



NOTHING is Impossible

By: Len Cadwallader, Executive Director of Vital Communities

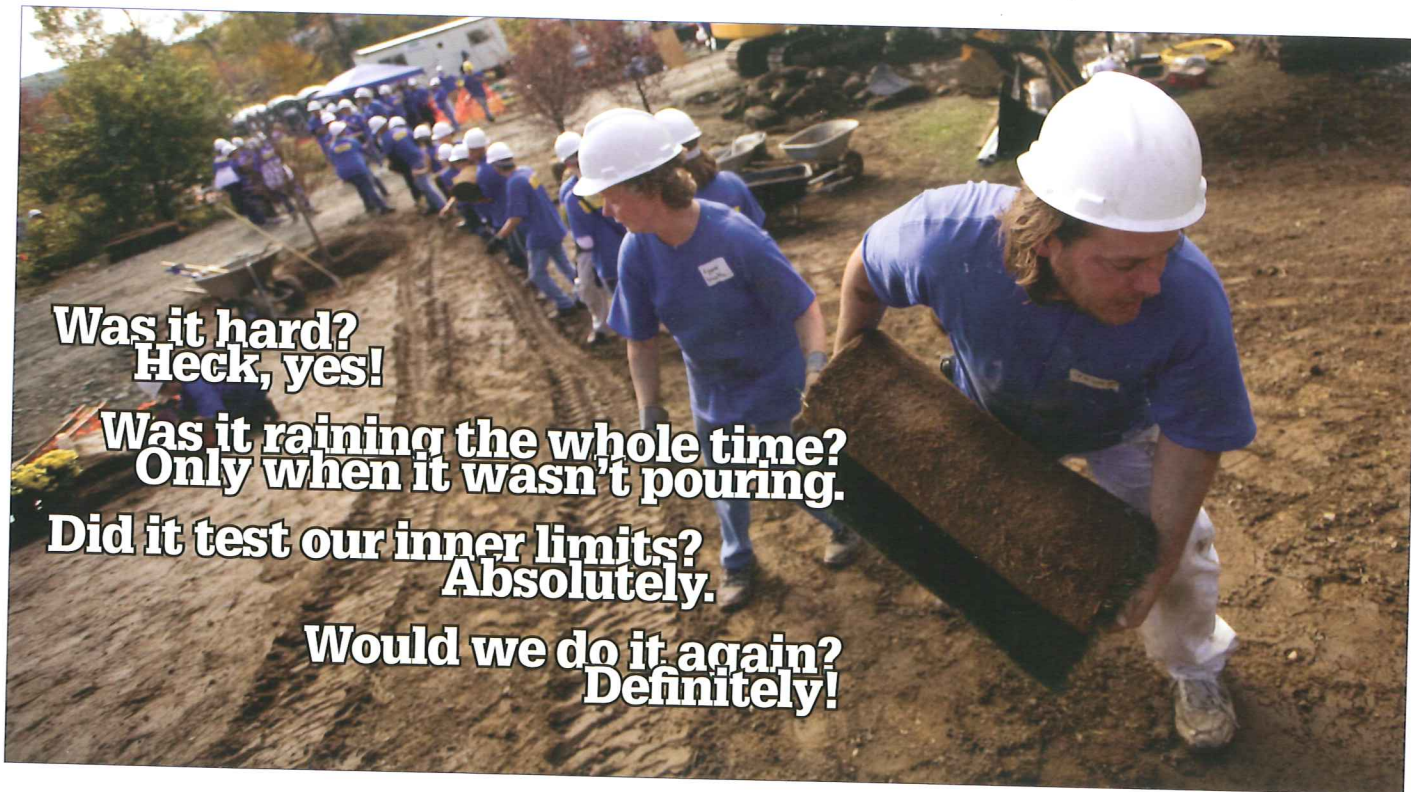
MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition/Upper Valley* was a celebration of tradesmen and tradeswomen and their families. Big time. Together, they accomplished the impossible. And each person who participated got to experience something quite rare and wonderful.

Eisenhower was told it was impossible to get enough men across the English Channel to invade Normandy. Theo Epstein and generations of Red Sox fans were raised to believe the Sox would never win the World Series. Everyone knows you can't tear a house down and build a new one in a single week. When word leaked out that ABC-TV was bringing *Extreme Makeover* to our region, the Upper Valley had its share of armchair generals and parlor pundits who stood around the coffee counters at general stores spouting that line. To which an army of volunteers responded, "Bring it on."

There is a difference between worrying that you might fail, and failing to even try. From the Allies invading France to win the war, to the Sox overcoming the curse of the Bambino to win the Series, belief ran strong that if you are willing to push past the doubters, ultimately anything is POSSIBLE. Could our community tear down a house and build a new one for a deserving family in a week? None of us had imagined it to be possible before being asked, but with the challenge in front of us, no one was going to stop us from doing everything we could to make it happen.

In each case, there had to be an element of bravado. And there had to be a lot of belief in the cause. In all three cases, there were ample reserves of both. And for those who participated, the rewards were gratifying.

