

# AT HOME

NEWS FROM CHAMPLAIN HOUSING TRUST

FALL 2012



**Mary Carter enjoying the  
second phase of her life...  
see page 3**

# DEAR CHT MEMBER,

Last month you might have seen orange flags at Champlain Housing Trust properties around Burlington. They identified our homes to 300 visitors here for the National



Community Land Trust Network conference. Those big buses weren't full of leaf peepers who had taken a wrong turn, but fellow

community land trust practitioners, here to see our work and to learn from each other.

So many people said how impressed they were with the number, quality, and variety of the properties we steward. My answer was, "We should have something to show for three decades of work to create permanently affordable housing." And we do.

This newsletter's focus is longevity—something I think about every September as I mark my anniversary of joining CHT (then BCLT) in 1991. My longevity has been rewarding to me, as the challenge of creating and preserving affordable housing has pushed me and our staff to grow, change, and constantly forge new partnerships.

In fact, our biggest new project—preserving affordability in Burlington's South Meadow community—harkens back to CHT's start. South Meadow was built in 1986, and it offered affordable housing for twenty years thanks to HUD funding. When its owner decided to sell, he called and offered it to CHT so the affordability would continue and

residents would not be displaced. In fact, with help from the City of Burlington and other funders, we will be able to increase the affordable options at this beautiful property.

We also maintain affordability through major improvements to our rental properties. This year you might have noticed historic buildings in the Old North End, Pine Street, and Winooski brighten up their blocks, thanks to a big updating of nearly forty apartments. Less visible than the new paint, windows, and doors is the energy-saving work that makes these places both cozier and less costly to run. Cutting our energy use holds our costs down for the long term.

Finally, the Carters' story of using a low-interest loan from our Champlain Housing Loan Fund to repair their home in South Hero (page 3) highlights that program's value. Our loans help customers repair the homes they love so they, too, can steward their properties—whether they are CHT homes or not—for the long term.

Reflecting on the longevity of our work has brought to mind some of our past milestones—but this commitment to permanent affordability is really all about the future. It keeps us looking forward so that we have the funds, expertise, and community support to uphold this very important promise to you.

Best,

  
Brenda Torpy,  
CEO

# IN DEVELOPMENT

Burlington's South Meadow Apartments have been a real success in creating affordable housing within a broader mix. The complex of 148 apartments also boasts a great location in the South End, well-kept units with nice amenities, and lots of green space. So when the property's owner decided to sell and offered it to CHT, we jumped at the chance to preserve and even expand the affordability there. "If CHT did not buy it, the site would be ripe for gentrification," explains CHT Director of Real Estate Development Amy Demetrowitz, "and low-income residents living there could be displaced, with very few options."

**WE RECEIVE 100 RENTAL APPLICATIONS  
A MONTH. IN THIS INCREDIBLY TIGHT  
MARKET, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO PRESERVE  
AFFORDABILITY WHERE IT ALREADY EXISTS.**

Our development staff assembled \$19 million in financing for this project. This will allow us to set below-market rents at 64 apartments—up from the 40 affordable units the property has had—and do repairs and improvements to keep the site in good condition. It will also create new opportunities for homeownership; two years from now, 32 townhouse units will become affordable condominiums and the residents will have the first option to buy them.

We receive a hundred rental applications a month. In this incredibly tight market, it is essential to preserve affordability where it already exists. We are gratified to be able to bring South Meadow into our portfolio; current and future residents can rest secure in the knowledge that we will steward their home as a community asset, in line with our mission.



# ReNEW

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR CHT BUILDINGS



**C**HT's overhaul of rental properties around town this year is like an anniversary gift to these historic structures and the people who live in them. We've already enjoyed a long relationship. This investment will make us even stronger going forward.

The 13 buildings in Burlington and Winooski that we just finished renovating were some of our first rental properties. Most were bought as part of a neighborhood stabilization effort. Keeping the 40 apartments affordable was our primary goal; we just didn't have the resources to invest in their renovation until now.



Twenty-some years on, low interest rates gave us a golden opportunity. With new financing that dropped our rates from 8 percent to 5.5 percent, and provided equity from the sale of tax credits, we've been able to make deep improvements that will reduce the properties' operating costs for the long haul.

Improved insulation, new windows, kitchen appliances, and solar hot water systems, among other major updates, have really cut these buildings' energy use. Residents will enjoy the results as a gift that keeps on giving—both in cozier living spaces, and in the knowledge that CHT is working to keep their costs down wherever we can.

