



Greater Springfield  
**Habitat**  
for Humanity®

# 2021 Year in Review



# Hope. Perseverance. Joy.

## Board leadership

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Executive Director

**Sheri L. Green**  
Construction Manager

**Brandice J. O'Brien**  
Marketing & Communications  
Manager

**John O'Farrell**  
Fundraising & Volunteer  
Coordinator

**Deborah O'Mara**  
Family Services Manager

## Photography:

Marie Ciosek  
Brandice J. O'Brien  
John O'Farrell  
Shannon Kingston

Dear Friends of Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity:

“Strength, stability, and self-reliance,” supporters of GSHFH see this tagline used often when we talk about what our program provides to the families that receive our services. However, in the past year it has also been my mantra of sorts in trying to keep GSHFH together and moving forward. We entered 2021 with the hope that things would return to normal. However, it became very clear early on that the COVID-19 pandemic would continue to wreak havoc.

Already struggling from the events of 2020, as staff and board we worked together to pool our strengths, rely on our resourcefulness, and look to how best to maintain stability. Our strength many times came from the very people we were trying to serve, our partner families. Their thankfulness for our help to get them through these trying times provided us the focus and determination needed to find ways to keep our programs running. Decisions such as not to renew our ReStore lease were not easily made, but were done so to best utilize our strengths in order to meet the needs of the mission in the next year.

The support we received from those who attended and sponsored Fall Festival was overwhelming. We did not know what to expect in planning an in-person event and we wondered: would anyone show? Are we going to end up alone in the room? We were pleasantly surprised with the response and attendance. In many ways it felt like a family reunion, catching up with friends that we had been apart from, laughing about old times on the construction site, or that trip to Guatemala, along with making plans for future gatherings. We ended the evening knowing we made the right decision to hold the event and started talking about ideas for next year's Festival.

While funding, supply chain issues, COVID absences, and good old New England weather continue to make planning difficult, it is reassuring to have a dedicated staff and board. Sheri, Mary, Edgar, Brandy, and John all started with us either just before the pandemic or in the midst of it and have done a tremendous job of riding the turbulence while learning the ropes. Deb's compassion to helping our families is second to none. We said goodbye to some board members when their terms expired, which is always hard. Bill, Kim, Janet, and Melvin you will be missed. We are excited to welcome new members Johnniel, Liz, and Michael to the team.

I look forward to the next year, and hope our many generous donors will continue to support our programs and we will have even more volunteers out on the job site. We look forward to sharing more stories at the next Festival as we work together to meet the mission of GSHFH: providing strength, stability, and self-reliance to those in need in our community.

Sincerely,



Aimee Giroux, Executive Director  
Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity

# Our work: Financial highlights



Average cost  
to build  
a Habitat home  
**\$180,000**



Municipal  
support  
**\$190,619**



Cars for  
Homes  
program  
income  
**\$17,278**



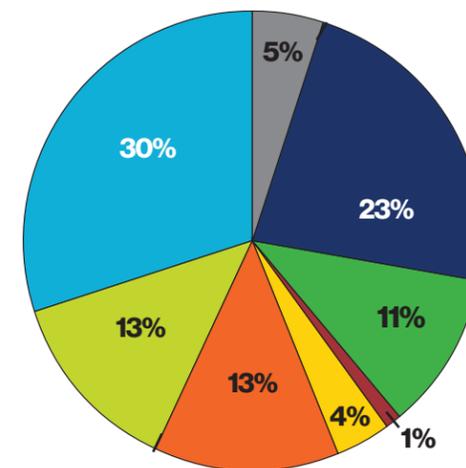
Corporate  
giving  
**\$15,781**



Volunteer hours  
(construction,  
office,  
and ReStore)  
**3,609**



Individual  
giving  
**\$40,455**



Sources of funding revenue

# GSHFH welcomes 3 new partner families

Welcome to the Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) family. Three Western Massachusetts families have been approved for new homes and each will purchase a Habitat home in the coming two years.

