

Summer Newsletter 2023

Volume 21, Issue 2

Summer/Fall 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 Wednesday of each month, 6:30pm**
New volunteer orientation, online, sign up at www.pvhabitat.org/ways-to-volunteer
- » **3rd Saturday of each month, 9:00am**
New volunteer orientation, online, sign up at www.pvhabitat.org/ways-to-volunteer
- » **3rd Sunday of each month, 12-4pm - Women Build,** check VolunteerUP for location. Go to www.pvhabitat.org/ways-to-volunteer/womenbuild/ to learn more and to register
- » **Monday, Sept 18, 6pm**
PVHH Annual Meeting, Esselon Café, Russell St, Hadley
- » **October, date TBD**
Dedications of three homes on Burts Pit Rd., Broughtons Meadow
- » **Sunday, Oct 22, 3pm**
Briars in the Cotton Patch viewing and discussion, Parlor Room, 32 Masonic St., Northampton
- » **Saturday, Dec 2 - Dec 9**
Gingerbread Build at Home pickup locations TBD, home-building countertop scale in the comfort of surroundings of your own home

This Could be You!

You've heard us tell the story again and again: Volunteers are the engine that keeps the work of Habitat chugging forward. In this issue, a few volunteers share in their own words who they are and how they interact with Habitat and why they do what they do so you may see how individual contributions are part of a collective whole. How each person brings one or two or many different areas of talent to bear on Habitat's work. How volunteers impact the local homeownership landscape, allowing future homebuyers with low incomes to build stability and financial security by building and purchasing an affordable home. You could add your voice to theirs!

"I love volunteering for Pioneer Valley Habitat because of the impact it is having on the lives of so many in our area..."



Aaron Cook



Aaron delivers treats to the job site

When I joined the Pioneer Valley Habitat community: 2022
A little background on me: I grew up in a small town near Kansas City, Mo. While working in my career in Information Technology in Fort Worth my wife Brenda and I supported the local Habitat chapter financially and by volunteering on builds. We retired to East Longmeadow to be closer to one of our three sons. I have served on several charitable boards and Brenda and I have established endowed higher education scholarships in our parents' names.

How I'm involved: I serve on the Finance, Family Support and Hospitality Committees, offer ideas for fundraising initiatives, participate in diversity/equity conversations.

Why I do it: "Habitat for Humanity is a cause that I believe makes profound generational differences in people's lives. Homeownership leads to stability in the family. It also provides stability in children's education and increases likelihood of advanced education that helps raise standard of living for multiple generations."

William Levine (Bill)

When I joined the Pioneer Valley Habitat community: 2017
A little background on me: I'm originally from the New York suburbs, graduated Northwestern University and Suffolk University Law School and spent 40 years practicing law in Boston while raising my family. After living in Florence part-time for many years, my wife Choteau and I became permanent valley residents in 2020. For nearly 3 years I commuted for weekly construction work with PVHH, then jumped in more intensively after retirement. I have worked as a volunteer paralegal for Afghan refugees and I leverage my passion for cycling to raise funds for worthy charities, most recently the Western Massachusetts Food Bank, for which I organized a PVHH team for this year's Bike 4 Food ride.

How I'm involved: I am a regular construction volunteer and sometime supervisor and serve on Build Teams for construction projects, I am a current member of the Board of Directors and on the Safety Committee.

Why I do it: "I love tools and building, the camaraderie on the job and serving the mission of advancing affordable housing."



Bill organizes riders to raise money for the Food Bank (support them here: engage.foodbankwma.org/site/TR/Events/General?team_id=1970&pg=team&fr_id=1070)

cont'd

Tired of looking at that unused vehicle for which you no longer have any use sitting in your driveway? 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 car or truck or RV could turn into the 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 spectacular New England fall foliage in their back yard.

