Franklin Hampshire
Habitat for Humanity®

Summer Newsletter 2026

Volume 24, Issue 2 Summer 2026

As of May, we are under the new banner of Franklin Hampshire Habitat for Humanity to better reflect the two counties in which we build homes, hope and community.

Working with our many partners, Franklin Hampshire Habitat for Humanity builds strength, stability and self-reliance through affordable homeownership in Hampshire and Franklin Counties. We are an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, an ecumenical organization that envisions a world where everyone has a decent place to live.

Looking Forward:

- **3rd Sunday of the month, 12-4pm, Women Build,** at Cadwell St. site. Learn more: https://fhhabitat.org/womenbuild/
- **Monday, Sept 28, 6pm FHHH annual meeting,** Esselon Café, Hadley
- **Monday, Oct 5 World Habitat Day –** release of HfHI's Global Housing Research Report
- **Saturday, Dec 5 - 12 Gingerbread Build**, build at home!

The leaves are rustling, fall tag sales are starting up, you're buttoning up outside the house to get ready for another New England winter. What about that old car (motorcycle/van/RV/boat) in the driveway? Wouldn't you love to see it recycled into the walls, the windows, the front door of a family's dream home? Consider donating your unwanted vehicle to Habitat, it's EASY.

Go to fhhabitat.org/donate/cars-for-homes to learn more.

Donate your car.
Habitat for Humanity® Cars for Homes™
(877) 277-4344
carsforhomes.org

Deepening the First Time Homeowner Experience: Habitat's Innovative Mentorship Model

Homeowner Tiffani and Mentor Carol

Here in Franklin and Hampshire counties, your local Habitat affiliate continues our steady march toward creating opportunities for affordable homeownership on a different scale and to a different drumbeat than many other developers. And what sets us apart? While we currently build and sell only 2-4 homes each year, our community-with-homeowner-build, family mentoring approach is a proven model for the building of homes and wealth for first generation first-time homebuyers with low income. AND…we have a zero foreclosure rate. That's right, 60 families to date who have built and bought their homes and either still live in them as they pay off their mortgages or who have sold them as an affordable unit to the next family and moved on.

"[Partnering with a family as a mentor] is really great and so much fun, the excitement of watching the house go up and everything coming together."

- Carol, five-time mentor

Homeowner Giovanna with mentor Lucia and attorney Mary Melnik-Penney at closing

The secret sauce? A main ingredient is the group of dedicated individuals who make up Franklin Hampshire Habitat's Family Support committee and who take turns serving as mentors for families as they are building their future homes and for one year post-occupancy. Mentors cite having the time, a caring heart and attentive ear, resilience in the face of unforeseen circumstances and the ability to respect and honor what both the family and the mentor bring to the partnership in terms of culture and background as key characteristics to successful mentoring relationships.

To prepare for becoming a Habitat partner family mentor, volunteers typically join the Family Support committee and are steeped in the culture of partnership, mentoring and support. Currently the longest running member of the committee and five-time partner family mentor, Lucia says of the experience, "I was able to be on the committee many months and listen to [committee members] who had known each other and been doing this a long while. They disclosed so much valuable information and history. I want our new mentors to have that experience also, to let the new members hear the history of WHY, what's the background, how have we made decisions to update the way we do things" to better reflect the Franklin Hampshire Habitat of today.

Does partnering with a future homeowning family sound like something you'd like to do? Contact Community Engagement Coordinator Sara Lark at sara@fhhabitat.org to learn more and discuss whether it's a good fit!

"[Our mentor] was a helpful go-between between us and…Habitat as an org while we were going through the financial process. While [the ED] ends up being the person that has the hard info about all the low-income mortgage, and deed rider stuff, [our mentor] was helpful in getting that information from [the ED] and digesting it."

- Former Habitat partner family member, now homeowner

Welcome Sara!

