

Fall 2004

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www.rvhhabitat.org



KMC Telecom Partners With Habitat In Manville



Employees of KMC Telecom work on the Roosevelt Avenue home during one of several company-sponsored workdays.



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Building Update...

We are making excellent progress on the Roosevelt Avenue duplex build in Manville. Completed work includes framing, sheathing, roofing, windows, exterior doors, and siding. Rough in of the heating ducts is complete, due to a generous donation of a professional HVAC team. Electrical wiring (by women volunteers led by co-chair Don Schneider) and plumbing rough phases are complete and ready for code inspection. Soon we will install insulation and sheet rock and plant the lawn.

The spirit and enthusiasm of the volunteers have helped compensate for the many rain delays. We still expect occupancy in early 2005.

RVHFH is engaged in a strategic planning project to set goals for the next 3-5 years. Given the increasing need for affordable housing in our area, the Building Committee ran an exercise to understand the impact of a goal to double house production within 3 years. In summary, it was determined that the best way to build more homes would be to construct clusters of nearby homes sharing a common design. This plan would allow us to speed up production of later homes using the learning gained from the earlier houses of the same design. It would also allow us to deploy volunteers more efficiently and to negotiate for discounted or donated materials or services in larger quantities.

We hope to complete the first "cluster" build of four homes in Lambertville in 2005.

- Dick Carr & Don Schneider

KMC Telecom has launched a major partnership with RVHFH with a generous gift of \$35,000. The donation is being used to underwrite half the building cost of one of the Manville houses. Erica Jeffrey and her four children will become the homeowners when this house is completed at the end of the year.

KMC Telecom is a nationwide provider of next-generation telecommunications infrastructure and services at the network edge. Founded in 1995, it is the largest privately held nationwide telecommunications company in the United States, serving more than 300 U.S. markets. The company is headquartered in Bedminster, New Jersey, with operations centers in Georgia and Alabama and network central office facilities in 35 metropolitan areas.

"We hope to make this the first step in a continuing partnership," said KMC Telecom founder and chairman, Hal Kamine. A Tewksbury resident, Kamine joined KMC Telecom employees for one of several on-site workdays that took place over the summer. The company has also provided volunteers for additional workdays this fall. Kamine indicated that he is particularly pleased to be able to use KMC Telecom's resources to help in the local community.

- Lisa Esposito

Volunteer *Spotlight*

This issue's Volunteer Spotlight falls upon another outstanding RVHFH volunteer, Dave Smack. Dave is both a regular weekday crewmember and the Wednesday Crew Volunteer Coordinator. When we are working on a construction site in his home county of Hunterdon, Dave also works with the Thursday crew there.

A Habitat volunteer for approximately 3 ½ years, Dave says that he really enjoys being part of the actual construction process because it "is truly a hands-on experience, one that affords a material and certainly a visual sense of accomplishment."

Before retiring, Dave was a district sales manager with Baxter Healthcare, which, like any job, had its own rewards. He noted, however, that in his corporate position, many of the rewards were of an "intangible nature." That is why he finds it so exciting to experience the tangible rewards of "building a home for a very deserving and needy family." He particularly enjoys meeting and working alongside the partner families, who are both very deserving and extremely appreciative.

Like many RVHFH volunteers, Dave was attracted to the "giving concept" of Habitat for Humanity. He says that the partner families are truly partners and contribute to the partnership by investing much of their own sweat equity. He also feels that, unlike some charitable organizations that are laden with ill-defined goals and poor utilization of resources, Habitat for Humanity has a well-defined mission, effective management, and attainable goals. "Habitat for Humanity works and works well!"

On a more personal note, Dave, his wife Carol, and their daughter-in-law Amy had a very exciting experience in August when they traveled to Athens to watch his son Kent compete in the Olympics. Kent is a member of the U.S. Rowing Team and rowed the stroke position in the Quadruple Sculls (four men with two oars each in "one of those skinny boats"). Kent's team won a very tough repechage race over teams from France, Great Britain, and Switzerland, which Dave said was "the high point of a very memorable trip."

- Lisa Esposito

Dave Smack (above) at the worksite in Manville.

Board member Don Schneider and his crack team take a break from the electrical work to regain their enthusiasm.

FROM THE PRESIDENT...

