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Union-Snyder Habitat for Humanity|www.usfh.org

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USHFH names new partner family, will break ground on Kratzerville home Saturday Degenstein Foundation grant helps fund affiliate's first rehab project

KRATZERVILLE, Pa. — Union-Snyder Habitat for Humanity has selected Latanya Williams and her four children, of West Milton, as the affiliate's 19th partner family and will break ground on a new home Saturday (June 18).

A ceremony is planned for 11 a.m. at the home site, 4014 Route 204 in Kratzerville. The public is invited to attend.

"This means everything to us," said Williams, an assistant teacher at Head Start who is pursuing a child development associate's certificate online as well as her medical assistant certification at McCann School of Business in Sunbury in the hope of opening a daycare business one day.

"This is a big step not only for me but my kids too," she said. "I have always wanted to be a homeowner and to have a foundation for my children. This is a new beginning."

Volunteers will build a 1,192-square-foot, four-bedroom ranch home for Williams and her children: India, 7; Nadiyah, 11; Randy, 12; and Delshon Brown, 15. The family currently rents a townhouse in West Milton, which has an awkward layout, is not adequately heated and has mold growing in the bathrooms.

"My daughters won't sleep in their rooms because it is too cold," Williams said. "The mold in the downstairs bathroom is bad because there is no window to vent it. The upstairs bathroom has a window, but there is still mold."

Grant supports first rehab project

The Kratzerville build is the first rehabilitation project for the local Habitat affiliate, which serves Union, Snyder and Northumberland counties. USHFH received a \$5,500 grant from the Sunbury-based Degenstein Foundation to demolish an existing house on the property, which was infested with powder post beetles and could not be salvaged. Materials from the home were recycled or sold, with proceeds going toward the construction of future homes.

The Degenstein Foundation awards grants for "unique, innovative and creative projects that benefit children, promote education, improve health care, encourage business, culture, conservation of nature resources, and protection of the environment, according to the foundation website, <http://www.deg-fdn.org>.

M&T Bank of Lewisburg also contributed \$10,000 toward construction of a new home on the Kratzerville site.

Powder post beetles

Powder post beetles tend to be found in older homes where the wood was not properly dried before a home is constructed, USHFH board member Rick Gora, chair of the site selection committee. The insects also infest wood that is not treated. The larvae burrow into the wood and create tunnels until they reach their adult stage when they emerge from the wood.

"Imagine holding a bunch of straws," Gora said. "That is what the beams in this house looked like. The beams appeared solid, but when you touched them, dust would come out. We were able to salvage some items from the property including metal and windows."

Board member Charlie Devanney, co-chair of the construction committee, is in charge of the first portion of the build, including the installation of the cellar, framework, and panelized walls. A site supervisor will be hired to oversee construction of the new house.

The second phase of construction will include the installation of electrical and plumbing systems throughout the home, Devanney said.

It costs about \$80,000 to build a Habitat house. The Williams family will pay back Habitat through an interest-free mortgage, and the payments will be put in the Fund for Humanity to be used for future home construction. Volunteers will complete the majority of labor to build the home.

Central PA YouthBuild partnership

In addition to traditional community volunteers, young adults enrolled in the Central Pennsylvania YouthBuild program will work on the house through the fall. Union-Snyder Habitat is in the midst of a two-year partnership with YouthBuild. Groups of young adults from six counties in the Susquehanna Valley will be selected to work with the local affiliate and another organization that provides affordable housing during six-month-long programs.

The YouthBuild trainees, who range in age from 18 to 24 years old, will split their 30-hour, five-day weeks between the classroom and the construction site, learning academic, career and life skills. Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, Central Pennsylvania YouthBuild is part of a national program that helps young adults rebuild their lives while rehabilitating or building affordable housing. The local organization is supported by a grant administered by the Central PA Workforce Development Corp. and the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board.

Habitat International

Founded in 1976, Habitat International has built more than 175,000 safe, affordable homes for partner families.

Habitat's goal is to fulfill the dream of home ownership with simple, basic homes for families in need. Families must be able to pay a no-interest mortgage and commit to 250 hours of "sweat equity," by helping with construction of their own home and working on future affiliate projects. They also must complete a home ownership course.

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