

Ground broken for second Habitat home in Port Colborne

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Habitat for Humanity Niagara's second Port Colborne house is another step closer to reality.

Habitat staff and board members, project donors, supporters and high school students gathered at the building site yesterday to officially launch the project.

Habitat Niagara CEO Alastair Davis said the occasion was mainly symbolic, because the actual construction work will not begin for more than two months from now.

But it was important to build community interest in the project, he said. Since receiving a donation of land from Earl Ruston to build the first Port Colborne Habitat home, there has been a desire to build a second home.

"Land is absolutely everything. It's the catalyst that gets things going," Davis said.

That "everything" includes partnerships with fundraisers, the community and builders, he explained.

The home will be constructed by students in District School Board of Niagara's specialist high skills major construction program. Twenty students from Port, Eastdale, Ridgeway-Crystal Beach, Eden and Beamsville high schools will build the three-bedroom house at 22 Paul St.

The home will be next door to the first Habitat home in Port Colborne. Although the new home will look a lot like the first one, it will be an improvement, according to Davis.

The new house will meet Energy Star standards for energy efficiency in construction methods and in subsequent energy use, Davis told the crowd. Energy Star standard homes typically require 30 per cent less energy than non-Energy Star homes. That fact makes the cost of home ownership even more affordable. Habitat for Humanity is the only homebuilder in Niagara that builds only homes that meet Energy Star standards, the crowd heard.

The build will be Habitat for Humanity's 30th in Niagara. "That's quite an accomplishment," Davis said.

Construction will begin in early February, when excavation gets underway. Students will receive training at an on-site trailer throughout the month before getting started on framing at the end of that month.

The roof is expected to be raised in mid-March, and the entire build should be complete by the beginning of June.

Before that happens, though, Habitat for Humanity will begin the selection process for the family that will own the house.

There will be a family selection information session at Port Cares on Dec. 4 at 6 p.m. Families who currently pay a disproportionate amount of their income towards shelter costs; who have a demonstrated ability to pay reasonable mortgage payments; and who are willing to donate 500 hours of "sweat equity" are encouraged to attend that meeting.

The Centennial Rotary Club of Port Colborne is responsible for raising \$60,000 needed to build the home. To date \$15,000 has been raised.

Rotary Club president Sandy White said having gone through the process once already, he is confident the club will reach the goal again.

"We're really counting on the community to pitch in," he said