During the holiday season we often think about our many blessings. The thought of being "Home for the Holidays" gives us a feeling of comfort and security. We at Raritan Valley Habitat give thanks for all the individuals and groups that make it possible for our homeowners and partner families to experience this same joy.

We are thankful for

- *A dedicated professional staff*
- *The 120 Habitat committee members who give their time and talents toward achieving our mission*
- *The hundreds of volunteers who help build our houses*
- *The financial backing of local businesses (We have about 60 companies that provide funding, donated services and materials to our chapter)*
- *The assistance of over 75 local churches that support our efforts*
- *The numerous individuals who provide financial donations as well as support for our fund drives*
- *The partnership of local agencies, such as the Somerset County Coalition on Affordable Housing, the United Way, and the Somerset County Community Development Office*
- *The help and cooperation of the officials in the towns where we construct our homes*

Thank you.

Silvio Verdile



Church Partnerships

- a blessed line of support

Partner, colleague, co-worker, friend, supporter....

All these words describe the very special relationship with our Church Partnership participants. RVHFH has been blessed with the enthusiastic support and commitment of our many Church Partnerships through the years. This year we have four very active partnerships building support and funds for four Habitat homes!

Our Manville Area Church Partnership began in the spring and has grown to include First United Methodist, Immaculate Conception R.C., Liberty Corner Presbyterian, Middlebush Reformed, Pluckemin Presbyterian, St. Bernard R.C., St. John's Episcopal, St. Martin's Episcopal, and Trinity United. These nine churches have a collective goal of raising \$35,000 for half the construction cost of one of the duplex homes in Manville. As House Partners, they also provide volunteer crews and pray for our mission.

The Hunterdon Church Partnership will sponsor two of the 2005 Lambertville homes. This group of 15 churches will contribute \$70,000 for the materials and services needed for each home.



Mike Kowal from Pluckemin Presbyterian Church donates his expert carpentry skills.

Since 2001 they have sponsored two homes in Hampton and one in West Amwell, demonstrating the synergistic power of working together to accomplish the common goal of giving a life-changing gift to a family in need.

The Reformed Churches of the Delaware-Raritan classis will also participate at the House Sponsor level for another of the Lambertville homes. This group not only built our first home in Hampton in 2000 but also fueled interest in our mission among the Hunterdon County congregations.

A new partnership of congregations led by Flemington Presbyterian is in its establishment stage. Members of this church so enjoyed their experience on the Presbyterian Church project in Lambertville in 2002 that they conceived



Brian Morgan and Wayne Napolitano.



Monsignor Brennan, Patricia Kerster, Maureen Koenen, and Sheila Dixon enjoy a lunch break.

the idea of starting a new partnership of area churches to build yet another house in Lambertville in 2005.

Each of these churches saw in Habitat the opportunity to demonstrate their faith by putting it into action. Through Habitat, they can minister to local families in need and make a tangible difference in their lives.

Working in a partnership is surely a gift that gives - to the partner family, the community, and the participating congregations. Giving can be a great gift to the giver as well as to the recipient.

If you or your congregation would like to find out more about Church Partnership opportunities or would like to join the newest partnership started at Flemington Presbyterian, please contact the Habitat office or the Church Relations committee (Eileen Esposito at edesposito@earthlink.net). We would be happy to discuss the benefits of this worthwhile involvement.

-Eileen Esposito



Monsignor Brennan and parishioners from Immaculate Conception Church frame the house.

LAMBERTVILLE WELCOMES FOUR NEW HABITAT HOMES

RVHFH has successfully put together a redevelopment plan and created a partnership with the city of Lambertville. Submitting a thorough and formal presentation of Habitat's resources, abilities, and experience, RVHFH was named Redeveloper and given rights to purchase four lots in the Lambertville redevelopment zone at the cost of condemnation. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2005.



The success of this effort demonstrates Habitat for Humanity's ability to improve neighborhoods and also underscores the fact that the housing problem we are addressing is one shared with municipalities and not just families. RVHFH has made presentations to numerous municipal councils and officials and is finding support in many forms. A municipality can convey land that it owns, donate funds it has set aside for providing low and moderate income housing, waive or reduce fees and other requirements, help identify lots that have been abandoned, publicize our program needs, and find other creative ways to help.

