

Habitat for Humanity of Ontario County

Habichat

Spring Edition

May/June 2008

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CONTRACTOR OF THE MONTH



R. Stowe Construction is a home building and re-modeling company with office and home located just East of Honeoye, NY on Rt. 20A. Husband and wife team Bob and Beth Stowe have owned and operated the company, building and remodeling homes in the Finger Lakes and Rochester area since 1982.

Their family includes son Brandon, their daughter Migna and their son in law Nathan, with new born grand daughter Zophia. They round out their family with 2 dogs Marshal and Annabelle, a cat, 2 horses, and a pony, Sweet Pea.

Bob and Beth are active members of the Honeoye United Church of Christ serving as youth group leaders, Trustees, and Sunday school leaders. They have been foster parents for over 12 years, primarily working with teenagers, sharing with them their love of the outdoors through hiking, gardening, camping and traveling. They are passionate about this cause and feel their lives have been greatly enriched through their experiences.

Both have supported HFHOC beginning in 2002 by installing the kitchens in the Hillson Home in Crystal Beach and the Bloomfield home. Bob was construction manager on our recent Honeoye home and his personal, organizational, and technical skills were a key reason the Honeoye 2007 Blitz was the most successful one in our history!

Bob, Beth, and 5 year old son Brandon enjoy very active lives with God, Family, and Community always at the center. HFHOC is extremely fortunate to have them as major supporters.

It is with our sincerest gratitude that we announce **R Stowe Construction, Inc.** as Habitat for Humanity's "Contractor of the Month"

Brothers and Sisters,

Much has happened with the Churches of Ontario County & Habitat for Humanity over the course of the fall and winter.

November 11th, 2007 members of the Victor First United Methodist Church youth group gathered together for the First "Shanty Town Awareness Night".

Youth Members and adult leaders spent a night in the cold and elements to raise awareness of the plight of the homeless in our communities.

The first Homeless for a Night mission ran from 6 p.m. Nov. 11 to 7 a.m. Nov. 12.

60 coats and 20 blankets were collected for Canandaigua Churches in Action. Food collected was given to the Victor Farmington Food Cupboard. \$4,200 in donations were also collected to assist Habitat for Humanity of Ontario County with its mission to provide safe, affordable, decent homes to those in need throughout the county.

The youth came away with a better understanding and appreciation of those in need of basic requirements of shelter, food and clothing. And a better appreciation of the blessings they enjoy in their life.

At Christmas Time, several Geneva Churches held a "House of Worship" open house and walking tour to help raise funds for and awareness of Habitat for Humanity - Ontario County plans to build another home in Geneva in the year 2008. It was a time of coming together to discuss the common bonds shared by different denominations and faiths.

Also during this time, letters were sent out to the churches of Ontario County informing them of the various activities occurring and planned for Habitat for Humanity.

An invitation was extended to all the churches to better understand how Habitat for Humanity and all of its partners can better advance the mission of God's people to assist those in need of safe, clean housing.

-Ken Allen

The following testimony is written by Michele Harris, who with her two children, moved into a completed Habitat for Humanity home in Crystal Beach, Gorham, in January of 2005.

Dreams Do Come True

Our story begins in the early summer of 2004 when a close family friend, Debbie Karl, called and said that Habitat was looking for a family for a house in Crystal Beach. Debbie thought that our family would be the perfect candidate for that home. After multiple interviews, the date of choosing a family closed in. When the phone rang at exactly 7:36 p.m. on an October night in 2004, little did we know that our life was about to change forever. Yes, it was Habitat calling to inform us that our family was chosen for that home!

Days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months as we prepared to get the house ready to become our home. However, the work we put into this house didn't seem like work at all. It seemed like fun because we knew that this house would soon become ours. Finally, on January 31st, our home was finally done and our dream came true. No way would it have been possible for us to own a home without the help and support of Habitat for Humanity!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the kind people from Habitat and Willow Brook Christian Church for allowing us to live the American Dream. Without them, it never would have come true. THANK YOU!

