

Niagara Area Habitat for Humanity dedicates 61st Street net-zero home

Submitted by Niagara Area Habitat for Humanity
Niagara Area Habitat for Humanity celebrated its 31st Habitat home in Niagara County with a home dedication to celebrate the newest Habitat homeowners achieving their dream of homeownership.

Jessica Billingslea-Young is the newest recipient of a new four-bedroom home on 61st Street in Niagara Falls. A single mother of three, Jessica applied for Niagara Area Habitat's homeownership program with the goal of building a better life for her children. As part of Habitat's homeownership process, Jessica completed hundreds of hours of "sweat equity" working alongside Habitat staff and volunteers to build her future home. In addition, Jessica also attended a variety of classes to prepare for homeownership, including a first-time homebuyer



class, budgeting classes, and financial literacy courses to build her credit to qualify for a Habitat mortgage.

"I'm so excited," Jessica said during the dedication ceremony. "My children have a place to call their own forever home, and their kids will know that we all had a part in making this our home."

The dedication ceremony celebrated Jessica and her family, as well as the many volunteers, donors, vendors and Habitat board and staff members who came together to build the home.

"It truly takes a village" Habitat Community Outreach Director

Marco Notaro said. "At Habitat, we believe our work is putting our faith into action and you truly see the collective power of our faith in action when you see how many people came together to help rehab this home."

Thanks to a partnership with National Fuel Gas Distribution Corp., the 31st Habitat home is a net-zero home – the second such home built by Habitat in Niagara County in partnership with National Fuel. The home was built using energy-efficient construction, combined with the use of high-efficiency natural gas equipment and a solar panel system. These practices ensure a net-zero home minimizes carbon emissions while simultaneously making the home more affordable by reducing the homeowner's monthly energy costs.

Niagara Area Habitat for Humanity works to build strength, stability, and self-reliance



Top: New Habitat homeowner Jessica Billingslea-Young celebrates in her Habitat home with her children: Najah, NyAsia and Caleb. • New Habitat homeowner Jessica Billingslea-Young, Habitat Board President Kaye Lodick, Executive Director Gina Beam, Community Outreach Director Marco Notaro, and board member Paulette Campbell celebrate Niagara Area Habitat for Humanity's newest home in Niagara Falls.

through homeownership. It was established in 1993 by a group of dedicated volunteers to address the lack of affordable housing in Niagara County, and has built 31 homes for families in Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda.

To create homeownership opportunities for low-income families, Niagara Area Habitat subsidizes the cost of homes through donations (both monetary and materials) and volunteer labor. Families that purchase homes

through our program are required to first contribute 500 hours of "sweat equity" as their down payment, working alongside community volunteers to construct their home and the houses of other families in the program. Once approved, families purchase their homes from Niagara Area Habitat by paying an affordable, low-interest, monthly mortgage. For more information, visit www.niagarahabitat.org.

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IN THE NEWS

Holiday bazaar at the NAAC

The Niagara Arts and Cultural Center invites the community to check out its holiday bazaar, taking place from 5-9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 15; and noon-4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16, at 1201 Pine Ave., Niagara Falls.

The event will offer multiple floors of artisan gift-shopping opportunities, with 30 vendors, crafts, a basket auction, foods, live music, a kids zone and more expected. Friday evening activities include the basket auction, kids' crafts and live music. Saturday programs will feature a "Whoville Market" with the Grinch and Grinch-themed treats for sale, and the "Charlie Brown Christmas Musical" on stage at 1 p.m.

Admission is \$1 per person or the donation of a non-perishable food item. Proceeds from this event will go toward the Open Door Productions scholarship fund presented to a graduating senior from the Niagara Falls School District.

Niagara Sheets LLC assists needy

Niagara Sheets LLC Safety Manager Judi Kensinger and President Glenn Giles presented a number of nonperishable food items, and a cash donation of \$1,000, to the Niagara Community Action Program Inc.

"We are grateful for their support and commitment to our agency and its mission of helping needy families throughout Niagara County," Suzanne Shears said.

See photo above.

Don't gift lottery tickets to youths

Submitted by the New York Gaming Commission's Division of Lottery
The New York Gaming Commission's Division of Lottery is once again advising adults to not gift lottery tickets to children this holiday season.

"Many times, a child's first exposure to gambling comes in the form of a gifted lottery ticket from a well-meaning adult who may be unaware of the associated risks," Gaming Commission Chair Brian



O'Dwyer said. "We encourage age-appropriate gifts this holiday season and throughout the year, and thank our partners across the country in helping to spread the message."

The reminder is part of the national "Gift Responsibly" campaign, created by the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) and the International Center for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors at McGill University to raise public awareness about the risks associated with youth gambling.

According to the NCPG, youth problem gambling is a growing concern:

- ✓ Many young people report their first gambling experience occurs around 9-11 years of age.

- ✓ Approximately 60% of high-school-aged adolescents report having gambled for money during the past year.

- ✓ Ten to 14% of adolescents are at-risk for developing a problem with gambling.

- ✓ While male adolescents gamble more frequently than females, female adolescents are more actively involved in lottery play.

- ✓ Four to 6% of adolescents presently have a serious problem with gambling.

Visit www.PlayResponsiblyNY.com for important information, including where to get help for problem gambling, a gambling self-assessment, professional problem gambling resources, and more.