The three homes will all be situated in Holyoke. Two will have three bedrooms and one-and-a-half bathrooms. The third home will have four bedrooms and two full bathrooms. The families applied through our homeownership program, participated in an online interview, virtual home tour, and volunteered at a build site to get a better grasp of the “sweat equity” concept. Sweat equity is in place of a traditional down payment. Partner family members who are 16 and older can volunteer their labor or time at a Greater Springfield Habitat property in lieu of the monetary contribution.

“We accepted applications for these new Habitat homes starting in March of 2021,” said Deborah O’Mara, GSHFH Family Services manager. “It’s exciting to know we’ve found three eligible and financially-qualified families to become our next Habitat homeowners.”

### Family #1

One family, comprised of a single mother and her four children will purchase the soon-to-be-built



Left: Soon-to-be homeowners Juan and Ireydiza (right) stand with their daughter after receiving a surprise visit from Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity on Dec. 8, 2021, to announce the good news.

four-bedroom home. The family, which has three girls and a boy, currently resides in an apartment with significant issues, including poor insulation, sewage backups, mold in the basement, a leaky roof, and is in an unsafe neighborhood.

The apartment is just one of many the family has lived in through the years. As survivors of domestic abuse, the mother wants to show her children it’s possible to break the cycle and give back to the community that helped them escape their situation.

With the support of a local social service agency, the mother said she received counseling, training, and employment.

“I have a beautiful family, an awesome job, and I am now working toward buying my first home. I have hopes, dreams to

do better, and be better than my upbringing,” she said. “It’s not about where you come from, it’s about where you’re going. Good attitudes produce better outcomes.”

### Family #2

A single mother and her three teenage boys will move into a three-bedroom home currently under construction. After becoming a young mom, she said she struggled to earn better than minimum wage. With her mother’s help, she went back to school and became a certified medical assistant working at a local doctor’s office. In doing so she achieved financial stability and overcame many of the obstacles facing young mothers. But, she wanted more for her children.

Since divorcing her abusive husband, she’s strived for a safe and decent affordable home. Within her current apartment, her two youngest sons share a

**“It’s not about where you come from, it’s about where you’re going. Good attitudes produce better outcomes.”**  
- New partner family

bedroom and bed. Looking for a sense of privacy and space, the youngest boy sleeps on the couch. Additionally, the neighborhood they live in is terribly unsafe. It has several vacant buildings, homeless people, drugs, and vehicles are frequently vandalized.

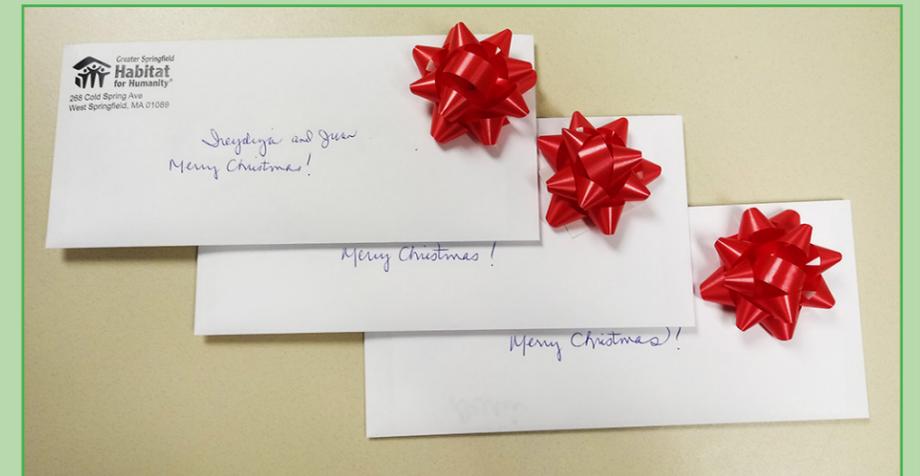
“I see so much better for my children and I want to be able to provide them a forever home – a place where we will feel safe, stable, happy, and accomplished,” she said. “We want a place to create beautiful memories for many years to come.”

