



Save the Date: “Raise the Roof” virtual fundraiser is Dec. 3

On Dec. 3, Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) will introduce a virtual fundraising event and online auction called “Raise the Roof.” Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, GSHFH cannot host the traditional “Feastival” event, but asks supporters to back this occasion.

The virtual portion will include testimonials from our partner families, a review of all the progress we have made this year despite the challenges of COVID-19, and an update on future projects ahead as we continue to provide safe, decent, and affordable housing for our partner families throughout Hampden County. The online auction will begin at 5pm on Dec. 1 and close Dec. 13.

For more information, go to habitatspringfield.org/raise-the-roof. Or, contact John O’Farrell, Volunteer and Fundraiser coordinator, at ofarrell@habitatspringfield.org or (413) 739-5503 x1006.

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Greater Springfield
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NEWS

November
2020



River 4 team members work together to remove debris from a Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) construction site in Springfield.

AmeriCorps River 4 team volunteers with GSHFH

They came. They saw. They are pitching in.

In mid-October, nine youths representing AmeriCorp National Civilian Community Corp (NCCC)’s Southern Region arrived in Western Massachusetts for their month-long team-based volunteering stint with Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH). Known as the “River 4” group, the young adults who range in age from 18 to 24, live and work in the community. At GSHFH, they primarily work at the construction sites assisting the crew.

For many of them, the choice to join the national service program is an opportunity to travel around the United States, engage in new and selfless opportunities, and figure out what they would like to pursue for a career. Prior to arriving in Springfield, the team volunteered in Louisiana where they worked with Lafayette Habitat for Humanity. Then, in Alabama they worked with elementary-age children in the Selma school district.

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

In Massachusetts, a state that's foreign to many River 4 members, they are taking in all the experiences – fall foliage and snow in October, plus the kindness of gratitude of the Habitat community.

"I really enjoy working with Habitat for Humanity," said Baylee Bluejacket, 20, from Tulsa, Oklahoma. "It makes me really want to get things done. Not only are we working with the homeowners, but we also see the framed picture of the whole family and their little bio and it motivates me to get this done so they can move in and start their lives."

Prior to joining the NCCC, Baylee had attended college at two Oklahoma schools, but couldn't decide on a major or career field. Since linking with NCCC in July, she's discovered interests in broadcast journalism, speech pathology, and social work/counseling. When the program ends in May 2021, she's thinking of continuing in AmeriCorps through Vista, a program that works to alleviate poverty.

The River 4 team begins their workdays between 6:30 and 7:15am, leaving their apartment at 7:30am. They work until 4pm, and have dinner as a group at 5:30pm.

Sheri Green, GSHFH Construction manager, who spends the most time with the youths assigning tasks and overseeing their work, said, "They're hard workers. They want to feel proud, and they're willing to learn."

Mary Melchiskey, GSHFH Construction site supervisor, agreed.

"They're exuberant and they excel. When they get going, they're on it," she said, specifically referring to their reorganization of the Habitat warehouse and the task of moving 16 tons of stone from a worksite.

The NCCC team's days also include structured group physical training and work for



River 4 Team Leader Sophia Trueblood (left) and Tree Moses lay flooring at a Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) worksite.

"They're really hard workers. They want to feel proud, and they're willing to learn."

***- Sheri Green
GSHFH
Construction
Manager***

their individual specialty roles. Each member of the group has one and they include reaching out to local media outlets to educate them on NCCC, or service learning initiatives, such as conducting research to understand how their service impacts the communities they're in. Their nights end with downtime. Members have said they read, watch movies, play card games, or scroll through the social media apps on their



Baylee Bluejacket (standing), a River 4 team member, holds a tape measure while Tyler Johnson (left) and Tree Moses assemble kitchen cabinets.

mobile phones.

Baylee's teammates, 20-year-old Tree Moses, of the Bay Area in California, and 24-year-old Pilar Righetti, of Sinajana, Guam, said the most challenging part of the NCCC is the lack of alone time.

