

Working with our many partners, Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity builds homes, hope, and community in Hampshire and Franklin Counties and is affiliated with Habitat for Humanity International, an ecumenical organization dedicated to assuring decent, affordable homes for people the world over.

## LOOKING FORWARD

- 1st Wednesday and 3rd Saturday of each month – New volunteer orientations
- Sunday April 3rd, 12-4 pm – community event benefit at Ten Thousand Villages
- Spring – construction resumes at Hawthorne Farm, 235-237 East Pleasant Street, Amherst
- Wednesday April 27th – FEAST for Habitat at Cows Building Supply
- Saturday April 30th- Sunday May 8th – National Women Build Week

**I have one life and one chance to make it count for something... My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference.**

**-Jimmy Carter**

# Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity Newsletter

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WINTER 2016

## Learning and Leading: Pioneer Valley Habitat's Build Team Duo Walt Kohler and Charlie Klem

When Walt Kohler was commuting to Boston from Amherst every day for the last twenty years of his career, he didn't know that he would one day be contributing a lot of bedrooms to what he thought of during those years as his bedroom community. After fifteen years teaching computer engineering at UMass-Amherst followed by two decades of work in the computer and data storage industry that required the commute to the east, when Walt was looking at retirement in 2006 he knew he wanted to find satisfying volunteer work that would use his skills and keep an energetic man busy... and local.



"I wanted to get more involved in the community that I had spent so much time away from," he said, "and at the time there was a Habitat build going on at Stanley Street." The Stanley Street project – a four-home development planned for land donated by Amherst College – had just gotten underway when Walt came on board in 2007, and it was in joining the volunteer build efforts on the first of the four homes that Walt met Charlie Klem.

Charlie had landed in Amherst after spending years in upstate New York, Puerto Rico, and the Hartford area in his career in public accounting in corporate environments and then privately-held construction companies. This last stage of his career, while it didn't put Charlie out in the field, gave him access to people who were and who could offer him tutorials on things like sheet rocking and other home improvement skills that he would apply to his own projects at home and eventually to the work of Pioneer Valley Habitat. His first habitat experience was participating in a Learning in Retirement work party where he found himself alongside students from his alma mater Amherst College, putting out hay bales at the Stanley Street site.



A volunteer opportunity so close to home, and one that allowed Charlie to realize his passionate "interest in minimizing the very real obstacles to homeownership faced by so many..." and Charlie was hooked.

The friendship and construction camaraderie between Walt and Charlie cemented on the site of that first Stanley Street home and blossomed into the two men assuming the role of co-leaders for the next home build on that project. Since that second Stanley Street home, Walt and Charlie have been the build team leaders and/or have contributed in a supervisory capacity on some eleven Pioneer Valley Habitat build sites.

With no formal training or expertise in construction, they've rolled up their sleeves and set about the task of learning to lead teams of volunteers in the construction of simple, decent, and affordable homes for low income families; thirteen homes in total to date. (Continued on page 3)

**"Walt and Charlie's willingness to both learn and lead at the same time in extraordinary. They may have come on board as relatively inexperienced hands, but they now bring a solid body of knowledge to the job, along with a good sense of humor!"**

**-Peter Jessop, former PVHH board president, former owner of Integrity Construction and Development, longtime Habitat volunteer**

## PVHH Board

John Ebbets  
Reverend Janet Bush  
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Paul McDonough  
Steve Harrington  
Keith Woodruff  
Allie Brady  
Marybeth Bridegam  
Jeff Hutchins  
Tom Jones  
Walt Kohler  
Libby McLarty  
Anna Novey Cook  
Tara Palkoski

## PVHH Staff

Megan McDonough  
Executive Director

Amy Landry  
Director of Resource Development

LaVae Allard  
Bookkeeper

Gratitude to our volunteer graphic artist, photographers, and contributing writers and editors who bring their talents to bear on this newsletter and other PVHH outreach materials: Hailey Brown, Alicia Ralph, Peggy MacLeod, and Kayla Fontaine.

Follow us on Facebook to find out what's happening thanks to posts by Nicole Sgrignari and Allie Brady!



We are reserving Team Builds for 2016! For more information about how you and a group of 7 others (your friends, your workplace colleagues, your civic or church group) might spend the day building a home, hope, and community, call the office at 413-586-5430. And to sign up as an individual volunteer, go to [www.pvhabitat.org](http://www.pvhabitat.org) and reserve your spot! New volunteer orientations take place the first Wednesday evening and the third Saturday morning of each month at the Habitat office.