Through the miracle of television, we've all *seen* clips of the Normandy invasion and the '04 World Series on the silver screen. We could experience them vicariously, filtered with an element of technological separation. But here was a chance for us to experience something bigger than life



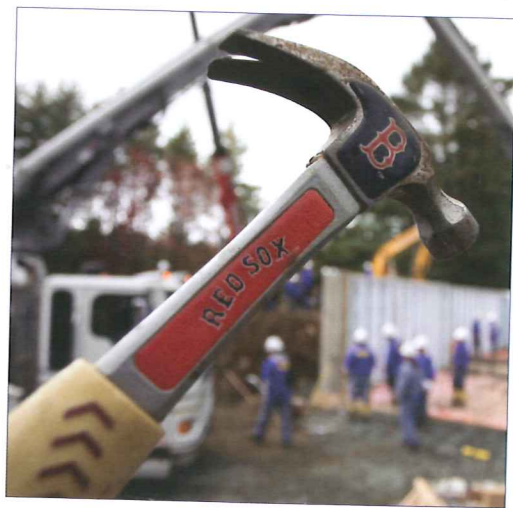
first-hand. And boy, was it fun. Was it hard? Heck, yes. Was it raining the whole time? Only when it wasn't pouring. Did it test our inner limits and our patience? Absolutely. Would we do it again? Definitely.

I'm overdrawing the picture to make my point as there are plenty of times when we rise to occasions. Our volunteer fire departments and first-response squads go to extremes for us whenever there's trouble. In times of floods and hurricanes, neighbors help neighbors without a thought. We react well, and put our best foot forward in times of duress. But this situation was different. In Lyme, our region was asked to step forward proactively—not because a family lost their home to fire or flood, but because it was the right thing to do.

They were electricians and plumbers, sheet rockers and painters, carpenters and roofers, cement finishers and landscapers—all had a chance to let their lights shine this time. In a bigger sense they were acting on behalf of so many working men

and women, the auto mechanics, janitors, administrative assistants, and mail carriers who lack the skills to pound a nail or cut a board. The building trade workers “got it.” They understood they were representing other working men and women as they built this home for the Marshalls. And they made all of us proud.

Sure there were wealthy people who came to work and accept the anonymity of the blue T-shirts. I saw bank presidents, retired school principals, and certified public





accountants don hard hats and climb aboard the shuttle bus to put in a shift at the work site in the rain. And I'm glad they, too, rolled up their sleeves.

But this show was first and foremost a chance for the building trades to shine and show their prowess. I saw men who brought their families to watch them from the spectator's area while they worked. I met a woman from Colebrook who slept in her car so she could work extra shifts. And scores of "generalists" helped in the staging area at the Dartmouth Skiway to serve food, direct parking, and register volunteers, so the folks working on the house could give their all. Behind all these folks was yet another ring of volunteers who helped organize data bases, scheduled restaurants to provide food, covered shifts at the Lyme Fast Squad, and sorted donated canned goods for the area's food shelves.

Armed with a renewed sense of achievement, I can only imagine the ripple effects spreading out across this region in the months and years ahead. I was amazed at how many people said they'd never realized they had the time to volunteer, or didn't know how to start. Will more people be ready to help a neighbor in need? I hope so. Will local organizations like COVER and Habitat for Humanity find more people willing to give a day? I hope so. Will the United Way find there are more people willing to solicit at work? I expect so. Because that's what happens when the social fabric of a region is strengthened by an event like *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*.

Three cheers to all who participated. If only by offering your prayers for the safety of the workers and a good outcome, you did your part. Thanks to Trumbull-Nelson, especially Larry Ufford and Ron Bauer, for seeing the tremendous opportunity to build social capital while honoring working men and women. **T-N**

Upper Valley Housing Organizations Working Together

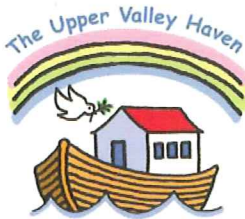


www.coverhomerepair.org

COVER volunteers complete 45-50 urgent home repair projects every year for low-income homeowners in the Upper Valley. We usually take on projects like roofs, wheelchair ramps and weatherization. In addition, the ReCover Store accepts tax-deductible contributions of used appliances, cabinets, furniture and building materials from area residents and local contractors. The store is open to all!

www.uppervalleyhaven.org

The Upper Valley Haven is a private not-for-profit organization, founded in 1981, that provides temporary shelter for homeless adults, families and children, as well as food, clothing and programming to those in need. For 28 years the Haven has fostered independence by providing resources through our Shelter Advocacy, Aftercare and Educational programs.



www.listencs.org

Since 1972, LISTEN Community Services has been providing services and support to meet the critical needs of Upper Valley individuals such as food, fuel and rental assistance as well as youth advocacy programs.

Tri-County Cap Homeless Programs & 10 Bricks

<http://tccaphomeless.org/tenbricks.html>

Making sure every resident of NH's North Country & VT's Upper Valley have access to programs to prevent homelessness or find shelter should homelessness happen.



Upper Valley
**Habitat
for Humanity**

www.uppervalleyhabitat.org

Habitat for Humanity builds homes with people who could not otherwise afford them. We offer the benefits of home ownership to carefully selected families from the Upper Valley. Our homeowners build with us, putting in at least 500 hours of sweat equity into building their own home. We believe "Every family deserves a simple, decent home to live in. Every child deserves a safe, secure place to grow up in." This year, we are building our 25th house in the Upper Valley.



Upper Valley United Way

www.uvuw.org

Upper Valley United Way is working to advance the common good by focusing on education, income and health, the building blocks for a good life. United Way's goal is to create long lasting changes that prevent problems for happening in the first place. Together, united with engaged citizens, local business leaders and community non-profit partners we can inspire hope and create opportunities for a better tomorrow.



www.tphtrust.org

TPHT seeks to strengthen the Upper Valley's social fabric by developing, improving and preserving perpetually affordable rental and ownership housing for households of lower and moderate income. Today's portfolio includes 183 rental and 46 owned homes in NH and VT.