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Building simple, decent homes since 1989

Spring 2009, Volume 19, Issue 1

OUR 20TH YEAR!



HABITAT HAPPENINGS



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Save the date –our Founders’ Day celebration is Sunday, May 3. Keep checking our website for details, or call our office!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Happy birthday to us!



Meet our new site supervisor!



Help us record our history!

Helping us help our families: Oneonta and Otsego County offer grants and loans to first-time home owners

By Tom Norris, past president

For the past several years, HFHOC has partnered with the City of Oneonta and Otsego County in their first-time home buyers' programs. In this issue, we want to let you know about the programs and the good people who run them.

Oneonta First-Time Homeowner Program

Since 1996, the First-Time Homeowner Program has been making homeownership in the city affordable to lower income families. Bruce Amadon is a Housing Rehabilitation Specialist in the Community Development Department. Bruce works with qualified first time home owners to structure and provide a low interest secondary repayment mortgage.

HFHOC began meeting with the city in late 2004 to see what we could do together. Since 2006, we have built 7 homes that qualified for this program. The program loans our affiliate the money up front. Receiving the funds immediately gives us capital for building more houses. We repay the city out of our families' monthly mortgage payments.

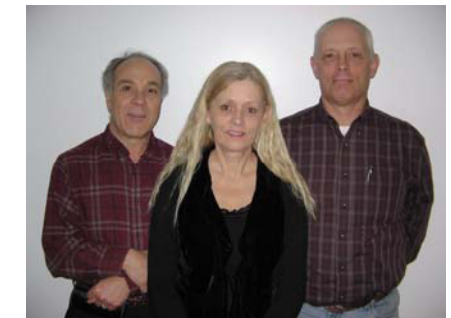


Bruce said, "The First-Time Homeowner Program has helped build 300 houses since we began. Sometimes I see the families we've worked with. It's a good feeling to know that we've helped them." He added that he appreciates all the work that Habitat does to properly document, qualify and counsel our families.

This has been a win/win relationship for both Habitat and Oneonta. Our efforts make the process much easier and efficient for the city. The city has also provided our Oneonta families with small grants for landscaping their properties.

Otsego Rural Housing Assistance, Inc.

ORHAI is a private, not for profit that uses grants and private donations to help families in Otsego County. Some of the major services they provide include rental assistance, home improvements and rehabilitation, and first time home owner assistance.



Pictured L-R: Executive Director Tony Scalici, Administrative Assistant Nancy Chapin and Program Manager Jack Foster. Last year they provided services to over 260 families. In the past five years Tony, Jack and Nancy have worked together to provide first time homeowner grants to 10 of our Habitat families.

Jack Foster has worked with all of our families. Jack says, "Working with Habitat is one of the more pleasant aspects of this job. We appreciate the screening and prequalifying work you do before your families apply for a grant. Habitat provides excellent applicants. This is a mutually satisfying relationship. We all win, first the families win and so do ORHAI and Habitat."

Habitat's partnerships with the city and county are great examples of how the government and nonprofits can work together. We look forward to many more years of our successful relationships!



Writings on the Wall

By Jeanne Miller, President

Even as we continue shoveling snow and hacking ice off of our steps and driveways, we look ahead to the renewal that springtime brings. The cycle of life in our part of the world means that we have faith that the brown trees and the buried bulbs will soon bud and flower and fill our lives with beauty.

The larger cycle of life requires us to say farewell to our founder, Millard Fuller, who died on February 3. As we paused to remember his work and the inspiration that he has brought to all of us, our board commemorated our 20 year anniversary of our first board meeting. Our founders here in Otsego County, along with Millard and Linda Fuller, began this work and had faith that it would live on. This is a good time for us to renew our dedication to building a better world and to commit ourselves to realizing the vision of our founders.

IN MEMORIAM



Along with the loss of Millard Fuller, Habitat Otsego was saddened to learn of the July, 2008 death of Rev. Reese Griffin, who founded our local affiliate and served as its first president. Here are remembrances of these two remarkable men of God.

Reese Griffin was born in Georgia, and served as a pastor in Georgia for many years. He relocated to New York for further graduate study and subsequently served several appointments in New York and Connecticut.



HFHOC President Julia Evans (L), presents a Certificate of Appreciation to Ella V. and Reese Griffin in 1997. Shortly afterward, the Griffins retired to North Carolina.

Rev. Griffin's retirement ministry was dedicated to HFH. He worked actively on building houses until his health began to fail. He was not able to continue building, but he served on the board of the Thermal Belt (South Carolina) HFH. All of us at HFHOC are grateful for his incalculable contribution to the creation of our affiliate.