## Homes by the Mountain

With Mount Tom as the backdrop, on Sunday February 21st at 1 pm, the MJ Adams Legacy Women Build project culminated in the dedication of these homes to their new owners, Angelique Baker and Aleta Kennedy, and their families. Habitat staff and volunteers, Easthampton Mayor Karen Cadieux, spiritual leaders of the families' choosing, and other Habitat community members gathered that afternoon to celebrate the crossing of the threshold into a new life for the Bakers and the Kennedys.

## Foundation Laid at Hawthorne:

Thanks to the many Habitat supporters who gave generously of their time and financial resources last fall to ensure that we headed into winter with the foundation in place to begin construction at the site of the former Hawthorne Farm on East Pleasant Street in Amherst! Wagner Wood's preparation of the site followed by work done by the Smith Vocational School plumbing program readied it for the pouring of the slab to go under two homes, construction to resume this spring. On Friday October 30th, there was a celebratory mood at the site when Amherst civic leaders, neighbors, Habitat staff, board, volunteers, and others gathered as John Heaps, president of Florence Bank, and his staff presented an oversized check for \$10,000 while Interim Town Manager David Ziomek spoke about how this project will benefit the town of Amherst.



## A Letter from the Executive Director

### Dear Habitat Community,

I wanted to take a moment to thank some of our community partners that make it possible for us to focus on the complex work of building homes and partnering with new homeowners. It takes the direct contributions of many volunteers, donors, and supporters to accomplish our goals, but there are also others working diligently on the overarching goal of ending poverty housing alongside us.



- **Our partner affiliates in other areas.** Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity services Hampshire and Franklin Counties, but what about our neighbors in Springfield, Pittsfield, and Worcester? There are eighteen Habitat for Humanity affiliates serving different areas in Massachusetts. We meet every other month to share best practices and collaborate on ending poverty housing across the state. Want to find an affiliate in another area? <http://www.habitat.org/local>
- **Emergency Shelter Groups.** For those in crisis, organizations like ServiceNet, Craigs Doors, and more provide a vital service in the fight against poverty housing. Some of our homeowners have traveled the long road from homelessness to rental housing to a permanent home of their own with Habitat for Humanity.
- **Local Community Development Corporations.** Organizations like Valley CDC teach Homebuyer education courses in our area and do budget counseling with potential homeowners. Many of our partner families take classes with Valley CDC on their path to homeownership. <http://www.valleycdc.com/>
- **Community Development Financial Institutions.** CDFI organizations invest in small businesses throughout the area that contribute to a vibrant economy. Common Capital, a CDFI based in Holyoke, partnered with us to provide working capital for construction. <http://www.common-capital.org/>

The list above just scratches the surface of the great work going on in our community to address the issues of poverty housing. Our vision is a world where everyone has a decent place to live, and sometimes reaching that goal can seem daunting. But what I truly appreciate about our community is the willingness to do the hard work, to put our money where our mouths are, and commit to doing something. To doing what we can today so that someone can have a better tomorrow.

Thank you to the direct and indirect support of the community where we are changing lives.

One is not born into the  
world to do everything but  
to do something.

- Henry David Thoreau

In gratitude,

Megan McDonough

# Learning and Leading: continued from page 1

Further, they've engaged a number of their friends and neighbors who have come to known as "regulars" on Habitat builds, a steadfast crew of volunteers that help keep the construction wheels in motion, critical to success within the Habitat model.



"Nobody has demonstrated more commitment to the ideals of Habitat than Walt and Charlie. They have continually stepped up into greater and more productive roles in the organization," according to Peter Jessop. "They are models for the rest of us."

While the Hawthorne Farm build is in hibernation for the winter months, you might guess that Walt and Charlie have a lot of time off. You'd be wrong. Even with tools and materials tucked away into sheds until active construction resumes, the Team-That-Rarely-Rests is busy with budget number advising, soliciting materials, and services to help keep building costs low, contributing on Habitat committees, and engaging in many other tasks that keep the work moving apace. And when building begins anew at Hawthorne Farm, fortunate volunteer laborers on the site will have the opportunity to work with these mentors who embody truly Pioneer Valley Habitat's mission of building homes, hope, and community.



