

Honor President Carter's Habitat legacy, donate



President James "Jimmy" Carter

Thirty-ninth US President James "Jimmy" Carter is a hero to Habitat for Humanity International and began volunteering for our philanthropic organization in 1984. It's because of his efforts to bring awareness and publicity to the mission that builds strength, stability, and self-reliance through shelter, that millions have benefitted through volunteering or homeownership. Today, we honor him, his legacy, and send prayers to his wife Rosalynn and their family. President Carter recently entered hospice care.

President Carter is often confused as being the founder of Habitat. He is not. He is a staunch and avid volunteer. Since March 1984, he and Mrs. Carter have been involved in many quick-turnaround construction projects known as "Carter Work Projects." Their first was in New York City's

Continued on Page 6



Greater Springfield
Habitat
for Humanity®

April 2023



Habitat construction team wows 16-year-old volunteer



Grace Kelleher Slocum (left) and her mom Trish Slocum pose together at the Chestnut Street, Holyoke, build site where they volunteered in mid-March.

Grace Kelleher-Slocum recently stepped out of her comfort zone, tried something new, loved it, and was invited to participate again. The 16-year-old Somers, Connecticut, high school student volunteered at Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity's (GSHFH) Holyoke build site with one of her moms, Trish Slocum.

Trish said Grace ventured out to the build site to begin her capstone project, which

is a student's opportunity to explore a particular discipline that may lead to a career. Trish said Grace has an interest in construction management and volunteering at GSHFH is in line with what she wants to do.

"I really enjoyed doing work with them. It made me feel helpful and I would love to go back and help more," said Grace. "Everyone was so nice and the site leader was very

Continued on Page 6

Meet Olga Kravchenko, GSHFH's newest staffer

Call it kismet, serendipity, fate, or being at the right place and time. In any case, the LinkedIn stars aligned and put the Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) Homeowner Programs Coordinator job ad in Olga Kravchenko's line of sight. In early March, Olga joined the team.



Olga Kravchenko

Olga, who has a background in banking and dabbled in nonprofit fundraising and event planning, said she followed a fateful chain of events one Sunday. It began when she had an inkling to send an acquaintance a congratulatory message. Then, she clicked on the "jobs" tab and applied for the position days later.

"I wanted to work for GSHFH because I wanted to make a real difference in our communities," said Olga. "I hope to help as many potential and current homeowners achieve pride in their homes and communities, as well as empowering them with confidence through financial literacy."

Olga is not native to Western Massachusetts, but has called the region home since she and her family emigrated from Kyiv, Ukraine, in May 1998. The family settled in Springfield where her maternal grandparents planted roots. She has since lived in Chicopee and recently purchased a home in Springfield with her fiancé. As Olga grew up, she thought she wanted to follow in her maternal grandfather's footsteps and become a radiologist. Later, she decided healthcare was not her path.

Instead, Olga found employment at a regional

bank, rising through the ranks to become assistant branch manager. She has a strong understanding of the mortgage provider component of Habitat. She has also taught financial literacy to new immigrants from numerous countries and people from underprivileged communities. She is fluent in Russian. Olga also worked as a consultant for a well-known furniture company and with nonprofits to organize charity nights for customers and staff. She requested donations and later gave the contributions to the appropriate organization on behalf of the company.

"I have been a passionate advocate for the Springfield renaissance and have been partnering with numerous business owners to bring pride back to Springfield," Olga said.

These days, Olga remains involved in a handful of nonprofits, participating in events such as a knit-a-thon and read-a-thon when her time allows. Olga is also finishing her Bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies from

American Women's College at Bay Path University. When she graduates, she plans to pursue a master's degree.

"We are excited to have Olga join our team. Her knowledge of financial literacy will be extremely helpful to the success of our future homeowners," said Aimee Giroux, GSHFH executive director.

