

Dreams Do Come True

Brahim's and Hasnaa's Story

Anyone who's had to finance the purchase of their home knows the rigors of that process and the additional amount of money necessary to repay that loan over time. Brahim says although he and his wife Hasnaa long wanted to have a home for themselves and their two children, he never even approached a bank about a mortgage, knowing that his minimum wage salary would not work in the bank's formula for lending and that even if it did, the tenets of his cultural heritage prohibit him from making the interest payments charged by a bank. For years, therefore, he thought the dream of owning a home in western Mass would never come true.



Brahim was born and lived in Morocco until he was 24 years old, when he came to the United States. He came to Sunderland where a support network of friends helped him and his family with a place to live while they got established. He worked with local agencies to learn English and then attended Greenfield Community College where he studied while working his job in the manufacturing field.



Hearing about Pioneer Valley Habitat through staff at the International Language Institute where he was taking English classes he said, "it gives you hope to know that you can live in a house in a fairly short time and for way less money." He had been steadily employed at the same job for several years, and was in a good position to apply to become a Habitat homeowner. When he and Hasnaa were not chosen in the first lottery for an Easthampton home, or for an Amherst home that came up a year later, he remained undaunted and told his wife, "One day it will probably be me!"

He was right, and another year later his name came up in two lotteries, one for a Greenfield home and one for a home in Amherst. He and Hasnaa chose Amherst, where Brahim describes doing his sweat equity "like working a second, part time job." He is happy to do it because, as he says, "the happiest thing is that you are going to own it, have your own space, paint it any color you like. It's your own house. "

He sees their future home as a gift for their children. Their current living situation does not allow them to live the way they would like. "They want a better life," he says of his son, age 5 and daughter, 2 ½ . "They deserve it."



And what does he think now when he thinks back on all that's happened? "So dreams do come true!" he says with a wide grin.