



REPAIRING HOMES AND
BUILDING COMMUNITY

THE COVER PAGE

NEWS ABOUT COVER HOME REPAIR & THE RECOVER STORE

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COVER volunteers and staff get some of the most important things done when we slow down.

At one level, COVER is very much a part of the world of accomplishment and measurement of outcomes. We absolutely care what the revenue numbers are in the Store; how many roofs, ramps and other projects the Home Repair volunteers complete; and how many window and door kits the weatherization crews install as they complete their 70 projects this winter. These numbers matter because they represent COVER's success at reaching out in our community and meeting the needs of homeowners.

However, COVER's mission — the core of what we aspire to accomplish — is to “foster hope and build community” and those goals are not reached by going faster or working harder. Those goals are often met by slowing down and listening to the people with whom we are working.

In the ReCover Store, the staff and volunteers know that customers are often looking for key items that will make their house a home — useful things in good repair (or fixable) — that will make a difference in their daily home life. Many customers also come to the Store for advice on a project, or as part of their weekly round of places they like to shop. A busy day at the Store is a social thing, with customers meeting friends and discussing projects with the staff. The vibe is warm. It feels like a welcoming place.

On the jobsite, it is easy to get focused on the task at hand. Volunteers and homeowners are eager to make progress so there is usually big energy to get going. However, John and Diane know that it is critical to start the day with introductions all around. Stopping for lunch is not just about refueling, but about taking time to get to know the other people in the circle. The home repair or weatherization work is what brings us together, but the real success is when we “see” each other and understand how we are connected.



In talking with donors, my impulse is to dwell on the measures of COVER's work— and I do! I've learned over time, however, that the individuals and foundations who support COVER are eager to hear and understand how we foster hope and build connection. They share a vision of being a community in which we act on the knowledge that we can address the housing needs of low-income homeowners through working together — leaving homes that are dry, warm and safe.

“Though we had our troubles, we had them in a true perspective. The universe, as we could see any night, is unimaginably large, and mostly empty, and mostly dark. We knew we needed to be together more than we needed to be apart.” —Wendell Berry

The holidays are a busy time, with plenty to do and get done. Let's all take some time and slow down. Connect with people. Find some light. Create some warmth. Take joy in the community of which we are an vital part.


—Rob Schultz

Rob has been Executive Director of COVER since 2006. He likes it that they sometimes let him leave his desk and sling tools or unload furniture. He can often be found in a sea kayak traveling with Diane.



Mary Sutton-Smith, **COVER's new Volunteer Coordinator**, has been learning so much about COVER and why people volunteer to work on COVER projects! She forwarded some of the best quotes from the last six months to the editor of The COVER Page.

- The experience is always humbling to enter another's home and offer some warmth and a listening ear. Diane exercises great balance working with home owners and offering solutions to what is being asked of her and COVER. Overall being able to volunteer is a privilege and a tangible way of loving our neighbors.
- This weekend was wonderful! John and Matt were both really great to work with and I really enjoyed meeting the other volunteers as well. Also, thank you for letting me sign up for both days because it was really nice to see the transformation that took place in just two days of work. I am really looking forward to volunteering again.
- It was a wonderful day. Diane and Finn were so much fun to work with. I am so glad that the [homeowners] got to have their ramp built for them. It is so hard to be in their place, and not be able to get something that is really needed. I was so glad to be part of helping them. Thank you for the opportunity!
- It was a very rewarding experience. I enjoyed the chance to use my hands for something other than a computer, and the chance to sit down with the homeowner and her family at a well-made lunch. I hope I will have the opportunity to volunteer with COVER again.

Mary joined COVER in April as COVER's new Volunteer Coordinator (and database wizard!). When not scheduling volunteers or working on COVER's digital universe, she spent as much of her summer swimming as possible. 



The Store – What We Take, What We Don't, And Why

While conducting a clean up of your barn, garage, or basement, you discover some older, but still useable items. Rather than haul them away to the dump, you think, "I'll give them to charity." You load them into your truck, and head down to the ReCover Store.

After parking at the store, an employee comes out to check on your merchandise. All prepared to unload your treasures, the person sadly informs you that they cannot take what you brought. "But I don't want anything for them," you say. To no avail; they thank you, but pass on the items. You are stuck with your bathroom sink, 30-year old blue toilet, and huge particle board desk.

