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A Major Announcement: Two Habitat for Humanity Affiliates Become One!

The two beloved Habitat for Humanity affiliates of Sussex and Warren Counties have recently decided to join forces! Conversations about a potential merger between the two organizations began early in 2024. After many meetings and discussions, the two affiliates brought their decision to merge to Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) and have officially become Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey (Habitat NWNJ) effective January 1, 2025.

The Sussex County Habitat for Humanity (Sussex County Habitat) affiliate has been serving Sussex County since 1993. Entirely volunteer run, the organization has succeeded in building homes in partnership with thirteen families, performing numerous repairs, and forming strong partnerships with organizations such as The Scouts of America, Rebecca's Homestead, Katie's House and the Sussex County Fairgrounds.

Since their founding in 1999, Warren County Habitat for Humanity (Warren County Habitat) has built 25 homes alongside 25 Partner Families and served several hundred families through their Home Repair program. They have successfully operated two ReStore locations, having opened their newest location in October of 2023, and a Community Center which has been in operation since April of 2022.

The merger will allow the two affiliates to combine resources and opportunities for land acquisition and construction, thus impacting even more families through their homeownership program across the two counties. As Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey, the merged organization also aims to perform over 100 Home Repair projects, begin construction on 8 more homes, and open a ReStore location in Sussex County, all in 2025.

As with any new endeavor, the work accomplished depends on the support received. Habitat NWNJ is seeking volunteers to perform repairs, to join their two regular construction crews in Warren County and Sussex County, to work with customers and pre-loved items at their ReStores (currently located in Washington, with plans to open a third ReStore in Sussex County soon), and to help further all efforts behind the scenes by joining a committee or assisting the office staff.

The beauty of merging two Habitat for Humanity affiliates is the passion for the mission shared among everyone involved. This merger will ultimately allow the combined affiliates to serve more families and build more homes, communities and hope in Northwestern New Jersey. To learn more about the work Habitat NWNJ is doing in your community or to join the mission, visit their website at habitatnwnj.org.



31 Belvidere Avenue
Washington, NJ 07882



82 Mount View St.
Newton, NJ 07860



Not One, Not Two, but THREE Organizations Partner to Improve Lives of Adults with Special Needs in New Jersey

In a heartwarming collaboration, Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey teamed up with the popular renovation show, *George to the Rescue*, to transform an all-purpose gathering space at Rebecca's Homestead. This project not only provided a multi-functional area for residents but also highlighted the power of community and partnerships in creating meaningful change.

About Rebecca's Homestead

Rebecca's Homestead [<https://www.rebeccahomestead.org/>] is in Wantage, New Jersey. Its tagline is appropriately "Where All Are Welcome Inn." The goal of the facility and program is "to create an inclusive and sustainable community by providing differently abled adults housing and a self-sustaining lifestyle." Residents of the homestead participate in farming, gardening, art, and other hospitality employment opportunities as part of their daily routines.

Founders Dennis and Michele Elmers created Rebecca's Homestead in honor of their daughter, Rebecca. Their desire was to create a space that focused on employment training and community and shied away from the traditional sense of a residential facility.

The all-purpose, shared space at Rebecca's Homestead is a vital part of the residential community, functioning as a hub for social gatherings, educational programs, and skill-building. However, the room had long needed a makeover to be handicap accessible and better serve its diverse purposes.

How It All Began

More than a dozen volunteers from the combined efforts of the Sussex and Warren County Habitat for Humanity affiliates focused on improving the lives of the adult special needs residents that have made their home at Rebecca's Homestead. The Sussex County affiliate, prior to merging, previously worked with Rebecca's Homestead to make repairs to the facility and build new

additions for the residents. The affiliate's previous experience with Rebecca's Homestead is how the need to remodel the multi-purpose space was discovered.

George to the Rescue Steps In

The renovation project took an exciting turn when *George to the Rescue* [<https://www.nbcnewyork.com/entertainment/the-scene/george-to-the-rescue/>], the NBC show known for its heartfelt renovations, joined the effort. Hosted by George Oliphant, the show specializes in turning dreams into reality for deserving individuals and organizations. George and his team were immediately drawn to the story of Rebecca's Homestead and the collaborative effort behind the renovation.

The team from *George to the Rescue* worked tirelessly to reimagine the space. The designer, Alyssa from AlyssaRaeCo, and staff paid careful attention to the needs and preferences of the residents, resulting in a room

that would be both functional and welcoming.

Team lead Dave Puzio explained “we made extensive changes to their crafting/gathering room. We reconfigured the entrance to make it more accessible for wheelchairs. The worn carpeting was replaced with luxury vinyl flooring. We removed closet walls and covered the existing walls with bead board paneling and wallpaper. The existing lighting was replaced with recessed LED lights and a chandelier. The ceiling was replaced with a beautiful Stratford ceiling tile. The ventilation system was reconfigured and a wet bar was added. Our dedicated, skilled volunteers completed the renovation on schedule even with numerous delays in material deliveries. The results are just overwhelming. This is just another example of the generosity of Habitats selfless volunteers.”

