

Habitat Happenings

JULY 2020



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Meet Abigail Sonnek, the newest person to offer her hand up to the Habitat for Humanity crew!

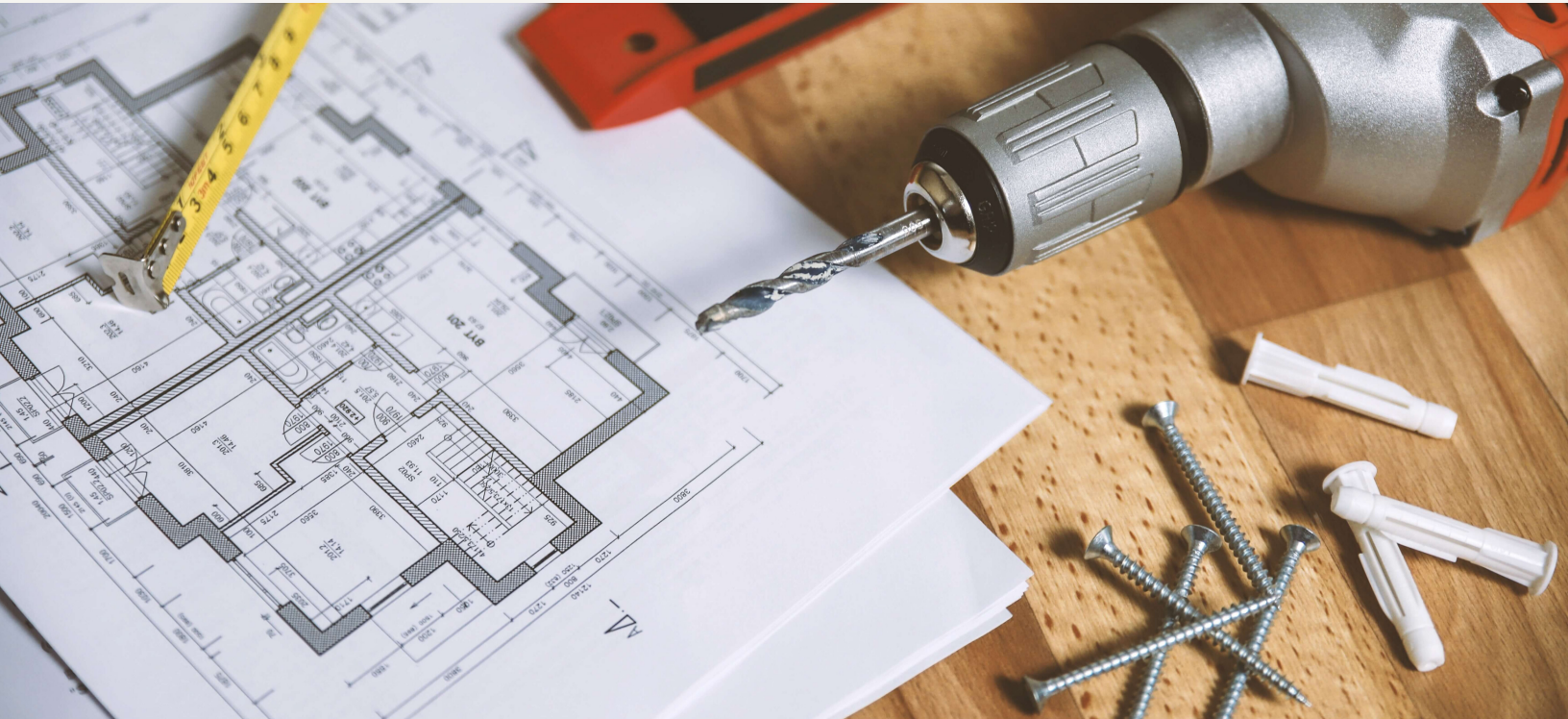
JIMMY CARTER AND HFH

This article explores the beginnings of the Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter work project and their activism.

WRHFH COMMUNITY UPDATES

See what we've been up to in recent months, including several photos from jobsites!

