As I head toward the end of my first year at Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity, I am inspired by our model of building homes for families in need. At the very core of our organizational philosophy is a deep well of faith and optimism; We know we can bring positive change to individual lives. And there are opportunities for everyone to be a part of this change.

This year, for our Gingerbread Build in December, 49 teams of children, business professionals, youth and church groups, and families made the day sweet and fun, and raised money to help build Habitat homes in the Valley. A special thank you to Eastworks for hosting the Gingerbread Build again this year, and to Betty Duprey and her team at Nicky D's, who stepped up to provide coordination and support for this family-fun event.

Here we come, Easthampton! We will be breaking ground on our first Women Build home, in Easthampton, and build two highly energy efficient homes nestled beneath Mt. Tom on East Street. One will be fully handicapped accessible and the other will employ universal design to ensure its “visitability” by those with physical limitations. Our Women Build calls for women in leadership positions at every level of the planning and building process including fundraising and public relations, home design, project management and site supervision.

This is an ambitious undertaking because, historically, we’ve had a wonderful group of committed and skilled men leading our builds, but very few women in leadership positions on the job site. This dynamic reflects a national trend in carpentry. According to the Department of Labor, less than 2% of carpenters are women, and women are typically not taught carpentry as well as painting. Men are welcome on a Women Build, but 70% of the leadership and labor will be made up of women. This intentional flip of gender roles supports a welcoming atmosphere that many women find motivating, and as a result we expect to see a new set of faces in Easthampton this spring for our groundbreaking. Please contact us at the Habitat office if you are interested in volunteering on a Women Build committee, or building on site.

Habitat for Humanity is brilliant at reaching its end goal of building homes, but also at using this very process to bring change to people’s lives—which multiplies our impact on the community. I find deep inspiration in this. I’m lucky to be a part of this amazing organization and I’m grateful to all of you who keep us building.

In Gratitude,

Elizabeth Bridgewater, Executive Director
Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting presented an exciting tone this year. It took place on the evening of September 23rd at Essalon Café where this restaurant generously donated the space. About 75 people gathered to hear outgoing president, Peter Jessop, review the year in brief and introduce the incoming president, Mike Simolo. Executive Director, Elizabeth Bridgewater sang “Build A House For Wendy” from Peter Pan in lieu of the prayer. Words to this are on the Annual Report cover. Peter Jessop, Sandy Belden, Doris McLeod, Molly Flynn, and Julie Held were honored with PVH gifts as a token of appreciation for their dedication. New board members were warmly welcomed: Johan Brongers, John Ebbets, Adam Kelly, Peter Kakos, and Libby McLarty. The Annual Report may be read online: https://pvhabitat.org/about/annual-reports

Gingerbread Build ’13

The Gingerbread Build ’13 was a great success and great fun for everyone, young and old! This second annual event was held on December 7th at the Eastworks building where we took over the Program Room—and almost all the hallway space! We extend warm thanks to Nicky D’s, which co-organized the event. There were 49 teams building gingerbread houses-- 9 more than last year. Teams included The Valley Advocate, Finck & Perras Inc, Dostaal Eye Care, Nicky’s, Maple Street Architects, Belchertown High School, the Easthampton Cheerleaders, and The Williston Northampton School. The concepts for each house were funny, creative, traditional, and downright amazing. The judging team, led by Easthampton Mayor-elect Karen Cadieux, had fun rewarding everyone’s best efforts.

Betty and Amy at Nicky D’s helped us generate so much excitement about this event that we raised almost $12,000--$4,000 more than last year. Please join us in thanking our generous sponsors: Eastworks Building, River Valley Market, Maple Street Architects, Nicky’s, Integrity Development and Construction, Freedom Credit Union, Dietz & Company Architects, Barbara Demerski Real Estate, Bova Harrington, Fleury Lumber, Norseman AV Systems, and Puffer Printing.

Our special thanks and admiration go to each of the teams. They did a great job of building edible homes—and raising donations for us to use in building sturdy permanent homes for working low-income families in our Valley.

Michael Broad Honored with Green Giant Award

Michael Broad, long time construction supervisor for Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity, was recently honored by The US Green Building Council Massachusetts West Branch (USGBC MA West). This statewide award is part of the Green Giants Awards Program, and it recognizes the dedicated work of the many diverse people who build, teach about, envision, and fund green buildings in Hampshire, Hampden, Franklin, and Berkshire counties: trades people, educators, owners, and program directors.

