

## Giovanna's Story

# Not only something we own, but something we built

Giovanna's story is her own and will also ring familiar for many people. She grew up in a big family, moved to the area as a young person and began working summers as a housekeeper at a hotel. She then switched to another inn where she took on more hours. The manager there recognized Giovanna's talent and initiative and assigned her to work the front desk within only six months of her hire. Giovanna worked hard in her personal life as well, earning her GED.

After Giovanna's first child was born, she struggled financially. "Who knew having a baby could be so expensive?!" she remembers. "That's when I really started adulting..." She felt her job at the local inn was secure as she continued to receive increasing responsibilities, she had found a stable work "family."

Until things changed. There was a turnover in personnel at the inn, many were pushed out and Giovanna found herself without the job she had worked so hard at building. Fortunately, she had siblings close who provided support for her and her children as she went to Holyoke Community College seeking a Business Associates degree. Her interest was in event planning, a good fit for someone who likes to organize and host celebratory gatherings. Giovanna proudly graduated from HCC... and then the pandemic hit. It was no time to be an event planner.

Resilient as always, Giovanna took a job with New England Treatment Access and has been with the company ever since. She had known about Pioneer Valley Habitat and had even once before started the application process, but never completed it. She decided with steady employment it was time to try again. While the uncertainty of the process was scary, being chosen a future homeowner has been nothing but amazing, says Giovanna. "I'm grateful for this, I'm humbled," she says. "Once I move in, I feel like then I will REALLY be adulting!"

What does the future look like? Giovanna's youngest daughter has been helping her mom choose colors and finishes and fixtures for the house. Giovanna says, "I am actually looking forward to decorating! And gardening. Being able to have our own property, our own parking spot. Not only something we own, but something we built." She also dreams of the day she is able to sit on her porch with her coffee looking out over her farmland view: "I can't wait to see the sunrise and sunset..."

