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NOVEMBER 2023 Newsletter

Dedication for Maple Street Project

Despite a very wet, rainy day the dedication and open house for 14 Maple St came off without a hitch on Saturday, October 21. After a busy morning of touch ups and cleaning, the house was ready for guests. Kristina and Adam Baker are a step closer to moving in with their 3 children Angelique, Nathan and Ryleigh. The dedication was well attended with about 25 guests. Numerous family members and friends were in attendance along with board members, several volunteers and neighbors. The Reverend Deanna Shorb gave a blessing. Keith Davis acknowledged and thanked contractors, lending banks, vendors and volunteers. Following the 10-minute ceremony, all were invited to have cake and cider. It was a fitting and welcoming celebration for Habitat's newest family.

Both the Maple Street and Cole Avenue home (completed in fall 2021) were designed by architect Dana Bixby. Excavation and site prep work was done by Modern Excavation and the foundation frost walls and slab were poured by Berkshire Foundations.

Active construction on the Maple Street project began in late spring 2022 and has progressed steadily with our dedicated volunteer group working each Wednesday, Friday and Saturday morning. Electrical work has been completed by McLain Electric and plumbing work by Ouellette Plumbing. Kitchen and bath cabinets were installed by Benchmark Kitchens. Otherwise, all aspects of the construction have been completed by our volunteers – framing, sheathing, roofing, installing windows, insulation, vinyl siding, sheetrock, exterior and interior doors, flooring and trim and an air exchange system, taping, mudding and painting walls and trim plus a multitude of other small details. Our homeowners have worked alongside our core crew and community volunteers to turn this house into a home.



Our thanks for support of our 14 Maple Street Project

Contractors and Suppliers

Dana Bixby Architect
BEK Land Surveyors
Berkshire Foundations
Modern Excavation
Trinity Engineering
Center for EcoTechnology
McLain Electric
Ouellette Plumbing
rk Miles
Benchmark Kitchens
Aubuchon Hardware, Williamstown
Carr Hardware, North Adams
A-1 Inc

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Williamstown
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First Congregational Church, Williamstown
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Our Habitat Construction Volunteers

We sometimes hear from individuals who are interested in the Habitat mission but feel that they do not have the carpentry or construction background to volunteer at the worksite. Our construction volunteers are actually from wonderfully different backgrounds – they are not carpenters or construction workers by trade. Our core worksite volunteers, past and present, have included doctors, a dentist, a lawyer, a psychologist, mechanical and environmental engineers, a tool designer/fabricator, an electrician, a telephone linesman, a postal carrier, college and high school administrators, financial advisors, a college professor, high school teachers, and a special needs grade school teacher. Most of the core crew are retired and devote volunteer time to our project on a regular basis, two or three mornings a week, but the regular crew is supplemented by younger individuals who can volunteer one morning a week or occasional mornings. Anyone with any background with an interest in joining a great team of volunteer home builders is welcome.

Some of our volunteers arrive with a good skill set for the work. Others start with little experience but with an interest in learning. Those who are already skilled at the task at hand are willing to teach the less experienced; the less experienced are eager to learn new skills. Some of our core crew started with little experience but are now the ones teaching others. As building materials and techniques have changed, we all are learning new skills with each new build. Members of the core crew who have worked with us on multiple houses are actively offering suggestions on how we can do things differently and better.

Volunteering at the worksite is very rewarding. We work side by side with the family who will own the home and we get to know them, their children and friends and family during the project. Any volunteer who contributed time to the project can view the completed home as a worthwhile effort. The core crew members who worked on the house from start to finish taking on a multitude of different tasks along the way, can see the end result of their efforts as a home completed for the homeowner family. Our volunteer crew also has completed a number of smaller repair projects for veterans and other homeowners in need. Those projects are also rewarding in seeing the difference small improvements can make for the families served. Along the way, crew members form strong bonds of friendship. They are a team who enjoy working with each other and enjoy welcoming new volunteers to the building project. As we look forward to our new projects on Summer Street, we encourage anyone interested in joining the work to volunteer at whatever level of time they can commit.

Our Continuing Mission Over 30 Years

Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity was founded in 1990 and since that time has been working to meet the housing needs of Adams, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Florida, New Ashford, North Adams, Savoy, Williamstown and Stamford, VT. Our projects include building new homes and renovating existing houses. As of November 2023, Northern Berkshire Habitat has completed 14 home buildings or renovations, serving 14 families and an estimated 73 people including parents, children and foster children. This includes the family who will be moving in to our newest house on Maple Street. We have also performed 16 Brush with Kindness critical repair or ramp projects impacting 30 people. With the support of Habitat contributors, homeowners achieve the strength, stability and self reliance needed to build a better life for themselves and their families.



