APPLICATION CYCLE OPENS for 3-4 bdrm., 2 bath home in Ellsworth.

Beginning on November 20th, applications for the home will be available by request to (207) 702-9457 or Director.HCHH@gmail.com; postmark deadline for returned applications is January 30, 2021. Learn more about the process at: HancockCountyHabitat.org/apply

Built in 2010, the home will be refreshed for its next occupant(s) through our traditional model of volunteer support and the qualified Partner(s)’ sweat equity. The original floorplan may be modified from a 4- down to a 3-bedroom, depending on the ADA accessibility needs of the qualified applicant(s).

How did we reacquire the home? Recognizing that our Partners may have a change in job, life circumstance, etc., Habitat’s mortgages allow that a home may be sold at any time under certain provisions. If the original occupant chooses to sell the home, Habitat has the first right of refusal (the option to buy it back before anyone else)—less any outstanding mortgage amounts still owed and less any increase in equity shared between the Partner and the affiliate. Along with a forgivable 2nd mortgage, the first right of refusal helps to protect the investment in the home by volunteers & donors and allows Habitat to retain the home as an affordable unit of housing.

The global pandemic has reframed how we live our lives and redefined the landscape. What has not changed is the fact that HOME is ESSENTIAL — a home which is safe, secure, accessible, adaptable and affordable.

As I sit writing this at my kitchen table, I feel both grateful for and embarrassed by the privileges that I enjoy — a job, reliable Internet, on-site laundry, a yard, space to gather and space to be on my own....

Anticipating the difficulties our Partners would experience during this time across all aspects of their lives, our affiliate streamlined how we evaluate hardships and mortgage assistance needs. ...But affiliate-level policy changes alone cannot make a difference. We continue to advocate for reforms creating change now and into the future.

According to recent surveys conducted by the nonpartisan institute, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (cbpp.org):

- 1 in 6 adults (11.8 mill.) are behind in their rent or mortgage;
- This # rises to 1 in 4 if the household includes children;
- 1 in 3 reported difficulty covering typical household expenses; and,
- 14% of households w/ children reported not having enough to eat.

“The impacts of the pandemic and the economic fallout have been widespread, but are particularly prevalent among Black, Latino, Indigenous, and immigrant households. These disproportionate impacts reflect harsh, longstanding inequities — often stemming from structural racism — in education, employment, housing, and health care that the current crisis is exacerbating. Relief measures have mitigated hardship, but there are significant gaps....”

Habitat and its supporters as well as other nonprofits help to stand in the gap. You are our ESSENTIAL WORKERS in helping our Partners to build financial & physical security and hope! THANK YOU!

In Partnership, Kelley J. Ellsworth, Executive Director

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INTRODUCING THE GROESBECK FAMILY—SONIA & BROCK

A resident of Maine since 2002 and of the Blue Hill Peninsula for most of that time, Sonia works as a Pharmacy Technician, Basic Life Support (BLS)/CPR Instructor, and substitute teacher to support her family. She applied for our new home build program this past winter and, following evaluation by the Selection Committee under our criteria of need, willingness to partner, and ability to pay an affordable mortgage, was recently selected to be our next Partner.

Sonia currently resides in a small 1-bedroom apartment which doesn't easily accommodate her son, Brock, whose main residence is with his father in Brooklin where he attends school but who is also supported by his mom. As an animal lover, the home has 5 resident rescue cats and squeezes in Brock's therapy dog, Teddy, when they're both staying over.

Sonia has seen first-hand the difference that a Habitat home can make in the life of an applicant, having volunteered on and helped fundraise for a friend's project back when she lived in Nevada. She views her future Habitat home as a place of comfort and stability for herself and Brock. A self-described DIYer (with a little help from friends & YouTube), Sonia is looking forward to picking up new skills on the jobsite. "If I can learn it, I want to learn it."