SPOTLIGHT ON

Olga Kravchenko
Homeowner Programs
Coordinator
of Springfield, MA

What musician would you most like to meet? Why? I think I'd have to say John Williams, because he has composed music for some of the most iconic movies of all time.

Do you like to take risks or play it safe? As a Hufflepuff, I can't help but play it safe.

Would you rather ride on the back of a giant owl or on the back of a dolphin? Why? Giant owl, hands down, because I think that's the closest I would ever get to flying on the back of a Hippogriff.

How many pairs of shoes do you own? 9. That's including the one pair of Crocs I received as a gift.

Volunteer of the Month



Christopher Daly

Christopher Daly admits he doesn't know the intricacies of construction, but enjoys being a part of the process and seeing the progress. Christopher is a volunteer who, since January 2022, regularly ventures to a Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) build site. In fact, he can be seen there on Saturdays.

"I really enjoy working on the builds, seeing and learning what it takes to complete a home," said Christopher. "Also, the people at the job site are terrific. It's a good, productive way to fill free time."

Christopher is a native of the south shore of Long Island, New York. He came

to Western Massachusetts for school at Western New England College, now University, and eventually settled in the area.

Christopher said he's been aware of GSHFH for years, but it wasn't until he visited a build site following a New England Public Media fundraising campaign held with Greater Springfield Habitat that he realized an opportunity to volunteer. Christopher is the on-air fund drive director for the nonprofit broadcasting station headquartered in Springfield.

"It was during the COVID lockdowns. I learned Habitat needed on-site volunteers," Christopher said. "Perfect! I could get out and do things I enjoyed."



Christopher Daly of Chicopee, MA

In his own words ...

What advice would you give a construction volunteer about the physical labor aspect of the job? My father always told me "lift from your knees, not your back." Excellent advice. Know your strengths. You may leave physically tired, but it's a good tired having worked to create a home.

Do you count your steps? Nope. No need.

Would you rather have a personal chef, personal housekeeper or personal chauffeur? Why? A personal chef! Oh, there's so much to learn from watching, and their meals would be so much more interesting than anything I could make.

Outer space or bottom of the sea? Um, neither – too dark, too cold.



GSHFH welcomes newest AmeriCorps volunteer

Samantha Majjad (pronounced Ma-jad) wants to make a difference in her community. In January, she devised a plan to do just that. Samantha joined AmeriCorps and applied for a posting at Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH). Samantha now serves as the community outreach coordinator for the affiliate and will remain a part of the team through most of 2023.

AmeriCorps is a government agency that promotes volunteer work with nonprofit agencies. In turn, participants receive a stipend to support living expenses. Members can also earn the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, which is offered to individuals who complete a term of service and can be used to pay for a range of educational expenses, like repaying qualified student loans or future tuition payments.

“Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity has participated as a host site for AmeriCorps volunteers for over 10 years, we have worked with National, VISTA, and Senior Corps members, and NCCC teams,” said GSHFH Executive Director Aimee Giroux. “We were very excited early this year when Springfield native Michael Smith was confirmed to the position of CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the government agency that oversees the AmeriCorps program.”

As the community outreach coordinator, Samantha builds



Samantha Majjad, Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity's newest AmeriCorp volunteer, helps construct a staircase for the Chestnut Street, Holyoke, build site.

and fosters strong relationships with the Hampden County community. She plans, coordinates, and executes projects in collaboration with community partners.

“I hope to deepen my understanding of the needs of the community and ultimately, I aim to help families in need,” said Samantha.

Samantha is a Western Massachusetts native with her roots planted in Easthampton and is a full-time seventh-grade teacher. In her free time, she said she loves traveling and learning about different cultures, languages, and religions. Samantha said she learned about GSHFH through a Google search of “nonprofits in Western Massachusetts.” Once on the

Greater Springfield Habitat website, she discovered the AmeriCorps job posting.

Although still new to the organization, Samantha said she is impressed by what she's seen so far.

“We take pride in our staff for the excellent representation of women in our workforce,” she said. “In fact, the majority of our team is composed of remarkable and dynamic women who are leading the way with their exceptional skills and abilities.”

