

November 2, 2012

2 Habitat for Humanity affiliates to merge Jan. 1

Move intended to boost productivity, eliminate confusion

BY LUCY MAY

lmay@bizjournals.com

In a move that should help triple the number of homes that they build and renovate over the next five years, Cincinnati Habitat for Humanity and TriState Habitat for Humanity will merge to become a single affiliate.

The new organization will be known as Habitat for Humanity of Greater Cincinnati after the merger takes effect Jan. 1. It will cover: Hamilton, Butler, Clermont and Warren counties in Ohio; Boone, Campbell and Kenton counties in Kentucky; and Dearborn and Ohio counties in Indiana.

The merger should boost productivity and eliminate confusion for volunteers and donors, said Ed Lee, executive director of Cincinnati Habitat.

"We have been competing for the same pie so we have wasted energy on trying to build our own brands in the same media and development market," said Lee, who will be CEO of the merged organization. "Now we won't have to spend our time worrying about that. We become a single voice."

BIGGER BUDGET, BROADER REACH

Or as TriState Habitat Executive Director Dawn Stutz calls it: "the big freaking awesome Habitat for Humanity." Stutz will be vice president of operations after the merger.

The combined organization will have 23 employees and a budget of

about \$6 million that Lee expects to grow to \$10 million or more in the next five years. Habitat is funded by donations, loan repayments from the families it serves and revenue generated from its ReStores, which sell new and used donated building materials, appliances, home fixtures and furnishings at steeply discounted prices.

Currently, the two Habitat affiliates build and renovate homes for between 30 and 33 families each year in neighborhoods throughout the region. The goal is to increase that

number to 100 families per year by 2018. Companies with employees in the area the two groups serve already have expressed greater interest in working with the merged organization, Lee said.

BUILDING ON CLOSE RELATIONSHIP

"We hope and pray that potential donors understand what we're doing and that they get excited," said TriState Habitat board president Trey Clem, who will chair the merged organization's board.

Cincinnati Habitat board president Paul Knue noted the two groups already are working closely together: Cincinnati Habitat's new ReStore in Florence, for example, will open Nov. 10 at a site owned by TriState Habitat.

"These are kindred spirits and I think everybody's out to make it work and is very excited about the options and the opportunities," Knue said.



Lee



Stutz