

The Building Committee: Preparing for Three Busy Years



Eric Moore at a recent construction site. Photo Courtesy of Public Relations Committee Member and Photographer Ray Doucette.

When volunteers first approach GNHFH they usually imagine they'll be working on a construction project. Although these opportunities are available regularly, there is a wide range of areas volunteers are needed for that they might not be aware of: from affiliate historian to press liaison. GNHFH has always been in particular need of volunteers in all these "behind-the-

-scenes" roles. Now, however, the affiliate has come to a critical point in which construction volunteers have become more urgently needed than ever: the Building Committee is facing its greatest need for help with three solid years of house construction beginning next spring: properties are to be erected in Milford, Nashua, and Wilton – each roughly a year at a time.

Building Committee Chairman Eric Moore first approached GNHFH "about 12 years ago". During the week Eric works as a project manager / engineer for BAE Systems. On weekends he has dedicated time managing construction projects for GNHFH – at times working on one small project site

while directing other small projects concurrently at other sites. The question that GNHFH now faces: can the task of managing multiple construction sites be stretched to cover two or three full home constructions at once? It's one thing to juggle a few small projects, but building more than one house at a time is a different proposition. Eric observes: "At this time the goal is one-a-year, for three years... One-a-year is based on volunteer efforts and availability - basically because at the moment we can only work on Saturdays".

Eric does feel that there are some ways the organization could grow strong enough to handle more than one full

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Rob Schafer: First President of Nashua's Habitat Affiliate

by Chris Houpis

Editors Note: This is the first of a series on GNHFH's past presidents. After a substantive but unsuccessful effort to reach former GNHFH President Rob Schafer we decided to begin running the series. We welcome any corrections or feedback on how to reach Schafer.

The founding of GNHFH can be traced back to Rob

Schafer. In 1991 Schafer was living in Hollis, New Hampshire and was a recent graduate with an architectural degree studying to obtain his license. He began volunteering with SoHillCo, the predecessor organization of GNHFH, with his cousin. Given his background, Rob was well suited

for the Building Committee which he was asked to serve on soon after volunteering. Shortly thereafter Rob was elected Chairperson for that committee. Rob produced the blueprints for a duplex on Tolles Street, one of the first building projects the organization completed. Schafer's greatest contribu-

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Current Volunteer Needs

- ASSISTANT OFFICE MANAGER (5 TO 10 HOURS PER WEEK)
- NEWSLETTER MANAGING EDITOR (20 TO 40 HOURS PER QUARTER)
- DATABASE ENTRY (3 TO 5 HOURS A WEEK)
- CONSTRUCTION TEAM LEADERS (HOURS VARY)
- FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN (HOURS VARY BASED ON AMOUNT OF PROJECTS PLANNED)
- 2010 TAKE A HIKE FOR HUMANITY AFFILIATE COORDINATOR (HOURS VARY BASED ON ABILITY TO BUILD A TEAM FOR THE EFFORT)

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Jack F. Kemp: 1935-2009

by Ed Lopez



Former US Congressman and Housing and Urban Development Secretary Jack F. Kemp served on the HFHI Board of Directors from 2000 through 2007.

I met Mr. Jack Kemp in a political context many years ago: what always impressed me about him was a trait that transcended partisan politics and, more importantly, politics itself. Kemp was a statesman. His interest in housing issues stemmed from a passionate commitment to serving those in need. It was this wholehearted commitment that compelled many on the other side of the political aisle to recognize his qualities.

Kemp was, in his own words, a “bleeding heart conservative.” He served on Habitat for Humanity International’s (HFHI) Board of Directors between 2000 and 2007. “Under his leadership, Habitat was able to raise more than \$700 million, enough funding to build nearly 150,000 Habitat homes” according to HFHI.

He stressed the importance of motivating others to serve those in greater need: “Take time for our American family, particularly the least privi-

leged, the lost, and those left behind. After all, as my mother always told us throughout the years, those of us who are blessed have an obligation to be a blessing to others.” His service was a blessing to many; we should honor his memory by inviting others to serve and to rise above the differences that divide us from time-to-time in that pursuit.

Ed Lopez is a member of the Board of Directors and Chairman of the Public Relations Committee. He is pursuing a doctorate in Intelligence Studies at Durham University, in the United Kingdom.

“IF WE HAD STAFF TO SPREAD OUT

CONSTRUCTION, IF WE COULD MATCH FUNDRAISING TO A MORE INTENSE CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE, AND IF WE CAN IDENTIFY PROPERTIES FAR ENOUGH IN ADVANCE, THEN WE COULD CONSIDER WORKING ON MORE THAN ONE PROPERTY AT A TIME”

The Building Committee: Preparing for Three Busy Years (continued)

construction effort at a time. For example, the addition of weekday construction team could greatly accelerate build rates. One challenge here is to find people to work during the week – material can be made available, but the demand has been for *site supervisors*... there must be training and availability for week-day work. These supervisors

would need to be coordinating between the week-time teams and the weekend teams. “If we could break the Saturday-only barrier, by whatever means, it should be self-sustaining”.

