



Our offices will be closed Christmas Day (Monday, Dec 25) will reopen Tuesday, Dec 26, at 9am.



Greater Springfield  
**Habitat**  
for Humanity®

**NEWS**

**December 2023**



A team from Westover Job Corps removes the old ramp from Kenneth's side entrance at his Chicopee home.

## Habitat project reconnects Chicopee acquaintances

Chicopee native and Army veteran Kenneth will readily admit he's set in his ways. He lives a simple life watching the famed Dallas Cowboys, appreciating his coin collection, and enjoying his independence. At 76, he didn't need much, except a new ramp to his ranch home. The previous wood ramp was built without supports and, through wear

and tear, became unstable. By Thanksgiving, Kenneth received what he needed.

Kenneth is the latest recipient of Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity's (GSHFH) Veterans Build program. Veterans Build is a national initiative to provide housing solutions, volunteer, and employment opportunities for US veterans, military service

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# Did you know?

## The Rockefeller Christmas tree benefits Habitat for Humanity



Photo credit: AP

The 2023 Rockefeller Center Christmas tree is an 80-foot tall Norway Spruce that is 43 feet wide, and weighs 12 tons. It begins its journey from Vestal, New York, between Owego and Binghamton. It makes the 190-mile journey southeast to Rockefeller Plaza in Manhattan.



Photo credit: G.N. Miller/NY Post

The donated 2023 Rockefeller Center Christmas tree reaches its destination.



Photo credit: AP

The 2023 Rockefeller Center Christmas tree is erected in Rockefeller Plaza. The tree is roughly 80 to 85 years old. A lighting ceremony was held Nov. 29. The tree is topped with more than 50,000 multi-colored lights on it, plus roughly 5 miles of wire wrapped around it.

A three-dimensional star designed by architect Daniel Libeskind in 2018 is perched on top. The star weighs approximately 900 pounds, has 70 spikes, and is covered in 3 million crystals.



Photo credit: Pinterest

The 2023 Rockefeller Center Christmas tree is lit daily from 5am to midnight until Jan 13 when it's turned off at 10pm. There are a few exceptions. On Christmas Day, the tree is lit for 24 hours. On New Year's Eve, it is lighted from 5am to 9pm. When the tree is taken down in early January 2024, it will be milled into lumber and used to help a Habitat for Humanity partner family build their home. Lumber from the famous tree has been donated to Habitat every year since 2007.

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members, and their families. The program serves limited-income homeowners who are affected by age, disability, or family circumstances, and struggle to maintain the condition and utility of their homes.

Aimee Giroux, GSHFH executive director, reached out to Westover Jobs Corp to remove the previous ramp, and to Able Home Accessibility to install a new steel and aluminum modular ramp to his home's side entrance. Home Depot Foundation funded the project through a grant.

"We are extremely grateful to Westover Job Corps, Able Home Accessibility, and the Home Depot Foundation to help us provide Kenneth with a new safe ramp," Aimee said. "Our community partners help us to help more veterans in need of home repairs."

Aimee spoke with Justin Cote, Westover Job Corps Work Based Learning coordinator, who previously asked about the two organizations working together. Job Corps is a program overseen by the US Department of Labor that offers free education and vocational training to low-income youth between the

**"I knew him growing up, but hadn't seen him in many years."**  
- Justin Cote, Westover Job Corps Work Based Learning coordinator, acquaintance to homeowner

ages of 16 and 24 years old. Justin began his tenure four years ago and transferred to his current role within the past year. This is his first time working with GSHFH.

When Aimee brought Justin to Kenneth's home to review the scope of the project, something unexpected happened. Justin and Kenneth recognized each other.



From left: Able Home Accessibility President Matt Walsh stands with his team and Kenneth (far right in blue jacket) atop his new ramp at his Chicopee home.

"I knew him growing up, but had not seen him in many years," said Justin. As a child and until high school, Justin said he played Pop Warner football on the

Chicopee Braves. Kenneth was the team president. Kenneth joined the Army following high school. He is one of 13 children and one of eight in his family who joined a military branch or the Peace Corps. He served for three years with the Signal Corps as a

chief teletype and cryptographic operator. He also spent time in Korea. When he left the Army, Kenneth said he had an opportunity to work in security clearance, but instead married a woman with three children. He and his wife added another child to the brood. Kenneth worked for the town sanitation department for a few years until an injury forced

him to retire. Kenneth's family continued to expand. Soon, there were four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Kenneth's wife passed away in 2008.

