



THE COVER PAGE

NEWS ABOUT COVER HOME REPAIR & THE COVER STORE

158 South Main Street, White River Junction, Vermont • 802.296.7241 • www.coverhomerepair.org

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A very special Thank You to Kendra Colburn, COVER Home Repair Crew Leader, who once again jumped in to help out with our weatherization program.

Pictured here, Kendra shares the results of the days weatherization.

A COVER Testimonial

When my children and I first moved to the area one year ago, we didn't have much for furniture and we moved into a 240-year-old house that hadn't been updated in nearly 50 years. We were in need of a lot of items, from bed frames, light fixtures and wires, to table and chairs and everything in between. One day at a thrift store while trying to scour for these items, a customer told me to try the COVER Store nearby. We immediately drove right over and instantly found everything we needed. Not only that, but the employees were incredibly knowledgeable and friendly; taking things apart to show me how they worked, fitting items into my car, arranging for pick-up and delivery for what I couldn't fit, and taking countless hours to demonstrate and teach me how to install certain items or repair things inexpensively.

When fall came around, it was quickly evident that the blankets I had nailed up on doors and windows to keep the snow out of the ½" gaps to outside, weren't going to suffice. As a single mother, I was

already fighting financially to support basic needs; winterizing a house was not in my budget. Finding myself not knowing what to do, I went to where I could always rely: COVER. I spoke with staff, who recommended I apply for their weatherization program. The approval process was fast and it wasn't long before I was contacted for an appointment to have the house assessed for needs. Two weeks later, a crew of volunteers and COVER staff pulled into my driveway to spend an entire day winterizing our home. I got to meet neighbors I didn't know I had, and learned so much about how to maintain an old house. Everyone was incredibly knowledgeable, friendly, and expedient. All of my windows and doors were weatherized, unused fireplaces were insulated, the attic was closed and insulated, and I even got to help spray foam. Not only was our house noticeably warmer, doors were repaired, lights were changed, and fire alarms were installed. I can't imagine our first winter here without COVER's help.

—Jessica, Homeowner
(Story continues on back page)

Women at Work

In January, homeowner Cathy requested a crew of women for her weatherization. Most contractors could not fulfill this request given that women represent less than nine percent of the construction industry. COVER, however, has a strong history of supporting and training women in construction. COVER Home Repair Crew Leader, Kendra Colburn, and I led a group of three female volunteers in weatherizing Cathy's home. Though all of us are fairly gregarious women, we entered the house one at a time with a quiet tread. After reassuring Cathy with words and actions, COVER Home Repair Crew Leader Jay Mead and COVER volunteer Todd were also able to join.

Allowing someone into your home is very vulnerable, and many women have had experiences that make it difficult to let their guard down. Throughout their lives, women are often told to be careful. We are told not to stay out late, not to walk alone, not to trust the people we meet. While I agree that a certain level of care and attentiveness is a good thing, this message eats away at confidence.

Confidence and trust are crucial ingredients that allow COVER to function. Without them, we cannot fulfill our mission to connect and build community. Outside of my service at COVER, I tutor young women in mathematics. Almost always my students have the knowledge to solve a problem, but they become discouraged before they reach the answer. I have seen this same behavior in COVER's volunteers. For example, a volunteer might become disheartened



after stripping a few screws. Often, women haven't been exposed to power tools from a young age. In my experience, as we get older we are more hesitant to confront the things we don't know. One female volunteer told me, "I'm just not good at it!" I promised her that nobody is born knowing how to use a screw gun. In these cases, I apply the same techniques that I used with Cathy and with my math students. From geometry to hammering, patience and reassurance goes a long way. A person cannot learn a new skill until they feel comfortable enough to practice. I feel very grateful that COVER and AmeriCorps have given me the opportunity to confidently learn and pass on these skills, and that my presence has been a trustworthy one.

—Sophie Connor,
COVER AmeriCorps Member
(pictured above and below)



Reaching out for help can be difficult sometimes but COVER made the entire experience easy. The maintenance and work of a home is tough but the crew of volunteers are beyond helpful and amazing.