Why are some items turned down for donation? In a word, space. At the store, we are very fortunate to have Upper Valley residents steadily donating items to the store. Frankly, we do not have the space,

or ability to take every item we are offered. As a result, we need to be selective about donations.

When deciding what to accept, the most important consideration is whether the item will sell at the store. Many years of experience have taught us what will sell easily, and what will not. Condition of the donation is another consideration. The better the condition, the greater likelihood the item will sell. Finally, we look at whether we have the space to display the item. We do not have additional storage at our facility, so everything that comes in must go on the store floor.

If you want to be fairly sure we'll accept an item before making the drive, call us, or email photos. Otherwise, stop on by, but be aware: we may not be able to accept what you have. REMEMBER: not all donations are equal.

—Frank Orlowski



Frank has been ReCover Store Manager since 2005. He loves flea markets and antiques and keeping useful things in the marketplace (and the Detroit Tigers!).



Weatherization

As I write this on October 15, it is 77 degrees and muggy. It is hard to believe. As much as I would like to think that I am on vacation in Florida, I know, unfortunately, I am not. It is going to get cold and heating fuel is never going to be two dollars a gallon again. But don't lose hope!! There are more ways to burn less fuel than moving to Florida.

So, your Mom was right. If you are cold put on a sweater and go run around the house. By lowering your thermostat one degree for eight hours per day you will reduce your consumption by 1 percent. If you are away at work during the day and you lower it as night as well by 5 degrees you can save 10 percent. It is a common misunderstanding that you use more fuel raising the thermostat back up to a comfortable temperature than if you had just kept it warm all the time. Lowering your thermostat will save you money. Just think of all those soft cozy sweaters!

Make sure that all your storm windows are in place and that windows are closed and locked. There have been many occasions that I've been called to a home and found that the draft was caused by an improperly closed window. They may look closed but they are not — check the locking mechanisms closely.

If your windows are still drafty, have we got a product for you!! An interior plastic "storm" window. They can be removed in the spring and reused next winter. They are available for sale at the ReCover Store. If you need help financially or with installing them please apply for assistance from COVER. We would be happy to help you out. COVER's weatherization program has lots of other fuel saving tricks as well. So spread the word and help your neighbor save on their heating bill as well.

—Diane Reinhardt



Diane is one of COVER's two Home Repair Directors. She has worked with COVER for many years, most recently joining in September 2011 with a focus on weatherization during the fall and winter.



Roof Repairs & Replacements

Throughout the year COVER receives numerous requests to repair or replace roofs. There are always more roofs than we can take care of during the building season. We take a careful look at the projects and our schedules to try to address the most urgent requests. The projects must be volunteer friendly, which unfortunately, prevents us from considering very steep or complex roofs.

Some of the roofs we work on require simple repairs, others require replacement, and in some cases a new roof system needs to be framed over the existing roof. All projects provide multiple opportunities for volunteers, whether learning new skills, or joining together with volunteers and homeowners. For home owners it offers a piece of mind that their roof no longer leaks and their home is safe and dry.

—John Heath

“There is no way to truly convey how appreciative I am for the work that COVER has done on my home! Before COVER came, I stayed up on nights it rained because water would pour into the fuse box. Now that COVER has come and put on a new roof I look forward to falling asleep to the sound of rain on a metal roof and sleeping through the night!!! Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!!!” —Homeowner



John Heath is one of COVER's two Home Repair Directors. He worked with us during the recovery from Tropical Storm Irene and rejoined the team in January, 2014. When not doing construction, he is often found fishing the Connecticut River in his kayak.






There are a few thoughts I would like to share after working for COVER for eight and a half years. First, I am filled with a feeling of gratitude. There are so many people, possibly hundreds, who have helped me to grow, to teach, to learn, to risk, to show up.

This work is not easy; it is right up there with the challenge of forming a family and raising children. But, I have had many teachers along the way—people from all walks who have been willing to be vulnerable, to open their hearts to giving and receiving. There is that moment at the beginning of the work day when we all gather and wonder, “How is this going to work out? What is going to be asked of me? Am I going to measure up? What are all these strangers going to think of me? Will the work get done the way I want it? Will I be able to do the work?” Then we go ahead and get at it. Open our doors, pick up our tools, share our food, and share our stories. At the end of the day, we can see something very tangible has been completed; some physical repair has been made which will improve comfort, bring greater safety, and make a home more livable. But, if we look a little deeper, we find a sense of accomplishment, a release from worry, greater understanding, more compassion, a sense of caring, a bit of “community” created. This is what has brought me back weekend after weekend, to be a part of the good work COVER does.