The Big Reveal

The big reveal was a moment of pure joy for residents of Rebecca’s Homestead, one that the public will be able to enjoy when the episode airs in March of this year. As George unveiled the newly renovated space, big smiles and gratitude filled the room. Residents marveled at the thoughtful design and the possibilities the new space offered.

“When the renovation of the rec room was done, we took a group photo,” Pam Vreeland, COO of Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey explained. “As we were posing, one of the residents began to quietly sing ‘Amazing Grace.’ Normally head down and shy, he made his way over to his aide and his voice became louder. It was a visible and audible representation of how much this means to him, and how connected he is to the community and facilities at Rebecca’s Homestead. It

inspired everyone involved in the project to continue to give their time and energy to changing lives- and we cannot wait for the next opportunity!”

The Merge and Looking Ahead

As of January 2025, the Sussex County and Warren County affiliates of Habitat for Humanity merged, creating the newly formed Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey. Together, the group intends to use their shared resources and experiences to continue to give back to the community and expand their mission to reach even more people and families.

In a world that often feels divided, projects like this remind us of the incredible things we can achieve when we come together. With organizations like Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey and *George to the Rescue* leading the charge, the future looks bright for communities everywhere.

See Pictures on the next page

Rebecca's Homestead—the Transformation!



From humble beginnings, this is the "before" of the rec room at Rebecca's Homestead. Tune into *George to the Rescue* to see the finished product!



A sign hanging in the rec room reads "Welcome Volunteers!"



Left to Right, Alyssa (Interior Designer), George Oliphant (Host of *George to the Rescue*) and Dave Puzio (Construction Manager of Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey) discuss plans for renovations.



The crews from Rebecca's Homestead, *George to the Rescue* and Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey put their hammers in, ready to kick off the beginning of the renovations!



New HFHNWNJ Project to begin in Wantage

In December, 2024, Wantage Township awarded Habitat for Humanity an abandoned property for rebuilding and helping a Sussex County family get a home.

The property is in dire need of cleaning out and

renovation.

Habitat will need to replace the roof and most of the interior. We also need to install new heating, electric and plumbing systems. All the doors and windows need replacement as well.

Recently, the property was examined for underground oil storage tanks, and fortunately none were found.

Unfortunately, because of the winter conditions, work is progressing slowly. We intend on starting up again to-

wards the middle or end of February, weather permitting.

This project will be an ideal opportunity for individuals and groups to volunteer at many levels to help a family become homeowners.

I'm interested in Habitat for Humanity's mission—How can I help?

Would you like to assist with construction on a current (Wantage, Harmony Twp., Franklin Twp.) or future project? Don't want to build but would still like to help? There are so many ways to pitch in!

- ◆ Opening family selection—we will soon be accepting applications from families who are interested in qualifying for one of our current home projects. You can join the team which will be screening the applications and making recommendations for qualified families: please watch our website for updated information, or contact one of our offices.
- ◆ Call for volunteers—We are ALWAYS happy to have new volunteers! Whether you're interested in building but have never held a hammer, or are proficient in office skills, public relations or many other areas of need, we'll be happy to guide you in how to do the task, will work alongside you as we accomplish together and provide you the opportunity to learn and turn your compassion into action!
 - ⇒ In Wantage, we're currently seeking all volunteers but especially those proficient in building trades, including plumbing, HVAC and tree services. Please call the Sussex office if interested. Our first actions at the site are expected to start in February with a major cleanout—let us know as soon as possible if you would like to help.
 - ⇒ We have an ongoing program of home repairs for members of our communities who are older or otherwise in need. If you prefer to work on a shorter-term project that gives you the satisfaction of more immediate results, knowing that you improved the lives of those needing help who might not otherwise have qualified for assistance, this may be the perfect fit for you!
- ◆ Material donations—with our ongoing home builds and home repair program, we are always in need of construction materials, particularly sheetrock, windows, doors, etc. We also welcome items for our ReStore locations in Washington. Please see <https://www.warrenhabitat.org/shop/> for contact information and hours of operation.
- ◆ Fundraising—our activities and projects to help house and support our communities need fuel to keep the fires burning! Your contributions in the form of time to help plan, organize and staff our fundraising activities, solicit donations (monetary or otherwise), publicize our events, setup and cleanup, all aid the work we do.
- ◆ Be our eyes and ears! — We are currently seeking a location for an additional ReStore in Sussex County. The criteria are simple—it should be a space in commercial zoning, with at least 10,000 square feet and highway frontage. Good access to parking and loading/unloading would be helpful. If you are or become aware of such a space looking for an occupant, please let us know!

Home Repairs Update

What does our home repairs team do? Thanks for asking! Since a picture says a thousand words, please see the amazing before and after pictures from a recent project, shown below.

Before



After



Stairwell/Railing

Rotted window sill

Shed

Habitat for Humanity mourns the passing of Jimmy Carter

After he left the presidency in January 1981, our 39th president and his beloved wife Rosalynn were searching for ways they could make a meaningful contribution in their post-White House years.



