Measuring Habitat for Humanity’s Impact

One of the frequent questions asked by people interested in volunteering or making a financial commitment to programs focusing on homeownership is about the impact it has on individuals, families, and communities. Very little can compare with the smiles on the faces of new Habitat homeowners and the joy they experience when they receive the keys to their new homes. But once families settle in their homes and their immediate elation wears off what are some of the social and economic benefits they can expect long-term?

Continued on inside
Dear Neighbors, Friends, and Supporters:

I am privileged to be writing you once again to thank all of you who have contributed their time, talent, and treasure to the on-going success of Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity. It was another rewarding year for our affiliate and for the families we helped realize the dream of affordable homeownership. In this issue of Views from the Porch, you will read about some of our accomplishments and about how MVHH continues to foster strength, stability, and self-reliance through shelter for Merrimack Valley first-time homeowners.

Nothing is more gratifying to me, my fellow Board members, our staff, and our many volunteers as when MVHH is able to celebrate the completion of new homes. On a rainy day in June we did just that when we dedicated our Veterans Build in Lawrence. The weather did not dampen the spirits of the many local dignitaries, volunteers, donors, Board members, and staff who were there to dedicate the new homes of the Maldonado and Velazquez families. The build on Phillips Street took just under two years to finish and throughout the process we worked hand-in-hand with the families and veterans groups in what proved to be an exceptional experience.

Family selection is well underway for four new homes on Lopine Road in Andover and we anticipate that one of them will also house a veteran family. This will be the first time MVHH has built in that community and we are partnering on the project with Andover Community Trust, which will build two of the six homes. Over the summer our two organizations purchased the land from South Church in Andover and we have already begun construction on the site.

Another new community where we plan to build up to seven homes in the next few years is Salisbury. Construction on the first three of the homes also started recently. The Salisbury build presents an opportunity for the affiliate to engage new businesses, faith communities and individuals on this exciting project. To help jump-start the build, we successfully recruited 10 AmeriCorps NCCC volunteers who will be joining us for an entire month in late Fall.

In addition to our builds in the Merrimack Valley, a group of volunteers, Board members, and staff participated in an international build in the Dominican Republic, where the need for affordable housing is acute. For just over a week in March, we worked in collaboration with the local Habitat affiliate to assist families with needed repairs and upgrades to their homes in San Juan de la Maguana. It was such a meaningful way of extending our affiliate’s engagement abroad that we are planning another international build in the near future.

I want to conclude by thanking all of you—our neighbors, friends, and supporters—for your commitment to making our Merrimack Valley affiliate so successful. We certainly could not have accomplished all we did this past year without your generous financial contributions, in-kind donations, and countless hours of volunteering as we continue to help deserving families by providing them with an opportunity to fulfill their dreams of affordable homeownership.

Sincerely,
Dick Sumberg
President, Board of Directors

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Veterans become homeowners

In spite of the weather, there were smiles at the June dedication of two new homes. Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity’s first-ever Veteran Build in Lawrence was completed in just under two years. Home supporters included many local corporations, the Veterans Northeast Outreach Center (VLOC), and local Lawrence veteran’s organizations and individuals.

“Many of these donors have been long-time supporters of MVHH, and thanks to their commitment and generosity we were able to make the dream of affordable homeownership a reality for two deserving veteran families,” said Randy Larson, Executive Director of MVHH.

Two veterans, who honorably served, worked side-by-side with volunteers. Like all Habitat homeowners, these families contributed a minimum of 360 hours of “sweat equity” working on the construction of their home and the homes of others. These three-bedroom, one and one-half-bathroom homes were made possible by generous sponsors, donated materials and over 500 volunteers contributing 13,000 volunteer hours.

Veterans Joseph Maldonado and Isidoro Velazquez now reside at Phillips Street in Lawrence and are brand new homeowners.

Isidoro Velazquez is a veteran of the Vietnam War who moved from Puerto Rico to Massachusetts. Isidoro, with his wife Ordaliza, have a grown son, who is autistic.

Joseph Maldonado served 25 years in the U.S. Army National Guard—spending 10 years in a port construction unit, and completing his tenure after another 15 years with the combat engineers. Joseph, with his wife Diana, have two small boys who will be able to attend schools, just blocks away from their own backyard.

Thank you everyone at Habitat and everyone that was involved from day one. Thank you so much for getting our family our dream home. Our family thanks everyone for their hard work and donations. Thanks to Habitat, our child enjoys his privacy and is so happy in our new home. May God bless all you do for so many families.

