

AT HOME

NEWS FROM CHAMPLAIN HOUSING TRUST

FALL 2014



**A huge crowd celebrates the opening of Harrington Village
in Shelburne with Governor Peter Shumlin**

PROFILES • RESOURCES • EVENTS

DEAR MEMBERS,



Members of our 2012 Legislative Day group meet with Rep. Joan Lenes at the Statehouse in Montpelier

While in nature spring signals beginnings, the fall is also a time when things start up in our lives, be it school, or work projects that were deferred in the vacation months. And so it is at CHT.

October marks the start of our new fiscal year. The board adopts a new budget and a workplan to go with it. We open our doors to auditors and prepare year-end statements. The board also looks ahead to see which seats will be up for re-election, and invites candidates to stand for any vacancies. Annual meeting, held in January, is our official wrap-up of the past year, when we report to you and elect the new board.

Looking ahead to this important member gathering reminds me of the power of membership and the strength it brings to CHT. Every February members come with

us to the Statehouse for Legislative Day, to support state funding for affordable housing and conservation. This resource was first created through citizen action, and has been sustained for over twenty-five years by annual advocacy from citizens like you.

This winter you will receive a flyer inviting you to Legislative Day and to a workshop to prepare for it. This is a terrific way to learn how to speak to legislators and influence policy that directly affects you, your families, and your neighbors. We are lucky in Vermont to have easy access to our lawmakers.

If you haven't come to Legislative Day before, do consider it this year! The governor and the leaders of both houses always meet with us to kick off the day. You also get to speak to your local representatives and see how state government actually operates.

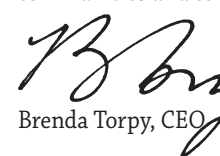
We often feel that we can't affect things in DC—but a few hours in our Statehouse and you will see the power you have as a Vermont citizen, and know at the end of that day that your voice made a difference.

In the Spring newsletter I noted how CHT has grown and innovated over our first thirty years. With each year I am more aware of the roles our members play in pushing us forward and keeping us on task, be it as board members, as volunteers with campaigns, events and committees, or through citizen advocacy.

In that issue I also invited members to explore filling a resident representative seat on the board. One who did, Xu Zhou from South Meadow, agreed to stand for the seat and she will be on the ballot at annual meeting.

This time we invite you to nominate yourself or someone else for our Resident Award for Civic Engagement (see story on page 6.) With this award we want to shine a light on the ways so many CHT residents contribute to our communities. We will post the nominations in the Spring newsletter; a board committee will select the awardee, and we will honor him or her at the summer Members' Picnic.

As we look forward to the year ahead and all the ways we come together—as members, citizens, and friends of affordable housing—let's celebrate the power of membership and your contributions to our communities and to CHT.


Brenda Torpy, CEO

EVENTS

WE CELEBRATED OUR 30TH ANNIVERSARY with our largest Member's Day Picnic yet. Almost 200 members attended and our board and staff pulled out the stops to make it special.



SAVE THE DATE

ANNUAL MEETING SATURDAY, JANUARY 31ST, 2015, EVENING

One of our big member events of the year, the Annual Meeting will be held at the Burlington Hilton Hotel on Saturday, January 31st. The evening features music, a cash bar, and a sit-down meal with a choice of main dishes and some scrumptious desserts.

We hope you will join us to get updates on our work, elect new members to our Board of Directors, and help us celebrate outstanding supporters of affordable housing. It is a great opportunity to share ideas and questions, to reconnect with CHT and to show your support.

SPEAK UP FOR HOUSING AND CONSERVATION:

WORKSHOP ON ADVOCATING TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3RD, 2015, 5:30 – 7PM

It's easier than you might think to have an impact. One of our local legislators will join us at this event that explains how the Statehouse works and how to build support for affordable housing.

LEGISLATIVE DAY THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH, 2015, 7AM – 2:30PM

CHT provides the ride to and from the Statehouse so you can become part of a statewide, 25-year campaign to promote needed housing and the conservation of farms and open land.