### Family #3

Ireydiza and her husband Juan will purchase the other three-bedroom home, which is in the process of being built. The couple has two young children. Just four years ago, the family was happy, healthy, and dreaming of buying their first home. Then tragedy struck. A workplace injury disabled Juan, the breadwinner. Following several surgeries and two strokes, their dreams were put on hold. Juan was unable to return to work. Ireydiza left school to be the sole breadwinner, and created time to care for her young children and recuperating husband.

“He has a permanent handicap placard at the age of 33. He lives with chronic pain every day of his life,” Ireydiza said. “The stroke left him with chronic migraines, which he now gets Botox for every 12 weeks to help alleviate the pain. He is unable to walk or stand for a long period of time, and he has a weakness on his right side.”

Despite the pain and struggle, Juan gives back where he can. Whether it’s playing with his children, sharing his story on



Top: The sign used to surprise the soon-to-be homeowners on Dec. 8, 2021, plus goodies given to each family. Below: Congratulations and acceptance letters for each chosen family.

social media to bring awareness to strokes and the symptoms, or supplying food to the homeless, Juan is determined to make the best of his situation.

The family is eager to move forward and out of the apartment, which in winter is cold in the living room and master bedroom. Plus, Juan and Ireydiza’s bedroom is on the second floor, which Juan has trouble reaching due

to the stairs. Additionally, the neighborhood is dangerous with gunfire. Drug activity is common.

“We’ve been trying to leave for a while. This neighborhood has a bad reputation,” said Juan. “We want something different for our kids. We want them to be able to give them something where they come home and say, ‘This is our home’.”

# A home preservation project

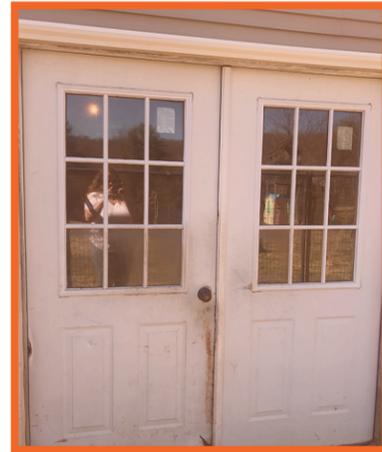
In 2021, Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity completed five home preservation projects. This one benefitted a single mother of three teenage daughters in Monson who battled cancer. To learn more of her story, see [Page 7](#).



Before: Crystal's front door entryway.



After: Crystal's front door entryway. The stairs and exterior door were replaced.



Before: the old exterior doors to the basement.



After: new basement doors



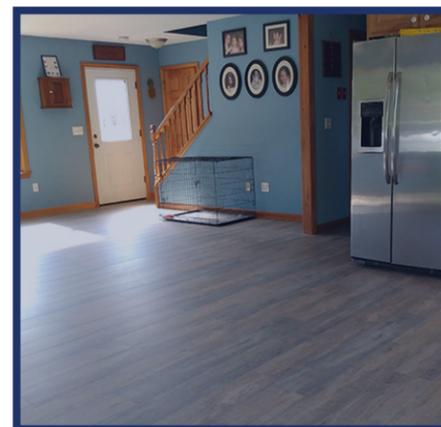
Before: Crystal's side door entryway.



After: Crystal's new side entryway complete with a rail and deck.



Crystal's living room is stripped of flooring. The kitchen floor still has linoleum.



The flooring is finished.

# Greater Springfield Habitat helps “the helper”

Single mother battling cancer benefits from home preservation program

Crystal said she is not used to asking for help. She is the helper. She gives to others. Period. But when Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) offered assistance to improve the function and quality of her home, it was not an opportunity Crystal could refuse.

“I’m so excited. This is so exciting,” said the single mother of three teenage daughters.

After all, it’s been a challenging year.

