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## Big News on the Small Home Front



sharing and coordinating of conversations alongside the Habitat staff have shaped the understanding we now have of opportunities and barriers for the small home revolution, and have helped move these innovative efforts forward. We are grateful for their thoughtful leadership and contributions!

Through the generosity of a local donor, Pioneer Valley Habitat has taken ownership of a small lot on Garfield Ave. in Florence - a potential pilot site. We look forward to breaking ground on this small home prototype soon!

In our last newsletter, we featured the work Pioneer Valley Habitat is doing to convene pioneers in crafting a revolutionary approach to building small, simple and green homes locally. Since then, groups of architects and planners, representatives from municipal offices and the financial sector, academics and future homeowners and many others have gathered to share ideas for turning dreams of building small into a working reality. And taking a lead in this effort have been four interns with a passion for living sustainably: Pam Kimball (who has since the end of her internship agreed to stay on as Small Homes Project Coordinator), Maggie Kraus, Monika Sharma and Congke Li. Their months of research, information



### Get Involved!

Visit our website to  
sign up and volunteer!



140 Pine St Room 9, Florence, MA | (413) 586-5430 | www.pvhabitat.org



## Summer Newsletter 2017

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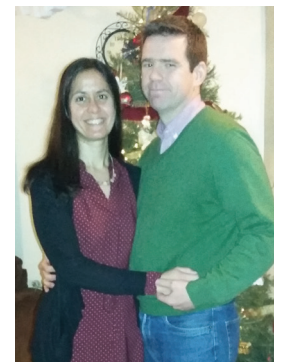
Working with our many partners, Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity builds strength, stability and self-reliance through affordable homeownership in Hampshire and Franklin Counties. We are an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, an ecumenical organization that envisions a world where everyone has a decent and affordable place to call home.

### Looking Forward:

- » **1st Wednesday of each month, 6:30pm**  
New volunteer orientation, Habitat office, Florence
- » **3rd Saturday of each month, 9am**  
New volunteer orientation, Habitat office, Florence
- » **Sunday, September 10, 10:30am**  
Spin for Habitat at 50/50 Fitness, Hadley
- » **Wednesday, September 13, 5:30pm**  
New volunteer orientation, 170 Main, Greenfield
- » **Monday, September 25, 6pm**  
Habitat annual meeting, Esselon Café, Hadley
- » **Tuesday, November 28, all day**  
Giving Tuesday, online
- » **Saturday, December 9th, 1-4 pm**  
6th annual Gingerbread Build, Eastworks Building, Easthampton

## Stability for the Next Stage: The Speeks Tell Their Habitat Homeownership Story

In the spring of 2007, John Speek was driving around Turners Falls, not far from the cramped two bedroom apartment he and his wife Christine shared with their three children. Not for the first time, he was ruminating on the fact that their living space was not adequate for their family. Little did he know how soon they would become even more crowded – within the year Christine would be pregnant with twins. He was hitting one wall after another as he tried to puzzle out his “impossible situation.” They needed larger living quarters but had no prospects for additional income, and any larger apartments for the same price were in appalling condition. Bank after bank had turned them down for a mortgage, saying that the ratio of their debt from putting themselves through college to the income John made as a teacher simply was not in their favor.



Then John turned onto L Street and saw the sign, in front of a construction site. Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity was building a three-bedroom home and the sign announced that they had just re-opened the application process for a family to live there. For a minute, John's heart rose in hope, but then he thought to himself, “No, that's not the answer. Habitat for Humanity is for people who are truly very low income, for the poorest of the poor.” He couldn't help but take a second look though, and thought how perfect it seemed to be – small but big enough, in a good location, holding the promise of solar panels that would help defray the cost to live in it.



Both John and Christine knew the value of a home to a family, but from different childhood experiences. Christine's mother had come from Thailand and although the family grew up in low income circumstances, they were able to remain in the same Connecticut home over time, offering a sense of stability. John's family also knew difficult economic times. In contrast to Christine, he and his family

“bounced around a lot” and he craved but never felt as a child a sense of home as a place of safety and security. They wanted something different for their own family. This strong urge compelled John to tell Christine about the Habitat house

(continued inside)



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## Item Wishlist:

- » Sharpie markers
- » Painter's tape
- » Computer speakers
- » Office speaker phones
- » Crosscut shredder
- » Small couch and end table for our new office space

## Volunteer Wishlist:

- » Social Media Coordinator
- » Experienced Construction Site Supervisors
- » More volunteer builders in Greenfield!
- » Inventory Manager

## The Speeks continued...

when he got home, and after some phone calls and conversations they realized that their modest but stable financial profile made them eligible to apply. Indeed they were good candidates to become Habitat homeowners.

