

# toolbox

THE NEWSLETTER BY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF EASTERN CONNECTICUT

## Investment in Norwich

Our multi-home development in the Greenville section of Norwich is well underway, despite a difficult year. Two of the houses in this development will be finished by the end of year followed quickly by finishing the 99<sup>th</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> homes built by Habitat for Humanity of Eastern Connecticut.

These homes along with the remaining six homes that will wrap up the multi-home development are receiving \$360,000 of support from the City of Norwich's American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding. \$840,000 of additional ARP funding from the City will help us rehabilitate seven city-owned foreclosed homes.

These homes will be rehabilitated by Habitat and we will find homeowners for these houses through our homeownership program. Future homeowners will invest sweat equity and purchase the homes from our organization with an affordable mortgage.

This investment will realize multiple returns for the City including an estimated \$2.1 million of tax revenue over 30 years. This investment will also aid in the long term restoration of the Greenville section



of the city, by creating owner-occupied homes. The construction and rehabilitation of these homes will provide business to local building suppliers and subcontractors in the near future as well.

Our work is focused on creating a lasting and sustainable solution to affordable housing, so rehabilitations will include energy efficient design features to ensure

the homes are affordable to operate.

Once completed, Habitat will have permanently housed 17 families and created the opportunity for them to own their home, and achieving stability and self-reliance.

Help us complete our homes by signing up to volunteer or making a financial contribution at [habitatect.org](http://habitatect.org).

## Letter from the CEO

Our board is near the conclusion of the search for our next Executive Director. We anticipate the search wrapping up by the end of September, and so it is time for me to say goodbye.

Habitat and its mission is personal for me, as I know it is for many who engage in the work. It had a profound, life-changing impact and blessed me with an opportunity to work with so many wonderful, kind, hardworking, intelligent people so willing to be involved, to take a chance, to make a difference. It is an ambitious and necessary goal, and I am profoundly grateful to have had the chance to serve.

I am deeply appreciative of the efforts of the hard working staff today and over the years, who sacrifice so much to make decent shelter for all possible. They do so with love and compassion and I thank you all for everything you have given to the cause.

For all those volunteers throughout the years who serve(d) on committees, work(ed) in the office, serve(d) on the board, work(ed) on construction, work(ed) in the ReStores, you have shown me and our community that in each of us there is profound caring. Thank you for shining a light on what good intentions can accomplish.

To the donors who invest in the mission, you truly have to know that without you we could not serve. Thank you for choosing this mission through which to change the world.

To our partner families, thank you for putting aside the discomfort of reaching



out to us, for helping us tell your story so that we together can reach more families. Your efforts to make life better for your families is a testament to the efforts we collectively make in each other.

To the special people at the core of Habitat, like Bette Mahon and Lee Watrous and many, many others, who put their hearts in the center of the work, to all of you for being so giving, for helping me understand the world of Habitat, for being so gracious, I am indebted.

To my peers across Connecticut, the United States and the world, thank you for being so invested in the greater good. I truly believe this mission could be the greatest peace-keeping initiative as we put aside our differences, and with a hammer and some nails come together to build a better world.

Cherish your visions; cherish your ideals; cherish the music that stirs your heart, the beauty that forms in your mind, the loveliness that drapes your purest thoughts, for out of them will grow all delightful conditions, all heavenly environment; of these, if you but remain true to them, your world will at last be built. Your world, our world: Habitat's world.

I am profoundly grateful for the experience, for the spirituality, for the personal growth, for each of you.

Thank you and God Bless.

Terri O'Rourke  
Outgoing CEO and  
Executive Director



## ReStores Achieve \$1 Million in Sales

Our ReStores in Waterford and Plainfield achieved record sales during the last 18 months while the Covid-19 pandemic changed the fabric of our lives.

In June of 2020 when many businesses remained closed, the ReStores reopened by creating and enforcing safety precautions that allowed renovation-ready customers to shop safely and enjoy our inventory of new and gently used home improvement materials, appliances, and furniture.

Between then and this past June, the ReStores sold over \$1 million of merchandise, which is an all-time high for our organization. This astonishing figure means that we have netted over \$440,000

to directly support the construction of new Habitat homes in our region.

“I’m so grateful to our loyal customers and our amazing, incredible volunteers and donors,” says Director of ReStore Operations Kim Frenzel. “We simply couldn’t have reached this milestone without the generosity of the people who donate great products to our stores or the hardworking volunteers who helped keep the store open despite the ongoing pandemic.”

The ReStores operate with a low overhead thanks to a rotating team of dedicated volunteers. Some volunteers work daily, or a few times each week, and some come in occasionally as their schedule allows.

These volunteers help keep the costs of running the stores low compared to more

traditional retail shops, which allows us to allocate more of the ReStores sales to help fund the construction of Habitat homes.

Longtime volunteer Mary Drake said, “My work at the ReStore is meaningful, enjoyable, and supports Habitat for Humanity’s worthy mission.”

Sales for this fiscal year are off to a strong start and we could use your help. The ReStores in Waterford and Plainfield are seeking additional volunteers to keep up with the pace of our sales. We can use volunteers to help in every aspect of running our retail stores and welcome people who are returning to work, completing community service hours, or working with a job coach!

Sign up to volunteer at [habitatect.org](http://habitatect.org).



