

# Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity

## Volunteer Handbook



“Everyone deserves a simple, decent  
place to live on terms they can  
afford to pay.”

Millard Fuller,  
Founder of Habitat for Humanity  
For Humanity International

Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity  
60 Island Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor East  
Lawrence, MA 01840  
978-681-8858 978-681-9357 fax  
[www.merrimackvallerhabitat.org](http://www.merrimackvallerhabitat.org)

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#### Coordinator of Volunteer Programs

Karen Walsh 978-681-8858 x13

[karen@merrimackvallyhabitat.org](mailto:karen@merrimackvallyhabitat.org)

If you want to help with construction, at the ReStore, doing office work or in some other area of interest, Karen will help you find your niche and will schedule your volunteer time.

#### Student Build Coordinator

Karen Walsh, 978-681-8858 x13

[karen@merrimackvallyhabitat.org](mailto:karen@merrimackvallyhabitat.org)

StudentBuild is a Habitat program that involves youth in their community, engaging them in the mission to eliminate poverty housing. MVHH sponsors StudentBuild Work Days six times a year.

#### Women Build Coordinator

Anne Broyles 978-681-8858 x16

[abroyles@merrimackvallyhabitat.org](mailto:abroyles@merrimackvallyhabitat.org)

Women Build is a Habitat for Humanity International program that encourages and trains women to make a difference by building homes and communities and is held during the month of May. Additionally, MVHH holds Women Build days once a month, usually on the third Saturday.

#### Nickels For Nails Coordinator

Anne Broyles 978-681-8858 x16

[abroyles@merrimackvallyhabitat.org](mailto:abroyles@merrimackvallyhabitat.org)

Children and youth raise funds for "the house that youth built." This program is educational and inspirational, involving young people who want to help Habitat but are not yet old enough to work on-site.

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#### Staff:

Larry Sharp, Executive Director, ext. 11

Sharon Mason, Director of Development, ext. 18

Emerson Dahmen, Building Director, ext. 17

Ann Folinus, Business Manager, ext. 14

Gloria De Los Santos, Family Services Coordinator, ext. 15

Anne Broyles, Faith Relations Coordinator, ext. 16

Karen Walsh, Volunteer Coordinator, ext. 13

Jennifer Annis, Administrative Assistant, ext. 10

Anne Strong, ReStore Manager, 978-686-3323

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30am-5pm

#### Directions to Habitat office:

Take Rt. 495 to exit 45B, Marston Street. After 1 mile, turn left on Canal Street. Turn left on Union Street (0.3 mile) and park in the lot on the right. Directly across, at the corner of Island and Union Streets, is the Bell Tower Square Building. You will see a sign for Cambridge College.

Enter at the 60 Island Street door. Take a left and, immediately on your left, take the stairs to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and turn left. Or, immediately on your right, take the elevator to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and exit the elevator, turning right. Follow the hallway immediately in front of you to the end. You will come to an open area. Take the hallway that runs to your right. The hallway will turn slightly. We are the second door on the left after the bend.



### **Habitat for Humanity International**

Habitat for Humanity International is a nonprofit, ecumenical housing ministry that seeks to eliminate poverty housing and homelessness around the world. Founded in 1976 by Millard and Linda Fuller, Habitat has built more than 300,000 houses around the world and provided more than 1.5 million people in 3,000 communities with decent, affordable shelter.

More than 1,700 Habitat affiliates in the United States and 550 international affiliates coordinate Habitat house-building projects around the world.

### **Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity**

Founded in 1985, Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity (MVHH) is an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International. We build decent, affordable homes for low-income families in need of housing in the 22 communities we serve in Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. The homes are built in partnership with prospective MVHH homeowners and volunteers.

MVHH is a 501C3 non-profit organization.

### **Our Mission**

We believe that a stable community begins with home ownership. By giving this opportunity to economically disadvantaged people in our communities, we are enabling them to take control of their lives. Habitat's ultimate goal is to eliminate poverty housing and homelessness in the world by providing homeownership opportunities to all those in need.

