

SPRING 2021

toolbox

THE NEWSLETTER BY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF EASTERN CONNECTICUT



every
home

helps a family build strength,
stability, and self-reliance

*One of our newest Habitat families
showing their thanks - and their house
keys - during a virtual home dedication*

Letter from the CEO

Dear friends,

I wanted to share some news I am both excited about and nervous about at the same time. It is my intent to retire this year, after more than 14 years with this organization and 17 years with Habitat. The Board of Directors will engage an executive search firm to begin the public process of succession in the near future. The date of my retirement will be announced at a later time, but is expected to be in the fall.

Some of you may know I started as a volunteer with the Hartford affiliate, and fell in love with the mission. I convinced them to hire me as a fundraiser, and joined this affiliate in January 2007, and the rest as they say, is history.

Thanks to the extraordinary dedication of board members, staff, volunteers, faith partners, families, donors and community partners we have been able to grow our services focused always on reaching those who need us the most. We have accomplished much together toward the goal of decent shelter for all. I am deeply appreciative for every person who chose to be involved, and who have changed the world for the better through our mission. Thank you for allowing me to be part of such change.

Habitat's work is so close to home for me, as it is for so many others engaged in the work. My parents were hardworking. My father was a postal worker and my mother having only an eighth grade education worked part

time in minimum wage manufacturing jobs and later as a housekeeper in an upscale retirement community. I joined her in this work, when I was in high school, as did my sister, and let me tell you I still know how to shine those faucets!

After college, I began a 24 year career in the retail industry experiencing a wide variety of roles from store management, buyer, replenishment, to senior executive management. It was rewarding and consuming, so much so, that when it ended I felt lost and truly did not know who I was anymore.

In 2002, a friend introduced me to Habitat for Humanity Women Build. In that experience I found a new and life changing direction. One that has blessed me with the opportunity to work with people from every walk of life, all of whom share a greater good intention. It has been a privilege to meet and serve with some really incredible individuals and organizations, and they made me a better person, strengthening my faith in the goodness that each of us has within us.

Experiences have also reminded me that there is a greater power at work in our lives. This knowledge has been a comforting part of the mission and very fulfilling to have a place to put this faith into action. I have been with Habitat ever since and it is my hope to remain dedicated to the work even in retirement.

We have a great team in place and much work to do, and while the times

are challenging, I will leave knowing the organization is strong and capable of partnering with many more families as they work to realize strength, stability and self-reliance through shelter.

In the coming months, I would like to spend more time actually building and I invite anyone who wants to wish me well to join me there, where it all started, hammer in hand. And if the experience moves you, even better to make a donation to Habitat to honor someone in your life who inspires you.

My donation this year will be made in honor of my mother, Harmance. To find me on site, please check our volunteer up calendar periodically and look for dates where you see "Terri Build Day".

I am humbled by the opportunity to work and thrive in the mission of decent shelter for all, thank you and God bless,



Terri O'Rourke
CEO & Executive Director



Homeowner Update

In our Fall 2020 issue of Toolbox, we introduced you to one of our future homeowners, Amanda. She is steadily moving closer to the finish line and is more than half-way done with her sweat equity hours. This is an amazing feat anytime, but is especially notable during the pandemic.

Twice, Amanda and her daughter had to quarantine for two weeks after possible COVID-19 exposure, and once her daughter was positive for the virus. Thankfully, she recovered quickly and seems now to be in perfect health as she gets closer to her third birthday this summer.

Almost 100 of Amanda's construction hours have been invested on her own Habitat home. It is a lovely little house nestled into the steep hillside on Flanders Road overlooking Gorton Pond. Last Fall our brave and talented volunteers took down a rotted tree that posed significant risk to the home. As the last few items on the construction punch list are completed, we asked Amanda about her home.

"It's a wonderful home with a garage and an unfinished basement in East Lyme. I feel very proud of all the help I've gotten making this house a home for me and my daughter."