They first volunteered with Habitat for Humanity in Americus, Georgia, near their home in Plains, in March 1984. Later that same year, the Carters joined Habitat volunteers in New York City's Lower East Side to renovate an abandoned building, in partnership with families needing affordable housing.

Each year since then until 2019, the Carters volunteered with Habitat to build or improve houses alongside homeowners in communities across the United States and around the world. President Carter also served as a member of the organization's Board of Directors from 1984-1987.

"We are deeply saddened by President Carter's passing, and our prayers are with the Carter family," said Jonathan Reckford, CEO of Habitat for Humanity International.

"President and Mrs. Carter began volunteering with Habitat for Humanity near their home in southwest Georgia more than 40 years ago, and soon brought worldwide attention to the need for decent and affordable housing. We are grateful for the incredible impact the Carters have had on Habitat and on the families who have benefited from their shining example. The Carters put Habitat for Humanity on the map, and their legacy lives on in every family we serve around the world."

Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey sends our deepest condolences to the Carter family, and hope to follow the example set by the Carters through our commitment to affordable housing in our own communities. We take inspiration from President Carter, who once echoed the words of evangelist John Wesley when he said, "I have one life and one chance to make it count for something ... My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference."

Please Support Our Upcoming Fundraisers



*Have a
Heart For Habitat*

**WRNJ Radiothon to Benefit Habitat for
Humanity Northwest New Jersey**

Thursday, February 13, 2025

Call WRNJ at **908-850-1000**
between 9AM and 3PM, visit
www.warrenhabitat.org or scan
QR code to make a donation.






Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey is partnering with WRNJ to host the *third annual Have a Heart for Habitat Radiothon!* From 9:00am – 3:00pm on **Thursday, February 13th**, tune into any WRNJ station (**104.7, 105.7, 92.7 or 1510 AM**) to really feel what it's like to be a part of the Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey community. This year, you'll hear inspiring stories from recipients of our Home Repair Program, our Habitat Homeowners, and some of our very own volunteers.

To support Habitat Northwest New Jersey's mission of building homes, communities and hope in Warren and Sussex Counties, either:

- ◆ Visit our website anytime between now and February 13th to donate online at www.habitatnwnj/wrnj.
- ◆ Call in your donation on February 13th using the radio station's number at 908-850-1000. Calling gives you the option of either making a pledge and having someone contact you the following week for your choice of payment, or verbally giving your card information during your call.
- ◆ You can also mail a check to:

Warren County Habitat for Humanity
31 Belvidere Ave
Washington, NJ 07882



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Our 2025 TRICKY TRAY will be on 5/29/2025 at Camp Sacajawea, 251 White Lake Rd, Sparta, NJ 07871

NOW ACCEPTING DONATION OF COMPLETE TRAYS AND INDIVIDUAL GOODS / SERVICES

PLEASE CONTACT ONE OF OUR OFFICES TO ARRANGE DROPOFF

Warren County: (908) 835-1300 Sussex County: (973) 940-0503

Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey

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Visit us at
habitatnwnj.org

What is Habitat?

Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit organization that aims to provide affordable housing for families in need all around the world. Founded in 1976 by Millard and Linda Fuller, the organization has grown to become a global movement that has helped millions of people to access safe and decent housing.

Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey, Inc. was established in 2025 by a merger of the Sussex and Warren County chapters, by a small group of people concerned with the need for decent, affordable housing. We are 501(c)3 non-profit Christian organization. Our ministry was founded on the belief that safe and decent shelter is a basic human need.

We use donated labor and materials from the community, homeowners' sweat equity, and corporate gifts-in-kind to make safe and affordable housing a reality. We don't make a profit on our work. We improve the communities we work in by gathering and welcoming volunteers, new homeowners and supporters.

Habitat for Humanity Northwest New Jersey relies on volunteers and a small paid staff, and partners with people in need. Everyone is welcome.

OUR MISSION: "Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together by building homes, community and hope."

If you would like more information about us please call (908) 835-1300 or (973) 940-0503.

Donations

We would like to thank everyone who has donated to us in any way. The cost of materials has sky-rocketed so much that every little bit (no matter how small) would be greatly appreciated.

Our ReStore location in Washington (NJ) at 384 Route 57 West accepts donations according to the schedule posted at www.warrenhabitat.org/shop/

There is currently no Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Sussex County. We are actively seeking a new location. We would need a space in commercial zoning, with

at least 10,000 square feet and highway frontage. Good access to parking and loading/unloading would be helpful. If you are, or become, aware of such a space looking for an occupant, please let us know! We are accepting donations of construction materials at our Newton location.

We are also looking for donations of pieces of property (land and/or houses) in Sussex and Warren Counties so that we can continue to build affordable housing.

If you would like more information on how to help, please email

office@warrenhabitat.org
phone (973) 940-0503 or (908) 835-1300 or send mail to Habitat for Humanity Northwest NJ, 31 Belvidere Avenue Washington, NJ 07882

Sign up for our Newsletter

Keep current on our progress by signing up for our newsletter and visiting us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/warrencountynjhabitat

or our website habitatnwnj.org

E-mail: office@warrenhabitat.org