

# NEIGHBORWORKS NEWS

08

HOME BUYER FAIR

10

46TH HIGH SCHOOL HOUSE

11

OWNER BUILT HOMES UPDATE



06

FUND DRIVE & FUNDRAISING EFFORTS



09

COMMUNITY CLEANUP



05

HOME BUYER SPOTLIGHT





# Remembering A Legacy



**Dona Stebbins**  
**1947-2024**

Dona Stebbins was a pillar of change and hope in the downtown neighborhoods and Great Falls as a whole. She was the president of Neighborhood Council 7 for 12 years. It was through her involvement, commitment, and grassroots efforts in the Neighborhood Council that she decided to run for Mayor. After being elected, she served two consecutive terms as Mayor from 2006-2010.

Dona truly believed in maintaining and revitalizing neighborhoods. She recognized NeighborWorks' to be one of the crucial avenues for improving neighborhoods and rehabbing old homes and building new ones. She was particularly passionate about advocating for affordable housing solutions.

Dona devoted 12 years to serving on the NeighborWorks' Board of Directors. Within that time, she also received the Dorothy Richardson award for her contribution and impact to community development.

In honor of Dona's passing, we are republishing an article that she wrote for a previous "NeighborWorks News" issue that exemplifies her love of the community. Thank you, Dona, for your positive and lasting impact on not only NeighborWorks, but the entire community of Great Falls.



"A home houses so much more than people and their possessions - it nurtures and sweetens the spirit of all who dwell within. Caring for our homes, our neighborhoods, is an investment in the future of our children, and when the time comes, they will go forth with the knowledge and ability to create a home and a neighborhood of their own.

When I began to work with NHS Great Falls in the early 80's, my husband and I were childless newlyweds and with my widowed mother were "virgin" homeowners. The house we could afford was in the Northside NHS neighborhood - it was what we wanted but the neighborhood was unstable and in a state of decline. Winos, paint and glue sniffers dotted our morning landscapes, along with lovely old trees and stately, but neglected houses. Spot zoning had done great damage and realtors steered prospects to other, more promising areas. Of course, we fell in love with the house, area and all.

My work with NHS is inextricably entwined with our home. I have great difficulty figuring out where one begins and the other ends, and I hope it will always be so. NHS gave us the power to alter our personal landscape.

I grew up in the 1950's in a small town in eastern Montana. Let me define that - 8,000 people - all of whom know my mother, grandmother, aunts, uncles and cousins. Tales of my misdeeds often reached home before I did. When I had an errand at the store, I would stop by the home of an elderly disabled neighbor to see if she needed anything. I wasn't paid to do this and it would have shamed me deeply to take money for it. Lives were lived on front porches, weather permitting - we were both observers and participants, and we were involved in each other's lives, sorrowing and rejoicing, entwined in the gestalt of a healthy neighborhood. It truly takes a village to raise a child, I was well brought up.



High school, college, a big-city career – and, finally, time to NEST. Back to Montana and no chance to make a living in my old, small-town venue, but Great Falls shows promise and the roots sink in. With the birth of a daughter, a neighborhood that nurtures became as important as her first step.

Then NHS, small, struggling – what a good match for our family. My late father always said that those of us who were blessed with good health and good fortune were honor bound to give back to our community, so I volunteered. NHS in the 90’s is no longer small and struggling, but like most families, we are. The difference is now we’re doing it in a much nicer neighborhood.

Today, the word, “network” is shopworn and tarnished, with overtones of big business and corporate folly, but I knew this word with it was fresh and unsullied and I have seen the Neighborhood Network empower (oops, another one!) entire neighborhoods in our NHS area. New construction, rehab projects, low-moderate income home ownership and landscaping are rampant in our NEIGHBORHOODS. The time and effort (and the few dollars) I was able to invest in NHS have given me such satisfaction – and I have seen such growth. A truly incredible return on my modest investment.

But the greatest return, of course, is that our daughter is the product of our village – she knows everyone, they know her, and we all know what it takes to build and maintain a neighborhood.

And the children will go forth.”