Wild Rivers Habitat for Humanity



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A message from the team

A lot has changed in the months since our latest newsletter. In that short period of time, we have seen many of our operations resume, including employees returning to our offices, our ReStores opening, and beginning to accept donations once again. Our ReStore locations in Spooner and St. Croix Falls opened again on May 15th following a brief closure due to quarantine measures, and are currently open from 9am to 5pm from Wednesday through Saturday. We would like to recognize and thank our ReStore and affiliate staff for all of the hard work and commitment shown in the reopening of our stores, and their continued dedication they show to make sure we take the proper safety precautions.

Our donation process has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We opened donations on June 3rd via appointment only and cannot accept drop-offs for the foreseeable future. This is because the list of items we can accept has shrunk and greater care is necessary when meeting with donors and ensuring items are properly disinfected. We appreciate your understanding as we navigate this new normal; your generosity has always been the lifeblood at Habitat for Humanity. If you have an item you would like to donate, call to schedule an appointment at a ReStore at:

(715) 635-4771 for Spooner,
(715) 483-2700 for St. Croix Falls

Online shopping at the ReStore

With the COVID-19 pandemic far from over, Wild Rivers Habitat for Humanity is dedicated to providing our shoppers and employees a safe environment within our ReStores. Even though our two ReStore locations are open for business, we've decided to leave our online storefront open to give people a safer way to shop with us. Check out our inventory from the comfort of your own home at: <https://wildrivershabitat.org/online-restore-e-store>

We're all doing a lot of online shopping these days. So, why not support us without spending anything additional on your Amazon order? Make sure to use AmazonSmile to help our organization continue the great work in our community. AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice. Use the following link to support Wild Rivers Habitat for Humanity: <https://rb.gy/lklsi0>



Wild Rivers
Habitat
for Humanity®

Abigail Sonnek

Employee Spotlight

New to the crew

Abigail "Abby" Sonnek is joining Wild Rivers Habitat for Humanity to fill our position of Community Outreach Intern. Abby will be responsible for building relationships and partnerships with the organization's stakeholders and will work closely with the construction programs and engage volunteers to support these projects. She is currently attending St. Olaf College with a major in Kinesiology and Psychology, with a concentration in Neuroscience.

Abby first started her position on May 20th. This comes as our Community Outreach Coordinator, Brandon Johnson, is set to complete his AmeriCorps term and tenure with us. We're proud of the work he has done during his months with us, and wish him the best in the next stage of his career.

Abby first learned about Wild Rivers Habitat for Humanity during her weekend drives past the St. Croix Falls ReStore to another job. She said that "every time I drove past, I wondered what the inside of the store looked like, and I thought it looked like a fun place to work." She says that her favorite part of working at Wild Rivers Habitat is seeing the impact of our ReStores as well as our Housing programs, finds the relief and joy associated with that to be the most rewarding part of her job.



Abby loves arts and crafts, and when she's not working she likes to try her hand at things like embroidery, sewing, and bullet journaling. She also loves spending time with friends and family. Her mission in life is to ensure that women feel empowered, and one way she does this is through her organization: St. Olaf - Fitness and Bodybuilding Club. Her goal is to introduce women to the weight room so they feel confident and comfortable in the space, as well as proud of their bodies.

Easy Ways to Give

Carpenters Club: Help your neighbors through planned, monthly donations. As a member, you will be updated on the progress of builds and you will be invited to events including groundbreaking and home dedication ceremonies.

Give Online: Visit <https://wildrivershabitat.org/easy-ways-to-give> and click on the DONATE button

Tribute Gifts: Give in memory or honor of your loved ones to help others.

Planned Giving: Include Wild Rivers into your will/estate/trust.

Give Smart: Anyone 70 1/2 or older can transfer IRA distributions and appreciate stock to Wild Rivers.

Thrivent Choice: Eligible members can direct Choice Dollars to Wild Rivers.

smile.amazon.com: Amazon donates 0.5% of your purchase when you select Wild Rivers.

Cars for Homes: Donate your vehicle, motorcycle, RV, or boat and help Wild Rivers.

giveBIG St. Croix Valley 2020

We are extremely grateful for everyone who donated this year for giveBIG St. Croix Valley. We are always thankful to have the support of our neighbors; the money we raised during this fundraiser will allow us to continue our mission and make sure every family has a decent place to live. Fundraisers like these are vital for our organization because they give our community to connect with local causes like us and make a difference. During this stressful time, situations for far too many families have been made worse by the instability caused by COVID-19. We are proud to stand by so many individuals and organizations who pledged to make a difference in Polk, Burnett, Rusk, and Washburn counties.