MILLARD FULLER
A remembrance by Barbara Dauria



He towered, tall and slim, at the podium of the Tabernacle in Ocean City, June of 2004. I managed to persuade him to pose for a photo afterward.

He read scripture, thanked us for the opportunity to speak to us. He explained what he and Linda had recently done:

"Habitat International is now active in 89 countries, 3,700 cities, has built 150,000 houses for 750,000 people, and this year (2004) another 21,600 will be built." Millard said, "That's a new house for another needy family every 26 minutes, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day! Every 26 minutes another family moves into a good place to live, and keys are given, and a Bible is presented, and people know that out of motivation of God's love their lives have improved." (NOTE: We're currently at 300,000 houses, 1.5 million people, over 3,000 communities, over 90 countries - <http://www.habitat.org/how/factsheet.aspx>)

Millard continued, "You know the Christian religion that we profess is a very practical religion. Jesus never said the first and great commandment is this, 'Thou shall go to church'. . . . The Bible says things like 'Invite strangers in.' . . . Coming together (in church) . . . is very important, but that's the **beginning** of our expression of faith; this is not the end all. . . . If we only come to church and that's it, of what use are we out in the world? The Bible tells us to be salt, to be a presence in the world that makes a difference, like salt makes a difference in food. We are to go out from here. . . . **And that's what we seek to do in Habitat for Humanity. To be a presence in the world; to go out and express God's love.**" "

For more detailed information about Millard Fuller check out our web page: www.habitatotsego.org/HFHFullerpg.html

Something to be proud of: Arizona Cardinals quarterback **Kurt Warner** was named the 2008 Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year. After visiting flood-ravaged regions in 2008, he created a partnership with Habitat for Humanity to sponsor home builds throughout the Midwest. To date, he has raised over \$650,000.



On the Level

By Marie Hegeman, Editor

Most people don't glance too closely at a newspaper's masthead. But if you are one of the people who look at "Awl About Us," you'll notice that we've rephrased our first paragraph slightly. It used to open with the statement, "[HFHI] is a Christian housing partnership that serves all God's people in need." Which it still is, but I thought that the new opening makes our position a bit clearer.

This column won't be about spirituality or religion. As long as we abide by the Golden Rule, I figure we're doing the best we can. But every spring I like to do some housecleaning. So as we begin our twentieth year in Otsego County, I want to put to rest some myths about Habitat. You know, like the belief that Jimmy Carter founded Habitat (he didn't), and that we give houses away (we don't). And the misconception that, because Habitat was founded as a Christian housing partnership, you have to be a practicing Christian to volunteer or own a home. Not true!

Our founder, the late Millard Fuller, liked to say that Habitat practices the Theology of the Hammer. This means that, while we may differ in our spiritual approaches, we all agree that picking up a hammer and building a house for someone who needs it is a good idea. Mr. Fuller also called it "Love in action."

Here's an example of what I'm talking about. It's a reprint from the website for Scientific American (www.sciam.com):



Rockefeller Center's 2008 Christmas tree in all its glory.

"Most people who celebrate Christmas can drag their holiday tree to the curb when they're done with it. Needless to say, it will be a bit more difficult to get rid of the eight-ton, 72-foot Norway spruce now gracing New York City's Rockefeller Center. So what's to become of this year's piney green giant when it's hauled from its pedestal on January 9? It will be donated to Habitat for Humanity International to furnish wood for some of the organization's house-building projects next year.

"Tishman Speyer Properties, the company that owns Rockefeller Plaza, began working with Habitat in 2005. That year, Tishman Speyer hosted a demonstration in the plaza during which Habitat for Humanity volunteers framed walls that were later shipped to the Gulf Coast to help rebuild homes damaged by Katrina."

Did you know that, around the world, 300 new Habitat houses are built every week? Three hundred times a week, before the first nail is pounded, untold numbers of people in communities all around the world pick up that theological hammer, so to speak – organizing volunteers, families, donors, and suppliers. And some of those houses, thanks to people who practice love in action, will contain a bit of a Christmas tree. It's a nice thought to keep in mind as we close the door on winter.

We hope you enjoy the spring that is coming our way!



Awl About Us

Habitat for Humanity International was founded on Christian principles as a housing partnership that welcomes everyone, regardless of religion, to share our vision of a world without poverty housing. The Otsego County affiliate was founded in 1989. Since then, we have built 25 houses.

We build on Thursdays and Saturdays, and everyone is welcome to help. Don't worry if you don't have skills; bring a willingness to learn and we'll teach you. **Our construction supervisor is Jon Edgington.**

OR, you can volunteer with one of the many committees that work behind the scenes.

