



HABITAT LEHIGH VALLEY

Fall 2011

Newsletter Volume 22, No. 1

Building homes, changing lives, one neighborhood at a time!

Spotlight on a Family—Eva and William’s Story

On July 16th, HFH of the Lehigh Valley presented their 89th home to a hard-working, deserving family Eva Santiago, William Vasquez, their son Gerson, and their daughter Dianetsy.

Eva and William, together, had a modest but optimistic dream of owning a house they could call home. One they would cherish and care for - a home where the couple planned to hold many future gatherings & celebrations. Unfortunately life dealt them a rough hand which delayed the realization of their dream. Dianetsy (10) struggles with cerebral palsy and autism on a daily basis. Eva and William work hard to provide their

daughter with everything she needs. However, when William was diagnosed with kidney problems, requiring dialysis, they had to set aside their dream of homeownership. Their dream became financially untenable.

The family lived in a small apartment that was cramped with the medical equipment William and Dianetsy required. Then, Eva learned of Habitat’s mission and that they could help. Although it was a struggle, she and her family put in tireless hours of sweat equity into building their home and other Habitat homes. Their efforts and determination during their 500 hours of labor were an inspiration to all



the volunteers on site and back at the Habitat office.

Construction manager Charles Schnauffer said, “They put their heart and soul into this building. They were here constantly.”

(continued on back)

Where are they now— Iris’s Story



Iris started her journey several years ago, applying as a potential Habitat homeowner and participating in the painstaking process of restoring one of Allentown’s Historic homes which had been neglected years past. The process took three years of sweat, patience, and cobbling together funding. Through a series of fits and starts, Iris questioned herself, her decision and ultimately

bonded with the structure that would become her home.

Dedication typically marks a grand milestone in the Habitat homeownership process – an end of a journey where a house becomes a home. For Iris, the dedication represented a beginning rather than an end.

Today, Iris’s home is a favorite on the annual Allentown Historic Home tours. Building on the simple, decent and affordable home presented to her in 2009, she has turned her home into a showcase of love, and unique finds. With a decorator’s eye and a frugality only a mother of two could know, Iris outfits and builds on her home for her and her two girls.

Jesalyn, aged 9 and Yamiris, aged 12 grew up caring for the home that would one day be theirs and they carry that sense of ownership to their own space and Justin Bieber adorned rooms. Standing proudly in front of their beds and pink accent wall that reads in elegant script – “Dream Until Your Dreams Come True”;

the girls give the grand tour and talk proudly of their mother and the hard work she has put into the home.

Iris, a longtime PPL employee started on the janitorial staff at the age of sixteen and worked her way up in the company, incorporating what she had learned during her time with Habitat. Now, after many years, she has done well in the company and experienced great success. The girls, not to be outdone, attend dance lessons and take part in a nursing program aimed at engaging young people in the health sciences.

We here at Habitat celebrate Iris and her girls and hereby endorse the wall decal that the girls sleep beneath every night –





245 N. Graham Street
Allentown, PA 18109
Phone 610.776.7737
Fax 610.776.7569

www.HabitatLehighValley.org
office@HabitatLehighValley.org

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Executive Messages:

Dear Habitat Supporter,

This summer has been a very exciting time in the life of Habitat Lehigh Valley. First and foremost, we placed our 92nd family into a Habitat home. Although every family we serve is special and well-deserving, fulfilling the dream of home ownership for this family was particularly rewarding because of the special needs of the father and daughter. Second, we now have a new director and a new marketing and development manager. Deb Cummins, our former VP of Advancement and Business Development is our new Executive Director. And Jullie Patterson, who worked with us this past year through Lehigh University's Community Fellows Program, is now our Marketing Resource Development Manager.

This fall is equally exciting with a Blitz Build and our Annual Wine Tasting Gala. The Blitz Build was in September on a home in Bethlehem where a young, single mother of four was able to see the first tangible steps toward her dream of homeownership. Soon, we will be setting our sights on the upcoming Easton builds where we will be building six new Habitat homes. It is wonderful to be back building in Easton again, where we've enjoyed tremendous support in the past. Please consider volunteering for a Blitz Build*; I am sure you will find this a very rewarding activity.

