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Jay Nuss, Habeeb & Associates Architects and McKenzie Engineering Group, Inc. complete community service project

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Jay Nuss and Sophie Evans cut the ribbon showcasing completion of the custom-built handicapped-accessible ramp.

Shown in background is Crystal Evans; others include (left) Steve Richmond, a volunteer on the project, and Jay Nuss Realty Group team members Liz Tavares and Jason Harris.

Braintree, MA A community volunteer effort to rehabilitate a home at 15 Hall Ave. and create a “forever” home for two local residents was celebrated recently with a ribbon-cutting ceremony to showcase a new handicapped-accessible ramp, which has been the focal point of the effort over the

last three years.

This volunteer rehabilitation and fundraising effort has been in the works since 2020, with local resident and commercial real estate broker-consultant Jay Nuss coordinating the entire process including the construction effort. Also involved were Habeeb & Associates Architects and McKenzie Engineering Group, Inc.

This community effort has created a “forever” home for the mother-and-daughter team of Crystal Evans and her daughter Sophie.

Crystal Evans is a disabilities advocate, mother, and survivor of traumatic brain and spinal injury and mitochondrial disease. Crystal uses a wheelchair and relies on a ventilator to breathe, yet she lives independently with her daughter Sophie, who is autistic.

Crystal was raised in a devout Christian family in New Hampshire; in high school she worked as a pharmacy technician and began college in the hopes of becoming a physician. At age 19 she was seriously injured in an auto accident. While stopped at a red light, Crystal’s car was struck by a distracted driver; she suffered a traumatic brain injury and broken neck. She spent the next four years in rehab but was unable to maintain her employment due to seizures and other impacts of her injuries.

To get the medical care she needed, Crystal moved from New Hampshire to Boston. She moved for better public transportation and better health insurance. She still had no money for housing, though, and lived in 14 different shelters and on the streets, while fighting every day to get back the life she had lost.

While homeless, Crystal managed to accomplish quite a bit to advance her cause and the cause of homeless and disabled people. She volunteered at Boston Children’s Hospital, Ronald McDonald House, and Hospitality Homes. She enrolled in a class at Harvard University, and wrote a widely-read blog about homelessness. She attracted media coverage including the Boston Globe and other outlets.

Crystal was also hospitalized with aseptic meningitis, but examinations revealed that she was afflicted with a rare genetic condition known as mitochondrial disease which affects nearly every organ in the body. She has been dependent on a wheelchair ever since.

Crystal eventually married and in 2010 gave birth to Sophie. Crystal is now a single mother and has full custody of Sophie. Sophie is a fiercely intelligent and curious sixth grader who loves books, science, dolls, and learning about social justice. Prior to the pandemic, Crystal and Sophie loved to explore Boston by subway.

Jay Nuss said, “Crystal and Sophie have been in the house since 2012.” Currently, there are issues with the kitchen and bathroom that Jay and his team plan to make accessible for Crystal.

“This is a perfect example of a village effort,” he continued. “We’ve worked on electrical issues, a new driveway, the customized handicapped accessible ramp with roof, and more. We are hoping people will step up and help us in completing this effort.”

For anyone able to contribute, please visit <https://givebutter.com/crystal-sophie> or contact Jay Nuss at 781-910-6575.

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