## NEW FACES @ NWGF



Machelle Murphy  
Education Coordinator



Kara Van Horn  
Real Estate Specialist



Don Herigon  
Maintenance Technician



Jessica Wakeford  
Community Specialist



Celeste Hardy  
Community Specialist



Allison Tangen  
Board Member



Susan Crocker  
Board Member



Morgan Yegerlehner  
Board Member



# 2023

# IMPACT REPORT



## HOMEOWNERSHIP

**262**

Homebuyer  
Education  
Graduates

**22**

Foreclosure  
Prevention  
Cases

**38,270**

Counseling  
Hours

**104**

New  
Homeowners

**14**

Homes  
Built

## FUNDRAISING

**174,841**

Dollars for the  
2023 Annual  
Campaign

**190,000**

Dollars in  
Private Grants  
Awarded

**339,151**

Dollars Raised  
for the  
Endowment

**245,728**

Dollars left to  
go towards  
Endowment



## LENDING

**26**

Total Loans

**13**

Loans to 1st  
Time  
Homebuyers

**41**

Matched  
Savings  
Participants

**10**

Debt and  
Credit Loans

**13**

1st Mortgage  
Lenders  
Assisted

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**1,706**

Volunteers

**5,656**

Volunteer  
Hours

**3**

Grants to  
Neighborhood  
Councils

**10**

New  
Downtown  
Murals

**17**

Trees  
Planted







# HOMEBUYER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Justin. He's active duty at Malmstrom Air Force Base, a weekend ski instructor, owner of an adorable cat named Moxie, and a first-time homeowner. Justin went through NeighborWorks' Homebuyer Education and was able to purchase his first home with the help of a few NeighborWorks' Preferred Partners.

"It (Homebuyer Education) was really helpful in showing me how the house buying process worked, how to get a loan, and what exceptions were available for me as military."

Justin's favorite part about owning a home is being able to change the space, and he has several home improvement projects underway. He recently completed a room in his unfinished basement and plans on adding an office, landscaping a shaded reading area in his backyard, and upgrading the green house.



"Being a homeowner means having the freedom to control my living situation. It also allows me to have a stake in the community and feeling of belonging."

When asked what advice he would give to someone thinking about making the step to homeownership, he had nothing but encouragement.

"I'd say do it! It is better to be a property owner paying into a tangible investment and have the freedom to do with it as you please than answering to someone else."





# FUND DRIVE

During the Spring, NeighborWorks Great Falls secures funds for our many programs by embarking on a two-week fundraising campaign, known as the Fund Drive. From March 4-15th, volunteer teams from local area businesses and financial institutions called on over 550 businesses to raise funds for NeighborWorks. Other businesses showed their support by hosting internal fundraisers or events and helped raise money and awareness. Their efforts aimed to enable families to attain affordable, quality homes and help to revitalize our neighborhoods. From all of us at NeighborWorks Great Falls, a huge thank you to all the volunteers and businesses for their support!



As we continue our efforts to expand access to quality, affordable housing in Great Falls, we invite you to join us in this important work. A donation to our Annual Campaign or Endowment Campaign will help us continue to create successful homeowners by providing essential programs such as financial coaching, rental assistance, housing, renovation, loans, down payment assistance, and many more options, for years to come. The NeighborWorks Endowment will forever benefit Great Falls homebuyers and neighborhoods. Thank you for your continued support and partnership as we strive to create a community where everyone has a place to call **home.**



**We are 90% of the way to our Endowment Campaign goal!**



# HI-LINE CLIMBING CENTER CLIMB-A-THON



This last May, the Hi-Line Climbing Center partnered with NeighborWorks Great Falls for the second annual Climb-A-Thon. Participation in the event was free, as each climber had at least one sponsor signed up. For each route they climbed, sponsors donated \$1 to the fundraiser, and all proceeds went to NeighborWorks Great Falls. Previously, the Climb-A-Thon was only open to members of the climbing center, but this year, the event was open to the public and no climbing experience was necessary. It was a great day and a great way to introduce more families to the sport of climbing. Thank you, Meadow Gold Dairy, for donating the free ice cream! We are hoping for even more community involvement next year, and for people to enjoy a free day of climbing while raising money for a good cause.

## COMMUNITY PARTNER GRANTS



NeighborWorks is proud to be a recipient of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines Member Impact Fund Award, made possible through partnership with Bravera Bank, First Interstate Bank, Montana Credit Union, Opportunity Bank and Wells Fargo. In total, this award will invest \$70,000 into our community and support our primary goal: to promote financial independence and empower communities to build wealth through homeownership. We also received a check from NorthWestern Energy, thanks to a creative fundraiser. At the Home & Garden Expo, they set up a “pop a shot” basketball and donated \$1 per basket made to NWGF and the Emilie Center.

