



“Raise the Roof”: Habitat for Humanity-Powhatan kicks off 25th year with a music and history celebration

Habitat for Humanity-Powhatan, founded by a devoted group of 15 individuals, most of whom were affiliated with local churches, will honor that history on Sunday, Oct. 26, from 3 to 6 p.m.

Habitat-Powhatan will kick off its 25th anniversary with a late Sunday afternoon ticketed event called “Raise the Roof,” which will feature a catered supper by 1933; recognition of Habitat-Powhatan’s founders and volunteers; and performances by two iconic gospel groups.

Powhatan’s Henley Family Gospel Singers have been performing since 1961 — long before their immensely talented cousin D’Angelo rose to fame. In 2011, the group issued their first CD, “Done Deal.” produced by the group’s gifted guitarist Marlon Cox, who passed away in 2023. The group’s album, as described by music reviewer Craig Belcher, embraced its Southern gospel roots but with a modern twist thanks to Cox, as heard in their recording of the song, “John the Revelator.”

The Legendary Ingramettes, known as “Richmond’s first family of gospel,” has a long affiliation with Powhatan County.

In the 1960s and 1970s evangelist Maggie Ingram and The Ingramettes began an association with the various churches and organizations in Powhatan. Powhatan became one of their favorite places in which to travel and sing, according to Ingram’s oldest daughter, the Rev. Dr. Almeta Ingram-Walker. They were introduced to another family singing group, Ralland Robinson and the Keys of Heaven of Powhatan. They appeared many times for the Keys of Heaven, and as a result, they were invited to Little Zion Baptist Church of Powhatan by the late Rosetta Smothers. They also were invited to bring their music ministry to the St. Francis de Sales School in Powhatan and performed for the community there. They also have appeared at Second Antioch Baptist Church and the Unity Community Church.

The group was founded by Ingram as a way to keep her family together through hardship by teaching them to love God and dedicate their lives to serving others. Ingram taught her five children to sing while they were still very young.

Originally from Miami, Fla., Ingram moved her family to Richmond in 1961, following what she described as a divine calling. It was a harrowing journey through the pre-Civil Rights South, but the Ingram family's arrival here was met with love and acceptance.

Ingram and her children soon took flight as a result of an invitation from the world-famous and Richmond-based Harmonizing Four Quartet. That invitation was to open for “The Queen of Gospel” Shirley Caesar at the Mosque (now the Landmark Theater), and they soon began singing at many of the local churches and surrounding counties in Virginia.

Ingram developed Alzheimer's in her later years and gracefully passed the leadership of the group to Ingram-Miller, prior to Ingram's death in 2015.

A powerful singer in her own right, Ingram-Miller is now backed by her sister-in-law Carrie Ingram Jackson; Ingram's goddaughter Valerie Stewart; and Jaccarri Woodson. A rock-solid rhythm section that includes Kenneth Heath, Calvin “Kool-Aid” Curry and Patrick Newby, rounds out the group. In 2022, the National Endowment for the Arts named them National Heritage Fellows, the highest honor the U.S. government bestows on folk and traditional artists. As Heritage Fellows, they

join the ranks of other prominent artists such as B.B. King, The Blind Boys of Alabama and Shirley Caesar. They also have been performed at the Lincoln Center and at The Kennedy Center.

Tickets to this Habitat fundraiser (2 for \$90 and \$50 for one) and 8-seat table sponsorships are still available.

Please visit <https://www.habitatpowhatan.org/anniversary-concert>.