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# Spring 2015 Newsletter

## Meet the Ayers Family!



Jon, Amelia and Jennifer Ayers

in supporting their families. Jon enjoys his work and helping people.

Jenn remarked “We had been looking for a house for 3 to 4 years but were deemed not “mortgage ready” for a bank. It was very discouraging because we wanted to move out of our cramped apartment and to give our daughter a better home. Chittenden County is so expensive but this is where Jon’s career is and we desperately wanted to find a way to become homeowners. When we heard about the Green Mountain informational meeting in July of 2014 we decided to attend but not to get our hopes up. We were notified in September that we had been approved for a Harrington Village home! You can’t imagine our joy, after years of stress, worrying if we would be able to afford a house or if we would need to leave the area.”

“The opportunity to have a home for ourselves and our daughter, to build equity and to be part of an intentional community is so exciting!” said Jon. “We are so lucky that we will have the social, financial, community and family development benefits, not to mention the energy-efficiency of a Habitat home.”

Jon continued, “We can’t wait to start working on our home in the spring with our family and friends and future neighbors. It is so exciting that we’ll be there with three other Habitat families, building our own neighborhood. There is a wonderful nature area, the LaPlatte River Marsh Natural Area, close by and we are excited about being able to explore the trails with our daughter.”

“It will be so nice to have room for family and friends to come over” said Jenn, “something we can’t do in the apartment because it’s so small. And I can’t wait to decorate our new home! We’ll be able to really invest in our new community and to be more involved.”

“We feel so lucky to be working with GMHfH,” stated Jenn. “You really feel covered, that the staff and volunteers have your back. It’s much less scary with the support, we’re not worried about making mistakes with so many people to help us. We are celebrating the process!”

Jon ended our conversation by saying that he and Jenn are so grateful to the volunteers, staff and the generosity of the people who donate to Green Mountain Habitat. “It is such a huge blessing!”

“We feel incredibly blessed to have been selected for a home at Harrington Village” said Jon Ayers. He and wife Jennifer sat in their apartment living room, watching their 3-year-old daughter look through a picture book. “And we’re excited about being part of an “intentional community” with other families. Without Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity, we wouldn’t be able to purchase a home for our family.”

Their tiny apartment in the center of Burlington has been decorated by Jenn with handmade wall hangings and natural materials, giving the run-down room a sense of warmth and whimsy. Daughter Amelia, a precocious 3-year-old, happily shows off her slippers and cuddles up with her mother as we talk.

Jon and Jenn met in 2007 while helping to develop the University of Vermont “lifelines outdoor” campus ministry. They served as outdoor guides for the UVM students and used experiential skills, like canoeing and rock climbing to mentor students and teach them about trust, working with others and developing strong communities. The work with the students was rewarding and they were sorry to see it end in December of 2011.

Jon continued his education and now works as a mental health clinician for the Howard Center, working with people in the Reach Up program in Burlington and St. Albans to meet their goals. Reach Up is a Vermont program which helps families with children to become self-sufficient including working with them to overcome challenges so that they can be successful

## How You Can Help

Please send your donation to: Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity, 300 Cornerstone Drive, Suite 335, Williston, VT 05495 or on our secure website at [www.vermonthabitat.org](http://www.vermonthabitat.org). We are a 501 (c) (3) non-profit and donations to us are tax deductible.

You could also consider including GMHfH in your will. This is a wonderful way to leave a legacy to help end substandard housing in our community.

Thank you for helping families achieve their dream of owning a simple, decent and affordable home!

## Volunteer Opportunities— We need your help!

- Construction volunteers needed to help build houses now (we are working inside the first duplex at Harrington Village) and this spring and summer in Shelburne and Milton. Please go to [www.vermonthabitat.org](http://www.vermonthabitat.org) and click on “Volunteer to Build”.
- Habitat ReStore Volunteers needed—call 802-857-5296 and ask for Jonathon.
- Opening on the Board of Directors—contact David Mullin, Executive Director at [dmullin@vermonthabitat.org](mailto:dmullin@vermonthabitat.org).
- Development volunteers needed for the Development committee and to help with research and donor support— e-mail Catherine at [cstevens@vermonthabitat.org](mailto:cstevens@vermonthabitat.org).

## Why I Give to Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity

“If people get into their own home I think they’ll be more independent citizens and maybe elevated to a higher level of prosperity and that is a good thing for the overall population. If their children are safer, it will allow them to do better in school, which will allow them to do better in the workplace, which will be better for the community and that’s why volunteering for Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity is a good use of my time.” Dick Shasteen, Construction Committee Chair and GMHfH Board Member

## What are You Helping to Build This Year?

As soon as Mother Nature melts the snow and warms up the ground our wonderful site supervisors and volunteers will be building in two locations. We are currently completing the final two homes at Alberts Way in Charlotte and are also working to finish the first duplex at Harrington Village in Shelburne. When the ground warms up we will begin the second duplex and will also be building a single family home on Railroad Street in Milton. Building in two locations is a challenge but the need for affordable housing in Chittenden County continues to grow. With your support, five families will move into their simple, decent, perpetually affordable and energy efficient homes in 2015!

