

# Building a Sanctuary

## Christa's story

Growing up in the '80s in Plymouth, MA, Christa remembers that although her mom didn't have much money, she always donated to Habitat for Humanity. And still does!

Christa tells the story of herself as a single mom with a young daughter ten years ago driving by the Habitat homes under construction on Stanley Street in South Amherst and thinking to herself, "I wonder how you get one of those houses?" She kept looking on line, never felt she made enough money as the sole provider for herself and her daughter. Her mom would push her, "why don't you look at a Habitat house?"



Christa's housing situation became more difficult as time went on. Her rent increased on a regular basis at a pace far faster than her increase in wages. She and her daughter were forced to move to a larger space where having housemates would defray their housing costs, and she describes a series of housemate situations that ranged from uncomfortable to unmanageable.

As a close friend of the farmers who started and still run the Simple Gifts farm, Christa joined their CSA in North Amherst and heard about the Habitat home that was slated for the edge of the property. Christa tells how she "...jumped on it, looked into it, saw I was close financially, but it turned out I wasn't quite ready."

Subsequent to coming to this realization she received an email from Pioneer Valley Habitat Executive Director Megan McDonough asking her whether she'd be interested in applying for a smaller, less expensive home Habitat would be building next in Greenfield. She applied and was successful this time and has come to feel that this was the answer to her housing needs that was meant to be. Building alongside her, a friend who is familiar with Christa's trying housemate circumstances commented, "you're building your sanctuary."

With the end of construction mere weeks away, Christa looks forward to creating a beautiful space, to living alone with her daughter again. She's excited to be living on solar power, no utilities, not contributing to huge carbon footprint.



Her dreams? To start gardening, someday build a deck. She describes how building her own home has helped her confidence level for fixing things to grow. She also says working with community volunteers has been a blast and that there are some connections she hopes to maintain.

And she sums up beautifully what it means to finally own a home of her own: "If your home isn't a sanctuary, where else do you really have to go?"