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Greater Springfield  
**Habitat**  
for Humanity®

# NEWS

**April  
2025**



Roger Bilbodeau, of West Springfield, drops off a carload of empty, clean aluminum cans at Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity's administrative office.

## **Celebrate Earth Day in style** Make eco-friendly donations to GSHFH

**E**arth Day is just around the corner and Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) invites you to celebrate the occasion by making a general environmental stewardship donation to support green building and energy-efficient building code requirements, or by participating in two recycling initiatives.

is collecting aluminum beverage cans for its **Cans for Homes** program. The initiative is tied to the Novelis Affiliate Recycling Program, which awards a \$2,500 grant when 500 pounds (or 16,000 cans) are collected. Novelis is an international leader in aluminum rolling and recycling. The nonprofit will also accept Massachusetts

Greater Springfield Habitat

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# Westfield University Students participate in a unique alternative spring break at GSHFH

For many, spring break is synonymous with vacation, beaches, partying, and sometimes mayhem. For eight Westfield State University students, the weeklong absence from school translated to an opportunity to volunteer at Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) and earn three academic credits.

In mid-March, the students volunteered with the administrative and construction teams. Following their alternative spring break, the students, with guidance from a faculty member, will complete a service-learning research project focusing on their experience and may explore social, cultural, or economic factors that impact the community they serviced. They will then present their findings in a poster format to the university community.

“It was my idea to offer course credit,” said Hillary Sackett-Taylor, assistant provost for Educational Excellence and Retention at Westfield State University. “I have been collaborating with Ashley Ewick, senior coordinator for Student Activities at Westfield State, for over a year now on this project. We wanted to provide additional incentive for students to participate in Alternative Spring Break, and I also thought it was an opportunity to meet additional learning outcomes through deep personal reflection



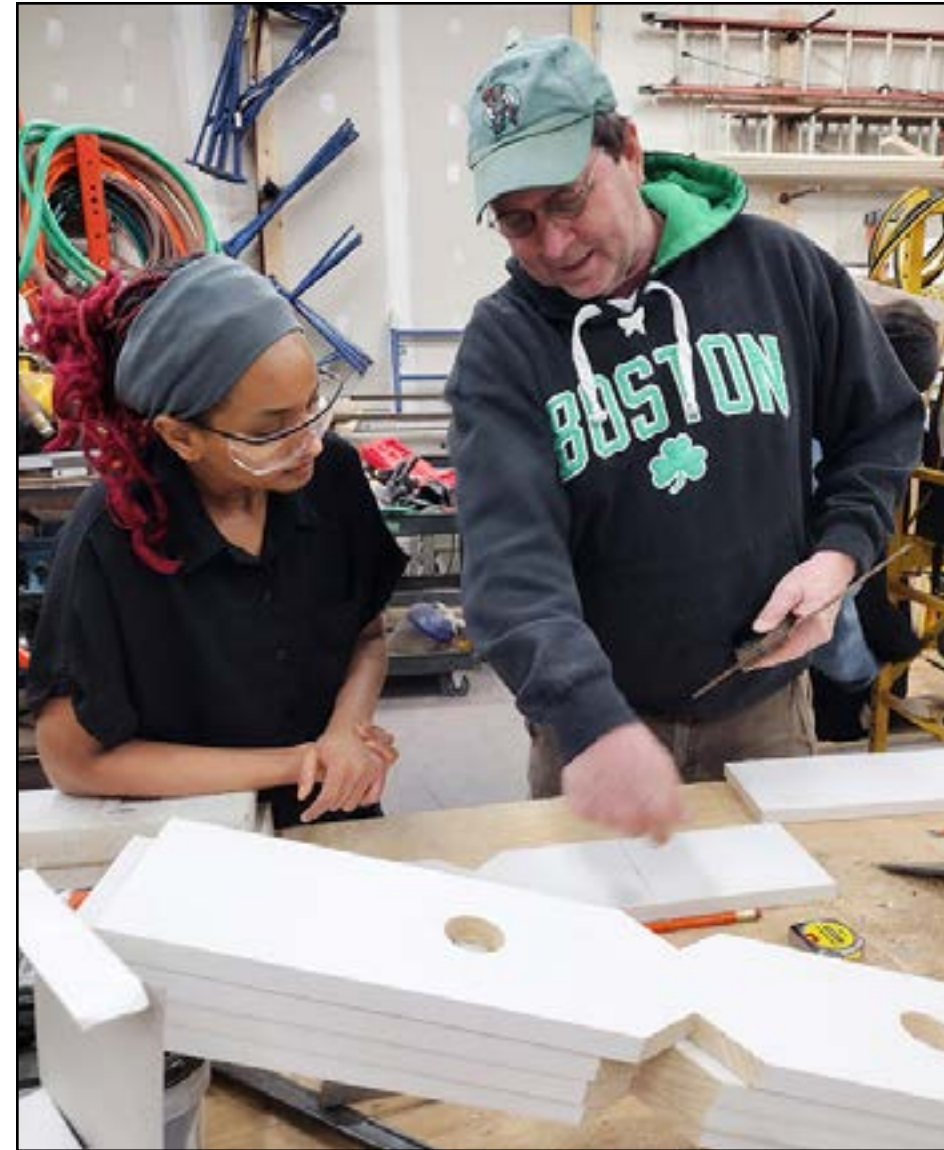
Ali Sutherland, a Westfield State University junior and Commonwealth Honors student, takes inventory of knobs at Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity during his alternative spring break in mid-March.

and engagement with academic research. Further, the National Collegiate Honors Council recommends that community service be an integrated component in the college honors experience. While not all of the students enrolled in the course are Honors students, many of them are.”

