

# PRESS RELEASE

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Photos Attached (3): the Rivas home before and after; Carlos & Edelmira holding their house keys



## “Habitat For Humanity + Hard Work = One-Of-A-Kind 30th Birthday”

Hillsboro, OR (August 2011) -

What do you want for your birthday? Say you are approaching the big 3-0. You are gainfully employed and have a couple of kids, but you are still living with your parents. In fact, your family of four, your sister and her two children, your brother, and your parents are all living in a 3-bedroom home together. You tried converting the garage into a 4<sup>th</sup> bedroom, but it is not insulated so too cold for comfort in the winter. Now, what do you want for your 30<sup>th</sup> birthday?

Carlos Rivas bought a house. His birthday morning started at the title company where he purchased a Willamette West Habitat for Humanity house. Sitting next to him at the table was his sister, Edelmira, who was also purchasing a Willamette West Habitat for Humanity house that day. They drove out to their new homes in Hillsboro and were surprised by the owners of the King City Grocery Outlet who were there to fill both kitchens with groceries.

Carlos may have bought a home on his birthday, but the journey to homeownership started much earlier. A cousin who is a Habitat homeowner told him about the program. He and Edelmira attended an orientation session in the fall of 2010 and in October received the life-changing news that they had both been accepted into the program. The homes Carlos and Edelmira purchased were not a hand out; they had to work hard to achieve the American Dream. After they were accepted, they headed out to the construction site and began putting in their sweat equity: 500 hours (per house) of helping Habitat build homes in Washington County before they could buy theirs. The homes eventually sold to the Rivas siblings with a zero-percent interest mortgage were in foreclosure and purchased by Willamette West Habitat for Humanity using Federal stimulus money. They were in deplorable condition and had to be gutted and rebuilt inside from top to bottom.

Before, Carlos paid his parents \$600 monthly for rent and utilities; his two boys (aged 2 & 4) spent their entire life sharing a bedroom with their parents. Today, Carlos is a homeowner with a monthly mortgage payment of \$623 for his 3-bedroom home. Edelmira, who was paying \$550 per month, is now paying \$415 per month for her mortgage, and her two children have their own rooms. In addition, the two homes, which were once foreclosed and vacant, will generate nearly \$4,600 a year in property taxes.

And all the while, while the Willamette West Habitat staff was helping Grocery Outlet and family members put groceries away, and everyone was hugging and crying, you could hear the gleeful shouts of 4-year-old Seyline in the background as she ran through her house and up and down her stairs, shouting “**THIS IS MY HOUSE...THIS IS MY BEDROOM...THIS IS MY HOUSE...THIS IS MY BEDROOM**” at the top of her little voice. When it suddenly struck her that she would no longer have to share a bedroom with her mother, she told her “*if you get lonely or scared at night mommy, you can come sleep with me.*”

When asked how he would ever top his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, Carlos replied that he never could. “*I can’t believe I own my own home, it’s a dream come true.*”

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### About Willamette West Habitat for Humanity

Willamette West Habitat for Humanity is dedicated to generating homeownership and benefiting our community by building simple, decent, affordable housing with an emphasis on building neighborhoods. Since 1988, we have completed 62 homes in Washington County, and look to complete eight more in 2011. Habitat works in partnership with low-income families, volunteers, donors, and organizations to receive donated materials, volunteer labor and generous financial gifts. Qualifying family’s receive a zero-percent interest rate and monthly payments structured to their income. Mortgage payments go into a fund which is then recycled back in to the community to build additional houses. For more information, visit us at [HabitatWest.org](http://HabitatWest.org).