GSHFH has another AmeriCorps position open and is hiring a Volunteer Services Coordinator. For more information, go to habitatspringfield.org/join-our-team

Building homes, building opportunities Habitat offers a hand up, not a hand out

Home is a concept many take for granted. After all, it's easy to say “there's no place like home” when there's somewhere to kick off shoes, rest and recharge in a safe, stable, and decent dwelling. If those components aren't available, what then? For many people living in Greater Springfield, the concept of “home” is nonexistent. The heat doesn't work or the house is poorly insulated. The roof leaks. There are rodents, mold, and bugs sharing the residence. Neighborhoods are littered with drugs, gangs, and violence. Gunfire and vandalism are common. It's certainly not a place to decompress, let alone allow children to grow up.

To further complicate the problem, purchasing a home through traditional means is simply unattainable, particularly for families of limited income. That's where Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) comes in.

Greater Springfield Habitat

realizes everyone deserves simple, decent, affordable housing. Period. Habitat aims to close the racial wealth disparities by providing subsidies and affordable mortgages to help families break the cycle.

Habitat is slowly changing

the community landscape in Hampden County. Read about the reality of the home affordability crisis, how families benefit, and how GSHFH's home preservation program benefits existing homeowners. habitatspringfield.org/building-homes



Greater Springfield
Habitat
for Humanity

Tickets are \$40 each
paypal.me/2MomsOnAMission
Venmo @Two-MomsOnA-Mission
(Please note the date of the event when purchasing the ticket)

Purse & Power Tool Bingo

Thursday, May 25, at 6pm (Game begins at 7pm)
Knights of Columbus Council 50
371 Washington St, Enfield



Continued from Page 1

smart. She knew all about everything and was a genuine person. I always have loved helping people and I always will.”

As the saying goes, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Grace's mom Trish also enjoys volunteering at Greater Springfield Habitat. Trish said she has participated at five or six GSHFH construction projects in the Springfield area through her work at Liberty Mutual and MassMutual.

“As we were driving home, Grace said, ‘Maybe I can work for them when I get older, or even volunteer as I get older’,” Trish said. “I just love her mindset and I love that she understands how great it feels to give of yourself in support of others.”

The admiration is mutual. GSHFH Construction Manager

Sheri L. Green said Grace and Trish are welcome back at the site any time.

“They were awesome,” Sheri said. “Very engaged. Grace asked a lot of questions and wanted to know how everything works. They were both really good.”

Trish said she enjoyed the day as well.

“Grace and I love being around each other. She is a very loving kid and has a great sense of humor, so she's easy to be around,” Trish said. “Grace's project has allowed me to participate outside of my typical window, which I enjoyed.”

Grace has to complete 20 hours of volunteering for her capstone project. Trish is sure Grace will choose to come back to a GSHFH build site.

If you'd like to volunteer, visit habitatspringfield.org/volunteer

Continued from Page 1



Top: President James "Jimmy" Carter
Bottom: President Carter and his wife, Rosalynn Carter.

Lower East Side to renovate an abandoned building for affordable housing. Every year until 2020, the Carters volunteered with Habitat and more than 104,000 volunteers across the country and in 14 other nations to build and repair Habitat 4,390 homes.

Because of President Carter's advocacy, our affiliate has thrived. To date, Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity has constructed 74 homes in Hampden County and repaired 49 homes. Approximately 435 volunteers engaged in more than 13,000 hours of service in fiscal 2021.

We thank President Carter for his work and contributions. Help us to continue his legacy by supporting our mission. Help us empower more low-income families reach their dream of affordable homeownership.

An advertisement for Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity. It features the organization's logo at the top left. The main text reads: "We support Greater Springfield Habitat and affordable housing. You can too." To the right of this text is a graphic of a smartphone with the text "Text BUILD413 to 44-321" displayed on its screen. The background is a gradient of blue and green.