



In the final weeks volunteers ready two Albany Street homes for dedication (story inside).

# Habitat Builder

A quarterly newsletter of Habitat for Humanity of Schenectady County, Inc.

WINTER 2003



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## Nonprofits join forces to rehab houses on Hamilton Hill



(l to r) Betty Patterson, Janet Grigsby, Beverly Burnett, Bruce Pomeroy and Ed August hold one hammer to symbolize their collaborative commitment to the Emmett St. project.

In an effort to transform a rundown section of Emmett Street in Schenectady into safe, affordable housing, Habitat for Humanity of Schenectady County, Inc. (HFHSC) has joined forces with two other nonprofits, Better Neighborhoods, Inc. (BNI) and Community Land Trust (CLT) of Schenectady.

After signing a year-long agreement on November 20 outside 827 Emmett Street, which is owned by CLT, representatives from each of the groups toured the neighborhood to begin evaluating properties for this collaborative venture.

According to HFHSC Strategic Planner Betty Patterson, the three groups

joined in this endeavor to have “a bigger effect together than we could possibly have alone.” The three organizations will have greater access to grants and other fund sources as a result of the agreement.

Bruce Pomeroy, HFHSC president, expects that Habitat will provide at least four homes in the next two years. Ed August, BNI chairman, estimates about 20 houses in the same period of time. CLT’s Beverly Burnett praised the agreement, although CLT have no plans to purchase any additional properties until 827 Emmett is sold.

Hamilton Hill Neighborhood Association President Chauncey Williams, who is also on the board of directors of HFHSC, believes in the project, saying in a *Gazette* newspaper story that “this will change the landscape of the community.”

## A Women Build is planned for '04

*HFHSC seeks interested Capital Region women of all ages*

In 1991, a group of women in Charlotte, N.C. completed the first women-built Habitat for Humanity house. With this, the seeds for Habitat for Humanity’s Women Build program were planted; and in May 1998, the Women Build department was officially instituted. Since 1991, women crews have built more than 350 Habitat houses in the United States, and the program has grown internationally as well.



HFHSC is planning a Women Build in 2004 and has named builder Tricia Downes as Habitat’s construction supervisor. Volunteers are needed. Training will be provided, but it involves more than swinging a hammer. People are needed to help choose the family, provide lunch, recruit volunteers, raise money and more. So women, from teens to seniors, are encourage to volunteer.

For more information go to the HFHSC website at [www.hfhscny.org](http://www.hfhscny.org). You also can learn more about the Women Build program at [www.habitat.org/wb/](http://www.habitat.org/wb/).

## Tee off in 2004

A summer golf tournament fundraiser is in the planning stage to benefit the activities of the Schenectady HFH affiliate. An organizational meeting will be held on January 11 at 1 pm at the home of Development Chair, Trish Savage, 1090 Avon Rd, Schenectady, NY (near Ellis Hospital). Volunteers are needed at all levels. If you are interested in attending contact Trish at 393-4111 or [tsavage4@nycap.rr.com](mailto:tsavage4@nycap.rr.com).



Kimberly Ketchen

# Holidays will be special for Habitat's newest homeowners

On a sunny, crisp fall morning the lives of two families were changed forever thanks to their own hard work and the efforts of many volunteers and donors. Keys to 1768 and 1772 Albany Street were presented to the Paige and Ketchen families at the Nov. 22 dedication ceremony.

**H**FHSC President Bruce Pomeroy welcomed guests to the November 22 ceremony to dedicate 1768 and 1772 Albany Street. Rev. David Heise (Habitat Church Relations chair) blessed the homes, and guests heard remarks by Betty Patterson (Family Selection Chair), Dee Lundstrom (Family Nurturing Chair) and Habitat for Humanity International's Affiliate Support Manager Bruce Rodgers.

Certificates were presented to material donors and volunteer groups. Two

special awards were given to exceptional Habitat volunteers. The Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Duane Dodds. Bruce Pomeroy accepted the Al Finke Distinguished Service Award for Dale Swann, who was unable to attend.

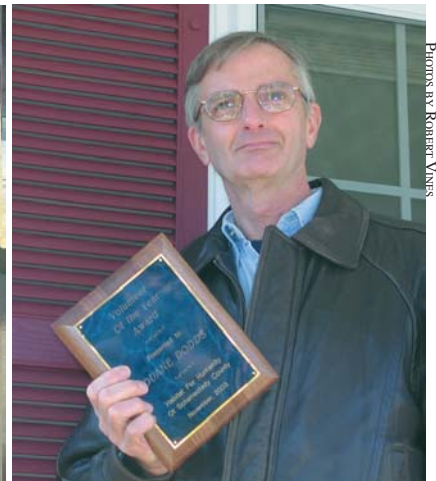
The Paige and Ketchen families were introduced, presented with family Bibles and other gifts. Finally the keys to the new homes were given to the youngest members of each family. A reception at the homes followed.

The Paige family has four children,

one of whom is severely disabled. The Ketchens have three children, who are home schooled. All have worked hard, putting in their sweat equity hours — even the children, through school projects, to realize their dream of homeownership.