## Ten Thousand Villages and Habitat: A Shared Vision

When you purchase something made by a maker from locations across the globe at Ten Thousand Villages, you "become part of a chain reaction that helps sustain a family of six, a community of 20, a village of 100..." according to the website of this popular local merchant. Shop at Ten Thousand Villages in Northampton on Sunday April 3rd between 12:00pm and 4:00pm and a portion of the day's shopping proceeds will go to Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity. In addition, there will be activities, food, and music throughout the afternoon to make for a fun shopping experience. Ticket's for this year's FEAST for Habitat will be on sale that day. Hope to see you there!



TEN THOUSAND VILLAGES

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carsforhomes.org

## FEAST for Habitat Coming Wednesday April 27th!



Join Pioneer Valley Habitat and co-hosts Cows Building Supply for the annual FEAST for Habitat, a fun after-work party held this year at Cows in North Amherst on Wednesday April 27th from 5:30pm to 8:00pm. For the \$45 ticket price, partygoers will feast on delicious food, enjoy a beverage, meet new people, hear some jazz provided by local musicians, and find some hidden gems on the auction table. It's what the Habitat community does best: combines fun, building community, and doing good work with building supplies (well, the building supplies are just for ambiance, but get inspired to come build with us! To purchase tickets online, go to [www.pvhabitat.org](http://www.pvhabitat.org)



## Valley Habitat Volunteers Travel the Country

This year the UMass-Amherst Habitat campus chapter is thrilled to be going to Winston-Salem, NC for their Spring Break trip. Twenty-two UMass students will head south to participate in the Collegiate Challenge, a year-round alternative spring break program offered by Habitat for Humanity International. Students will work with Forsyth County Habitat to help with their current builds as well as their ReStore. If you would like to support UMass efforts, chapter members are hosting fundraisers at Bertucci's in Amherst all day on February 23rd and Bueno Y Sano in Amherst all day on March 30th.



## ...and the World

As an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, Pioneer Valley Habitat makes an annual contribution to Habitat International's work in Haiti. Board member the Reverend Janet Bush, minister of the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence, recently returned from a trip to Haiti with other affiliate leaders from around the U.S.

"I was most impressed by the Habitat staff," she commented. "They are committed to providing training resources and technical assistance to community leaders, empowering them to take the lead in improving their neighborhoods. I'm very glad Pioneer Valley Habitat is a partner in this work."

**Shop at AmazonSmile**  
and Amazon will make a donation to:  
Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity

Get started

## Wish List

- Writing/ editorial help
- Volunteer to help with office cleaning and recycling
- New phones for the office
- Folding chairs





**Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity**  
 P.O Box 60642  
 Florence , MA 01062  
 413-586-5430  
[www.pioneervalleyhabitat.org](http://www.pioneervalleyhabitat.org)

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**Get Involved!**

Scan the QR code  
 to sign up and volunteer!



## Tribute Giving Gives a Gift Twice

How much of the fabric of our childhood memories weaves together our mothers, our fathers, our homes? Memories of warm meals on cold days eaten at a kitchen table, of playing ball in a vacant lot until a parent's call brought us home for dinner, of working shoulder to shoulder with parents and siblings to learn the finer points of weeding a garden?

Express your gratitude or love with a tribute to mom or dad (or other parental figure) that will support low-income families having access to decent and affordable homes in the Pioneer Valley. Tribute gifts may be made for Mother's Day, Father's Day, or for any reason you have to celebrate someone special.

When we receive your gift online or in the mail, we will mail a personalized tribute card in your name to the individual or family you are honoring.

To give online, go to: <https://pvhabitat.org/support/donate/tribute-giving>

Or mail your check made out to Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity at:

PO Box 60642, Florence, MA 01062

with a note about who you are honoring and where their tribute card should be sent.

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Mama was my greatest teacher, a teacher of compassion, love, and fearlessness. If love is sweet as a flower, then my mother is that sweet flower of love.

- Stevie Wonder

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### HELP WANTED:

**Pioneer Valley Habitat is now accepting applications to fill half-time Volunteer Coordinator position. For more information on the position and how to apply, go to:**

<https://pvhabitat.org/employment>

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140 Pine St. Room 9, Florence, MA

413-586-5430

[www.PVHabitat.org](http://www.PVHabitat.org)