



Habitat
for Humanity®
of Addison County, VT

NEWS
from the
CREWS
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Habitat purchases four-lot subdivision in Vergennes

Habitat for Humanity of Addison County recently completed the purchase of a four-lot subdivision in Vergennes, which will eventually be the site of Habitat's first home-building project in the northern part of the county.

The Raymond Danyow Family Trust offered the property to Habitat, and Mickey Heinecken, HfHAC president, said the organization was "grateful for the opportunity, and for the generosity reflected in the purchase price." The land is part of the Boothwoods neighborhood in Vergennes, off Green Street, just south of town.

Habitat board members Michael Johnston of West Addison and Poppy Cunningham, who lives in Boothwoods, were both instrumental in bringing about the land purchase.

"We are looking forward to being part of a volunteer team committed to providing affordable housing to citizens in the greater Vergennes community," said Michael Johnston. "By building homes in the Vergennes area, Habitat will broaden its reach to hard-working families in need of affordable, efficient housing, and expand our volunteer and donor base to the northern end of the county."

The subdivision, which has a valid Act 250 permit, is also on city water and sewer systems. The four lots range from 15,000 to 25,000 square feet.

The city government is also support-

Jim Danyow of the Raymond Danyow Family Trust, center, with Habitat's Mickey Heinecken, left, and Michael Johnston.



ive of the project. "I was so pleased to hear Habitat for Humanity of Addison County had purchased building lots in Vergennes," said Renny Perry, mayor of Vergennes. "This means in the near future, affordable housing will be constructed in Vergennes to meet the needs of working families in Addison County. The city needs this housing and it will be a welcome addition to the Boothwoods neighborhood. Thank you, Habitat, for considering Vergennes."

Poppy Cunningham described Boothwoods as "a lovely little community." She has lived there since the 1970s, and said the Habitat project will represent something like "a new coat of paint for Boothwoods, bringing in some younger families and four well-built homes."

Mickey Heinecken noted the work that Middlebury College students, in architecture courses taught by John McLeod, have done on the current Habitat project on Seymour Street in Middlebury. He said Habitat is hoping to involve McLeod and his students in the Vergennes project, as well.

He said it was "a huge plus" for the organization to plant its flag in Vergennes, after building houses in Middlebury, Bristol and Cornwall. He said land development costs are always a big part of Habitat's expenses, and sharing the costs across the four lots will mean a significant savings. And, he said, "The Danyow Family Trust's willingness to sell the lots at such a generous price was key to making the deal a reality."

HfH and HPH: A match made in (indoor) heaven

For some years now, Habitat for Humanity of Addison County has been focused on producing energy-efficient homes. It makes sense, since the mission of Habitat has always been to provide affordable housing.

More recently, Habitat has adopted the high-performance home as its model. A high-performance home (HPH) is not just energy efficient but also more durable and more comfortable to live in. High-performance homes



Habitat hopes its fourth house in Cornwall, nearing completion, will be its first certified HPH.

are extremely well insulated, with tight building envelopes to reduce airflow in and out. This not only makes them easier to heat and cool, but also prevents moisture from getting trapped in walls and ceilings, which means less maintenance and a longer building lifespan.

HPH technology typically includes energy recovery ventilation (ERV) systems, which reduce the loads put on heating and cooling systems, and thus costs, and improve the quality of indoor air. In essence, ERV systems use outside air to ventilate, but are able, in the winter, to capture heat and humidity from exhaust air to pre-condition the incoming air. In the

summer, the process is reversed, with heat and humidity from incoming air transferred to the exhaust. The result is a house that's more comfortable to live in all year, with cleaner air to breathe.

Among those driving the process of bringing HPH technology to Habitat homes have been architect Jean Terwilliger of Vermont Integrative Architecture in Middlebury and Alex Carver, a general contractor from Rip-ton who is now on Habitat's board of trustees, serving on the building committee. Habitat has also worked closely with Efficiency Vermont, a state agency that encourages energy-saving strategies in homebuilding.

Jean has long been an advocate for energy efficient, environmentally friendly homes, and Alex has built many of the homes she's designed over the past decade. Jean began working with Habitat about a dozen years ago; her first home design for Habitat was a house built off Weybridge Street in Middlebury, and she designed all four of the houses in the Habitat development on Carothers Street in Cornwall, just off Route 30.

Alex and his crew have contributed to those houses, as well, doing work on the roofs and some other jobs that are, as he says, "difficult for the volunteers but easy for us."

For years, Jean has been experimenting with producing small, energy efficient homes, which was obviously a good fit with Habitat's culture.

She says even well insulated houses,

by conventional standards, require spending quite a bit on heating systems. "So we started wondering how much insulation would be enough to run a small house in Vermont with just one or two heat pumps," she said, "rather than an oil or propane system. It turned out the answer was about R-40 in the walls (a typical new house is about R-19) and R-60 in the attic, with triple-glazed windows and well insulated doors."