Apply for current projects

We are looking to partner with two families for new home builds located in Burnett and Washburn County. By working with us from beginning to end, we can help prospective individuals prepare for the various responsibilities of homeownership, including learning about personal finances, mortgages, maintenance and upkeep of homes, and much more.

If you are interested, you can visit our Website for eligibility details and program requirements.

If you are a low-income homeowner struggling with improving and maintaining your home for any number of reasons, consider applying for our Home Repair Program. Repairs that the program can help you with are related to poor structural conditions, safety, landscaping and painting, as well as special needs. Projects can include porch and deck, window, roof, gutter, siding and trim, and wheelchair ramp and railing repair or installation. This program was recently expanded to include providing energy efficiency upgrades in addition to our standard repairs; currently we are offering homeowners the ability to replace their current thermostat with a new Google Nest Thermostat at no charge.



Former President Jimmy Carter and HFH

Carter Build
2019

A look back at Carter's activism

In October of last year, former president Jimmy Carter suffered a fall in his home while getting ready for church that required 14 stitches. That same afternoon, he traveled to Nashville to begin the 36th week-long Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Work Project with Habitat for Humanity. Sporting a bandage above his brow and a visibly black eye, he stood underneath a tent on a muddy lot constructing corbels with his wife a few feet away, painting them white.

Carter came to work.

"I had a number one priority and that was to come to Nashville and build houses," he told a crowd of volunteers that evening at Ryman Auditorium.

The oldest living former president celebrated his 95th birthday in October of 2019, and though he's physically frail, he's sharp as a tack. Over the years, the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Work Project has built, renovated or repaired more than 4,300 homes alongside more than 104,000 volunteers across 14 countries. The Carter Work Projects started modestly and built slowly. Early projects were held in the United States and were relatively small compared to later years.

It's a testament to his remarkably active post-presidencies, a story of service and love. The



Carter Work Project origin story began with a run in Manhattan. Habitat for Humanity was founded in Americus, Georgia, in 1976, just about 10 miles from the Carters' home in Plains, Georgia, where they have lived since leaving the White House in 1981. Carter had been asked to get involved with the organization and had volunteered casually, but it wasn't until he was in New York City for meetings and out on a run on the Lower East Side that the Carter Work Project seed was planted.

"He ran by a group of students struggling to do a Habitat project, and he just made a comment, 'We need to do something to help these students,'" Habitat for Humanity International CEO Jonathan Reckford told CNN in 2019.

Soon after, Reckford said, the Carters took a bus ride back to Manhattan "with a boatload of folks from South Georgia" and worked on the Mascot Flats apartment building, the inaugural 1984 Carter Work Project, for a week. The volunteers—including the former first couple—slept on the floor of a local church basement each night. The...

A message from John Reckford

Continued...

Carters had been offered a small room at the church, which they gave up to a young couple who had skipped their honeymoon to attend the build. There is no sign that the couple, who both walk with canes, have any intention of scaling back their work on build sites.

"I'll stop when I have to. But I won't stop until I have to," Jimmy Carter said during the 2019 build. Asked why, after all these years, they still make the effort to do the work, Carter simply said: "We've always gotten more out of it, our Habitat work, than we put into it."

He added: "We have a net gain when we come to a Habitat project. There's always an emotional feeling among the volunteers and the homeowners, kind of binding us together in a spirit of love, appreciation, and mutual respect, and also equality ... Treat everybody the same and try to help people that are in need."

The story of Jimmy Carter's post presidency activism is one of dedication and hard work, and it's one that is deeply American. As we celebrate the Fourth of July this month, it is a time to remember these stories and reflect on the blood, sweat, and tears that have allowed our country to persevere. As Carter once said, "Whether the borders that divide us are picket fences or national boundaries, we are all neighbors in a global community."

