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Story: Cleaning Alleys & Building Community

Waist high grass in the backyard overwhelmed Kathy, a Woodland Heights resident. It made her feel hopeless about a situation that got out of control. Her lawn mower quit working and she didn't have the money to replace it. The front yard is decorated with carefully arranged potted plants and lawn art. It's not that Kathy doesn't care. She does. But living with her disabled husband made it difficult to keep up.

A few days before Habitat for Humanity's first Neighborhood Revitalization project, Rally in the Alley, Demita, a board member of the Woodland Heights Neighborhood Association, volunteered to meet other residents along her alley. She knocked on Kathy's door and the neighbor next door in an effort to raise awareness about the rally. Something happened between these neighbors that Demita never imagined.

When the man next door learned that Kathy needed help, he came over and cut down the tall grass. Kathy had never met him before and said, "This is the nicest thing anybody has ever done for me."

That afternoon, Kathy proudly showed off her freshly mowed yard. Demita realized the Rally in the Alley was already a success. In addition to making alleys clean and safe, Rally in the Alley was meant to build community. That was happening in a small way on one alley.

Later that night, Demita stayed to help Kathy with additional yardwork. Other neighbors saw the two women working and joined the effort. None of these people knew each other. By sunset, Kathy's yard was no longer an eyesore.

That evening, Kathy's husband passed away. The same neighbors who helped clean her yard came over when they saw emergency vehicles parked out front. At first Demita thought "This is so unfair! Why, God, did you give her such happiness earlier in the day, and then take it all away?" Then she realized that because of the yard clean-up, Kathy was introduced to neighbors who were supporting her in a time of need. Demita believes God had a plan all along.

By: Melissa Adler, Community Outreach Development Associate for Habitat for Humanity of Springfield, MO.

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About Habitat for Humanity of Springfield, Missouri

Habitat for Humanity of Springfield, Missouri (HFHS) believes every person in the Springfield and surrounding area deserves a decent place to live. As an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, HFHS impacts more than 130 households a year. Since 1988, HFHS has either built or renovated more than 490 homes, providing shelter for more than 998 men, women and children from Greene, Christian, and Webster Counties by helping people gain strength, stability and self-reliance through housing, including home construction, rehabilitation and repairs and by increasing access to improved shelter through products and programs. HFHS is a United Way of the Ozarks partner agency. Learn more, including official word marks and images, at habitatspringfieldmo.org/newsroom or at [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

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