Achievement
This has been an eventful year. An historic Presidential election has brought the promise of hope for a better day to вопи экономический downturn that brings hardship to the people we serve and that threatens the stability of our communities. We saw gasoline and fuel costs rise to unfathomable levels, and then drop again. Our work has shifted to helping more people retain their homes even as we strive to continue to help people attain homeownership.

Through these challenges and struggles, we are buoyed by the resiliency of our residents, staff, volunteers, donors and Board members. We have had a year to remember.

Two years ago we wrote to you about change – the merger of two organizations to create a community development agency that would succeed in both lean and better times. Last year, our Annual Report focused on the concept of community because community is the foundation of our mission and an engine of our enterprise. This year, even as we face new and unprecedented challenges, we pause to celebrate our collective achievement.

The achievement that we see every day takes many shapes, as the stories profiled in this report attest: Sarah Kunz and Colin Robinson buying their first home and enjoying their woodstove; Judy Ververs searching for, and ultimately finding, a home she could love – and afford; the Kariyelova family moving into a new apartment that they are proud to call home after emigrating from Moscow, Russia; and Harriett Glazer preserving the security of her home through an affordable loan for necessary repairs. These individual achievements stand in for the hundreds more that make up a year’s work and best describe our purpose and mission as stewards of the community’s assets.

Last April, visitors from the United Kingdom came to Vermont to assess our programs as a finalist for the United Nations World Habitat Awards, given annually to recognize innovation and sustainability. Our whole organization – from residents to staff to partners to volunteers – responded with passion for what we have accomplished and what we do together each day. The passion was not just for the service we provide, but for the way we do it. That enthusiasm and commitment set us apart from the other finalists and resulted in our selection as the winner of this year’s Award.

By the time this Annual Report is printed, we will have moved into our new headquarters at 88 King Street, a green building where we fully complete our merger by bringing together all of our staff into a central office. Built in partnership with Housing Vermont, this revitalization project eight years in the making also adds 20 beautiful new apartments to downtown Burlington. This new beginning for CHT is a fitting start to our 25th Anniversary year.

It seems so long ago when we were writing to you about change. Perhaps that is because we have come so far together, even in two short years. Thank you for your engagement, your encouragement and your support.

Sincerely,

L. Randolph Amis, President
Brenda Torpy, CEO
For Zulia and Roman Kariyelova home is not where you come from but where you are going. The two met in Baku, Azerbaijan and began a 20 year journey to find a place they could call home. They found it in Vermont.

Today Zulia, sitting in her kitchen drinking strong Turkish coffee and sharing recipes from her Armenian heritage, reflects on her family’s journey. “We have been refugees for so long, but now we are ready to be citizens of the United States of America. We do not want to be refugees any longer.”

It has been a long and interesting trip. In 1989 she and her husband moved to Moscow and lived in a hotel, the only housing they could find, for 8 years. Roman had a good job as a manager at a large manufacturing facility and Zulia, who has a degree in accounting, also worked for a large firm. They started a family. Both of their boys Yuriy and Sasha were born in Moscow, but under Russian law they still were not citizens of Russia since Zulia and Roman had refugee status.

After the breakup of the U.S.S.R. Zulia and her family tried to make a new life in the Ukraine and moved to Odessa, but it was short lived and soon they were back in Moscow. Now Zulia was raising her own café and they were able to find housing. “We had a good life, but we were still refugees, and Roman and I realized that it would never feel like home,” said Zulia.

Zulia, Roman, Yuriy and Sasha arrived in the US on April 25, 2003. “On our trip people asked us where we were going,” remarked Zulia. “Vermont, I think it is going to be cold.”

As part of the refugee resettlement program the family was provided with an apartment and with the help of a new found friend, Zulia and Roman found jobs. It was a good start, but they were still looking for a community. “I love Champlain Housing Trust,” beams Zulia. “I have good neighbors and it is easy to communicate with the managers like Mike, he is a good guy.”

Zulia and her family have lived at O’Dell for three years and as Zulia says, “Life is good!” Yuriy is enrolled at Lyndon State College. Sasha is on the honor roll at Fredrick H. Tuttle Middle School in South Burlington. Roman works for a local property management company and Zulia has her own business, Zulia’s Cleaning Co. “This has been a very good place to live, but someday maybe a house,” says Zulia smiling.

