



The Rev. Patti Weikart receives the Community Partnership Award from President Dick Carr.

Celebrating its 15th year in action, Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity held its 2007 annual meeting on February 5. Pam Ely, Executive Director, Richard Carr, President, and the chapter's Board of Trustees honored several individuals and organizations for their overarching support in 2006.

"We had a successful year in 2006, with the completion of three homes in Lambertville and the start of two duplexes in Bernardsville," Mr. Carr said. "In addition, a group of volunteers from RVHFH and supporting churches, with the assistance of a significant corporate partner, traveled to Thibodaux, La., to help Habitat for Humanity International build an entire new neighborhood of 90 Habitat homes in the wake of Hurricane Katrina."

Dick Kline was recognized for his nine years of dedicated service in construction, most recently as Construction Coordinator. "Dick has been a tireless advocate for RVHFH, forging numerous partnerships in the community to support our construction program," said Don Schneider, co-chair of the building committee.

The appreciation awards handed out at the annual meeting included: **Landmark Five Award** to the Hunterdon County Electrical Contractors Association. The Landmark Five Award recognizes the generosity of building industry pros and service providers who have contributed to the construction of five or more Habitat homes by donating materials or professional services.

ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS KEY VOLUNTEERS AND RVHFH'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY

Community Builder Award to Amboy National Bank and Vice President Karen Mlynarski. Since 1998 Amboy National Bank has contributed increasing amounts to RVHFH's building program and has sponsored the chapter's Federal Home Loan Bank AHP grant applications. Ms. Mlynarski has helped the chapter apply for the grants, which are difficult to obtain.

Community Partnership Award to Rev. Patti Weikart of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church. Rev. Weikart has played a vital role in initiating the Bernardsville project by locating the property and building a coalition of churches to purchase the site and donate it to RVHFH.

Professional Services Volunteer Award to John Lynch, Esq. Mr. Lynch has lent his legal expertise in land use to the task of planning RVHFH's first nine-house development on Southside Avenue in Bridgewater.

Building Trades Professional Award to Daryn Seal, Branch Manager of Bradco in Branchburg. Over the last five years, Mr. Seal has helped supply quality roofing and siding at discounted prices, arranged the donation of siding for two duplexes, and provided free transportation and storage of a separate siding project facilitated by Habitat for Humanity International.

Great Neighbor Award to Melanie and Michael Depoortere. The Depoorteres have set new standards for friendship and support of both RVHFH's volunteers and partner families in Bernardsville. Among other things, they have been outgoing, welcoming neighbors to partner families and construction crews.

"We have literally hundreds of volunteers helping with each project, and it's difficult to single out any of them for special recognition," said Ms. Ely. "Still, these people and organizations have gone above and beyond to truly show all of us what volunteerism really means."

In addition to community supporters, some of RVHFH's most dedicated committee volunteers also received recognition awards. They included:

- Dick Bedner, construction volunteer
- Josie Chisom, construction volunteer
- Linda Bradway, family support volunteer
- Nancy Young, family support volunteer
- Jim Staker, finance & technology volunteer
- Mindy Shanks, fundraising and public relations volunteer
- Sandy Martin, fundraising and office volunteer
- Jane Huck, office volunteer

"I wish to thank every one of the hundreds of people who have been active in the 2006 program," Mr. Carr said. "For every construction volunteer, there are two or three people raising funds, working with towns on future projects, keeping the books, supporting our existing families, and selecting new families. Our entire team is driven by compassion and passion."

- Greg Crawford



Award recipients (clockwise from top) Josie Chisom, Mindy Shanks, Jim Staker and Sandy Martin.

RVHFH CELEBRATES *15 Years!*

Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity is proud to be celebrating our 15th anniversary in July 2007. RVHFH became a Habitat affiliate in 1992. The organization was founded by a group of local residents who wanted to do something about the shortage of decent, affordable housing in central New Jersey.