Make sure to give a hearty Habitat welcome to the newest member of the FHHH staff, Community Engagement Coordinator Sara Lark, a self-described extrovert, who enjoys bringing people together to do meaningful work. Sara comes to us with her experience of several years on the board of the Friends of the Greenfield Public Library, working with volunteers and creating events, recently taking on the leadership role of President.

Sara got the bug for Habitat during a college spring break when she worked on a Habitat construction site in Baltimore, putting up sheetrock. Formerly a Northampton resident and now living in Greenfield, Sara has spent the last 8 years dedicated to raising her young boys and is excited to start this new chapter and continue to grow her many connections throughout the Franklin and Hampshire communities. We're glad to have her on the team!

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New Homeowners in Two Communities

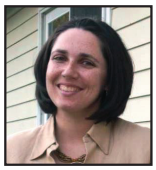
Two households closed on and moved into their new homes in the summer of 2026!

At a Greenfield home dedication ceremony, we heard from mayor Virginia Desorgher, Greenfield Cooperative bank president Tony Worden, Greenfield Community Preservation Committee's Susan Worgaftik and project Leadership Team volunteer Anthony Hill who detailed their involvement in the project before welcoming Hannah and her son Gabe to their new home. Gabe joined the speakers to add a few poignant words of his own.

In Northampton, state representative Lindsay Sabadosa opened the dedication ceremony, followed by Northampton Community Preservation Committee's Brian Adams, Florence Bank's Jim Hickey and rounded out by project Leadership Team representative Rob Steinberg. Many friends, family members and neighbors, Habitat board, staff and volunteers congratulated Jem on the completion of her future home, the fastest homebuilding project in FHHH's history!

Congratulations to these two new homeowning households!

Letter from the Director



Dear Habitat Community,

Beyond a place to gather, store our belongings, lay our head at night and retreat from outdoor elements, what impact does access to a decent place to live have on an individual, a family, a community, our world? On World Habitat Day, October 5th, Habitat International will launch the Global Housing Research Report, focusing on lived experience worldwide, "revealing the true cost of housing on people's quality of life, health, stability, and future opportunity." Data for the report was drawn from what Habitat International calls "one of the most inclusive global public opinion housing surveys conducted to date."

Beyond the data, we see and hear directly from our local Habitat partner families how buying their home helps them thrive. A grandmother raising her grandson describes the disappearance of health issues that had plagued her grandson in their mold-infested rental unit previously. The parents of five children over the years achieving ever increasing success in their work and eventually selling their Habitat home to move to a larger home. Let's continue to unlock and open doors together as a community to the opportunity a simple, durable, sustainable Habitat home affords.

"I think it is a really powerful thing to imagine what it is that we would want in the future at a really granular community level, and start living into it right now. Start living it right now." ***— Norma Kawelokū Wong***

With gratitude,

Megan McDonough,
Executive Director

Let's Open the Door! The True Impact of Sustainable Housing on Our Communities

Fifty years ago, a small collective of determined housing advocates who were to become the founders of the Habitat for Humanity we know today came together to build homes, hope, wealth and health in their community by making sure everyone has a safe, affordable place to call home. To salute this 50th anniversary milestone, Habitat affiliates across the globe are pronouncing together "Let's Open the Door!" to address collectively and more strenuously than ever the need for decent housing globally.

In western Mass, you are part of the steady march toward the stability and self-reliance we know comes from sustainable homeownership. Today more than ever, understanding the impact of living with dignity in a simple, efficient home on our families and neighborhoods and advocating to further opportunities in that arena are critical to keeping our communities vibrant, viable places to burrow in and raise families and live out our lives. As Megan mentions in her letter in this issue, we eagerly await knowing more about the worldwide impact of sustainable homeownership, to add to our knowledge of the lives changed here in Franklin and Hampshire counties. Thank you for staying informed, leading by example with your time and talents, supporting with your dollars.

What Will You Build?
14th Annual Gingerbread Build is Coming!