The 7th Annual Wine Tasting Gala on Sunday, November 6, will be held at the new ArtsQuest facility in South Bethlehem. This is great venue within eyesight of our 40-home development on South Mountain. I encourage you to purchase your tickets early for our Wine Tasting Gala, a very enjoyable and entertaining event.

Thank you for your involvement & support in making a positive and lasting difference in the lives of well-deserving families. I look forward to our working together to end substandard housing here in the Lehigh Valley.

* - Volunteer through our website at www.habitatlehighvalley.org

God bless,
Mark A. Erle, PhD,
Chair, Board of Directors

"Light tomorrow with today"

-Elizabeth Barrett Browning

This July, I was appointed as the Executive Director for Habitat for Humanity of the Lehigh Valley. I consider it a privilege to serve our community in this capacity. Our organization's mission is simple yet powerful...we seek to put God's love into action by bringing people together to build homes, communities and hope. I am inspired everyday by our partners and the spirit of collaboration that abounds for creating a better world for hard-working local families who want to provide their children with a safe, decent and affordable place they can call home.

I thought it might be helpful to know a little bit about me. Prior to my appointment as Executive Director, I served as the Vice-President for Advancement and Business Development for our affiliate. I have extensive fundraising experience working at such places as Moravian Academy and Lafayette College. Additionally, I have worked for an internationally known diversity and inclusion firm. As a small business owner, I have travelled nationally to develop leadership curriculum for emerging leaders and to deliver keynote speeches and programs to various organizations. I have an undergraduate degree in Social Work from Muhlenberg College and a Master's degree in Human Organization Science from Villanova University. As a resident of the Lehigh Valley for over 25 years I have served various organizations as a volunteer including Muhlenberg College's Alumni Board, Cops 'N Kids and most importantly as a Morning Star Rotarian.

Over the years, I have developed my own philosophy of what I consider "Think Good" leadership. My leadership recipe includes equal cups of integrity and open communication mixed with a few cups of patience and a gallon of enthusiasm! As we look forward to a great Fall, with two blitz builds and the completion of a number of homes with our partner families before the holidays, I am hopeful about the future of Habitat Lehigh Valley and grateful to have such a strong network of supporters engaged in our mission.

Best, Deb

Wish List

Make a Habitat wish come true! In an effort to maximize your donated dollars, we are seeking some odds & ends that make our job a little easier.

Laptop | Conference room table | Photographer | Videographer
Writer
Graphic Artist | Web Designer | Writable CDs
UPS (uninterruptable Power Supply) | Large Capacity Shredder

At Our Core -The Meaning of Volunteers

Without volunteers Habitat Lehigh Valley would not be able to provide a quality built home for low income, hard-working families. Hundreds of individuals, faith communities, colleges and businesses step up with countless hours of unpaid service. The services provide at least \$20,000-\$30,000 in savings per house. Many of the core volunteers consistently return year after year and provide a solid foundation for continuity and efficient building. Friendships develop, families thrive and communities grow.

The Newbie – Dan Poresky

After decades of working in the corporate world, Dan Poresky had a choice...to take up the golf hammer or the nails and hammer. At Habitat, we count ourselves lucky to have been part of his ultimate decision. "I was looking for a way to become productive again" says Poresky. Seeking an outlet to use his hands, avid fixer-upper and all around handy-guy, Dan found Habitat a great way to keep engaged. Armed with a smile and a positive attitude, Dan quickly became part of the core crew of volunteers. Some of the veteran volunteers took him under their wing and showed him a few things and he was grateful to learn. Dan, no shy violet, took the initiative to ask if help was needed here or there or how to do various tasks. So, what's the thing that keeps him coming back? For Dan the camaraderie, the friendly atmosphere, the fact the people with minimal skills are given the freedom to make mistakes and to learn and most of all - the mission, keeps him coming back!

The Veteran – Kevin Kehoe

Kevin has been with Habitat for twenty years. As a long time and well respected volunteer, Kevin Kehoe was inspired by the Habitat mission stating, "We were put on the face of the earth to help each other out – to laugh, to problem solve, and to build." For Kevin the problem solving aspect helps to challenge the brain and Habitat demonstrates that solutions don't just come from one person but through the synergy of resources, ideas and other people. The sum is greater than the individual. The Habitat mission is a win, win all around. For the career oriented person, you can learn to do something for someone else and break free of the "me first" mind set. So, what's the thing that keeps him coming back? For Kevin, it's a way to engage people, to push past your comfort zone, and be a part of something meaningful.



