



Applications Being Accepted for Wilton

2009 Projected to be Very Busy Construction Year

The Family Selection Committee (FSC) has announced that it is now accepting applications for a property to be developed in Wilton. This is in addition to its upcoming project in Nashua, for which it is still accepting applications. This promises to make 2009 a particularly busy year for GNHFH and the FSC.

According to Paul McLaughlin, Family Selection Chairperson and Affordable Housing Specialist for Merrimack County Savings Bank, this presents two new opportunities for "New Hampshire families unable to obtain conventional financing due to affordability issues" but who still "have the ability to save 1% towards down-

payment." Paul identifies several reasons Habitat can help make housing affordable: construction "doesn't include labor due to volunteer builders, thus keeping the cost of the home substantially lower than most; the family only pays for the cost of materials on a no interest mortgage." Paul also points out that the approval process at Habitat is different
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Peter Dobratz: New GNHFH Vice-President

Priorities Include Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

GNHFH Elects New Vice-President

Peter Dobratz has had his hands full for quite a bit of time: he works full-time at BAE Systems, and is a member of the Litchfield Community Church Presbyterian – where he has

been a member of the choir, serves as the Church's Newsletter Editor, and has most recently picked up the responsibility of developing their new website. If that's not enough, for the last five years he has volunteered for GNHFH.

At GNHFH, Peter's volunteer role has expanded to include the Chairmanship of the Technology Committee and will now also include a new role as the Vice-President of the Board of Directors, to which he was elected a few weeks ago. If you think this is quite a
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Ron Dyer at Dutton Street, Manchester, New Hampshire.
 (Photo Courtesy of the Greater Manchester Habitat for Humanity)

Ron Dyer Heads to Manchester

Ron Dyer first volunteered for GNHFH in 1996— motivated by a series of Landmark courses that encouraged him to get involved in community service, he found Habitat for Humanity's message compelling: "it was a chance to help people help themselves." With that motivation,
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Here's How You Can Help GNHFH

- We're looking for a **Youth Coordinator**: many youth organizations offer to help us out. We need a volunteer to help us organize these efforts.
- We're looking for **Building Project Team Leaders**: our construction projects are run by teams of volunteers. Do you think you can help us by becoming a leader in our building projects?

Call us at 603.883.0295 for more information..

Applications for Wilton (Continued from page 1)

in that it has a more personal angle to it. Habitat "actually visits applicants to better understand their needs."

There are three main criteria in the process of selecting a family: actual need, the family's ability to pay for a no interest mortgage loan, and willingness to partner with Habitat. The ability to partner is demonstrated several ways, most especially through sweat equity: 350 hours of it are required before they can become homeowners. This work includes construction in several dimensions; participation in partnership workshops regarding financing, working with Habitat committees, fundraising events, newsletter work, office manning, and, potentially, working on homes other than their own. They can also help with small projects. Up to 20% of their

sweat equity can come from friends and relatives. Construction could take up to a year and takes place on Saturdays.

GNHFH has enclosed two flyers with this newsletter edition, in English and in Spanish each. Habitat is asking for help from those who receive the newsletter in the pursuit of applicants for both the Wilton property and the Nashua property. Habitat is asking that the flyers be posted on bulletin boards in churches, businesses, buildings or any other public area where potential applicants might learn about the mission of Habitat for Humanity and the properties that are now available in Nashua and Wilton. For more information, please contact GNHFH at office@nashabitat.org.

Volunteers Needed for Public Relations Committee Work

The Public Relations Committee (PRC) is searching for volunteers that will help the committee expand its outreach efforts. The committee seeks writers to contribute short articles and interviews for the newsletter once a quarter, individuals who are willing to work with the media in several capacities, including the distribution of "Public Service Announcements" and press releases. "The recent election of new GNHFH Board Members, the new year right around the corner, and the upcoming Nashua and Wilton construction projects make the expansion of the PRC a particularly important need at the moment."

For more information, please contact Public Relations Chairperson Ed Lopez at our GNHFH office: 603.883.0295, or email him at ed.lopez@nashabitat.org.

New GNHFH Vice-President (Continued from page 1)



Kristel and Peter Dobratz with their newborn son, Thomas (Photo Courtesy of the Dobratz Family)

bit of work, consider the fact that Peter and his wife Kristel, also a GNHFH volunteer, recently welcomed Thomas, their first child, into their family.

In his role as Chairman of the Technology Committee Peter has worked closely with all aspects of Information Technology at GNHFH, making sure that computers are upgraded, that computers are wirelessly connected to the internet, and that other basic technological needs such as

telephone lines are all in proper working order at the GNHFH office. Among the most important responsibilities he has tackled: the development and maintenance of the GNHFH website. Along with fellow Technology Committee members Sandra McCarthy and Steve Murphy, Peter has managed this critical communication tool – a vehicle for volunteer recruitment, news dissemination and fundraising. In recent weeks Peter has been working on a new version of the GNHFH website. His new role as Vice-President will not push these foci into a lower echelon of his "To-Do" list: his new role actually offers an opportunity for him to magnify these efforts in a way that can bear even greater influence over the broader operations of the organization.

One key point Peter would like to focus on is getting more volunteers involved and building a system on the technology side that will help make volunteer recruitment and retention more efficient. "As Vice-President I would like to help create a better system of communication between the website's volunteer form and the database where this information

is stored for use." Peter would like to see the interface of a volunteer form on the GNHFH website work in tandem with the database system that is currently updated manually.

GNHFH President Jerry Harrow has also been looking forward to upgrading the database system. The development of a new website might prove to be instrumental in this pursuit.

