



Greater Springfield
Habitat
for Humanity®

**COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIP
NEWSLETTER**

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK



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GSHFH partners with Springdale Education Center to help young adults realize their dreams

Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) is known for building and preserving homes in Hampden County. But, to three Springdale Education Center students, the organization is also about providing a safe place where they can hone social and vocational skills.

The students, with Springdale Young Adults Teacher Trina Winans, venture to the Greater Springfield Habitat administrative office in West Springfield weekly to perform simple janitorial services and some computer work. Their tasks typically include vacuuming, washing dishes, freshening the bathroom, breaking down and recycling cardboard boxes, shredding old documents, taking out the trash, and data entry. Springdale has held this partnership with GSHFH for the past three years.

“Community collaborations such as this provide an important opportunity in supporting one another’s mission. By helping to provide individuals with practical, hands-on experiences that promote personal growth and renewed confidence, we are in turn creating a more positive world while strengthening our local communities,” said John O’Farrell, GSHFH Fundraising and Volunteer coordinator.

“We look forward to our continued partnership with Springdale Educational Center’s Positive Regard program.”

Springdale is private therapeutic day school headquartered in Chicopee. The center provides a range of educational, clinical, psychoeducational, behavioral, vocational, and outreach services for youth between the ages of 5 and 22 years old.

“The Young Adult Transition program offers a unique, individualized learning experience. The program is supported by a therapeutic component focusing on interpersonal skills. These wrap-around services capitalize on the individual learning styles of the students and prepares them to become productive members of the community,” said Trina. “The most rewarding aspect of our partnership is helping people to fulfill their dreams.”

For more information about Springdale Education Center, visit positiveregard.com



Top: Jani, a Springdale Education Center student, performs data entry work at Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity administrative offices.

Above: Springdale Education Center student Nathan puts away dishes after washing them.

New volunteer excited to participate; expresses passion and enthusiasm for Habitat for Humanity

Cathy Faits remembers when she was 10 years old and helping her father work on the roof for the family house in Natchez, Mississippi. Her father held two roofing nails in his mouth and a hammer in his right hand. He wiped sweat away with his sleeve and pushed his glasses up on the bridge of his nose. The family needed a new roof for some time, but money was tight. Instead of hiring a local contractor, Cathy’s dad took on the task himself with the help of his three sons and daughter.

“I held the shingles in place and my dad would nail them in. The wind had picked up, but I loved being up in the open air on the roof,” said Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) new volunteer Cathy Faits. “There was work to be done and I loved working with him.”

Cathy discovered a love for handywork, but put it on the backburner to attend college, work in Corporate America, marry, raise two sons, and relocate to New England. As her life continued, she frequently reminded herself of her love for volunteering and the mission of Habitat for Humanity. But still, she put it off.



Cathy Faits uses a powder-actuated tool, also known as a Ramset gun, at the Bay Street build site in Springfield, to drive nails through wood into the concrete foundation to install the inner basement door below the bulkhead door.

“I remember President Jimmy Carter and his involvement. I always said I would one day volunteer, but it always seemed to get put off. I woke up one day and realized if I didn’t do it now, I probably wouldn’t,” Cathy said.

Now 65, Cathy signed up. On her first day, she met construction crew members Mary Melchiskey and Edgar Herrera, and longtime volunteer Tom Eisenman at the Bay Street build site.

“I was blown away,” Cathy said. “Yes, they had knowledge and skill, but they also care about the quality of their work

and the enthusiasm for the work was contagious. They made me feel like part of the team.”

In her short tenure, Cathy worked with a Ramset concrete nail gun to install the inner basement door, helped remove the rough temporary stairs, and installed the treads and risers.

“I thought Cathy would be great when I saw how skillfully she used tools,” Tom said. “In the afternoon, she used a Ramset tool. This is loud and a scary thing that uses a gunpowder charge to drive nails into the concrete foundation. She *liked* it.”

Mary, GSHFH Construction Site supervisor, said she was equally impressed with Cathy.

“I love Cathy,” Mary said. “She’s very sweet and competent. I asked her to do something and she just did it.”

Cathy said she also met and saw other volunteers, including students from Springfield’s Roger L. Putnam Vocational Technical Academy working on the front porch and a local woodcarver doing his craft.

