

Working in partnership with members of the community, Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity builds homes, hope, and community in Hampshire and Franklin Counties.

# Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity Newsletter

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 3

FALL 2013

## LOOKING FORWARD:

- Now – Build with us at Garfield Avenue in Northampton
- September 23<sup>rd</sup> – PVH Annual Meeting
- October 1<sup>st</sup> – World Habitat Day
- Mid-October – Women Build Steering Committee Meeting
- October 12<sup>th</sup> – Family Information Meeting
- December 7<sup>th</sup> – Gingerbread Build

## PVH BOARD

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Eric Marsh



## Beginnings And Endings

### BILL GEMMELL

Bill joined our office on August 5 in the new position of Construction Volunteer Coordinator. He has been volunteering with PVH for three years on sites in Florence and Amherst and believes very strongly in the mission of the organization. Bill has a background in business while sustaining a contractor business for twenty years. He will be responsible for coordinating build teams, individual volunteers, site supervisors, and volunteer orientations. He will also be serving to support the Build Team leaders to ensure that materials and resources are on sites in a timely manner. Bill may be contacted at [volunteer@pvhabitat.org](mailto:volunteer@pvhabitat.org).



Bill Gemmell

### BUILD UPDATES

As board member Walt Kohler was quoted in the Letters to the Editor section



Wright Builders helps PVH once again

of the Daily Hampshire Gazette in late July, “While most of us were trying to figure out how to keep cool in the 90 degree-plus heat, four professional carpenters employed by Wright Builders and a few volunteers spent a day installing the roof on the latest Pioneer Valley habitat for Humanity home under construction on Garfield Avenue in Florence.”

### PINERO HOUSE

Construction at 887 Belchertown Road in Amherst came to a terrific completion celebrated at the dedication



Another beautiful Habitat house in Amherst

on Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> with the Pinero family, volunteers, and Pioneer Valley Habitat staff. Thanks to so many volunteers and Lesley’s sweat equity this house was built in only nine months! NCTV, Channel 2, Channel 22 and Channel 40 lauded this building accomplishment. Enjoy NCTV footage from the [ceremony](#).

### PUBLIC RELATIONS

Two videographers from the Northampton Community



NCTV crew interviewing Lesley Pinero at her house dedication

Television station are working on a video about our works in the Valley. You may see Jennifer Ramsay and Margarita Maiz who been taping at our wall-raising, dedication, work sites, and conducting personal interviews. Let [us](#) know if you would like to be interviewed too.

### KIDS HELP US BUILD

The Florence Congregational Church chose Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity as its mission for the children’s Vacation Bible School this summer. They incorporated into their theme of Kindom Rock that building a house is part of building a strong community. Children raised more than



Children watched their dollars add up as the leaders placed framing in place to illustrate the building of a house.

\$300 dollars with the idea of buying framing wood and paint for our next house. “Children collected dollars and cents as an offering to your mission. We are very excited to be sharing in this project with you”, said Pastor Irven Gammon of the Florence Congregational Church.

Volunteers, school groups, and Team Builds are welcome to build so sign up through [Volunteer Up](#)

# Where Are They Now?

## Sylvia Johnson: An Experienced Habitat Owner

by Elizabeth von Klemperer

Sylvia and Ernest Johnson live in a Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity house on Forbes Avenue in Northampton. Sylvia's life includes several moves and she looks back on them happily—as she does on life in general, including the people who have filled it and the things on which she has worked.

Sylvia is what some of us call “a people person,” but really, she is also an artist, sensitive to the shapes, colors and sounds that she sees and creates—and to all the people in her life. Her positive view of life is evident in her behavior: her black eyes sparkle, her frame is small but lively. She is so eager to talk about the things she loves that the words tumble out.



Sylvia Johnson at her Habitat house

Sylvia spent her early years in a house in Philadelphia. Her family was musical and liked to sing together, but her mother was determined that she learn to play “a real instrument,” so she took piano lessons.

Music filled the apartment in New York City where she moved with her husband and their three kids and spent the next part of her life. Visitors filled the apartment along with music—the more the better. In 1986 they started to take in nephews. They liked visitors to stay—and in fact some did stay pretty long: a brother-in-law came for a weekend and stayed for 27 weeks. Today Sylvia figures that she raised 8 children: three from her and her husband and one from her husband.

What about household chores in a group as fluid as that? According to Sylvia, “everybody did everything.” This was in keeping with the Johnsons' present housekeeping in their Habitat

house: there is no division of labor, no man's work or woman's work. The Johnsons welcome manual work, handling wood or plaster or paint. Since moving to Massachusetts they discovered a new area of pleasure—gardening, for which they had no space in the city.

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## The Johnsons' motto is “always help people... Always help people with their dreams.”

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What was it like feeding all those young and old who dropped by or stayed a while? There was always food, says Sylvia; they always prepared more than enough. Now that they live in the country they find new ways to share. Sylvia creates new flavors from her herb garden and exchanges seedlings with her neighbors. For Sylvia, feeding the body goes with feeding the soul.

Her husband, she says, “is a very spiritual person.” So, it seems, is she. She has always been interested in religion: she once wanted to be like John the Baptist. She feels that her becoming a Habitat family was divinely ordained and that God has been present in the work she has done on her house.