"The challenge I've faced is living

Continued to Page 3

Continued from Page 2

with such a diverse group and knowing you're going to be doing that for 10 months," said Pilar. "Although living with a variety of individuals is the most challenging for me, it is also the best learning opportunity for me. I have enjoyed it and have grown as a person and that is one of the many things this program has to offer."

Pilar said she spent much of her childhood traveling internationally, but hadn't seen much of the mainland United States. Following her graduation from the University of Redlands in California, she returned to central Guam to pursue a career in the hospitality industry. For two years, she worked the front desk at a hotel when she questioned her next steps – should she pursue her master's degree, follow a different path, or travel? By joining NCCC, she could dabble in a variety of career fields and give back to the community, a prospect she said she has enjoyed so far, particularly for Habitat, as she loves the mission.

Tree said he joined because he was unhappy with the university he selected in California and the overall college experience. By joining NCCC, he could travel – a hobby he enjoys – and explore various career paths. When the NCCC program ends, Tree said he figures he'll try college again. But with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing students to attend classes online, he's not sure about that path either.

The team leaves Massachusetts on Nov. 22 and heads to their next destination, Litchfield, Connecticut, where they will be working on maintaining outdoor trails.

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SPOTLIGHT ON

Debbie O'Mara
Family Services Manager
of Ware, MA



How long have you been a GSHFH staffer? I have worked for GSHFH since January 2019 as the Family Services Manager. Prior to that, I lived in eastern Mass. and volunteered with Old Colony Habitat in Attleboro as their Family Services Committee chairperson.

What attracted you to the Family Services Manager role and what are you trying to accomplish?

For years, I have been drawn to the Habitat mission of helping families find safe, decent, and affordable homes of their own. My husband and I have created a home for our family that is such a place of comfort and refuge for us that I

want to make that possible for others to experience. I see it as my life's work to 1) help families qualify for our program and 2) help our existing partner families address and solve the problems and issues that arise with homeownership so they succeed and benefit from a lifetime of comfort and refuge in their own homes.

What would you sing at karaoke night? Turning Home by David Nail

Who would you want to play you in a movie based on your life? Minnie Driver (she has freckles!)

Do you love or hate roller coasters? HATE roller coasters ... I get motion sick so easily!

If you were a new addition to the crayon box, what color would you be? I would be a warm and happy shade of yellow.

Do you collect anything? If so, what and why? I collect red transfer ware dishes. My grandmother had red transfer ware and I always loved it. I also collect meaningful song lyrics and quotes that reflect real life experiences. They bring me comfort and inspiration.

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habitatspringfield.org



AmeriCorps River 4 team and GSHFH rebuild a veteran's Springfield walkway

In honor of Veterans Day, AmeriCorps NCCC Southern Region's River 4 team worked with Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) to replace the side entrance walkway belonging to an Army vet living in Springfield. The all-day project replaced an old slate walkway that was missing most of its pieces, had receded areas, and was a tripping hazard. The new walkway is concrete. Thank you, Bank of America for your generous donation, which paid for the supplies.



The old walkway.



The River 4 team guided by Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) Construction Manager Sheri Green, in the neon green shirt, levels the surface of the old walkway for the new path and clears away dirt from the edges to make room for the form.



River 4's Milynn Scott hammers in a stake to secure the form for the new pathway. Her teammate Tree Moses watches.



River 4's Tree Moses screws the stake Milynn Scott is holding to the framing. Baylee Bluejacket (standing left), Pilar Righetti, and River 4 Team Leader Sophia Trueblood (squatting) look on.



Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity Construction (GSHFH) Manager Sheri Green, in neon green shirt, shows the River 4 team the mixer and explains how it works.



River 4's Tree Moses separates the concrete from the form so when the form is removed, the walkway isn't damaged.



River 4's Tree Moses (left) and Pilar Righetti level the newly poured concrete. Team leader Sophia Trueblood (standing) looks on.



The finished product.

GIVINGTUESDAY

Dec. 1



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