To achieve that level of insulation, the Habitat team now uses double-stud wall construction, basically an inner and an outer wall with insulation filling the space in between. The building is also wrapped tightly to reduce airflow through any cracks and around windows.

While HPH technology does add about 5 percent to the cost of a house, Terwilliger and Carver say the savings in energy costs provide a relatively quick payback of about 10 years.

Alex Carver is now working with the Middlebury College architecture students who are designing the next generation of Habitat homes, two houses that Habitat hopes to build on a Seymour Street site. In particular, he's helping them understand the ideas and systems involved in high-performance homes.

For Habitat, Mickey Heinecken says, the high performance home concept just makes sense. "It keeps heating and cooling costs down for the homeowners," he said, "and reduces maintenance costs, while also producing a more comfortable, healthier home."

Mickey says Habitat hopes the fourth house in Cornwall, now nearing completion, will be its first certified high-performance home. "With the guidance of Jean and Alex and Efficiency Vermont," he said, "we've made big gains on this front."

HOMEOWNER SPOTLIGHT

Shawn O'Neil: New home, fresh start

Almost a year ago now, Shawn O'Neil and his family moved into a new home, built by Habitat for Humanity of Addison County volunteers. Shawn says the move represented more than just a change of address. It was the start of a new phase in his life.

Shawn and his three children now live in the third house built by Habitat on



Shawn O'Neil has worked at the college library for 20 years.

Carothers Lane in Cornwall. Shawn has worked in the library at Middlebury College for more than 20 years, and now works every other weekend at Eastview, a retirement community. After he was divorced six years ago, his financial situation changed, and he found himself renting a mobile home, which was adequate but needed some work. When he saw an ad for Habitat for Humanity that encouraged folks to apply for the program—even if they didn't think they could qualify—he decided to give it a try. A lot of paperwork ensued, but before too long, Habitat told him he had been selected for the house in Cornwall.

Looking back on his experience, he thinks it's important for people to know that Habitat is not a give-

away program. Homeowners make mortgage payments to Habitat and are responsible for maintaining their houses, paying for utilities, etc. Applicants need to have steady jobs and a demonstrated ability to manage finances and pay their bills. Habitat for Humanity, he says, is always encouraging, never really saying "no" to applicants, but instead talking with them about where they are now, and where they need to be.

Like all Habitat homeowners, Shawn pledged to work at least 200 hours on his new home with the Habitat crew, and he's sure he far exceeded that number. He was able to take Wednesdays off from his job at the college to join the volunteer crew in Cornwall, and also worked Saturdays when not at Eastview. Now 52, Shawn said most days, "I was the youngest guy on the crew, by far. I didn't have much building experience, but I learned a lot. And I worked really hard, put in a lot of sweat equity. Even bled a little."

His new house is extremely energy efficient, which helps make it more affordable. Down the road, Shawn is thinking about adding solar panels to the roof, which the house is designed to handle. The new house has helped Shawn's finances, making it easier to budget for everyday expenses and even put aside money for the future. Speaking of the future, this fall he's starting an online course that will lead to a master's in library science.

He says his kids love the new place. He has two daughters and a son: Fiona, 19, a first-year at Bennington College; Riley, 16, at Middlebury Union High School; and son, Finn, 13, who attends Middlebury Union Middle School. "The house is really the start of a new phase in our lives," Shawn said. "The kids are proud, now, to have friends



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visit their home; we've had a lot of sleepovers."

For his part, Shawn said, "Every day waking up here is just bliss." He's even paying more attention to keeping in shape: "I have a 30-year mortgage, and I'd like to be able to enjoy this house for many years."



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Good news for HfHAC project on Seymour Street

A land swap with a neighbor has given a shot in the arm to the Habitat for Humanity of Addison County project on Seymour Street.

As we reported in last spring's newsletter, the project involves a parcel at 51 Seymour Street, which Habitat obtained from the Addison County Community Trust, on the condition that Habitat use the lot to build affordable housing. Habitat has been working with John McLeod, a Middlebury College faculty member, and architecture students in his classes; they've spent the past few semesters coming up with a plan for two small houses on the lot.

John and the students, along with



Rendering of the two houses proposed for 51 Seymour Street.

Mickey Heinecken, Habitat's president, presented their plan to Middlebury's Development Review Board last spring. The DRB members liked what they saw, but said the lot was just a bit too small to build two houses, per the town's zoning bylaws.

Habitat began looking at its options, and before too long was in negotiations with a neighbor to do a boundary adjustment that would give Habitat an additional 3,000 square feet of

land, making the lot large enough for a two-house development.

As of late October the negotiations appeared to have reached a successful conclusion, with a generous donation by the neighbor. And Habitat,

John McLeod and the college students, who are taking another class with John this fall, were getting ready to present a slightly modified plan for two houses to the DRB, with a meeting scheduled on November 5. The plan takes into account feedback received from neighbors and town officials, at the original DRB meeting and in the months since. If all goes well, Habitat could be starting construction on the lot in 2019.

Stay tuned. We hope to have more progress to report on Seymour Street by the time the next newsletter comes out in the spring.