



Making Connections and the Blower Door

In February the COVER Home Repair Team and several volunteers met at Hugh and Sherri's to weatherize their home.

The morning started with greetings, introductions, and discussions of the work we would be doing throughout the day. We stood in Hugh and Sherri's welcoming home and talked about the connections we share as neighbors, coworkers, teachers, friends and family.

The focus of the COVER Weatherization Program is air sealing: taking care of drafty windows, doors, attic hatches, and leaks in the foundation. The blower door is a large fan that is set up in a doorway. When the fan blows air out it also pulls extra air through all of the leaks in the house, making elusive leaks easier to find. The blower door measures how many cubic feet per minute (CFM) of air are flowing through the house. The initial blower door reading was 7,035.

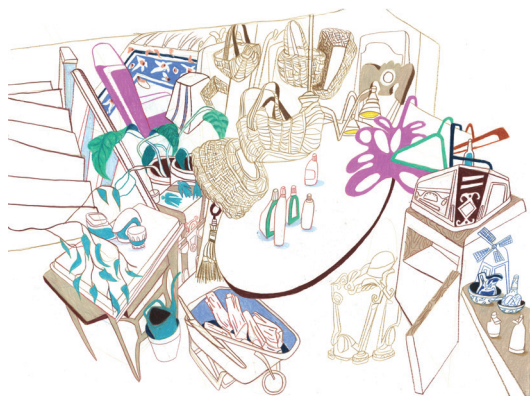
With volunteers Hugh MacAuther and Brendan working upstairs installing window kits, Eliot, Jay and Keren attacked the basement, sealing the bulkhead door and cracks in the foundation, and insulating the hot water heater. Great music coming from the living room, laughter from the basement, and good conversation made the morning go quickly.

We all sat down to Sherri's wonderful chili and salad and shared stories of: the local hills and lands far away, shared experiences, and Sherri's old ice box.

After lunch, with the wood stacked and window kits installed, we turned on the blower door again to find a 1,175 CFM improvement, not a bad day.

Finishing the day with less drafts and fuel to be saved, always feels like a sense of accomplishment, but the connections made give our work the most meaning.

—John Heath, COVER Home Repair Director



Drawing above of Hugh and Sherrie's house by volunteer Keren Katz. Her reflections continue on the back page.

COVER Store Helps Supply The Escape Factory

Over five years ago, Claremont resident and entrepreneur Nick Koloski discovered The COVER Store in White River Junction through word of mouth. He began purchasing donated items from the COVER store and utilizing these items in his Escape Factory – a game room constructed to look like a bunker or a subway car, where a team of people are confined in a room with one hour to figure out how to escape. The escape experience is not only designed to tease the brain but also to develop teamwork skills.

The Escape Factory is adjacent to the Koloski's family restaurant, Time-Out Americana Grill.

According to Nick, "About 70% of all the items in The Escape Factory or in their



(Nick pictured in his Escape Factory)

restaurant next door, are re-purposed items. I like the character of repurposed items and especially like that the dollars I spend can end up back in an urgent home repair project helping one of my neighbors in Claremont."

Some may know Nick as someone who donates much to his own community both individually and through his business. One can often see posts from him on the Upper Valley Facebook group offering free meals or free food to those with insecure food sources. He raises money for local causes and helps out with supplies during cold winters.

Proceeds from all COVER Store sales go to support COVER's urgent home repair and weatherization programs. COVER organizes groups of volunteers to perform urgent home repairs as a means to build community by getting neighbors to help neighbors. Nick has also helped recruit volunteers to help on urgent repair projects. COVER is a non-profit, volunteer based organization serving the Upper Valley.

—Bill Neukomm, COVER Executive Director



I send our heartfelt thanks to COVER and all of the wonderful volunteers for their time, energy and expertise...We both feel the home is much warmer with a lower thermostat setting...(My brother) has been through some very difficult times of late, both financially and health wise. We could never have made such improvements to his home.

