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Sherika Eskridge '08 Helps Residents Achieve Goals for Their Communities

Helping people realize the dream of home ownership is just one part of the mission of Habitat for Humanity. Another main goal of the organization is to build stronger communities. Leading these efforts for Habitat in Charlotte, N.C., is Sherika Eskridge, a 2008 alumna of Gardner-Webb University. As neighborhood revitalization coordinator, she meets with homeowners to determine their goals and how to achieve them.

Photo of Sherika Eskridge

“I love my job, because I get to spend so much time in the community talking to different people,” Eskridge reflected.

One of her first steps is to survey the residents and conduct an analysis of the community’s strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results (SOAR). After the neighborhood decides its priorities, Eskridge either connects residents with a Habitat partner agency or writes a grant for funding to accomplish their goals. “One of the best parts of my job is receiving the grant and helping a community bring to life what it has put onto paper,” she assessed.

Eskridge, a native of Shelby, N.C., chose to attend Gardner-Webb because it was close to home, and she wanted the individual attention offered by a small campus. The University’s Christian foundation also aligned with her beliefs. She started out as a music major, playing double bass. However, she developed tendonitis and had to give up performing. She explored several majors before discovering sociology.

“Sociology gave me the option to look at several different vocations,” she observed. “I wanted to look at jobs where I could work with people—mentoring, counseling or facilitating.”

She has used these advising skills in all of the jobs she’s held since leaving Gardner-Webb. Before accepting the position at Habitat, she was state coordinator for a teen pregnancy prevention program, and in her first job, worked as a mentor in a program for parents and teenagers. In each role, she’s applied the theories she learned in her sociology classes.

A hands-on learner, she appreciated her sociology professors' style of teaching that involved class discussions and student presentations. All of the public speaking techniques she learned give her more confidence when she's facilitating group discussions or teaching classes as part of her job. "Dr. Dianne Sykes and Dr. Robert Munoz provided one-on-one interaction," Eskridge explained. "I like to talk through things. It is so much easier for me to retain information when I can say it back to someone."

Photo courtesy of Habitat for Humanity in
Charlotte