

MORRIS HABITAT FOR HUMANITY KICKS OFF VETERANS BUILD WEEK WITH U.S. CONGRESSWOMAN MIKIE SHERRILL

RANDOLPH, N.J., November 14, 2022--Morris Habitat for Humanity kicked off Veterans Build Week on November 4 in Randolph with a patriotic ceremony to honor and thank the veteran community. Veterans Build Week is a special week designed to highlight the homeownership challenges facing veterans. It is a national initiative created to provide housing solutions and volunteer and employment opportunities to U.S. veterans, military service members and their families.

Morris Habitat was joined by Navy veteran and U.S. Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill, along with a host of other dignitaries, supporters and veterans who came out for the ceremony and build day at The Crossings at Bennett Avenue, a 25-unit condominium project that will provide housing for low to moderate income families, including one Army veteran. It is the largest project in Morris Habitat's 37-year history.

"The housing affordability statistics for veterans are alarming, and we must take action now," said Blair Schleicher Wilson, CEO of Morris Habitat for Humanity. "Nearly 4 million of our veterans pay over 30 percent of their income toward rent or mortgage while more than 1.5 million pay at least 50 percent."

"As a member of the House Armed Services Committee and a veteran myself, I believe it's our country's most sacred obligation to prepare and equip the troops we send into harm's way and then to care for them and their families when they come home," said Congresswoman Sherrill. "Veteran homelessness is truly a point of failure in fulfilling this obligation and it's an avoidable tragedy. I am working hard in Congress to bring an end to veteran homelessness."

Also at the ceremony, Congresswoman Sherrill announced that Morris Habitat for Humanity received the final award notice for a \$3,000,000 federal grant to be used to help complete The Crossings at Bennett Avenue. This funding was secured by the Congresswoman as one of ten Community Projects she submitted in the House Appropriations Committee Fiscal Year 2022 bill.

"I was honored to participate in the Veterans Build Kick Off," said Congresswoman Sherrill. "Morris Habitat for Humanity is an incredible force in NJ-11, working across the county and the state to build homes and provide housing security. Today the focus was on their work to establish affordable home ownership and job opportunities for veterans, and I am so grateful to have such wonderful local partners as I fight for these same issues in Washington. With this federal funding, Morris Habitat will help complete this project in Randolph, continuing to make life in New Jersey more affordable and provide the housing stability that allows families to reach their full potential."

"There are more than 400,000 veterans living in New Jersey, and too many of them are unable to access safe and affordable housing," said Senator Anthony Bucco (R-25). "To help rectify this,

I am proud to partner with Morris Habitat for Humanity to raise awareness for Veterans Build Week—a critical initiative that helps provide quality homes for veterans in need. I encourage anyone who is able to volunteer to do so. Together, we can help improve the lives of veterans and bring some joy to their families during this season of giving.”

The ceremony also included the reading of the Pledge of Allegiance by members of Randolph’s VFW Post 7333 and the singing of the National Anthem by Randolph resident Mercedes Pesceovich Ryan. Many attendees were wearing RED for the “Remember Everyone Deployed” initiative.

“This home is life-changing for my family. Our kids will have their own rooms and we’ll finally have enough space for everyone,” said Army veteran Alex Demesier, whose home is currently under construction at The Crossings at Bennett Avenue. Demesier and his family must contribute 550 hours of sweat equity toward building their home.

The Crossings at Bennett Avenue is being constructed in partnership with Randolph Township, which donated the property in 2009. Four buildings will consist of one-, two-, and three-bedroom condominiums. Amenities will include a community meeting room, sidewalks and bike paths, outdoor picnic area, gazebo and playground. The complex will be handicap accessible and meet the highest standards of energy efficiency and safety. The first phase of the project will be completed in early 2023.

“One of the most important social issues facing Randolph is affordable housing,” said Randolph Township Mayor Marie Potter. “This is a great project that will help fulfill Randolph’s affordable housing plan.”

Morris Habitat for Humanity builds more than just homes—the organization empowers families to build brighter futures for generations to come. Home is the foundation to achieve the strength, stability and self-reliance that people need to shape a better tomorrow for themselves and their families. Additionally, every home constructed helps to strengthen the fabric and economies of local communities for all citizens.

ABOUT MORRIS HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Morris Habitat for Humanity is part of a global, nonprofit housing organization committed to building homes, communities, and hope. The organization serves Morris, Middlesex and portions of Somerset and Union counties. Through volunteer labor and donations of money and materials, Morris Habitat builds affordable new homes and provides home repair services to income eligible families. Since 1985, Morris Habitat has served nearly 780 families through building 173 local homes, preserving 324 homes for low-income and senior residents, and helping 282 families with housing solutions worldwide. The organization has engaged more than 145,000 volunteers for various programs. Morris Habitat also operates a successful ReStore home improvement outlet which has kept 15,500 tons of reusable materials out of landfills and funded 33 homes. For more information, visit MorrisHabitat.org or call 973-891-1934.

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