Our Board meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at Elm Park UM Church, Chestnut Street in Oneonta, at 7pm. Stop by and learn more about what we're doing! Our officers and directors are:

President: Jeanne Miller
Vice-President: Mike Donahue
Secretary: Kirsten Wolfe
Treasurer: Peggy Fowler
Assistant Treasurer: Mary Ann Dowdell

Board members: Carole Alicino, Barbara Dauria, Bruce Downie, Emily Ernsberger, Janie Forrest-Glotzer, Marie Hegeman, Karen Joest, Susan Melchior, Bill O'Dea, Norm Tiffany, Alton Van Cleef, Steve Walsh, Bruce Ward, and Cecilia Zapata.

Our office manager is Trish Dukes.

HABITAT HAPPENINGS is the official newsletter of Habitat for Humanity of Otsego County. It is published in March, July, and November. It is edited by Marie Hegeman, with production assistance from Barbara Dauria at TouchstoneGraphics.com. Thanks to their combined generosity, this newsletter is produced at minimal cost.

What's happening? The latest news from HFHOC



The dirty dozen, plus seven: Our annual board retreat was conducted on Saturday, January 24. During the daylong event, we review our accomplishments to date and outline our plans for the year (and years) ahead. Sometimes we can be persuaded to pose for a photo.

To put some faces to names, we are:

Front row, seated, L-R – Barbara Dauria and Peggy Fowler (Treasurer).

Second row, seated, L-R – Alton Van Cleef, Janie Forrest-Glotzer, Marie Hegeman, Karen Joest, and Mary Ann Dowdell (Assistant Treasurer).

Back row, standing, L-R – Bill O'Dea, Bruce Ward, Mike Donahue (Vice-President), Kirsten Wolfe (Secretary), Steve Walsh, Emily Ernsberger, Jeanne Miller (President), and Bruce Downie.

Missing from photo: Carole Alicino, Susan Melchior, Norm Tiffany, and Cecilia Zapata.



The torch is passed to a new generation: More than three years have passed since Hurricane Katrina ripped through the Gulf Coast region. To this day there are countless families who are still displaced by the damage caused by the massive hurricane. The SUNY Oneonta Habitat for Humanity club sent 13 of their most dedicated students to the Mississippi Gulf Coast to help in rebuilding the area. The students spent their entire February break working 8 hours days to building new homes for these families.

(continued next column)

The campus Habitat for Humanity club has been highly involved with the community. In addition to working at the sites each weekend, they have worked on raising funds for the local Otsego chapter and future trips to other areas in need. The students have also been coordinating meals which are brought to the site for the volunteer workers.

In the past several months, the students have been preparing for their trip, learning new skills by working on local Habitat homes. The students are given instruction on anything from raking rocks and spreading top soil, to painting and helping to put up dry wall. Although the build site is not a typical classroom, they are learning a great deal about the home building process, lessons that will not only help them with their upcoming trip, but are also lifelong skills.



Meet and Greet: Last fall, the Volunteer and Public Relations Committees tried a joint recruitment tactic. The Volunteer Committee held its monthly meeting in one of the houses that we were building on North Seventh Street. The Public Relations Committee invited neighboring homeowners to drop by the house, have some refreshments, take a tour, listen in on the meeting, learn more about what we're doing, and maybe volunteer to help out. In the photo above, Volunteer Committee members conduct business in what will eventually become the living room. Below, Board members and neighbors enjoy coffee and cookies in the kitchen. We had a good turnout of visitors and a pretty nice evening!



What's happening? The latest news from HFHOC



Bidding a fond farewell: Construction supervisor Mike Lanza (above), announced in December that he accepted a job in Manhattan, and would be leaving us in January. Mike began working with us in 2006. Mike's skill and patience were unending and, under his guidance, we completed seven houses and started an eighth. He's also a terrific cook, and often treated the crew to homemade hot lunches. On his last day of work, the Thursday regulars surprised him with a going-away party, complete with cake. Stay in touch, Mike – we miss you!



A Merry Christmas to all! December 4 marked the day that our newest homeowners, Alfred Andrea and wife Harriet Mohamed, purchased their home on North Seventh Street in Oneonta. The family moved in shortly afterward and celebrated the holidays in their new home. Pictured above are Harriet Mohamed, Alfred Andrea, and their baby. Family sponsor Carole Alicino looks on while Kelley Eckmair, Esq., explains some of the paperwork involved in the closing.



Look no further than your own back yard: Our sadness following Mike Lanza's move to the big city was lightened when longtime Habitat volunteer, Jon Edgington (at left, with construction committee chair Mike Donahue), agreed to take over as construction supervisor. Jon, a professional carpenter, lives in Hartwick with his wife Mary. The couple has nine children, ages 26-6.