Pam Ely, Executive Director, was one of the early board members. Pam said, "It's so amazing when I think back over the years and realize how many people have made significant contributions to Habitat, sharing their gifts with us at just the time when we needed them most! We have truly been blessed, and all of us together have accomplished a great deal in the past 15 years."

Since 1992, RVHFH has built 23 homes in Somerset and Hunterdon counties, with four more to be completed in May of this year.



And that's not all - during the last 15 years, RVHFH has also funded the construction of over 50 Habitat homes in El Salvador.

These donations are part of Habitat for Humanity International's tithe program, where U.S. affiliates help to fund the construction of Habitat homes overseas. Our tithe money is sent to El Salvador in honor of our first local family, the Santos, who are natives of El Salvador. The Santos moved into their Habitat home in Bridgewater in 1994.

Habitat for Humanity El Salvador serves families with very low incomes, mainly consisting of two minimum wages (US\$288 monthly). On average, these families consist of five members who inhabit structures built of adobe without any treatment, bahareque (interwoven cane and mud), tin sheets, cardboard, wood, and plastic. To make matters



A finished home in El Salvador

worse, these houses do not meet minimum security, hygiene, and basic sanitation requirements. The construction of a simple, decent home in El Salvador costs less than \$5,000, so the money we are able to send helps to house several families each year.

We are proud of the impact we have made in the lives of hard working, low-income families, both in our local region and in El Salvador. **Thank you to everyone who has participated in our program over the years** - your time, your donations, and your dedication have made a real difference. With your help, we hope to continue to make a difference for many years to come.

- Diana Pecina



BUILDING ON FAITH IN FRANKLIN

RVHFH is blessed to have been able to secure property in Franklin Township on which to build four new homes in 2007. Generous support for this project has come from many quarters - the Township; our corporate sponsor, Foley Inc.; and the Somerset County HOME office - making this truly a partnership of many.

It is particularly exciting to see local churches coming together to form the Franklin Building on Faith Partnership. In January seven congregations sent representatives to an informational meeting where they learned more about the Franklin Building on Faith Partnership. Since then several more churches have expressed an interest in joining the Partnership. The support that these local congregations will give in terms of prayer, money, and construction volunteers will be key to providing safe, affordable homes for more local families. This Partnership will be the true "cornerstone" of our Franklin build.

I can personally attest to the power of Church Partnerships to not only enable builds but to foster a love and appreciation for Habitat's mission. My first experience with RVHFH was through my congregation's involvement in a Church Partnership. The first event I attended drew me into Habitat and got me "hooked" for good. It was a partnership fundraiser, an evening of "tricky trays" and "live auctions" that was a true multi-generational and interdenominational event. There were young children enjoying the evening vying for their favorite "tricky tray" baskets, teens running a hot dog cart, and adults of all ages having fun out-bidding their friends and neighbors on every sort of auction item. I can still feel the spirit of that evening eight years later. It was a spirit of fellowship, but the evening's goal, to provide safe homes for local families, was never far from anyone's mind.

God blessed that event with a very successful financial outcome (far greater than if each of the congregations had conducted their own fundraising). More importantly, the community was blessed with an energy and commitment that has kept that Church Partnership going for many years.

The GOOD NEWS is that there is still time (and need) for interested congregations to join the Franklin Building on Faith Partnership. Construction is scheduled to begin in late spring and continue through early 2008. I enthusiastically invite you and your congregation to prayerfully consider joining the Franklin Building on Faith Partnership. Regardless of the size or resources of your congregation, there is a place for you in the Partnership. Won't you join us?

For more information, please contact the Habitat office at 908-704-0016 or email me at: dukemom81@yahoo.com.

- Leslie Hyman

Stories From The Heart...

An Interview With Francis Robinson, Future Bernardsville Homeowner



What made you decide to apply for a Habitat home?

Lack of money - and desperation! The public school system where I live is horrible, and there's a rampant drug problem. Habitat seemed like a good solution.

What are you most looking forward to about your new home?

