

TRUMP SAYS MEDIA TOO FOCUSED ON FEUD, NOT HIS SUCCESSES. 11A

TUESDAY, JULY 4, 2017



THE DAILY TIMES 8A

OPEN FOR SUGGESTIONS



FAMILY SERVICES DIRECTOR FOR Habitat for Humanity Blount County Sarah Hooks talks to Jason Gattis about the number of people eligible for affordable housing in Blount County.

TOM SHERLIN | THE DAILY TIMES

Blount Habitat for Humanity hosts event to develop growth plan

Woman tries to stop cycle of abuse

DEAR ABBY: I recently moved to Texas and met my teenage niece for the first time. After I got there I learned she had been molested by her



DEAR ABBY

mother's father at the age of 3. He had also molested her mother when she was a child. "Grandpa" is currently serving a life sen-

tence in prison.

Abby, my niece has some issues. Her parents caught her sexting twice that I know of and took her phone away for a period of time. She was also accused of touching her 8-year-old niece and was ordered to knock it off.

She told me she showers with her mother and asked to shower with me. When I refused, she became abusive. When I tried to tell my brother she needs professional help, he told me to mind my own business.

If I report this, I risk never



For 2017, Blount County's Area Median Income for a family of four is \$63,900. Thirty-one percent of households earn 50 percent of this or below. Forty-two percent of households earn 60 percent or below



Blount's fair market price for a two-bedroom apartment is \$811, the third highest in Tennessee. To afford that, a person would have to earn \$32,440 a year or \$15.60 an hour



HUD estimates 12 million households pay more than 50 percent of their annual income for housing. Thirty percent is considered an affordable amount

Information from the Department of Housing and Urban Development

Guests had the chance to check out a recently completed Habitat for Humanity home at an open house Thursday afternoon at an event whose purpose was to start conversations about the need for more affordable housing in Blount County.

On hand at the West Howe Street home in Alcoa were Vanessa Sparks, Kathy Jackson and Sarah Hooks, all of Habitat for Humanity, and a representative from USDA Rural Development. USDA has come on board as a partner with Habitat to help provide financing for home buyers.

Sparks, development director for Blount County Habitat for Humanity, said close to 120 invitations for the event went out to various city and county government officials.

She said as workforce development brings in more industry, the community will have to address and meet housing needs.

"We would like to start discussion with workforce development officials to show everybody what their role is," she said. "Maybe at some point we can start a task force to start those conversations to see what we can all do together."

Nonprofits, the private sector and public sector all have a role to play, Sparks and Jackson said. "We are having some phenomenal growth, really," said Jackson, Habitat's executive director. "We need to strategically plan."

Jackson added she doesn't think the situation is critical, but the time to act is now.

Habitat put together a pamphlet providing statistics about Blount County families. For 2017, the Area Median Income for a family of four is \$63,900.

Thirty-one percent of households earn 50 percent of the AMI or below, which is \$31,950. Forty-two percent of households earn 60 percent of the AMI or below, which is \$38,340. A gross annual income of \$42,280 is required for a three-



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY'S VANESSA Sparks talks to Tony Thompson about housing during an open house Thursday at one of Habitat's recently completed homes in Alcoa.

'We would like to start discussion with workforce development officials to show everybody what their role is.'

Vanessa Sparks
Blount County Habitat for Humanity development director

bedroom apartment to be affordable. These figures are supplied by Housing and Urban Development.

MAKING ENDS MEET

When it comes to renting, Blount County has the third highest fair market rents in Tennessee. The county's fair market price for a two-bedroom apartment is \$811. To afford that, a person would have to earn \$32,440 per year or \$15.60 an hour.

According to HUD, 30 percent of gross monthly income is considered an affordable rental, including utilities.

But the agency estimates there are 12 million renter

and homeowner households that pay more than 50 percent of their annual income for housing.

Sparks said in many cases, the mortgages people would pay for a Habitat for Humanity home end up being less than a rent payment. They have entered into lending partnerships to help achieve that.

The home in Alcoa that hosted the open house will have its closing later this month. It sits next door to another Habitat home where the owner has moved in. The Women Build project for this organization is also underway.

There are also plans to start two more builds this fall. Habitat has about 10 more lots on which to build and will be looking for other locations soon.

Regina Jennings, board member for Habitat for Humanity, was also present at this event. She served a three-year term and then resigned for three more. She said as more jobs are created and more people move here, there have to be more affordable options. SCCY Industries will be adding 350 new jobs in Blount County.

"We all need to work together," she said.

again, but I love my niece and I'm afraid for her. Her mother has already limited my contact with her, and I'm afraid Mom needs help as much as my niece. Please help. None of this makes sense to me. Why won't they get her help? —**DESPERATELY NEEDS HELP**

DEAR DESPERATELY: They won't get help because it appears that in their lives inappropriate sexual behavior may have become an ingrained family affair. You are right that the mother needs as much help as your niece, and your brother should not be covering for his wife. You should report what's going on to child protective services. While you probably won't be thanked for it, you may be able to interrupt the cycle of incest and molestation.

DEAR ABBY: I have a great-paying job telecommuting. I know the idea of sitting around in pajamas all day seems wonderful, but I'm going stir crazy.

I live in a very small town with no fancy co-share offices or trendy coffee shops. There's one fast-food place that allows 20 minutes of internet use, but that's about it. How can I stay productive and motivated and not feel so much like a hermit crab? By Friday, I don't want to be at home anymore. —**GOING CRAZY AT HOME**

DEAR GOING CRAZY: If there is another telecommuter in your town, perhaps you could compare notes with him or her. If your problem is getting an internet connection or finding Wi-Fi, consider using the public library as an additional site from which to work. That way, you wouldn't be trapped in your home feeling so isolated. If there isn't one in your community, ask your boss if you can change your schedule occasionally. This might allow you to take breaks and do something like take a powerwalk. For most people, work involves more than labor — there is also a social component involved. If that kind of stimulation/interaction is what you're craving, you may have to change jobs.

CONTACT DEAR Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.