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1 in 7 U.S. households pay half or more of their income on housing.

Let's do something about it.

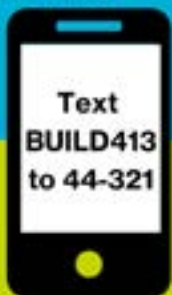


Habitat for Humanity

Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity

We support Greater Springfield Habitat and affordable housing.

You can too.



Greater Springfield
Habitat
for Humanity®

NEWS

October
2023



From left: Personal Care Aide Amber LaBranche, Gloria, "Little" Gloria, and Max stand together near their home in the McKnight Neighborhood of Springfield.

Habitat homeowner needs your help

Max needs help but he's not used to asking for it. Typically, he's the one who provides it. Last year, when he and his wife Gloria tried to help their sick adult daughter, the results were financially devastating and emotionally heart-wrenching.

Now they are accepting aid from Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) and Purple Heart Homes (PHH), but it's not enough. They need support from the community.

Former Marine Corporal Max and Gloria are retired and

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SAVE THE DATE

Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity Fall Festival
Thursday, Nov. 9 | Twin Hills Country Club, Longmeadow
Doors open at 6pm | Tickets: \$75 each

Join us
New look. Same great event.



Come for an evening of drinks, DJ, food, friends, and stay for the auction that benefits Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity. New this year: 1 free alcoholic beverage voucher for each purchased ticket will be given upon entry to the event. Details to follow – habitatspringfield.org/fall-feastival
Building homes, building opportunities.



Volunteer of the Month



Dave Alger

“Just do it” isn’t merely a popular advertising slogan. To Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity volunteer Dave Alger, it’s also a piece of advice. He added, “Habitat has all the tools and knowledge, they just need your help at any skill level.”



Dave Alger
of Holyoke

Since this past summer, Dave has been a frequent volunteer to the Chestnut Street, Holyoke, build site. He said he’s known about the nonprofit organization for quite some

time. After all, Dave is a native of Holyoke. But, he didn’t start volunteering until May, when

he participated in a corporate build day with his employer. That changed everything. Dave said he’s at the build site nearly every other week since August.

“I enjoy working with my hands and I was, unfortunately, laid off mid-summer, so I continued to volunteer over the summer,” Dave said. “It’s a great organization and I

love the mission to provide low-cost homes to families in need. I’m glad I can be a part of it.”

In his own words ...

What would you advise a new volunteer wear to the build site? Dress to be dirty. You don’t know what you may end up doing that day.

What advice do you have in regard to preparation for manual labor? Be ready to be on your feet and moving – but know you won’t ever be rushed.

Would you rather have three eyes or three legs? Three eyes – so I can see more of the world hopefully at once.

Does your family have a “motto,” spoken or unspoken? Not a motto, but every time my kids ask, “How long?” the answer is always “four hours.”

Would you rather go on a hayride or jump in the leaves? Jump in the leaves.

What’s a common saying you don’t understand or think is odd? “Not my circus, not my monkeys.”



Volunteers wanted
habitatspringfield.org/volunteer

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disabled, each combatting a host of health conditions and illnesses. Their well-being makes climbing the stairs each night to the second-floor bedrooms of their colonial home in Springfield's McKnight Neighborhood difficult. Greater Springfield Habitat is building a bedroom and bathroom addition on to the first floor at an affordable cost to the couple. PHH has donated \$15,000 to the cause but would like to give an additional \$10,000. The nonprofit organization, which offers housing and employment opportunities to qualified military veterans, is asking for donations.

"Every act of generosity toward our veterans echoes a resounding commitment to honor their service and sacrifice. With deep gratitude, Purple Heart Homes is proud to contribute \$15,000 to the Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity home preservation project, ensuring veteran Max finds solace and security in a place he can call home," said John Gallina, CEO and co-founder of PHH. "Our mission extends beyond this gift, as we embark on a dedicated fundraising campaign to reach a goal of an additional \$10,000. We believe we're better together. In collaboration with Habitat for Humanity, we hope to build a legacy of compassion and support for those who have bravely defended our freedom."

Max and Gloria sit in the living room of the house they purchased from GSHFH in June 2002. They are across

from each other, each positioned on a large brown leather cushioned piece of the sectional that creates a three-sided frame. The walls are painted a warm mocha tone. A flat screen television hanging on a wall in front of them emits little sound as the volume is turned down. They are not alone. Sitting around them are family members who visited from Florida. Other family members stop in, walking through the magnetic mesh screen door that is the only barrier between the world and the inside of their home on a warm early autumn afternoon. They stay for a quick minute or a while disappearing into various rooms. Max and Gloria refer to all of their guests as family, including the personal care aide (PCA) who tends to their youngest daughter, "Little" Gloria.

It's just another day for the family. They say goodbye to the family visiting from the Sunshine State and begin their story of how the addition became a necessity.

In June 2022, Max and Gloria sought out a contractor to build a first-floor bedroom and bathroom addition. Their 33-year-old daughter Zitia battled Lou Gehrig's disease, a progressive neurological



Max looks through a pile of papers in his home to show proof he hired a contractor before contacting Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity regarding his need for a first-floor addition.

disorder that results in weakened muscles and deformity. The couple hoped if she moved home, they could better care for her.

