

# Donovan and Shelby's story

## A vision of stability

*An accessible and affordable home in Greenfield puts creative dreams in reach for future homebuyers*



Like so many others, Shelby and Donovan met at the crossroads that is the Valley when each of them moved here, one from the east and one from further west in the state. Shelby came for economic opportunities, community, and higher level medical care and Donovan because his family had moved here while he was in the service. And now their chosen community benefits from the skills and ingenuity of this talented couple who is building their future home in Greenfield.

No amount of hard work and determination can mitigate the fact that the Valley does not have a range of choices for affordable living situations and Shelby and Donovan bumped up against this unfavorable reality again and again as they sought to make a better life for themselves here. They started in a very small studio apartment and were able to move into improved spaces little by little, but always there were compromises.

In their current situation, the leaky roof was such a problem they had to contact the health department when the rain came straight through the ceiling. A health condition for Shelby has made living on the second floor with laundry two flights down increasingly challenging. For five years the couple has been on a waitlist for low-income housing with their financial papers in order should a better rental opportunity arise. So when they saw the open application process for a Habitat home announced, they jumped at the chance and were able to submit their application within a week. “We didn’t really believe it,” says Shelby, when they got the news that their names had been chosen in the lottery. “I still don’t believe it!”

Since raising the first walls on their future home in July, Shelby and Donovan have spent hours each week on the construction site. Donovan brings skills in site work, small engine maintenance and carpentry and Shelby’s background in science and mechanics is a boon to building as well. They are excited to be able to use these skills even more after they move into an accessible and affordable home where they can maintain their own car, fix their own household items, build an outdoor run for their rabbit.

Their location in Greenfield holds a lot of promise for Shelby and Donovan. A place to indulge their creative spirit, to attend events at the nearby fairgrounds, to use the newly expanded library, to access the public transportation hub to someday – when the line is completed – use the train to get to appointments in Boston. “Stability” is a word they both use often when describing the future they envision.

