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NEWS

April 2022



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Community Works offers students hands-on learning at Habitat build sites

With so much to do on a chilly Saturday morning in early April, the Community Works team didn't waste time. Divided into two groups, of three students each, they went to work at two Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) build sites in Holyoke. One group installed windows, while the other set up scaffolding and mounted siding.



Community Works student Kel Spohn installs a window April 2 at a Holyoke build site.

Community works is a pre-apprenticeship program that offers Springfield/Holyoke area residents the opportunity to learn and work in the building and transportation industries. The six-week program includes classroom and hands-on learning experiences. Upon completion of the schooling, students may apply for a state-registered apprenticeship program or transportation-industry employment. This group of 15 students began their session Feb. 8 and will officially end on April 9. Unofficially, students can opt to come out to the GSHFH build site for two additional Saturdays in April for more hands-on experience.

for the students," said Community Works Lead Instructor Greg Garfield, a retired carpenter who has taught in the pre-apprenticeship program for the past three years. "Due to their lack of training, it's a better learning environment at this stage than when a house is farther along.

"This group is great, very enthusiastic," Greg added. "They've come out here on cold February Saturdays and they soak up knowledge like crazy. Two of

"There's always plenty of work to do at any stage of building a house and this is great training

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The annual report is here. Check it out at habitatspringfield.org/news



Greater Springfield
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2021 Year in Review

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Welcome to the GSHFH team, Mckenzie Springfield native joins board of directors

When Mckenzie Russell-Masterson moved back to her native Springfield from Boston a couple of months ago, she knew she wanted to remain committed to the Habitat for Humanity mission. True to her word, she has. We are pleased to welcome Mckenzie to the Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) Board of Directors.

Prior to joining Greater Springfield Habitat, Mckenzie volunteered at Essex County Habitat for Humanity, formerly known as Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity. There, she served on the site acquisition committee for two years.

"I wanted to join GSHFH to give back to the community where I was born and raised, and advocate for individuals who can benefit from Greater Springfield Habitat's impactful efforts," Mckenzie said. "I hope to facilitate opportunities for GSHFH to expand their network and in turn, help individuals in the Greater Springfield area achieve

their goals of homeownership."

In addition to volunteering at a Habitat affiliate, Mckenzie understands the world of residential real estate. Mckenzie is a real estate attorney at Dalton and Finegold, a full-service civil law firm based in Boston. As part of her daily work, Mckenzie handles real estate transactions, reviews title work, collaborates with lenders to facilitate finances, and networks with real estate professionals.

"As a real estate attorney, she has knowledge that can be beneficial to the organization when we look at property sales and purchases. Growing up in Springfield gives her insight to the communities we work in," said Aimee Giroux, GSHFH executive director. "It's nice when you get recommendations from the executive director of another affiliate about a volunteer that has been super involved, but is leaving the area and would like to continue supporting Habitat in their new location. It shows commitment to the mission."

SPOTLIGHT ON

Mckenzie Russell-Masterson
GSHFH board member
of Springfield, MA



Aside from the necessities, what is one thing you could not go a day without? Talking to my mom. We are very close and chat every day!

What is the most daring thing you've done? Paragliding off a cliff in Queenstown, New Zealand.

On a scale of 1-10, how funny do you think you are? For an attorney, a 10 – compared to everyone else, a 7.

What's your favorite season and why? Summer, I love being warm.

What is the farthest place from home that you've traveled? Australia.



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No experience necessary
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Advocate on behalf of Greater Springfield Habitat. To learn more, go to habitatspringfield.org/advocacy

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them – Kel Spohn and Rachel Leahey – are already working with carpenters."

Kel Spohn (pronounced spoon), a 32-year-old from Northfield, said he bought a house in the past year, which ramped up his interest in carpentry. While working two jobs in the restaurant/café industry, he saw a Facebook post advertising Community Works. Now, he enjoys learning new skills, including window installation, and working with his hands.

"It's instant satisfaction," said Rachel, 19, of Hampden. The daughter of a carpenter, she said in recent years she knew she wanted a career in the trades as she enjoys working with her hands. She also said she has little interest in the typical professions following a college education. "Here, you go from a couple of pieces of wood to a whole house. It's the most satisfying thing ever."

Rachel said she learned about Community Works through a pipefitter friend who introduced her to Tradeswomen Tuesdays – information sessions geared toward women interested in working in the trades.

Michelle Kyser, 41, of Holyoke, said she also learned about Community Works through Tradeswomen Tuesdays and Google searches. She highly recommends the program.

Prior to signing up for Community Works, Michelle said she worked in finance and didn't like sitting at a desk all day. She preferred to be outside, working with her hands, and fixing things. Community Works gave her that opportunity. Upon completion of the program, she said she would like to be an elevator constructor, which works with elevators and escalators. Her second choice is to become a plumber or pipefitter. Pipefitters build piping systems



Top: A Community Works student taps the outside of the newly-installed window to put it in place.

Above: Two Community Works students work with Union Laborer Chelsea Fenton (front left) of Local 596 as she watches the lowering of the scaffolding support. Sheri L. Green, Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity Construction manager, guides the support beam down from above.

used for heating, hot water, cooling, and steam.

"It's an awesome program for anyone at any age if they're thinking about or trying to decide about a career in the trades," Michelle said.

To learn more about Community Works, go to communityworks.umasscreate.net