Crystal thought she finally caught a break when the newly-divorced mother refinanced their Western Massachusetts Cape Cod-style home, which she had lived in for just more than a decade. But the moment was short lived. Four months later, in early February 2021, Crystal received a stage 3 Merkel cell carcinoma (a rare form of skin cancer) diagnosis. To battle the disease affecting her right arm, Crystal endured several surgeries and five weeks of five days-a-week radiation treatments in Boston. She asked for leniency from her mortgage company as she navigated her way through state-issued Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) benefits, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and other support opportunities; but was denied. When the PFML ended, Crystal worked three days a week and used vacation time to support herself, her daughters, and the \$28-a-day expense it cost her in tolls and gas to commute to Boston from Monson for treatment.

Desperate, afraid, and uncertain of what the future held for her and her girls, Crystal reached



Crystal (second from right in white) and her daughters.

out to a variety of contacts and organizations for long- and short-term aid. An acquaintance suggested GSHFH’s Home Preservation program. Knowing her home needed repairs that she hasn’t been able to financially tackle and worried about what she may need if the cancer worsens, Crystal reached out.

Greater Springfield Habitat assessed the home and necessary repairs in spring 2021 and devised a two-part plan. First, and in the weeks that followed, the Habitat construction crew replaced the linoleum and carpet throughout the entryway, living room, kitchen, and hallway with wood laminate. Crystal, who also lives with a neurological disorder that has weakened the right side of her body, said the change in flooring often presented a tripping hazard. As a result, she’s broken several bones in both of her feet. The new flooring offers a consistent smooth surface throughout the downstairs living area.

“The Habitat Home Preservation

program is here to help folks just like Crystal,” said Deborah O’Mara, GSHFH Family Services manager. “She is a hardworking single mother who is doing her best to provide for her family but she just doesn’t have the extra resources to pay for needed home repairs.”

Part two of the project began Oct. 12, 2021, when Triple S Construction worked on the exterior projects. The company, which has worked on Greater Springfield Habitat projects in the past, replaced three exterior doors, and the decking and stairs to the front and side entryway. They also widened the side entryway in case Crystal needed to put down groceries she’s carrying into the house. There’s now space for her to do just that.

“Greater Springfield Habitat is an amazing resource and I’m very fortunate to have discovered it,” Crystal said. “Long-term, this is a huge help. I don’t know when I would have had the extra money to do these projects or incur the expenses. I was just getting by.”

# Hats off to the many volunteers who worked on our build sites

If you would like to volunteer, visit [habitatspringfield.org/volunteer](https://habitatspringfield.org/volunteer)



**439th Logistics Readiness Squadron** | Bay Street, Springfield | July 2021

If you would like to volunteer, visit [habitatspringfield.org/volunteer](https://habitatspringfield.org/volunteer)



**OMG, Inc.** | Holyoke | October 2021; Bay Street, Springfield | October 2021



**SR Commercial Realty** | Bay Street, Springfield | July 2021



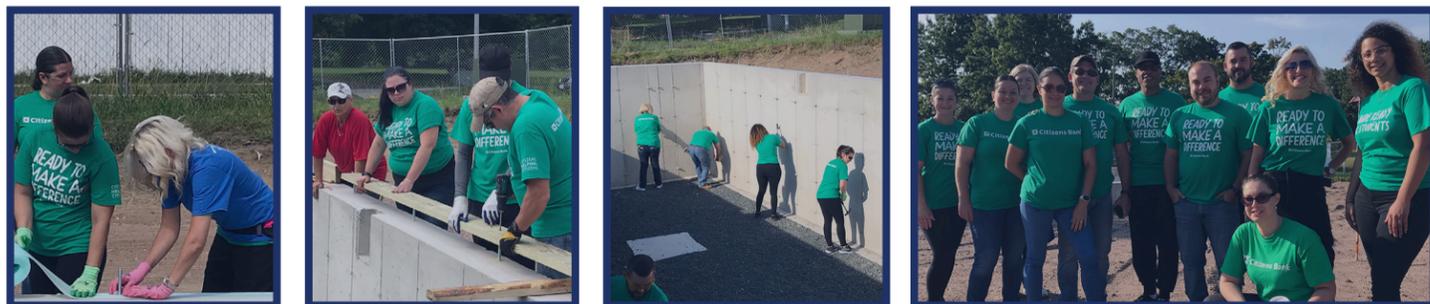
**Holyoke Housing Authority** | Holyoke | November 2021