"This project definitely has significance to me," Justin said. "Having the chance to work together with Job Corps and Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity to help a local veteran is rewarding enough. The added bonus of knowing the person made it even more rewarding."

Justin said he presented the project to Mark Aubin, Westover Job Corps Building Construction Technology instructor, and his students. The team removed the ramp the week leading up to Thanksgiving. Matt Walsh, president of West Boylston's Able Home Accessibility, and his team installed the new ramp.

"The first team did a great job of getting rid of the old material and leveling the property. There was no mess," said Matt. "These ramps are great. They don't rust or deteriorate and Kenneth is a nice guy. It's always great to help a veteran."

# Volunteer of the Month



## Candice Somar

**C**andice Somar is the living testament of actions speaking louder than words. The branch manager at Florence Bank has attended countless Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) events dating back to the mid-2000s and just wrapped her second year as a Fall Festival volunteer.



Candice Somar of Springfield, MA

help, you don't need to be an expert," Candice said. "Come as you are, your time is appreciated." John O'Farrell, GSHFH Fundraising and Volunteer coordinator, agreed.



"One of Habitat's main recruitment points

has been 'No experience necessary,' for we feel that everyone has their own skill set, talents, and strengths to share; and when volunteers get together, great things happen," John said. "In the process, we hope people learn some new things along the way that encourage them to join us again and again, helping to make a positive difference in our community."

In addition to attending meetings, setting up Fall Festival, and helping where she could, Candice and her Florence Bank peers also ran a ring toss booth. Participants were given an opportunity to toss plastic rings in hopes that one landed around a wine bottle neck. If it succeeded, the participant won a bottle of wine. The ring toss booth was added to Fall Festival in 2022. This year, the team raised \$130 for Greater Springfield Habitat.

Candice said she was introduced to GSHFH through her banking career. She then attended Fall Festival, Men Can Cook, a fundraising event held in previous years that showcased male professionals in the community waiting on women attendees at a sit-down dinner; and corporate builds.

"I choose to be a volunteer for Habitat because I believe in their mission statement. I saw firsthand the impact Habitat for Humanity has played in the lives of the families they've helped," Candice said. "I continue to volunteer because I enjoy being part of such a great organization and the team of people who make it all possible."

"My advice to anyone looking to volunteer with Habitat is that there are so many ways you can

### In her own words ...

**Frosty the Snowman or Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer?** Rudolph all the way.

**If you could start a club for something silly, what would it be about?** My silly club would be Karaoke Battle Club.

**Best female singer of all time?** The best female singer of all time is Whitney Houston.

**What makes you the happiest?** Being appreciated makes me the happiest.

**How do you take your coffee?** I take no coffee, only tea.

# HOPS for HABITAT beer passport is back!

## To participate:

1. Purchase a Hops for Habitat beer passport by clicking on the QR code to the right. Follow the instructions. Physical passports will be mailed to the address listed on the order form. Participants may also pick them up at the [Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity administrative office \(268 Cold Spring Ave., West Springfield\)](#).
2. Visit each brewery listed on the passport. Order and pay for beverage. Show the passport to the bartender, who will stamp the box of the correlating brewery. As a participant in the Hops for Habitat promotion, the bartender will fill your order and give you a gift of equal value (which may include a gift card for a second beer).
3. After you've visited and collected stamps from each of the passport's listed nine breweries, make sure your name and contact information is written on the document. Return the passport to one of the breweries or mail it to [Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity administrative office \(268 Cold Spring Ave., West Springfield, MA 01089\)](#) to be entered into a raffle for a grand prize.

## Frequently asked questions:

- Q. How soon after I order a passport will it arrive at my home?  
A. Passports are mailed via two-day priority mail.
- Q. Can I purchase a passport at a participating brewery?  
A. No.
- Q. When I visit a brewery, will the bartender know to stamp it?  
Yes, when you make a purchase and show the bartender the passport, they will know to stamp it.

## Participating breweries:

