I've been thinking a great deal lately about milestones, both small and large—life events which are etched in the collective memory, those which mark the passage of time from one stage to the next, those which are celebratory and those which memorialize.

A recent email contained a striking image from the mid-September, “In America: Remember,” 20-acre installation on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Taken by National Geographic Explorer photographer Stephen Wilkes, this poignant image and the installation itself achieved a representation of the immeasurable and incomprehensible—flags for each American life lost to COVID just prior to the country reaching the grim milestone of 700,000.

So many aspects of the last year-and-a-half+ have been historic and hard—the worldwide tragedies of the pandemic, the 9/11 20th Anniversary, and movements, marches and protests surrounding racial injustice, immigration, economic & environmental injustice, equity, inclusion and human rights. At a time when we are experiencing shared loss and often general disruption of a sense of safety & security, the tendency may be to compare and minimize certain missed milestones.

We've all had to replace common experiences and events with more unique ways of marking important moments or even forego them entirely. We've had to find meaning, gratitude and moments of appreciation while confronting the hard and often impossible.

It has been no different for Habitat affiliates and our extended family of Partners, volunteers and supporters. While we could not hold our traditional home dedication for our Franklin project, we were able to share celebration materials with the Campbell's church to help honor and commemorate the important life transition. And, more recently, I had the pleasure of meeting with long-time Habitat partner, Lisa, who tore up her mortgage—symbolically marking the payoff of her loan! ☺ Partner selection, wall raising, closing, dedication, loan payoff and all of the many moments in-between—these are milestones which you, our volunteers and donors, make possible. Thank you!

If you are in a position to give this year, we invite you to support our continued, vital work in the community of building strength, stability, self-reliance and shelter.

In Partnership, Kelley J. Ellsworth, Hancock County Habitat Executive Director

---

**HOMEOWNER PAYS OFF MORTGAGE**

On a blustery fall day, we joined long-time homeowner, Lisa, in celebrating a milestone—her final mortgage payment! Often performed as a mortgage burning, this ceremony recognizes both the accomplishment of the homeowner and our many years of partnership.

FROM LISA: “I wanted to take a moment to thank you for the blessing of being chosen as a Habitat homeowner at a time when everything was very uncertain. My family would never have had the chance to own property or even enjoy the companionship of pets without this program. We watched our children grow surrounded by so much love and stability here in our own home.

“Habitat provided us with the opportunity of a lifetime, and I feel very blessed to have made it to our final mortgage payment. The only thing missing from this moment of celebration was my husband, who unfortunately didn’t live to see this day; but I know that he is looking down and smiling at all we accomplished.

“Habitat is all about family and opportunity for those who need a head start. I can’t say enough about what a wonderful organization this is, and I hope to see many other individuals and families reach this goal.”

A lifetime supporter of Habitat for Humanity ❤️, Lisa
It can feel awkward and even insensitive to have a conversation with donors about end-of-life planning, but we do so because we believe in a mission which fosters strength and self-reliance and breaks the cycle of housing instability—and because we know that planning gives you the peace of mind that your intentions to provide for your loved ones and the causes you care about will be carried out as you wish after your lifetime.

PLANNED GIVING DONORS CAN BE ANYBODY:
Planned giving is an option for anyone who wants to build a legacy, regardless of age or income, and is easier and more affordable than you might think. Often described as a “major” or “significant” gift, this type of language creates a barrier to planned giving which is misleading. The truth is, there is no threshold for planned giving; every gift is helpful.

Unlike a cash gift made from disposable income, a planned gift is one that is made or designated today and that may not fully mature or be realized until a future date. Planned gifts use estate & tax planning to provide for charity and heirs in ways that maximize the gift and/or minimize impact on the donor’s estate.

Examples of planned gifts include: bequests (money left to an organization through a will or codicil); beneficiary designations (life insurance policies, retirement or investment accounts, bank accounts, and certificates of deposit); stock; real estate; charitable remainder or lead trusts; and revocable living trusts.

Once you have made plans for a legacy gift, please let us know. We would be honored to have the opportunity to thank you. We would also like to make sure we can fulfill your wishes, while respecting your confidentiality. While Hancock County Habitat does not offer legal, financial or tax advice, we’re committed to helping you match your goals with the right gift, whether now or in the future.

