

Island Housing Trust surpasses campaign goal

BAR HARBOR — Island Housing Trust (IHT) has surpassed its goal of raising \$3.5 million to provide new year-round housing opportunities on Mount Desert Island.

Coming Home, IHT's campaign for MDI, was launched publicly in July 2021 after raising over \$2.5 million in its quiet phase. A key factor in the success of the campaign was a late fall challenge gift from an anonymous donor to match all campaign donations up to \$400,000. The challenge was met and exceeded by the end of 2021, bringing the campaign to its conclusion.

"This campaign has been transformative for IHT," said Marla O'Byrne, the organization's executive director since 2018. "IHT has been working steadily for a number of years to increase the stock of year-round workforce housing on MDI. With the success of Coming Home, we are now positioned to move more quickly and effectively to build new workforce neighborhoods, help people with down payment assistance on local homes, and explore new opportunities as they arise. We are grateful to our community, which responded generously and enthusiastically to enable us to take this enormous step forward."

In addition to the challenge gift, IHT received donations from individuals, businesses and foundations. A public campaign across MDI brought in dozens of new supporters.

"It was incredible to see the amount of support coming from all residents of MDI - both year-round and seasonal, as well as from local businesses," said



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Deedie Bouscaren, IHT's board chair and the campaign co-chair. "People have great love for this island and recognize the need to keep our communities vibrant throughout the year," she said. "We are extremely grateful to everyone who supported our island communities with gifts to the Coming Home campaign."

The need for housing has been an ongoing issue for many towns in Maine and is especially critical for coastal communities such as MDI. Housing prices have risen dramatically over the past two years, due in a large part to the pandemic.

"IHT has been a leader in raising concerns about workforce housing on MDI," said Peter Rogers, IHT board member and campaign co-chair. "As a result of raising funds to meet and exceed our challenge and our campaign goal, IHT can continue to find long-term solutions to the pressing problem of year-round housing for our essential workers, teachers, park rangers, medical professionals and so many island employees."

Campaign donations are already at work on MDI. A new neighborhood of work-

force housing is coming to the head of the island. The Jones Marsh neighborhood will provide 10 homes, both single family and duplexes, when it is completed. The road will be under construction soon, allowing lots to be cleared and foundations to be poured. Applications will be accepted over the winter, and the homes will be sold over the coming months. Near the Jones Marsh neighborhood, an IHT HomeOwnership Assistance Program (HOAP) house is already in place. HOAP is helping a local educator purchase her first home by assisting with the down payment. New opportunities for workforce housing are under consideration in Southwest Harbor, Town Hill, Mount Desert and Bar Harbor.

IHT promotes viable, year-round island communities by advancing permanent workforce housing on MDI. IHT envisions a future where MDI has year-round housing available and affordable to the workforce. IHT homes are protected by covenants, enforced in perpetuity.

Since 2003, IHT has completed 48 homeownership projects serving 143 adults and children on MDI. IHT holds covenants on 37 homes and has overseen the successful resale of several of these properties at below market rate to qualified households working on MDI.