We are always eager to welcome individuals who may be interested in talking with us about serving as a volunteer, and we have several ways you might consider. Although the most visible form of volunteering is to participate in construction projects, we also welcome those who may want to participate in community relations and events, publicity, family selection, grant writing and fundraising. Please contact us if you would like to explore how you can become involved in our work.





Do you have a car you'd like to donate?

Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity is now participating in the Cars for Homes program. Your donated vehicle will help build the next home. To donate a car, call 877-277-4344.

<https://www.habitat.org/support/donate-your-car>



Brush with Kindness/Veterans Projects

We have the most wonderful group of volunteers in our Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity affiliate. Just ordinary people doing extraordinary things. This year we completed the construction of a house started back in 2022. The volunteers work three mornings a week, week in and week out making a difference in our neighbors' lives.

In addition to building houses, we have two other programs; the Brush with Kindness program and the Veterans Project program. This year we completed one Brush with Kindness project and, three veteran's projects.

The brush with kindness project was to help a senior citizen safely gain access to her house from the driveway. For this applicant we built a railing along her concrete stairs. It was an interesting project as the stairs were different length treads and not in a straight line. Most of the boards involved compound angles with miters and bevels.

This article is being written just one day before Veterans Day. We ask so much of our veterans while they valiantly serve our nation keeping us safe and free. Our volunteers are proud to help them in their time of need. This past summer while building the Maple Street house, we also built a ramp for a veteran to provide easier access to his home. A second veteran was served by repairing two bathrooms, and in a third case rotted soffits were repaired and a section of the main house sill replaced. Then the exterior of the second floor of this veteran's home was painted and the roof patched.

Fall finally started and the temperature dropped. What did the volunteers do? They moved on and spread tarps over the roof of another veteran's home to seal it for the winter. And then, before the end of the year, the volunteers will tackle one last veteran project and install a railing along the stairs leading to the front door.

While some of these projects may seem small and insignificant, the difference they make in a family's life is huge.

Applicants must:

- Have lived in Northern Berkshire or Stamford, VT for at least one full year prior to application date.
- Own their own home.
- Earn no more than 80% of the Medium Income for Northern Berkshire.
- (Non-veterans) Be able to fund the cost of materials.
- (Veterans) Be Honorably Discharged.

To learn more about the Brush with Kindness Program or Veterans Program and to request an application, contact Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity, (413) 664-4440, office@northberkshirehabitat.org, P.O. Box 391, North Adams, MA 01247

Summer Street

Back in 2018, the Williamstown Affordable Housing Trust advertised two pieces of property in a Request for Proposals. The goal was to build affordable housing in Williamstown. Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity answered the call and submitted proposals for both pieces of land. The first parcel was the Cole Avenue/Maple Street lot. We have now completed two houses on this parcel and we welcome two families as homeowners here in Williamstown.

We are now focusing on the second parcel. It is 1.75 acres in size and “L” shaped with a 100’ opening on Summer Street opening up to a 300’ wide rear lot line. There is a jurisdictional wetland on the property, which will be preserved.

We are hoping to build 4 ranch houses with varied roof designs, which is something the Williamstown Affordable Housing Trust (WAHT) encourages, we have begun talking to the neighbors and are going to talk with them again, and we’re working with town hall and the WAHT. We will need to install a short access road to the property, then subdivide the remainder into four building lots, each lot and home keeping in character with the neighborhood. Houses will be small in scale and approximately 1200 square foot one floor ranch houses. Each house will have a full bathroom and a half bathroom along with three bedrooms. Each home will be designed to easily become handicapped accessible.

All building codes will be observed in the construction and the houses will be highly energy efficient meeting the stretch energy code. Exterior wall will be framed with 2 X 6 studs allowing for more insulation and have 3 and ½ inches of rock wool insulation on the exterior walls. The attic will be trusses with 18 inches of blown in cellulose insulation. The windows will have a U-value of 0.16.

In conjunction with Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity the future home owners will be able to choose the color of vinyl siding, flooring, kitchen cabinets and appliances and interior paint colors. Additionally, they will have to put in 250 hours of sweat equity, and participate in a financial literacy program. When they take over ownership, they will have a mortgage, pay property taxes and home owners insurance along with the rest of the expenses normally incurred by home owners.

At this point we are in the early stages of planning. BEK engineering has surveyed the land, we have met with the town community development department, town manager and the affordable housing trust. We have also started meeting with some of the abutters and they are favorable.

Guntlow Associates have been hired to come up with a site plan that will deal with storm water management, retaining the water on each piece of property, storm water for the road and the road plan. Everything is still preliminary and in flux. Once that is done BEK engineering will need to provide the definitive plan for permitting.

We hope to undergo permitting this spring and construction of the access road with utilities.

Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity hopes to break ground for the first house late summer or early fall of 2024. Hope to see everyone there.