Eric added: “If we had staff to spread out construction, if we could match fundraising to a more intense construction schedule, and if we can

identify properties far enough in advance, then we could consider working on more than one property at a time.” Eric believes that now that there are three properties to develop, GNHFH has a little time to find property bargains and even donated land. “Hopefully we will always have a property one year ahead. I would get nervous if we started the

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Rob Schafer: First President of Nashua’s Habitat Affiliate (continued)



The Tolles Street property was first planned under Rob Schafer’s leadership. The Mena family has resided there for 10 years and were recently featured in Nashua’s The Telegraph and The Broadcaster - Photo Courtesy of Marie Lopez

tion to the organization came when he helped lead the process of organizing the volunteers of SoHillCo into a fully affiliated and recognized local Habitat for Humanity chapter. This goal was achieved in 1994 and the organization was then renamed Greater Nashua Habitat for Humanity (GNHFH).

Rob was elected President of GNHFH and served with distinction from 1994 to 1997 until relocating to the Boston Metropolitan area. Former Board member Patrick Verhoff felt one of Schafer’s “principal concerns was to get people involved in a project in order to be able to attract volunteers... they got involved in small projects but found a great opportunity to tackle bigger

projects in the French Hill area” including the Tolls Street Project. To this day, GNHFH remains invested in improving the French Hill area. Schafer also developed a strong partnership with the Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter.

Chris Houpis is a member of the Board of Directors and a member of the Public Relations Committee. He is an Executive at Kronos Incorporated, in Chelmsford, Massachusetts.

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third construction and didn't have something behind it." As a first step towards increasing the house construction rate, Eric wants to make sure GNHFH can continue its small projects in parallel with the next build.

The Building Committee is quite busy with small projects – the challenge for Eric is to find volunteers that are willing to make a regular commitment to helping with these projects and the larger ones

that are about to unfold – there is a particular need for construction volunteers who can help manage the work with him: "Our Committee is looking for anyone with construction expertise... I personally call people who seem to have significant building experience. The challenge is that the availability fluctuates; I try to stay in touch with them and make sure I know where they are. The key thing is there is a need for skilled tradesmen."

Asked what he feels motivate volunteers for his committee, Eric responds: "A huge range of reasons! Some people get satisfaction from watching people be taken care of; many people are there to learn." Those interested in volunteering to help meet these urgent needs are encouraged to contact Eric at the GNHFH office, at 603.883.0295. You can also reach Eric directly by email at eric.moore@nashabitat.org.

"THE CHALLENGE IS THAT THE AVAILABILITY (OF VOLUNTEERS) FLUCTUATES... THERE IS A NEED FOR SKILLED TRADESMEN"

From the Desk of President Jerry Harrow

The energy sure has been building this summer -- and I'm not talking about the weather.

The first source of energy has been the Family Selection committee which has been diligently searching for qualified partner families to enable construction to start on our next home. Applications are still being accepted and processed with follow-up interviews on going. As of this writing it appears that the Tonella Rd property in Milford will be the first to complete this process to enable construction of a duplex to start next spring.

A second source of energy is all the activity swirling around the new *Habitat for Humanity Community Fun Day* to be held Sept 13th at Greeley Park in Nashua. Weekly planning meetings have been held since July to work out the vision, recruit exhibitors and sponsors and plan out the

details of the event. It is so gratifying to see new faces along with some familiar ones join together, build a shared vision, and then work to make it a reality. In this case the vision is to provide a fun-filled day with games, food, and entertainment that enables us to share the mission and ministry of Habitat for Humanity to the broader community (and hopefully raise some funds to support that ministry). Together we can accomplish things we would never dare to attempt on our own, even the elimination of substandard housing.

You might think that you have little to offer in such a huge undertaking, but young or old, novice or professional, we all have something to contribute to make our community a better place. We just need take that first step, and turn our good intentions into action. As Mahatma Gandhi so aptly said, "Be the

change you want to see in the world."

I'm convinced that people long to be a part of a community that they can be proud of. One that builds strength out of its diversity. One that comes together to support those in need. So come Sept 13th I look forward to seeing the bountiful energy of our Greater Nashua community come together celebrating our diversity, learning about the needs of others within our community, and sharing from our bounty to assure all have what they need. I'm sure I won't be disappointed.

Blessings to you and yours,



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A Critical GNHFH Need: a Volunteer Assistant Office Manager

by Marie Lopez



Marie Lopez currently serves as Office Manager. GNHFH is looking for an Assistant Office Manager and volunteers to help the organization manage a large volume of work.

Office work is a critical component in keeping the Nashua affiliate going. There are phone messages to retrieve, mail to be sorted, emails that need to be answered, and a volunteer and mailing list data base that needs to be maintained. Meeting all these challenges helps amplify our ability to build more houses in the Greater Nashua area.

There is also a direct link between taking care of these tasks and fundraising – fundraising opportunities and donations often begin with an email or phone call to the office: when we're not there, we might miss some of these. Our ability to pay attention

to these emails and phone messages can translate into more opportunities for our affiliate to expand and serve more people in need.

One key challenge we have in office management efforts is retaining volunteers: we understand that volunteering takes away from personal time and our daily routine, but the reward is the feeling you will have knowing that you are part of a great organization that helps improve the lives of others in the Greater Nashua community.

At the moment we are in need of a volunteer Assistant Office Manager – someone who can come in at least once a week to work on any

of the tasks mentioned above and more importantly, to help us find volunteers willing to help with these tasks individually. Assisting in this capacity is not an easy task, and requires a consistent commitment.

If you are up to this challenge, and want to immerse yourself in Habitat's mission, please contact us at volunteering@nashahabitat.org.

Marie Lopez is a member of the Board of Directors and serves on the Executive Committee. She is also a member of the Public Relations, Fundraising, Nominating, and Site Selection Committees, and serves as Office Manager. She is the owner of Marie Lopez Photography and studies at the University of New Hampshire.