



Chemung County  
**Habitat**  
for Humanity®

Fall 2025

# THE BLUEPRINT NEWSLETTER

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**Phone:**

(607) 734-1361

**Address:**

PO Box 3110  
Elmira, NY 14905

**Email:**

info@  
chemungcountyhabitat.org

**Website:**

chemungcountyhabitat.org



## A Dream Realized: another Habitat family becomes homeowners

In June, the Schweiger-Wilson family proudly purchased their new Habitat home — the joyful culmination of several years of dedication, learning, and hard work through our Homeownership Program.

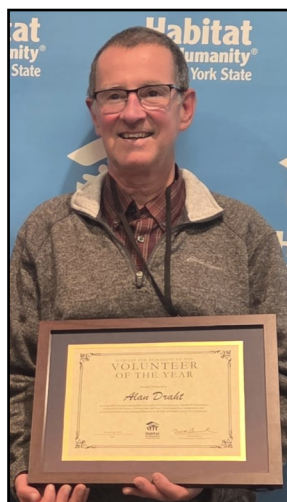
This family of four has truly earned their place in the Habitat community. Together, they volunteered countless hours on build sites to fulfill their sweat equity requirements and participated in Habitat’s workshops and classes to prepare for the responsibilities of homeownership. Their journey was not without challenges, but their determination and teamwork never wavered.

In a meaningful note of thanks, the Schweiger-Wilsons shared: “We would like to thank Habitat for Humanity, volunteers, Sean and his crew, the staff at Alternatives Bank, and Sheila for helping us with this big adventure of purchasing our own and first home. It wouldn't have been possible without everyone on board pushing for us. This home means everything to us.”

Their story is a powerful reminder of what’s possible when determination meets opportunity — and when a community comes together to build homes and hope. Congratulations to the Schweiger-Wilson family on this life-changing achievement!



*The Schweiger-Wilson family makes it official — signing documents to purchase their new Habitat home.*



## Alan Draht Named Volunteer of the Year by Habitat for Humanity of New York State

Chemung County Habitat for Humanity is thrilled to share that our very own Alan (Al) Draht has been named Volunteer of the Year by Habitat for Humanity of New York State! The award was presented to Al at the state conference awards banquet on October 28. This well-deserved honor celebrates his exceptional leadership, dedication, and compassion through our Ramp Program. Al humbly accepted the award by giving credit to his entire volunteer ramp crew.

Since joining Habitat in 2023, Al has become the driving force behind our volunteer ramp crew—coordinating projects,

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# HER Academy Empowers Women with Hands-On Home Repair Skills



HER Academy (Home Empowerment & Resilience) launched in October—and what an inspiring experience it’s been! This unique, hands-on workshop series was designed for women, helping them gain confidence and skills to maintain their homes.

The sessions were filled with energy, learning, and empowerment as participants explored electrical and plumbing basics—building practical skills that will serve them for years to come. The Painting & Drywall Repair session taught the women how to patch holes and touch up walls like a pro. During the Cost-Saving Home Hacks workshop, participants swapped ideas and tips for stretching their household budgets. Together they made eco-friendly, cost-saving cleaning solutions, learned decluttering techniques, and shared strategies for saving on groceries and meal planning.

Other sessions focused on Basic Carpentry and practical home

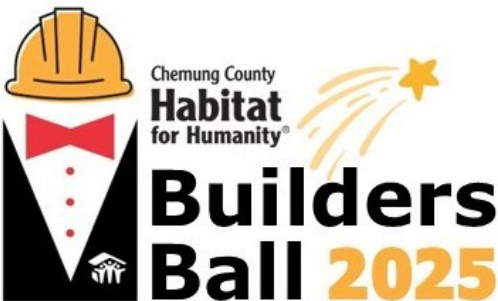
repair projects. A team from Corning Cooperative Extension presented a segment on Weatherization & Energy Savings, teaching participants how to prepare their homes for every season. Our professional instructors understood the assignment and nailed the learning objectives—delivering engaging, relevant, and empowering workshops to 40 women.

The impact has been clear from the comments we’ve heard from participants, such as *“Making my own repairs will save our family a lot of money,”* and *“I know I can do this myself.”*

A big thank you to Corning Incorporated’s Community Impact Division for generously funding this program, and to the Fund for



Women of the Southern Tier for their support. We’re also grateful to Welliver for sponsoring the cool pink shirts and Bouille Electric for voltage testers. Thank you EOP for providing a welcoming space for this inspiring initiative.



Thank you to all who attended for an incredible evening at the 2nd Annual Builders Ball, held at the Ill Eagle Taphouse on October 4th.

The event brought together friends, supporters, and community partners to celebrate Chemung County Habitat for Humanity’s mission of building homes, community, and hope.

Guests enjoyed a night of great company, delicious food and drinks, a dessert bar, music provided by DJ A’Don Allen, and a silent auction. The photo booth set up by Magical Moments Photo Booth captured lots of smiles and fun moments among the guests.

One of the most moving highlights of the evening came from two Habitat partner families who shared heartfelt stories of their journeys to homeownership and the lasting impact it has had on their children and futures. Their words reminded everyone why this mission matters — and how much can be achieved when a community comes together.

We’re grateful to the sponsors and supporters who made the evening possible: Siemens Energy, Simmons-Rockwell, John Maloney, Corning Credit Union, Ill Eagle Taphouse, Hughes Structures, Warren Real Estate, and our dessert bakers Davida Moss and Jennifer Jackson. We also extend a big thank you to the local businesses who donated silent auction items. Your generosity and support truly help us build a better community.



