



# HABITAT HAPPENINGS

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## Large or Small, Inside and Out – Fundraisers Keep Us in Business

*Editor's Note: I like to believe that angels walk among us, dressed as humans. In these tough economic times, we continue to be awed by, and grateful for, the enthusiastic support of individuals and organizations who donate their time, resources and talents to help us continue our mission of eliminating poverty housing in Otsego County. This issue of Habitat Happenings is devoted to thanking these angels.*

### SECOND ANNUAL RICHARD COUCH MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT RAISES \$4,000

On September 19, 76 golfers participated in our second annual Richard Couch Golf Tournament. We had great support from the Oneonta Country Club, SUCO, our partner families, and from many local merchants and friends. Even Mother Nature cooperated with us this year and the rain held off until late in the evening after all the festivities were completed.

The golfers enjoyed our welcome bags and everyone who donated to our raffle received one of the prizes that were graciously donated to us by local merchants. The winner's share of the 50/50 drawing was over \$300. We had Sponsors for every hole and also for some golf carts. Best of all members of the Couch family were with us for the entire day. Nancy helped with the set up and greeting and the boys both played in the tournament. HFHOC contributed 10% of our net proceeds to an education fund for Nancy's sons.

The golf tournament was a great success socially and financially and it was a lot of fun. We look forward to next year's tournament. Mark your calendars for October 18, 2011.



**Nancy Couch, pretty in blue and green, is surrounded by Habitat volunteers at the registration table.**

**MORE STORIES ON PAGE 4, 6, and 7**

### BOARD MEMBER ORGANIZES CHURCH DINNER



**Chef Alton, with church volunteer Georgia Meader, take a moment to smile for the camera.**

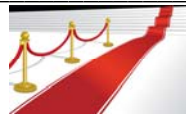
On September 17, Board member Alton Van Cleef, along with his wife Linda, hosted a delicious dinner at Christ Episcopal Church in Cooperstown. Chef Alton prepared Beef Stroganoff, accompanied by a medley of garden-fresh vegetables. Members of their congregation, along with 18 Habitat board members and two home owners, assisted in the serving of the meal and the welcoming of over 70 guests to the dining room. Over \$800 was raised during this first-time event.

Linda Van Cleef said, "The idea for this meal was Alton's and he had several reasons to do this for Habitat. [First], we had an abundance of garden items and a desire to share. We also have a God-given ability for food preparation and hospitality which we enjoy using to the common good. [T]here is a need for people to gather in these times of difficulty and share their ideas and enjoy a sense of camaraderie. An inexpensive meal out is nice in this time of high prices."

Linda added, "It was very heartwarming to see Habitat members taking time to talk to others about the work Habitat does and how it operates. We pray that this can be a real stepping stone for the organization and that this can be done again, perhaps in other places by other people, as a way to raise funds as well as awareness."

## I Have the Floor

By Jeanne Miller, President



I was recently interviewed by a student at SUNY Oneonta for a paper she was writing about the problem of substandard housing. I was pleased to discover that, in thinking of solutions, she had thought first of Habitat for Humanity and wanted to learn more about it. I was happy to answer her questions and provide her with the details about HFHOC and our partner families. Unfortunately, I didn't have such good answers for her questions about the multiple causes of substandard housing and other possible remedies.

I appreciated this student for asking these questions and for her concern. It reminds me that we all need to continue educating ourselves and looking for solutions to the serious problems that affect us all. If we want to start locally, a good beginning reference is the study that was conducted recently by a large group of concerned citizens (including our own board member, Norm Tiffany) about housing needs in Otsego County. You can find the report and the recommendations online at the Otsego County website by searching for the "Otsego County Housing Needs and Opportunities Study." At the other end of the spectrum, the Habitat for Humanity International website can provide you with the worldwide perspective.

If you have any questions about Habitat for Humanity of Otsego County, I hope you'll call our office at 432-7874. One of our board and/or committee members will be happy to get back to you with as much information as you need.

Finally, this is my last newsletter article as president of the HFHOC board of directors as my term ended in October. It has been an honor to serve the volunteers and partner families and I'm looking forward to continuing my work on the board and in committees. As always, I invite you to join us by assisting with building, on any of our committees. Remember that "teamwork makes the dream work."



**A pretty fall day at the worksite – why don't you drop by?**



**Say it with flowers, or a plant: (L-R): Treasurer Peggy Fowler, incoming Vice-President Bruce Downie, and incoming President Karen Joest surprise outgoing President Jeanne Miller with a gift from the Board. Jeanne served two terms as Board President, and all of us at HFHOC are grateful for the gift of her consistent and dedicated leadership. Thank you, Jeanne, for a job extremely well done!**

## Awl About Us



Habitat for Humanity International was founded on Christian principles as a housing partnership that welcomes everyone, regardless of religion, to work toward our goal of a world without poverty housing. The Otsego County affiliate was founded in 1989. Since then, we have built 27 houses in Otsego County. We have also tithed to Habitat for Humanity International to complete 28 houses in other countries. HFHI's mission is to see that everyone in the world can someday own a simple, decent, affordable home.