—A COVER Homeowner

AmeriCorps

My time with COVER has offered some of the most valuable and transformative experiences of my life. Whether we're building a safe entrance for an elderly man and his dog or just helping a young family save on fuel through weatherization, the people we meet and the feeling I get from serving are extraordinary.

I've learned more in my time here than I've learned in years of schooling. The hands-on learning and expert guidance made all the difference when familiarizing myself with the basics of carpentry, and even after my first day I was walking away with new skills that I will be carrying through the rest of my life.

Even better than the skills I've acquired, however, may be the gratitude shown to me and other volunteers by the homeowners whom we've helped. It's very rare that one gets to be told that they've significantly improved someone's life, and I don't know if I've ever even heard such praise. With COVER I get to work with great people to improve lives several days a week. It's been an incredible experience and I'm infinitely grateful for the opportunity.

— Eliot Crow, AmeriCorps Member



Board Profile

Several years ago I came to know COVER as an organization which provides a system for helping to keep otherwise perfectly useful building materials out of the waste stream. As a builder, for years we had looked to repurpose windows, doors, cabinets etc. that we removed from our renovation projects, in hopes that we could find new homes for these materials. COVER finds that new home through its store and home repair programs.

Then, as I learned more about COVER's mission, I became increasingly intrigued with the idea of getting more involved if I could. Families living on low incomes can ill afford much needed repairs and energy improvements to their homes. And when money is tight, it's painful to think of so much of the costly warmth generated by their heating systems finding its way outside the house. Enter COVER's home repair team of staff and volunteers including family and neighbors. One home at a time becomes more comfortable and affordable with financial support from the community. And one family at a time has some pressure relieved from their monthly costs.

COVER helps strengthen community and makes this area an even more welcoming and vibrant place to call home. As a board member I hope to contribute to this positive community building cycle and appreciate the rewarding opportunity the position affords me.

—Kevin O'Hara, COVER Board Member



From The Desk of the Store Manager

If you haven't been to the COVER Store lately you should stop by.

On March 10th ten volunteer Hanover High School students descended upon the store and removed a wall separating the entry and houseware/tool rooms, in less than 3 hours! What a difference this makes to the store space; it really opens it up. Keep checking on the store. There's more changes to come! It's all in an effort to showcase and make more space for our top selling items (appliances, furniture, cabinets, tools) and to make your shopping experience fun and rewarding.

When you shop at the COVER Store, COVER is able to buy the materials to help neighbors in your community with urgently needed home repairs and weatherization. Visit our Facebook page and look for 'What's new in the Store' to see what has wandered through our doors.

Thank you

Kendal at Hanover, a Continuing Care Retirement Community, donates often to the COVER Store and in several ways. No doubt there are residents who contribute financially, but many also donate furniture and household items. The Kendal Facilities crew allows COVER to take abandoned items from the 'loading dock', but perhaps most valuable are donations of cabinets and appliances that come from apartment renovations. All of these items are lightly used because the food service at Kendal is quite good.

Keith Fossett (pictured at right) and his renovation team assist with equipment, labor and generously accommodate the store's capacity. Furniture and appliances have long been major sources of revenue for COVER, but sets of cabinets boost us to record sale days and hold great potential for growing revenue.

COVER Home Repair sends our thanks to the entire Kendal Community.



COVER tears down walls

Are you retired? Do you have some extra time on your hands? Become part of the COVER community by volunteering at the COVER Store. It's a great place to spend a couple of hours, an afternoon or a day keeping the store organized and running smoothly. Volunteers are our heroes. Contact Mitch at the store or Wendy, our Volunteer Coordinator.

store@coverhomerepair.org
volunteer@coverhomerepair.org

BE A HERO, BE A VOLUNTEER!

As always, many thanks to the donors, shoppers, volunteers and staff. All of us together keep the COVER community going and growing.