I was happy things were completed perfectly but was sad to see them go.

—A COVER Homeowner

Volunteering — It Takes All Kinds of Talents

Rich Acker is a retired facility engineer who has great experience and skills in maintaining large buildings (The Montshire, Kendal, etc.) So, when he began volunteering in the COVER Store, there was no shortage of projects he could help with: replace all old fluorescent light bulbs with LEDs; install CAT 6 cable for our new VoIP phone system, install door closers and our new air curtains, and help select a smoke alarm vendor. Rich can just about do it all and we feel very grateful for his help.

Daniel Burgess is a retired truck driver living in West Leb a short bike ride from the COVER Store. Most of the exercise equipment in his living room Daniel purchased from the COVER Store. To say he's fit, is an understatement. According to store staff Paul Johnson, "if you turn your back on Daniel, he'll carry a recliner on his head." Recently, we called Daniel on a moment's notice to help deliver a reclining chair to a homeowner in Hartford for whom the home repair team had recently completed a repair project.

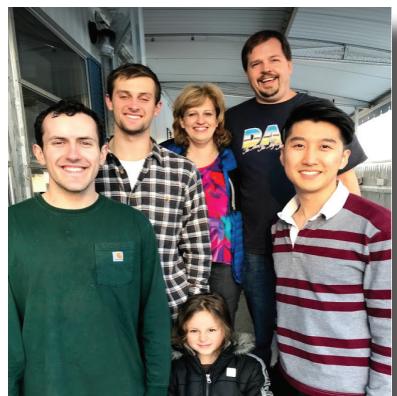
David Fall has been at it again, this time best leveraging his Hanover wood-working business, Fall Woodcrafts. David continues to volunteer regularly on Mondays where he handles nearly everything: transactions, customer and donor service including loading and unloading, pricing and stocking shelves, etc. Much like Rich Acker, David's special projects best distinguish his contributions. David constructed many racks for displaying chairs, doors and sinks. The new custom bookshelves, though, will set a new standard for merchandizing in the COVER Store.

Steve Henderson stops in the store on a regular basis and best exemplifies "spontaneous" volunteerism. He'll help last minute with a pick-up if we are short-handed; he'll rescue our truck when in a pinch; he'll help load or unload a truck or help us load a customer's car. There is little he hasn't done to help whenever needed.



Bathroom Brigade : Fabulous 4 join Homeowner at the end of another COVER bathroom modification.

Pictured Jay, George, Todd, Dan and Sophie. The bathroom was for Jay's wife Meredith.



Dartmouth students Dylan Giles, Luke Bienstock and Ray Li helping with a weatherization for Leslie, Alan and Maya.

From the Store Manager's Desk

We would like to send a big 'thank you' to all donors, shoppers and store staff. Store sales November to February are traditionally slow but the past 4 months have been the best in 4 years by approximately \$25,000.

So where does this money go? Proceeds go to COVER'S Home Repair Program to buy materials for projects such as accessibility ramps, roofs and weatherization.

Here we grow again. The store has 2 new part time staff. We would like to welcome Zyla Nuite and Eric Richardson to our COVER Store staff.

And speaking of improvements to the store, we will be getting a much needed box truck thanks to a grant from Jane's Trust for financial support and Sabil & Sons for helping select the right truck.

Contest Winners!

And the winners of the Winter Repurposing are:

1st prize went to Renea Sutton for the vanity made from a cabinet.

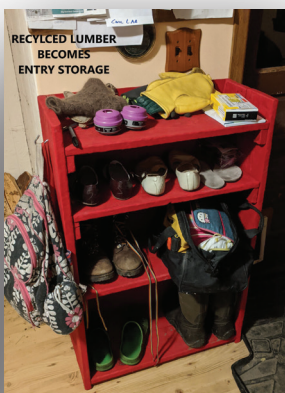
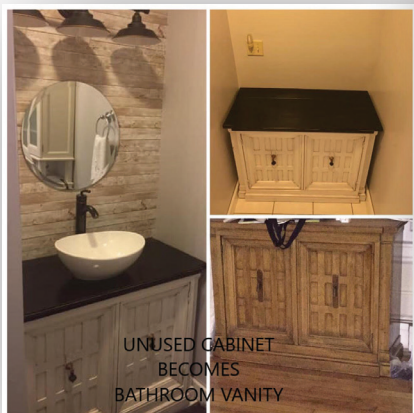
2nd prize went to Tanya Murphy for the chest made from a bureau.

