

“We have a really good life and this is a good way to give back.”

Dick Shasteen met with me at the Staniford Road duplex construction site Burlington, taking a break from providing materials to volunteers. He chuckled and said, “Sometimes my wife, Darlene, says that I’m spending too much of my time on Habitat work, but I love doing it. If we can pull some families off public assistance and help them to become self-sufficient it’s well worth my time.”

During his years at IBM, Dick worked his way up the ladder, eventually supervising 800 people in the US and other countries, and he learned a lot about managing people. “I always took personal responsibility if anything went wrong, no matter who was involved.” Now retired, he uses those same skills to keep his construction volunteers happy and motivated, and a core group of men and women, who named themselves “the Geezers”, volunteer once or twice each week to help build homes for local families. “My career required that I improve quality and reduce cost and I do that when I (volunteer) supervise Green Mountain Habitat home builds”

Dick also treats vendors well by being organized, knowing what is needed in advance and sending thank you notes. “Not only do we receive great service from suppliers and tradespeople, but often they give us discounts and some become financial donors.”

People skills are important but obviously so are construction skills and Dick and his wife have built and sold



several houses and enjoyed the process as well as how to manage all the facets.

Along with building decent, simple homes for families in need, Dick is committed to making them as energy-efficient as possible, while working within tight budgets. “It does a family no good to purchase a house and then not be able to afford the upkeep and energy bills.” With each house, Dick works with Efficiency Vermont from the plans to the finished home, to incorporate new energy saving components and as a result, GMHfH built homes receive the Energy Star rating and, just recently, the new Indoor AirPlus rating. These efficiencies mean that the families will spend less on their utility bills, just as they spend less on their mortgage/property tax/home insurance than most did on rent alone. These savings are one factor in the “hand up” to the families, and an opportunity for them to become more financially stable.

Meet the Families YOU Are Helping this Year



Julian and mom, Becca, looking forward to becoming homeowners



Becca helping to build her new home.



YOU ARE AMAZING! Thank you for making it possible for families to achieve the dream of a home of their own! These Habitat built homes wouldn't be possible without YOU!



Thanks to the many volunteers who help build homes for families.

Questions? Suggestions? Contact Catherine at cstevens@vermonthabitat.org.

“I could write a book about what this home will mean to my family”

I can't wait to get out of subsidized housing and to start building equity by paying my mortgage to Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity!" Rebecca Mann smiled as she said that. "I enjoy working as the supervisor of the drop-in child care center at the Greater Burlington YMCA, but the salary isn't enough to come close to buying a home on the open market. Being selected to become a GMHfH homeowner family is a great opportunity for me to grow with the responsibilities of homeownership."

Her 12 year old son isn't interested in building equity, of course, but he is really looking forward to a basement where he can play his guitar! He and his mother are also looking forward to being close to the bike path.

Their 2-bedroom, 1-bath home will also have a yard to

share with the other family in their duplex and both mother and son are looking forward to having outside space.

"When I'm at the build site, during breaks from working on my sweat equity, I walk around the house and imagine where I'll put our couch and what plants I'll put in the garden."

"The "sweat equity" requirement makes a lot of sense because I'll be able to learn so much from that experience. Working with the volunteers at the build site of my new future home has not only given me the opportunity to meet and personally thank them", said Becca, "it has also allowed me to work alongside my new neighbors who I will be sharing the land with. I could not think of a better way to ensure that families care for their homes and partner with their future neighbors in creating a healthy habitat than having them build it together. Thank you Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity!"

“A home means we are staying in this community, that we will raise our family here. This is such a dream come true!”



Jasmin and Ahmed on the site of their future home for their family. Jasmin has been bringing treats to the volunteers.

Here in Vermont, it can be impossible to imagine the horror of trying to survive in a war-torn country with meager food supplies and poor sanitation.

The Somalia Civil War has been going on since the 1960's, as a variety of groups have fought for control. Somalia has remained classified as a "Fragile State", a list of countries vulnerable to collapse and whose citizens are at great risk. Decades of war, as well as drought, floods, food shortages and lack of economic opportunities, have caused hundreds of thousands of Somalis to flee their homes.

These horrific conditions are why young Ahmed and his family and young Jasmin and her family left Somalia for refugee camps in Kenya. Imagine young children living with the terror and uncertainty, and how frightened their parents must have been for their families. Ahmed and Jasmin actually met each other in the camp as children.

After years in two different refugee camps, Ahmed, 19, came to the US with his uncle in 2004 settling in Nashville, TN where he got a job working in a chicken slaughterhouse. The \$9 hourly wage was difficult to live on and certainly not enough to marry Jasmin, who was allowed to come to the US with her parents in 2005. Ahmed asked around to find a job where he could make more money and was told about deep sea fishing in Alaska! He had never fished before nor been on a boat but he interviewed for a job, was hired on the spot and flown to Seattle, Washington the next day. Needless to say, deep sea fishing is hard and dangerous work, but Ahmed was driven to save money so that he and Jasmin could be married. They married a year later.

