



We are very excited to announce our first signature fundraising event, taking place this spring in the Pioneer Valley! It is titled Feast for Habitat, and it will be on May 4<sup>th</sup>, from 6-9 pm. Restaurants from all over Pioneer Valley will be sampling their cuisine, there will be a silent auction with tons of good deals from around the Valley, wine and beer, live music, and lots of Habitat supporters. And here's the best part: it is going to be held at a brand

new 30,000 sq. foot lumber warehouse! Habitat gets all its lumber from R.K. Miles, and they have offered their new \$5 million warehouse to hold the event. With high ceilings, walls lined with lumber, and huge doors that will let the party spill outside, it is the perfect setting for our first Feast for Habitat.

Please mark your calendars for May 4<sup>th</sup>, 6-9pm, and keep your eye out for your invitation, arriving in the mail soon! If you just can't wait for your invitation, you can buy your ticket online at [www.PVHabitat.org](http://www.PVHabitat.org).

If you are interested in helping plan the event, volunteering the day of the event, donating an item to the auction, or having your business be a sponsor, please contact Keegan at 586-5430 or [Resource@PVHabitat.org](mailto:Resource@PVHabitat.org). We can't wait to celebrate our inaugural Feast for Habitat with you!

## Habitat Youth!

We are happy to announce that both the UMass and Amherst College Chapters of Habitat will be holding their first ever Habitat Shantytown events this April! Students will be sponsored to build and spend the night in "shantytowns" made of cardboard and tarps. This is a great event for raising two things: awareness about housing issues and money to build homes for families in the Valley.



In addition to our college chapters, Deerfield Academy is interested in starting a chapter, and Turner's Falls High School is interested in doing some group builds. If you would like your school or church youth group to help build homes for Valley families in need, please contact Keegan at [Resource@PVHabitat.org](mailto:Resource@PVHabitat.org) or 413-586-5430

### ***Please remember that we are always looking for more volunteers!***

*We would especially appreciate volunteers for our Event Planning, Public Relations, and Faith Relations committees. Please contact our Development Director, Keegan Pyle, if you are interested in serving on any of these committees. If you are interested in volunteering in other areas, including building, please visit our website, [www.pvhabitat.org](http://www.pvhabitat.org) to sign up.*

# Haitian Paradox

Written by  
Mark Lange, PVHabitat Volunteer

Tent cities and sewage, President Carter and Garth Brooks, 90 degree heat and no shade, armed guards and barbed wire, Irish cooks and performers, destruction and need everywhere--Haiti is surreal. It took a while for me to gain perspective on my week with Habitat for Humanity in the poorest island country of the Caribbean. The gratification was twofold: working with Haitian families to construct 100 homes in a week; and working alongside 400 optimistic volunteers to improve the lives of those hundred families.

This was my first International HfH Jimmy Carter Work Project. Others had done this numerous times. But few had been to Haiti, and all agreed that this was one of the most daunting projects they had undertaken. In this bizarre context, the logistics of moving volunteers and materials, while providing protection for both, was mind-boggling. Our living quarters and the work site were surrounded by fences, barbed-wire, and armed guards. When there is desperation every-



where, nothing--and no one--is safe. The homes we built were more modest than modest. At 12' by 16', they were the size of a typical dining room in the U.S.. Even so, they were mansions compared to the tired tents that so many of our partner families inhabited .

The mega-entertainment couple, Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood, provided an impromptu concert after the midweek dinner. I marveled at their down-to-earth style and their comfort as "regular" people, already working along with the rest of us in the midday heat. And I also had to chuckle about another touching absurdity: here we were, thousands of miles from home, treated to a priceless, personal, café-style performance that couldn't be had even in a sold-

out arena. Immediately after the concert President Carter delivered one of his briefest, and best, speeches ever: "Tonight we are the luckiest people on earth."

So, I survived Haiti, and Haiti survived my efforts. I am richer for the trip and I am deeply appreciative of the support of friends and family that made the journey possible. I had the pleasure of working all week with Jehosephat ("Joe")--the husband in one of the partner families--as he happily tackled anything that was required.

As we packed up on the last day he thanked each of us personally. Joe took my hand in the two of his and said, in pretty good English, "Thank you. May God repay you for this, if not in this life, in the next." My teary response arose from one last glaring contrast. Here was a man who had so little, praying that I would directly benefit from a token week's work. It didn't take much personal reflection to appreciate the simple truth of my life: I had already been paid--in advance--many times over.

