

Help Habitat for Humanity break ground

By Sarah Sobanski

Prince Edward-Hastings Habitat for Humanity is reaching out to the community to help it break ground this month.

Habitat needs community volunteers to donate their time, and businesses to donate materials. It hopes to break ground on the first of its three lots in Bancroft by July 15.

"We rely on a lot of community involvement for our building process," said Prince Edward-Hastings Habitat CEO Bob Clute. "We need families to apply, that's one of our major needs. You'd be surprised at the number of people who need a house but they don't apply."

Habitat is accepting applications from families to mortgage the house to.

Clute described the home-giving process as a hand up, not a handout. Habitat offers a zero per cent mortgage with no down payment. Mortgage payments are targeted for less than 20 per cent of the family's net income.

"By not asking for a down payment, that leads to breaking that cycle of poverty - it's the kids in the family that benefit most from their parents owning a home," said Clute.

He explained the children of the family find a quiet place to study in their new home. This leads to their grades improving. Their new home also becomes somewhere they can be proud to bring their friends home to, and a place to feel safe and secure. This leads to improvement in their social skills and much more.

Families must partake in 500 hours of what Clute calls sweat-equity, working on building their home, or contributing to Habitat by working in their ReStore in Belleville. Hours can also be obtained if the students of the home see an improvement in their school grades.

As of last Thursday, Habitat didn't have a family for the new home. The family will be selected from the Bancroft area.

"I'd love to turn the keys over to a family so that they can have Christmas in their house. So if we start in July we have a good shot at doing that," said Clute.

He added, "We've just started to go public with the fact that we are building a home [in Bancroft]. We didn't want to disappoint anyone if we ran into any road blocks, but it looks like the coast is clear and we're ready to go."

The three bedroom, 1,250-square-foot home will be built on the corner of Billa and Bridge Street, for a market value of up to \$225,000 once it is completed.

"It's a great spot. It's close to schools, close to a recreation centre, close to the medical centre, close to everything," said Clute.

Habitat focuses on keeping the future family's operating costs low. The new house in Bancroft will have foam insulation, keeping heating costs down come wintertime.

Families and volunteers can apply at habitatpeh.org. Anyone 17 years or older is welcome to donate their time.

Habitat is planning a special week for women to encourage them to participate. It also wants to host a corporate day - a great team building initiative for local businesses.

Clute noted that he is currently looking to connect with a local plumber, electrician and those who can help frame and supply framing.

When asked about the volunteer reaction for Habitat's previous project, Clute said it was tremendous.

"We have individuals, but most of the time we have groups of people, or neighbours on the street. They have a ball building. The reaction for people who don't normally engage themselves in construction, they like to do it. They want to know how to do it, and as a result it becomes an amazing learning experience."