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20 NYC COUPLES GET DOWN AND DIRTY FOR VALENTINES DAY . . . BUILDING AFFORDABLE HOMES WITH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY – NEW YORK CITY AND FAMILIES IN NEED

Brooklyn, NY, Feb. 14 -- Forty New Yorkers and their special Valentines, dressed in their oldest jeans and faded tee shirts, traded roses and chocolates for hammers and nails this Valentine's Day to celebrate their affection for each other and to help Habitat for Humanity - New York City build homes for families in need.



These heartwarming volunteers also raised more than \$10,000 to help cover the costs of the 41 affordable new homes, in a multifamily condominium complex in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, Brooklyn.

On a day when most New Yorker couples are dressed to the nines, armed with greeting cards and heading for romantic dinners, why did these Valentines choose to spend this holiday installing floors on a dusty construction site?

Here are a few of their stories:

Karin Palmieri and **Greg Zannella** decided to spend their first Valentine's Day doing something meaningful. Karin says: "I have waited a long time to have a Valentine but now that I have one, I realized that the commercialism of the holiday doesn't mean so much when you are in a committed, healthy relationship."

Karin built Habitat homes in Louisiana last year, and "I had an amazing experience. I wanted to share with it Greg for a day. It took no convincing and he agreed immediately when I proposed the idea.

"My Valentine is my best friend and husband **Eric**," says **Jacqueline Sacks**. "Traditionally, we avoid purchasing material gifts during Valentines Day, birthdays, anniversaries," she says adding that "material items are limited in both memory and scope . . . and we feel experiences should be the celebratory vehicle for the special occasions in our relationship. A beautiful memory can be recalled anywhere, anytime – and is not subject to fads or upgrades.

"We felt this was a good way to give back to others," says **Gayle** and **Larry Amato**, a husband-and-wife-team. "We hope to help families and build relationships with other volunteers. We are thrilled to be in Brooklyn and helping such a good cause," Gayle adds

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Emily Shaw and **Simon Workman**, who met a little over a year ago while they were delivering meals to elderly people, are celebrating their first Valentine's Day. "For us, the idea of volunteering on this romantic day is well worth the aches and pains we may feel after," they say.

Jim and **Alice McQuade** ("the love of my life," he says) have been happily married for 20 years. "We hope to enjoy the time spent with each other and perhaps 'pay it forward' so that the good deeds that are going to be performed on Saturday continue to be repeated over and over again," says Jim.

The Valentine's volunteers worked alongside **Habitat families**, who will be future homeowners of the affordable homes that are part of this complex of 41 condominium units.

Habitat for Humanity - New York City transforms lives and our city by building quality homes for families in need and by uniting all New Yorkers around the cause of affordable housing. With the help of an average of thousands of volunteers every year, Habitat-NYC has built more than 180 affordable homes in the five boroughs of New York City.

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