Jon's involvement with Habitat started in 1992, when he volunteered to work on the first house we ever built. Jon remembers, "Bill Ralston helped frame the house. Later, I met Bob Beken when he helped with a house in Laurens. I remember coming to work days where there were a lot of volunteers – as many as 30 people."

Jon is supervising our Monroe Avenue build. When asked about the challenges of moving from being a volunteer to a supervisor - such as supervising workers who are at varying skill levels – Jon was quite candid. "As site supervisor, I'm on the steep end of the learning curve, with all that I've got to learn. But what HFHOC does is remarkable – so many of our volunteers are dealing with life-threatening health problems, such as heart conditions and cancer. But they're out there, unselfishly donating huge blocks of their time. It's a stressful job, but to see people doing stuff like that – carry a 50-lb. toolbox down into the basement, and over snowy banks – it chokes you up."

But it's also a lot of fun, according to HFHOC Treasurer Peggy Fowler, a worksite regular. She says, "Jon's sense of humor is fantastic – very dry. Once I was ranting and raving about how I hoped no one washed the paint brushes with the four gallons of DRINKING water I brought in. Jon, looking a bit hurt, said: 'I put it back after I used it.'"

After 17 years of working for us on his own time, we're delighted to have Jon running our show. Welcome!

What's happening? The latest news from HFHOC

A house for a house dept.: In November, the Amish Barn Co. in Colliersville donated a log cabin playhouse for auction, with the proceeds going to HFHOC. The auction was publicized by Central Radio Group's local radio stations, and the local papers. The playhouse, valued at \$2,899, sold for \$1,825. ABC sells indoor and outdoor furniture, country gifts including a Christmas shop, storage sheds, and playhouses.



Pictured above are fundraising chair Bruce Ward, store manager Sarah Waid, and baby Lila Waid, who snoozed through the photo-op.

The winning bid was cast by Ralph Morse of New Lisbon, who owns the Kaatirondack Benefit Planning Co. Ralph said he wanted the playhouse for his grandchildren. His daughter-in-law, Heather Morse, contributed a photo of the kids looking happy with Grandpa's gift. Pictured below, left to right are Isaak Morse, 5, Avery Morse, 3 and David Morse, 3.



Happy Birthday to Us! February 3, 1989 marked the very first meeting of the Board of Directors of Northern Susquehanna Habitat for Humanity (now HFHOC). Coincidentally, our monthly board meeting was scheduled exactly 20 years later, on February 3, 2009. We celebrated the happy coincidence with cake, cider and balloons. Cutting the cake is Rev. Norm Tiffany, who was on the founding board and is still a member. Watching is Assistant Treasurer Mary Ann Dowdell. Mary Ann started as our original "lunch lady" in 1992, when she volunteered to bring food to our first worksite.

FOUNDER'S DAY IS MAY 3rd!!

You'll note that our back cover reminds you to save the date for our Founder's Day celebration. We will unveil plaques displaying the names of the men and women who shaped our affiliate and have kept us going for 20 years. It will be Sunday, May 3, from 2:00 until 4:00 pm. Refreshments will be served.

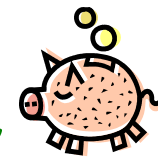
The celebration will be held in our office at 50 Dietz Street, Suite M, in Oneonta. This will be a great time to catch up with old friends. See you there!



Ain't too Proud to Beg

Really, we ain't. This is a list of stuff that we sure wish we had. If you are of a mind to donate any of these things, we'd be proud to take it. And remember, your donations are tax-deductible and we can supply you with a receipt. Call our office at 432-7874 and Trish will gladly talk with you about how you can help.

Pennies from Heaven:



Cash – we are always grateful to receive, in any amount. Stop by our office to check out our Habitat merchandise – our NEW "Teamwork Makes the Dream Work" T-shirt, books, hammer-screwdriver sets, note cards – all priced to sell!

All your worldly goods:



We urgently need refreshments for our laborers. Lunches, morning snacks, and cases of bottled water, juice, iced tea, lemonade, and sports beverages would be terrific.

A gift of LAND – we need building lots all around Otsego County. Donations are great, but if you have some land you'd like to sell, we may buy it if the location and price are right.



We are updating our affiliate history. If you have any memories, documents, or photos to share, please call or email our office. All documents and photos will be safely returned.

We need people to volunteer behind the scenes on our family, fundraising, public relations, and volunteer committees. And people for our Board of Directors. For a relatively small donation of your time, you will receive a world of fun and friendship in return.

We would like a person who has the experience and contacts to promote us to local and county governments.

We would also like a person with photo/video experience who could develop a promotional video.

And if you have specific building skills to bring to the site (and maybe a desire to teach or lead a small crew) – wow!