

Summer Newsletter 2020

Volume 18, Issue 2

Summer 2020

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 place to live.

Looking Forward:

- » **1st Wednesday of each month, 6:30 pm**
New volunteer orientation, Zoom
- » **3rd Saturday of each month, 9 am**
New volunteer orientation, Zoom
- » **Tuesday, Sept 22, 6:30 pm**
PVHH Annual Meeting, Zoom
- » **Thursday, Oct 15, 6 pm**
Small Homes, Big Movement, author Sheri Koones and PVHH staff on small home living, Zoom
- » **Saturday, Dec 5th – Saturday, Dec 12**
Gingerbread Build at Home – pickup locations TBD, confectionery crafting at home

Habitat's Roots: Racial Equality and Radical Inclusivity

Often when people hear Habitat for Humanity mentioned, the first association they have is Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter. While the former president and first lady together are certainly the most familiar face of the organization and walk the walk of building community one home at a time (still! as nonagenarians!), there is a lot of history to Habitat that is less well known, foundational to Habitat's deep ongoing commitment to social justice through affordable homeownership.



Photo courtesy of Koinonia Farm.

Habitat evolved out of Koinonia Farm*, an intentional integrated community in Georgia founded in the late 1940s on the principles of racial equality and radical inclusivity. This was highly unusual for its time and place and threatening to some who sought to separate black and white, rich and poor. In 1976, Habitat for Humanity was founded by Koinonia supporters Millard and Linda Fuller, who had been a part of Koinonia's transition to a more outwardly focused Fund for Humanity, and because they felt compelled to focus on a housing ministry. The Fullers' vision was simple: to create a world where everyone has a decent place

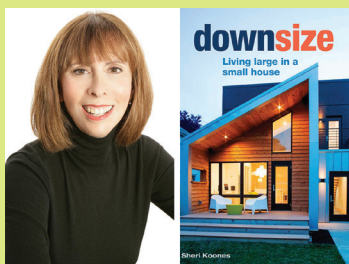
to live. The first Habitat homes were built alongside future homeowners who were descendants of slaves and who had not been approved for mortgages or bank loans because of racism in banking. Since those early days of seeking equity housing, the organization has worked with future homeowners and the community to build homes for more than seven million people worldwide. The Fullers' vision still guides the organization today: Habitat for Humanity is a global leader in building opportunity through life-changing housing solutions.

Having a decent, affordable place to call home is a matter of equity and opportunity and is the birthright of every human being. It can be transformative, and the lack of it is an injustice. It is the commitment to these ideals that always has been and will continue to be the very heart of Habitat's work.

"What the poor need is not charity but capital, not case- workers, but co- workers. And what the rich need is a wise, honorable and just way of divesting themselves of their overabundance. The Fund for Humanity will meet both of these needs."

– Clarence Jordan, Koinonia's founder, recognizing the need to expand the Farm's principles in 1968 into a wider reaching funding mechanism

* For more information on Koinonia Farm today, go to www.koinoniafarm.org.



Small Homes, Big Movement

Home ownership is especially important in times of uncertainty, and small, simple, energy-efficient homes are an important piece in larger movements for housing stability and equity. Join us to hear from keynote speaker, author Sheri Koones, and from PVHH for updates on building homes and a small home movement during a pandemic. October 15th, online event followed by audience Q&A.

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*"When you see something
that is not right, not fair,
not just, you have to
speak up. You have to
say something; you have
to do something."*

– John Lewis, civil rights leader
and politician, 1940-2020

New Homeowners on Glendale Road!

It wasn't a typical home dedication, but it was celebratory nonetheless. On Thursday 30 July, dozens of friends, supporters, funders and faith community members came together on a Zoom screen to share in the joy of the impending homeownership of Bonnie and Miguel and their family. Two weeks later, on August 13th, they did indeed take ownership of their new home on Glendale Road, joining two other families in Habitat homes on a shared driveway under a grove of towering pines.

It must be said: we wouldn't have been celebrating in July had it not been for the generous donation of two anonymous donors who stepped forward back in April when the pandemic threw our construction schedule into disarray. Their challenge to raise \$4,000 was met two to one by the equally generous Habitat community, allowing us to bring in outside contractors to do work that would ordinarily have been done by our faithful Smith Vocational School trades students, college and community groups and our dedicated regular volunteers. Please know that financial support then and now has been critical to keeping families moving toward their homeownership goals, thank you!

Congratulations to Bonnie and Miguel and their family on becoming Pioneer Valley Habitat's 46th homeowners!



"There are no words to describe this feeling of being able to have a place and to have all these memories embedded physically, kinesthetically - in the wood, in the nails, in the concrete... We just have all this heart and spirit and support."

– Bonnie, new homeowner

Letter from the Director

Friends,

The pandemic has turned all our lives upside down, for some more than others. The current crisis has laid bare stark economic and racial inequalities in our society. People of color have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic – dying and being infected at greater rates (www.cdc.gov) and facing greater financial impacts as we reach record levels of unemployment. But inequalities in health and economic outcomes existed before Covid-19 changed our lives – it's one of the reasons we do the work we do. We know that safe, stable housing can change lives for the better and we need to take action to increase access to homeownership.