# PROFILE

## MAKING A NEW HOME IN AN OLD HOUSE

...LOAN FUND HELPS A COUPLE STEWARD A HOUSE INTO ITS NEXT PHASE OF LIFE

In 2010, Harvey and Mary Carter bought a light-filled 1870 farmhouse in South Hero. They were making a major life change—retiring from running a sheep farm and producing cheese in Corinth. They wanted to be closer to their children in the Burlington area, but also wanted enough land to keep a few of their favorite sheep. Realizing that they were priced out of options in Chittenden County, they started looking in the islands.

**THE COUPLE COULD NOT SAY ENOUGH ABOUT THE HELP PROVIDED BY PROJECT MANAGER DENNIS WILLIAMS, WHO THEY CALL “A TREASURE.”**

“It was literally a dark and stormy night when we first saw the house,” commented Mary, “and the power was out. But we liked it immediately. We’d lived in old houses before. We love the big old trees here and could tell this was a special spot.”



The Carters knew the house would need some work. Problems with the roof were clearly visible. A septic inspection showed that the tank had to be replaced. And once they moved in they discovered a few more issues, including a water heater that failed on Thanksgiving! “We boiled a lot of water to do the dishes that year,” Mary recalled. So they set about looking for financing, with special concern for the septic work.



“If as a homeowner you have a failed septic system—especially with a leach field—then you’re stuck,” Mary noted.

When they found CHT’s low-interest loan fund, the Carters looked no further. In addition to its great lending terms, the loan program offers an unusual benefit: it provides project management at no extra cost.

The couple could not say enough about the help provided by project manager Dennis Williams, who they call “a treasure.”

“It was so easy to deal with him,” recollected Harvey. “He knows what he’s doing, lays out your options very clearly, and helps you choose reliable contractors.”

“It was just such a good experience! The contractors, especially our general contractor, were very efficient and respectful, and did excellent work. Some final bills even came in below their estimates,” Mary concluded.



# EVENTS

**MEMBERS' DAY, JULY** Once again we had a great turnout and excellent weather for our annual Members' Day picnic at Oakledge Park. Members enjoyed the grilled lunch and ice cream donated by Ben & Jerry's, an update on CHT activities, and the lake, while CHT board and staff enjoyed the chance to get to know members better.



**NATIONAL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST NETWORK CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER** CHT proudly hosted over 300 people from 36 states and six countries for this lively four-day event. The attendees learned from each other and from CHT about the community land trust model, which maintains housing as a permanent community asset.



## CORNERSTONE COMMUNITY GROWS

Last fall, in light of the uncertainty of our economic climate, CHT launched the Cornerstone Community and invited people to join who believe in our mission and want to add to our long-term stability. Members of this group strengthen CHT by making donations over a three- to five-year period.

This fall we hosted our second Cornerstone luncheon. We are pleased to say that we now have 65 donors giving us the resources to plan for a solid future of serving individuals and families in need of housing. We are so very thankful for this generous support. For more information on the Cornerstone Community, contact Chris Donnelly at (802) 861-7305.

**SAVE THE DATE:**  
**CHT ANNUAL MEETING**  
**SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 2013**

Plan to enjoy a sit-down dinner, hear our news and future plans, and elect members of the Board of Directors that guides our work. Invitations will be mailed in late December.





**JUSINTA KATON and TAMMY HAYDEN,**  
Employees of the Quarter for April-June, 2012.

Jusinta Katon and Tammy Hayden of CHT's property management department were jointly named as employees of the quarter for spring 2012. Their nominations stated:

"While managing a portfolio of rental properties, Jusinta was training Tammy in her new position as assistant property manager and Tammy was training her own replacement. At the same time they covered two other large portfolios for colleagues who were out on parental leave. They filed all recertifications on time and handled move-outs, move-ins, apartment showings, inspections, and tenant inquiries and problem-solving. On top of that they leased up thirty-three apartments in a whole new building, Avenue Apartments, within sixty days of its opening (which would have been a feat in itself).

They could have easily done the minimum [necessary] due to the sheer magnitude of the work, but they didn't. They went above and beyond and did an exceptional job. I feel blessed to work with such great people who really work as a team."



### A BIT MORE ABOUT JUSINTA

**Years at CHT:** I've been in this position for two years. Before that I worked at our Winchester Place property for two and a half years, as administrative assistant to the manager there.

**What I did before this:** I was a claims manager at a major retail chain.

**My job mainly involves ...** I manage a mix of rental buildings and housing cooperatives. I deal with residents' needs and help keep the properties in good shape financially and structurally. I also ensure that they stay in compliance with the regulations that apply, be it tax-credit financing, ongoing subsidies, or other programs.

**What I like best about the work:** Helping people in our community get housing that they would otherwise not be able to find.