He moved to Vermont in 2011 and was hired as a welder with Fab Tech, where he now trains other workers. The company so values him that they will be allowing him to have every other Tuesday off so that he can do his required GMHfH sweat equity hours, helping to build his home. Jasmin works as a caregiver for a woman with disabilities and will be working at the ReStore towards their sweat equity hours.

Ahmed had a dream to buy a home for his family and applied for a mortgage but couldn't qualify because of his income. Jasmin spoke, with a warm smile, about their belief "that we would have a home of our own, after spending our lives in camps and rentals. We were patient and believed it would happen someday."

The family lives in a rental apartment which they keep spotless but which has some serious problems including loose wiring and mold. Ahmed stated "As a renter, I am not allowed to fix the issues that come up. I like to fix things and when we own our home I will be able to keep everything in good shape."

Ahmed shared, with a broad grin on his face, "A home means we are staying in this community, that we will raise our family here. This is such a dream come true. And, I am excited about learning how to help build our house, with the volunteers, and to thank them for helping."

At last, they will become members of a safe community, using the "hand up" provided by you, to move their family out of poverty and on the path to financial stability. "Owning our own home will give us security and we know we can stay there forever."



Ahmed, working with volunteers to help build his families' new home

Would You Like to Help Build Homes for Families in the Future?

We recently learned that a longtime supporter of Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity and the families we serve passed away and left a bequest in her will, in order to help build homes for families in the future. It is always overwhelming to know that a donor shares our vision of a world where everyone has a safe place to live, not only by supporting the current families but also those in the future.

If you would like to add a bequest in your will, we thank you very much. Here is the simple copy which you can give to your attorney to do so:

"I (name) of (city, state, zip code) give, devise and bequeath to Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity, Tax ID 22-2558923, (written amount or percentage) for use at Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity in Williston, VT.

Thank YOU for making homes a dream come true for 4 families in Essex Junction!

Four families moved into their new homes in Essex Junction and celebrated at a Home Dedication on April 8. Friends and families were at the celebration and the quotes from our new homeowners ranged from "After living with only a pellet stove for heat, we are so grateful to be in a warm, safe home" "So happy for my son and I to be in a safe home after years of living in a friend's trailer".



Mongali Rai, new Essex homeowner, excitedly points to the pepper plants donated by Dr. Mark Starrett from UVM.



A 'Lost Boy of Sudan' will finally have a home



Mary and Simon working on their sweat equity hours at their future Cottage Grove home in Burlington.

Simon became one of the "Lost Boys of Sudan" at the age of 6. He literally ran from his country, along with an estimated 20,000 other young boys, to avoid being killed or conscripted into the army in the Second Sudanese Civil War in 1987. These "Lost Boys" walked more than a thousand miles, wandering in and out of war zones, and spent the next four years in dire conditions. Thousands of boys lost their lives to hunger, dehydration, and exhaustion. Some were attacked and killed by wild animals; others drowned crossing rivers and many were caught in the crossfire of fighting forces, half of them dying before reaching Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, a sprawling, parched settlement of mud huts, where the survivors lived for eight years under the care of refugee relief organizations.

In 2001, as part of a program established by the US Government and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, approximately 3800 Lost Boys were allowed to resettle in the United States." Simon was one of those boys.

Simon arrived in Burlington, attended Burlington High School and received his diploma from BHS in 2004. He then returned to Africa and married Mary, who he had known for a long time and who was living in a refugee camp in Kenya. Sadly, she was not allowed to emigrate with Simon when he returned to the U.S., so they remained apart.

Simon moved to Texas and worked for the Tyson meat company from 2006-2011. He started his petition to bring his family from Africa to this country, but he had to have a sufficient amount of money in order to have his petition accepted. In 2011, Simon, Mary and their children were able to move to Vermont, a place that the family considers "home."

Simon works at the UVM Medical Center, and Mary is a resident care associate at a senior care facility. They are currently living in a small apartment where they fear for their children's safety. Cars, including theirs, have been broken into and their daughter was frightened by other kids who had knives.

Having grown up in frightening and dangerous circumstances, Simon and Mary understandably want their children to be safe. "I am looking forward to having a home where our children can play outside safely in the back yard", said Mary,

"Owning our own home will make a big difference to the safety of our family", Simon added, "And we are so excited about having the responsibility to maintain and meet certain standards with our new home during our lifetime. We will also save money for our children. I will be happy to pay our mortgage for 30 years!"