In addition to continuing our work to build homes, the past six months have been a time for charting new paths and reflecting on change. As a part of this effort our team of volunteers, interns and staff have:

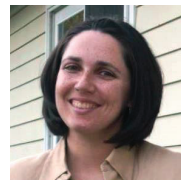
- surveyed Habitat homeowners from the last 30 years about how homeownership has affected them and what we could do better
- interviewed a sample of key donors and supporters to better understand why and how Habitat can help them make a difference in the community
- gathered demographic data on our staff and leadership to compare to Habitat homeowners and the region to inform efforts to walk the walk, and not just talk the talk of being inclusive

It's one of the reasons I know that 96% of Habitat homeowners feel more financially secure because of homeownership and that Habitat donors care immensely about these first-time homebuyers and their families. I also know that Habitat homeowners are more racially diverse than Hampshire/Franklin counties, but our leadership and staff are not. We have done good work and we have more work to do!

The pandemic can be "a portal to a new world" (Arundhati Roy) and I would like to think this new world is one where everyone has a decent place to call home.

In gratitude,

Megan McDonough, Executive Director



A Spring and Summer Like No Other

Anyone who knows Habitat volunteers knows that they are a hardy, dedicated, determined bunch with the ability to innovate as necessary. These past few months, when put to the test, they showed that spirit more than ever. Small crews of the regular faithful, observing strict and often cumbersome health and safety regulations, returned to the Habitat worksites to keep construction as on schedule as possible. Outside contractors partnered with us at reduced or no cost to help move things along.

One such contractor, Jason Greene, volunteered his time and expertise as a house painter at the urging of his teenage son. Jackson Greene is a very talented young painter in his own right and was determined to offer his skill as a volunteer for Habitat, but since he was not old enough to do so on his own, a parent was required accompany him. When Jackson lobbied his dad to join with him to help a family finish their affordable home, Jason was moved by his son's passion and determination to make good on his own long-held intention of volunteering for Habitat, with the added benefit of spending time with his son. Jason says that doing the work together and offering advice to those new to painting was fun. "It's a great lesson for a younger person – to have people in their 40's, their 50's, their 60's look to Jackson for instruction and encouragement...he can start to figure out 'where do I fit in, how can I help out' in his community. He learns he's skilled, he's capable!" Jackson has been a great inspiration to many already.



Thank you to ALL of our hardy construction volunteers and partner contractors who have worked under difficult conditions to keep hope alive for families building their future homes with Pioneer Valley Habitat.

Small Homes in YOUR Home: Gingerbread Build 2020!

The crickets are chirping, cool breezes ruffle the leaves in the evening...fall is in the air. And once we hit autumn full on, you know the question on everyone's mind: When will this year's Gingerbread Build take place?? Well, maybe not *everyone's* mind, and maybe the question is more *where* will the Gingerbread Build take place, but whatever the case, GB is coming soon!

Yes, we're on for 2020! This year, teams will pick up their supplies at a designated location and have a week to design and build their mini masterpieces. At home. Judges will make their determinations of winners in each of a dozen categories from submitted photos. Keep a sharp eye out for more information in October and November, including logistical details, award categories and some of the fabulous prizes that will go to winning entries and all youth participants. It's not too early to start dreaming up your cutting-edge confectionery cathedral or cottage, competition is sure to be as stiff as the egg white meringue snowdrifts in your gingerbread home's front yard.



What's happening on the build sites?



We celebrated via Zoom the raising of the first walls on the final home on PVHH's Glendale Rd Northampton project in late June, a zero net possible 2-bedroom home. Since then the future home of Hamid and Fatima has been framed and the roof trusses installed. On to siding, roofing, interior framing, windows and doors, plumbing and electrical.



We have also begun work on a 3-bedroom home on West Pelham Road in Shutesbury. We welcomed future homeowner Chuck and his daughters at a virtual wall raising ceremony in mid-July and have since then framed the home and are now working on framing interior walls and making the house weather tight.

As noted in the article on this page, our usual community volunteering on the construction site is currently suspended due to safety restrictions imposed by the conditions of the pandemic. For updates, go to www.pvhabitat.org/covid-19/.

Donate your car.



(877) 277-4344
carsforhomes.org

So you can't volunteer on the construction site right now, but maybe there's another way you can support affordable homebuilding. Do you have an aging vehicle that's ready for trash or trade? Turn your old car into kitchen cabinets for a family in need of a home! Or maybe a window or two to bring sunlight into the new home of a first-time home owning family!

Check out Habitat's Cars for Homes program by going to pvhabitat.org/donate/cars-for-homes.



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Habitat's Modular Homes Garner National Attention

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, Pioneer Valley Habitat is in a select group of top builders in the nation who have certified one or more homes that meet or exceed Zero Energy Ready Home guidelines for excellence in performance and energy efficiency. The DOE selected Pioneer Valley Habitat as a 2020 Zero Energy Ready Home Housing Innovation Award Winner in its Affordable category. The award recognizes the two zero net possible modular homes on Glendale Road, completed in 2019 and now occupied by two young families.

We are grateful to the Western MA Community Foundation for its support of this project.



"Housing Innovation Award winners such as Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity are leading a major housing industry transformation to zero energy ready homes. This level of performance is the home of the future because it improves the way Americans live by substantially reducing or eliminating utility bills, ensuring engineered comfort way beyond traditional homes, protecting health with a comprehensive package of indoor air quality measures, and helping maximize the largest investment of a lifetime."

*– Sam Rashkin, Chief Architect,
U.S. DOE Building Technologies Office*

Get Involved!

Visit our website to
sign up and volunteer!



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