Sylvia appreciates Shakespeare's words, “If music be the food of love...” For years she and her husband have reached out to others through their music: they played in churches, at parties, at weddings. In recent years Sylvia has been increasingly attracted to visual arts. She spent a year in art school. She draws, paints, sews, sculpts, and her works bring in money. What does she do about marketing? The word puzzles her. People like her work, she says; when they see a special doll, for example, they ask “May I buy it?”

The Johnsons' motto is “always help people.” This could mean many things, but Sylvia likes to add her focus: “Always help people with their dreams.”

## Women Build...It Is Time To Network

We are looking for volunteers to serve on committees for our first-ever Women Build home which is also the MJ Adams Legacy project. This will be a two-house construction on East Street in Easthampton. Women Builds strengthen the skills of women, of all ages, by including them as leaders to organize, fundraise, and build homes for families in need. Now is the time to contact [us](#) to be included.



## Team Builds

You and your colleagues can reserve work days at our Northampton construction site. We don't just build houses, we build foundations for teamwork. Participating in this program is ideal for team building. Covered in dirt and drywall dust, with tools in hand, your team can expect an experience that will enable them to work better with each other. Gather eight fellow workers (or friends) and sign up by contacting [us](#).



## Church Group Build

A group of seven congregants from the Christ Covenant Church traveled from Harleysville, Pennsylvania to join us once again. This is their fifth year building with us for a full week, this time working at Garfield Avenue. These hardworking volunteers completed 95% of the roof, strapped the ceiling for drywall, built the access to the attic, and placed rigid foam on the outside of the house. They stayed at the South Congregational Church of Amherst and also enjoyed an ice-cream social after an exhausting work day. Board member, Marybeth Bridegam, hosted a delicious dinner at her home for their comfort and enjoyment. Ms. Bridegam was quoted in the *Gazettenet.com* recently, "This group has a mission to give service to other people as a part of their spiritual life. They were a happy, upbeat and hardworking group, as well as extremely generous with their time and expertise. They joined other Habitat volunteers and the future homeowner, along with donors of the land and materials, to build one more safe, decent, affordable home for a low-income family from our area." The group mentioned how memorable their work was because they met and worked with the homeowner, Kim Rivera.



## High School Group Collaborates

The Interact club of Northampton High School fundraised all year to raise \$250 with the intent on promoting further for a matching gift of \$250.

That matching gift came from an interested community member impressed with their dedication to our mission. These young ladies were intent to raise the \$500 to buy a water heater for our next house – and they did! These volunteers may also be recognized as those who helped so diligently at our Feast For Habitat in May – they are always cheerfully on the job.

## Gingerbread Build & Nicky D's

Nicky D's has taken the lead with our annual Gingerbread Build. They have brought back the host and sponsors from last year! Nicky D's is working with the Eastworks Building staff who will again host our event on December 7: save that date! They have also received the commitment from the River Valley Market who will, once again, provide the baked gingerbread pieces and all the icing that will be needed ~ for as many teams who sign up. So [sign up](#) now!



## Feast For Habitat 2014

Easthampton will be the chosen city for our next annual FEAST fundraiser. The venue and date will be announced in our next newsletter. Until then, the Silent Auction and Restaurant Committees are gathering to start their fun work. Join them by contacting [us](#).



## Help Us Build Our Next House

Right now...from where you are reading this you can buy materials for our ongoing builds:

- \$15:** 3 studs for framing a window
- \$30:** Paint for the living room
- \$50:** Nails for a 2-bedroom house
- \$75:** Sheetrock for the stairway
- \$100:** Primer paint for the house entrance and hallways
- \$145:** Window for any room of the house
- \$150:** Interior door
- \$200:** Kitchen cabinet
- \$300:** Laminate for kitchen floor
- \$450:** Exterior door
- \$500:** Water heater for 3-bedroom house

Help us to help hard-working families in Hampshire and Franklin counties achieve the American Dream of homeownership. Your [gift](#) may also be made in honor of someone special.



**Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity**  
P.O. Box 60642  
Florence, MA 01062  
413-586-5430  
[www.pioneervalleyhabitat.org](http://www.pioneervalleyhabitat.org)

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## Valley Gives

Last December we came in at 9th place receiving \$12,117... and you can help us do that again! Here is how it works. When you go to the [Valley Gives website](http://www.valleygives.org) on December 12th, you can make a gift to us at Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity. At the end of 24 hours, the top three nonprofits that raise the most money, and the top three nonprofits that receive the most donors, are rewarded with special grants of \$15,000, \$10,000 and \$5,000. The nonprofit in 12th place in each category will receive \$1,200. In addition to those prizes, participating nonprofits are eligible for special bonus gifts given between noon and midnight to randomly selected winners. We invite you to help us in this very special way on 12/12/13. Look for our mailer, emails, and Facebook reminders. Thank you!

## A Collaboration Of Sponsors

The Eastmont Custom Framing and Canal Awards of Easthampton partnered in making beautiful framed drawings with laser etched borders. These were drawings from Habitat family children and presented to Home Sponsors. Visit them through their websites: Eastmont Custom Framing and Canal Awards.

Eastmont  
*Custom*  
Framing 



140 Pine St. Room 9, Florence, MA

413-586-5430

[www.PVHabitat.org](http://www.PVHabitat.org)