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Ron Campbell

Lauren and Suzie Arnold stand on the porch of their home that was built by Holston Habitat for Humanity.

Volunteers, sponsors dedicate Habitat for Humanity home

By **SUE GUINN LEGG**
NET News Service

JOHNSON CITY — Volunteers from Holston Habitat for Humanity, Citi of Gray and the Johnson City accounting firm of Blackburn Childers & Steagall gathered Thursday to celebrate the completion and hand over the keys to Johnson City's newest Habitat home.

Suzie Arnold, a single mom and dispatcher for the First Tennessee Human Resource Agency NET Trans rural transportation program, will begin the business of home ownership today, closing on the loan in advance of her and her daughter's move to their new bungalow on East Holston Avenue next week.



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“First of all, thank you,” Arnold told the standing-room-only crowd of volunteers who turned out to help dedicate the home. “Without you, none of this would have ever happened.”

Directing her appreciation to project foreman Al Bentz and his faithful “B Team” of daily volunteers, to the local Habitat affiliate, and to the army of Citi and BCS employees she worked side by side with throughout the 11-week construction, she said: “For making it possible for my daughter and I to have a home, I just cannot thank you enough.”

Holston Habitat for Humanity board member Mark Matson said the Arnold home was among the more remarkable builds he has witnessed and complimented the sponsoring companies for their efficiency and organization.

“They knew what they wanted. ... We just stood back and let them go for it,” Matson said.

While Habitat secures the build sites, locates qualified families and provides new homeowners with the education they need, Matson said most of the work is done by sponsoring organizations like Citi and BCS and their employees.

Thanks to those sponsors, Matson said, the Arnold home is the fifth house Holston Habitat for Humanity has completed this year and the 214th to be built in the Washington, Carter and Sullivan county area it serves.

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— Suzie Arnold

Tom Greer with BCS said the company was blessed to be a part of the project. He expressed appreciation for the relationships they built, the new skills they learned, and their opportunity to grow closer as a firm. Jeff Jones with Citi echoed Greer’s sentiments and added, “We had a great time.”

Laura Swanson, executive director of Holston Habitat for Humanity, said the Arnold home’s vinyl-encased porches were built in keeping with a new Habitat initiative to improve its houses’ “curb appeal” and to help homeowners maintain their value over the long term.

Swanson said aesthetic qualities of the East Holston Avenue neighborhood were another plus for Habitat, which has also purchased two lots adjoining Arnold’s property, and for East Tennessee State University, which will kick off its next Habitat build on the lot next door in September.