# Thank you to our donors and grant funders

We are proud to recognize the organizations and grant funders whose support empowers us to keep building and create lasting change in our community through affordable homeownership opportunities. Thank you to the following:

- Corning Incorporated's Community Impact Division
- Tioga State Bank Foundation
- M&T Charitable Foundation
- City of Elmira—Cities RISE
- Chemung Canal Trust Co.
- First Pres. Church of Elmira
- St. Matthews Episcopal Church
- Raymour & Flanigan
- Countless individuals who donated toward our Ramp and Homeownership Programs.



We are continually amazed by the many volunteer who give their time and talents for others. Thank you to those who show up time and time again—dedicated volunteers like Rick Powell, Mike Trova, John Bowman, Frank Hungerford, Hans Afeldt and Gary Chollet. Thank you!

Recently we hosted volunteer groups from Rubicon, Alternatives FCU, First Presbyterian Church of Elmira, Corning Credit Union, and Horseheads Police Department.

All of them contribute to the future homes of hard-working families on their journey toward homeownership. Thank you.



## A Season to Give—and to Build

By Caranell Parks, Board President

Hello, my name is Caranell Parks, and I am the Board President, Chemung County Habitat for Humanity. As we enter this season of giving, Chemung County Habitat for Humanity is reminded of how powerful generosity and partnership can be. Each home we build and repair goes beyond walls and roofs; it represents stability, dignity, and the chance for families to thrive. Our mission has always been rooted in the belief that everyone deserves a safe, affordable place to call home, and it's through the compassion and involvement of our community that this vision continues to become a reality.

The need for affordable housing in our region remains pressing. Rising material costs, limited housing inventory, and economic strain have made it harder for families to secure stable homes—and for nonprofits like ours to keep pace with growing demand. Despite these challenges, our volunteers, donors, and local partners remain steadfast. Their hands and hearts keep us moving forward, even when funding and resources are stretched.

In this season, we are asking if you can join us with a gift to sustain this vital work. Your generosity, no matter the size, helps keep roofs over heads and hope in hearts. Volunteering your time or spreading the word about Habitat's mission also makes a meaningful impact.

Together, we can ensure that more families in Chemung County experience the strength, stability, and self-reliance that comes from a home built with love, because every act of kindness makes a difference.

## Join us in building **HOPE** this season



Please give if you can. Every gift—no matter the size—helps build stability, and self-reliance for local families.

• **Give Today:** You can make a one-time donation or set up a recurring monthly gift starting at just \$5 to keep the work going year-round.

• **Donate online:**

[www.chemungcountyhabitat.org/donate](http://www.chemungcountyhabitat.org/donate)

• **Scan** one of the QR codes above to give instantly

• **Or mail your gift to:** Chemung County Habitat for Humanity, PO Box 3110, Elmira, NY 14905

Together, we're building more than homes — we're building **hope**.



Chemung County Habitat  
Donation Website



**venmo**

# 2025 Ramp Program Builds 28 Ramps—and Independence



Pictured at left is the “core” group of ramp volunteers that have participated in nearly every ramp build. From left to right: John Slechta, Harry Fitzsimmons, Al Draht, Dennis Cooper, Tom Alexander, and Tim Belloma.

Thanks to an incredible team of volunteers and generous community support, Chemung County Habitat for Humanity’s Ramp Program completed 28 ramps during the 2025 building season. This year, 17 dedicated volunteers logged more than 1,000 hours of service. Their commitment and compassion have truly changed lives.

This vital work was made possible through funding from the United Way Senior Supports Fund, The Anderson Foundation, and the Elmira Elks Club Corn Hole Tournament, and many generous donors along the way. Together, they have helped remove barriers and restore independence for dozens of local residents.

As one grateful homeowner shared, “Before Habitat built my ramp, I was afraid to leave my house. The ramp has given me my freedom back.”



## Volunteers Revitalize Elmira Neighborhood During Cities RISE Clean-Up Event

In September, Chemung County Habitat for Humanity and the City of Elmira teamed up once again for our Cities RISE Community Clean-Up — now in its seventh year of bringing neighbors together to strengthen our community.

Nearly 75 volunteers joined us to assist eligible homeowners in East Elmira, tackling projects such as painting porches, repairing steps, weeding flower beds, hauling debris, and general neighborhood beautification.

The event drew an inspiring mix of volunteers, including 25 National Junior Honor Society students from Broadway Academy, and teams from Jabil Healthcare, Corning Credit Union, Warren Real Estate, United Baptist Church, and Girl Scout Troop 60200. Their energy and teamwork transformed the neighborhood and lifted spirits all around.

Special thanks to Superior Supply for sponsoring our volunteer T-shirts and to Wegmans for providing refreshments.

Together we’re proving that small acts of service can make a big impact on the places we call home.



### VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

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mentoring volunteers, and ensuring every ramp is built with care and dignity for those who need safe access to their homes. Al carries on the legacy of his late father, who began building ramps in 2011 through the Big Flats Lions Club and RSVP and personally completed 120 ramps before his passing in 2023. In honor of that legacy, Al stepped up to continue the work through Habitat, leading a team that now builds roughly one ramp per week, providing independence and accessibility for dozens of local residents each year.

Al’s humility, humor, and heart have inspired everyone around him, expanding our reach and strengthening our mission in meaningful ways. We couldn’t be prouder to see him recognized at the state level for embodying the true spirit of Habitat for Humanity. Congratulations Al!