Thank you!

Ordaliza Gomez & Isidoro Velazquez

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Measuring Habitat for Humanity’s Impact, continued from page 1.

We explored different studies outlining both the benefits associated with homeownership as well as the return on investment (ROI) tied to supporting affordable homeownership projects as they relate to both individual families and communities where affordable homes are built, like those we are currently undertaking in Lawrence, Salisbury, and Andover.

Most of the studies reviewed were conducted by other Habitat for Humanity affiliates and were largely based on family partner surveys. Foremost among them was research carried out by Habitat Canada, Habitat of Minnesota, and Habitat for Humanity New York City. Almost universally, the surveys focused on common areas such as education, health, safety, economic well-being, and community engagement as the results clearly reaffirmed the Habitat for Humanity mission.

In New York, for example, children of homeowners were 25% more likely to complete high school and 116% more likely to graduate from college than were renters. In the Habitat Minnesota survey, 83% of the respondents felt their children were safer after moving to a Habitat home. The Canadian study noted equally positive results across the board when 86% of those surveyed reported being happier than when they were renting, as well as feeling healthier, financially better off, and being more civic minded.

Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity has plenty of anecdotal evidence supporting the benefits of affordable homeownership for its family partners. The classic example is that of Sara Saldana who, at the time of her application for a Habitat home, had part-time employment and did not have enough money to pay for a market rate mortgage. She believes the Habitat program, “helped me economically and to be more positive in life and create stability.” Sara and her seven children became a Habitat Family in 1990, held a 20 year note, and happily paid it off in 2010. She added, “I feel so happy, it is like when you win the lottery!” Sara is one of 18 Habitat homeowners who have completely paid off their mortgages. Both she and her children benefited from the opportunity provided by affordable homeownership.

In addition to individual benefits, neighborhoods and communities also experience positive outcomes from embracing and investing in affordable housing. In a 2016 Forbes article, “Why Homeownership Matters,” a “multiplier effect” is cited as bringing additional money to the local economy through shopping and eating out, not to mention adding more tax revenues to community coffers. In a broader sense, the Canadian study indicated that for every $1 spent on affordable housing, there is a comparable $4 social benefit. The cost-benefit analysis conducted for the Minnesota report suggests that the 2,200 MN homeowners were likely using between $6.4M and $9.3M less in government assistance programs annually. Equal detail on ROI was provided in a study by the McLean County, IL Habitat affiliate, which noted that, between 2005 and 2015, the 66 homes built at a cost of $9.9M resulted in $14.6 in local economic activity.

Both the Canadian and Illinois studies provide templates that can be used by Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity to further assess the ROI to the region by investing in affordable housing. Both qualitative and quantitative information in these studies point to the value of bringing additional affordable housing to communities and underscore the importance of providing families with strength, stability, and self-reliance through shelter.

*Research arranged by Ella Fogel, 2018

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Thank You!
No matter who we are or where we come from, we all deserve a decent place to live.

Since our founding in 1985, Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity has helped close to 100 families secure a home. We bring people together to build homes, communities and hope.

This year, two new families are partnering with Habitat for Humanity. The future homeowners of our Franklin St. duplex home will be Henri Tshimbalanga and his wife Annie and Esther Castillo.

When their homes are completed, these two families will leave behind too-crowded, too-expensive, too-unsafe apartments and move into homes they helped build. Homes that will serve as foundations for strength, stability and self-reliance.

Through shelter, we empower.

"Esther is a hard working person, responsible and a considerate individual. I would recommend Esther in a heartbeat in any matter."

Esther Castillo a single mother with two children – a girl and a boy. After her landlord took over her apartment, Esther and her kids moved into a friend’s apartment and currently live together in one bedroom – all in order to save money for a home.

Despite some difficulties in her life she is a nurturing mother for her children and looking to give her children better lives and a nice place to live.

Esther felt blessed when she received the call from Habitat. Finally, she will have the opportunity to buy a home and to gain independence for her and her children.

She is already imagining how the house will look when she can finally move in. She will be able to create and maintain the warm and supportive family she sees as critical to the success of her children.

Through shelter, we empower.

"I can attest to Henri’s strength of character and work ethic. He has proved to be reliable, hard-working and a determined individual. He consistently goes above and beyond …”

Henri Tshimbalanga’s family are originally from the Congo. Four years ago, Henri, with his wife and six children – four boys and two girls – left the Congo due to the dangerous situation and because the future was not looking bright. They arrived in the U.S. speaking only French but within a short period, they learned English and adapted well to their new country.

