. Research indicates that once families have a secure home, the grades of children improve, family health improves, they begin modestly saving funds and even pursuing higher education becomes an option.

I am standing with Habitat because this is our community and we want everyone to have the hope that their dreams and goals can become a reality. We all play a part in what that community looks like. Providing assistance to those in need of something as basic as housing is absolutely a value we hold. Committing together to make this happen means we can ensure those 60 houses are built. They will be occupied by individuals who will be forever grateful and who will then be positioned to "pay it forward", helping others later in life.

I hope you decide to join us and make a stretch gift that will encourage and uplift many people, changing lives, one home at a time. By doing so, you will strengthen the fabric of our communities of Wake and Johnston Counties.

In the spirit of the Pack,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debbie Yow". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Debbie Yow
AD Emerita, NC State

PS. I love the thought that UNCCH, NC State, Duke, Wake Forest, ECU alums and friends, as well as others associated with various universities, can come together to improve the lives of our fellow citizens who live in Wake and Johnston Counties. Today, we are all supporting them. There is no competition among ourselves. Instead, we compete together against the poverty that threatens our fellow citizens. And, we will win. Big. One home at a time.