

Shoppers learn about Habitat at Commons

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COURTESY RARITAN VALLEY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY Habitat Partner Family Dawn Onque with 5 year old daughter Sanai in front of the sky mural hanging over center court in Bridgewater Commons that features them standing in front of their new home when it was under construction in Franklin.

Among some of the best stores, entertainment and dining, Bridgewater Commons shoppers are now presented with many opportunities to help Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity build homes in partnership with low-income families.

Hanging high above center court and along the third floor corridors are large banners displaying "Shop. Give. Build."

Pictured in the banners are Dawn Onque, and her 5-year-old daughter, a new Habitat for Humanity partner family, who will live in one of four new ranch style Habitat homes being built in Franklin Township.

The reverse side of each banner displays Cars for Homes™ "Nice Car" and encourages people to donate vehicles by visiting www.carsforhomes.org. Funds raised through the sale of donated vehicles are

directed to the donor's local Habitat for Humanity affiliate to help build homes with families in need of decent, affordable housing within the donor's local community.

The banners were made possible by a joint effort between Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity, Habitat for Humanity International's Cars for Homes™ vehicle donation program, and Bridgewater Commons, a General Growth Properties mall. The campaign is part of a three-year national partnership between General Growth Properties and HFHI to raise awareness of Habitat's mission to eliminate poverty housing.

"I walked into the mall one day for a meeting and realized that Bridgewater Commons and General Growth Properties are doing so much to help us, but no one would know that," said Lisa Fielding, corporate & community relations manager for Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity.

The idea of the banners was born during a conversation with Amy Harris, Marketing Manager at Bridgewater Commons, who had offered providing complimentary, unsold advertising space. Coincidentally, Fielding was also working to raise awareness about Cars for Homes™, Habitat's official vehicle donation program.

With an incredible opportunity to reach the public, Cars for Homes™ arranged for the production of the impressive banners that, traditionally, RVHFH could not due to budget limitations.

The "Shop, Give, Build" themed partnership started last June and includes "green" reusable shopping bags available for \$3 at Guest Services at Bridgewater Commons. The mall is working to increase awareness of Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity and Cars for Homes™ through the banners, upcoming events and materials distributed to mall patrons.

"Bridgewater Commons continually strives to be a true community partner," according to Amy Harris. "We are proud to be part of Habitat's life-changing mission of helping families in need experience a better quality of life. Ideally, this banner program will be a prototype to expand to other General Growth Properties malls across the country."

Dawn had worked two part-time jobs to put herself through Kean University, had recently graduated, and now has a full-time position in her new profession. By partnering with Habitat for Humanity, Dawn's goal of building a better life for herself and her daughter in a decent, affordable home is becoming a reality through her efforts to build "sweat-equity." They currently share a room in the home of a family member and are looking forward to having a home of their own. According to Sanai, she's "excited about moving into my new house."

To donate a car, truck, boat or RV to help Habitat for Humanity build homes with families, call (877) 277-HFHI (4344) toll free or visit www.carsforhomes.org

Celebrating over 15 years of building modest, affordable homes for low-income families in Somerset and Hunterdon counties, Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity is committed to helping hard working families build better lives and has completed their 31st house, providing 122 people with a decent, affordable place to call home. Visit www.rvhabitat.org for more information.

Cars for Homes™ is Habitat for Humanity's national vehicle donation program that provides donors a quick and easy process for car, truck, boat, RV and other vehicle donations to help build homes in partnership with local low-income families in need of decent, affordable shelter. For more, visit www.carsforhomes.org.

Bridgewater Commons Mall is an affiliate of General Growth Properties, Inc., one of the largest U.S.-based publicly traded real estate investment trusts, based upon market capitalization.