**What I would happily give up:** The paperwork!

**I wish more people knew ...** that we offer so many different programs. Some people only know that we provide low-income housing; in fact we have housing for everyone.

**One thing people are surprised to learn about me is:** While I seem quiet, I am a bit of a tomboy at home. And I'm that loud mom at my son's events: he is a world-record weight lifter, a mixed-martial-arts fighter and a football player.

### A BIT MORE ABOUT TAMMY

**Years at CHT:** Nearly two years. I started as an assistant to the Associate Director of Resident Services. Most recently I have become an Assistant Property Manager.

**What I did before this:** I worked in the banking and insurance fields.

**My job mainly involves ...** all aspects of property management; it's really varied.

**What I like best about the work:** I enjoy meeting applicants and hearing their life stories. They are so appreciative of my help and CHT as an organization. It is very rewarding to be able to help people find a permanent and affordable home.

**What I wish I could change:** I wish we had more rental housing available for people. It seems we can't meet the demand for affordable housing!

**I wish more people knew ...** that CHT offers more than rental opportunities. For instance we also offer homebuyer education and financial counseling.

**What I do in my spare time:** I enjoy cooking, kayaking, and traveling with my husband.

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# FOCUS

## BEHIND THE SCENES

THE SHELTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

**EMILY HIGGINS**, Director of HomeOwnership, was named employee of the quarter for January-March of 2012. Her nominations stated:

“This year, in the face of funding challenges and other changes in our field, Emily has been nimble, adaptive and bold in ensuring that CHT’s HomeOwnership Center can keep meeting our customers’ needs.

Faced with cuts in funding, she and other staff secured \$390,000 in new grants and capital to support the Loan Fund, Home Education and Counseling, and Shared Equity programs. For example, in 2011 our counseling budget lost \$80,000 — a 43% cut. With her guidance we raised funds to fill the gap.

Emily’s work has produced great results for CHT and our whole state. She helped develop a stronger collaboration among all the Vermont NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Centers, and brought the challenges of mobile-home owners into focus with other nonprofits, funders, and policy-makers statewide, to promote a large-scale shift in support of their needs.”

### A BIT MORE ABOUT EMILY

**Years at CHT:** Nine years in total, six as director of homeownership. I started out managing the sale and resale of our shared equity homes.



**My job mainly involves:** Making sure my team has the support to provide excellent customer service in education, affordable loans, and permanently affordable homes.

**What I like best about my job:** Being able to make a significant difference in people’s lives, with high-quality programs that really work.

**What I would happily give up:** Less grant reporting would be okay!

**I wish more people knew:** The amazing range of services and support CHT offers.

**One thing people are surprised to learn about me is:** I love collecting cool rocks and discarded metal objects to create mobiles and other artwork.

### A COLLABORATION FOR HOUSING

On a sunny fall day, members of the Shelter Review Committee convene their weekly meeting at the state office building in St. Albans. Over the next two hours they will review the cases of clients who face extra challenges in finding housing, and who agree to have the group discuss their needs. The committee will suggest solutions and rule out dead ends as they navigate the sometimes complex field of housing assistance.

### “WE CAN GIVE HER EMERGENCY SHELTER, BUT WHAT WILL SHE DO FROM THERE?”

We hear a report from Linda Ryan of Samaritan House, which provides shelter and transitional housing for people who are homeless. She hopes to help a woman who became disabled and has almost no income. “She is living with family but she has been told she needs to move out,” Linda reports. “We can give her emergency shelter, but what will she do from there?”

Next, a staffer from the Department of Children and Families seeks advice on behalf of a 17-year-old who left home after altercations with an addicted parent. He is going to school, but sleeping in a local

park. The immediate problem is his age: the shelter can only take those 18 and up. Beyond that, the question of a longer-term path comes up again.

Before this group existed, people with unusual needs were at greater risk of ‘falling through the cracks.’ The committee—created by the state’s Department of Human Services, and chaired by its Field Director for Franklin and Grand Isle counties—lets staff from government and nonprofit agencies solve situations together that no one program addresses. It can also grant up to \$700 to help a household get into a decent, sustainable living situation.

On this day the committee identifies several promising ideas. The DCF staffer will approach family friends of the youth who might take him in, and also connect him to a program that helps people get to economic self-sufficiency. And Samaritan House will refer their client to CHT to apply for an apartment that comes with a Section 8 subsidy.

CHT’s staff in our St. Albans office feels good about working with the SRC. “We learn a lot from each other,” notes property manager Anne Borchers. “I can walk the other agencies through the various housing options, using my knowledge for people who are really in need. And we ourselves find great tenants through this collaboration.”



**CHAMPLAIN  
HOUSING TRUST**



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