3rd prize went to Zyla Nuite for the entry storage made from recycled lumber.

Thanks to all who entered. Keep your eyes open for the next Repurposing Contest

As always a big thank you to our store volunteers. We literally could not make this all work without volunteers; Pat, Rich, Kate, Luise, Liz, Steven, Nick, Daniel, Fran, Nelson, David and the students from Dartmouth College.

—Mitch Ross, COVER Store Manager



We love this store and the people who work there are super helpful and friendly! Definitely check them out first for furniture, doors, light fixtures, odds and ends- everything is super organized!

—A COVER Store shopper

Board Profile

My first introduction to COVER was on a CST (Community Service Time) day with some fellow Hypertherm Associates. A last minute request came from the COVER team to help work through some of the backlog of jobs that they always have; made only more urgent by heavy November snow and cold. The day was spent between two homes, the first an elderly woman who needed assistance winterizing windows and pipes, who did not have the ability to do the manual labor. The second, a family whose home was initially not intended for four season living, was going through a family health crisis, and recently lost their employment, and as such lacked means and ability. Both of these interactions were with members of my community I likely would not have met in my normal routine. COVER was there, and gracefully navigated two very different situations, leading some untrained volunteers (me) along in the process. We not only were able to lend a hand to our fellow neighbors as most community service organizations do, but we also shared conversations and a meal with the homeowners. We had the opportunity to talk and listen to one another, laugh together and even console



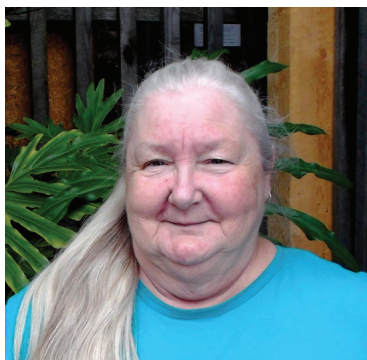
Zeb is pictured in this photo with a group of volunteers from Hypertherm, including Evan Smith, CEO and Travis LeHaye, our ambassador to The Hope Foundation.

a complete stranger in a time of crisis. These are the special COVER moments where people (volunteers and homeowners) work side by side, and listen and learn about their fellow community members. Today, I serve on the COVER board, to help more of my friends and neighbors get this opportunity to have their COVER moment, to meet their neighbors who they might not otherwise, and support one another in this community we all call home.

—Zeb Mushlin, COVER Board Member

During the COVID-19 crisis, we have suspended regular program services to avoid spreading the virus. Our staff is re-deployed to help other essential service organizations, doing outreach work by phone from home, supporting family members, and working with the Upper Valley Strong coalition. We know urgent home repair and store needs have not gone away. COVER will be back to work on the other side of this crisis. In the meantime, be well and stay strong!

— The COVER team



After many years of dedicated service, Gail Guernsey, COVER's Homeowner Coordinator has left COVER, but she will not be forgotten. For many years, when a homeowner called COVER seeking help for an urgent home repair or accessibility solution, it was Gail who answered the call, introducing the caller to COVER's mission. Homeowners found Gail's easy-going personality a comfort when they needed someone to listen.

Gail walked each homeowner through the COVER process or redirected them to another source when needed. Gail used her knowledge of resources to direct homeowners to services such as funding from our partner agencies, applying for COVER Store vouchers, fuel assistance, or where to find a food shelf. Gail joined staff on project site visits, meeting the homeowners in person which was a great support to many.

We are grateful for Gail's dedication, compassion and service to the COVER community. We wish Gail well. She will be missed!

