

Winter Newsletter 2021

Volume 19, Issue 1

Winter 2021

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, online, sign up at www.pvhabitat.org/ways-to-volunteer
- » **Monday, March 8-15**
Honoring National Women Build Week, see article
- » **Friday, March 12**
Deadline for Applications, 3 BR home in Pelham
- » **TBD, Spring**
Dedication of homes in Northampton and Shutesbury
- » **TBD, Spring**
Groundbreaking for two homes in Pelham

Honoring Women in Construction: National Women Build Week - March 8-15, 2021

You might have some idea of the typical volunteer on a Habitat construction site in the dead of winter – measuring, cutting and installing siding in 8" of snow, a brisk wind blowing. If you're picturing a bundled up, spunky, retired psychologist with a twinkle in her eye, you must know Judith Souweine (aka "Jude" to her friends). You might also imagine that Jude must have spent time during her life on a construction project or maybe she has extensive knowledge of homebuilding techniques and that's what compelled her to brave the elements to build with Habitat. In fact, Judith will tell you that it's all Walt Kohler's doing. Walt, Pioneer Valley's longtime Building Committee chair and volunteer construction supervisor, showed up to Judith's retirement party two years ago with a present for her, the thing he knew she'd be needing more than anything in the coming years: A hardhat with her name on it.

"From there," according to Judith, "I was all in! There was no turning back."

While it's true Judith is no stranger to power tools (woodworking has been a hobby for decades), she landed for the first time on a Habitat build site with next to no homebuilding experience and has expressed gratitude for all the support she's received as she builds her skills on site. Now, after almost two years, she is considered a "regular" and works a weekly shift as part of the small crew that has kept continuity in Habitat building during the pandemic. Early on she assisted on the building of the two modular homes in Northampton, and once construction began in Shutesbury she shifted to that project, closer to her Amherst home.

Back in Northampton, where Pioneer Valley Habitat is building the fourth and final home in the Glendale Road project, Donna Cowan and Julie Rosenshein have become regular members of that crew. Like Judith, they too speak of the supportive environment, the camaraderie of working as part of a team to accomplish a goal that is sometimes beyond their comfort zone. "I am finding it a wonderful learning experience," Donna says, "and can't say enough about the other volunteers and supervisors being patient and ever so willing to teach me all the things I do not know and to keep teaching me when I forget!" And if you needed more convincing, Julie pays her construction mentors a high compliment when she tells us, "in all sincerity, Habitat is one of the best organizations I've ever been part of."

Currently, with restrictions due to increased health and safety protocols onsite, we are not able to bring new volunteers on to build. But this is a good time for women who are interested in volunteering in the coming months to take some steps to be prepared: Pioneer Valley Habitat requires all would-be volunteers attend an orientation session, held the first Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm, on zoom. Go to VolunteerUp on the Habitat website and sign up for and attend an orientation! Also, check out our new Power Tool Safety video to familiarize yourself with the kinds of tools and situations common on a construction site that require attention at https://youtu.be/Gwn_OjKrRjM. We are grateful to Lowes for their partnership with Habitat affiliates across the country to get more hammers and saws into the hands of more women to expand Habitat's workforce.



Judith working in Shutesbury



Donna, Jess and Julie on Glendale Road

PVHH Board

Christine Aubrey, President
Benjamin Barnes, Vice President
Muthoni Magua, Treasurer
Jane Andresen, Clerk
Samantha Brazeau
Kathy Caputo
Tom Jones
Mariah Kurtz
Clara Lopez
Stacy Metzger
Matthew Ramon
Christy Reynolds
Matthew Sherwood
Christine Speak
Rob Steinberg

PVHH Staff

LaVae Allard, Bookkeeper
Lindsay Berry, Volunteer Coordinator
Jess Flohr, Big Enough Project Coordinator
Amanda Hanley, Construction Coordinator
Amy Landry, Director of Resource Development
Megan McDonough, Executive Director

Intern

Emily Duffy

Graphics Support

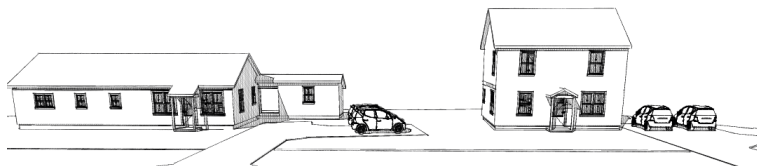
Beth Graham

Administrative Volunteers

Del Blank
Ken Carpenter
Lyn Heady
Jodi Kirschner
Lucia Spiro

**When day comes
we step out of the shade,
afire and unafraid
The new dawn blooms
as we free it
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough
to see it
If only we're brave enough
to be it**

— Amanda Gorman



Breaking Ground on Two Homes in Pelham this Spring: Applications Due Friday, March 12!

We are looking ahead to breaking ground this spring on two 3-bedroom homes on Amherst Road in Pelham. Please help us get the word out to anyone you know in a household with low income who is ready to become a first-time homebuyer. The deadline for applying is Friday, March 12. Applications are available by downloading the pdf from our website; picking up a copy at the Pelham Public Library, the Jones Library in Amherst, or the Habitat office at 140 Pine Street #4 Florence; or by requesting one at www.pvhabitat.org/apply.