**MGM Springfield** | Bay Street, Springfield | September 2021



**UMASS Triathlon Club** | Bay Street, Springfield | December 2021



**Citizens Bank Retail Banking Team** | Holyoke | September 2021



**Western Massachusetts Tradeswomen** | Bay Street, Springfield | December 2021

# Thank you, individual volunteers

If you would like to volunteer, visit [habitatspringfield.org/volunteer](https://habitatspringfield.org/volunteer)



## Bay Street, Springfield and Holyoke

# AmeriCorps Maple 4 team visits Western Ma Volunteers at Greater Springfield Habitat and ReStore

Prior to their April 3, 2021, arrival, several members of the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corp (NCCC) North Central Region Maple 4 team knew nothing about Western Massachusetts. Once here, they experienced a crash course in not only the towns of Hampden County, but the mission of Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH).

The purpose of the national service program is to empower youths between the ages of 18 and 26 to live and work in the community. The team traveled throughout the United States for 10 months and volunteered with a variety of nonprofit organizations. The stay with GSHFH was the team's first assignment. Team members hailed from Texas, Mississippi, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Maine, and primarily worked on build sites assisting the GSHFH construction crew and at the ReStore, in Westfield, during their three-and-a-half-week stay. For many members of the Maple 4 team, the NCCC experience helped them figure out what they may want to pursue as a career.

"It's a good fit," said Lauren Rawlins of Georgetown, Texas, a city 25 miles north of Austin. "It'll give me leadership skills, new experiences outside of an office/administration role, and a wider range of new skills."

Lauren is a 23-year-old graduate of San Antonio's Trinity University. She said after graduating with a major in English and a minor in German studies, she wasn't sure what path to



AmeriCorps NCCC North Central Region Maple 4 team on April 6, 2021, help build a stockade fence in the Springfield backyard of a partner family.

follow next. Instead of rushing into something, she wanted to try something different, something that made her more marketable when she entered the workforce. NCCC checked those boxes. Hazel Miller agreed. The 20-year-old from Evanston, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, said she was very excited for the opportunity to learn a variety of skills. Habitat, in particular, is an organization that's near and dear to her heart. Hazel said while growing up, there were times when her lower middle-class family struggled to pay bills. To now volunteer for an organization that helps ease that burden is very important to her.

Taylor Rabalais, a 21-year-old from Bay St. Louis, a Mississippi Gulf Coast city, said she heard about AmeriCorps from her aunt who works for a Habitat affiliate. Prior to joining Maple 4, Taylor participated in the AmeriCorps NCCC sister opportunity, FEMA Corps. For 10 months participants

travel the US as part of a team, but instead of doing community service projects, they learn about disaster response, recovery efforts, and long-term recovery activities within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Taylor said she was excited about the Maple 4 team because it gave her a different perspective and she was entertaining the idea of college or a technical school when she returned to Mississippi. She may even consider a career in construction.

"I want to learn building skills and work outside. I like doing things that are hands-on," she said.

Sheri L. Green, GSHFH Construction manager, said she was excited to work with the Maple 4 group.

"They got along well, had trust in each other, and were willing to mix it up by trying new things and work in different groups and pairs," she said. "They were very eager to jump in where help was needed."

# Fall Festival is successful following COVID-19 pandemic

The Fall Festival grossed \$34,500. The November 2021 event was Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity's (GSHFH) largest fundraiser since the COVID-19 pandemic began. While it is not as much as was raised in previous years, it's a significant step forward.

