

GREEN MOUNTAIN HABITAT FOR HUMANITY, BUILDING HOMES FOR LOW-INCOME WORKING FAMILIES FOR 37 YEARS



Exterior of 4-plex on Hinesburg Road, South Burlington



Family helping to build their future home with required sweat equity hours



Volunteers at the South Burlington 4-plex



By Catherine Stevens, Advancement Director
Photos by Dick Shasteen

You might have been helped by an LPN at the Medical Center. Perhaps you were served at Asian Bistro.

What you didn't know was that each of the above encounters could have been with one of Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity's soon-to-be homeowners. By the time you read this article, four homes on Hinesburg Road in South Burlington will be completed, as well as a single family home in Burlington.

Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity was started in 1984 by a group of volunteers who were concerned about the need for affordable housing for low-income working families in Chittenden County. Today, thanks to generous donors and volunteers, we build five to seven homes each year.

The importance of a safe home has never been more obvious than during the Covid-19 pandemic, where homes have become school rooms, offices and safe places to shelter. But what if you didn't have a decent and safe place to live? What if you were a family of four, living in one bedroom in a cousin's home? What if you lived in an apartment with leaky ceilings and mice? What if you lived in a tiny apartment with no outside space where your children could safely play?

Sadly, these are the conditions where some of the soon-to-be Habitat partner families are living now, despite working full time or more. Vermont is an expensive place to live and Chittenden County is the most expensive county in the state, where a two-bedroom apartment requires an annual income of \$62,920 to be considered affordable. Affordable housing means that you spend 30% or less of your household income on housing. Rest assured that the families who work in the positions listed at the beginning of this article do not make that much. People who work in day care centers, clerical positions, retail jobs, food production, manufacturing, hospitals and more do not make enough to

Volunteers Dick Shasteen and Ron Reynolds reviewing building plans
(photo by Catherine Stevens)

afford a decent apartment and they certainly don't qualify for a conventional mortgage for a market rate home.

So what do they do? They rent apartments which have unsafe plumbing or electrical systems, broken windows, leaky roofs, vermin, mold or they can't even find one of those substandard apartments and are forced to live with family or friends.

Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity's mission is to build safe, energy efficient and affordable homes for working, low-income families living in substandard housing. We purchase land and build homes with the help of volunteers who are trained and supervised by experienced builders. Because utility costs are high in our community, we work closely with Efficiency Vermont to keep the energy costs as low as possible. A recently built two-bedroom home has an annual heating bill of \$200!

The revenue to buy land and build the Habitat homes comes from financial donors, grants, homeowner mortgage payments and net proceeds from our Habitat ReStores in Williston and Milton. And Habitat built homes are perpetually affordable due to a clause in the deed. We want to make sure that the homes will always be lived in by a low-income working family.

Housing affordability not only reduces the difficult tradeoffs between necessities like food and health care, it also greatly reduces stress for both adults and children. Homeownership leads to better test scores and higher rates of high school graduation and college attendance for children. And stable housing results in more civic engagement and greater economic stability.

Five families will soon purchase their homes at the cost to build them, currently around \$160,000 and with monthly costs of around \$900 for their mortgage, homeowners' insurance and property taxes which is 30% or less of their incomes.

The local airline employee mentioned at the beginning of this article said "I've not had an easy time the last several years but I work hard and never give up. My kids mean the world to me and we have a pretty strong bond. The opportunity to have our forever home will greatly improve our lives."

For more information about Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity including how to donate, volunteer or apply for a home visit <https://vermonthabitat.org>.
Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity, 300 Cornerstone Drive, Suite 335, Williston, VT. 802-872-8726



A grateful family standing in front of their new home in Milton

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Photos by Phyl Newbeck

Hello friends and neighbors!

Summer is here and things are starting to look a bit more like normal. There will be baseball games at Centennial Field, concerts on various town greens, and farmers’ markets with fresh vegetables, local meats, and other value-added products. I hope everyone has a chance to get out and enjoy all that the season has to offer us.

In this month’s issue, we’ll introduce you to Ellen Gurwitz of De-Clutter Me! Gurwitz will share her insights on the best way to part with some of your accumulated possessions and – as a bonus – she’ll explain why she thinks dragon boat rowing is similar to choral singing.

We’re continuing our mission to introduce you to folks in our community who are doing good things for others. This month, we’ll catch up with the Vermont chapter of Habitat for Humanity and learn how they’re making home ownership affordable for lower-income working families. We’ll also catch up with the folks at the Green Mountain Club and learn what they’re doing to maintain the trails we all know and love. That story should give you renewed appreciation for some of the wonderful recreational options we have in Vermont.

If you know a local non-profit group that deserves a shout-out, please have them contact me at pnewbeck@bestversionmedia.com

Phyl Newbeck

SOUTH BURLINGTON & SHELburne *Living*

PUBLICATION TEAM
Publisher: Dana O'Neill
Content Coordinator: Phyl Newbeck
Designer: Julie Hustad
Contributing Photographer: Danielle Allendorf Photography

ADVERTISING
Contact: Dana O'Neill
Email: doneill@bestversionmedia.com
Phone: 262-297-3603

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EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS



Danielle Allendorf Photography
Danielle Allendorf
Capturing timeless memories. Wedding photography and portraiture cherished for generations
802-355-4340
www.dallendorfphotography.com



Pines Senior Living Community
Alyson Kennedy
Happy, Healthy and Hassle free: independent senior living at its best
802-865-1109
www.summitseniorliving.net

To learn more about becoming an Expert Contributor, contact Dana O'Neill at doneill@bestversionmedia.com, or 262-297-3603.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:

EMERGENCY...911

Non-emergency Police Department	
South Burlington	802-846-4111
Shelburne	802-985-8051
Non-emergency Fire Department	
South Burlington	802-846-4110
Shelburne	802-985-2366
Chamber of Commerce	802-863-3489
Parks & Recreation	
South Burlington	802-846-4108
Shelburne	802-985-9551
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Shelburne Admin.	802-985-5111
South Burlington City Manager	802-846-4107
South Burlington Water Department	802-864-4361