Franklin Hampshire Habitat's annual Gingerbread Build contest will open Saturday the 5th of December, when teams will pick up their kits and have until midnight Thursday the 10th to unleash their countertop construction creativity as their contest entry. Celebrity judges with their deeply discerning sensibilities honed over the years will then debate, decide and declare winners in each of several categories the afternoon of Saturday, December 12th. More details as they become available, so keep an eye out for GBuild e-news this fall.

Check back in the fall for more information at www.fhhabitat.org/events/gingerbread-build/.

Planning Today for Tomorrow

August is National Make-A-Will Month and while the month may have passed, the opportunity to plan for your estate in the future continues. Writing your will is an essential way to protect your loved ones, plan for the distribution of your assets, and give those in your life peace of mind for the future.

Making your will not only addresses your wishes as they pertain to the individuals closest to your heart, it is the moment to consider including a legacy gift to make a lasting impact on families in need of decent and affordable homes. All it takes is a gift to Franklin Hampshire Habitat of any size in your plans. Our partner FreeWill's free and trusted online platform (www.freewill.com), helps you write your will in just 20 minutes and designate beneficiaries for assets outside your will such as an IRA or 401(k).

If you would like more information about estate planning or legacy giving, please do not hesitate to reach out to Resource Development Director Amy Landry at amy@fhhabitat.org.

What's happening on the build site?

Cadwell St., Pelham
Framing, framing, framing! Come help us get everything buttoned up for winter and the inside work started!

Cooke Ave., Northampton
Coming soon! We hope to complete sitework before winter.

***Homeownership application period coming this fall, be on the lookout!*

Equal Housing Opportunity – www.fhhabitat.org /apply.

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY
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You may be lucky enough to work alongside one of the future homeowners the day you're out volunteering on site. The paths they've traveled to Habitat are extraordinary and inspiring. Read the stories of the families currently building their homes and of those who have gone before at **www.fhhabitat.org/homeowner-stories/**.

"I learned so much building this house…Everything coming to fruition now feels really surreal. Anything worth having is not easy; in the process is the personal transformation…and this house is the beautiful result. But what makes it a home is the people, the community. A heartfelt thank you to every person who had a hand in the process."

— Hannah, new homeowner

Wish List

- TV monitor with HDMI capability
- folding chairs

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P.O. Box 60642
Florence, MA 01062
413-586-5430
www.fhhabitat.org

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Franklin Hampshire Habitat Rides 4 Food in FoodBank Fundraiser 2026

Bill Levine, a member of the Franklin Hampshire Habitat board of directors and leader of the FHH Rides 4 Food team, acknowledges that housing and food security go hand in hand and that's why he is an ardent supporter of both. He says, "every mile we ride helps fuel real change. For every dollar raised, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts can provide three nutritious meals to neighbors facing hunger—meaning your support goes further than you might imagine. Whether big or small, every donation helps ensure food reaches people with dignity and care."

If you'd like to support the efforts of this team of FH Habitat enthusiasts to raise money for the Food Bank of Western Mass, go to https://secure.foodbankwma.org/site/TR/Events/General/493015433?pg=team&fr_id=1170&team_id=4821.

Could a Corner of Your Land be the Cornerstone of a Family's Future?

Franklin Hampshire Habitat has been the fortunate beneficiary of parcels of land from municipalities, individuals, organizations. These donations allow us to use our resources for other parts of the process of building and keeping homes affordable. Maybe you have a parcel, or a corner of a property, or know of a piece of land that is just right for a Habitat home? Contact executive director Megan McDonough at megan@fhhabitat.org if you have some land our Site Squad might come review for homebuilding possibilities.

Get Involved!

To set up your individual volunteer account on Better Impact go to www.fhhabitat.org/ways-to-volunteer and sign up today! If you have a group that would like an in-person orientation or you have any questions about volunteering, reach out to volunteer@fhhabitat.org. We need you!

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