*What does it mean that Haiti is our "tithe partner"?*

*From the earliest days of the organization, Habitat for Humanity has been both local and global. Each affiliate (like our Pioneer Valley Habitat) manages its own local affairs . . . but we also fully understand that we are part of a global effort to assure that all humans have a decent place to live. So we "tithe." Tithing is based on the Biblical injunction to give 10%, and that is what many affiliates do--send 10% of undesignated income to build internationally. However, a few years ago we switched from that system to the alternative plan of building a "house for a house". This makes our international contribution more concrete for us and ties our local efforts more clearly to the global level. Each year Habitat International calculates the average cost of a house built in other countries; it's now \$4500. So that's what we send for each home we complete here. In the past, we have selected various countries to receive our tithe, but for the last several years--since before the earthquake--it has been Haiti.*

# Two Special Volunteers: PV Squared and the Sun

**W**hen Pioneer Valley Habitat builds homes, many local businesses partner with us. The businesses contribute by providing materials, labor, and often both. One of the most valuable Habitat partners is **Pioneer Valley Photovoltaic Cooperative**, familiarly known as PV Squared. They provided and installed the solar energy panels for the four Habitat houses recently completed on Stanley Street in Amherst. Also two houses on L Street in Turner's Falls. The value of the installation for each house is between \$18,000 and \$19,000. The cost of the Amherst installations was covered in part by a grant from the Rural Development Institute, but the installations at Turner's Falls were contributed entirely by PV Squared. Another installation in Franklin County is in the planning stage.

The Habitat homeowners are all highly pleased with their solar energy systems. Because of the energy-efficient design of the houses, the electric bill for a house equipped with solar panels averages only \$1 per month, which means that these homeowners, who are working hard to pay their affordable Habitat mortgages, have more money available to provide for their families. In some months the panels generate more energy than the family uses. The surplus is returned to the electrical grid and the homeowner receives a credit. Students from Franklin County Technical High School, who work on the



*Warner Street , Montague City, home, complete with photovoltaics from PV Squared.*

construction of the Habitat houses as part of their school curriculum, benefit from the partnership by learning how solar panels are installed. As another contribution, PV Squared had a banner installed at the baseball field in Greenfield, calling attention to the work of Habitat and encouraging attendees to volunteer to work for Habitat.

PV Squared is a worker-owned cooperative which has been in business for ten years. During this time the performance of photovoltaic panels has steadily improved and the price has come down. And, of course, solar energy installations are environmentally sound, avoiding harmful polluting emission that we get from conventional power systems. More information is available on their website [www.pvsquared.coop](http://www.pvsquared.coop).

## What Would You Say?

At every Board meeting, Keegan presents the Board members with a question about Habitat--a question they might get asked by members of the larger community.

Here is one for you:

*Why should I give to Habitat to help only one family, when other groups benefit many more people?*

The Board answer has various dimensions. Giving to Habitat helps more than just one family: the family's mortgage payments help build additional new homes. Thus, your donation keeps giving over and over again. Additionally, a Habitat home is a permanent addition to the affordable housing stock and tax base for its town. And finally, owning a home has a long term effect of permanently transforming the owner.





**Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity**

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

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[www.facebook.com/PioneerValleyHabitatForHumanity](http://www.facebook.com/PioneerValleyHabitatForHumanity)

**Site updates:**

Warner Street, Montague City: Dry walling

Garfield Ave, Florence: Painting, installing ceramic tiling in kitchen and bath

Belchertown Rd., Amherst: Meeting with Conservation Commission regarding permitting.

Planning for site in Easthampton and Sunderland continues.

For more information visit [www.pvhabitat.org](http://www.pvhabitat.org) or scan the block with your smartphone:



**Please note:** Volunteer Orientation dates have changed! They are now every first Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm, and every third Saturday of the month at 9:00am. They are held at the PVHabitat office, 140 Pine Street in Florence.



Newsletter Contributors: Betty von Klemperer, Peter Elbow, Doris McLeod, Leo Sartori, Marilyn Woodman

**Special Thank Yous:**

- **Osterman Propane** for donating services to help the gas connection on Garfield Avenue.
- **Palmer Paving** for donating approximately \$7,000 worth of asphalt for the paving of Garfield Avenue.
- **Earth First** for donating tiles for the Garfield Ave. house.
- **Jack Hornor and Ron Skinn** for offering to match every dollar donated by April 30th in Northampton, up to \$30,000, to build the next house on Garfield Ave.

If you would like to receive this quarterly newsletter electronically rather than in paper form, please send an email to [admin@pvhabitat.org](mailto:admin@pvhabitat.org).