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Building their own Habitat

Submitted by Anonymous on Wed, 06/02/2010 - 10:04

By: Hannah Disch

Two years ago Brady Wright and her husband, Mike Coulombe, never dreamed they'd be homeowners, let alone participate in building their home. But thanks to Habitat for Humanity, that's exactly what the couple is doing.

On Friday, May 21, construction began on the 10th new Habitat for Humanity home in Stoughton. Since the Stoughton Satellite group was formed 15 years ago as partner with Habitat for Humanity of Dane County in planning and building homes, they have also restored two homes.

The nonprofit, ecumenical Christian organization's mission is to eliminate substandard housing and homelessness worldwide and to make adequate, affordable shelter a matter of conscience and action.

That's what it did for Wright and Coulombe.

"Two years ago I had just lost my job, found out that I was pregnant and we had gone through our savings," Wright said. "I thought, there goes our chance of owning a house. Then my stepmother saw an article in the paper that Habitat for Humanity was looking for applicants. So we applied and two years later here we are."

And its also thanks in part to Sue Albright, who was instrumental in starting the Stoughton group, and has many wonderful memories of the work they have done over the years.

"My involvement with Habitat for Humanity began when I attended a Coldwell Banker Sveum Realtor's Convention with Roger Staubach giving the inspirational speech which introduced me to Habitat for Humanity and the organizational pursuit of seeking to eliminate poverty housing and make decent shelter a matter of conscience and action.

This was in 1995 and that very same year, the opportunity was presented to have Habitat for Humanity become a reality in our community. The past 15 years' achievements are a tribute to a community that reaches out to share the gifts of time, talent, funds, and enthusiasm," she said.

Albright was involved in local theater and felt that musical productions would be a good way to get local people involved in fundraising, as a way to fulfill the Habitat requirement that the community fundraise a portion of the cost of construction.



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The Stoughton Habitat for Humanity Theater Group produced fundraising musicals each time a Habitat home was constructed.

Stoughton's first Habitat project, in 1995, was the repair of a local home. This was done with the help of 20 volunteers from local churches. The next year over 1,000 volunteers worked together to help a family restore their home so the gravely ill young son could live out the rest of his life in a handicap accessible home.

In 1997 the first new construction Habitat home was built in Stoughton in conjunction with Target Corporation. Each of the construction projects was sponsored by a local church or business. Fleetguard Inc., The Nelson Foundation, The Wahlin Foundation on behalf of Stoughton Trailers, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, Lutheran Brotherhood, Lakeside Church, Covenant Lutheran Church, First Lutheran Church and St. Ann's Church have also been sponsors.

Universal and Wells Fargo are Stoughton sponsors of the current Habitat build. Vannesa Wallis, Wells Fargo store manager for Stoughton stated, "We're proud to support such a strong organization, and together we can help the effort to create safe, decent and affordable housing for our community."

Habitat also fits well with the Universal belief in giving back to local communities.

"A home is very local," said Janel Lopez, a member of the Universal Gives Committee and HR Manager for Universal.

"Families that live in Habitat homes are a long-term benefit to Stoughton and that spreads into so many facets of the local economy."

Speaking of community support for Habitat's work Albright said, "With each build the City of Stoughton provided encouragement and a positive involvement along with Stoughton Utilities and the local lumber and hardware stores. Churches and Community Clubs have been generous with volunteers helping to construct the homes and also provide food for morning breaks and lunches. Coffee and rolls from local bakeries and restaurants were also donated for the enjoyment of all."

Albright estimates that in the last 15 years there have been over 6,000 construction and fundraising volunteers, working beside the homeowners, in the repair and construction of 11 homes in Stoughton. She feels that this is "a tribute to a community working in partnership with Habitat for Humanity of Dane County to build homes with those who otherwise might never realize their dream of home ownership."

Francis Long, Ted Ormond, Kendall McBroom and Henry Kanazawa (architect for most of the builds) are four very important volunteers. They have each volunteered hundreds of hours of their time to help construct the last seven Habitat homes in the Stoughton community.

Ormond started out working with Albright on the theatrical fundraising productions and progressed to working as site construction supervisor for some of the Habitat builds. In this position he was involved with purchasing and selecting home lots, home design and coordinating materials and volunteer construction activity. Although he didn't have a building background he learned on the job like many Habitat volunteers. Ormond describes enjoyment of the whole experience as "a given".

The current Habitat home is being built in partnership with the Wright/Coulombe family. The family consists of Mike Coulombe, his wife Brady Wright and their young son Alex. Wright explained how they became involved with Habitat for Humanity.

The home will be a ranch-style house with no basement. Because Wright has a medical condition that requires her to use a wheelchair from time to time, the house is being built to be wheelchair accessible. It will be about 1,300 square feet when finished, which will probably be close to the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday season.

Wright is excited to host family holiday gatherings in their new home. The family also looks forward to having a yard with room for their son to play, to garden and have pets.

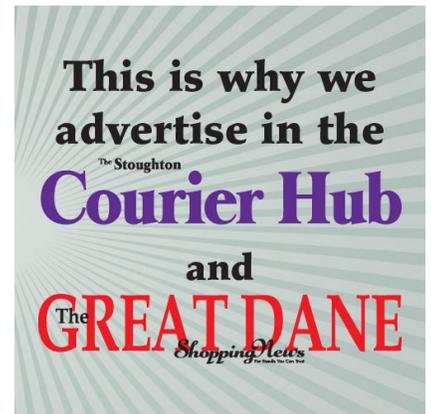
Wright is enthusiastic about fulfilling Habitat's requirements that the family contribute hundreds of hours of sweat equity to the building of their home. She said, "I'm not a very handy person. My husband's more of a handy person. I'm excited to learn more about how to fix things instead of always having to ask him, honey can you fix this or that."

Albright extends "a heartfelt thank you, to the many who shared their variety of gifts to reach this 15 year goal." She adds, "And the gift goes on as this year we again have the privilege of joining with Habitat for Humanity of Dane County and their partnering family to construct a home in our community."

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