This program is distinct from other building design awards because it honors a wider range of participants working behind the scenes in sustainable building movement in our region. Michael was nominated by Peggy MacLeod, from the Center for EcoTechnology (CET) for the Trades Category. She was honoring Michael’s long term commitment to helping PV Habitat design and build energy efficient homes throughout the valley. “Michael has a tremendous commitment to green building and has done a beautiful job of ensuring that our home designs include eco-friendly features. This translates into real savings for our Partner Families,” says Elizabeth Bridgewater, Executive Director.

The dedication dinner was held on December 4, 2013 at The Monkey Bar in Amherst and the event was sponsored by Wright Builders. We congratulate Michael for all his dedicated work on green building with us!
Habitat’s Influence Extends Beyond Partner Families

by Catherine Ruggiero

Meet Stan Samuelson, Volunteer Team Builder. He works at the Williston Northampton School and organizes team builds with the students. Stan and the Williston group were one of the first groups to build in the Garfield Ave site in Florence, starting in 2008. Every month they come to work on a house there, and they are scheduled to carry on through February.

Stan has been involved with Habitat for 15 years, and he appreciates how it’s always been a positive experience. Habitat has helped make this normally positive person even more positive, and this shows in his behavior. “I love the whole concept of Habitat,” he says. “The building process is only a small portion of the fulfilling outcome.”

When asked how his Habitat work has affected him, Stan feels nostalgia. He lives in the area and when he drives past the houses that he and the Williston kids have worked on, he remembers: “My kids built that portion. My kids put up that siding.”

As a volunteer and a resident of the Pioneer Valley, he gets to feel this personal tie to the projects. Knowing what this work has done gives him a feeling of accomplishment. This motivates Stan into continuing to take part in the team builds and to push his students to be a part of something “incredible.” “I want my kids to be a part of this experience.”

And meet Ben, a student. Along with Stan, many students have become involved in these builds, and they become transformed in the process. Ben is one of the students involved in these team builds, and he’s been involved for four years. “It feels nice to be able to help people.” Working on these builds has increased his enthusiasm for future endeavors. It’s pushed him to want to go into law enforcement “and help people in ways that I never thought were possible.”

Being a part of Habitat gives different rewards to different people, but when you volunteer, you will find yourself like Stan and Ben and come away with a new mindset.

Help Us Build Our Next House

Your donation can buy materials for our ongoing builds...

$15: 3 studs for framing a window
$30: Paint for the living room
$50: Nails for a 2-bedroom house
$75: Sheetrock for the stairway
$100: Primer paint for the house entrance and hallways
$145: Window for any room of the house
$150: Interior door
$200: Kitchen cabinet
$300: Laminate for kitchen floor
$450: Exterior door
$500: Water heater for 3-bedroom house

Or contact us about in-kind and materials donations!

Scaffolding Needed

We are in dire need of extra scaffolding for our Spring 2014 builds, as we start 3 houses at the same time!

Join the 5 Garfield Build Team

2 or 3 key volunteers are needed to join the 5 Garfield Leadership Team. Can you help?

Tribute Giving

Help us to help hard-working families in Hampshire and Franklin counties achieve the American Dream of homeownership. Your gift may also be made in honor of someone special.

Save the Date so you can Feast for Habitat

On Saturday, June 14, 2014, we’ll celebrate the third annual feast for Habitat. We’ll gather at Stone Soup Concrete in the Eastworks building in Easthampton. This creative venue is in keeping with our tradition of hosting our feast at cool sites associated with the building trades.

Stone Soup “brings concrete in from the cold”—which resonates with Habitat’s mission to help families build their own homes. No wonder they are donating their space for our biggest fundraiser of the year. We invite you to volunteer to help with the Feast for Habitat by contacting us at feast@pvhabitat.org

 Newsletter Contributors – Feature Writer: Catherine Ruggiero, Graphic Design: Hailey Brown
Valley Gives

To all the individuals and companies who supported Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity on 12/12/13 through the Valley Gives campaign – Thank You! Through your support, we were able to raise almost $16,000. These resources are crucial in our efforts to build homes for low income families throughout the Valley.

This innovative approach coordinated by The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts raised more than $2 million through a comprehensive on-line giving campaign. Best of all, our community is better educated on the amazing work being done by non-profits in the area and the spirit of giving could be felt throughout the day and evening.