**Job Attire:** For the sake of your safety, we require that no open-toed shoes, loose clothing or hanging jewelry be worn on construction sites. We ask that men and women keep their shirts on, even in hot weather.

**Name Tags:** All volunteers and visitors at our construction sites are required to sign in and wear a name tag throughout the day. This is important because of insurance and safety concerns and contributes to fellowship among volunteers.

**Confidentiality:** Volunteers such as board members, family services volunteers and database assistants are all required to adhere to agency standards of confidentiality regarding any information they may have access to in their work for MVHH.

**Habitat's Volunteer Insurance:** MVHH carries a policy of medical and short-term disability insurance to protect our volunteers in the case of an accident. This coverage is in place to assist if the volunteer is uninsured, or to supplement the volunteer's own medical insurance.

**Standards of Conduct:** Paid staff and volunteers are required to maintain the high standards of professional conduct while involved in any activity on behalf of MVHH. We hope that everyone affiliated with MVHH will interact with respect, trust, and kindness. Please try to assume the best about each other and use direct communication to solve misunderstandings.

As a legally formed, non-profit organization, our staff and volunteers are bound by all federal, state and local laws against sexual harassment or any other harassment based on a person's gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, physical characteristics or any other condition. Actions or words that may be perceived as threatening or belittling, or actions of unwanted personal attention or physical contact are prohibited.

To report an incident that needs investigation or resolution, please contact the Executive Director.

## General Information for All Volunteers

**Quality Standards and Accountability:** Staff and volunteers alike join in the important work of MVHH because of our dedication to its mission. We strive to provide volunteers with the training, guidance and support to do the best possible job in any responsibility they have accepted. Please contact us with questions or if you have need of additional support. We want you to succeed and enjoy your volunteer experience with MVHH.

**Unexpected Absence or Need to Step Down:** We are counting on you, but realize that personal circumstances can change unexpectedly. If you cannot fulfill a commitment to a build day or other assigned task, please communicate with the volunteer coordinator or appropriate staff person as soon as possible so we can find a substitute.

**Volunteer Job Satisfaction:** If you find that you have been “misplaced” within our organization, please contact the volunteer coordinator so we can find the best match for your unique talents and time you have to offer. Similarly, if you have questions or concerns about your volunteer experience, don’t hesitate to let us know. We are committed to making your volunteer experience pleasant, satisfying, and rewarding.

**Job Site Safety:** Our safety policy relies on all volunteers taking responsibility for maintaining a safe job site. The site supervisors and greeters will provide specific instructions related to safety that must be followed. Hard hats, safety goggles, and other safety devices must be used as instructed. Make safety your first priority. Please immediately report any safety concerns you observe to a site supervisor.

**Waiver of Liability:** All volunteers are required by our insurance company to sign an annual Waiver of Liability before participating with us in construction. Volunteers under the age of 18 must bring their waiver signed by a parent or legal guardian.

**No One is Alone:** No one may work alone on a Habitat job site, or be on the site at times that have not been authorized by the Building Director.

## Habitat Homeownership

The homes MVHH builds in partnership with prospective Habitat homeowners and volunteers are sold to approved Habitat homeowners at no profit with a no-interest 20-30 year mortgage.

MVHH’s Family Selection Committee reviews all applications. Those who meet all the selection criteria are interviewed in their homes by the Family Selection Committee. The Committee identifies the families who are most in need and best meets the qualification guidelines and presents them to the MVHH Executive Board for consideration.

Selected Habitat homeowners are required to:

1. Attend an informational meeting
2. Participate in all Habitat home educational workshops
3. Contribute between 240 - 360 “sweat equity hours” by working on building their own or another MVHH homeowner’s home
4. Pay closing costs (about \$2,800)
5. Participate in the management of a condominium association where applicable
6. Participate in and support MVHH events and programs

Today, we have built 64 homes and rehabbed 7 others in the Merrimack Valley. We are in the process of building 14 more.