 **Habitat for Humanity®**  
**ReStore**

**have donations?**

**schedule a pick up: [habitatect.org](http://habitatect.org)**

### **Plainfield ReStore**

808 Norwich Road, Plainfield, CT 06374  
(860) 564-7507

### **Waterford ReStore**

82 Boston Post Road, Waterford, CT 06385  
(860) 437-3422

### **Store Hours:**

Tuesday - Saturday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Donations accepted 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

## Homeowner Spotlight

Siobhan is a future Habitat homeowner who is no stranger to hard work.

Siobhan, 36, has been working diligently to complete her sweat equity hours while balancing a full time job and the challenging work of raising her three children all to create a better life for her family.

After her divorce in 2018 Siobhan moved into an apartment in Norwich with her children as the sole provider and with full custody. The apartment was worse for the wear and was not located in a great neighborhood, but it was the best that she could afford for her family.

“It wasn’t a great place to live; there were always drugs up the road and shady people hanging around,” says Siobhan. But in the last two years, things got worse. “My neighbors used drugs, which we smelled in the house and one day when I walked the kids to the bus stop, there was a drug deal going on in front of our home. After that we didn’t use the front porch.”

In addition to the unsafe neighborhood, the home they lived in when they applied was in need of major repairs. Leaky windows and water damage from heavy rains has warped wood and laminate flooring in the home, and caused mold to develop several times. In the winter, the cold and rain made it impossible to sleep. “It’s awful to live somewhere that’s always wet.” Siobhan’s eldest son also has asthma and the development of mold and poor air quality was on her mind often.

Her landlord was aware of the issues and was not very responsive or willing to do permanent fixes, instead opting for inexpensive and ineffective fixes.



In 2019 Siobhan heard through her church, Norwich Worship Center, that Habitat for Humanity was seeking applicants to become homeowners, but didn’t think she would qualify. Her doubts grew when she went to the applicant information meeting and saw a large crowd. “Owning a house is not something I thought would ever become a reality.”

Still, Siobhan went through several rounds of applications and interviews, and was approved to help build and purchase a Habitat home that would be built in Norwich. “My family and I are getting out of [the bad neighborhood] and we are going to have our own home, with our own yard in a safe neighborhood.”

Siobhan began working on another Habitat family’s home to start working towards her sweat equity hours. Everything changed in 2020 when the Covid-19

pandemic shut down our build sites for several months, significantly pushing back our construction schedule. But it hasn’t been all bad: during this time Siobhan was able to move her family into a safe home that she is renting from a friend.

In June of 2020, HFHECT reopened our work site for Habitat families and volunteers, and Siobhan was back working on her home and others’ homes.

“I learned so much working [on the construction sites], and I can take the knowledge I gained to my home and fix things.” Siobhan’s house is one of the 10 homes that Habitat for Humanity of Eastern Connecticut is building on the Margerie/Sylvester block in the Greenville neighborhood of Norwich. We aim to finish this house, and its twin this fall. To help, sign up to volunteer at [habitatect.org](http://habitatect.org).

## Message from the Board of Directors

The search for a new Executive Director is wrapping up and the committee anticipates completing the interview process during the month of September. We hope to have a new Director in place by the end of October.

Throughout her nearly 15 years as Executive Director, Terri's deep commitment to Habitat's mission and her visionary leadership have enabled the affiliate to prosper and grow. The future is bright for HFHECT, as she has positioned us to be able to provide even more opportunities for families to achieve the dream of homeownership. We currently have enough property banked to serve 50 more households, and to develop the largest Habitat subdivision in the state of Connecticut.



Those of us on the Board of Directors know that our staff, homeowners, and everyone associated with the affiliate will miss Terri's dedication, inspiration, and friendship. We wish her all the best as she transitions into her well-deserved retirement. We can't thank her enough for all that she has done in service to HFHECT and its families.

Nancy Banks  
President, Board of Directors



## recycle your idle vehicle

Donate your vehicle to help a family build a home and attain strength, stability and self-reliance for the future.



(877) 277-4344  
[habitat.org/carsforhomes](http://habitat.org/carsforhomes)



## Group Build Days

With so much work ahead of us, we are seeking groups of 5 to 10 people to help us build our homes throughout Eastern Connecticut. Group Build Days are a fun way to give back to the local community, bond with colleagues and family, and to learn something new! No experience is necessary. For more information visit [habitatect.org](http://habitatect.org).

## Matching Gift Opportunity



CHARTER OAK  
CREDIT UNION

Charter Oak Credit Union is matching member gifts to Habitat for Humanity of Eastern Connecticut and other nonprofits now through November 24, for gifts up to \$500!

Double the impact of your gift by making your gift online or with a check, and completing the Charter Oak matching gift form.

Last year we received about \$5,000 of support. Please visit [charteroak.org](http://charteroak.org) to fill out your matching gift form!



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New London, CT 06320

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Please remember us when  
planning your will and estate.



## Every gift helps families build better lives with Habitat

Your gifts help Habitat families achieve stability and self-reliance:



future homeowners build their homes  
and those of other Habitat families



future homeowners take  
classes in financial management



future homeowners learn how to  
repair and care for their home

Habitat homeowners achieve outcomes like:



improved health



improved  
academic  
performance



access to  
better jobs



ability to  
save for higher  
education



revitalized  
neighborhoods



stronger  
connections in  
the community

## Give generously to help families in Eastern Connecticut