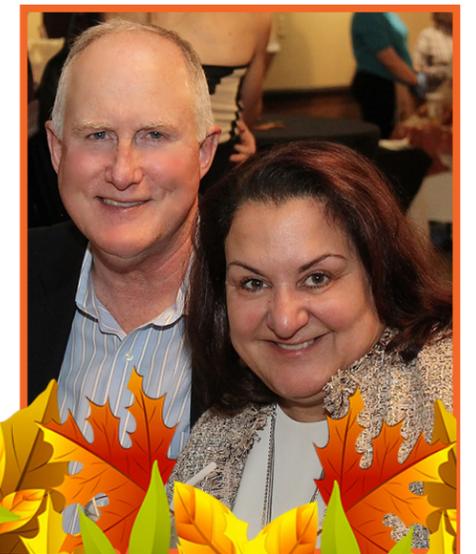
The evening event held at Twin Hills Country Club in Longmeadow offered guests samples from six food vendors, including Elegant Affairs, Cerrato's Pastry Shop, Nadim's Downtown Mediterranean Grill, Mamma Mia's, Richard's Grinders, and Twin Hills Country Club. Additionally, the approximately 125 visitors in attendance were encouraged to bid on more than 50 auction items. Three of which were offered in a live auction, and included two tickets to the Nov. 11 Bruins game; an outdoor pizza oven; and a stay at the Red Lion Inn in the Berkshires. The remaining pieces were sold

through a silent auction. John O'Farrell, GSHFH Fundraising and Volunteer coordinator, said while the fundraiser and its goals are important, the impact of how our mission affects families is where we should concentrate our focus.

"Our houses give families a place they can call 'home,' where children can feel safe, and have a quiet place to do their homework," John said. "Partner families are guided and supported to be able to take on a mortgage. It's a place where they can call home, where they have security, and peace of mind."

If you would like to volunteer and take part in planning next year's Fall Festival, call John at (413) 739-5503. If you would like to support the mission and empower Greater Springfield Habitat to help more families, visit at [habitatspringfield.org/donate](https://habitatspringfield.org/donate)

To relive the evening, check out these pictures from photographer Marie Ciosek.