During their week with the Greater Springfield Habitat crew, the students worked on various projects, including taking inventory of various knobs;

separating aluminum cans from glass and plastic bottles, and recycling the lot; cleaning the Dwight Street, Springfield, build site; and starting porch repairs at the Wilmont Street, Springfield, project. They also tackled data entry and prepping lattice pieces that will be used on a home preservation project to restore the front porch of a historic Springfield home. The task required the students to measure

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Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) Construction Manager Joe Schebel (right) talks with Westfield State University senior Lina Anter about tools and measurements during her alternative spring break in the GSHFH warehouse.

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and cut wood, file off splinters, prime, and paint the pieces.

“I think this opportunity is amazing. It brings people of all different backgrounds together to benefit the community,” said 20-year-old Brenna Guiliani, a sophomore and Commonwealth Honors student studying nursing. She is a first-time Habitat volunteer.

Lina Anter, a senior studying criminal justice and psychology, agreed. “It’s a great experience

to learn new skills, and a good way to connect with and meet new people.” The 23-year-old first-time Habitat volunteer is not in the Commonwealth Honors Program, but saw a flyer advertising alternative spring break and was interested in community service. “I love volunteering and will definitely do it again.”

Junior Commonwealth Honors student Ali Sutherland said he is thrilled to work with Habitat, especially in these trying times.



Brenna Guiliani, a sophomore and Commonwealth Honors student at Westfield State University, uses a table saw to cut a piece of wood for lattice work, which will be used on a home preservation project to restore the front porch of a historic Springfield home.

“The times we live in are devastating the middle and lower-income class. Habitat works toward bettering the community and wants to help bridge the gap,” said 31-year-old Ali, who is studying health sciences and has plans to obtain a masters in occupational therapy. “I like that Habitat is a nonprofit and I like volunteering here.”

GSHFH Construction Manager Joe Schebel said he was impressed with the students’ attitude and determination.

“They’re talking with each other, they want to learn, and they’re not afraid to do anything,” he said.

To learn more about volunteer opportunities at Greater Springfield Habitat, visit [habitatspringfield.org/volunteer](http://habitatspringfield.org/volunteer)

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redeemable plastic and glass soda and alcoholic beverage bottles. Every can and bottle that is recycled with us helps build and repair affordable homes for families in need.

“The Cans for Homes program helps us receive a grant, which is financially beneficial but it also helps keep those cans and bottles out of our landfills. So, we are helping our local environment as well,” said Olga Callrigos, GSHFH Homeowner Programs coordinator.

The Cans for Homes program debuted in May 2021 when Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) and Novelis introduced a collaboration and invited Habitat affiliates to participate. Each quarter, participating affiliates collected and recycled donated cans, and reported the results back to HFHI to be eligible for a \$2,500 grant.

In 2024, the program changed. Instead of hosting quarterly initiatives, the grant was open for a six-month block and required affiliates to collect 500 pounds to be eligible for a \$2,500 grant. Additional awards are also given to the top 10 aluminum pound collectors.

“When we began the revised program in 2024, we thought the challenge was impossible. The community really surprised us and came to our aid. We collected more than 1,000 pounds of aluminum,” said Brandy O’Brien, Greater Springfield Habitat Marketing and Communications manager. “It was really quite impressive.”

Cans can be dropped off at 268 Cold Spring Ave in West Springfield. Or, to schedule a



A 2014 Nissan Altima, similar to what Olga Callrigos donated to Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity.

pick up, call (413) 739-5503.

Additionally, an assortment of vehicles can be donated to Habitat for HFHI’s **Cars for Homes** program. Cars, motorcycles, boats, snowmobiles, and forklifts are accepted. All that is needed is certificate of title and four tires. HFHI will take care of the rest and arrange for pick up.

“I loved how easy it was to donate my car to the Cars for Homes program. They helped get a broken-down car out of my driveway and my affiliate got the financial contribution from that donation, a win-win in my book,” Olga said. She donated a 2014 Nissan Altima.

The **Cars for Homes** program launched in 2005 and since that time, HFHI has accepted more than 160,000 vehicles. The donations have been resold or recycled, and all have benefited Habitat. In the past five years, the Cars for Homes program has raised over \$72 million, according to [habitat.org](http://habitat.org).

Once donated, the vehicle, based on its condition, will be sold through a national network of fully-licensed, insured, and bonded auctions and direct buyers. Roughly half of vehicles are sold to licensed dealers at wholesale auctions and are reused for transportation. The remaining half are brought to auto salvage yards where the reusable parts, batteries, tires, and fluids are removed. Vehicles that can be recycled are crushed, shredded, and turned into steel. On a monthly basis, 78-86% of revenue from vehicles donated to Habitat through Cars for Homes support local Habitat affiliates, like GSHFH. In fact, between \$7,000 and \$12,000 per year comes back to Greater Springfield Habitat.

Based on a donor’s zip code or personal request, the donation is transferred to their local affiliate of choice.

To start your donation, visit [bit.ly/3QNxn9a](https://bit.ly/3QNxn9a)