

## “NEPALESE SAYING: “WHEN WE WAIT A LONG TIME WITH PASSION, THE FRUIT IS MUCH SWEETER”

Isn't that a wonderful saying? It's not always easy to be patient, but when there is a possibility of owning your own home, patience is critical. Lal and Muna Pradhan have demonstrated patience over and over again. They are Bhutanese who grew up and met in a refugee camp in Nepal after their families and over 100,000 other Bhutanese were exiled to Nepal and India during an ethnic cleansing by the Bhutanese government, leaving their homes behind. Most of the refugees were in the refugee camps for 15 to 20 years, living in shelters made of bamboo poles and plastic roofs, and without water or electricity. The families had to spend hours in line waiting to get water from a common tap. Lal said that they had either a coal, wood or kerosene stove for cooking and lamps for light and that the air was extremely polluted. And, it was always noisy because of the crowded conditions.



Lal and Muna with sons Aarush (1) and Swopnil (8)

Lal and Muna met in the camp, married and had their first son there, while waiting to emigrate to the U.S. The United Nations Refugee Agency, working with Australia, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States has relocated 100,000 refugees as part of a humanitarian project started in 2007.

an information meeting for the Harrington Village project 4 years ago and submitted their first application. They were turned down several times because there were more applicants than homes to be built. “There's a Nepalese saying that translates to ‘when we wait for something a long time with passion, the fruit is much sweeter.’ We have been patient waiting for a home because it is so important to our family and we are so happy that it will happen.” At last, they were accepted this year to become the owners of the home under construction on Elmwood Avenue in Burlington.



Imagine waiting in line to fill buckets of water every day.

Finally, Lal, Muna and their oldest son, Swopnil (now 8) were able to move to Vermont in 2012. They lived with family for two years and moved into an apartment in 2014 where their second child, Aarush, was born. They learned about Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity and attended

### WHAT ARE THEY MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO?

Lal responded quickly by saying that “Owning a home is everything for me because our children will be safe and our new house will be closer to my jobs and my son's school. My son is anxious to move and to have a safe place to play. Also, we'll be building security for our family by investing our mortgage payments rather than paying rent.

When I asked Muna what she was looking forward to she showed me the vegetables growing in pots outside the back door of their apartment and said “I want a garden to grow vegetables for our family and maybe flowers, too. Gardens are part of our culture.”

“I am enjoying working on our new home with the volunteers and every day our son asks ‘when are we going to move into our new home?’ For us, the long wait, from the refugee camp almost 30 years ago, to helping to build our new home, is worth it.”

## CAN YOU HELP?

In order to build more homes to help more families more money must be raised – it's as simple as that. What's not so simple is how to find more people like YOU who believe in our mission that everyone deserves a decent place to live. If you know someone who might agree, please share this newsletter with them OR contact Catherine Stevens at 872-8726 or cstevens@vermonthabitat.org and ask that a copy be mailed to them. And, if you know of a company or a group where we could give a presentation please let us know. Thank you for helping!

Before



## JUST THE FACTS:

- Habitat Partner Families are required to do at least 400 hours of Sweat Equity helping to build homes or other projects.
- Habitat homes cannot be flipped; each deed includes a perpetual affordability clause and when a home is sold it goes to another qualified low-income family.
- The average Habitat home has 1200 square feet of space, 3 bedrooms, 150 pounds of nails and 400 two-by-fours.

After



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT:



Ted and Lorraine Johnson have donated to Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity since 2009 and Ted has been the president of our Board of Directors for two years. "We became donors because the need for affordable homes is large and we believe that the long-term benefit for local families makes our support a good decision. Since 1984, 75 families, 11 of whom were new to the U.S., have been able to achieve the American Dream of owning their own home, a dream that wouldn't have been possible without Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity. These families were living in deplorable and/or expensive rental housing and weren't qualified for a bank mortgage. But now, they are paying mortgages on their own decent and energy efficient homes. We're proud to be part of this mission."

## I DONATE BECAUSE IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

Judy Wright said "I donate money to Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity because I believe that everyone deserves to have decent housing and because every family who purchases a Habitat home makes all of our lives better... I am reminded of the parable about the boy at the ocean who sees that many starfish have been washed up on the beach. He starts to toss one back in the water and an old man walking by asks him what he is doing.

The young boy paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean. The tide has washed them up onto the beach and they can't return to the sea by themselves," the youth replied. "When the sun gets high, they will die, unless I throw them back into the water."

The old man replied, "But there must be tens of thousands of starfish on this beach. I'm afraid you won't really be able to make much of a difference."

The boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned, smiled and said, "It made a difference to that one!"

"Building homes, one at a time, matters", continued Judy, "and I am extremely proud to be able to help give these folks a hand up."