Since their arrival, they have been living in sub-standard housing.

Henri’s dream is to give his wife and children a comfortable, safe, and a decent place to live.

Henri was so happy when he was selected to partner with Habitat and to have a chance to become a homeowner. He cried and thanked God and Habitat for the opportunity.

He still cannot believe that he is actually building his own house. He and his family put in their sweat equity hours on Thursdays and Saturdays, building alongside volunteers.

“He approaches all that he does with a joyful heart,” and feels blessed to see Habitat volunteers working so hard to help his family fulfill their dream.

The family are already planning to have cookouts and invite friends and family to share the joy of the new house.

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The ReStore is a wonderful combination of a garage sale, a building supply store, and the Brimfield Flea Market. We are unique and offer distinctive products and services.

Many visitors to the ReStore come to find “hidden treasures” and we provide local residents and small contractors with building materials, furniture and household goods at great prices.

The use of the donated materials allows our customers to save money while shopping for great items and diverts reusable materials from our landfills.

The ReStore is a vital component to the success of MVHH by providing added revenue to achieve the mission of affordable housing in the 22 communities that we serve.

There are many reasons I volunteer, but the biggest reason is to witness the impact on our Habitat families. What touches my heart the greatest is watching a family get the keys to their home – and then many years later realizing the impact homeownership has had on stabilizing their lives.” —Tom B., 15 years volunteering with MVHH

ReStore Continues its Success

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To strengthen a community, start with one family.

Schneider Electric volunteer team at our Franklin Street project

Three generations of the Baird family volunteering for National Women Build 2018

$721,912.00 Gross sales

1307 ReStore donors

469 tons diverted from landfill

22,740 Transactions

$32.00 Average sale

Furniture, Appliances: top 2 best-selling departments

Saturday at noon: most popular time to shop

Volunteer with us. volunteer@merrimackvalleyhabitat.org

Without the “power of volunteers” we would not be able to achieve the MVHH vision where everyone has a decent place to live. Thank you.

The Power of Volunteers

Our volunteers come from our community—retired individuals, students, and local business groups make up the core of the much-needed, consistent volunteer corps.

1100+ volunteers of all ages and backgrounds who each year bring their energy and enthusiasm to Habitat for Humanity construction sites, ReStore or serve in other ways.

Without the "power of volunteers" we would not be able to achieve the MVHH vision where everyone has a decent place to live. Thank you.

Volunteer with us. volunteer@merrimackvalleyhabitat.org
Woodland Golf Club and Winchester Country Club

- Mark G., MVHH donor

Over the next year.”

“Habitat for Humanity is a wonderful organization. It not only helps many deserving families achieve home ownership, but also improves the local neighborhood. I appreciate the "hand up, not hand out" philosophy and that there are tangible results that are easy to see. The Merrimack Valley branch in particular has had a very impressive track record with nearly 100 homes built or refurbished, each one of which has made a significant difference in the lives of a family. We support Habitat, and that includes my son who has initiated several fund-raising activities. As he recently turned 16, I look forward to also participating in building events over the next year.”

- Mark G., MVHH donor

Contributed volunteer hours to our office.

We have made every effort to verify the accuracy of this list of contributors, but if your name has been missing, incorrectly or should appear differently in the future, please contact Chellenne Valdez, Business Manager, at 978-681-8858 or chellenne@merrimackvalleyhabitat.org.
Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity has built primarily in the towns of Lawrence, Methuen and Haverhill, but there is critical need for affordable housing across the Merrimack Valley and Essex County, where MVHH serves our 22 communities.

We are building in Salisbury and Andover, MA. MVHH broke ground at 22 Old County Road in Salisbury and will build seven homes. And along with our build partner, Andover Community Trust, we broke ground at 8 Lupine Road in Andover and will build six homes.

With those upcoming builds, we are extending a hand-up to those in need of decent and affordable shelter. And with decent shelter families can thrive and create a better life for themselves.

Families in need of affordable housing live everywhere.

Traveling beyond the Merrimack Valley, a group of volunteers, board members and staff embarked on an international build in the Dominican Republic in the Spring of 2018 and spent just over a week in San Juan de la Maguana.

They mastered the local construction methods by installing cement floors and fabricating cement wall panels.

“I won’t soon forget the faces – the kid who was so excited to take a wheel barrow of dirt; the father explaining it has been 20 years with dirt floors. The experience redefined wealth for me. I look forward to the next trip soon.”
- Peter Poulin, MVHH volunteer at Dominican Republic build