

Growing Shea family look forward to new Habitat

Posted By Kaesha Forand

PORT COLBORNE – As Caleb and Joshua Shea played in the grass and got dirty in a large heap of dirt, parents Charissa and Bradley didn't mind. The boys were enjoying what they can soon call home — the backyard of their Habitat for Humanity house on Paul St. in Port Colborne. The parents of Caleb, 5, and Joshua 3, are expecting twins and are preparing for their first big step towards home ownership, thanks to Habitat for Humanity and the community's support.

It's a big step up from their two-bedroom apartment in town which doesn't give the family much room and which has mold growing in some corners.

Months ago, while the second Habitat for Humanity house was being built, the Sheas began looking for other living arrangements and believed a family had already been selected. That is until a relative told them about a family-selection information session.

"There were quite a few people there, so we thought what are the chances?" Charissa said.

But as Bradley likes to say: "If you don't shoot you don't score."

A few weeks after the information session, the family received the call they were hoping for. They had been chosen Port Colborne's second Habitat for Humanity family.

"I didn't know what to say," Bradley said. "It didn't hit us until we saw the (Habitat) house in Dain City and saw the potential in the house. It was overwhelming."

Although the family is already involved in the community, the Sheas must put in 500 sweat hours into the home being built by District School Board of Niagara students or into the community. It should be an easy task for Bradley, who volunteers for cinema and dance nights at the Guild Hall and who volunteers at McKay Elementary School, and for Charissa who makes milk bag mats.

"Volunteer hours aren't hard for us," he said.

The Sheas look forward to providing safety and stability for their children. But before that, they'll be packing, purchasing new furniture for the house and preparing for the birth of their twins within the next month.

As part of the Habitat process, they will also take courses in finance management and being a good neighbour, learn how their no-interest mortgage will be calculated based on their income, and satisfy other educational components of Habitat.

Had the Sheas not been selected for the home, they would have waited for a co-operative house to become available — which could have taken months and left the soon-to-be family of six in a small apartment.

"We're still overwhelmed," Charissa said. "We didn't think home ownership would be that soon."

Lisa Aceti of Habitat for Humanity Niagara said the most successful homeowners are those who are ready for home ownership, who work hard and "who need a helping hand to get to where they aspire to be."

"They will definitely be successful," Aceti said. Construction continues on the Energy Star home, with a completion target of the end of June. A home dedication ceremony will take place June 10.