—Mitch Ross, COVER Store Manager



COVER and HHS March Intensive

For the past twelve years, Hanover High School has been proud to play a role in making the Upper Valley a little more neighborly through our week-long March Intensive COVER experience. This year was no exception. What started out with students receiving an overview of past projects (and weather conditions), ended with a group of 12 students and two teachers, ready for whatever the COVER leaders and the weather had in store for us.

Thankfully, COVER home repair leaders John Heath and Jay Mead had done their usual thorough prep work and Verna, the homeowner, was ready to have us build an access ramp that would allow her to enjoy her home for years to come. Unfortunately, the cold and snowy weather meant that we would have to utilize a variety of manual and electric devices to break through the ice and frozen ground. Despite the challenge of turning a snowy and ice-covered backyard into a work site, the miter saws and impact drivers soon filled the air with the smell of cut lumber and saw dust. Students who had never picked up a power tool were suddenly in charge of



building a ramp, making stairs or cutting decking, thanks to the gentle and supportive guidance of our two COVER gurus and Eliot, their trusty AmeriCorps member.

Another source of comfort was lunch with Verna. Despite the lack of internet connectivity, or perhaps because of it, the crowded dining room table was a happy place for everyone, only quieting down when it was time for Wheel of Fortune or Verna's excellent brownies. Although some of the students were friends before this experience, it was most gratifying to see students who had never spent time together share a laugh or work as a unit to achieve the team's objective: a ramp for Verna. As one of the students said, "It was very rewarding to come together as a team and make a real difference for Verna." It's now Verna's ramp and we're happy knowing that our neighbor can stay right where she is.

—Eric Richardson, Hanover High School



This project of a ramp and handicap shower made it so I could stay in my home!

—A COVER Homeowner

Opening Doors

Many years ago and after many days of procrastination I bravely ventured down to White River Junction to inquire about volunteering with COVER Home Repair. The office door opened and out stepped tall Simon. Simon doesn't say much. He mainly listens and comes out with the most agreeable conversation. I have never met a more agreeable man.

The next morning Simon Dennis and I were off to New Hampshire to check out a job. As the truck traveled on, after extended silences, out of the blue Simon asks, "Ken, what is the meaning of life?"

Although feeling intimidated by this big question and my first day on a COVER job, I thought, "Stick with it, I might learn the meaning of life."

Last year I ventured down to Houston to help two families repair their homes after Hurricane Harvey. After returning I was often asked if the families thanked me. "No, there were no thank yous in Houston. I volunteer for myself, whether it be

Houston
or
COVER
any



in
for
or

family in need. If I can help a family with simple work, we both are happy.

As sung by the Beatles,

*"so much younger than today
(I never needed) I never needed anybody's
help in any way*

*(Now) but now these days are gone
(these days are gone) I'm not so self-
assured (and now I find)*

*Now I find I've changed my mind, I've
opened up the doors."*

--Ken Woodhead, COVER Volunteer

A bunch of years ago I encountered Ken making incredible installations using firewood at Sculpture Fest. I happened to ask him what was his passion in life and he said he liked to help low income people out with house repairs. He was talking about COVER of course which I knew nothing about at the the time. Three years ago I began working for COVER. When Ken walked into our offices last fall and said he would like to volunteer again and that he had worked with Simon many years ago, I nearly fell off my chair. To put it mildly, Ken has a wonderful wry sense of humor and is fun to work with. His wood working skills are deep and he often says "I like to work in wood, to be true to my name, Woodhead, don't you know." We'll keep finding wood for Ken to work with.

—Jay Mead, Home Repair Leader

Changing A Life



Over 5 days COVER volunteers framed, plumbed, and wired a new bathroom for Alice and Gary, a real life changer for this wonderful couple.

Thanks to all the great volunteers that made this possible.



