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Ceremony Celebrates Start of Three New Homes In Franklin Township



Thierry (left) and Philippe Donaus
In front of the foundation of their new home.

On Saturday, June 28, Habitat volunteers, partner families, Aventis and church partners gathered at the Alex Place building sites in Franklin Twp., to witness the symbolic beginning of another miracle—the building of a Habitat home!! In this case, we were able to witness an even bigger miracle since Habitat is partnering with three families.

The home at 21 Alex Place already had the framing



Fahmy family during Dedication Ceremony.

completed, while the duplex at 31 and 35 Alex Place had the foundations completed. The partner families arrived prior to the beginning of the ceremony to observe the progress. Their smiles clearly showed the excitement they were feeling as they contemplated becoming homeowners for the first time!

The ceremony began with a welcome from RVHFH President, Silvio Verdile, followed by an invocation by Father Ronald Pollock of St. John's Episcopal Church. Barbara Wright from Church of St. John on the Mountain talked about the church partnership. The group was also treated to a few songs from Catherine Barrier, a soloist at Maranatha Baptist Fellowship. Nancy Young, Family Support Co-Chair, introduced Olivia Maxwell, who will be moving into the home at 21 Alex Place. Anny Bestel, Family Support Liaison, introduced the Donaus family, who will move into 31 Alex Place, and Lynn Moratz,

Family Support Liaison, introduced the Fahmy family, who will move into 35 Alex Place. Each of the partner families spoke from their own personal experience, describing their feelings about partnering with Habitat and the circumstances that brought them to this point. It was apparent to all those who attended that these families are anxious and excited about becoming homeowners.

The ceremony concluded with a Litany led by Silvio and a Benediction by Pastor John Schenck of the Maranatha Baptist Fellowship.

Thanks to Aventis, the Episcopal Church Partnership, and businesses and individuals who donate their time, materials, and labor, three families' dream of home ownership will be fulfilled.

- Maggie Chigi

Future Homeowner Speaks to Congregation

On June 22 Raafat Fahmy, the husband of one of our newest partner families, spoke to the congregation at St. John's Episcopal Church in Somerville during the 10:15 worship service. St. John's is one of five area Episcopal Churches that are sponsoring the home that the Fahmys will occupy.

Raafat spoke of his coming to this country to seek freedom from the discrimination he felt as a Christian in Egypt, his homeland. His message was communicated with a sense of warmth and compassion for his new country, but it was

balanced with some of the economic realities that he and his wife Neven had to face in their attempt to find affordable housing in New Jersey. At one point, Raafat said they seriously considered moving to another state.

Happily, however, sometime this fall Raafat, Neven, and their two children will be moving into one half of the duplex house currently under construction on Alex Place in Somerset. Raafat described his family's acceptance as a Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity (RVHFH) partner family as a true "gift from God." He was also quick to

mention that he welcomed the responsibilities that other Americans had – that of paying a mortgage, taxes, and insurance. It is clear that, to the Fahmys, their new home will be a hand up, not a hand out.

At the conclusion of his talk, Raafat received a well-deserved ovation. After the service, the congregation had the opportunity to speak with the Fahmys about their family and their plans for the future.

As a result of Raafat's talk, members of the congregation gained a new appreciation of what it is like to partner with RVHFH and perhaps what it is like to be an immigrant in America.

- Jim Richart

Volunteer Highlight

What does it take to build a house? Nailing the framework, putting up sheetrock, painting the walls? Yes, nailing and painting are integral to constructing a house, but these volunteer activities are just some of the many activities involved in building a Habitat home. In addition to building, there are many volunteers working "behind the scenes" to make Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity (RVHFH) homes a reality for our partner families.

Just two of the many volunteers who support RVHFH are Amy Denecke, Fundraising Committee, and Sue Jezorek, Public Relations Committee. Participating in a Blitz Build in Americus, GA, was Amy Denecke's first experience with Habitat for Humanity. She had been invited by a neighbor to help with the Build, in which they built 20 houses in one week!

As a result of her experience in Georgia, Amy contacted her local chapter here in New Jersey, RVHFH, and has been actively involved for seven years. Most recently she has been working on the fall fundraisers, including the PT Cruiser and Altima car raffles. You are likely see Amy at Cruisin' in Somerville on any Friday night, selling tickets for this year's fall fundraiser, which is a raffle for a Sony 42" Plasma Flatscreen HDTV System.