Construction Corner Update

Bethlehem

- Habitat is working on two homes on Aaron Street in **Bethlehem**. The first has the foundation and framing complete and is fully enclosed from the weather with roofing, siding, windows and doors. The rough plumbing is complete and the rough electric was just completed. After a few inspections, the insulation, drywall and trim will be installed.
- The second home on Aaron Street has its foundation complete and Habitat's core volunteers have framed the first floor garage and mechanical room to get ready for a Building Blitz. The Blitz started on September 13th, lasted for 10 days. The goal for the Blitz was to frame the second and third floors, install the roof and wall sheathing, and install the roof shingles, siding, windows and doors. After the Building Blitz, inside work on the home will begin.

Easton

- Another home at Hope VI in **Easton** is on track. Habitat just pulled building permits from the city and had plans for the foundation to be completed in early October. With the cold winter weather ahead, it is important to get the home weatherized. The schedule is not yet finalized, but Habitat hopes to start framing the first floor by early spring of next year.

Allentown

- In **Allentown** we are building on Chew and N. 12th streets. On Chew Street we have started to drywall the home and anticipate its completion in 2-3 weeks. At N. 12th the Habitat team is working on the façade of the structure – taking the white brick back to its original finish and preserving its historic value.

Idle Car Put it to Work Helping Families Build Homes

Habitat of the Lehigh Valley is one of 1500 HFH affiliates taking part in a relatively new program called Cars for Homes. It started as a pilot project in Washington State. Because of its success there, the program went national in 2005. Cars for Homes is a program that allows individuals, businesses or groups to donate vehicles (cars, trucks, boats, RVs and others) to Habitat for Humanity International to help a worthy cause and maybe benefit from some added PR. Habitat for Humanity International then sells the cars and distributes the proceeds to their affiliates.

Last year the program reached the \$10 million mark, and just last month in the Lehigh Valley, Habitat raised \$10,000 in car donations. While most of the donated cars are sold for fundraising, not all of them are. Marcia Rundle, the creator of the program, says that if the affiliate where the donation came from has a use for a good used van or truck for the construction team, the title can be transferred directly to that affiliate.

To donate your vehicle: You can go online at carsforhomes.org or call toll free, 877-277-4344 to donate cars, trucks, boats & RV's – Running or not! Be sure and indicate your local affiliate, Habitat for Humanity of the Lehigh Valley to ensure all proceeds remain in your community!



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Posts made prior to the Blue Mountain Ski Resort Fundraiser generated new “likes” and word-of-mouth promotion which contributed to an attendance at the event of over 500 people and \$15k in donations. The outlay of funds for this effort \$0!

Announcing Our New Corporate Partners

Morning Call

As part of its community initiative, The Morning Call is proud to partner with Habitat for Humanity of the Lehigh Valley to promote the ideas and values of Habitat. The Morning Call believes that everyone deserves a safe, comfortable place to call “home.” Partnering with Habitat is just one of many ways they give back to the community. The Morning Call also supports hundreds of local community organizations through employee participation, partnerships, and inkind promotions.

Wells Fargo

At Wells Fargo we have enjoyed a nearly 20 year relationship with Habitat for Humanity and our local team members are excited to be working on this project in Bethlehem, said Ryan Nicholl, Western Lehigh district manager for Wells Fargo. “We believe in doing what’s right for our communities and you could not ask for a better partner than Habitat for Humanity.

Spotlight on a Family *(continued)*

Gerson (16) is eager to be rid of their old, unsafe neighborhood and looks forward to graduating from Freedom HS and going on to study mechanics. He helped at the dedication by translating for Celia Ruiz,

the family’s pastor. She ended her blessing by saying, “Now this house is dedicated to the Lord...from the patio up to the roof.” The family’s new home has room for William’s dialysis machinery and a handicap-accessible first-floor bathroom to

accommodate daughter Dianetsy. With 1200 square feet, their new home can comfortably house the family and with the affordable mortgage, they can invest in themselves (instead of paying rent) and focus on their future.

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245 N. Graham Street, Allentown, PA 18109

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