We build on 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.

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

**Our construction supervisor is Jon Edgington. Our office manager is Trish Dukes.**

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: Karen Joest  
 Vice-President: Bruce Downie  
 Secretary: Emily Ernsberger  
 Treasurer: Peggy Fowler  
 Assistant Treasurer: Ann Morris

**Board members: Barbara Dauria, Mary Ann Dowdell, Bruce Downie, Emily Ernsberger, Starr Hobb, Bill O'Dea, Judith Russell, Alton Van Cleef, Kerry Wagner, Steve Walsh, and Cecilia Zapata.**

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.

## Bruce Downie – Our Nominee for Habitat International Volunteer of the Year!

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Each fall, Habitat International invites affiliates to nominate outstanding volunteers for their Lifetime Achievement Award. This year, we are proud to nominate Bruce Downie. In January, four winners will be selected by HFHI and will be flown to Atlanta to be honored at a special ceremony. We know you will join all of us in congratulating Bruce on his nomination, and hope that Habitat International will select him for this honor that he so richly deserves.



Bruce joined our affiliate in 1995, and served with distinction as President from 1999 to 2001. He is presently a member of nearly every committee in our affiliate, including nominations, construction, volunteer, site procurement and the Board of Directors.

Bruce works at our building sites least two days per week. In addition to our regular days, he also goes on his own time, working alone or with one or two other experienced volunteers. As a retired engineer and skilled electrician, he brings a special expertise and is willing to share his knowledge with students from our local Job Corps. He supervises on site learning, teaching the students principles of wiring a residence.

Bruce makes it a point to introduce himself to the neighbors at our work sites. He asks for, and receives, access to their electricity and water. Such is Bruce's charm and enthusiasm that neighbors often also bring over snacks and beverages.

Rev. Olu Harding, pastor of Elm Park UM Church, wrote a letter in support of Bruce, his friend and church member. He said,

"Bruce currently serves as Chair of the Trustees of the Elm Park United Methodist Church, a position he has held for several years. There is no one more faithful to serving Elm Park than Bruce, as evidenced by his work on a wide range of committees and his participation in a large number of church events...Bruce can be counted on to encourage the participation of others in our ministries. Bruce is truly a blessing to Elm Park."

In addition to this wonderful letter of support, Board Member Barbara Dauria also wrote to support Bruce's nomination. Barb said,

"You'll see Bruce almost everywhere we're working, and he's done almost every job...Bruce has been the person keeping the wheels turning and the construction projects moving forward. He asks nothing for himself, never shirks both administrative and the physical work when it needs doing, and consistently reminds our board, 'Our mission is to build houses.'

"Bruce has spent most of his life in the Oneonta area; hence, he seems to know almost everyone, who they're related to, what they do and land they own. Not only has he done his own work for Habitat (and lots of it), but he's recruited, from his vast wealth of connections – others to work on construction, as volunteers, and the board. He's also suggested where unadvertised land might be available...he's never been afraid to ask, and never seems to get discouraged no matter what the response. He just keeps on asking, and the successes eventually come.

"During a smooth board meeting, you might not hear three sentences from Bruce; but he'll wade in anytime he's asked. He keeps us moving forward, and encourages us to follow the guidelines we've been given by Habitat International. He's not afraid to place himself in a slightly adversarial position if it helps to keep us focused on building as many homes as possible, as efficiently as possible, and for the most deserving families.

"These are the kinds of things Bruce does, many invisible to the active Board members who just see him at their monthly meetings. As he never boasts about all this, many of us don't realize how totally involved and completely committed this man is. But we'd be progressing much slower without him."

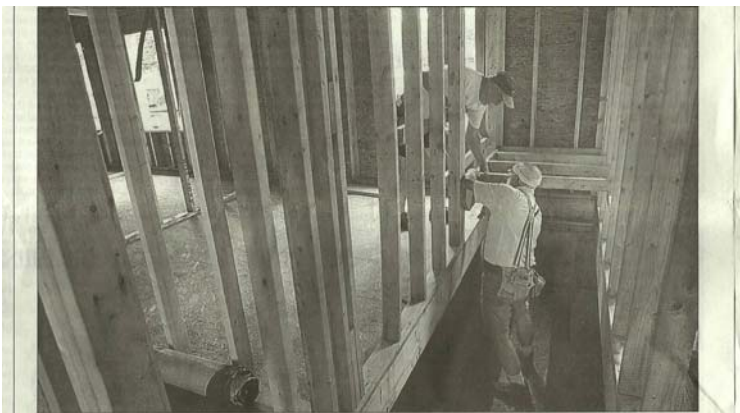
Large or Small, Inside and Out – Fundraisers Keep Us in Business - *More stories!*



**Angels from Out of Town:** Members of the Telford, PA Trinity United Church of Christ traveled to Oneonta in June. They spent a week with us, at their own expense, working on our house on Morse Street in the Town of Oneonta. The crew, headed by Jim and Myra See, are shown starting their first day of work.



