

## Good Neighbors on Stanley Street

New Habitat settlements don't appear in old communities as if they were imposed by colonists from far away. They are largely the creation of local people and owe much to local institutions. For instance, the Stanley Street site in Amherst was donated to Valley Habitat by Amherst College at the urging of James Patchett, an Amherst graduate who had volunteered at Habitat sites in Northampton. Since then Sid Salvi, Community Engagement Leader at Amherst College, has recruited students to work with other volunteers on the houses planned for the site. Two of these are already inhabited, a third is under way (see stories in this issue). He gets enthusiastic help from the College's athletic teams, who help schedule weekend work hours. Salvi says students are eager to get out of what he calls the "bubble" of a selective college and to work under the guidance of seasoned builders.

Valley Habitat does not design neighborhoods. It doesn't impose diversity or homogeneity. Yet there's something about Habitat that fosters neighborliness. Kathy Perry, who lives in the first Habitat house on Stanley Street, says that before it was finished two men from a group home around the corner regularly brought containers of water to the little garden she started.

Kathy's says her relationship with Ashlee Cancio-Bello, who moved into the second Habitat house on Stanley Street, is "fabulous." Both women love growing things; each has planted two white pines and a lilac bush—tempering the flatness of the site. Ashlee has also planted other shrubs, including azaleas. This year they've worked together on a vegetable garden; next year Kathy will run that while Ashlee starts an herb garden for them both. They look forward eagerly to the arrival, next spring, of Jan Lamberg and her three daughters—who should be good company for Kathy's daughter Rachel. Rachel helps Ashlee look after her 6-year-old son. "It's wonderful," says Kathy, "to see our little neighborhood expanding!"

—Elizabeth Von Kemperer



3rd house going up on Stanley St.



## Raising Another Wall in Amherst

A third home is rising in the Amherst College Field of Dreams. It is now visible from South East Street, as the framing proceeds. On September 3, the ceremonial wall-raising gathered the Lamberg family, PVH volunteers, and town and college representatives to celebrate—and to lift a rather heavy section of framing into place.

Sandy Belden and MJ Adams greeted everyone and explained how we came to be at this place—with thanks to Amherst College for the donation of land. Jim Brassord of the Amherst College staff, who has been the "point person" for the project, spoke about its progress. Gerry Weiss and Aaron Hayden were there to represent the Town of Amherst, whose Community Preservation Act funds have been crucial to the development of the site. And the family spoke of their dreams.

But when the speeches were done, it was the students who provided the muscle. Many were

freshmen who were building as part of the new-student orientation period. They had been assembling the wall all morning and now, in the early afternoon, it was ready to place. It was up, glued, braced, and nailed—and everybody smiled.

Amherst College students will continue working at the site and they will celebrate their "construction marathon" tradition with a Dawn to Dusk Build on Saturday, September 26th. Community volunteers are encouraged to sign up to work on Saturdays throughout the fall and winter ([www.pioneervalleyhabitat.org](http://www.pioneervalleyhabitat.org)).

# An Interview with Jan Lamberg

The new partner family that will join the Stanley Street community is headed by Jan Lamberg. She is an outgoing woman who isn't afraid of hard physical labor. She was raised on a dairy farm, loves the outdoors and hard work. Jan is ready to dig and hammer!

Jan has supported herself in many different ways. Her love of languages sent her to France and Spain, via scholarships and various jobs abroad. Earning her keep included being a horse farm worker and exerciser in Brittany, teacher of English in a French lycee, grape harvester, and nanny.

On this side of the Atlantic Jan has usually chosen work in non-profit organizations. For example, when she volunteered with VISTA, she was placed in "Youth Build." This HUD funded program helps 16-25 years olds, who dropped out of school, to learn the basics of construction and earn their GED degree at the same time. So destiny already linked Jan with building! During her 4 years with VISTA she heard about other non-profits, among them Big Brothers Big Sisters, which "adopted" one of her own children for a time.

Soon after moving to western Massachusetts in 2001, Jan came to the Pioneer Valley Habitat office to learn about the selection of partner families. It took a few years to work out financial plans, transportation, after school activities for the children—and also to find a non-profit employer who accepted "flex time" for sweat equity during the week so she could make up hours outside the standard office day. Partner families know that the dream of owning a home carries one through.

Now everything has fallen into place and the Lambergs are about to begin their big adventure. Jan has three children: Claire, 15, Carys, 14, and Aarti, 7. What a coincidence that this family will live on Stanley Street! They used to play in the river area and the field generously donated by Amherst College. Recently they met their future neighbors when they attended the dedication party for Ashlee Cancio-Bello last June. And Kathy Perry invited them to the house next door. The Lamberg girls are happy and excited about having a home of their own. Claire and Carys hope to do some work if site supervisors find a suitable task.

—Patricia Weed



## Jean Miller Outstanding Volunteer

Outstanding PVH volunteers are rewarded with tiny gold hammers. But Jean Miller, twelve year chair of Habitat's Family Support Committee, doesn't particularly care about hammers. What drew her to Habitat was an interest not in building but, she says emphatically, in people.