Executive Director Spring Update

Ramps & Roofs Building Materials Fund

Once again, the Jack & Dorothy Byrne Foundation is offering matching funds to Ramps & Roofs fund sponsors. This year COVER expects to spend \$80,000 on building materials to complete urgent home repair projects. If you want to become a sponsor, contact my office: 802-296-7241.

Vehicle Replacement Fund

COVER needs to raise \$95,000 to replace one pick-up truck, one box truck, and one tool trailer. So far, we have commitments from the Timken Foundation, The Dwinell Foundation, and The Jack & Dorothy Byrne Foundation.

COVER Books In-Store

Liz Ambros began volunteering in the COVER Store this past fall. Her lifelong passion for books both as a reader and collector brings valuable expertise. She has reorganized the in-store book department with special emphasis on COVER's promotion of two free books for every child who visits. If you have unused children's books, donate them to the COVER Store. We'll find a new home for them! Most books sell for \$1 or \$2 each and we have a wide selection.

COVER Books On-line

Liz is also reorganizing our on-line bookselling enterprise. We need book donations in new condition: cookbooks,



Thank You

Thanks to Fred Davis of Davis Auto in WRJ and The Timken Foundation, COVER has a new tool trailer! Fred has been super generous and helpful to us over the years. This year he facilitated the sale and build out of our new trailer by letting us use his heated garage free of charge in January. This is a terrific trailer and allows us to be more effective.

(Pictured above, Jay Mead left and Fred Davis right)

self-help or DIY books, and spirituality books. These sell for \$10 and up.

Whether you buy books in the store or through Amazon, you help COVER Home Repair install another new roof or accessibility ramp or weatherize another home for a homeowner in need.

Impact

This year we completed 87 urgent repair jobs and weatherized 39 homes. 327 volunteers made homes safer, warmer, and drier for single working moms, elderly widows, low income families, and those with mobility limitations. COVER builds community: volunteer; donate; shop.

—Bill Neukomm, Executive Director

It meant a great deal due to my recent hip surgery and my husband had difficulty on old stairs without two handrails to hold onto. So happy!

—A COVER Homeowner

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 and religious organizations.

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www.coverhomerepair.org



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 by facilitating the reuse of household goods and building materials at The COVER Store. We envision a community where the need for home repair is an opportunity for people to come together.

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158 S. Main Street
White River Junction, VT 05001



"Like" us on facebook:
COVER Home Repair & The COVER Store

Check out our website!
www.coverhomerepair.org
Call the COVER Office or Store
at 802-296-7241

**The COVER Store is open
7 days a week!
Monday - Saturday 10-5,
Sunday 12-5**

(continued from front page)

In September, at a local gathering, Eliot, the annual AmeriCorps member, first told me about the home repair projects taking place at COVER. I had just moved to White River Junction from Tel Aviv as part of The Center for Cartoon Studies Annual Fellowship Program. In my proposal for the grant I had expressed my wish to be part of a community of creators forming a personal and intimate discourse to demonstrate the possibilities of language and storytelling as a shared space. In the past few months, being part of both the school and the COVER projects, the word community has become an entire vocabulary of gestures that will root me to this place; each day unfolding with such generous adventures towards heartbreaking goodbyes.

Volunteering, I am standing on a ladder in a living room, measuring the width of a window overwhelmed by a looming forest, the beauty of a small wooden well, a laced curtain, spiraling porch lights, and the glow of bells and chimes. The smell of soup is climbing up to meet me, voices checking how I'm doing, footsteps of a cat; all the possible warm echoes to counter the wind outside. For the first time, I can feel the physicality of belonging.

These images are part of a series of studies of all the locations I have visited. I felt compelled to express how moved I have been to spend time in them and receive such incredible trust from both the crew members and the hosts. The drawings are not realistic renderings of a single point of view, but rather a reconstructed prismatic dreamscape, all linked together as a tribute to the inspiring lives I have glimpsed. It is my letter of gratitude for being welcomed to this growing community.

—Keren Katz, Volunteer