Max said he hired a company out of eastern Massachusetts that had received five stars on Angie's List and paid a considerable sum upfront.

"He ran off. He took advantage of us," Max said. He added they recently hired a local lawyer, but has yet to receive an update on the case.

Zitia's amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, symptoms worsened after receiving a batch of bad blood from a transfusion. In November, she lost her battle and passed away.

Max and Gloria still grieve. Max often breaks from the conversation, looks down toward the littered coffee table,

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and fades into a trance. Gloria's eyes well with tears as she tries to explain the debilitating heartbreak, but doesn't find the right or powerful-enough words. She mumbles, "I just miss her."

Coming back to the conversation, Max speaks of his military career.

"I was in for six years, eight months, 22 days, four hours, and 45 minutes," he said with a laugh. In all seriousness, he said he loved his time with the service. He joined the Marines when he was 17 because he liked the organization's history. There was a faithfulness he admired. "You meet people from all aspects of life and come together as one," Max said. He also said he opted to separate because the powers-that-be wouldn't let him stay in Japan.

When he returned home, he worked an assortment of jobs to take care of his family, which included a young son.

His employment history is sprinkled with a variety of positions, such as collecting trash, maneuvering a forklift, milking cows, and working as a mechanic. Later, he studied plumbing, heating, and electrical work, and became a handyman.

At 37 years old, Max married Gloria, whom he met through friends. Together, they had four children. In 2002, the family moved into their Habitat home. Max and Gloria speak with pride about their experience and appreciation toward the nonprofit

To donate, visit donorbox.org/maxwell-wiggins



Walt Tomala, of TNT General Contracting, gives a thumbs-up as he shows the progress of the first-floor addition on Max's house. Instead of using wood frames, he is utilizing insulated concrete forms, which is more energy efficient, quieter, and less expensive than lumber.

organization that brought hope and opportunity to them.

"Thank God for Habitat," said Gloria, who suffers

from rheumatoid arthritis, a bad knee, Fibromyalgia, systemic lupus erythematosus (Lupus), and Sciatica. "We had been looking for a home, but with the kids in the apartment, it was hard. We wouldn't have had a house without Habitat."

Around 2009, Gloria said Max's health began deteriorating. It started with difficulty breathing, which was later attributed to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Then, came rheumatoid arthritis, issues with L1 and L2 vertebrae in the lumbar spine, and kidney cancer as a result of the Camp Lejeune water contamination

problem that occurred at the Marine base camp in North Carolina between 1953 and 1987. Max also said his right knee was replaced.

Despite their health issues, they remain grateful for their opportunities and insistent to help others when they can.

Amber LaBranche, the PCA for "Little" Gloria, who is nonverbal with developmental disabilities, said Max went as far as purchasing a cell phone for her father because he couldn't afford one of his own. He also paid the monthly bill.

"It's just in Max's nature," Gloria said. "He will always help anyone. Even if he's not well."

Max agreed. "I will always help. Unconditionally. It's what the Bible teaches and it's about doing the right thing," Max said. "If you do good, good will come back. It always will."

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And that's just one of the reasons why Greater Springfield Habitat was eager to help Max and Gloria.

"The work that is done at Habitat is not always easy, but homeowners like Max and Gloria help us to keep perspective. I cannot think of a time when they have not shown their appreciation for being able to purchase a home from us," said Aimee Giroux, GSHFH executive director. "Max never came to us asking for help. He stopped by the office one day to drop off his mortgage payments, and we started chatting. He mentioned he was trying to build an addition and all of the events that had transpired.

"I looked at him and said, 'Let me see if we can help, no promises. I am going to reach out to the veteran community to see if we can do something because I know how important your home is to you and your family,'" Aimee said. "I immediately thought of Purple Heart Homes since we had worked on a few projects together and they agreed to help. GSHFH could not have undertaken this project on its own. We are grateful to have the support of other organizations that are willing to work in partnership with us to help Max and Gloria be able to stay in their home as long as possible."

To donate, visit donorbox.org/maxwell-wiggins



Greater Springfield
Habitat
for Humanity

Now hiring
Construction
Manager

habitatspringfield.org/join-our-team

The poster features the Habitat for Humanity logo in the top left corner. The main text is centered on a dark background. On the right side, there is a photograph of a two-story white house under construction, with blue window frames and a set of concrete steps leading to the front door. The background of the poster is a mix of blue and black.



Greater Springfield
Habitat for Humanity

GIVE

GO GREEN

1. Visit mystopandshopcause.com within 7 days of purchase.
2. Remove the scratch-off layer on the Giving Tag to reveal the unique identifier.
3. Submit the identifier and select the nonprofit you would like to receive the \$1 donation.

Purchase your reusable bag now until the end of of October at 935 Riverdale St in West Springfield.

The poster has a green and blue color scheme. On the left, there is a circular image of a reusable shopping bag filled with fresh produce like corn, carrots, and leafy greens. A hand is shown holding a black scratch-off tag with the word 'GIVE' on it. The background features a grid of dots and a large arrow pointing towards the right. The text is in white and yellow.