“I can’t brag enough about the volunteers. One afternoon, I looked outside to see a man, in the rain, with an umbrella propped above a tree stump. He was carving an owl and a cardinal out of a tree stump,” Cathy said. “This wasn’t an assignment but a piece of art and thoughtfulness that will be a part of this family’s memories. How wonderful is that? Habitat for Humanity is amazing on so many levels. Everyone involved benefits. Every one.”

Habitat volunteer creates lasting memento for partner family at Bay Street property

Dene Kimball has a unique ability to see the extraordinary in the ordinary. He recently shared his talent in April and carved an owl and cardinal into an old stump found on the Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) Bay Street property in Springfield.

Dene with his Springfield, Massachusetts, Rotary Club peers volunteered at Bay Street helped with final punch list items around the property and in the house when something caught his eye.

“When I saw the small stump, I thought I could find a little screech owl and cardinal in there,” said Dene, 85. “I happened to have a battery-operated chainsaw with me ... I hope the family thinks it’s fun. Maybe the owl and cardinal can take care of the house a bit.”

The carving took Dene approximately 20 hours, which also included sanding and painting his creation. The average chainsaw carving takes Dene roughly 35 to 40 hours to complete.

“C’mon, he was just a little angel. He’s 85 and did not slow down,” said Mary Melchiskey, GSHFH Construction Site supervisor. “He came back to finish the owl and cardinal.”

Dene said he began carvings as a child in grade school, back in an era where kids commonly carried jackknives in their pockets. One day, his teacher brought in cases of Ivory soap.



Dene Kimball, center, stands with his Springfield, Massachusetts, Rotary Club peers outside the Bay Street house in Springfield.



Dene took a bar and vaguely remembers carving a bird out of it.

He soon graduated to wood. In the years that followed, Dene has carved animals, including eagles and bears. He has also created religious adornments, such as crosses and the stations of the cross, for various churches.

“I love carving. It keeps me out of jail so to speak,” Dene said with a chuckle.

Since the carving benefits Greater Springfield Habitat and its partner families, Dene said he was more than happy to do it. After all, the rotary club’s mission ties closely with Habitat’s purpose. It’s all about service.

“It’s as simple as that. Our rotary model is service above self. As human beings, we need to be our brother’s keeper,” Dene said. “Habitat for Humanity is a marvelous



Top: A picture of the stump carving at Bay Street in Springfield in its early stages. Above: A finished picture of the stump carving.

organization. I very strongly support the group and can’t wait to work on the next house. However, not every house has a little stump.”

Join us! You’re invited.

Dedication Ceremony





Greater Springfield
Habitat
for Humanity®



**332 Bay St,
Springfield, MA**

**10:30am, Monday
May 23, 2022**

Make a \$10 minimum donation during the month of May and be entered to win a 4-pack of tickets to the Worcester WooSox game on Sunday, June 26, at 1:05pm.

habitatspringfield.org/donate



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Nueva Esperanza spreads the word, helps build Greater Springfield Habitat community

When Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH)

opens a new homeownership application cycle, it often depends on its community partners to help spread the word to eligible families. Nueva Esperanza is one of those partners spreading the word in Holyoke.

Nueva Esperanza, which means New Hope in Spanish, is a community engagement nonprofit that acts as a catalyst

to encourage a vibrant, sustainable, and empowering Puerto Rican/Afro-Caribbean

look forward to continuing the partnership in the near future.” Cynthia said the key to

success in the partnership is transparency and similar missions.

Deborah O’Mara, Greater Springfield Habitat Family Services manager agreed.

“Our relationship with Nueva Esperanza provides GSHFH with a valuable connection to members of the Puerto Rican/ Afro-Caribbean community in Holyoke. With the



community in Holyoke. To date, Nueva Esperanza Executive Director Cynthia Espinosa Marrero estimates at least 50 individuals have benefited from the partnership whether it be through homeownership or volunteer opportunities.

“The most rewarding aspect of our partnership with GSHFH is being able to build a home for a family in our city and seeing the impact the greater good has on someone having a place to call home,” Cynthia said. “We

city of Holyoke being one of the largest residential centers in our service area and with its older housing stock, we are deeply motivated to help qualified lower-income families move out of rental housing and into brand new homes of their own,” Deborah said. “Homeownership changes lives in so many positive ways for both the families we serve and the community at large.”

To learn more about Nueva Esperanza, go to nuevaofholyoke.org

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Deborah O’Mara,
 Greater Springfield
 Habitat for Humanity
 Family Services manager