-The Harris Family

Family Selection

By: Jim Schwartz

If you asked a dozen Habitat volunteers to identify the most difficult aspect of a Habitat project, you might get a dozen different answers. The painters might say that the site work is the worst. The plumbers might say that the finish work is the worst. Everyone might agree that fundraising is difficult. Would anyone say that the most difficult aspect is finding a family to serve? Probably not, but that may be the situation in which we at Ontario County Habitat for Humanity presently find ourselves. In the past several months the Family Selection Committee has been sending out application packets, meeting to consider applicants, and meeting some more to discuss strategies. So far, for our planned build in Geneva in 2008, we have not found the right family to benefit from the Build.

One of the unique features of the way Habitat works, and one of the main ingredients of Habitat's success, is the way in which people qualify to receive help from Habitat. Our organization is not a charity serving the neediest of the needy. For a number of reasons, we do not offer our services to the destitute. Neither do we build homes for those who can readily solve their own housing problems. We succeed largely because we families that can almost but not quite afford standard housing and who are willing to invest the sweat equity that is a hallmark of our program. While this window of qualifications leads to excellent long-term sustainability of our program, it also makes it difficult to find just the right family.

The Family Selection Committee has received relatively few completed applications this year. We have looked carefully at the applications we have received, and so far we have not found the family that we believe is the right fit for our build. We are continuing to seek applicants, we are more than willing to work with families on completing the applications, and we are eager to meet with applicants to interview them. With the current "mortgage crisis" and the economic stresses that have been in the news so much lately, we are convinced that there are many families in Geneva that will qualify for help from Habitat. We look forward to finding the right family for our 2008 build.

Habitat for Humanity - Spring Conference

By: Ken Allen

Habitat for Humanity of New York State met on Saturday April 19th 2008 in at the beautiful campus of Ithaca College. Habitat for Humanity of New York State held its Spring Conference.

This was an opportunity for Affiliate Chapters from all across New York State to gather together to renew old friendships, make new acquaintances, discuss challenges, review successes and plan for future activities.

The day also allowed the opportunity to attend workshops designed to hone old skills and create new ones. The day presented opportunities to gain from the knowledge and experiences of other Chapters, Individuals, Educational institutions, and State & National Advocacy groups.

A total of 13 members from Habitat for Humanity's Ontario County Affiliate attended the day long Conference.

Geneva Steering Committee Active in '08

Beginning in the fall of '07, the Geneva Steering committee was reassembled to begin planning, site selection, family selection and fundraising for a Geneva'08 Build. We had hoped to begin groundbreaking by May 1st. However, the intended site proved to be impractical for Habitat families and it was necessary to seek another site. Presently, the committee has applied to the City of Geneva to purchase a site which would provide up to seven buildable lots, when subdivided. We continue to be optimistic that we can begin work this spring.

One fundraiser, a tour of houses of worship, in Geneva, proved to be successful in raising nearly \$1000 and making the public aware of our intent and activity in the city area. A Concert and Silent Auction, held on May 8th at The Smith Opera House in Geneva developed into a major event. Hammered Dulcimer Artist, Dan Duggan and First Lady of Adirondack Music, Peggy Lynn were the featured attraction. Over 300 tickets were in circulation and auction items received so far are reaching a total value of over \$3000. There were some tremendous, unexpected values for winning bidders. See our web site for pictures and News release information.

We are still searching for a family or families for the Geneva site. Perhaps you know of someone who might qualify. Our brochure and web site describe general qualifications. Send us a family name, address, and telephone number via the web site: www.HFHOC.org, tel: 585-425-8960 or 315-789-4398 for application.

The committee meets on the third Thursday each month at 7p.m. in Faith Community Church, 90 Lewis St., Geneva. Come and add your talents to our efforts to eliminate substandard housing and help families in need of a hand UP, instead of a hand OUT.

Submitted by Roger Chapin, committee chair

Freezin' For a Reason

By: Brian Miles

On the very chilly night of December 14, 2007, students in Jody McLaughlin's Leadership Class from Marcus Whitman Central High School held their annual "Freezin' for a Reason" overnight. Spending the night outside in makeshift, cardboard shelters, the purpose of the activity is to raise awareness and get a better appreciation for what it is like to be homeless. Students collect both monetary and clothing donations as part of the event.

