

Winter Newsletter 2022

Volume 21, Issue 1

Winter 2023

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 Wed of the month, 6:30pm**
New volunteer orientation, online, sign up at pvhabitat.org/ways-to-volunteer
- » **3rd Sat of the month, 9:00am**
New volunteer orientation, online, sign up at pvhabitat.org/ways-to-volunteer
- » **3rd Sun of the month, 12-4pm**
Women Build, Burts Pit Rd. site Go to pvhabitat.org/ways-to-volunteer/womenbuild/ to learn more and to register
- » **Monday, Feb 27, 7pm, Zoom**
Race in Housing & Neighborhood Dev't, video and discussion
- » **Wednesday Mar 8**
Application deadline for three new homes in Northampton
- » **Monday, Mar 20, 6pm, Zoom**
Intro to Race and Systemic Racism, video and discussion
- » **Monday, Apr 24, 7pm, Zoom**
Anti-Racism and Racial Justice, video and discussion
- » **Wednesday, May 17, 6pm**
FEAST for Habitat
- » **TBD, Spring**
Wallraisings for three new homes, Burts Pit Rd, Northampton
- » **TBD, Spring/Summer**
Dedications of three homes in Northampton, one home in Conway

Energy Efficiency and the All Electric Habitat Home

Pioneer Valley Habitat homebuilding happens in the intersection of climate, economic and social justice, and it is here that we find the all-electric home. Remember the 1970s (or, if you're too young, remember reading about?), when electric heat was expensive, to be avoided, reviled even? In the intervening 50 years, innovation has brought to the fore the use of alternative energy sources that make sustainably generated electricity the next wave choice for powering our homes. Moving to energy efficient, all-electric homes is part of an important move to decarbonization of our power supply.

Your local Habitat affiliate has long been committed to building energy efficient homes that are affordable to live in over time, and with each new calendar year we find even more ways to achieve this goal. Take the current 3-home Broughton's Meadow Homes project on Burts Pit Rd, whose design by Simple City Studios has won sustainability awards from the city of Northampton and Habitat for Humanity International. The city of Northampton requires these units to be net-zero compatible and include no burning of



"WBI is known throughout the nation as a high-performance builder, specializing in net-zero homes and workplaces. I am so grateful for my relationship with PVHH who realizes the immediate need for cost effective, healthy, resilient, low operating expense homes. A key point for homeowners to build equity for a just future. We all benefit from thoughtful design and net-zero capabilities. Our motto is to 'always do good' and PVHH leads the way in the affordable ownership field."

— Seth Lawrence-Slavas, Owner Wright Builders Inc.

fossil fuels. The three very small homes will have the potential for reaching zero net energy and are being built to exceed stretch code standards through the use of continuous insulation, excellent air sealing, LED lighting, ENERGY STAR appliances, mini-split heating/cooling, and a

cont'd

When the snow is all gone and you get to your spring driveway cleanup, what will you do with that car your parents left behind when they retired and moved to Arizona? That boat that seemed like something you'd use on weekends but then you took up trekking in the western Mass hills? You could decide, as dozens of owners of used vehicles did last year, "I think I'll donate my vehicle to Habitat!" It's easy, as easy as making a call and waiting for a truck to come take your vehicle away. And your unwanted vehicle could turn into the welcoming front door of a family's first home. The beautiful flooring in their entryway or bathroom or the window through which they will see the beautiful New England spring unfold. Go to pvhabitat.org/donate/cars-for-homes to learn more.

Donate your car.



(877) 277-4344
carsforhomes.org



Three More Homes to be Built on Burts Pit Road APPLICATIONS DUE MARCH 8th

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The application period has opened for three more homes in Northampton, on Burts Pit Rd. We call this development Victoria Bismark Farm, and the cluster of 3-bedroom houses will sit adjacent to Smith Vocational agricultural fields. For more information about these homes and applying, go to www.pvhabitat.org/apply. Paper copies of the application in English and Spanish are outside our office on the first floor of 140 Pine St in Florence, MA, at Northampton City Hall, or Forbes Library. The deadline to apply for this homeownership opportunity is March 8th, 2023. Equal Opportunity Housing.

Hats Off to Smith Voc!

Dozens of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School students have supported the building of Habitat homes over the years. Pioneer Valley Habitat has benefited from the Forestry Department's tree clearing skills and the Carpentry Department's building prowess. Habitat homes are often plumbed and wired by Smith Voc students who apply their classroom plumbing and electrical knowledge to real-world homebuilding. Even the Automotive Department has stepped up to help Habitat efforts by keeping Habitruck 1.0 chugging along on a few months of borrowed time until we acquired Habitruck 2.0. On the current 3-home Habitat development going in on Burts Pit Rd, students in the trades have taken on the construction of one of the homes from start to finish. Huge thanks to Smith Voc for their terrific contributions.

Letter from the Director

Dear Habitat Community,

Many of us have been examining diversity, equity and inclusion in our day to day work with more deliberateness since the murder of George Floyd in 2020. And yet still we mourn the death of black men like Tyre Nichols and the many people of all races and ages who have suffered due to violence and racism.

It can seem a too-small gesture to plan a simple training on microaggressions or the roots of Habitat for Humanity as an integrated farm in the 1950s as a way to tackle a big problem like systemic racism. But I think breaking down big problems into small actionable parts is what we've always done here at Habitat. This country's housing crisis is huge. People are homeless. Rents are out of control. But instead of saying that's too big for us to deal with we say, who can we build a home with today? How will we insulate it? Who will buy the nails? Who will pick up the hammer?