The search for land is becoming more difficult in this highly competitive market, and public lands are one area of focus that can yield results. These properties often have title issues, are non-conforming, or have other constraints that our experienced professionals can resolve for the betterment of both RVHFH and municipalities.

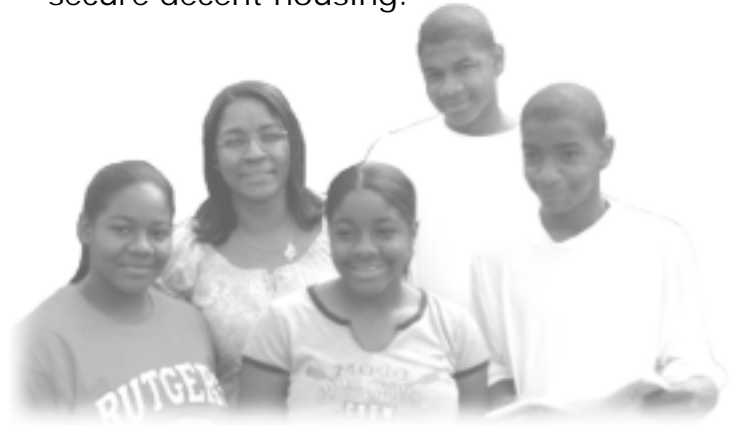
-David Maleski



Your donation will be an investment in their future.

As housing costs soar and numbers of affordable housing units fall, more and more families are finding it difficult, if not impossible, to secure decent housing.

Your generous gift will make it possible for other families, like our Manville partner families, to reach their dream and know the safety and security of owning their own home.



Together, let's build a brighter future for families needing a simple, decent home.

- I would like to volunteer, please contact me.
- I want to make a donation in the amount of \$ _____ Check Visa MasterCard

Name on card _____ Credit Card # _____

Signature _____ Expiration Date _____

Please make checks payable to: **RARITAN VALLEY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY**
Mail to: **PO Box 6275**
Bridgewater, NJ 08807

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Thank you for your support! Your gift is tax-deductible.

Come Visit Our New Website!

All good things need to be revisited occasionally, and that's just as true for the RVHFH website as it is for any pamphlet, brochure, or flyer presenting a public face for the organization. Last year we were looking at an Internet presence that was static, limited in scope, and dated from a graphics perspective. Our website had served us well, but it was time for a change.

We began to ask ourselves questions...How could RVHFH strengthen its website presence? How to do a better job of communicating our mission? How to provide more complete information for volunteers, donors, and partner families? How to take advantage of newer technology?

The Technical Support Working Group, with participants from Public Relations, Human Relations, and other volunteers, began by looking at websites from other Habitat chapters, drawing inspiration from sites in Minnesota, Virginia, Connecticut, and southern New Jersey. The approach focused on a basic web page layout-the look, feel, and spirit of the site.

The objective was to present a professional, friendly, and compassionate public face through an Internet presence that was primarily an information resource.

As a way to manage the project and move it along quickly, our approach was to develop a prototype site and then offer it up to RVHFH committees and constituencies for additions, revision, and refinement.



The work was taken on by a core team that included Louisa Bartok, Office Manager; Pam Ely, Director; Jim Staker from the Technical Support Group; Diana Pecina, Grant Writer; and Cathy Kerr of the Church Relations Committee. For technical support the group reached out to Jim Koharski of Cyclone Web Design, who maintained one of our model sites, www.coastalhabitat.org.

The first step was to develop a look and feel for the site: colors, graphics, fonts, layout. More challenging was the development of structure to meet the needs of a variety of visitors - information seekers, potential and past donors, partner families, partnership participants, volunteers. The list was long and challenging.

With a new look and a structure in place, the work rested with Diana Pecina and Cathy Kerr. Their writing skills proved up to the challenge of turning good intentions into a reality. The result is a site that makes many of us smile. It's graphically interesting, information intense, and structurally up-to-date.

Today we have a website opportunity for each working committee of RVHFH to showcase their efforts. We can look forward to current information on projects, donor activity, partner family highlights, and partnership efforts.

Take a look. Visit www.rvhhabitat.org. We hope you too will like what you see!

