

Women set to build Habitat for Humanity house

It's probably safer to hammer in work boots rather than heels, but Habitat for Humanity York Region likes to live dangerously.

At least for one night only.

Habitat will host a 'Hammer & Heels' dinner and fashion show in October to mark their launch of Women Build, a program to engage women across York Region not just with Habitat, but in picking up their own hammers and helping to build homes where needs and opportunities arise.

Through Women Build, a construction job is completed entirely by women from the design concept stage right through to the very last flourishes of the home once it's constructed.

Women Build is a model that has been successfully implemented by Habitat for Humanity organizations in communities across Canada, but this will be a first for York Region, according to Keasha Green, Community Event Manager for Habitat for Humanity York Region.

'We had two successful builds in York Region last year and we're doing a new turn in terms of having a theme,' says Ms. Green. 'The interesting thing about [focusing] towards women's groups is we're not just getting women who want to volunteer because they are women; we're getting women who are in the trades who come out and say, 'I actually want to build and contribute to this.'

'It is a great opportunity to introduce the fact there are females in the trades. We're also engaging community leaders: we've got MPs and MPPs, Councillors, and leading women in business coming together, so we're bringing together the whole community.'

A location for York Region's first Women Build house has not yet been determined by the Habitat board, but the build is indeed scheduled for 2014. They're currently aiming at one house but that is entirely dependent on how much money they raise 'and, of course, land prices in whichever York Region municipality they decide to focus on.

If you're interested in participating but intimidated by the project or unsure of what you can contribute, Ms. Green says there's no cause for concern.

'If you have no skills, you get trained on the site,' she says. 'We have people who are trained to build houses. You get hands-on training. The other side of it is, if someone already has a trade, they bring in specialized people. If you are a woman and already know how to do roofing, for instance, you are welcome to come and we will connect you with our construction manager to start the process.

'This is a great opportunity because it embodies the fact it can be for career-oriented women, a stay-at-home mom, or someone at the office 'anyone can just grab a hammer and go. It's kind of fun too!'

Hammer & Heels will be held October 17 at the Venetian Banquet and Hospitality Centre in Vaughan. For ticket and event information, as well as info on Women Build, visit www.hammersandheels.ca, or call 905-868-8722.