



WHEN ONE DOOR CLOSSES, ANOTHER OPENS: *Hancock County Habitat announces its office move*

When Hancock County Habitat for Humanity's Board of Directors made the difficult decision to close its Ellsworth ReStore location earlier this year (effective mid-August), it did so with a view to focusing more on the organization's core mission of providing affordable housing and related support services in the county. It was important to the leadership of the organization to find an office space which would reflect its mission and fulfill its vision of growing in service to the community. After considering the current and future needs of the organization and evaluating several spaces, Habitat is pleased to announce that our administrative offices have moved to the Orland Community Center, located at 21 School House Road, Orland.

With additional conference room space, a licensed commercial kitchen and other shared facilities in the handicap accessible building, being a part of the community center provides the potential for Habitat to expand its public service offerings to include financial education training, safety seminars, etc. for its Partners and the community. Habitat's leadership also sees the opportunity to utilize the new office and community center rooms to enter into other collaborative partnerships with area nonprofits.

The Community Center itself went through a transition several years back to become the active space that it now is. In the spring of 2011, town residents voted to shutter the then Orland Consolidated School and move its students to Bucksport as the result of state subsidy funding cuts impacting the district.

While the former 16-classroom school and gymnasium was offered up to redevelopers in 2012, with a town committee considering alternative uses such as senior, assisted-living or low-income housing, a charter school, offices or a retail center, ultimately the Town of Orland retained the building. By 2013, the location had already become more of a community hub, regularly hosting an area Boy Scout Troop, cancer support group, Master Gardeners, beekeeping club, and other community groups. In 2015, with funding from the town and a grant from the Maine Community Foundation, a fitness center opened in the building—a conversion spearheaded by Mike Malenfant. Mr. Malenfant held the position of former maintenance director of the school for approximately 12 years and now manages the Community Center along with former school librarian, Karen Lanpher, who provides administrative and operational support.

Current building tenants of the Orland Community Center include a café, registered dietitian, wheelchair & scooter repair shop, bio-medical business, barber, beautician, tanning salon, massage therapist, and a 2nd hand shop—all of whom are listed on the Community Center's Facebook page. The grounds are typical of a school, with a playground and ballfield, but also

include divided small and large dog park areas. Spaces in the building are available for daily rentals and short and long-term lease.

“We’re really excited about becoming the newest tenant in such a vibrant, diverse community space and what this will mean for our affiliate’s future,” said Executive Director, Kelley Ellsworth.



Please note, our mailing address has remained the same:

Hancock County Habitat for Humanity • P.O. Box 343 • Ellsworth, ME 04605

Physical: 21 School House Rd., Suite #20, Orland • *Office hours by appointment.* • (207) 702-9457

About Hancock County Habitat for Humanity

Habitat was founded on the conviction that every man, woman, and child should have a simple, decent place to live in dignity and safety. Hancock County Habitat has been proudly serving the area since 1989. Through private donations and volunteer labor, Habitat builds simple, decent homes in partnership with qualified individuals and families who assume an affordable mortgage on their home at completion. To learn more, please visit www.HancockCountyHabitat.org



Please note, additional details and photographs of the Orland Community Center can be found on our Facebook page.



Hancock County Habitat Shifting Focus to Build Program: Closing ReStore

(As released in May 2019)

Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build strength, stability and self-reliance. Thanks to the hard work of many committed volunteers, staff and generous donors, Habitat for Humanity has been well represented in Hancock County since 1989 and will continue to serve its community.

There remains a continued need for services like the ones Habitat provides in the county. Rental costs continue to outpace increases in wages, housing stock is scarce and homeownership is increasingly out of reach for local individuals and families. Local Habitat affiliates (of which there are 8 in Maine) are a small but important part of the puzzle addressing the need for affordable housing in the state.

While there is often a misconception that local Habitats are supported by Habitat for Humanity International, each independently operated, local affiliate must raise their own operating and building project funds. In order to address local funding needs, Habitat came up with the “ReStore” concept. ReStores are home improvement stores and donation centers selling new and gently used furniture, appliances, home goods, building materials and more to the public at a fraction of retail prices while diverting reusable materials from the waste-stream.

With hopes that the ReStore model would grow to contribute significant funds to its mission, Hancock County Habitat opened a store in the fall of 2009 on High Street before moving to their present location (218 Downeast Hwy., Rt. 1, Ellsworth) in 2012.

In a statement released this week, Hancock County Habitat *Executive Director*, Kelley Ellsworth, announced the intention to close their ReStore and discontinue their retail line in order to more effectively focus energy and resources on Habitat’s core mission. *“Not being immune to the challenges which other small business face in this economy, as we approached our 11th year, with expenses rising and in-demand [donated] inventory unpredictable, the affiliate’s Board of Directors reached a consensus to close the ReStore, relocate our business office, and redirect our energies in new ways to accomplish our mission of helping our neighbors improve their living conditions.*

Knowing how the ReStore has become a fixture in the community, it was a difficult decision to close the store and not one that was made lightly. It took a lot of courage for the Board to study the issue and make the decision as part of our strategic planning process.”

Despite significant effort, it has proven a challenge to make the Ellsworth Habitat ReStore location successful. Staff and volunteers have worked hard and have demonstrated a commendable level of commitment (with volunteers having donated over 4,600 hours of their time in the last 5 years alone); however, multiple factors have impacted the success of the operation. While many see the ReStore as the face of the organization, and despite providing a valuable public resource for affordable home improvement materials, the selling of goods is not the primary goal of Habitat. ReStores across the country are run for the purpose of supporting the mission of building homes, not as a service in-and-of-itself.

Other ReStore locations will remain open throughout Maine, and efforts are underway in Belfast to build a store and office for the Waldo County Habitat affiliate. Hancock County Habitat hopes to support those efforts by donating many of its store’s fixtures, equipment, etc. and will be reaching out to them, other local Habitat affiliates, and area nonprofits as it wraps up its own store operations.

Progressively discounted sales on the remaining stock at the Ellsworth ReStore will start in July and will continue through closing, slated for Saturday, August 17th, or until stock is depleted. Scheduled donation pick-ups will cease in early August and accepted donations will be limited to stock which typically moves quickly at this time of year – furniture, appliances, full cabinet sets, exterior doors and double pane windows. More details and updates will be posted on the affiliate’s facebook page and on their website.

Long-time Board Member, Bill Zildjian, said in the release, *“We are extremely proud of all that we have accomplished over the years in partnership with members of the community, and we could not be more grateful for those who have believed in our vision and supported our mission by shopping, donating and volunteering at our ReStore. As this door closes, we look forward with anticipation to the completion of our latest new home build project in Franklin and to continuing to partner with you to provide local housing solutions which transform lives.”*