On September 30, 2008, twenty years after meeting each other, Zulia and Roman along with their two sons Yuriy and Sasha applied for U.S. citizenship. “I can’t tell you what it will mean to be a citizen,” remarks Zulia. “It has been a long wait, I hope they call soon!”

“I love Champlain Housing Trust,” beams Zulia. “I have good neighbors and it is easy to communicate with the managers like Mike, he is a good guy.”

Finding a Place to Call Home

In the comfort of their living room Zulia, Yuriy, Sasha and Roman joke and talk about family life at O’Dell Apartments.
Judy Ververs bought her Burlington home in 2002. "It’s wonderful," said Judy. "It’s a partnership between the home buyer and the organization that built it," she explained. "I feel that I have a sense of responsibility and more of a partnership [with CHT]," said Judy. "It’s wonderful." Judy methodically sought out the right home for her, and after working with CHT HomeOwnership Center staff and looking at over two dozen homes, found one that both suited her needs and fit into her personal budget. She purchased this year, and felt a change in her relationship as she had transitioned from a renter, to a custodian, and finally to an owner of a permanently affordable Housing Trust home. "We loved Vermont and weren’t sure what other places were aligned with what we were looking for in a community," explained Colin.

After renting in Burlington, they started looking into buying a home in the area. A year of home shopping led them to a realization: there was a disconnect between the homes they were interested in and their ability to afford them. Judy attended CHT’s homebuyer education course, and worked with counselor to learn more about the buying process and prepare herself for the investment. "It’s wonderful." said Judy. "I feel that I have a sense of responsibility and more of a partnership [with CHT]," she explained. "It’s wonderful." Judy appreciated the assistance of a downpayment grant from CHT, made possible through the support of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. But her involvement with CHT actually began in 2000, when she decided to become a member and make a donation. "We appreciated the organization’s philosophy of providing access to decent housing and the commitment to community building," she explained. "I didn’t think that I needed the help or was eligible to buy a CHT home," explained Judy.

Judy attended CHT’s homebuyer education course, and worked with counselor to learn more about the buying process and prepare herself for the investment. "It’s wonderful." said Judy. "I feel that I have a sense of responsibility and more of a partnership [with CHT]," she explained. "It’s wonderful." Judy methodically sought out the right home for her, and after working with CHT HomeOwnership Center staff and looking at over two dozen homes, found one that both suited her needs and fit into her personal budget. She purchased this year, and felt a change in her relationship as she had transitioned from a renter, to a custodian, and finally to an owner of a permanently affordable Housing Trust home. "We loved Vermont and weren’t sure what other places were aligned with what we were looking for in a community," explained Colin.

Judy attended CHT’s homebuyer education course, and worked with counselor to learn more about the buying process and prepare herself for the investment. "I didn’t think that I needed the help or was eligible to buy a CHT home," explained Judy. "I learned more about what I really wanted [in a home]. At the beginning, I thought I wanted a much bigger place, but then I didn’t. We were looking for in a community," she explained. "We hosted Thanksgiving with our family, and sitting around the table with family and friends made us reflect on how truly grateful we are to own our own home." She has a new appreciation for the staff, volunteers and residents of CHT. For the last few years, she has volunteered for CHT’s annual Community Campaigns, encouraging other community members to get involved.

Over these years her understanding of the need for affordable housing has deepened, as has her appreciation for the staff, volunteers and residents of CHT. For the last few years, she has volunteered for CHT’s annual Community Campaigns, encouraging other community members to get involved.

Sarah Rutz and Colin Robinson were home buyers by “high school” Sweethearts growing up in Rutland. They were drawn to settle down in Burlington after graduating from college because of their desire to live in a place that supported their values. "We loved Vermont and weren’t sure what other places were aligned with what we were looking for in a community," explained Colin.

In 2006, Judy returned to the search, this time realizing that owning a CHT’s Shared Equity Program could help her achieve the goal of owning her own home. Then Judy attended CHT’s homebuyer education with a downpayment grant to provide access to home ownership, in exchange for sharing future market appreciation with future buyers.

"I feel that I have a sense of responsibility and more of a partnership [with CHT]," said Judy. "It’s wonderful." 

Over these years her understanding of the need for affordable housing has deepened, as has her appreciation for the staff, volunteers and residents of CHT. For the last few years, she has volunteered for CHT’s annual Community Campaigns, encouraging other community members to get involved.