For years she satisfied this interest by teaching elementary school; now she satisfies it even more fully by working with Habitat families. On the Family Support Committee she's still an educator, but responsive to the problems and aspirations of people of all ages. She guides them through the mysteries not of long division but of heating systems and mortgage payments.

The Family Support Committee consists of a dozen members who serve as mentors to individual partner families or, in some cases, as trustees to Habitat condominiums. A mentor will take on a new partner family as soon as it's been chosen by the Family Selection Committee, and lead it through the steps to becoming home-owners. He or she will go on helping that family for a year after it has moved in.

Jean attributes much of her committee's success to continuity. Its members stay on for years — as she will do after retiring as Chair. Drawing on their cumulative experience of Habitat families, members respect practices that were successful in the past while responding to social and technological changes that affect house ownership and housekeeping. Several years ago Jean and her committee created a handbook for partner families in which information and advice were clear and accessible. Now they have created two updated versions, one addressed to partner families and the other to mentors.

—Elizabeth von Klemperer

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Sanford Belden

# Remarkable Contribution from a Remarkable Church

South Congregational Church in South Amherst has been one of Pioneer Valley Habitat's most faithful supporters from its very beginning. The relationship between the two organizations dates back to 1993.

Volunteers from South Church served in the charter group and as Board members at PVH over the years. (Sheila Rainford was in the Charter group; she and Eleanor Reid, and Rich Morse were Board members.) David Cody of Cody Construction is currently a construction crew leader. Other construction crew members from the church include Suzan Young, Alan Rainford, Steve Mabee, Liza Morse, as well as many youth group members.

The South Church Choir has performed at numerous dedication ceremonies for Habitat buildings. Many church members have provided meals, led prayers and



South Congregational Church Operation Home Delivery volunteers send first walls down to Gulf recovery area

worship services, and contributed significant financial gifts to Habitat.

The entire congregation came together for Operation Home Delivery in June 2006 and "boxed" a house to be delivered to a family that had lost its home to Hurricane Katrina. The house was sent to an Alabama warehouse to be delivered and built by Habitat volunteers as soon as a construction site became available.

For the past three years, church members have prepared welcome dinners for the Care-a-Vanners who have come to Amherst to work on Habitat projects. Another such dinner is scheduled for Sept 26. In July 2008, the church offered the use of its kitchen to a group of volunteers from Telford, Pennsylvania, who spent a week working at the Stanley Street site.

## Carters to Build in Asia with Habitat International

The Mekong River in Southeast Asia will be the location of the 2009 Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter Work Project. From November 15th to the 20th, thousands of volunteers will work on the construction of homes for 300 families in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and China's Sichuan province. It will be the beginning of a 5-year initiative by Habitat for Humanity International to work with 50,000 families in the five countries. Nearly one third of the population along the river lives in poverty.

The main host site will be at Chiang Mai, Thailand, where the Carters will host celebrity visits and oversee the hoopla of opening and closing ceremonies. That location will also be a blitz build, where 82 houses will be completed in a week. At a recent test build, twelve

U.S. volunteers used concrete interlocking blocks for the first time. The "volunteer-friendly" technique, with no mortar, enabled them to complete the walls in two days.



In contrast to the Chiang Mai site, the satellite locations in Cambodia and Vietnam will be more low-key, with modest ceremonies and more time for volunteers to interact with the villagers. They will not be blitz builds.

This will be the 26th annual Carter Work Project and probably the last for the 85-year-old former President and his 82-year-old wife. They have been active participants, toiling in the hot sun from New Orleans to Africa, attracting considerable attention as Habitat's most famous volunteers.

—Doris McLeod



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# Murder Mystery Dinner

Saturday, November 14, 2009

All Saints' Episcopal Church, South Hadley Center

**"It's a Wonderful Death"**

Tickets \$25.00 ♦ 5:30 pm 'til approximately 9:00 pm

For ticket information / reservations

Please contact Greg Williams

at [greg.allen.williams@gmail.com](mailto:greg.allen.williams@gmail.com) (preferred) or 413-540-1952

## A New PVH Building Site in Franklin County

The permitting process is now underway at PVH's newest location: Warner Street in Montague, not far from Faren Care Center. Dealing with the challenges of the layout of a site is seldom quick and easy, and this site has several challenges. Our thanks to Carl Geupel of the Site Selection Committee for his perseverance.

This site has been enabled by a purchase and sale agreement with the Roman Catholic diocese of Springfield for a parcel of land that had been given to Our Lady of Peace Church in Turners Falls. Father Stan Aksamit suggested that building Habitat homes would be a good use for the property, and an agreement was reached for the sale.

Four homes are projected. Construction of the first home will begin this year and will continue in partnership with

Franklin County Technical School. The students will work during the week; Habitat volunteers on the weekend. The Tech School worked in the past with PVH in building two homes on L Street in Turners Falls. Those homes were two-story, but the new Warner Street homes may be cape or ranch style.

A significant contribution to the project came from the First Baptist Church of Greenfield. The Church dissolved and sold its building and then gave generous legacy gifts to various agencies in Franklin County. PVH received \$15,000 toward the building of the next Habitat home in Franklin County. A Habitat home becomes a permanent investment in affordable housing in the community, a concrete legacy. Our gratitude goes to the church for their generosity.