I am deeply grateful for all of this.

Service is an aspect of my work with COVER that has been richly rewarding. I learned so much about this part of my work life from COVER homeowners and volunteers. To serve and be served at the same time has been a core part of being on the COVER home repair team. I have said many times to homeowners that I get just as much out of doing the projects as they do. Some believe me, and some don’t. But, regardless, I was drawn in by the sense of service going both ways.

As I complete this transition out of my role as Home Repair Director and COVER staff member, I am intensely aware of the strong bonds and warm friendships I have formed and all that the COVER community has given me. I certainly am not the same person I was when I started. I have been given so many opportunities for growth—to learn my own boundaries, to stretch my capacity for acceptance and compassion, to experience what love can do, to see that real change can be accomplished by people with dedicated, open hearts. It is with great sadness and joy that I leave this part of my time at COVER. The sadness is that I am no longer in day-to-day contact with a very special community. The joy is for what I have been given to take with me and what I can continue to share in new ways. —Hugh MacArthur

Hugh, pictured above, second from the left, has, until August, been COVER’s Home Repair Director for 8 years. He is now running his own construction company, Porcupine Ridge Construction. 


So Long Finn! Welcome Matt!



Outgoing AmeriCorps member Finn Burns works on a ramp in Lebanon

The last year of my life hasn't really followed the script that I thought it would. I was going to school in Wisconsin and had every plan to graduate in the spring and look for a full-time engineering position, to follow the path laid out in front of me. But a thought kept coming back to me, that there were still some things I wanted to do before I began that part of my life. So I ended up applying for and being accepted into a study abroad program, and spent the last summer in China. It was during my time there that I also decided I wanted to pursue a service term with AmeriCorps and ended up finding out about COVER and its mission.

After my return from China, I had about a month to spend back home before I hit

Matt is an Apprentice in our Home Repair Program. He joined COVER in September as this year's AmeriCorps member. He is a great addition to the team! 

the road again and made the drive out East. I slowly watched the gently sloping fields and straight roads turn into curving highways through forests and mountains. It started to hit me that I was really going to spend the next year of my life in this totally new setting, and my first impressions had me excited to meet new people and explore the area.

Everyone I've met in my first month here has been incredibly welcoming and has me looking forward to this next year with COVER. Whether it's a volunteer spending a day with us or a homeowner welcoming us into their lives, the people I've met through COVER have created an image of the united community that is the Upper Valley. It's these kinds of connections that will help make the coming year an experience I won't soon forget.


—Matt Sherman



Farewell Hugh and Finn & Ham

Hugh MacArthur retired from his work at COVER in August. He has started his own construction firm Porcupine Ridge Carpentry. Hugh is a legend at COVER. His patience and wisdom and hard work will be missed by all of us. He will still be volunteering for COVER as his schedule allows. Look for his article elsewhere in The COVER Page 6.

Finn Burns completed his year with COVER and headed West to join the National Civilian Conservation Corps in California. Take care, Finn!

Ham Gillett also moved on in July. He worked as COVER's Business Manager and Development Director since early 2012. Ham brought tremendous organization, good humor and work ethic to his time at COVER. His ability to introduce people to COVER's work was remarkable. Ham improved COVER's own recycling process and has moved on to work for the Southern Windham-Windsor Solid Waste District. 

The Cover Page is published semi-annually and mailed to friends and supporters of COVER in the Upper Valley including individual contributors, businesses, foundations, civic groups including churches and other religious organizations.

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COVER's mission is to foster hope and build community in the Upper Valley.

We do this by bringing together volunteers and homeowners to complete urgently needed home repair projects and to facilitate the reuse of household goods and building materials. We envision a community where the need for home repair is an opportunity for people to come together.

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The ReCover Store is open
Mondays 10-2; Tuesday – Saturday,
10-5. Check out our website!
www.coverhomerepair.org

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COVER Home Repair & The ReCover Store

Every time I volunteer on a COVER project I meet interesting people, learn something new about construction, get to help the homeowner and get some much needed exercise. It's a win for everyone involved. — Volunteer



Volunteer from Kendal, installing an upcycled kitchen last September.