

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**JULY 19, 2019**

**Contact:** Jim Fennell

Tel: 603-647-8606

E-Mail: [jimf@evradvertising.com](mailto:jimf@evradvertising.com)

**BEST PRACTICES IN ENERGY EFFICIENCY: DRIVE TO NET ZERO WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

*NHSaves Honors Homeowners, Builders and Architects for Projects in Newbury, Sutton and Etna  
Sen. Jeanne Shaheen on Hand for Ceremony*

**MANCHESTER, NH** – As the first homebuilder to receive certification for a Zero Energy Ready Home in New Hampshire, Unity Homes of Walpole knows what it takes to build green.

That experience and know how is on display at the Newbury residence of Janet Taft. The 3,570-foot home was named the winner of the second annual NHSaves *Drive to Net Zero Competition*.

“We were doing our best to become net zero and then we started searching for a builder who had the same values that we had,” Taft says of her home project that started in 2017. “We were lucky to find Unity.”

Taft and Unity was one of three teams from New Hampshire honored Thursday by NHSaves for embodying the best in energy-efficient home building practices. The winners were recognized during a ceremony at Eversource Energy Park in Manchester.

U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) addressed the crowd, applauding their dedication to building energy efficient homes and relating her own experiences of building an energy efficient home in the 1970s. Her appearance came one day after she and U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R-Ohio) re-introduced the Shaheen-Portman bill to improve the use of energy efficiency technologies in buildings, industry and by the federal government.

Tedd Benson, founder of Bensonwood and Unity Homes in Walpole and a long-time proponent of net zero building, was the keynote speaker.

“There is no reason that buildings today are not super energy efficient,” Benson said. “I want to congratulate all of you tonight for being part of the solution.”

A total of seven homes were entered in the annual *Drive to Net Zero Competition* that rewards the commitment to building homes that produce more energy on site than they consume.

Mark and Elizabeth Peterson of Sutton (Matthew O’Clair builder) were second while Bruce Williamson, who owns Domus Custom Builders, and his wife Wendy of Etna placed third.

NHSaves introduced the *Drive to Net Zero Home Competition* in 2017 as a design and build competition for single and multi-family homes. Prizes are awarded to the top three entries: \$5,000 for first place, \$2,000 for second and \$1,000 for third.

NHSaves is a partnership of Eversource, Liberty Utilities, New Hampshire Electric Co-Op and Unitil to provide New Hampshire residents, businesses and municipalities with information, incentives and support to help them save energy, reduce costs and protect the environment.

Net zero homes produce as much energy as they consume by minimizing energy use through efficiency and meeting their remaining needs through renewable energy systems. Homes entered in the *Drive to Net Zero Home Competition* are participants of the ENERGY STAR® Homes program. Homes earning the ENERGY STAR label use 15-30 percent less energy than typical new homes.

“Builders and architects certainly understand the impact building net zero can have, but we are seeing more and more homeowners looking to build this way,” says Matt Minghella, Residential Program Manager for Liberty Utilities. “They are doing their research and finding that they are not just being environmentally conscious, but are making a wise and affordable investment.”

The *Drive to Net Zero Competition* weighs five criteria, including the cost effectiveness of the project, the home’s total estimated energy use and, most notably, a home’s score on the nationally-recognized Home Energy Rating System Index (HERS).

Homes had to be completed with a HERS index by November 30, 2018. The competition used RESNET (Residential Energy Services Network) rating standards to determine a home’s HERS Index.

“We’re excited to once again participate in this competition with builders, architects, homeowners and our partners at NHSaves,” says Michael Loughlin, Energy Efficiency Services Program Manager for Eversource. “This competition is a great opportunity to showcase how net zero homes can both lower energy costs for homeowners and help reduce their impact on the environment.”

**First place:** Jane Taft home in Newbury. Unity Homes of Walpole was the builder and Eversource was the utility partner.

**Second place:** Mark and Elizabeth Peterson home in Sutton. Matthew O’Clair of Newport was the builder and Eversource was the utility partner.

**Third place:** Bruce and Wendy Williamson home in Etna. Domus Custom Builders of Hanover was the builder and Liberty Utilities was the utility partner.

To learn more about NH Saves, the *Drive to Net Zero Home Competition* and the winning entries, go to: <https://nhsaves.com/programs/about-the-competition/>.

#### **About NHSaves**

NHSaves is a collaboration of New Hampshire’s electric and natural gas utilities working together to provide NH customers with information, incentives and support designed to save energy, reduce costs and protect our environment statewide. Partners are Eversource, Liberty Utilities, New Hampshire Electric Co-Op and Unitil. For more information, go to [www.nhsaves.com](http://www.nhsaves.com).