## Green Mountain Habitat ReStore EXPANDING

We opened the Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Williston, in September, 2012 to produce revenue for GMH by selling new and gently used furniture, building materials, appliances and housewares. The store has been bulging at the seams and when the space next to ours became available we decided to expand from 7000 sq ft to 13,000 sq ft! Just imagine all the treasures that you will be able to find! If you haven't been to the store we hope you take this opportunity to see our remodeled space at 528 Essex Road/Rout 2A in Williston on Tuesday through Friday, 9am to 6pm and Saturday 9 am to 5pm. We will pick up large and multiple items at your home for free—call 857-5296 to schedule a pick-up and to learn about volunteering. Your donated items and your purchases help us build more homes for families in our community. Shop, Donate and Volunteer!



## Critical Need for Affordable Housing in Chittenden County

There continues to be a critical need for affordable housing in Chittenden County, especially for low-income working families, sometimes called “the working poor”. With only a 1% vacancy rate for apartments, these families face several severe challenges. First, they don't have many options because they are making low wages and can't afford most of the available apartments. Second, since landlords have lots of people to rent their properties, some landlords don't properly maintain their apartments. Our families must be living in “substandard” apartments in order to qualify to be a Habitat family and this means they live with unsafe electrical and plumbing systems, mold, vermin and little or no insulation which causes the families to be cold.

**In order for us to build homes each year we DEPEND on donations from individuals and businesses as well as on volunteers.** We receive no funding from Habitat for Humanity International and must raise all of our annual budget from four areas: donations, grants, the Green Mountain Habitat ReStore and family mortgage payments. That's it. And in order to put as much of these funds as possible towards building homes, we keep our administrative costs low, with only 3 staff in the GMH office. In addition, we depend greatly on volunteers who serve on our Board and committees, who help build the houses and who work at the ReStore.

**Thank you for making the dream of homeownership possible for families in our community** and please send in your donation in the enclosed envelope, or on our secure website [www.vermonthabitat.org](http://www.vermonthabitat.org) or to GMHfH, 300 Cornerstone Drive, Suite 335, Williston, VT 05495.

Please also consider including GMHfH in your will, leaving a legacy of affordable housing.

## Energy Efficient Habitat Homes

In addition to building simple, decent and perpetually affordable homes, we also build extremely energy efficient homes. Why? So that our partner families will be comfortable and healthy and have the lowest possible energy bills. We work closely with Efficiency Vermont during the building process and they rate each home upon completion and our homes consistently rate higher than the average new home being built today!

Li Ling Young, Senior Energy Consultant at Efficiency Vermont, stated “Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity has a longstanding commitment to improving air tightness in their homes. Since reduced air leakage is the number one way to save energy and improve comfort, GMHfH is doing great work to provide truly affordable housing. The most recent homes built by GMHfH have 40% of the air leakage allowed by Vermont's energy code. With a premium ventilation system ensuring plenty of fresh air, GMHfH's homes are energy efficient, draft-free and healthy.”

## The Pradhan Family

*“If you are determined and work hard you can succeed.”*

Nir and Dhan moved to Vermont from Nepal in September of 2009 and were so excited to leave the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal behind. Dhan and his family fled Bhutan when he was 3 years old and Nir and her family left Bhutan when she was only 1 year old and both families ended up in different refugee camps in Nepal. They met through playing on different sports teams and married there.

With assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), they were able to move to the U.S. along with some of their family members. Bhutanese refugees are not technically Bhutanese, according to the country's government. Known as Lhotsampas, their ancestors migrated to Bhutan from Nepal in the 17th century. And in the 1990s, more than 100,000 of them – one-sixth of the country's population – were trucked out of Bhutan as part of its “one-nation-one people” policy, effectively an exercise in ethnic cleansing. They're now one of America's fastest-growing refugee populations.

Dhan was a teacher in the Nepal camp and taught English, Science and Math to Bhutanese students. He now works for Alpla, an international plastic manufacturing company, at its Essex location.

Dhan encouraged Nir to study and she completed her high school degree here and then studied to become a Licensed Nursing Assistant (LNA). In addition to her studies, Nir has worked for a local department store since moving here and also works for the Burlington health department. She is about to begin a third job as a LNA at the UVM Medical Center.

When asked what the opportunity to own their own home will mean to them, Dhan replied, “You can stay forever, you don't have to move, you can have a garden and save money and stop worrying about the rent increasing.”

Nir said “You can change the colors of your walls if you want to and you can have privacy.”

Nir and Dhan enjoy helping to build their house and said that Mike Welch (the Harrington Village site supervisor) was a good teacher. Dhan had some building experience in Nepal but said it is very different than building here! In Nepal they used hand tools, bricks, sand and cement and they don't use any insulation. He said “building our Habitat house is very different with power tools and insulation and different materials.”

Nir and Dhan have a 2-year old son Beebak and they are looking forward for him to be able to play outside.

“I didn't dream this life, it is so good to be here in the U.S. We have to work hard, but everyone is very encouraging.” said Nir. “If you are determined and work hard you can do it.”



Nir and Dhan Pradhan



Beebok is 2 years old and looks forward to playing with the other children at Harrington Village.

## Paquette Family Moves In!



Renee and Jordan Paquette and their three sons moved into their new home at Albert's Way following a dedication on February 22. While still unpacking boxes Renee recently said “It is so wonderful to be in our beautiful new home! Our sons love being able to play in our yard and are having so much fun settling into their new bedrooms.” Welcome, Paquette family!