

# Habitat for Humanity Volunteers Bring Energy-Efficient Innovation to Affordable Housing

by Debbie Goodwin

Central Vermont Habitat for Humanity, Inc., is one of eight Habitat affiliates in Vermont with the mission to build affordable, decent housing in partnership with low-income families. Habitat's recent project was a "passive house" in East Montpelier. Winning Efficiency Vermont's Honor Award in Residential New Construction and PHIUS certified, the home boasts double walls filled with rigid insulation, a super-insulated slab, triple-paned windows, a cellulose-filled insulated attic, and a southern exposure. The result is significantly lower and stable monthly energy costs to the owners.

Building volunteer Chris Miksic of Montpelier Construction found the build to be a "great match of passive house standards with an affordable, energy-efficient, low-carbon, fossil-fuel-free quality housing." Habitat for Humanity started with a modest budget and simple design and was successful partnering with vendors that could donate or sell materials at a reduced cost.

The Rockwool Group provided a significant donation of its sustainable, environmentally friendly Roxul insulation and is continuing their support with an equally generous donation to a "high performance" build that is currently taking place in Randolph. Green Fiber Company has also rallied to the cause by donating their cellulose insulation, which is made from mostly recycled material, furthering Habitat's goal of building with more environmentally responsible products and techniques.

Site supervisor for the duration of the build at the East Montpelier passive house, Bruce Landry, says, "The fluctuating price of energy goes beyond what our families can afford. The families we partner with start out with

very tight budgets and every dollar counts. An energy-efficient home gives stability in heating costs and utility payments.”

As with any Habitat for Humanity build, it is the hearts and labor of volunteers that maintain the projects and help make the build affordable. Their reasons for volunteering are many:



**Jan Ruta, Electrician**

“I volunteer for Habitat because I want to have an impact at the local level. It gives me the opportunity to share my electrical expertise with others and learn a lot of new carpentry skills. I also believe in Habitat’s mission that “Everyone should have an affordable place to live.” In building homes, we are supporting and building community.”

### **Chris Miksic, Montpelier Construction**

“Everyone needs a home, a shelter. A home must be comfortable and healthy and in this day and age, low carbon and energy efficient. I also want to promote and educate the public about the low-energy, passive house building standard and see it get adopted as the building code to combat the effects of climate change and to create affordable, healthy and resilient housing for people.”

### **Denny Ingrisano, Waitsfield**

“It is an honor to be associated with an organization that creates opportunities for families to live in, and eventually own, an affordable home. The fact that affordable housing is approached from a legacy point of view makes me feel like we are all in it together, building a high-performance home, reducing dependency on fossil fuels, living in better harmony with the Earth, and yukking it up a bit when you cut the wrong angle in a 2 x 10. Who wouldn’t want to volunteer?”

### **Glen Seifert, Marshfield**

“Since retiring and becoming involved with Central Vermont Habitat for Humanity, I have experienced first-hand the personal satisfaction of working on a CVHFFH build. At the end of the work day, you can stand back and see what a group of volunteers, and new acquaintances, can accomplish as a team. The partner families are so grateful and still in a state of disbelief that this house is actually going to be theirs.”



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