Homeowners Mary and Clyde have been married for 62 years. Due to health issues, Clyde cannot come home until his house is wheelchair accessible. These Hanover High students built him a 46-foot ramp as part of the March Intensive program. So far the pandemic has delayed the needed bathroom modifications.



Thank you and farewell to Reverend Jeff Scott of the West Lebanon Congregational Church for your years of support for COVER. Pictured here first on the left.

**They came and made my cold home a much warmer, relaxing place to live.
Thank you COVER.**

—A COVER Homeowner

Executive Director Spring Update

The COVER Growth Fund

With a \$25,000 matching grant from the Byrne Foundation, COVER has launched a three-year project to raise \$150,000 to expand our mission and capacity. For the past three years, COVER has received many more applications for urgent home repairs than it is able to handle. Each year we carry over more than 30 urgent applications for work we have not been able to get to.

To meet this need, COVER will create a training program for eligible AmeriCorps members or other interested individuals who have served with the home repair team and are interested in increasing their home repair skills for the next three years. In the past, COVER has been very fortunate to recruit and train many talented AmeriCorps members. After nine months with COVER, they move on to other opportunities and we start the cycle all over again.

We know from the two general contractors who serve on our Board, Erik Tobiason and Kevin O'Hara, that there is a shortage of experienced carpenters in the Upper Valley.

With increased support from donors, we hope to raise an additional \$25,000 above and beyond our donors' past support, so that we might leverage the match from the Byrne Foundation.

The COVER Ramps and Roofs Fund

With a \$20,000 matching grant from the Byrne Foundation, COVER hopes to raise \$80,000 for our Ramps and Roofs Fund. Each year COVER spends approximately \$80,000 on building materials to complete 70-90 urgent home repair jobs and 40-50 weatherization jobs. This allows COVER to help low income, elderly and mobility challenged homeowners become safer, warmer and drier in their homes. Contact bill@coverhomerepair.org for more information.

—Bill Neukomm, COVER Executive Director

COVERBooks Fest & Volunteer Appreciation



Colleen O'Neill and COVER are hosting a book fest and volunteer appreciation event at Langwood Farm, 301 Lang Road, in Cornish on Saturday, June 6th from 3:00pm-7:00pm rain or shine.

Come and enjoy brief readings from local authors, recognition awards for volunteers, and a buffet table of finger food and beverages. The event is sponsored by Mascoma Bank. Price of admission is the donation of a mint condition book: history, biography, spirituality, or self-help.

COVERBooks is selling donated books in the store and on-line through Amazon. The COVER Store also has a free book program for children.

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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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.

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

**COVER Home Repair
and the COVER Store
are closed until the
coronavirus pandemic
subsides.**

COVER
158 S. Main Street
White River Junction, VT 05001



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COVER Home Repair & The COVER Store

(Continued from front page)

After a couple months of rehab for a hand injury, I returned to weatherizing at COVER. It was early January and one of the first jobs I came back to work on was at Jessica's house. When we arrived at this old Sharon home we were greeted by Jess and felt very welcome. In fact, I quickly realized that Jessica and her daughters were the very same ones I had encountered at a stilt-walking workshop I had offered for the Sharon community the previous spring. I was impressed that Jessica had not only taken advantage of our store offerings, but had also figured out how to apply for our weatherization services after being in the Upper Valley for only a few months.

Jessica not only provided a healthy scrumptious lunch, she also rolled up her sleeves and learned how to work our blower door assessment, as well as air seal and apply window kits. We had a great crew of volunteers and toward the end of our project the children returned from school and helped us finish up. They even got to program and run the blower door at the end of our workday. While our impact was significant with a 1300 CFM (cubic feet per minute) improvement, a number reflected in lower energy bills and greater comfort and health, it was clear that this community effort was going to touch Jessica and her family in ways we could not measure. It's wonderful to have Jessica's family be part of the COVER community.

—Jay Mead,
COVER Home Repair Crew Leader



Volunteers Pam & Ed Piper, Dana, Kendra, Jay and the Snow family; Jessica and her 4 daughters.