Amy says, "With the concept of a hand-up and not a hand-out, Habitat for Humanity gives the homeowner the dignity and the satisfaction of working toward and achieving one of life's major goals."

Another crucial volunteer job is putting together the newsletter you are reading right now. The newsletter informs supporters about RVHFH's mission to build decent homes. The person responsible for the design and layout of the quarterly newsletter is Sue Jezorek.

It was about 10 years ago when Sue read about a local Habitat home being built and decided to get involved. Her first volunteer job was working in the office 2-3 days a week. She also joined the Public Relations Committee, where she stepped up to take over the newsletter layout. Some marketing art and design courses at a local college gave Sue a background for working with the newsletter, but the rest, she says, "was learning as you go along."

About her involvement, Sue stated that, "I had some free time, and I wanted to make a contribution to my community...helping people who need a decent home. There is a real need for volunteers for the supporting committees, as much as for construction."

FROM THE PRESIDENT...

This past June, the church I attend (Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church) partially sponsored a group of nine individuals who traveled to Anniston, Alabama, to help construct homes for Habitat for Humanity International. I was part of that group, along with Building Committee members, Dick Carr and Bill Rutar.

In Anniston we helped build 35 homes in one week. We all agreed that watching a construction site go from a foundation to a finished home in just one week was remarkable. Efficient planning was the key to being able to construct a home in such a short time. It was also rewarding knowing that we helped improve the life of a family by working with them to build a new home and a new future. At the house we worked on, the partner family worked along with us for the entire week.

In all, there were over 4,000 volunteers who joined former President Jimmy Carter in Anniston, Alabama, as well as LaGrange and Valdosta, Georgia, during Habitat for Humanity International's Jimmy Carter Work Project (JCWP) 2003. During the week-long build, 92 homes were completed in partnership with the new homeowners and their families. Habitat estimated that the volunteers donated 140,000 hours of work, while the partner families completed 39,000 sweat-equity hours to build the homes.

The next JCWP is scheduled for October 2004 in Mexico. For more information, check Habitat for Humanity International's Web site: www.habitat.org.

Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity does not have the resources to build 35 homes in one week; however, with your help, we can achieve our mission of building 4 affordable homes in 2003. If you are interested in assisting us, please call our office at 908-704-0016.

Silvio Verdile

Because of volunteers like Amy and Sue, there are now numerous families in Somerset and Hunterdon counties who have realized their dreams of owning their own homes. All the dedicated volunteers on all the RVHFH committees work together to help ensure that Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity can continue to build decent homes for those in need.

- Sarah Verbeke

*Please join us for a
Volunteer Orientation
September 23rd
7:30 PM*

*United Reformed Church
100 West Main Street, Somerville, NJ*



**I LOVE YOU,
YOU'RE PERFECT,
NOW CHANGE!**

*Raritan Valley Community College
February 21, 2004
8:00 PM*

A dinner will precede the performance as a fundraiser for RVHFH. A committee is forming now to coordinate this event and help is needed. If you are interested in helping make this a great event, call the Habitat office at: 704-0016.

WE WELCOME YOUR IDEAS!

January – June, 2003 Donor Recognition

Acknowledgments shown are for program support received 1/1/03 - 6/30/03.
Donors to projects under construction will be acknowledged at project completion.

Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity is grateful for the generosity of these donors.

Golden House Supporter \$5,000 +

Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church
Somerset County Community Development Office
The Hackett Foundation

Golden Hammer Supporter \$1,000-\$4,999

Bridgewater United Methodist Church
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Hudson United Bank
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Sovereign Bank Foundation
The Valley Foundation
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United Trust Bank
Wal*Mart
Katherine M. Whitney
Yardville National Bank

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James & Sharon Staker
Stanton Reformed Church
A. P. & Hazel Sullivan
Ronald & Denise Szymanski
Silvio & Barbara Verdile
Robert & Nancy Young

Fine Food & Wine Help To Keep Habitat Building

On Friday, June 20, more than 100 friends and supporters of Habitat attended a Wine Tasting at Nassau Racquet & Tennis Club in Skillman, NJ.



