



From the Foundation

Habitat celebrates a milestone toward homeownership



Pedro and Damaris are one step closer to their dream of homeownership. On a blustery December afternoon, the couple celebrated the completion of the construction phase at their new Holyoke home. Also in attendance were city officials, community leaders, representatives from Holyoke Housing Authority (HHA), and Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) staff, members from the Board of Directors, and volunteers.

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Dietz & Co gifts Habitat \$4,000

Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) took second place in the Dietz & Company Architects annual "Spread the Cheer" voting poll campaign. The prize, a \$4,000 donation.

"Thank you! We are so grateful to be included in this activity and are thrilled to have done so well," said Brandy O'Brien, GSHFH Marketing and Communications manager. "More than that, we're glad everyone benefitted, regardless of the results. Thank you to those who voted for us and have supported us throughout the year."

The campaign kicked off Dec. 10 on Facebook and encouraged

Continued on Page 3



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 (260 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.

2. Can I purchase a passport at a participating brewery?
A. No.

3. 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.



Continued from Page 1

Unlike previous Greater Springfield Habitat builds, this one came together through a unique collaboration with Holyoke Housing Authority and the University of Massachusetts' DesignBuild program. HHA donated a plot of land on Chestnut Street. GSHFH prepared the site and built the foundation. UMass DesignBuild professors and students designed and constructed the modular home, and oversaw delivery to the Holyoke site.

"This house is a testament to the very belief that this community values a collaboration



between Greater 'Holyoke' Habitat for Humanity," Holyoke Mayor Joshua Garcia said in jest, "Holyoke Housing Authority, a longtime agency in the city that has transformed neighborhoods, and UMass. The very neighborhood we're standing in is a result from a cross trajectory of resources."

Pedro and Damaris's new home stands in the heart of Churchill Homes, a neighborhood reborn through a \$15-million HOPE VI grant awarded to the Holyoke Housing Authority in 1996. What was once a neglected area has been thoughtfully transformed into a vibrant, family-centered community. Today, the neighborhood includes a mix of rental and homeownership opportunities, along with community centers that bring neighbors together.

Greater Springfield Habitat is proud to have contributed to this revitalization through earlier partnerships with the HHA by building a home at 365 Chestnut St. in 2013. GSHFH also built three additional homes adjacent to Pedro and Damaris's. They were made possible through the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), funding during the COVID-19 pandemic to extend hope and stability during a time when it was needed most.

Pedro is a graduate of HHA's self-sufficiency program. But when he finished the classwork,

Continued on Page 4

Continued from Page 1

community members to vote for their favorite nonprofit of the 16 listed organizations. Voters used a surveymonkey.com link.

Mental Health Association, based in Chicopee, nabbed first place and will receive \$5,000. Springfield's Way Finders placed third and will receive \$3,000. The remaining participants will each reap a \$500 donation.

In 2025, Dietz employees volunteered at the Chestnut Street, Holyoke, build site to seal the foundation.

Dietz & Company Architects is an employee- and woman-owned business based in Springfield. It opened its doors in 1985 and its area of practice includes housing, education, commercial, hospitality, historic renovations, public, and municipal work.

Continued from Page 3

there were no available homes on the market.

"This project was really done as a way to help support their self-sufficiency program," said Aimee Giroux, GSHFH executive director. "This allowed us to build a home specific to people, like Pedro, who were going through that program, which is a longtime commitment."

Matt Mainville, HHA executive director, who once served as the Hope VI coordinator, agreed.

"We at the Housing Authority are always excited to see vacant parcels become homes, particularly at a time when there's a huge demand in the Commonwealth for good housing," he said. "... we also recognize housing resources are limited, dollars for development are hard to acquire. So, when we're able to partner with Habitat, UMass, and the City, it's always a recipe for success."

The 575-square-foot modular home accentuates energy efficiency through double studded walls, lots of insulation, triple-glazed windows, and all-electric Energy Star-rated appliances and air-source heat pumps.

The UMass DesignBuild team met with Pedro and Damaris in late winter 2025 to discuss design aspects specific to their needs. As a result, the house has a U-kitchen and interior stairs to the basement.

The DesignBuild team conceived the home in spring 2025. Construction began in summer and the home was delivered in mid-November.

"I'm very anxious and grateful for everything that I've accomplished. I feel honor and want to say



Pedro and Damaris's new home on Chestnut Street in Holyoke. 'thank you' to all of the board of directors of all the agencies, and I'm very grateful that I'm here with you today," said Pedro through his interpreter Vivian Rodriguez, HHA Homeownership and Financial Education coordinator. "I hope to be successful in homeownership."

Pedro and Damaris currently live in a one-bedroom apartment and have complained about their unfriendly neighbors who they say makes their everyday life unenjoyable. The couple doesn't have children together, but have a large blended family. Pedro has two daughters from a previous relationship and seven grandchildren. Damaris has three children and five grandchildren.

The couple is expected to close on the house early in the New Year. To see more pictures and videos of the construction, visit habitatspringfield.org/holyoke


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