In normal years, families and friends are invited to the build sites to work alongside the Future Homeowner. This year, with limited shifts and social distancing, homeowners worked alongside our staff and core volunteers to keep numbers small and exposure



risks limited. Amanda is the first person in her family to learn about building and construction. She is enjoying learning about her home and how to take care of it as a single-parent household.

Amanda says, "sacrifice, dedication and perseverance is what it takes to build a home. Love, family and friends make the home. Habitat for Humanity makes it happen."

"I feel very proud of all the help I've gotten making this house a home for me and my daughter."



donate your car

donate your vehicle of any kind and in any condition, and help local families build a home and a better future!

habitatect.org/support
1-877-277-4344



Our New Normal

The work never stops for our affiliate and that includes during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have adapted every aspect of our operations to ensure that we are keeping our staff, partner families, and volunteers safe and still working towards housing our families in affordable, safe places to live.

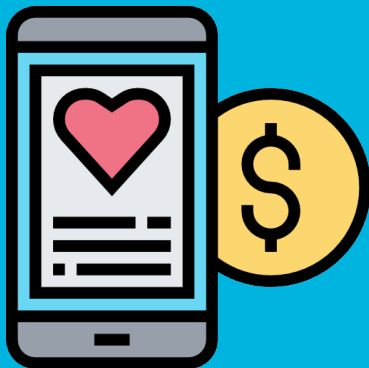
Our volunteers are continuing to work on our build sites with a reduced capacity and with safety measures like temperature checks, social distancing,

and mandatory face masks in place. Our office staff continues to work remotely and our board and staff continue to meet via Zoom web conferencing. Our ReStores are open with mandatory face masks, social distancing, and hand sanitizing stations located at the entry of each store. We are now doing furniture pick-ups, which can be scheduled at [habitatct.org](https://www.habitatct.org). The Plainfield ReStore is now under the direction of a new manager, Ben, and a new assistant manager, Erin. We are pleased to have them!

One of our favorite parts of our work, the home dedications have also been completed remotely this year. We have had three home dedications held via Zoom so far. Though we were apart, the spirit of the ceremony and the energy of our community was palpable.

Our partner families joined a staff member at their new Habitat home for each dedication. Volunteers who helped build the homes, staff, community partners, and the families' friends and family all congregated on a big Zoom call. After our regular ceremony, the families took everyone on a virtual tour of the home and then had some time at the end of the call to speak with the attendees who offered praise, well-wishes and asked the families questions about the experience. You can see recordings of the Zoom dedications on YouTube at [youtube.com/user/HFHSECT](https://www.youtube.com/user/HFHSECT).

Over the last year we have continued to adapt and we thank you for your support and trust in us to help local families build safety, stability, and self-reliance through shelter.



Virtual Gala

save the date

Friday, June 4 • 7:00 pm

Please save the date and plan to join us for our 30 minute, warp-speed Virtual Gala! No tickets, dressing-up, or long speeches!

We're holding our gala virtually to raise as much money as we can in 30 minutes! More details to come soon!



Construction Update

Construction is still moving along at a steady clip despite our continued limit on the number of volunteers we have working on our homes. We have been able to close on three homes in the last few months (122 and 126 Golden Street, Norwich, pictured middle right; 72 Mechanic Street, Danielson, pictured bottom right) and are nearing completion for 123 Serwan Ave, Willimantic and 109 Flanders Road in East Lyme (top left).

We have poured the foundations for four of the planned ten homes in our multi-home development in the Greenville section of Norwich. We have begun framing and will soon connect the utilities at a discounted rate from our partnership with Norwich Public Utilities.

We will continue to build observing COVID-19 safety precautions. We encourage everyone to observe safety protocols, get vaccinated when you can, and sign up to volunteer at [habitatct.org](https://www.habitatct.org) when you are ready!



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Habitat for Humanity® ReStore

schedule a spring cleaning pick up!
habitatect.org

Plainfield ReStore

808 Norwich Road, Plainfield, CT
860.564.7507

Waterford ReStore

82 Boston Post Road, Waterford, CT
860.437.3422

Store Hours:

Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am - 5 pm
Donations accepted 10 am - 4 pm