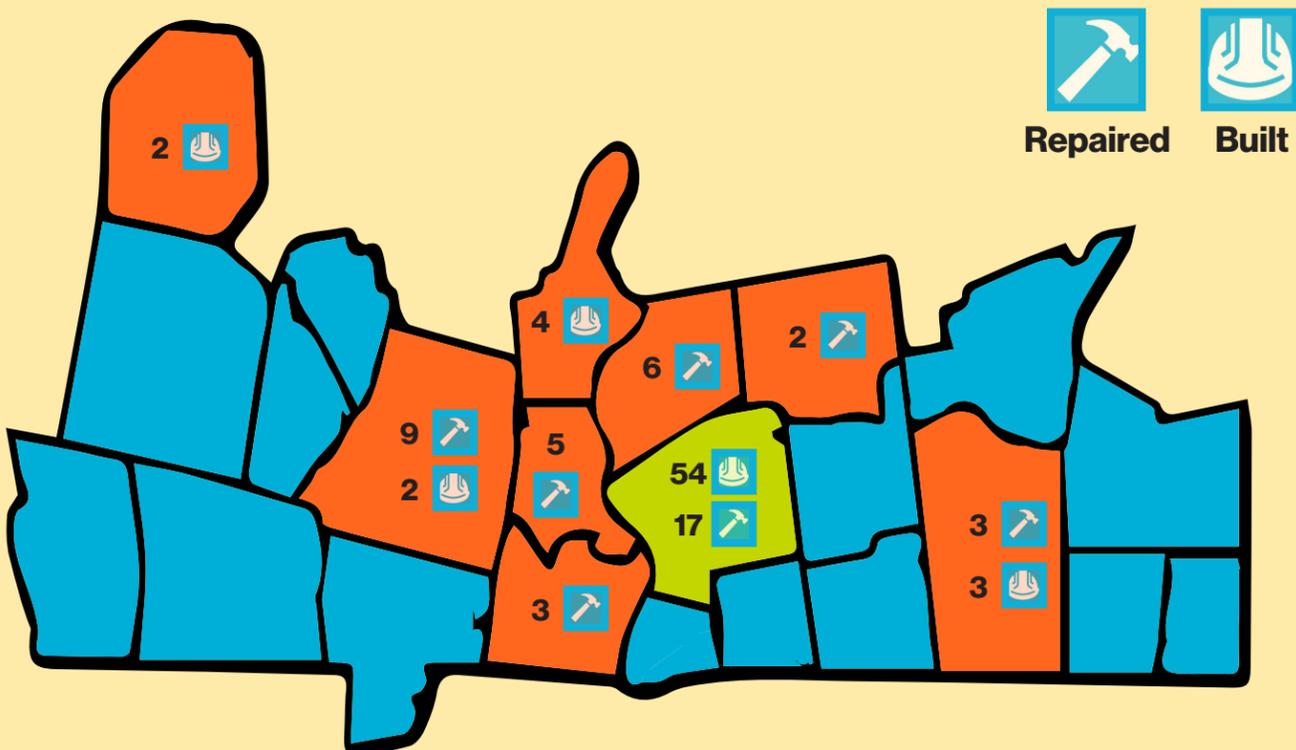


# Focusing on our future



Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) is on track to finish a home on Bay Street in Springfield and two houses in Holyoke early this summer. A third home in Holyoke is slated to begin construction in spring 2022. For more information, go to [habitatspringfield.org/programs](https://habitatspringfield.org/programs)

## Homes built or repaired by GSHFH since 1987



14

# Thank you, 2021 donors

Donations received between July 1, 2020 and Dec. 31, 2021.

**\$40,000 and Above**  
 Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts  
 Holyoke Housing Authority

**\$25,000 to \$39,999**  
 City of Springfield  
 Department of Housing  
 Habitat for Humanity Int'l

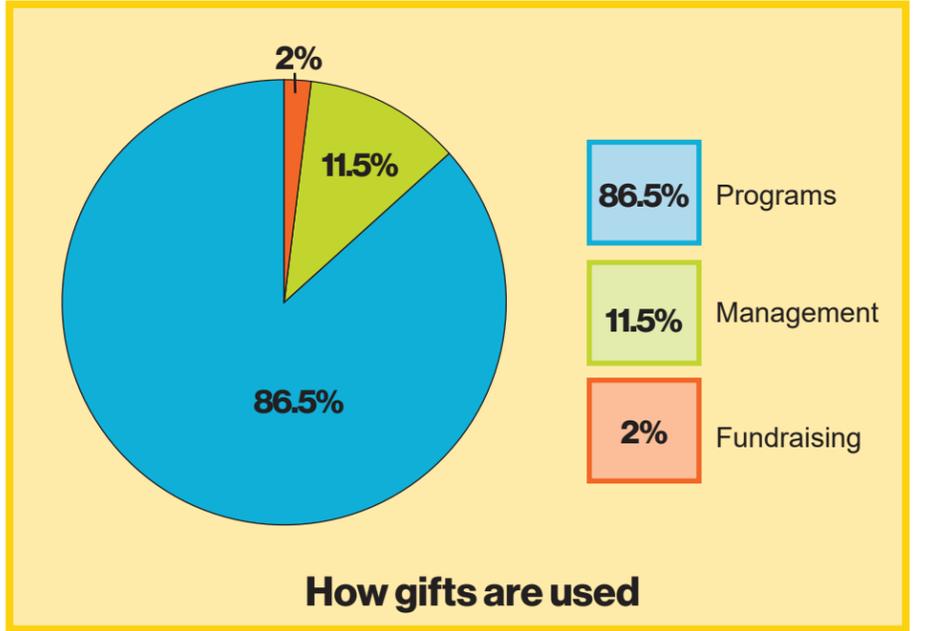
**\$10,000 - \$24,999**  
 Bank of America  
 CSX Transportation  
 Home Depot Foundation  
 Purple Heart Homes  
 Whirlpool

