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# Positive News™

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## Sustainability

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# Local Housing Program Echoes in Developing World

by Andris Goncarovs

Every month, Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. (INHS), graduates a dozen income-qualified, mortgage-ready people from their First Time Homebuyer Education program. Often, the graduates find it difficult to find an affordable house to buy. Many end up in cramped, unsafe apartments, or in trailers twenty miles away from their jobs.

"It's bad for the family, it's bad for the community, and it's bad for the environment," says Jack Jensen, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Community Building Works! Inc. (CBW), a not-for-profit corporation, talking about the dearth of affordable housing in Tompkins County.

"At CBW, we have an action agenda - enough talking about the problem.

Let's roll up our sleeves and do something about it," says Jack. He and Program Director Sheila Squier have between them 50 years of experience in creating affordable housing.

Founded in 2006, with its first construction site in 2008, Community Building Works! Inc. is ready to take on affordable housing in Tompkins County and internationally. For every house they build locally, they will also build a house in a developing country. The organization's business model calls for the creation of low cost housing by use of volunteer labor. The difference between the price of the house and its cost gets plowed back into the organization for use in creating housing for low-income people in developing countries.

Before founding CBW, Jack and Sheila volunteered with an organization called JourneyWays in

Ecuador. The couple helped build a house for a family in less than a week, with a final cost of \$3,000, US. They were inspired and realized that they could run a similar operation in Ithaca.

"We had been trying to find a way to tap the energy, enthusiasm, and good will of the community to help create affordable housing for quite some time," says Jack. So, thanks to volunteers and Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, CBW hopes to add four brand-new affordable houses a year - two in Tompkins County and two in developing countries.

Contact: [www.communitybuildingworks.org](http://www.communitybuildingworks.org)

This article was written by Andris Goncarovs who became one of our Positive News student interns this semester.



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Jack Jensen, Co-Founder of Community Building Works! (center) takes a break with volunteers Joe Decker and Steele Steffy.

## Wolf Teachers

by Jordan Cosentini-Jensen

BEARSVILLE, NY - In 1969 someone brought a wolf puppy into John Harris's home. Little did he know this new addition would lead to a national recognition of wolf advocacy. Eventually John developed a wolf rescue center, and with the wolf named Jethro he began teaching at public events. John taught about



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wolf advocacy as well as environmental preservation.

In 1978 John met Pam Brown through a mutual friend. Pam was clear that John's work with wolves was exactly what she wanted to be doing.

Pam traveled with John and his wolves all over the U.S. They made appearances in schools and even at Carnegie Hall and the Smithsonian. They taught the world what it means to be an animal advocate. They talked about the difference between survival hunting and trophy hunting and explained the vital role wolves play in a habitat.

Pam Brown stressed this point in a recent interview with Positive News. She described the damage to the ecosystem in Yellowstone National Park when the wolf population was wiped out. "Everything is linked to each other, and the wolf is a major link. Without predators things fall apart." She described how deer break down habitats so nothing can live. She also explained that wolves naturally balance the coyote population in shared territory. "The purpose of wolves is to cull the weak and old deer and to control populations of coyote."

John and Pam's project was featured in three National Geographic hardcover collections. After John passed away, Pam retired the wolves and moved to Mexico, where she developed a slide presentation of everything she and John taught.

While traveling with her presentation, she met Kent Weber, who had started "Mission Wolf." Mission Wolf is virtually the same program that John and Pam ran for so long. Kent had the wolves and the passion, he just needed the training. She began working with Kent, taking him around the country and teaching him how to work with the wolves and the audience.

Pam, Kent, and a new partner, Tracey Brooks, occasionally tour together sharing the message of respect for wolves throughout the country. They will present at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY on October 15.

John Harris is remembered everyday for his compassion and generosity. His legacy lives on while more and more people acquire a deeper understanding of what we can learn from wolves and how we can support their admirable species.

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This article was written by Jordan Cosentini-Jensen, one of our Positive News student interns this spring.