Sarah appreciated another benefit of buying a permanently affordable home. "We knew that we were preserving this home for the family and friends who come by," said Colin. "We made it a reality not just for ourselves, but for another family that ends up buying this house from us.”
When Harriett Glazer needed a number of essential repairs done to her home, she knew it was going to be tough to find the money. She had purchased the beautiful 100-year-old home in St. Albans in 2006, after selling her house in South Burlington. Harriett, who has multiple sclerosis, did not have a job at the time and was stretched to the limit by living on Social Security.

The roof had a leak—“the place was leaking like a sieve,” Harriett remembered—and when the Weatherization Assistance Program came to inspect, they found knob-and-tube wiring.

“When I had two problems to solve instead of one,” Harriett lamented.

When she tried to find a bank to lend her the money, they all turned her down flat. “I couldn’t qualify for a loan because I didn’t have the income,” she said.

She decided to search for alternative sources of funding. “I heard about the Champlain Housing Trust and their loan fund in St. Albans when I went to Community Action. I was like, “Wow, I should call these guys.” Harriett did call CHT, and she was pleasantly surprised.

With the affordable loan from CHT, a new tin roof was put on, the entire property was rewired, the plumbing was upgraded, and the bathroom was renovated.

“It was really easy to go through the process. The paperwork was simple, and everyone at CHT was so friendly,” Harriett recalled.

When all was said and done, Harriett couldn’t be happier with how well all the work went. “Overnight on those jobs has been stellar, and all of the contractors were amazing. They did great work,” Harriett said. One of the contractors would even “have his guys come over to plow my driveway in the winter, even if they didn’t need access to it that day.”

Harriett, who volunteers for the local Humane Society, hopes to go back to work part-time in the near future. “I’m starting to go a bit stir crazy,” Harriett admitted. But for now she is just thankful that her home is safe and secure, with a loan that is affordable.

“I would have had to try to take out a second mortgage,” with much higher interest rates, she noted, if this program was not available. “CHT was there to help.”

Harriett was able to put on a new tin roof, rewire the entire property, upgrade the plumbing and renovate her bathroom—all with an affordable CHT loan.
As the World Habitat Award recognized both our shared equity program and our community-based, resident-centered organizational structure, CHT’s staff and Board believed it was important to have a representative in addition to CEO Brenda Torpy attend the ceremony in Luanda, Angola. Board member and Flynn Avenue Cooperative resident Richard T. Kemp volunteered to go, and offered to help raise the $4,500 needed to cover the flight, hotel and other expenses connected to the trip. We turned to the community for support, and you responded quickly and generously. Thank you to all of the individuals and organizations who supported this opportunity.
Stewardship

At the heart of all land trusts’ mission is the stewardship of land for the benefit of the community. We accomplishing this goal by ensuring long-term affordability and preserving the quality of our precious resources through land acquisition, conservation, and the management of property transferred from one homeowner or community group to another.

With membership comes a responsibility to ensure that these properties always serve the wider community as set forth in our mission and by-laws. The Board of Directors, elected by the membership at the annual meeting, must approve each transaction, and no parcel can be returned to private, for-profit use without a vote of the full membership. Thus, all public and private investments are an investment in our community’s stock of permanently affordable housing.

In Fiscal Year 2008 we added 40 new homes to our permanently affordable portfolio, a number of which are described in detail on pages 18-20 of this document, which is a transfer of service for 18 more homes.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING OUR WORK POSSIBLE

We are grateful for the support our community provides us to help CHT meet its mission. This support comes in many shapes and sizes, all with the common goal of ensuring that those who need an affordable home have access to one. We offer our deep appreciation to the hundreds of individuals and institutions that make gifts, in-kind donations, charitable investments and pledges in Fiscal Year 2008 (October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008) that have made it possible to continue our work.

$10,000 AND ABOVE

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In all, 45 gifts and pledges have been made to the campaign, led by Lois McClure’s $1 million leadership gift and a $500,000 donation from the Amy E. Tarrant Foundation. While these may be the two most notable contributions, every pledge to the Fund is meaningful and we are grateful for the community’s support.

We are thankful for the guidance of our seven-member Honorary Committee and the efforts of our nine-member Campaign Steering Committee. Approximately $2 million in pledges have been made towards the $3 million goal.

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