Habitat's commitment to anti-racism

Habitat for Humanity is more than a nonprofit housing ministry. We have a vision of a world where we share one humanity, and that's a world that we believe in and fight for every day. We are a faith-based organization, but we realize that faith alone is not enough. Our faith must be coupled with works and action. CEO of Habitat for Humanity International, Jonathan T.M. Reckford, said this about Habitat's commitment to anti-racism.

"In recent days, I have fallen to my knees in frequent prayer and reflection, seeking God's guidance. Guidance to be a better listener. Guidance to be a better leader. Guidance to truly understand that my path as a white man has not been the path of so many of my fellow citizens and that my own experiences cannot be the measure of their journeys; that we must love our neighbors as we love ourselves. And, finally, guidance to own where Habitat must go from here."

"We must commit to doing the work in our practices, our programs and our networks that brings equity to our efforts and helps bring justice to the communities in which we work. We must, throughout our ministry, do a better job of connecting issues of racial and social injustice with historic barriers to affordable housing and working to eradicate those barriers."

Celebrating a year of Cost of Home

New
Program

Habitat for Humanity's first advocacy program

On Friday, June 12th, Habitat for Humanity across the US marked the first anniversary of its advocacy program, Cost of Home. By evaluating policy wins reported from across the country, Habitat for Humanity estimates that the campaign has helped improve access to home affordability for nearly 1.5 million people.

The world has changed significantly since the program's launch a year ago; the significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout are still unfolding. The number of families struggling to make ends meet continues to grow. Cost of Home has been a critical component of Habitat for Humanity's response to the pandemic and will continue to play a key role in recovery. Habitat is refocusing and expanding its advocacy efforts, through Cost of Home, to address the housing affordability challenges that have been further revealed and exacerbated as a result of COVID-19.

Habitat's strategic plan calls on us to build sector impact through policies and systems that advance access to adequate, affordable housing. Working locally, Habitat affiliates across the nation, like Wild Rivers, see firsthand that a stable, affordable home is out of reach for far too many. Even before the pandemic, more than 38 million U.S. families were spending too much on their housing. We know we can't meet the need through building homes alone. That's why it's



imperative that we address the underlying policies and systems that hinder access to housing. Looking ahead, we know the impacts of COVID-19 will be felt most by those who can afford it the least. We know we need to make home affordability a priority in this year's elections. We know Habitat for Humanity must continue to advocate to policymakers at all levels of government to ensure that every family — no matter who they are, where they live or how much money they earn — can build the foundation for a stable, healthy future for themselves and their families.

Now more than ever, we must work together to make the cost of home something we all can afford.

In the Community

WRHFH Community Updates



Sheila Albrecht with her "what home means to me" post.

Ten years ago, Sheila Albrecht joined our team and was there when we opened the St. Croix Falls ReStore. She has been with us ever since, and we consider her not only a valuable asset to Wild Rivers Habitat for Humanity but a dear friend and member of our Habitat family. This summer, Sheila made the decision to retire. While we'll certainly miss her at the checkout, we wish her the best in her retirement; she's absolutely earned it. Thank you for all of your years of dedication to making sure every family has a decent place to live!

Another thank you to everyone who wished Sheila a farewell both on Facebook and in-person at the ReStore.

Home Repair Projects

Wild Rivers Habitat for Humanity has been completing home repair projects whenever possible. During these times of sheltering in place, it's more important than ever that people have a safe place to call home. In June, we completed a number of home repairs in Washburn, Burnett and Polk County, including: a furnace replacement and a deck repair, a roof repair, an exterior paint job, and a gutter install.



Thank you Dirks Heating & Cooling Inc. for coming out to replace the old furnace!



WRHFH Community Updates

In the
Community



On behalf of Shell Lake State Bank, Vice President Donny Strunk made a donation of \$5,500 to Wild Rivers Habitat For Humanity. The money will be used for home repair efforts within our service area, which includes four counties in northwestern Wisconsin: Burnett, Polk, Rusk and Washburn. The Home Repair program assists income qualified homeowners with maintaining and improving their residence, helping individuals complete repairs such as wheelchair ramp installation, deck, window, roof, gutter and siding.



North West Gutters came out to help attach gutters onto this home. Thank you!