MVHH is a 501c3 non-profit organization.



## Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are needed in all aspects of Habitat for Humanity's work. We welcome you to build on the construction site, serve on committees, work with families, help out in our office, and do projects from your home.

We need graphic artists, finance experts, writers, applicant interviewers, and computer tech experts as well as carpenters, roofers and painters. If you're not sure where you could be the most help, our Volunteer Coordinator would be happy to tell you about current needs in our organization and where you might fit in.

Our volunteers come to us from all walks of life, but share a commitment to make a difference in their community. Some volunteers have the time and energy for major, ongoing responsibilities. Others can help occasionally. Our Volunteer Coordinator will work with you and your schedule to help you fit into what is needed at Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity.

Construction takes place every Thursday and Saturday, with other build days as needed. You must sign a Waiver of Liability before you start work on your first volunteer day. Volunteers 18 years and older may work at any assigned task at a site. Youth who are 16 and 17 may participate except for dangerous activities such as felling trees, operating power tools, and working on roofs, ladders and/or scaffolding.

It's crucial that you sign up ahead of time to work on the build site so our Building Director can plan the work day in a way that is meaningful and safe for everyone on site.

We welcome groups and teams, and will discuss numbers and other details when the group leader calls the Volunteer Coordinator to reserve a day.

## MVHH Committees

**Building Committee** Convener: John Cuozzo  
Deals with issues related to construction management and procedures, safety, materials specs, training, tools and equipment. Meets bi-monthly.

**Faith Relations Committee** Convener: Anne Broyles  
Committee members reach out to churches, synagogues and mosques to build partnerships that will support MVHH through contributions, prayers, work groups or lunch crews at the work sites. Meets quarterly and some email correspondence.

**Family Partner Committee** Convener: tbd  
Each Habitat partner family has a volunteer family partner who works with them to monitor sweat equity hours, help them prepare for homeownership, and serve as their liaison during the construction process and beyond. Two-year commitment of heavy involvement and interaction during the Habitat build, with continued periodic contact during the 1st year of homeownership.

**Family Selection** Convener: Rolando Lora  
Members of the Family Selection Committee conduct info sessions, process applications and interview potential homeowner families. Volunteers are very active during a two-month time frame each selection cycle while applications are open to prospective homeowner families.

**Special Events Committee** Convener: tbd  
Helps organize, publicize, set-up and breakdown our major special fundraising events. Meetings throughout the year based upon event schedules.

**Speakers Bureau** Convener: Anne Broyles  
Committee members are available to speak about MVHH's work at churches, businesses and community organizations. No regular meetings, but some training and preparation involved. Speaking events are fit into each person's schedule.

### Non-Construction Volunteer Opportunities

There are many non-construction specialized volunteer jobs available. Our needs change, but here are some types of volunteer work that might be needed.

#### Volunteer Greeters

A short greeter training will enable you to provide all the necessary information to volunteers as they check in on the build site on Saturdays at 8:00 a.m. Expect to be at the site for about one hour.

#### Lunch Preparation

Individuals or groups are encouraged to provide lunch, snacks or drinks to build day volunteer groups.

#### Technology

Input data in fundraising or volunteer databases, help create reports or mailing labels. We also occasionally need people with various computer software and database experience.

#### Administrative and Leadership

Includes organizational finance, budgeting and accounting work as well as personnel, strategic planning and project management.

#### Office Support

Some tasks require a few hours per week; others need occasional hours. Some work must be done in the office; other projects can be done at home on your own schedule.

