

Home

Summer 2024



Amber Folis, Habitat Homeowner, (left) and Cecilia Lawrence, HFHGB Board Member, Chair of the Homeowner Selection Committee (right).



A Sense of Place

Summer is a magical time in Maine. The weather we wait for all winter long breaks through and allows our beautiful state to shine. There are endless possibilities for recreation and connection with friends and family. Perhaps you will take a swim in a lake, or hike in the Maine woods, or enjoy a picnic in the park. All of these are good for the soul. But for most of us, the best feeling after one of these outings is coming back home. Home represents our sense of place where we feel safe and secure. But not everyone is fortunate enough to truly know this feeling.



You have likely read the daily news stories of record-high real estate prices and rising interest rates. Today, the dream of homeownership is out of reach for many Mainers. According to a recent housing study commissioned by the Governor's office and Maine State Housing, **the single most significant factor impacting the housing crisis is the lack of inventory** – especially at low and moderate-income price points. Demand for the existing inventory drives up the cost of construction and therefore makes the purchase price even higher.

Habitat affiliates across the country and in Maine are all working hard to do our part to increase production and still make homeownership affordable. Innovative partnerships, dedicated volunteers and committed donors like you are making a difference in the greater Bangor region. Your support is essential in helping us build more homes to provide the stability and security that homeownership brings. We hope you are inspired by the stories of gratitude featured in this newsletter from families who have partnered with Habitat for Humanity of Greater Bangor and have now come to know that sense of place in a home of their own.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa".

Melissa Huston, Executive Director
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Bangor

Making a House a Home

A home is not just a shelter but a cornerstone for stability, growth, and community. Through our partnerships with hardworking families, we provide them with the tools and opportunities to unlock their full potential.

Desiree, Amber, and Laura* are three women from different walks of life who show how stable homes can be the foundation for stable lives. They illustrate how Habitat for Humanity of Greater Bangor (HFHGB) not only builds houses; **we help people create homes.**

Laura's Story: From Uncertainty to Stability

After struggling to find a safe and affordable place to rent in Bangor, Laura and her two young boys found themselves in a precarious living situation, staying with friends in an overcrowded house.

Struggling to manage daycare costs on a low wage, she stumbled upon HFHGB during a Bangor YMCA event. Within months of filling out an application, Laura and her boys learned they would be the proud owners of a safe, affordable Habitat home in Old Town.

The stability of having their own home provided a sanctuary amidst personal hardships, including the loss of the boys' father and serious medical concerns in the family. Laura shares, "I know for sure that if we did not have our home when these things happened, the kids would have struggled even more than they already have. I can't tell you how much it means to our little family that despite any struggles, we have our home."

Amber's Story: Building Community

For Amber and her two daughters, their Habitat home in Orono has become a hub for family gatherings and outdoor activities. "We spend so much time outside now, enjoying our backyard swing, hammock, and firepit," Amber shares. From gardening to backyard camping with extended family, their home is already filled with cherished memories.

A hallmark of HFHGB's homeownership program is the financial education and support that homeowners receive. Amber emphasizes the freedom that comes with a fixed mortgage. "Having a reliable, affordable mortgage is so freeing. I no longer worry about rent increases and the effects that will have on my family," she says. This financial stability allows her to focus on her family and personal growth.

The sense of community that comes with homeownership is another vital element of our program. In addition to staying connected with HFHGB's team, Amber recalls how a neighbor offered to help clear her driveway of snow during a tough winter storm, and another neighbor welcomed her with a basket of goodies.

Amber's daughters, especially her eldest, feel proud of their mother's hard work and determination, knowing that they, too, can achieve their dreams.

Desiree's Story: A Shift from Surviving to Thriving

Desiree's story echoes a similar transformation. "Unless you have experienced poverty, it is difficult to describe the mind shift that comes with owning your own home," she explains.

This hardworking, single mother of four sons lived in a small, two-bedroom apartment with her two youngest children and struggled to get ahead financially. With HFHGB's support, achieving homeownership opened doors to new opportunities and personal growth. "Once you have worked to achieve the level of owning your own home, you start to realize what you have accomplished and what else is possible." Desiree's Hampden house became a home, a place where her family's dreams could take root and grow.



Help Build the Foundation for a Better Future

These stories illustrate something we see daily: that a house is not just a necessity but the foundation upon which individuals and families can thrive. The journeys of these women remind us that the possibilities are limitless with support, dedication, and a home to call their own.

We invite you to join us in continuing the truly transformative mission of Habitat for Humanity of Greater Bangor. Your encouragement and financial support allow more families to build their homes and a brighter future for their families. Together, we can make a lasting difference, one home at a time.

*The homeowner's name has been changed to protect her privacy.

Constructing Careers with Student Builders



At HFHGB, community partnerships are the backbone of our mission to provide affordable housing. One such collaboration with Eastern Maine Community College (EMCC) is not only a cost-effective approach to homebuilding by reducing labor costs, but it offers hands-on educational experiences for EMCC students in its Building, Construction, and Fine Woodworking program.

This partnership combined with the efforts of dedicated community volunteers, partner families, innovative building methods, modest house sizes, and no-profit loans, creates a sustainable path for low-income families to achieve homeownership.



For more information on how you can get involved, reach out to Eric Jolliff, our Community Engagement Coordinator, at eric@habitatbangor.org.

ReStore: A Thrift SCORE!

Summer is the perfect time to hunt for your next treasure at the ReStore! Whether you're looking to spruce up your home, grab tools for your next DIY project, or furnishing a college dorm this fall, our ReStore has affordable options for every shopper. Plus, every purchase supports our mission to build and repair homes in our community.

Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/habitatstore for daily photos of great finds!



Raising a Glass to HabiTAP Supporters!



Cheers to the generous HabiTAP Beer Passport holders who turned sips into support for a great cause. We raised more than **\$16,200 from the sale of 275 passports** and added donations to support our current house under construction in Old Town.

Look for next year's HabiTAP Beer passports to go on sale in November, just in time for holiday gift giving! Your contribution is the foundation of tomorrow's homes. As one of our passport holders shared, "I received a HabiTAP passport as a Christmas present from my mother-in-law and we had a lot of fun planning our outings together!"

A heartfelt thanks to **Darling's Auto Group** and our partner breweries for their contributions to HabiTAP and being beacons of hope.





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*Habitat for Humanity of Greater Bangor is an
affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International.*

Affordable Repairs, Lasting Impact

Our **Critical Home Repair program** is dedicated to providing affordable repairs for low-income homeowners. These essential repairs, which include deferred maintenance, weatherization for energy efficiency, and safety/accessibility modifications, ensure safe and livable homes for our neighbors.

We recently received a heartfelt thank-you letter from Bob McGown (pictured), a homeowner who benefited from this program:

"Thank you for your fine work [with] both doors at my residence. The doors look great and will be much more efficient in bad weather. In addition, they took an extra half hour to shore up another door at my other unit where my sister lives. I could not afford the cost of the project. I am happy to at least make a small contribution to Bangor Habitat. Continue the good work for those of us who need help from time to time."

Bob's gratitude is a testament to the impact of our work. Your support makes this program possible. Learn more at habitatbangor.org/critical-repair.

