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Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity Announces 2021 Small Home Hero Award Winners

(Florence, MA, February 16, 2022) – Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity is pleased to announce that Dorrie Brooks of Jones Whitsett Architects and Evan Ross of Amherst have been selected as the 2021 Small Home Hero Award winners. The Small Home Hero Award is an annual award that recognizes a local organization, business, or individual who is making use of innovative techniques to increase access to homeownership through the building, financing, design, and/or zoning for small homes. The award is an initiative of Pioneer Valley Habitat’s Big Enough Project, which aims to revolutionize how we think about homeownership in Franklin and Hampshire counties by advocating for and building simple, durable, and affordable small homes.

Dorrie Brooks of Jones Whitsett Architects has been promoting smaller and more affordable green homes for many years. She submitted work for the City of Northampton’s Just Big Enough and Small Lots | Big Ideas design competitions, and designed Pioneer Valley Habitat’s pilot “Big Enough” home in Northampton, which was a winner in the sustainability category at the 2020 Habitat for Humanity International home design competition. Her more recent work for the city of Northampton on the feasibility of studio apartments for the lowest end of the market is just one more example of her commitment to the building small ideal. In the words of the nominator, Dorrie “brings a dedication to her work and a commitment... to advance smaller and more affordable housing, which allows her to stand out from other architects.”

Evan Ross, former Amherst town councilor from 2018-2022, is a tireless advocate of small lot zoning reform and affordable development. His work on the town council, including his “First Steps” Housing Plan, focused on small lot zoning and multi-family development, both of which enable the creation of more affordable housing in the area. He also worked on the development of the Town Council’s Comprehensive Housing Policy, which establishes goals around housing and outlines potential strategies to achieve those goals. His award nominator describes the policy as one that “positions Amherst to tackle our housing crisis and sets a direction for the town,” and it exemplifies the kind of behind-the-scenes work necessary to make small, affordable housing possible.

Following a nomination process that is open to the public, winners are chosen for this annual award by a Small Home Advisory Committee convened by Pioneer Valley Habitat. The committee is comprised of volunteers who themselves have demonstrated a commitment to the small home movement in their

own work. Previous winners include the City of Northampton, a Greenfield resident who built her own small home, and Backyard ADUs of Whately.

The 2021 Small Home Hero Award winners are celebrated in this video: <https://youtu.be/9nEa5hdFvE8>. Please join Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity in recognizing these Small Home Heroes for their efforts this past year.

About Us

Since 1989, **Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity** has built decent, affordable homes with 48 families with low incomes in Hampshire and Franklin Counties. We build our homes with volunteer labor and donations of material, supplies, land, and services. At the onset of homebuilding, a family is selected and enters into a long-term partnership with Pioneer Valley Habitat. Future homeowners contribute 250 hours of labor during the construction of their home alongside volunteers from the community. Upon completion, the home is sold to the family with an affordable mortgage. Habitat is a hand-up, not a hand-out: the organization has a perpetual legacy in that all mortgage funds received are reinvested to build more homes. We are a housing organization helping to bring stability to families, bringing more stability into our neighborhoods and communities. Learn more at www.pvhabitat.org.

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