

"You can always find answers."

Ruth's Story

"The run is done, we don't have to run anymore."

This was the first thing Ruth said when asked how it felt to have been selected as the head of household who would spend the next year or so building her own home and then assuming an affordable mortgage to pay for it. As for her children, Ruth describes how they are dreaming about their house, about a treehouse, "they have so many dreams..."



Since 2014, when Ruth emigrated to the U.S. from Honduras as the wife of an American and mother of two, her life was characterized by unexpected hardship and instability. Far from her family and support system, when Ruth's domestic life was upended she found herself adrift with two young daughters, moving through a series of shelters and temporary living situations in the Boston area before it became clear that there were few opportunities for them there.

Once settled in a shelter apartment in western Mass, Ruth secured regular work in the food service industry and began to take college classes. It is no surprise that she is studying mathematics because, as she puts it, math "is a way to find answers, you can always find answers." Finding the answers she needs to forge a life of stability and self-reliance for herself and her children is a hallmark of this remarkable and resilient young woman.

Ruth's future home arrived on a flatbed truck in two pieces, built in a factory in Vermont. Her home and a second home next to it represent Pioneer Valley Habitat's first foray into modular homebuilding, an innovation supported by a grant from the Community Foundation of Western Mass. Ruth is helping Pioneer Valley Habitat pilot a novel approach to constructing affordable houses to see whether it is a model suitable for further adaptation within Habitat's volunteer-driven construction arena. Her house has also been dubbed "The House That Faith Built," a reference to a coordinated effort by the local interfaith community to raise funds for the construction of her home and for the many volunteer hours contributed by members of local congregations.

Building her own home has been a great experience for Ruth who describes her Habitat experience in this way: "Things don't come for free, you have to work for them. Owning something makes you feel better about yourself. I want to learn everything related to my home. I want to be able to do things without turning to someone for help."