After a year of long Saturdays working their hours of sweat equity (their church responsibilities and work made any other days impossible for them to work on their home, and relatives came each weekend to care for their three children while they worked at the site), they were on the brink of becoming proud homeowners. More than that, though, they had acquired a deep sense of appreciation for all that goes into building a home, and pride in the new skill set they had acquired along the way. When they didn't know how they could afford a dining room table, Christine thought, "If I can help build this house, I could build something like that!" She and John tell of her prowess in constructing a beautiful wood table and subsequently her fearless forays into fixing the refrigerator and the dishwasher and making other household repairs as the years went on. "There's real empowerment when you have a hand in building your own home," she says.

Now, nine years later, the Speeks are moving from their Habitat home into a larger home in Belchertown. They can still relate in detail the many contributions made by companies and individuals to that Turners Falls home. John describes feeling a strong sense of stewardship from the gifts they feel they received, saying that they could not have done it without Habitat's investment. That starter home "...gave us the stability for the next stage," says John. "College for five kids, being able to have a new home large enough to host a sibling who needs a place to live now and being in a sound financial position. It was everything we ever wanted."

*"Living Habitat's humble way has set the bar for us."*

- John Speek

## Letter from the Executive Director

Why I am a Golden Hammer Giver ...

It's been a little over four years since Pioneer Valley Habitat welcomed me into the fold, and since then I have met so many amazing people. People who give of their time, talents and treasure in a myriad of ways – entering donations into a database in the office, taking homeowners shopping for appliances, writing \$10 or \$1,000 checks when we send out a solicitation, leading construction volunteers, giving legal advice, donating windows and doors, sweeping the floors in the office, giving donations in memory of loved ones lost... I could go on and on.

It is this spirit of giving back that inspires me each day to do my job and is why I chose to be a part of the "Golden Hammer Club," making a recurring monthly donation. Regularly scheduled contributions help the organization plan for the future and help me plan giving back into my personal budget. I like knowing that the organizations I care about, like Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity, can depend on me.

Will you join me in building the strength and stability of Pioneer Valley Habitat with a monthly gift?

*"It's not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives. It's what we do consistently."*

- Anthony Robbins

In gratitude,

Megan McDonough



## Summer Golden Hammer Challenge is ON!



**Help sustain the work of Pioneer Valley Habitat with regular, long-term giving AND be part of making a \$4,000 contribution from an anonymous friend of Habitat possible!**

Golden Hammer givers are people who commit to setting up an automatic monthly payment to support the work of Habitat. These donors provide us with a sustaining stream of revenue that helps us to keep our construction work on track and on time with monthly income we can count on. Currently, 23 donors – both individuals and couples – have made this critical commitment to Habitat's work, several of them for many years.

We'd like to see how close we can come to doubling that number. Are you thinking this might be a good time to step up your commitment to making sure families in western Massachusetts have access to decent, affordable homes and the strength, stability and self-reliance that comes with homeownership?

**For every new Golden Hammer donor between now and our Annual Meeting on September 25, 2017, a generous contributor will give \$200, up to 20 new donors.**

## Hammerless Helping

Are you interested in supporting Habitat's work of building affordable homes but are not able, for whatever reason, to contribute on one of our active construction sites? Consider one of these fun alternatives!

### • Spin for Habitat

Have you wondered whether Spinning™ is a sport for you? Are you already a Spinner who would like to spend time doing what you love in the company of people supporting affordable homeownership? Join a high-energy 45-minute Spin class at the studio of our friends 50/50 Fitness at 251 Russell St. in Hadley, graciously hosted and led by PV Habitat's own Volunteer Coordinator Lindsay Berry. This fun, Habitat-fact-filled indoor ride will leave you feeling ready to face your day AND more knowledgeable about your local Habitat! The class is FREE, a donation at a level of your choosing is encouraged.



**Space is limited! Go to [5050fitnessnutrition.com](http://5050fitnessnutrition.com) to register.**

**Sunday, September 10, 10:30am**

### • Sixth Annual Gingerbread Build



**Saturday, December 9, 1:00 - 4:00pm**

Some come for the friendly competition. Some want to make a creative statement using dark chocolate roof tiles and lollipop trees. Some people just like the festive atmosphere and the opportunity to support Pioneer Valley Habitat in a whimsical way...

It's time to register (\$100 for your team of four) for this year's Gingerbread Build at the Eastworks Building in Easthampton! We supply the gingerbread and icing, you supply the decorative supplies and creative ideas. You could be in line to win a fabulous award and the admiration of your confectionery homebuilding peers!

**For more information about award categories and other details or to register, go to [www.pvhabitat.org/events/gingerbread-build](http://www.pvhabitat.org/events/gingerbread-build) or contact the office at 413-586-5430 or [info@pvhabitat.org](mailto:info@pvhabitat.org).**



## What's Happening on the Build Sites?

The first walls were raised in July at a duplex on North Pleasant St. in Amherst and a single family home in Greenfield amid much fanfare and outpourings of community support. Construction will be ongoing until spring 2018 – so please come lend a hand! Orientations for new volunteers and sign-up dates for returning volunteers are on our VolunteerUP calendar [www.pvhabitat.org/ways-to-volunteer](http://www.pvhabitat.org/ways-to-volunteer).