PROFILE BACK TO THE FUTURE



Brittanie Loso reminisces about her past and discusses her future.

The first time Brittanie Loso came to CHT for housing, it worked well for almost four years. The second time around her situation was touch-and-go. But thanks to her persistence and two creative programs, she overcame some serious obstacles and got her family back to stability.

Brittanie first applied to CHT as a young mother of three, but she was stymied by the lack of any credit history or landlord references. Like other landlords, CHT

requires a positive credit history as evidence that the household will be able to pay the rent. Lacking that, Brittanie qualified to rent with CHT through a special program for families who have been homeless.

Brittanie proved to be a reliable tenant. It was not money issues but rather, an abusive relationship that spelled the end of that period; by the time Brittanie extricated herself, she and her children were homeless.

BRITTANIE CREDITS CHT AND READY SET RENT! WITH HELPING HER COME OUT OF HOMELESSNESS WITH HER FAMILY INTACT. “IF IT WASN’T FOR THAT, I WOULDN’T BE HERE AND PROBABLY WOULD’VE LOST MY KIDS. NOW THEY’RE STABLE AND SECURE.”

“I felt discouraged and hopeless,” she recalls; “that was the biggest bottom I’ve ever hit.” She applied to CHT again but still lacked a credit score.

Fortunately, CHT had debuted a new program called Ready Set Rent! to help people over the credit hurdle. It turned out to be the path back to a home for Brittanie and her kids. Brittanie credits CHT and Ready Set Rent! with helping her come out of homelessness with her family intact. “If it wasn’t for that, I wouldn’t be here and probably would’ve lost my kids. Now they’re stable and secure.”

Ready Set Rent! lays out a set of steps for people whose applications are denied for credit reasons. They attend classes on money management and, working one-on-one with a counselor, create a budget and an action

plan. Once they reach a certain point in the path, they qualify to rent with us as long as they complete the steps in their plan.

Working with staff counselor Donna Constantineau, Brittanie learned how to build a positive credit history and set a monthly budget. She also consolidated her outstanding debt of \$168. While that amount may not seem large, for someone who was homeless and unemployed it was big enough to require a timeline for repayment; that became part of her action plan.

Donna referred Brittanie to an affordable CHT apartment in Swanton. The quiet setting was literally a breath of fresh air for the family. “I love it,” said Brittanie. “We have a yard, and a field across the street instead of thousands of houses; there’s no traffic. The kids have fun at their daycare. I was raised with animals and now my kids get to feed the calves there. We even hang out there after hours and have bonfires.”

“I found my sense of humor out here,” Brittanie shared. “Before this I was miserable and angry – now I can laugh. Before, I would yell at my kids; now I can just talk to them. Where you live really has an impact on you.”

Having a stable home and resources for some chronic health issues has allowed Brittanie to shift her focus to the longer term and focus on job training. “I know my kids are safe, I’m not worrying about a guy – I’m content. Now we have a life.”

FOCUS LEADING THE WAY ON PERMANENTLY AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP



“SHARED EQUITY OWNERSHIP IS SUCH A GREAT MODEL,” EXPLAINS EMILY HIGGINS, DIRECTOR OF CHT’S HOMEOWNERSHIP CENTER, “BECAUSE IT BALANCES COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND PERPETUALLY RECYCLES THE ONE-TIME PUBLIC INVESTMENT. IT LETS PEOPLE ACHIEVE THE DREAM OF OWNING WHO WOULD OTHERWISE BE LOCKED OUT OF THE MARKET.”

A volunteer crew from NRG works on weatherizing the first of two duplexes that CHT and Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity are building at Harrington Village in Shelburne.

For thirty years, CHT has been pioneering a different kind of homeownership: one that is accessible to low- and moderate-income folks, that helps them build wealth and strengthens their communities. More recently we realized that our expertise itself could be a valuable asset. As a result we are now taking this innovative model to greater scale, both in Vermont and around the country.