Having the kids have a safe place to play. It'll really be nice living in a good place, with grass and trees. And I won't have to constantly check outside to see if my kids are still there. Also, I'm looking forward to decorating! [Laughter]

How do you feel about the commitment you've made to build your new home?

It's scary, but you just have to do it. It has also been hard work, very hard. Laying down the footing was very difficult...Digging the trenches...We do everything by hand, for the most part.

What was your favorite task?

Learning how to hammer and nail straight, the glue gun, things like that.

What has been your least favorite task?

Shoveling the gravel and putting it in the wheelbarrow. The wheelbarrows are hard to use! We had to manually move the cement, too. I didn't like that. But I learned that I have a lot more stamina than I thought. I can really help other people.

Do you know how many volunteers are helping with the build?

Loads and loads! It's amazing. It's really something to see people helping others when they don't have to. They're all so genuine, too; they really want to help.

Do you have any advice for other families applying to be a Habitat partner family?

Just go for it. Do everything you need to do regarding the forms, and don't think you won't get picked because you never know. Oh, and be prepared for a big commitment.

Do you have any advice for the next Habitat partner family planning for a build?

Be ready to do it. Be open-minded, and trust everyone, especially with the scaffolds. There's a lot of trust going on up there!

Is there anything else you would like to say?

Just that Habitat's a great thing if someone wants a house. It gives you a real hand up. You have to put in money, but it's minimal in comparison. It's a good organization, and the liaisons are always there to help you.

- Mollie Bradlee



Students from Bernards High School got a lesson in home building as they measured, cut and hung drywall with future homeowner Fran Robinson.

From left: Fran, Kristin Borys, Joe Tafaro, Jackie Schorr, Elizabeth Kellet and Kathleen Kellet.

Youth Build Program To Be Launched

The first meeting of the new Youth Leadership Council was held on March 4 with youth from several local high schools joining together to eat pizza and discuss plans for establishing a new Youth Build program.

Youth Build will provide a way for young people to become actively involved in supporting the Habitat program. Participants will raise awareness, raise funds, and "raise roofs" by helping with home construction. Initially, the Youth Build effort will support the upcoming build in Franklin Township.

The program will be led by youth from area high schools who are willing to make a one-year commitment to serve on the Youth Leadership Council. Several members have already made this commitment. The Council will coordinate the Youth Build fundraising, publicity, and construction efforts. Council coordinator Kelsey Newborn said, "It's great to see so many kids come out to support Habitat. I can't wait to get moving and see what we can do!"

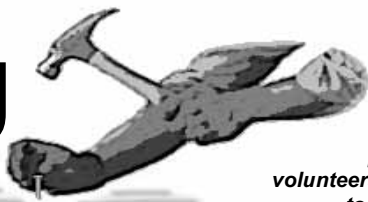
The Youth Build program is being supported by a generous matching grant from the Keefe Foundation. The Foundation has agreed to match the first

\$20,000 in funds raised by the youth in support of the Habitat program and has provided additional funds for educational materials and program development. A special thank you goes out to the Keefe Foundation for your support!

Although the Youth Build program will operate primarily through the high schools, there are plenty of opportunities for younger students to get involved as well. If you or someone you know is interested in getting involved with the Youth Build program, please contact Kelsey Newborn at newborn@patmedia.net.

- Diana Pecina

Building Update



Drywall is the project of the day as volunteers give up a Saturday to further the efforts in Bernardsville.

Mild weather through the holidays allowed the RVHFH building program on the two duplexes in Bernardsville to make good progress through the first of the year.

The east duplex has passed its framing, rough electrical, rough plumbing, insulation, and Energy Star inspections. It has also been drywalled, and work is progressing on the installation of the furnaces. Once there is heat in the units, the spacklers can do their work.

The west duplex has also progressed well. Interior stairs have been installed, rough plumbing, heating, and electrical are complete, and drywall has been started.