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



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Jillian Appling, community engagement coordinator
Jess Flohr, operations coordinator
Amy Landry, director of resource development
Megan McDonough, executive director
Eric Sussman, construction coordinator

Graphics Support

Beth Graham

Office Volunteers

Ken Carpenter
Lyn Heady
Lucia Spiro

Raising More Money, Raising More Walls

This spring, dozens of donors heard the call and not only met but exceeded the 1:1 challenge on the table to match \$10,000 generously offered by two anonymous donors. This challenge was directly geared toward building and sustaining organizational capacity in order to maintain an ambitious increased schedule of homebuilding. Thank YOU for helping to bring in \$21,230 toward the goal of providing more opportunities for affordable homeownership.



Framing Begins on the Future Homes of Three Families on the Victoria Bismark Farm project...

A large and enthusiastic crowd gathered on a sunny July morning to cheer on three families who are embarking on their journeys to build and buy their first homes on Burts Pit Road in Florence over the next year. Northampton Mayor Gina Louise Sciarra was joined by other municipal and state representatives, Florence Bank president Matthew Garrity, PV2 solar staff and Build Team leader Bruce Coldham to share how the Victoria Bismark Farm project has unfolded over the years. Be a part of history, come help these future homebuyers work with dozens of volunteers like you to transform a neglected field into a place to watch their children thrive and grow!

...and One Family Celebrates the Completion of their Home in Conway

Habitat dedication ceremonies are always joyous occasions, and the joy in Conway was palpable on July 23rd when a crowd of 80 people celebrated the completion of the new home of Herlinda and Roberto and their family. Members of College Church shared blessings and songs, Conway select board member Phil Kantor, PV2 representative Chris Dooley, Charles Roberts of Kuhn Riddle and Build Team leader Walt Kohler all told the story of the community that had worked together to bring us to that day, to dedicate the home exactly a year to the day from when the first walls were raised.



Letter from the Director

Dear Habitat Community,

It's with great joy that I have read all the volunteer profiles in this edition of our Newsletter. It's been just over 10 years that I started working for Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity and from the very beginning the volunteers have made me feel welcome. I have learned so much from all of you and continue to do so.

It's a great honor for us as staff to be able to work with such kind people. It's the unique glue of the Habitat community – this selfless giving of time from volunteers. The willingness to work together on big problems and small, all united around the desire for everyone to have a decent place to live. Strength, stability and self-reliance through homeownership.

The work of Pioneer Valley Habitat's small but mighty paid staff is amplified by the thousands of hours of volunteer time given to this affiliate. I'd like to welcome our newest staff person Jillian to the team and extend the same gratitude I have for those who volunteer their time to all the staff.

- Amy Landry – Director of Resource Development – 9 years!
- Jess Flohr – Operations Manager – 4 years!
- Eric Sussman – Construction Coordinator – 1.5 years!
- Jillian Appling – Community Engagement Coordinator – 2 months!
- Interns – a fabulous new bunch every semester!

"You always have a dream for what your life could be, and before now we've tried to reach for the stars but have never been able to reach them. Now, stardom is right around the corner!"

- Patrick, building his future home in Florence



In gratitude,

Megan McDonough,
Executive Director

...Volunteer



Beth & husband, Peter at FEAST

Beth Graham

When I joined the Pioneer Valley Habitat community: 2016

A little background on me: I went to elementary school in Quincy, MA, high school in Sandwich, MA and college at UMass, Amherst where I met my husband, Peter. I studied art and communications and was employed as a graphic designer for many years. We currently live in Leeds and run a consulting business helping organizations get affordable housing built for our fellow citizens. I was first introduced to Habitat while living in Salt Lake City where my sister-in-law was the forewoman on a women's build.

How I'm involved: I help with Habitat fundraisers, co-chaired FEAST silent auction, supply graphics support (this newsletter, program booklet and annual report layouts)

Why I do it: "I started volunteering with Habitat when I had just moved to Northampton and had some extra time between jobs. I continue to volunteer because it's a community and cause I enjoy being a part of."



Nour and family eager to build!