Gingerbread Build Goes Big and Goes Virtual

Thanks to all the sponsors, teams, judges, donors and supporters who made this year's first ever Gingerbread Build at Home a great success! There were some truly inspired entries this year, and some ingenious raising of funds by some clever teams. This year's fundraising total came to over \$14,000, a record over previous years and a great support to the building of real homes with real families. We hope to see you all again next year!



Letter from the Director

*So while once we asked,
how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?
Now we assert
How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?
We will not march back to what was
but move to what shall be*

— Amanda Gorman, the nation's first-ever youth poet laureate, from her poem read during the inauguration of President Joe Biden on January 20, 2021

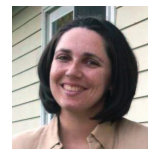
Friends,

It has been a long year. One of loss and turmoil. And through it all we have kept building. Investing in our neighbors and our community with sweat equity and dollars. But in March 2020, I didn't know it would be this way, that we would find a way to keep going. I am so proud of you, of us. Of the homes we have built, of the homes we are building and of the lives that have been changed.

I'd also like to encourage us all to be brave. Because there is still much work to do. The challenges of the past year have laid bare inequities that have been here all along. We must continue to shine a light on racial inequity and deepening poverty as we pick up our hammers to build a new tomorrow.

Towards a new dawn,


Megan McDonough,
Executive Director



Innovations in Sustainable Homebuilding: Pioneer Valley Habitat Gets and Gives Awards

In September, Pioneer Valley Habitat was recognized by the US Department of Energy as a winner in the Affordable category of its Housing Innovation Awards for the two high performance modular homes on Glendale Rd completed in 2019. The award puts this Habitat affiliate “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” according to the DOE.

Pioneer Valley Habitat’s house at 1 Garfield Avenue in Florence was also recently recognized, by Habitat for Humanity International with the Best in Sustainability award at the 2020



Habitat House Design Contest. Every year, the contest recognizes Habitat for Humanity affiliates who exemplify the Habitat commitment to “high-quality housing that is safe and affordable for the long-term, as well as strategies that advance shelter technology toward building more and building better.” 1 Garfield Avenue, designed by Jones Whitsett Architects, was completed in 2019. This unique small house project of only 625 square feet cost less than \$70,000 in materials. “Our local communities in the Valley are facing a critical shortage of affordable housing that has been growing more dire every year. We know it’s going to take new models of design, financing and

construction to achieve the volume highly sustainable small homes our neighbors need to thrive,” Says Dorrie Brooks of Jones Whitsett Architects.

Last month, we were delighted to announce the winner of our own annual recognition of local innovation, Pioneer Valley Habitat’s Small Home Hero Award for 2020. The 2020 award goes to Backyard ADUs based in Easthampton. Our awardee takes its name from industry parlance: ADUs are accessory dwelling units, small homes placed on the lots of existing single-family homes. Marc Sternick, Northampton architect and member of the Award committee, shared that Backyard ADUs was chosen because of their track record of “advocating for changes to zoning that allow for ADUs; creating a business model based on the growing need and opportunity that this zoning change has allowed for; creating smaller, comfortable homes that are both affordable and sustainable; and promoting the use of modular construction where possible, which helps with the affordability piece.” Congratulations Christopher and Kevin, founders of Backyard ADUs! See the 2020 Small Home Hero Award video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPbB4jOmmXg&t=208s> and learn more about Backyard ADUs by going to www.backyardadus.com.



For more information about right-sized, affordable green building, check out the Big Enough project page on our website at www.pvhabitat.org/big-enough, or join the Facebook group!



What’s happening on the build sites?



In Shutesbury, on West Pelham Rd., interior doors, windows and trim have been finished and walls painted. Next up, finishing outside trim on home and shed and installing flooring inside. Target completion date: May 2021.



On Glendale Road in Northampton, insulation and sheetrocking were just completed, interior painting is about to begin on this small two-bedroom home. Target completion date: June 2021.

Spring cleaning? When you get to the driveway, what will you do with your old car? Turn your old car into kitchen cabinets for a family in need of a home! Or maybe a window or two to bring the spring sunlight into the new home of a first-time home owning family!

Go to pvhabitat.org/donate/cars-for-homes to learn more.





P.O. Box 60642
Florence, MA 01062
413-586-5430
www.pioneervalleyhabitat.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 15
Northampton, MA

Gifts of Land, Gifts of Estate

Building affordable homes year after year isn't just a happy accident. Pioneer Valley Habitat would not be verging on our 50th home build if it weren't for the foresight of donors who made generous gifts of land and estate in the interest of seeing their neighbors accrue the benefits of living in a home they own, within their means.

What are these benefits, exactly? A recently released brief from Habitat for Humanity International details compelling evidence for tangible improvements in the lives of homeowners with low incomes and the communities in which they reside. Homeownership leads to better test scores and higher rates of high school graduation. It promotes civic engagement as future homeowners build social capital and resources in building their homes alongside community volunteers. The report cites the CDC's listing of improved housing quality as one of six critical indicators for improved physical and mental health. And the sustainable, green homes Pioneer Valley Habitat designs diminish the energy burden for the families who purchase them and for the planet.

Please consider contributing to a legacy of strong, healthy families and communities through a gift of land or a bequest from your estate. We look forward to turning your generosity into strength, stability and self-reliance with families in the Pioneer Valley.



Land donated in Conway for future build

Get Involved!

Visit our website to
sign up and volunteer!



140 Pine St. Rooms 3 & 4, Florence, MA | (413) 586-5430 | www.pvhabitat.org