

Tracy Lynn has new vision of home

By Judy Hogan

Tracy Lynn was recruited to North Carolina to work in the state's first hearing impaired unit for deaf/mentally ill adults at Dorothy Dix Hospital in Raleigh as their sign language interpreter and foreign language coordinator. She was born and raised in Bucks County, PA, 60 miles north of Philadelphia, and had worked for a similar psychiatric hospital prevention program in Chicago.

On weekends she took day trips around North Carolina. She liked Pittsboro. "It had a certain vibe I liked and the nicest people." In 2002 she and her husband moved into a house on Chatham Church Road, and she sought out Chatham Together, wanting to connect with community work again after being Vice President for Terry C. McInturff Guitars, Inc., for nine years. She worked for Chatham Together first as a volunteer mentor, but by 2005 she became AmeriCorps Promise Fellow for two years. In late 2007, she was hired as regular staff to recruit mentors for children at risk and develop community resources through networking. She calls Chatham Together "the best place I've ever worked," but beginning this fall, she becomes a part-time employee there in order to work full time on a certificate in Green Building and Renewable Energy, a new program that is just being born at CCCC.

She also wears hats as bookkeeper for Chatham Arts, volunteers and contracts with Girls Rock NC, plays in two bands, and is working on developing several business models in Smart Growth Community Development: Affordable Housing models and Energy Efficiency Remodels.

Meantime she was divorced and has been raising her son. She wanted to buy a home in Pittsboro but didn't qualify for a mortgage because of her limited income. She applied to Habitat for Humanity. When they accepted her and her son as a partner family, she asked them to consider building a "green" house. She was able to persuade Habitat and the design/build team of Kathleen Jardine and Jim Cameron of Sun Garden Houses, which designed and oversaw the pilot project. The design had to meet all the Habitat requirements for size, cost, etc. The outcome was that Tracy got her home, and Habitat International now has a "green" house design that may

WOMEN OF CHATHAM



Tracy Lynn is pictured with AmeriCorps intern Paul Drake. Below is her new house. TOP PHOTO BY JUDY HOGAN, BOTTOM BY TRACY LYNN

be used all over the world.

The house uses both passive (a lot of windows facing south) and active solar energy for heating and hot water. The poured concrete floor has radiant heating under it. The sturdy walls, aerated autoclave concrete, provide insulation, being 80 percent air. Tracy estimates they will stand 500 years and can resist 140 mph winds. She notes that aerated autoclave has been used for a hundred years in Europe, but the U.S. has only eight manufacturers. The way the house is being built, there is very little waste, and none of it is toxic. This 1,103 sq. ft. home is handicapped-accessible and has plaster on the

inside walls and stucco on the outside. She did a lot of the detail work herself, with friends jumping in when possible. Most of the work was done by Habitat volunteers, many from the Fearington community. The roof is metal—again for longevity.

Tracy's enthusiasm radiates to everyone. Her son has had some respiratory issues, which she believes are from indoor pollution. There will be none of that in this new home. She

describes her home-building equity hours as "a fabulous learning experience." Tracy acknowledges Chatham Habitat as one of the finest non-profits she knows—true to its mission, with a small and effective staff.

After two and a half years of planning and building, Tracy and Tristan moved into their new home in July. She likes the idea of Habitat homes being built responsibly and in mixed neighborhoods as far as income and house size, which is what Chatham Habitat strives for. New Habitat homeowners buy a home at the assessed value with a 20-year, interest-free loan.

Tracy's dream is to build retirement communes on a similar "green" model, where people of all ages can go for their vacations or to migrate here and there. She imagines a community garden, a shared kitchen, a doctor and nurse on site, "green" homes community built, where friends of like mind can go to "retire," whether for a short rest or for what we call "retirement." Tracy doesn't like the typical structure of retirement models. "There are better ways to go out with a bang." I'm sure that Tracy will find a better way for herself and others. She has the kind of energy and enthusiasm that makes things happen.

Judy Hogan is a Moncure poet, freelance writer, teacher of creative writing, and sustainable farmer selling at the Pittsboro Farmers Market. judy-hogan@mindspring.com

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