We now provide 550 shared equity homes, which makes ours the largest community land trust portfolio in the country. The homes receive an initial public investment that makes them affordable to their first owners. They stay affordable because the owners also share any market appreciation when they sell, and CHT reinvests most of it into the home for the next owner.

“Shared Equity ownership is such a great model,” explains Emily Higgins, Director of CHT’s HomeOwnership Center, “because it balances community and individual needs and perpetually recycles the one-time public investment. It lets people achieve the dream of owning who would otherwise be locked out of the market.”

As we worked to expand this unique type of ownership, we realized we could save other organizations the trouble of ‘reinventing the wheel’ and that we all could achieve more by collaborating. In 2012, we became one of ten housing organizations in the country to receive a competitive grant through the Cornerstone Homeownership Innovation Program (CHIP), funded by the

Ford Foundation and the federal Social Innovation Fund.

Now in its third year, the project has CHT working with six other community land trusts across Vermont to create more homes and expand our ability to support our owners over time.

Some of the steps showed results in short order. A valuable one was the ‘windshield survey,’ where CHT staff drove all around the state to assess the condition of every shared equity home—over 900 altogether. “We use the resulting analysis all the time; it helps



From left to right: Emily Higgins, Director of HomeOwnership, Josie Curtin, Director of Property & Asset Management, Mike Welch, Site Foreman, Kim Moran, HOC Special Projects Coordinator, Rob Leuchs, Shared Equity Program Manager, Jaclyn Marcotte, Shared Equity Program Specialist, Dil Tmang, home buyer.

us provide better service to our homeowners and make the case for more resources,” noted Eileen Peltier, Executive Director of the Central Vermont Community Land Trust.

Other aspects, such as an expanded partnership with Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity, involved a longer timeframe. This summer Habitat broke ground on a duplex as part of CHT’s new Harrington Village neighborhood in Shelburne, and they will build a second duplex there over the next year. CHT staff participated in two work days at the Habitat home in September.

The part of the plan that is the least flashy may actually have the deepest impact in the end. We and our partners have adopted a common kit of tools: a custom database, an operations manual, and policies and procedures for managing our Shared Equity programs and stewarding the homes. The grant allowed CHT to develop the core tools, share them, and train our colleagues in their use.

“Adopting the comprehensive operations manual means we’re all working from the same standards and practices, and the new database helps us work more efficiently and document our social impact,” Peltier explained. “We have gained so much from working with CHT on the CHIP project.”

Not only will our Vermont partners benefit from streamlined work and increased productivity, but having this set of tools means we can also share them more widely in the future. Thanks to the CHIP collaboration we have made big strides in expanding a model of homeownership that brings security, community control, and permanent affordability.

BY THE NUMBERS:

CHT RENTERS & HOMEOWNERSHIP

Members who rent from us or belong to a CHT co-op get a special benefit: when they take our amazing Home Education workshop, we waive the \$75 fee! You can learn about and register for our workshop on our website at www.getahome.org/education or by calling our front desk at 862-6244.

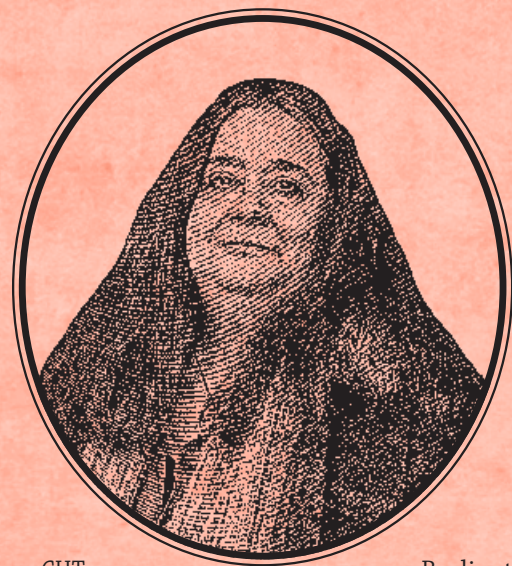
41%

In a recent survey of CHT tenants, forty-one percent said they want to own a home one day.

