

Volunteers gear up for Aurora's first Habitat for Humanity build



By Brock Weir

Volunteers are spending this week practicing their hammer wielding and their skills around a paint roller, all in preparation of tackling Aurora's first Habitat for Humanity build.

The house, which is mostly complete, sits in the new Daniels development on the southeast corner of Bayview and St. John's Sideroad. The three bedroom, two bath townhouse is now in its drywall stage and was formally dedicated earlier this month. Next week, however, volunteers will be arriving to help finish the job.

"The Daniels Corporation has been a long-time supporter for Habitat For Humanity across the Greater Toronto Area and in York Region we have been talking about this partnership since 2008 when they came to us," says Richard Solomon, Regional Vice President for Habitat For Humanity. "We have been working closely with them on that and through extensive discussions, it finally materialized to have one home in Aurora be dedicated as a Habitat for Humanity home."

The house sits in a complex of approximately 100 units tailored by Daniels to cater to first-time home buyers. With the drywall sanded and ready to paint, Habitat anticipates they will have volunteers on site next week working through mid to late summer for a mid to late summer occupancy.

The family taking occupancy of the house is expected to be formally recommended to the Habitat for Humanity Board and approved this week.

"This is our first build in Aurora," says Habitat's Kari Salovaara. "Our site community is also looking at land throughout York Region and the Aurora area as well."

For Daniels' Vice-President Don Pugh, any time they bring a "first home" development into a new community, they offer local Habitat for Humanity affiliates a chance to partner on a Habitat build. One such partnership already underway is now in Mississauga and another is ready to get off the launching pad in Brampton.

"When we do this particular program, and there are various programs that can happen with Habitat, because it is a condominium format, we deliver the home when it is at drywall stage," explains Mr. Pugh. "That gives us the ability to make sure that the condominium requirements are taken care of and gives Habitat the opportunity to do the builds they need to do."

"It is about housing for us. The Habitat partnership is just a natural fit. We are in the home-building business and they are in the home- building business. The relationship with Habitat is very strong, they are great people to work with, and their partner families are also fantastic people."

?What is also really cool is the feedback we get from families who are buying in the communities where the Habitat builds are now and how embracing they are of having had that in their communities. Obviously Habitat is going to be happy and we're going to be happy and the partner family is going to be happy they have got a home, but it is really great to see the acceptance from other people in the community.?

For anyone in the Aurora community looking to put a little bit of sweat and elbow grease into providing a home for the selected family, their volunteer corridors are always open. Volunteer opportunities on this site, as well as in their two Re-store opportunities, can be found at www.habitatyork.ca.