Among invited guests were Adeline W. Graham, president of the Wright Foundation, which donated \$40,000 — one of the largest single donations ever — for construction of the Paige house. Rep. Paul Tonko, Mayor Al Jurczynski and Mayor-elect Brian Stratton also attended.

Clockwise from top left: Adeline W. Graham, president of the Wright Foundation, which donated \$40,000 toward the construction of the Paige home, stands with Kayla, Kelly, Kevin and Karen Paige; the Ketchens (Stephen Sr, Stephen Jr, Kimberly, Colin and Leah) are presented with a variety of gifts by Building Committee Chair BK Keramati; Duane Dodds, a member of the HFHSC board of directors, holds his 2003 Volunteer of the Year Award; a crowd of family and friends gathered; and the Paige home at 1772 Albany St.



PHOTOS BY ROBERTA MINES

# Our Home on Irving Street

*Nestled beside Vale Cemetery, the two-story home at 115 Irving was the second "stick build" for Habitat of Schenectady. Brimming with family photographs, the house is a bustling center of activity for Regina and Stephen Baker, their five teenagers, and an energetic Dalmatian. When Stephen became gravely ill, the house also became an important source of solace and support. Here, Regina tells her story.*



PHOTOS BY JACKIE CRAVEN

by Regina Baker as told to Jackie Craven

Stephen and I didn't think we'd actually qualify for a Habitat home. We were renting a flat and our finances were stretched, but we were both employed. Then, when we were accepted as a partner family, we were so excited. I was anxious to have something that was truly our own, a place where we could decorate any way we wanted without a landlord telling us, "No, you can't paint that color." The children, who were aged twelve to nineteen, were also eager to have spaces they could call their very own.



That year we worked very hard. First we helped out with the construction of the Habitat House at 3402 Albany Street, then we got to work on the construction of our own home. The whole family pitched in, hammering, painting, and doing whatever else was needed. An enormous amount of

time went into clearing the land. The weeds were higher than my daughter, who is five feet tall. Night after night, we chopped and bundled, chopped and bundled.

Owning a house is not without challenges. Three days before my daughter's wedding, I came downstairs to find a flood on the kitchen floor. Something had broken under the sink. I was frantic, but Stephen remained calm. It's true we don't have a landlord to do repairs for us, but we're not really alone. If there is ever a problem we can't handle, we can always call Habitat and they will tell us how to get help.

Amazingly enough, living here is much less expensive than renting our old apartment. The apartment was not well-insulated, so the utility bills were higher. Plus, the rent was actually higher than our current mortgage and tax payments. These savings are a big help, and they became even more important when Stephen got sick.

Two years ago, Stephen was diagnosed with a brain tumor. He went into surgery

before Christmas, and it was February before he could return to work. Then, in March, he went back into the hospital for five bypass surgeries. I just don't know what we would have done if it had not been for Habitat for Humanity. When I phoned to say that I would be a little late with my mortgage payments, Roland Peteler (the treasurer at the time) suggested that we use our escrow account to make the payments. All through this horrible time, Habitat was right there to help us so we didn't get behind.

We've lived here five years now, and there have been so many joyous events: three high school graduations, one marriage, and one grandchild. In my job I work with preschool children, and now my daughter Heather is studying early childhood education. Also, we hosted three exchange students – I don't think we would have ever done that if we were still renting. It turns out that this one house has made a difference in many lives.

## Easy Shopping for Holiday Gifts

Avoid the tedium of crowded malls, long lines, slow checkouts, searching for the right gift, gift-wrapping, then mailing it. And give a more meaningful gift at the same time! This year, consider giving a donation to Habitat for Humanity as a gift in someone else's name. Choose a friend or relative who is concerned about ending poverty housing, understands the importance of homeownership, supports the idea of "sweat equity" or is impressed by the work of Habitat.



Habitat for Humanity of Schenectady County will mail an attractive Christmas holiday note thanking the person you designate as the gift recipient, as well as a thank-you letter to you for tax purposes. Both the giver and the recipient will have the satisfaction of knowing that they are doing something special for others at this time of peace.

Fill out the order form and mail to: HFHSC Gift Card, c/o Trish Savage, 1090 Avon Rd, Schenectady, NY 12308. For more information, call 393-4111 or email [tsavage4@nycap.rr.com](mailto:tsavage4@nycap.rr.com)

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## Habitat for Humanity of Schenectady County

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Schenectady, NY 12309

*Schenectady County Habitat for Humanity is an ecumenical  
Christian ministry whose mission is to build simple, decent,  
affordable housing for those who are unable to pursue  
home ownership in the conventional manner.*

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## First annual tool sale held at First Baptist



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HFHSC's first annual Tool Box Bash and Family Fun Day was held October 4 at the First Baptist Church of Schenectady at 1944 Union Street in Niskayuna. A variety of tools and home improvement items were available for sale by Habitat. First Baptist volunteers held a bake sale in conjunction with the event, and offered first-floor tours of the Westinghouse mansion. The church is seeking historic status for the home, which serves as a church center.

Please start saving your unwanted tools for next October's sale now.

## Many Thanks!

*HFHSC would like to thank the following organizations/companies without whose help the construction of these homes would not have been possible:*

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