Habitat will be building on a donated lot in Blue Hill which will keep Sonia close to her work, her support system of family and friends, and the hiking trails that Brock enjoys on the Peninsula. "We’re so pleased to have Sonia partnering with us," says Selection Committee member Carol, who was very impressed with her application. In letters of recommendation, Sonia is described as dedicated, conscientious, kind, positive, and a valued community member. One reference spoke about her as follows: "Sonia is caring and compassionate. She volunteers weekly at the local food pantry in her community. Sonia advocates for people who may otherwise not be heard due to their disabilities, sexual orientation, history of being a victim of abuse, socioeconomic status or other life factors. She reaches out to people to understand their struggles and see their beauty and strengths.... Watching Sonia’s love, compassion, patience and instruction, care and pride in her son is joyous. ...She gives of herself, works hard, tries to better herself, her family and her community, and is in need of a little help to make the dream of having a home come true."

We look forward to working with you, our Habitat supporters, to build a home in partnership with Sonia and Brock!

HABITAT’S ROOTS in RACIAL EQUALITY

Koinonia Farm, Americus, GA

Photos courtesy of The Fuller Center for Housing (fullercenter.org) & Habitat, with additional history notes from koinoniatfarm.org

Habitat for Humanity, founded in 1976, had its roots at Koinonia farm, a radically integrated (for the time & place), intentional farming cooperative in Americus, GA. Koinonia (meaning “community” in Greek) was founded in 1942 by Clarence & Florence Jordan and Martin & Babel England. During the 1950s and 1960s, the farm endured years of KKK intimidation, boycotts, violence and even church excommunication of its members while serving as a Civil Rights era model of racial and economic equality. Despite being the target of such hate, the community supported themselves and even thrived during its early years through sustainable farming and the selling of their produce. [In response to those who attacked the community, Koinonia’s slogan for their pecan product became, “Help us ship the nuts out of Georgia.”]

In 1965, future Habitat founders Millard & Linda Fuller visited, returning four years later at a time when the Koinonians were searching for renewed focus. It was then that the idea of a partnership housing model was formed with Jordan and other members of the community. Out of a deep and abiding concern for neighbors living in shacks and dilapidated homes, Koinonia began utilizing volunteer labor and donations to build—with families then purchasing their homes under a zero-interest, 20-year mortgage. While Clarence Jordan died just before the first home was completed in 1969, his legacy carried on. 194 Koinonia Partnership Housing builds were completed from 1969 to 1992, and Habitat has become a worldwide housing organization with affiliates in all 50 states and in 70 countries—proving that equal access to homeownership opportunities is essential.

As we BUILD BACK TOGETHER from COVID-19 during this time of division and uncertainty, Koinonia’s core beliefs speak to us: intentionality, sustainability, the honoring of people of all backgrounds and faiths, love—through service to others, joy—through generous hospitality, peace—through reconciliation, and, of course, radical equality.

For a wonderfully in-depth treatment of the subject of race and housing, we suggest following Twin Cities Habitat’s blog which covers both local and national aspects of the issue: tchabitat.org/race
Whitney was born and raised in Seal Harbor, ME. Following earning a BSW from Plymouth State University, she went to work for the state of New Hampshire for six years, including holding a position as a Foster Care Licensing Worker. Returning to Maine, she took the position of House Manager for the Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) in Bangor where she has worked for the past 5+ years.

At RMHC, Whitney recruits and manages volunteers and staff, maintains working relationships with local medical providers and treatment facilities, supports guests staying at the house, acts as a community resource, and assists with regular fundraising efforts.

Whitney joined the Habitat Board back in 2017 and now also serves on our Partner Selection Committee. In addition to volunteering with Habitat, Whitney is a member of the Bangor Chamber of Commerce and the United Way’s Eastern Maine Volunteer Coordinators (EMVC) peer to peer group. (She is pictured here—at right—raising walls on our Franklin project.)

“I grew up in a small, tight-knit community where everyone supported one another. In my professional life I’ve seen the great importance of a support system, or lack of one, and I feel everyone can do their part to help others in their community and beyond. Each Habitat project has an impact on the individuals and families we work with—both Partners & supporters. I’m grateful to be able to contribute to Habitat achieving its mission and expanding its outreach.”