#### The ReStore

Volunteer opportunities include helping on the store floor, merchandise prep and repair, pricing, display, donation pick up and organization

#### Other

Opportunities include public relations work, grant writing, creating printed materials, documenting archival information, running errands, making telephone calls, organizing our tool shed and

warehouse, transporting materials. Please let us know of your interest

### How to Volunteer

Volunteers are the heart of our organization. Each volunteer brings new vitality and strength. Experience is not necessary and volunteers are able to get involved in a number of a different ways. Merrimack Valley Habitat can put you to work!

There is no minimum time commitment for volunteers. You can volunteer one time or make it a regular commitment. Volunteers who regularly work on the build site often find that they increase their skills and comfort level in construction work. Returning volunteers provide continuity and serve as mentors to new volunteers.

1. Fill out a Volunteer Survey online or call our office to get a copy to mail in.

<http://www.merrimackvalleyhabitat.org/volunteer.html>  
978-681-8858

2. Our Volunteer Coordinator will contact you to schedule a build day, connect you to a committee, or help you choose times to work on other projects.

Note: Build day tasks are designated by the Building Director and site supervisors, who decide on the appropriate number of volunteers needed for those tasks, taking into account issues of safety, efficiency, and providing a meaningful work environment where everyone can be of use.

### Construction and Project Support Opportunities

General Construction- We need individuals with all levels of experience who are interested in either a specific type of work, or are willing to learn any area of construction. No construction experience is necessary! Everyone is welcome and training is provided. Let us know of your interest and skills from framing to painting to landscaping.

Licensed Contractors and Construction Professionals - MVHH is always delighted to hear from plumbers, electricians, heating contractors, roofers, plasterers, site and foundation professionals (the sorts of things we cannot do with volunteers) or other building professionals who wish to donate their time or services or offer a Habitat-friendly price for a quality job.

Site Supervisor- MVHH is always looking for experienced builders who are willing to supervise the construction of a MVHH home through one or more phases.

Crew Leader- An individual who is experienced in a particular phase of construction can lead a group of volunteers under the guidance of the site supervisor. If you're willing to work with a group of skilled and/or semi-skilled volunteers for one or more build days, please let us know.

### Build Day Procedures

Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity builds every Thursday and Saturday from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

All volunteers must pre-register with the Volunteer Coordinator in advance of each build day. The Volunteer Coordinator works with the Building Director to determine the number of volunteers that can safely and productively work on the site each build day.

We try to inform volunteers of the projects/tasks they will undertake on their volunteer day beforehand, but construction plans can change last minute. Please be flexible and prepared for plans to change.

Construction volunteers must be at the site by 8:00 a.m. It is important that volunteers be prompt. The Build Director or a site supervisor will address the volunteers regarding work assignments, safety and overall construction at the start of each work day.

Plan to work until 4:00 p.m. with cleanup and departure from the site at 4:30 p.m. Please let the site supervisor know if you need to leave the site for any reason or if you must leave before 4:30 p.m.

Please bring your own snacks, lunch, and water bottle. Occasionally lunch will be provided; we will let you know ahead of time if this will be the case.

Be prepared to work rain, snow or shine. For best results, dress for all weather and in clothes you don't mind getting dirty.

- + Bring a hat and work gloves
- + Bring a raincoat
- + Bring extra warm clothes
- + Wear boots or sneakers. No open-toed sandals or shoes
- + Bring sunscreen

Please help us keep our sites clean and organized. Before you leave for the day, please make sure all the tools, electrical cords, and materials that were used are returned to the proper locations.

### Community Service

MVHH welcomes community service volunteers from civic groups, schools community assistance programs, and the judicial system. It is the community service volunteer's responsibility to maintain an accurate time sheet and to ensure that it is signed off at the beginning and end of each day by a MVHH supervisor or duly appointed person. Hours worked but not recorded or signed off at the end of each day of service will not be counted. MVHH does not recognize breaks or lunches to be community service time. It should be further understood that only actual time worked would be credited for community service. For appropriate placement within our organization, MVHH reserves the right to know the offense related to court-ordered community service volunteers. Such individuals will be treated and held accountable to the same standards as all other volunteers.