Nour Elkhataby Strauch

When I joined the Pioneer Valley Habitat community: 2022

A little background on me: I am a community organizer and facilitator born and raised in Casablanca, Morocco. Currently, I live in Hatfield with my wife Catherine and our 9-month old baby boy Burhan. I serve as Executive Director of YES!, an international non-profit that works with social changemakers, working to co-create thriving, just and balanced ways of life for all (www.yesworld.org). I am the former president of a

youth-led NGO called Neighborhoods Association Idmaj, and have served on the National Administrative Council of Amnesty International Morocco. I have also worked with a number of other non-profits in Morocco and beyond.

How I'm involved: I am a member of the Board of Directors and the Family Support committee, Mentor for new Homebuyer family, and community interpreter for Arabic speaking applicants and families.

Why I do it: "I love volunteering for Pioneer Valley Habitat because of the impact it is having on the lives of so many in our area. The more we can help folks in our society feel rooted and safe in their housing situation, the more likely they are to thrive and contribute to the community in positive ways. I also really enjoy the community of volunteers, staff and directors that make the Habitat engine run and embody the change they want to see in the world."

Briars in the Cotton Patch Film & Discussion at the Parlor Room Oct. 22nd, 3pm

Aired on PBS in 2005 – 2010, *Briars in the Cotton Patch* tells the story of the daring social experiment in the middle of a racially divided South in the 1940s that was Koinonia Farm, an intentionally integrated community that was the forerunner of Habitat for Humanity. Join us for a screening of this one-hour moving film with footage of the civil rights era followed by a discussion led by Nialena Ali and Deborah Cohen from Human in Common. <https://www.briarsdocumentary.com/>.

Please be advised that this film contains words, images and content about racism that may be disturbing and is intended for mature audiences.



Gingerbread Build 2023, Get Ready!



Have you completed your renderings? Purchased all your materials? Cleared a large workspace where your architectural masterpiece has room to unfold? Just three months to go! The 11th annual Gingerbread Build contest will open Saturday the 2nd of December, when teams will pick up their kits (locations TBD) and have until midnight Thursday the 7th to unleash their countertop construction creativity on their contest entry. Discerning judges will then debate, decide and declare winners in each of several categories the afternoon of Saturday, December 9th.

Last year, you raised close to \$18,000 with this spirited event. This year, you can help us smash that record – a generous donor will match all team fundraising up to \$3,500! Check back in the fall for more information at www.pvhabitat.org/events/gingerbread-build/.

What's happening on the build site?

Broughton's Meadow Homes:

Flooring is now completed, we are about to start installing baseboards and cabinets. Solar has been installed. Final grading is underway.



Victoria Bismark Farm:

2 houses underway. We are framing the second floors now, truss installation, roofing, windows and exterior doors are coming up.



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 www.pvhabitat.org/homeowner-stories/.

"I just want to help others like people helped me."

- Herlinda, just completed her Conway home

Wish List

We are in need of a lockable trailer for storage and to move items from site to site! Can you help?



P.O. Box 60642
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Looking at 35 Years of Evolution and Innovation



Next year, Pioneer Valley Habitat will celebrate 35 years of homebuilding in Hampshire and Franklin Counties. We salute the over 50 families living in homes they helped build and purchased with an affordable mortgage, the volunteer community that supports this organization, the funders and donors who keep the money and in-kind goods and services and land opportunities flowing to keep the number of homes built growing. Three and a half decades of evolution and innovation as this Habitat community has kept steadfastly to our mission: adapting to economic realities through the years; innovating through pandemic restrictions; responding with a deep review of our structure and policies to Black Lives Matters; and finding the intersection between affordability and sustainability for long-term stability for families and communities with cutting edge energy efficient construction techniques and materials.

We hope when you look to your year-end giving, when you draw from your IRA, when you make your estate plan, you will consider a gift to Pioneer Valley Habitat. Perhaps a tribute gift at holiday time? No matter the size, your contribution matters. Home by home, family by family, together we are building the kind of community where people of all backgrounds, circumstances and persuasions have opportunities to thrive.

Get Involved!

Visit our website to
sign up and volunteer!



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