Twenty-two CHT tenants or co-op members have bought homes with our help in the past four years.

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NOMINATE A LOCAL HERO FOR THE JOAN BEAUCHEMIN AWARD



Do you know a CHT renter, homeowner, or co-op member —yourself included— whose community contributions should be recognized? If so please nominate him or her for the Joan Beauchemin Award for Resident Civic Engagement.

The award is named for one of our first homeowners, “Jo” Beauchemin, who was also its first recipient in 2013. Jo was a spirited and determined community leader. She organized neighbors in the South End to protect their quality of life; helped to found the Burlington Community Land Trust and other groups to support tenants and affordable housing, and ran for public office.

In the same vein, our 2014 award went to Cheryl McDonough, a CHT homeowner who served

on Burlington’s City Council for several terms, as well as on the boards of many nonprofits and civic organizations.

The awards committee will consider any resident “who has made outstanding contributions to their community through volunteerism, public service or advocacy.” Their work can be in any area, not only housing; it may be for the schools, the environment, seniors, neighborhoods, offender re-entry, or some other realm.

Send nominations to Julia Curry at jcurry@getahome.org or c/o CHT, 88 King Street, Burlington 05401. The deadline for submissions is March 1st, 2015, and the awards committee will announce the winner at our summer Members Picnic.

LOWER YOUR BILLS, NOT YOUR HEAT

Yes, winter is coming. If you own your home or you rent and pay for your heat, this is a great time to check out resources to help you stay warm for less.

1 Help for low-income households from Vermont Gas and Green Mountain Power: Both companies offer lower charges to customers in a certain income range. To find out if you qualify, call the Energy Assistance Office of the state’s Department for Children and Families at 1-800-775-0516, or go to www.energyhelp.vt.gov.

2 Other ways to cut your energy bills: We Vermonters are lucky to have a ‘one-stop shopping’ resource called Efficiency Vermont. The organization exists to give you customized advice and resources to help you meet your particular energy needs.

Renters will find a list of easy ways to reduce utility bills here: www.efficiencyvermont.com/For-My-Home/Solutions-For/Renters/Ways-to-Save

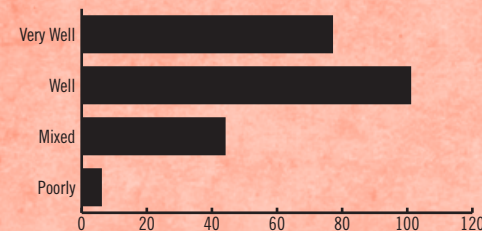
Homeowners will find their own list of options here: www.efficiencyvermont.com/For-My-Home/Solutions-For/Homeowners/Ways-to-Save

And if you’d rather talk to an actual person, the organization has a toll-free number: 1-888-921-5990.

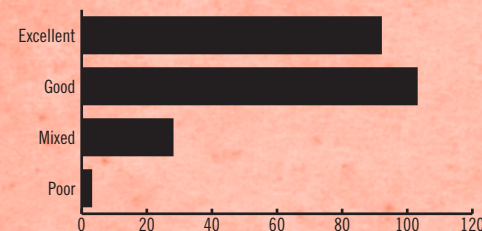
SURVEY SAYS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2014 SURVEY OF RENTERS

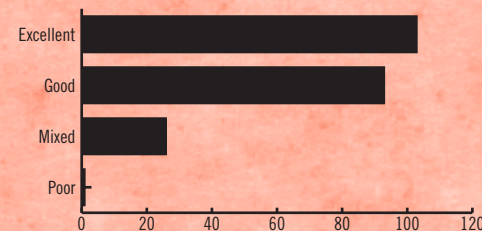
How clean and well maintained are your building and grounds?