This Spring, with that same mindset, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee scheduled three facilitated discussion forums for staff, board and regular volunteers, using videos produced by Habitat for Humanity International. We would like to emerge from this spring's DEI work with a shared language and understanding as a platform for future discussions of what additional action steps are necessary for the organization to honestly walk the walk of the path toward justice.

In community,

Megan McDonough,
Executive Director



*In memory of
longtime Habitat
supporter and our
dear friend
Maureen Mahar.
We are grateful and
will miss you.
1962-2023*

...All Electric

heat recovery ventilation system. We are piloting the use of solar-assisted heat pump water heaters in these homes, ensuring these homes are electric vehicle ready, and pushing our air sealing as much as possible. These are just a few of the ways we have been able to improve the efficiency of Habitat homes.

Our volunteer builders, along with our HERS raters, architects and subcontractors are working hard to make sure the houses currently under construction in Northampton and Conway meet the highest tier they can for incentives from Mass Save and meet or exceed new building energy codes. We could not meet these standards and keep these – and other – homes affordable to purchase without the help of stalwart



community friends and advocates. Amherst-based Kuhn Riddle Architects and Western Mass Heating and Cooling have been partners in the work. Pioneer Valley Photovoltaics has partnered with us for years to complete free or reduced cost solar PV arrays on Habitat homes. Local donor angel Bill Ashley believes so strongly in supporting the construction of zero net possible living spaces, he has graciously covered the costs of PV on

several Habitat homes and Local Energy Advocates has spearheaded fundraising to help cover the costs for heat pump water heaters at Broughton's Meadow Homes.

Once a Habitat home has achieved a high standard of energy efficiency, there is then the task of building an understanding of how to live in these homes with newly minted and in some cases first generation equipment and systems. We were awarded a grant from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center to support the development of bilingual homeowner education materials to ensure that first time homeowners understand the mechanics of optimizing the power in their living space. And even more good news: that grant will offer an opportunity for Habitat affiliates across the state who are newer to the concept and construction of the all-electric, net zero possible homes to share best practices, access Mass Save incentives, identify barriers and pave the way to overcoming them.

We are excited to share our own years of learning and innovation with other affiliates across the state and to grow our region as a place where there is a commitment to building homes that honor every family's right to live reasonably, affordably and sustainably.



What's happening on the build site? Could you see yourself contributing to some of these tasks?

Broughton's Meadow Homes

Ceiling drywalling is coming to an end and then it will be on to insulating all three houses late February early March. Coming next: drywalling the walls.



Conway

In Conway, walls have been taped and mudded and we are starting on installing doors and then will begin painting.



We need YOU!

You've seen us share this message again and again: As volunteers walk away from a Habitat worksite, they tell us their lives have been transformed. Some come and pick up a hammer or a paintbrush for

"Throughout my life, I've seen the difference that volunteering efforts can make in people's lives. I know the personal value of service as a local volunteer."

—Jimmy Carter, 39th US President and Habitat volunteer

Others help us explore opportunities to acquire land or establish health and safety guidelines for our work or support families on their journey to becoming first time homeowners.

Where do you see yourself fitting in? Take an hour to join one of our twice-a-month online orientations to learn more about what Pioneer Valley Habitat is and does and get inspired. We are committed to making a dent in the housing crisis with a robust construction schedule and all the work that goes behind that, and we welcome support from every corner.



Lucia Spiro receiving the 2022 Charlie Klem Getting it Done Volunteer Award

one day on a Women Build, others are out building on a weekly basis in every kind of weather. Some work tirelessly behind the scenes to engineer the smooth running of events that raise funds for the materials needed to sustain the building of 2-4 homes a year.

You may be lucky enough to work alongside one of the future homeowners the day you're out volunteering on site. The paths they've traveled to Habitat are extraordinary and inspiring. Read the stories of the families currently building their homes and of those who have gone before at <https://www.pvhabitat.org/homeowner-stories/>.

"So much has changed since we started building our house. I am actually asking myself, 'what would I want to do with a future?'"

— Joe, future homeowner

Wish List

Low-cost warehouse space (need loading dock entrance)



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Habitat in Haiti

Despite an embattled environment overrun with gang control, extreme weather and lack of governmental and judicial oversight, our Habitat colleagues in Haiti remain steadfast in their commitment to all Haitians having a decent place to call home. In 2022 after the horrific earthquake of 2021, Habitat Haiti completed dozens of home builds and over 300 rainwater harvesting cisterns. Itinerant outreach workers have educated thousands of homeowners about their land rights and about installing water collection and filtration systems for hygiene and hydration. Even in the midst of untenable, often frightening circumstances, Habitat Haiti has innovated, working with local universities on recycling plastic waste into construction bricks and developing other materials prototypes.

In the coming months, we will complete with four future homeowners their new homes in Northampton and Conway. When the transfer of ownership of those houses to those families has been completed, Pioneer Valley Habitat will contribute \$4,500 for each of the four home sales toward the building of four homes in Haiti. This is our pledged tithe to the Habitat work there, we do this every time we sell a home.

"The situation is really challenging but also still possible to work in...When we experience a difficult time in Haiti, that's when the most vulnerable people need us more because their situation is getting very serious. I may not have [all the needed] money yet, but I know I have partners in the US, in the Habitat network, I can count on."
- Jean Frenel Tham, Nat'l Director, Habitat Haiti



Get Involved!

Visit our website to
sign up and volunteer!



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