- Jim Staker

HELP WANTED

We can use your help to make the website better. Consider:

- ◆ **Website Liaison** - work with Habitat Committees to refine their contribution to the site and keep the information current
- ◆ **Website Traffic** - work with outside organizations and search engines to generate interest in the site and build awareness
- ◆ **Website Content** - translate our existing forms and literature into Web documents that will build with interaction and communications

If you are interested, please e-mail Louisa Bartok at officemgr@rvhabitat.org or give her a call at (908) 704-0016.

RVHFH Featured On Hopeful Days Calendar

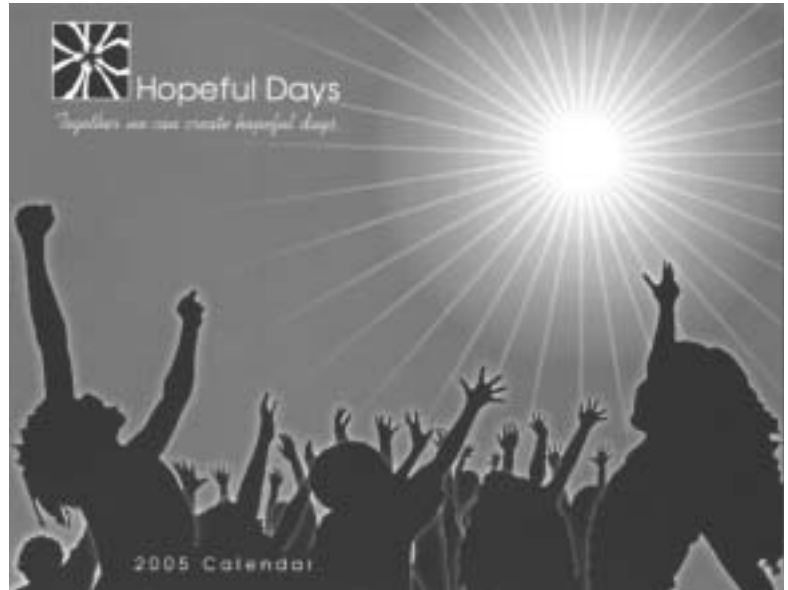
Last spring two students from Gill St. Bernard's School in Gladstone received a \$1000 grant from Youth Venture, a division of NetAid, to create a calendar as a fund raiser for Help Oppressed People Everywhere (H.O.P.E.). H.O.P.E. is a community service organization at Gill St. Bernard's Upper School.

Freshman Lauren Grillo and Sophomore Courtney Puglisi call their 2005 calendar "Hopeful Days." It features a different local, national, or international charitable organization each month. We are honored that RVHFH has been chosen to represent the month of May.

H.O.P.E. will donate the proceeds from the sale of the calendars to NetAid, for building a school in Haiti, and the Utz K'aslemal Association for Community Mental Health, for helping victims of genocide in Guatemala. The group will also donate a small portion of the proceeds to their school library for purchasing materials on becoming socially active.

The calendars cost \$15. If you would like more information or wish to purchase a calendar, call 908-534-4587 or visit www.HopefulDays.org.

-Louisa Bartok & Mindy Shanks



FOUR PRIZES AWARDED TO THE WINNERS OF OUR FALL RAFFLE

After months of selling tickets to family members, friends, and other Habitat supporters throughout Somerset and Hunterdon counties and beyond, RVHFH volunteers sold 932 tickets for the Fall Raffle.

Promising a choice of four prizes for four winners, the raffle came to an end when the winning tickets were drawn on Sunday, October 3rd, at the Somerville Street Fair.

The four winners, in order of draw, selected their prize from a Samsung HDTV LCD-Panel 22" TV, an HP Pentium 4 Notebook, a Canon 5 mp Digital Camera, and a Verizon Wireless Camera Phone.

These are the lucky winners:

Adam Nemes of East Windsor - Laptop
Terry & Lou DeTroia of Bridgewater - TV
Thelma Bartus of Manville - Digital Camera
Amy Fedorochko of Bound Brook - Camera Phone

Thank you to everyone who sold and purchased raffle tickets!

- Liz Kepniss



Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity Newsletter is published by Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity, Inc., an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, a non-profit, international Christian organization based in Americus, GA, that builds decent low-cost housing for hardworking low-income families. Over 2100 affiliates are at work in 100 countries, including all 50 states of the U.S. Habitat is supported by volunteers and contributions from churches, businesses and individuals.

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