**The house, shown at the end of the crew's last day – clearly, a good week's work!**



**Lending a helping hand**

Steve Leshinskie, left, and Stewart Hafler work Monday on a floor joist in a stairwell at a home being built on Miles Avenue in Oneonta by Habitat for Humanity of Otsego County. Leshinskie and Hafler are from Trinity United Church of Christ in Telford, Pa. Ten of the church's members are visiting to help with the project and will be working on the house through Friday.

**The Daily Star covered the visit too!**



**After that good week's work, we hosted an ice-cream social for our benefactors. Trinity leader Jim See (in white, far right), chats with other members of his church. Later Jim, on behalf of all members of the congregation, presented us with a substantial cash donation.**



**Lunch break!**



**Why we do what we do: Jim speaks with members of the family who will be buying the house.**

## 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.*



### **Cents-i-ble giving:**

We're always grateful to receive ca\$h, in any amount. Thanks so much for your continued generosity!



**Food and Shelter:** **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 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.

## CARE TO SHARE OUR OFFICE?

We have a **furnished** one-person office in our suite.

Quiet and privacy make it ideal for writing, research, or an individual professional practice.

Outstanding location in a prime office complex.

\$300 per month includes electricity, heat and hot water, kitchenette, restroom, and reception area.

**Reference required!!**

Can be seen Tue-Thu, 10:00-2:00, or call Trish at 432-7874 for an appointment.



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



**Large or Small, Inside and Out – Fundraisers Keep Us in Business - *More stories!***  
*Some of our most important sources of support are the donations of good and services. Below are some stories of people who donate with their hands and hearts.*

We missed a couple of photo ops! In July, volunteers from Carpenters LU 19 donated a day of professional labor. Bruce Downie sent a letter to the union, and portions are quoted here:

*The job site was blessed today with two men from the Union. It was a pleasure to have experienced volunteers on the site and good use was made of their time. The individuals were Mr. Glenn Sullivan and Mr. Curt Terrano, who worked with us from 8:30 AM until 2:00 PM.*

*Lunch was provided by the First United Methodist Church of Oneonta and, after lunch, Mr. Terrano gave us a short safety tutorial similar to what he would do at their union job site. It made us all aware of some safety issues that we could improve upon.*

*They were encouraged to return again soon and to remind their co-workers that experienced volunteers are always welcomed and needed. We would like to thank the local union 19 for making their visit possible.*



**(L-R) Mike Saggese and Paul Biesler, of Seward Sand and Gravel, shown with HFHOCers Bruce Downie and Mike Donahue. Mike and Paul donated a day of labor on our water and sewer excavation.**

Not shown, but also much appreciated, are Chris Little, owner of Otego Electric and Plumbing, and his employee Vern Glidden. They performed water and sewer installation, again donating their labor.



**Tom Pondolfino, City water inspector, appears to have liked their work!**



**On Saturday, October 9, members of SUNY Oneonta's Phi Kappa Psi donated a work day. Pictured above, doing preliminary landscaping, are (L-R) Jose Polanco, Joseph Repalone, Garrett Schnettler, Kevin Moke, and Jaraad Gardner.**



**Jason Sagat, of Phi Kappa Psi, paints interiors. Shown below is his frat brother Joseph Miller, doing some carpentry under HFHOCer Emery Herman's direction.**



**Community volunteer and Springbrook student Morgan Bouchard assists worksite supervisor Jon Edgington.**

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**Luncheon is served:** on Saturday, September 25, the Unitarian Universalist Society provided chili and sandwiches for our worksite volunteers. UU member Norma Lee Havens reports on the day.

*“Martha Robinson and I did the delivery and serving. Martha and members of [UU’s] Social Action Committee did much of the cooking. Martha and I had a great time meeting people—especially the community volunteers and the college kids [from the SUNY Oneonta HFH Campus Chapter]. There were 10 students, and they were so pleased by their experience.*

*“The house and site are great. Thank you for the work you do with Habitat.”*



**Martha Robinson dishes up chili.**  
 Photos by Norma Lee Havens



**On Saturday October 2, the good folks at Wightman’s Lumber in Portlandville invited us to participate in their annual Customer Appreciation Open House. Throughout the day, HFHOC volunteers staffed the refreshment table, selling beverages, snacks, and hot dogs that are provided by Wightman’s. This is our fourth year in a row that we’ve staffed the table, with Wightman’s donating all proceeds to Habitat.**

**Pictured above (L-R): President Jeanne Miller, Family Selection Chair Sue Melchior, volunteer Tom Hegeman, Newsletter Editor Marie Hegeman, and Site Procurement and Development Chair Alton Van Cleef.**



**Volunteer Anne Ward, shown with her husband, HFHOC Fundraising Chair Bruce Ward, inspect the table before opening for business. HFHOC earned several hundred dollars during the day, as Wightman’s conducted tours of their specialty lumber milling business.**



Wishing you the joys of home, at this special time of year.



*In this Issue*  
*What we've been doing...*



Golf tournament!



Church dinner!



Candle sales!



House building! – with visiting groups and friends from home...



*And why we do it...*



Melody and Matthew Stiles at the dedication of their new home. October 10, 2011.