Peter Raitt (left) and Dan Rothman of Catania's Restaurant.

The event, which raised \$6000 to benefit RVHFH's building programs, was organized by Ed Kennedy, a member of our Fundraising Committee (great job Ed!).

BUILDING UPDATE

The Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity building program is moving full-speed-ahead in the 2003 summer construction season. Two Somerset County projects are underway in Franklin Township. The home at 21 Alex place will be a single-family ranch featuring a new narrow-lot design which maximizes usable space. Generous sponsorship by the Aventis Corporation has allowed us to quickly frame the home and get it under roof.

A larger lot at 31-35 Alex Place allows us to build a two-family home, which makes the best use of scarce real estate. Construction of this house is proceeding on schedule, with the framing having been completed.

In Hunterdon County, a late-summer start is planned for a ranch home at 32 Belvidere Avenue in Lambertville. The lot clearing and demolition phases of the project are currently being scheduled. The neighbors are looking forward to the day when the existing abandoned home is razed and replaced with a new, attractive addition to their neighborhood.

The 2003 building program is off to a great start, thanks to the generous support of our volunteers, sponsors, partner families, and donors.

- Dick Carr

Guests were treated to an entertaining doubles match, courtesy of the site host, while they sampled more than 100 fine wines, provided by Towne Wine & Liquor and their suppliers. Delicious food provided by Catania's Restaurant, Cibo Café, Santa Fe Grille, and Yori Restaurant complemented the wine selection.

Many of the attendees joined in for some spirited competition for the silent auction items while our Fundraising Committee took advantage of the captive audience and sold some raffle tickets!!

We all enjoyed the wine tasting, the delicious food, and the tennis match and are anxiously awaiting the next one!!

- Maggie Chigi

Raising Balloons and Funds in Readington

This year, the 21st Annual NJ Festival of Ballooning had more to offer than a fantastic aerial display.

As balloons flew through the air, volunteers from Habitat were busy selling raffle tickets to onlookers.

The tickets, which cost \$10 each, are for a chance to win a SONY 42" plasma flatscreen HDTV system or a second prize of an RCA X-Surround audio shelf system. The drawing will be held at 1 PM on Saturday, October 4, at the Green Knoll Grille in Bridgewater. The event is made possible through the gracious sponsorship of the Green Knoll Grille and Best Buy.

Ticket sales at the three day ballooning event (July 25-27) netted Habitat \$538. These funds will help support new and ongoing building projects, and our presence at the Festival certainly helped visitors understand the importance of affordable housing and what our organization does. We were even pleased to welcome a number of new volunteers to our organization! Even if Festival visitors did not get

the chance to touch the sky in a hot air balloon, they were able to help other families soar to reach their dreams. Those who purchased two or more tickets even received a complimentary tape measure/level donated by Aventis Pharmaceuticals.

If you are interested in purchasing ticket(s) for the raffle or simply in making a donation to Habitat, you may do so at our Web site: www.rvhabitat.org or you may use the form below.

Lowell Schiller

BENEFIT GALA AND AUCTION

Hosted by Christ Church of Hunterdon County

Copper Hill Country Club
Flemington, NJ
Saturday, October 25, 2003
7:00 PM

Live and silent auctions, with a wide selection of items, services, and price ranges.

Last year's auction raised more than \$11,000 with items like - Antiques, artwork, sports events, restaurants, gourmet dinners and vacations.

Tickets are \$25 per person (admission, plentiful hors d'oeuvres, cash bar) and can be obtained by calling 908-788-8266.

www.christchurchnj.net

Don't Miss Your Chance To Win!

FIRST PRIZE:

Sony 42" Plasma Flatscreen HDTV System

SECOND PRIZE:

RCA X-Surround Audio Shelf System

Enclosed is \$ _____ for _____ raffle tickets at \$10 each.

Name on ticket _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I will be paying by: Check Visa Mastercard Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____ Print name on card _____

You must be 18 years old to enter raffle.

Drawing will be held October 4th, 1:00 PM, The Green Knoll Grille, Bridgewater, NJ

You do not need to be present to win. Winner will be notified.

I wish to support Habitat by enclosing a donation of \$ _____.



Mail to:

*Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity
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