This year resulted in one of the largest clothing donations to date, which were given to local relief agencies to be distributed to persons in need. The students also donated \$500 of the monies collected to Habitat for Humanity of Ontario County to be used to help eliminate sub-standard housing in this county.

The Board of Directors of HFHOC applauds these students for their 'frigid fund-raising' and thanks them for their generous donation!



HABITAT HOUSE NOW A HOME

Meet Ontario County's First Habitat for Humanity Family!! Tim and Carol Henshaw, and their two children, Jamie and Adam, were selected to become HFHOC's first family, moving into the county's very first Habitat home on Bristol Street in Canandaigua in 1991. The following is an account of their experience as they look back on that life changing event.

Tim, Carol, Jamie, and Adam Henshaw
11 Bristol Court, Canandaigua
First HFH house in Ontario County, 1991

A month after our first anniversary, we moved into a government subsidized apartment complex. Our two-bedroom upper was small, and in the summer, stiflingly hot. I knew other families had far worse living conditions and I tried hard to be grateful that we had an affordable roof over our heads. But I longed for a real home with a safe yard for the children to play in.

A home manufacturer regularly published floor plans in the newspaper and I cut them out, making note of those features I particularly liked, and put them together in a photo album. I prayed over this album at least weekly. The truth was that I hated the apartment. I hated the noisy playground in a not-so-good section of our city; kids playing on a warm day made it difficult for my babies to nap. And I hated feeling like the office manager and DSS staff approached everyone with a low income as a potential criminal against the system. It was degrading.

My mother-in-law was working at DSS in the early '90's when a representative from Habitat for Humanity, which was newly forming in Ontario County, brought in several applications. She brought us one. I hesitated to fill it out because so many other families were in greater need. My husband insisted, so I did it.

We received a phone call from HFH asking to meet us. The representatives explained that although they don't typically accept applications from families in subsidized housing, ours had been filled out so candidly that they had decided to consider us.

We were invited to a dinner on March 16, 1990 to meet the rest of the members. I expected to also meet the other families being considered, and was surprised to discover that the dinner was in our honor. We had unofficially been selected; only a vote stood between us and my dream home!

A vote and a few months of hard work... but I'd heard that when you pray for something, you need to be willing to be part of the answer. The 500 hours of work that would serve as our down payment on the home was our part of the answer. And the floor plan had all but two of the features I'd most wished for!

Building commenced shortly. During house-raising week, skilled people came to the site as if on cue – even when things were progressing ahead of schedule. When we were ready to put the trusses in place a day before the crane was scheduled, the hearty team proceeded to lift the oversize structures with ropes and pulleys! Without pictures, most contractors wouldn't believe it could be done.

We found exactly the linoleum I'd envisioned within our price range, and when installers learned that the house was being built by HFH, they volunteered their labor too. I painted most of the interior myself while the kids were in school and by the time the house was certified for occupancy and dedicated by Habitat, I'd spent so much time there that it already felt like home.

I'd had a recurring dream for a few years that we'd moved out of the apartment and found ourselves unable to afford another. That fear of homelessness woke me many nights. After we moved in - on Thanksgiving weekend 1991 - I never had that dream again.

The kids are 22 and 24 now. There are marks in the basement charting their growth. We sold the air conditioner, which had been a necessity in the apartment. We use the yard more than the kids did (they preferred video games). Here, we can have bird feeders and plant flowers. I can hang out the laundry. Tim installed a patio across the back a few years ago; now we almost live outdoors in the summer. And all of us now have the security of a place to come home to.



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Looking for a Family

The Family Selection Committee is presently actively searching for a family that will occupy and own a home we will be building in Geneva in 2008. We have mailed applications to 25 families that indicated they were interested in a Habitat for Humanity home. To our disappointment we have only had one completed application submitted to us. So if you know of anyone that would be interested in acquiring a home, please have them contact us at 585-425-8960 and leave their name and phone number.

We would like to select a family now so they can be in on the early planning of the home and we will be able to plan for any special needs they may have.

- Bill Sherry