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NEWS

July 2023




Volunteers from the Westfield Home Depot Distribution Center recently came out to Monson to help demolish a deck in preparation for a veteran repair project.

Three seniors helped via Home Preservation program

It's a busy summer at Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH). Two Veteran Build Home Preservation projects are underway. A separate home preservation project for a disabled senior citizen was recently finished.

Veterans Build is a Habitat for Humanity national initiative to provide housing solutions, volunteer, and employment

opportunities for US veterans, military service members, and their families. The program serves limited-income homeowners who are affected by age, disability, or family circumstances and struggle to maintain the condition and utility of their homes.

The home preservation program provides affordable micro-loans to qualifying

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

homeowners who need help with accessibility modifications, home weatherization, general home repairs, yard cleanup, and landscaping. GSHFH works alongside volunteers and homeowners to make repairs.

“Massachusetts has some of the oldest housing stock in the country and many aging homeowners are unable to make needed repairs on their own,” said Aimee Giroux, GSHFH executive director. “We are happy to be able to help them through the repair process so they can continue to stay in their homes.”

McKnight neighborhood, Springfield

Greater Springfield Habitat homeowners Max and Gloria live in the McKnight neighborhood of Springfield and purchased their two-story colonial home from GSHFH in June 2002. In recent years, Max has suffered from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and rheumatoid arthritis, which makes climbing stairs to the second-floor bedrooms challenging. Max said he presented his concerns to Aimee.

“She’s very knowledgeable and she knew just what I wanted and needed,” Max said. “Everything was very smooth and easy. Habitat is always there for me when I need it.”

Max, a former Marines corporal, qualified for the Veterans Build Home Preservation program and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Veterans Housing Rehabilitation



An employee from TNT General Contracting removes the deck from a property in Springfield to make room for a first-floor bedroom and bathroom addition.

and Modification Pilot Program (VHRMP). The pilot project gives competitive grants to nonprofits that serve veterans or low-income individuals. The grants can be used to rehabilitate eligible veterans’ primary residences.

Habitat was able to help get Max and Gloria approved for a first-floor bedroom and accessible bathroom through the VHRMP program. Additional funding was still needed and Purple Heart Homes (PHH) was there to partner with us, donating an additional \$15,000 to the project.

PHH, a nonprofit charity, provides housing solutions for former military members who are disabled and/or have decided to age in place. The organization has two programs – Veterans Aging in place and Veteran Home Opportunity Program (VHOP). VHOP is designed for service-connected disabled veterans who are either ready for the responsibility of homeownership,

are looking for a rental home, or are interested in a tiny home.

“Every act of generosity towards 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 Greater Springfield Habitat Humanity home preservation project, ensuring veteran Maxwell finds solace and security in a place he can call home,” said John Gallina, CEO and cofounder 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.”

Excavation began in early July with help from RJL

Continued on Page 4

Volunteer of the Month



42nd Aerial Port Squadron at Westover Air Reserve Base in Chicopee

Members of the 42nd Aerial Port Squadron (APS) at Westover Air Reserve Base in Chicopee, will soon add their mark to the Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) Holyoke build site.

Over the course of two days – July 20 and 21 – up to 20 airmen are scheduled to volunteer at Chestnut Street.

“I learned about Habitat for Humanity through company volunteer partnerships through prior private sector companies I’ve worked for (such as The Hartford, Aetna, and Wolters Kluwers),” said Senior Airman Erik Crespo, an aerial porter at the 42nd APS. An aerial porter transports critical supplies, rolling stock, and personnel across the world to support humanitarian and defense-related missions. “I enjoyed the hands-on work and connection to the Habitat for Humanity mission of building new homes for families in need.” Erik said he previously volunteered in the fall of 2017 at a South Windsor, Connecticut, location.

Senior Airman Herbert Jefferson, an aerial porter at the 42nd APS, said the upcoming volunteer days will be his first time at a Habitat build site.

He said he signed up because he enjoys the physical movements and likes helping others.

Erik offered this piece of insight to Herbert and the other volunteers: “It’s an upbeat and great team building/employee engagement experience,

In their own words ...



Erik Crespo of South Windsor, CT



Herbert Jefferson of Colchester, CT

Where are you from? Miami, Florida - Colombian heritage

What do you hope to gain from volunteering for GSHFH?

Get to know and build stronger relationships with other airmen that I do not know as well.

If you were a superhero, who would you be and why?

Ironman because of his technical ingenuity for creating products to advance human capabilities.

There are now 25 hours in the day. How do you spend that extra hour? At the beach.

Where are you from? Killeen, Texas

What do you hope to gain from volunteering for GSHFH?

A positive experience and fulfillment in purpose.

If you were a superhero, who would you be and why? Black Panther because representation matters.

There are now 25 hours in the day. How do you spend that extra hour? Resting. Being mentally fit is just as important as physically fit.

especially for groups of co-workers that have not had the opportunity to meet in-person or

engage outside of the work to build better connections with fellow coworkers.”

Continued from Page 2

Contracting. Longtime GSHFH supporter TNT General Contracting is doing the construction work.

Monson

In August, Greater Springfield Habitat in association with Window World Military Initiative, Home Depot Repair Corps, and VHMRP, will perform outside work for former Army Specialist fourth grade Roland and his wife Jo-Ann.

The one-story Monson house, which the couple purchased in 1992, has fallen into disrepair and according to Roland, his insurance company didn't want to insure it as is because of the state of the siding.

Roland said he knew of Habitat for Humanity from reading articles about well-known volunteer and former President Jimmy Carter and thought there might be an affiliate in Springfield. He reached out to Aimee, who visited his home to help the couple complete the application process.

Window World Military Initiative will donate the siding, replacement windows, a new sliding door, and gutters. They will also provide volunteer support to help with installation.

"Our family is blessed and honored to live in a country that provides the freedoms that we all enjoy, and as a small family business, we are the example

of the American Dream," said Grace Drost, Window World of Western Massachusetts owner. "With that, we can't forget that those freedoms and the American Dream aren't free and feel this is an opportunity to thank our veterans for the sacrifices they make so our dreams can come true. One of the core values of our company is rooted in changing lives, and this is a chance for our whole team to give back to those who make the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms."

“Habitat is excellent. I'm very pleased so far.”
- Roland, Monson homeowner

Habitat will also replace the deck and provide repairs to the shed roof and general yard cleanup at the home. Preliminary work demolishing the deck began in June with the help of volunteers from

Home Depot. Roland said that's also when the couple picked out new siding to replace the brown exterior with its peach shutters.

"Habitat is excellent. I'm very pleased so far," Roland said.

East Forest Park, Springfield

In early June, Karen needed help. The exterior breaker box at her East Forest Park, Springfield, home was corroded and rusted. Water had seeped in and destroyed it and there was a risk for fire. Karen, a disabled senior citizen, called "211" for help for the electrical emergency. The operator suggested programs, including GSHFH.

Karen said Aimee had

been upfront with her and informed her she might not be able to help, but would see what she could do. Karen did in fact qualify and Greater Springfield Habitat brought in a subcontractor to replace the electrical meter box.

"I'm pleased and very happy with the service all around. The guys who did the work were nice, cordial, and friendly. I liked communicating with Aimee," Karen said. "I definitely recommend Habitat to others. I only have good things to say about the program and the people I worked with."

Volunteers wanted
habitatspringfield.org/volunteer
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-Kim, Springfield homeowner

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