



## Habitat for Humanity assistance program launched at Colorado Springs Veterans Day Parade

By: Liz Forster  
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Janet Risley joins other members of the Pikes Peak Habitat for Humanity group as they march in the annual Veterans Day Parade in downtown Colorado Springs Saturday, Nov. 4, 2017. The parade is held every year on the first Saturday of November. (The Gazette, Christian Murdock)

From the 100th birthday of the Army's Colorado Springs-based 4th Infantry Division, to 75 years of Navy Seabees, and 70 years of the U.S. Air Force, this year's Veterans Day parade celebrated military milestones.

One group dressed up as Doughboys and their German foes to commemorate the centennial of America entering World War I.

The 1½-hour parade stepped off at 9:30 a.m. from St. Vrain Street, flowed down spectator-lined South Tejon Street and ended at Vermijo Avenue. About 90 groups and floats took part, ranging from Fort Carson's Mounted Color Guard and 4th Infantry Division's marching band to local high schools' ROTCs to service dogs with the War Dog Memorial.

For one veteran riding on a float, Saturday's milestone was not about the past, but rather the future.

Rick Parker, an Army veteran, will receive a home in Fountain from Pikes Peak Habitat for Humanity through the organization's new Veteran Homebuild Program, which was launched at the parade.

"It's a lot of relief for me to have my own home in a really nice neighborhood," Parker said, his 12-year-old twin daughters Jasmine and Joslyn nodding excitedly beside him.

Parker, the first veteran to participate in the program, enlisted in 1974, serving five years before leaving the Army in 1979. Stationed at Fort Carson with the 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment, he worked primarily as a driver for his commanding officer.

After the military, Parker briefly moved back to the Midwest, then returned to Colorado Springs in 1984 to live near his wife's family.

Parker lives with his daughters in housing subsidized by Greccio Housing - a local nonprofit that provides housing for nearly 1,150 residents each year.

His income recently surpassed Greccio's limit, forcing him to search for other options for a home. Having not financed a home, car or other purchase in over 20 years, Parker struggled to apply for a loan.

His landlord suggested applying for Habitat for Humanity's Homeownership Program, which builds and sells homes at no profit with an affordable mortgage to eight to 10 people every year.

Laura Williams-Parish, the Habitat for Humanity chapter's spokeswoman, said the selection committee read Parker's application and saw it as an opportunity to not only help Parker but also inaugurate a program specifically to help the city's military community - a group they, so far, say they underserve.

"This is the next step for Rick toward a permanent home, and that's really great to help facilitate," said Williams-Parish.

"So many people here want to support our military, and we're trying to do that in any way we can," Habitat for Humanity's Chief Operations Officer Jeff White added.

<http://gazette.com/habitat-for-humanity-assistance-program-launched-at-colorado-springs-veterans-day-parade/article/1614622>