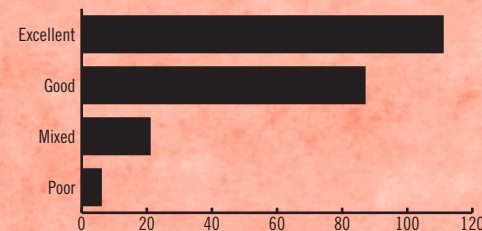
How would you rate the condition of your apartment?



How would you rate your experience with the maintenance staff?



How would you rate your experience with your property manager?



CHT EMPLOYEES OF THE QUARTER

EMPLOYEES AT CHT RECOGNIZE COWORKERS WHO HAVE DONE AN OUTSTANDING JOB



Name: Margaret Bozik
Job: Associate Director of Asset Management & Program Development
Years at CHT: Two and a half
EQQT: Winter 2014

Margaret joined CHT as a Property Financial Analyst, responsible for overseeing budgets, financials, and insurance for all of our rental housing properties. It soon became clear that she also brought deep knowledge of the social services in our region due to her previous work for the City of Burlington.

When our board committed CHT to do more to serve residents and address homelessness, we began drawing on all of Margaret’s expertise to help us get there. She was just recently made Associate Director of Asset Management and Program Development.

Coworkers nominated Margaret for this award to recognize the role she played in

creating Harbor Place, where CHT took a new approach to providing short-term housing for people who are homeless, adapting a former motel and providing social services on-site. A coworker wrote, “Margaret is the unsung heroine of Harbor Place. She worked hard to locate the funding to make it solvent – not an easy task. And you may not know this but Margaret has a BIG heart; she worked out agreements with several area agencies so that we could house their program participants.”

FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT YOUR WORK:
I really like getting to balance our mission and sustainability. I build the long-term financial and physical health of our properties, which is essential to live out our commitment to permanent affordability.

IF YOU HAD A MAGIC WAND TO IMPROVE VERMONT’S HOUSING SITUATION: *It would be fabulous to be able to offer a home to everyone who comes through CHT’s doors. To do that I would create more housing; more subsidy so homes will be affordable, and more services so people get support to stay in their homes.*

WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT CHT: *Housing is so basic to people’s lives. CHT has a great mission and great people; what more could you ask from a job?*

SOMETHING THAT MAY SURPRISE PEOPLE ABOUT YOU: *My undergraduate degree was in music, which is actually very mathematical as well as being creative.*



Name: Sara Maddocks
Job: Compliance Manager
Years at CHT: Three and a half
EQQT: Spring 2014

It takes many funding streams to create affordable housing, and each source requires regular reporting to show that we are using the funds as intended. Our two-person compliance department sees that we gather and report all the required data, on time and correctly, all the time. They also link our property management and finance departments and serve our residents by ensuring accurate tenant ledgers.

In nominating Sara for this award, coworkers wrote: Sara is such an asset to the team! She has been instrumental in the transition to a new software program – a major project – and has trained new staff and coordinated with the finance department, all while remaining approachable and helpful and making sure the daily requirements of compliance get

done timely. She has shown leadership, patience and understanding in the face of tremendous turnover and change. She is a joy to work with, and a true asset to CHT. Well done Sara!!

FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT YOUR WORK:
I am someone who likes everything in its place, so I like making sure all our data is right and everything is running smoothly. Helping CHT shift to new software has been a fun challenge. I’m excited that it will eventually let tenants see their ledgers and pay online.

THINGS YOU ESPECIALLY VALUE ABOUT CHT:
We have such a broad spectrum of rental options to meet lots of different needs – from the family that wants a small building, to people who need to be near the bus to their work, to youth served by Spectrum and households coming from being homeless.

IF YOU HAD A MAGIC WAND, HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE VERMONT’S HOUSING SITUATION? *I would just create more. We’ve had a huge increase in rental applications this year and low vacancy rates, so it’s hard for people to find something when they need it.*

ONE THING PEOPLE ARE SURPRISED TO LEARN ABOUT YOU: *I lived in New Zealand for a few years, working for an education program that focused on community development and sustainability.*