## WHAT YOU ARE HELPING TO BUILD THIS YEAR

It's so exciting that 5 families will become homeowners this year thanks to YOU! We are building our first-ever triplex as well as rehabbing a carriage house on Park Street in Essex Junction and at the same time we're building a single family home on Elmwood Avenue in Burlington. As you might imagine there are lots of materials to order, volunteers to schedule, permits to apply for but, at the end of this year, our vision of "a world where everyone has a decent place to live" will be five families further along.



Four homes in Essex Junction



Volunteer builders



Single family home on Elmwood Ave, Burlington

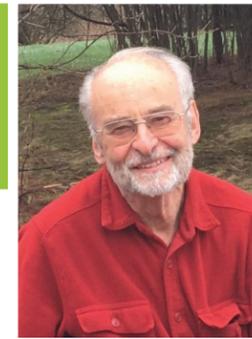
## WHAT WILL IT COST TO CONTINUE TO BUILD HOMES FOR FAMILIES IN NEED?

You probably are aware of the high cost of housing in Vermont. By definition, "affordable housing" should cost no more than 30% of a household's income. Currently, the average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in Chittenden County is \$1400, which would require an annual household income of \$55,806 to be considered affordable! For people making low wages, that cost of housing either forces them to live in unsafe and/or overcrowded housing or to spend a large percent of their income on rent and thus have less to spend on food, medical care, etc.

The current cost to purchase land, pay fees and permits, subcontractors (plumbers, electricians), building materials, etc. is approximately \$160,000 per house. Our goal is to continue to build 5 or more homes each year but raising the money is a challenge. We don't receive any funding from Habitat for Humanity International and must raise ALL the money needed to build homes locally. Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity receives income from mortgage payments from our partner families, net profit from the ReStore, grants and donations from individuals. Our 2017 budget is \$1,197,000 with 88% going to programs and services and 12% for administration.

YOU are making it possible for simple, decent homes to be built for low-income, working families!

*"If you don't have hope and don't have a safe home to live in, it's very hard to feel empowered."*



John Owen has supported Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity for years and believes that his donations are well spent to build homes for low-income families.

"The whole Habitat concept is great!" said John, "The opportunity to become homeowners takes people out of poverty. It makes people responsible by requiring them to do sweat equity to help build their homes. Families, especially children, must be in a stable environment in order to improve their lot in life. If you don't have hope and don't have a safe home to live in, it's very hard to feel empowered."

John went on to say, "Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity provides a community for local volunteers to work side by side with the partner families to build their homes. It's an opportunity for people from different walks of life to work together."

John worked for Kodak in Rochester and said that he first became aware of Habitat for Humanity when he attended a presentation by the local Habitat office. He made a mental note that "when I retire, I want to get involved with Habitat." After retirement, he and his wife Ann moved to Charlotte, Vermont where he looked for the closest Habitat affiliate and discovered Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity. He contacted Charlie Magill, a member of the Board of Directors, and joined the Site Selection committee, then went on to serve on the Board. Eventually, he became Board president and was involved in hiring David Mullin, the executive director, calling it "One of my best moves!"

After serving his term on the Board he continued to be a donor and started volunteering at the GMHfH ReStore soon after it opened. "The ReStore is another example of how Habitat makes sense. People donate furniture or appliances, keeping them out of the landfill and making these items available to people on a budget. Both the people donating their items and the people who then buy them are helping to build homes because the net profits are part of GMHfH's income." said John.

*"I continue to donate to GMHfH each year because I agree with them that everyone deserves a decent place to live. It's as simple as that."*



David Mullin presents Betty Button with the key to her new house.

## UPDATES FROM THREE PARTNER FAMILIES:

1 The Doner Family became homeowners almost a year ago, leaving a flooded and moldy basement apartment for their new safe and energy efficient home.



2 Robin, a Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity Partner Family shared with me recently: "Almost 12 years ago I was living in a two bedroom apartment with my two children Walker and Mahalia. I paid about \$900 a month for that apartment and made about \$400 a week. The rent was about to go up and I was contemplating moving us all into a one bedroom apartment, because with the cost of food, utilities and car expenses, I would not be able afford the \$1100 a month it was going up to. Fortunately for me I had applied to Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity and received a call that I had been selected and we started the process to become Home Owners!"

Financially, having a Habitat Home has changed my life. We could live in Beautiful Home, have a back yard for the first time and actually not sweat paying the bills. My children were in the 2nd and 5th grade when we first moved in they were so excited to have their own rooms. Because I was not scrambling to meet our basic needs the kids signed up for soccer and art camps, and their horizons opened up. My daughter is currently a student at Maine College of Art.

Vermont is an expensive state, and Habitat helps working class people continue to thrive here. I would never have been a homeowner in Vermont without Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity."

3 Jon and Jenn Ayers welcomed new son William into their family in their Habitat built home at Harrington Village along with big sister Amelia. Congratulations!

