

# the builder



## Building Community Together

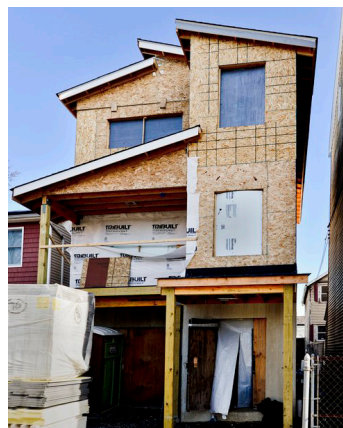
It all began in 2016 when Barbara and George invited their friends and family to join them in the building and sponsoring of a Paterson Habitat house on Hamilton Avenue. 2016 marked their 50th wedding anniversary as well as the 15th and 20th anniversaries of their sons and their wives.

While most couples host a party to celebrate, the Fernstrom Family hosted build days and a fundraising campaign to help support the construction of the new home. "You can do so much more when you get other people involved," Barbara said. "You can really make a difference."



In 2020, when George passed away his family wished to honor George's memory and his commitment to Paterson Habitat with the "George Fernie Build". 68 Clinton Street was chosen as the special project and the building and fundraising began. To date, the "George Fernie Build" has raised over \$135,000.

But 68 Clinton Street is not just any house, it is the future home of Mustapha, Haja, and their children. Mustapha and Haja migrated from the small country of Gambia 29-years ago to provide a better life and education for their children. A family of eight, they have lived in the Bronx, New York most of their lives. *(Continue on pg 3)*



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## A Note from Scott

CEO, Paterson Habitat for Humanity

As spring turns to summer and our construction sites are once again starting to buzz with volunteers it is beginning to feel a little more like normal around Paterson Habitat. As our corporate and community volunteers rejoin us in building, I am reminded about how it truly takes a community to transform a community. A community of neighbors helping neighbors.

At our recent home dedication, I was touched and challenged by the words of Imam Musa Kabba, “They (we all) are looking for a good neighbor, you are the good neighbor, being good to your neighbor will change them. They will be good too.” As I reflected on the Imam’s words I thought about a question posed to another priest and prophet many years ago ‘but who is my neighbor?’ And, as I reflected on that question I thought about our vision of an equitable Greater Paterson region where ALL people have access to the transformational power of safe, stable, affordable housing.

With our vision in mind the answer to the question is simple, anyone who is in need of safe, stable, affordable housing is our neighbor and as Imam Kabba challenged us, we must be a good neighbor to each of them, and all of them. Together we can. **Thank You for being a good neighbor!**

## A New Foundation



In March, Paterson Habitat broke ground not just on our first project in Passaic – a four-family homeownership opportunity – but a reimagined and reconstructed home for the Albert Lawson Memorial VFW Post.

In the Summer of 2021, we previously joined together with the City of Passaic, Mayor Hector Lora, and the VFW Post 10177 at 135 Summer Street as demolition crews began removing the old building.

Now the foundation is in as we plan to begin the next stage of construction this summer. We invite you to join us for this exciting new build beginning in July.

With your help we will celebrate four new homeowners in the City of Passaic and the doors will open to a new two-story mixed-use building. The ground floor will be the new home of VFW Post 10117. The hall will also serve as a meeting place for the community, ensuring the continuation of the VFW program which supports 67 veteran members, the largest in the state.

We look forward to having you join us in building and dedicating 135 Summer Street, our first project in Passaic!

The construction of Governor 5 has really taken shape since the last update we shared with you in our Winter issue. Five families await the day they too can stand in their driveway and realize that their hard work, dedication, and determination has paid off. **Please consider making a gift this summer to help us continue the construction of these five homes and change five more families lives.**



(Continued from pg 1)

In 2020, Mustapha and Haja decided it was time for a change and they searched for a new opportunity and found Paterson Habitat. Their new home will provide them the opportunity to raise their children in a safe and secure environment, which they didn't have before. Mustapha and Haja look forward to teaching their children about homeownership and financial education to prepare them for their futures. As Mustapha and Haja's oldest son, Mahamadou, gets ready to head off to college in the fall, he is looking forward to new experiences and furthering his education.

On May 22nd, in Paterson Habitat tradition, we dedicated 68 Clinton Street and we celebrated both families, Mustapha & Haja and the Fernstroms. Paterson Habitat's CEO, Scott Millard, opened the ceremony with the crowd of over 50 Habitat supporters. "It is such a thrill to have so many here today with us to celebrate what really is one of the best days in the Habitat story. The day we dedicate a home."

There was a true sense of community as donors, volunteers, sponsors, new and current homeowners, staff, board, and community members stood shoulder to shoulder clapping and cheering on new homeowners Mustapha and Haja.

"As you can see today, perhaps like no other day, it really takes a community to make what we do possible. Today we are here to celebrate that community", said Scott.

On the side lines were Luis and Julia, Habitat Homeowners from Hamilton Avenue, encouraging Mustapha, who was overwhelmed with emotion, as he stood at the podium, sharing a few words with the crowd.



"Twenty-nine years ago, I came to this country. I kept saying I was going to go back. But look what I have now. Thank you, everyone. Habitat, thank you!"

We were also joined by Mustapha and Haja's Imam, Musa Kabba, who was also overcome with the sense of community around him. "Since the day we came to this country we asked to have a good neighbor. That was his dream and he got the good neighbor now. You are the good neighbor." The Imam continued, "Being good to your neighbor will change them. They will be good too."

From 68 Clinton Street, the next chapter for Mustapha and Haja, which will impact their family for generations to come, you can see not only Paterson Habitat's history but also our future. Some of the first Habitat homes built in the Northside are just next door. Across the road is the future site of Clinton Street Park, which we will begin construction on this Fall. Clinton Street Park will be a place Mustapha and Haja's children can play and make friends in the neighborhood, building the next generation of community in the Northside.



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*Paterson  
& Beyond*

You're invited to our Gala Celebration on 09.22.22 honoring



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