In February, underground conduits for electrical, phone, and cable TV services were installed, and the electric company hooked up power to all four units.

Concrete piers have been poured to support the porches for both duplexes, and when warmer weather arrives, construction of the porches can begin.

Completion of the two homes is expected by the end of May.



Right: Werner Hack and Joanne Borys



Right: Jackie Schorr and Kristin Borys work with Fran Robinson



With the retirement of Dick Kline as Construction Coordinator and the continued expansion of building activities, the Building Committee is now actively recruiting for a Construction Director.

- Greg Crawford

Construction Director

Full-Time Paid Position

Oversees the affiliate's construction program, which will involve 4-8 Habitat homes per year in Hunterdon & Somerset counties. Must be able to organize and manage the site development and construction of multiple homes on several sites simultaneously.

QUALIFICATIONS: Position requires strong interpersonal and management skills, dedication to the ministry and mission of RVHFH, and significant residential construction experience. Has overall responsibility for all construction activities, including planning and site preparation, resource scheduling, and construction management.

TIME REQUIREMENTS: This is a full-time (35 hours per week) exempt position with paid vacation & holidays. Must be a self-starter who schedules his/her own work, frequently working from home. Responsible for field operations that take place six days a week. Attends monthly evening Building Committee meeting.

Send resume to
rvhfh@rvhabitat.org

Construction Site Supervisors

Part-Time Paid Positions

Responsible for onsite construction activities of Habitat residential housing on one or more sites. Train and supervise volunteers and crew chiefs, monitor safety and construction quality, and serve as construction technical advisors to the Building Committee and Construction Director.

QUALIFICATIONS: Must have some residential construction experience, an ability to teach and supervise volunteers, and subscribe to the ministry and mission of RVHFH.

TIME REQUIREMENTS: These are part-time positions, requiring site supervision on one to three days per week (including Saturdays) and attendance at monthly evening Building Committee meeting.

Send resume to
rvhfh@rvhabitat.org

Six Of Our Best



From left: Ken Schurzky, Silvio Verdile, Rich Yessian, Dick Cournoyer, Dick Carr and Lincoln Shimomura.

The weekday crew consists of men and women who work onsite building Raritan Valley Habitat houses on Wednesdays and Thursdays. For this article, my goal was to interview a couple of long-term, committed, devoted weekday volunteers - but with six men onsite who have volunteered almost every Wednesday and Thursday for at least six years, I could not pick just two!

These six men all volunteered with Habitat after they retired. They had all done some repair work around their own houses; and although four were engineers, none were employed in construction trades. So why do these men continue to show up every Wednesday and Thursday to put in a hard day's work with no monetary reward? As they hung drywall, I asked them. While each person was reluctant to sing his own praise, they all answered my questions about Habitat with astounding praise for the organization.

When I told Rich Yessian I wanted to interview him, he said, "Why, because I'm a relic?" Rich has been volunteering longer than the other men, starting on RVVHFH's second house in 1994, which means he will soon complete his 26th Habitat home. He has been a building committee chair and volunteer site supervisor. He said he was "a guy who thought he knew everything" when he first came to Habitat, but "has learned a lot from amateurs and professionals." Rich says Habitat is "a lot cheaper than a gym" and gives him a good workout.

Lincoln Shimomura and Silvio Verdile both started volunteering with Habitat in 1999. Lincoln told me, "A retired anesthesiologist is a rather useless

individual, and Habitat filled the need to be useful." He has been useful as our precision specialist. If something has to be done exactly right, Lincoln is your man. Coming from a farmer family, he had to know how to do things around the farm and house, but he has learned much at Habitat. President, Treasurer, Building Committee Chair and Finance Committee member are some titles Silvio has held at RVVHFH. In addition, Silvio works onsite every week because he likes being handy and learning. He especially likes to work alongside the partner family members, helping them build their own houses. He thinks meeting the interesting people at Habitat is a real bonus.