Please consider this information and the additional sample bequest language found on our website as a starting point; consult with a financial advisor or tax attorney to ensure that you receive maximum tax benefits, comply with state laws, and that your wishes are accurately reflected in necessary legal documents.
ADVOCACY — Important conversations & outreach surrounding housing matters

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 7 households — more than 17 million — were paying half or more of their incomes on a place to live. The pandemic has only deepened these challenges for many, and a record shortage of affordable homes is locking out first-time and lower-income homebuyers.

On Sept. 27th, Habitat for Humanity International CEO Jonathan Reckford hosted a discussion with Housing and Urban Development Secretary Marcia L. Fudge. The discussion explored how the administration is prioritizing investments in home affordability and equity to address our country’s growing housing challenges. [www.habitat.ngo/SecretaryFudge]

Part of a series, Habitat’s “+You” live discussion events bring together experts from across the U.S. and around the world to discuss how housing intersects and interacts with other areas of societal concern including COVID impacts and public health, redlining and racial equality, faith, the economy, and more.

In early October, our affiliate joined more than 375 Habitat organizations from all 50 states and D.C. in reaching out to Congress to assert that housing must remain in the Build Back Better Act. We believe that stable, affordable homes are linked to every measure of quality of life—health, education, general well-being, and the building of individual wealth.

At the time of this newsletter’s drafting, tough negotiations remained as Congress was determining how to scale back the Act’s overall funding package by nearly half; at one point, reports signaled that the $327 billion in affordable housing investments could be dropped entirely until advocates from across the country again joined to show their support. While it looks like $150 billion of the original sum will remain according to a late October report from Habitat for Humanity International, there are still no guarantees. The original plan sought to address the full continuum of housing from homelessness to rental homes to affordable homeownership. We invite you to help us continue advocating by visiting: www.HancockCountyHabitat.org

A MILESTONE IN MORTGAGE LENDING

In addition to taking on the servicing of our existing mortgage portfolio, we’re proud to announce that long-term supporter, Bar Harbor Bank & Trust (BHBT), has agreed to partner with us to develop the local pilot program for a new funding stream!

Habitat affiliates nationwide and here in Maine have found low or below-market interest rate loans to be an excellent way to leverage their mortgage portfolio to build capacity. Such third-party financed loans convert future mortgage cash flow into a lump sum [the net present day value in cash] at closing, allowing an affiliate to recover a high % of home costs sooner than a typical mortgage term. [Habitat’s traditional 0%-interest mortgages lose value over the lifetime of the loan due to inflation; leveraging recovers some of that otherwise lost value.]

The outcomes: Affiliates are able to serve more partners—better stewarding the investment of volunteers and donors, sustain growth, and improve cash flow in a competitive non-profit economy. Funds received through such loans may also present growth opportunities—for purchasing land, building infrastructure, undertaking a large-scale project, and/or acquiring foreclosures for rehabilitation. [Note: Fundraising support is still needed from the general public as the lending doesn’t result in 1-to-1 coverage of all costs.]

To read more about the model and how the mortgage is structured to be equalized to the costs of our more traditional, in-house Habitat loans, please visit our website.
SPECIAL THANKS: To the local Acadia Council of REALTORS, Mid-Coast Board, and the Maine Association of REALTORS Foundation who continue their generous, annual support of local affordable housing initiatives through fundraisers and matching grants.

To HospitalityMaine’s member properties and their guests for participating in the 18th Annual Hospitality for Habitat fundraiser which, this year alone, raised over $26,000 for the Maine Habitat affiliates! Regarding the partnership, Kathleen Pierce, Director of Member Experience, shared, “Affordable housing is one of the many pain points right now for the hospitality industry as it struggles to maintain its seasonal workforce. To be able to give back to such a crucial mission feels right.” For a complete list of participating inns and next year’s event details, visit: hospitalitymaine.com/page/habitat

To the players and sponsors—hospitality, hole & corporate-level (below)—who’d sent their contributions in early, prior to the COVID safety-related cancellation of our Swing for Habitat Golf Tournament: Thank you for allowing us to roll your donations into our general fund! [Visit our website for a complete listing.] SAVE the DATE: 10/1/22

Casey Hardwick, Acadia Council President Elect, presents their gift on the porch of our Tanglewood renovation project.

Katie L. of HFH/7 Rivers; HospitalityMaine Gov. Affairs Officer Greg Dugal & CEO Matt Lewis; Midcoast HFH board members Robert H. & Susan T. and Construct. Supervisor Peter F.