**\$5,000 - \$9,999**  
 Anonymous Donor  
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**\$2,500 - \$4,999**  
 ABSAK, LLC  
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 Smart Cabinets  
 SR Commercial Realty  
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**\$1,000 - \$2,499**  
 Anonymous Gift  
 Claude Borowsky  
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 Charles Casartello  
 Jason Catanzaro  
 Doherty Family Charitable Fund  
 Ernst Financial Group  
 Maurice Ferriter  
 First Church of Christ in Longmeadow, UCC  
 Garrity Asphalt Reclaiming  
 Julie Gittins  
 Edith Huck  
 Meyers Brothers Kalicka, P.C.

Continued on Page 16



How gifts are used

15

# Thank you, 2021 donors

Donations received between July 1, 2020 and Dec. 31, 2021.

Continued from Page 15

## \$1,000-\$2,499 (con't)

Network for Good  
Novelis  
Meg O'Hare  
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Pellegrini, Seeley, Ryan & Blakesley, P.C.  
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Tim Ryan  
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Dr. Alice Valle  
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## \$500 - \$999

Balise Family Giving Fund  
Marcelle Bastine  
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Kathy M Paul Real Estate  
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Walt Tomala  
Jack and Elizabeth Toner  
Twin Hills Country Club  
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# Thank you, 2021 donors

Donations received between July 1, 2020 and Dec. 31, 2021.

Rocky's ACE Hardware  
Richard Roos  
Timothy and Maureen Ryan  
Nilsa Serrano  
Brett Smith  
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James Tourtelotte  
Joshua Tripp  
United Industrial Service, Inc.  
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David Webber  
Suzanne Whitcomb  
Cary Williams  
Katie Wright  
John and Mary Margaret Young  
Michael and Janet Young  
Your Choice Brands, LLC

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Marion Anderson  
Ted Atkinson  
John and Nancy Barber  
Kristen Beturne  
Big Y - Giving Tag Program  
Daniel Blakesley

Continued on Page 18

# Thank you, 2021 donors

Donations received between July 1, 2020 and Dec. 31, 2021.

Continued from Page 17

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Elizabeth Beth  
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Sandra Burns  
David Burke  
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Bag Program

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United Way of Greater  
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A big thank you to all of our community partners, volunteers, staff, auction item winners, and auction item contributors for your support of our programs. We would also like to thank the many in-kind donors that so generously support our ReStore operations and construction projects throughout Hampden County! Together with your support, we are building brighter futures and stronger communities. Thank You!



**Donating your car is simple and free. 🚗 Learn more about vehicle donations:**  
[habitatspringfield.org/cars-for-homes](http://habitatspringfield.org/cars-for-homes)



# ReStore®

## Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity

After much deliberation and discussion, the GSHFH Board of Directors decided not to renew the lease on ReStore in Westfield so that we can focus more clearly on our home construction and repair programs.

Chatting with customers who stopped by on a regular basis looking for unique items, hearing explanations of how they would be repurposed, and looking at pictures of finished projects were highlights of our work there. The creativity displayed during ReStore Rivalries was inspiring!

We will miss the customers, donors, and volunteers whom we met at the ReStore over the past six years. Thank you for your support! We hope to see many of you at future GSHFH events.

The board is thankful for the work done by Myra, Sandy, Jacob, Michael, Michelle, Madison, Sister Gardner, and Donna for selling our inventory and preparing for the closing.

Sincerely,



Anne Eisenman  
GSHFH board president



**Thank you  
for your business.**



Greater Springfield  
**Habitat**  
for Humanity®

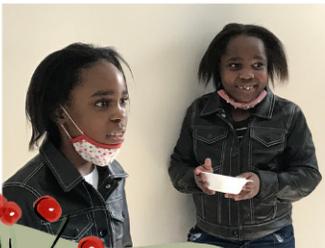
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