Although Peter is busier than ever, he is truly looking forward to working in his new role. Has he had to give other responsibilities up to do this? "I've previously sung in the choir (at Litchfield Community Church Presbyterian), but now I don't have the time with the new baby at home." Peter was quite happy to report, however, that his newborn Thomas has finally reached a point where he is sleeping five hours in a row. Despite this, with his new responsibilities as Vice-President at GNHFH the choir may have to wait just a little bit longer before Peter is back.

Nashua and Manchester Partnership

In recent months the Manchester affiliate of Habitat for Humanity has been in the process of rebuilding a volunteer base and its leadership. An important catalyst for growth in these two areas, was an Extreme Makeover Home Edition that took place in Manchester and aired in the early part of 2008.

An event at the Verizon Wireless Arena, in which the aforementioned episode was

aired, included activities promoting volunteerism in New Hampshire. Nashua and Manchester Habitat for Humanity volunteers shared a table there, where they both recruited many volunteers. This resulted in a partnership that gave Nashua the chance to lend a hand over the course of this year for several projects including the construction of a home on Dutton Street, in Manchester. Over the course of several Saturdays,

Eric Moore, Chairperson of the Building Committee at GNHFH, took his Nashua team to Manchester where volunteers worked together. The chance for the two chapters to interact provided more than a commonality of experiences for volunteers—it also helped grow the pool of volunteers and leaders for both affiliates. The two chapters will continue working together as opportunities become available.



nice car.

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Ron Dyer Heads to Manchester (Continued from page 1)

Ron embarked on a journey with GNHFH that would last 12 years. Most recently, Ron served as Vice-President of the GNHFH—he now leaves for Manchester, where he will become the Executive Director of the Greater Manchester Habitat for Humanity.

The same motivation led him to organize a project involving other people: Take-a-Hike for Humanity. It is with that project that Ron's name has become synonymous with Habitat for Humanity in the Nashua and Greater Boston Area: an effort that began with 12 participants in 1996 eventually grew into an event involving up to 12 Habitat Affiliates and about 400 participants. The event expanded with the encouragement of former GNHFH Vice-President Patrick Verhoff, who characterized a successful event as one in which "Habitat is able to produce a \$10 increase in funds!"... Take-a-Hike raised \$1,700 its first year: in recent years it has raised up to \$50,000 for regional affiliates. The event has often taken place at more than one site—sometimes up to three concurrent ones, including Raymond and Jaffrey, New Hampshire, as well as Milton, Massachusetts. From there, Ron kept working on projects until his responsibilities grew to include the GNHFH Board of Directors.

In all these years of experience Ron found two challenges that were always difficult

to overcome: "There are never enough people willing to commit what it takes to be leaders of the organization; this comes down to a few people managing all aspects of the organization." Ron feels that the challenges are not just organizational, however: "We have always been extremely challenged trying to find property—it challenges the organization to stay viable in the absence of land to build projects on." Despite the challenges, Ron is proud of the many successes that GNHFH has had over the years and is grateful for the chance that he had to be a part of that. He can also point out how extensive the work can be, even—or especially—when there is no construction going on. Ron worked on a number of committees including the Public Relations Committee, often tackling the newsletter or visiting organizations in an effort to recruit volunteers.

Last year, Ron began to transition into his position as Executive Director of the Greater Manchester Habitat for Humanity; however after the recent election of a new GNHFH Board of Directors Ron made a full transition there.

In Manchester, Ron has found a number of challenges too, but he feels prepared to tackle them. Discussing some of these over lunch at a small Hungarian restaurant in Manchester, you can sense Ron's ambition for the Manchester affiliate. He

tells us of the many changes that have taken place: many new leaders have joined the Board of Directors and many volunteers have been recruited... but many projects were on hold and are requiring a "catch-up" period. One can also sense that Ron misses working at the Nashua affiliate, but his experience with GNHFH seems to be exactly what Manchester needs.

Ron's job requires him to be in the office with greater frequency than volunteers who fit in their service between private sector, academic, and, or home and family responsibilities. "People are shocked to get someone on the phone or a call back when they call the Manchester Affiliate!" explains Ron.

As Ron takes us around a Manchester project, one in which the GNHFH lent a hand, he points out some of the changes that had to be decided on the spot, including the removal of a window to accommodate a stairway running parallel to it on the outside. It's analogous to the need to improvise in an affiliate like Manchester, where new leaders are laying the foundation for a new agenda while managing projects that had stalled for so long. Ron has had good training for this at the GNHFH—more importantly, he can count on many friends in Nashua who are always willing to help.

GREATER NASHUA HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

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From the Desk of the President



The leaves have changed colors and then fallen, and I've already seen a few flakes of snow in the air. You might assume that the work of Habitat for Humanity slows significantly over the winter, and you would be partially right. Without an enclosed house underway this winter, there will be definitely be fewer construction opportunities (though there are sure to be some minor repair projects here and there), however the behind-the-scenes work never stops. There is still much work necessary to enable the start of our next house project in the spring. This winter a key task is the selection of our next partner family. Applicants are selected based upon need, willingness to partner with Habitat, and their ability to afford the zero-percent interest mortgage for the construction costs of the home. If you know of someone who might benefit from the opportunity to own an affordable home, please share with them the possibility of being a partner family with Habitat and encourage them to apply. Additional information is available on our web site or by calling the office.

As we enter the holiday season, I pray that each of you will re-experience Christmas through the eyes of a child; looking beyond the busyness and commercialism to the joy and love that Christ brings. Embrace that love, and share it with the world in whatever way you can. Blessings to you and yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim".

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