Help us make a difference by visiting [nwgf.org/give](https://nwgf.org/give)



# HOMEBUYER FAIR

The goal of the annual Homebuyer Fair is to create a relaxing, fun, and informational space for future homebuyers to learn about the home purchase process from local experts!

## LENDERS

- Stockman Bank
- Independence Bank
- Opportunity Bank
- Mann Mortgage
- 1st Liberty Credit Union
- Russell Country Fairway



## INSURANCE

- Goosehead Insurance
- Comparion Insurance
- Brett Harris Insurance



## REALTORS

- Dustin Young & Co
- The Premier Team
- Brandi Langan
- Dascoulias
- Blaine Train
- Nancy Anderson
- Dahlquist



## TITLE COMPANIES

- Mountain Title
- Legacy Title



## OTHERS

- Rural Dynamics
- Capcon Drain Pros
- Montana Housing
- Habitat for Humanity
- Tilleraas Landscape Nursery
- Black Tail Home Inspection
- SAW Industries
- NeighborWorks Great Falls



## 2024 HBE SCHEDULE



May 15 & 16  
5PM-9PM



June 12 & 13  
5PM-9PM



July 17 & 18  
5PM-9PM



August 21 & 22  
5PM-9PM



September 18 & 19  
5PM-9PM



October 19  
9AM-5PM



November 13 & 14  
5PM-9PM



TBA

## HAVRE HBE

Check out our website at [nwgf.org/homebuyereducation](http://nwgf.org/homebuyereducation) to stay up to date!





# Community Cleanup

Each year, NWGF organizes a city-wide cleanup day. This year, we had 19 teams come together to clean up Great Falls, Black Eagle, and Belt. Thanks to our partnership with Malmstrom Air Force Base, over 10 tons of rubbish was taken to the landfill with the dump fees waived by Republic Services. We love bringing people together and working with our neighbors to create clean, safe, and welcoming spaces!





# HIGH SCHOOL HOUSE

## RIBBON CUTTING

46 Homes Made Possible by High School Students!

The 46th High School House in Great Falls is now complete! The house, located at 1301 3rd Ave S, was once an empty lot that will now provide a first-time homebuyer a place to call home. NeighborWorks and Great Falls Public Schools have partnered to bring this program to Great Falls for over 20 years. The school provides the labor as the students learn hands-on skills, and NWGF supplies the lot, arranges subcontractors, and finances the construction. Construction on the 47th High School House will begin Fall of 2024!



The student builders in front of the home they built



Builders of the Year



Not only is the home built by students, but designed by them as well. The interior design class creates a design board that shows their vision, and the winning idea is used in the home. The culinary students also make appetizers and desserts for the ribbon cutting as well. Way to go Great Falls students!



Cutting the ribbon- the build is now complete!



Designers of the Year





# OWNER BUILT HOMES

## MERIWETHER CROSSING

### Group Four

The fourth group of builders at Meriwether Crossing moved into their new homes in February after 16 months of building. This marks 175 completed homes through this program!



### Group Five

The newest group of builders-and the final build at Meriwether Crossing-began in May. Once all 10 homes are completed, the homeowners can move in!







NON-PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
GREAT FALLS, MT  
PERMIT NO. 261

## GREAT FALLS

509 1st Ave South  
Great Falls, MT 59401

# Upcoming Events:

## 03-07 June NeighborWorks Week

Celebrate this national week with us with talks, tours, and events. More details to come!

## 06 June

### Most Improved Awards

Join us as we recognize some of the individuals and businesses who made our community better this last year. The awards will start at 4pm at Elevation 3330.

## 10 July

### Budget & Brews

Join our financial counselors for a beer at Annie's Taphouse while learning tips and tricks on how to grow your savings or visit with them about your budget! We will be there from 4-6pm.

## 07 August

### Voyager's Night

NeighborWorks is the featured nonprofit! Make sure to buy your tickets from a staff member for a portion of the ticket sale to be donated to NWGF.



(406) 761-5861 | [info@nwgf.org](mailto:info@nwgf.org) | [www.nwgf.org](http://www.nwgf.org)