When they met at Habitat in 2000, Ken Schurzky and Dick Cournoyer discovered they had both attended the same engineering school with the same major. In addition to working onsite two days per week, Ken has been the Building Committee Chair for the last two years. He says he "knew enough to work on his own house but was not confident to work on anyone else's." Now Ken is always leading a crew of workers. Of the work Habitat volunteers do, he says, "In general, we can do as good a job as any professional. It just takes us longer." Dick remembers helping his grandfather build houses as a youngster. He knew that he wanted to volunteer with Habitat when he retired. Dick volunteers for any task, says building is fun, and likes seeing the completed project. These men were raising drywall to the ceiling of their 19th Habitat home as I interviewed them.

A Habitat volunteer since 2001, Dick Carr says his faith is what brought him

to Habitat. "I've been given so many gifts. My primary goal is to help others." Dick has learned a lot about construction by working with helpful people. He likes working with the variety of people at Habitat and finds that the skills he learned in the corporate world are useful in his volunteer work as well. As RVVHFH President, Dick has experienced the "best part" of Habitat - handing a family the keys to their new home. "That moment makes all the cold days and smashed thumbs worth it," he said.

Each of these men has volunteered many years (41 collectively), many days, countless hours to build homes for others. Why do they continue to build? Ken summed it up: "I come here because I want to, not because I have to. The people are nice." The resounding answer from the men was that the "people" and the "fellowship" keep them coming back. The weekday crewmembers work well together and form lasting friendships.

These men have advice to anyone considering volunteering. "Do it!" said Ken. "Building is great if you like building, but there are lots of other jobs. Whatever your talents, we can figure out something for you to do." "Don't be afraid if you don't know much. There are lots of good teachers," said Silvio. Dick Carr summed up his feelings about why building for Habitat is such a great way to volunteer: "This house is going to outlive me. This building is a part of the community. Many generations will enjoy warmth and security in this home."

Thank you, Rich, Lincoln, Silvio, Ken, Dick, and Dick for all the hard work you have done over many years. Thanks, too, for the leadership you give to all the new volunteers.

- Kathy Tanaka



Current Volunteer Opportunities

Please contact the office at 908-704-0016 if you are interested in any of the following positions.

BUILDING

Wed. and Thurs. Construction Crews:

Experienced builders and enthusiastic beginners are welcome

Saturday Individual Construction

Volunteers: No experience necessary

Site Hosts: Greet and sign in our volunteers Saturday AM & stay on to work if you want (Franklin Twp.)

CHURCH RELATIONS

Church Liaisons: Represent RVHFH at funding-church meetings

Desktop Publisher: Design church presentations and other communications

Telephone Follow-up: Contact churches after mailings

Writers: Create letters & brochures

FAMILY RELATIONS

Spanish Translator: Assist with family orientation meetings and the family selection process

FAMILY SUPPORT

Desktop Publisher: Stylize our partner family manual and add graphics

Partner Family Liaisons: Assist with decisions and questions; track "Sweat Equity Hours"

FINANCE

Software Support for QuickBooks: Help us transition from Peachtree to QuickBooks

FUNDRAISING

Graphic Arts: Design promotional pieces, fliers, brochures, and presentations

HUMAN RESOURCES

Volunteer Placement/Mentoring

Coordinators: Volunteer in office or at home

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Photographers: Take photos at site and home dedications and events

Website Support: Create content & increase traffic to RVHFH site

Writers: Create exciting articles for newsletters and press releases

SITE SELECTION

Site Research and Prospectors: Discover and evaluate prospective sites



Sponsored by
Habitat's Hunterdon
fundraising team!

Plans are under way
for another exciting
dinner auction event in
October at the
Beaver Brook Country Club
in Clinton, NJ.

Jewelry, art, vacations,
and Broadway musicals
- to name just a few -
will all be part
of the evening.

Call now to save a table for friends
and family. This is an evening
not to be missed!
You can reserve by contacting
Lydia Lehmmuller at
908-218-3633.