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NEWS

January 2023

New Year, new home

Congratulations, Juan and Ireydiza



On Jan. 5, Ireydiza Perez accepts the keys to her and husband Juan Gonzalez's first home from Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) Executive Director Aimee Giroux as Juan looks on. The family of four was selected to participate in the homeownership program in late 2021. As part of the partnership agreement, Juan and Ireydiza promised to engage in "sweat equity," which obligated the couple to volunteer 500 hours of their time toward the construction of their home and other projects. Juan exceeded the hours and became a regular fixture at GSHFH build sites.

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Board of directors welcomes new teammate, Matthew

Matthew MacDonnell might be the perfect addition to the Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) Board of Directors. The lifelong Western Massachusetts resident, who refers to Springfield as “The City of Homes,” has a love for home construction and design, appreciates the process, and understands how crucial housing is for families and communities. Plus, he’s a member of a local trades union and has extensive home renovation experience.

Born in Indian Orchard and later moving to Longmeadow, Matthew is a 27-year member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers local chapter 2324 as a repairman in the communications division. He’s been on the executive board for 16 years. Joining GSHFH’s board is his first volunteer experience.

“For many years, I have seen Habitat houses built in Springfield and was always intrigued about the process. When I was presented with the opportunity to join the board, I jumped at the chance to get involved,” Matthew said. “I hope to learn the process of creating quality, affordable, and sustainable housing for local families. And, in turn, contribute to enhancing the quality of life in



Matthew MacDonnell

Hampden County.”
Greater Springfield Habitat Board of Directors President

“For many years, I have seen Habitat houses built in Springfield and was always intrigued about the process.”

*-- Matthew MacDonnell
GSHFH board member*

Michael Cardaropoli said Matthew was referred to him by a union official he often works with in his day job as an attorney representing injured workers.

“The union official said Matthew was a very good, hard-working person who enjoys helping out with charities,” Michael said. “I also thought his background working as a

licensed electrician for many years could make him an asset to the board.”

Aimee Giroux, GSHFH executive director, agreed.

“We are excited to have him join the board and think that he will bring some great energy to the team,” Aimee said.

SPOTLIGHT ON

Matthew MacDonnell
Board member
of Longmeadow, MA

Air guitar or air drums?
Air drums.

What was your first job?
Newspaper delivery at 9 years old. A great view into life in my neighborhood.

Has a quote or saying ever changed your life? If so, what was it and how did it change you? “*To be proud and inaccessible is to be timid and weak.*”
-- Jean- Baptiste Massillon, French Catholic prelate and preacher (1663-1742)
This reminds me that strength comes from communication and connection.

Do you give names to inanimate objects? Why or why not?
I do not. They already have names.

What’s your go-to supermarket aisle?
Produce. The most variety, flavor, and benefits.

Do you enjoy getting a new phone or is it more out of necessity? A new phone is purely out of necessity. I have to learn a new variation of something I will never master.

Volunteers of the Month



Terrelle Castle
of Springfield, MA



Gabriella Castle, 18
of Springfield, MA



Madeline Castle, 16
of Springfield, MA

Lifelong Springfield resident Terrelle Castle said she doesn’t remember a time when she wasn’t aware of Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH). In fact, as soon as her youngest daughter Madeline turned 16 and became old enough to volunteer, the mother and her two daughters were regulars on Habitat build sites.

The family, which tries to volunteer twice a week and has been active with GSHFH for the past six months, said they continue to do so because they like the experience and Madeline enjoys working in construction.

“It’s a great way to learn and give back to the community,” Terrelle said. “The people who buy the houses are great.”

In their own words ...

Terrelle

Favorite GSHFH volunteer memory? When Madeline was working with the other girls in the program.

What is something you’ve dreamed of doing but haven’t done yet? Why haven’t you done it? Living in NYC for at least a month. I haven’t done it because living for just a month in NYC is a bit unrealistic.

Which Marvel character would you like to be? Black Widow!! Of course!

Gabriella

Favorite GSHFH volunteer memory? Digging the foundation for the new house and throwing rocks out of the hole.

Which Harry Potter house would the sorting house most likely put you in? Ravenclaw

Have you ever chickened out of something and now regret it? If so, what and why? Playing a basketball game, because there were too many people on the court.

Madeline

Favorite GSHFH volunteer memory? Moving all of the foam for the foundation and working with Mr. Greg (Garfield) on the porch of both houses.

How far will you venture in your pajamas? School and home

Be honest, how do you feel about Ariana Grande? She’s annoying.

Robots or dinosaurs? Dinosaurs.

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