



## Building hope for families one home at a time

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**Local News** - Habitat for Humanity builds hope for families one home at a time.

The non-profit Christian housing ministry provides simple, decent, affordable housing for families who can't afford a home.

"There are 4,800 families in this region alone that are looking for affordable places to live. Some of them are living in desperate circumstances. It's been beyond an eye opener for me," Alastair

Davis, CEO of Habitat for Humanity Niagara said to Rotary Club members yesterday, at Walter's Restaurant, on West Street.

"It is rather shocking that in this part of Ontario and this country that this exists all over the place," Davis said.

"We have not built here, yet we very much want to. We know there is very much a need."

He said through partnerships with local organizations, businesses, municipalities and groups, they all come together to build a home. Davis spoke to Rotary members to seek their support for future projects.

"The biggest confusion is that we give away the house. That's not what affordable housing means."

Struggling families submit applications to receive a Habitat home. Family selection is based on current inadequate living conditions, income and the ability to pay the mortgage. Families must also contribute 500 volunteer hours to build their home and other Habitat homes.

A no-interest mortgage is provided through Habitat for Humanity and payments are established based on income.

Davis said a simple, three bedroom house with an unfinished basement would have a mortgage of about \$100,000.

He said families who receive a Habitat home often experience other improvements in their lives.

Habitat statistics show that 53 per cent noticed improvement in child behaviour, 24 per cent of parents went back to school, 33 per cent moved on to better jobs, 36 per cent were less reliant on social assistance and 39 per cent showed remarkable improvement in children's school grades.

Since 1993 Habitat for Humanity has built 18 houses in the region and plans to increase that number by building five to six houses per year. They are currently finishing a home on Sixth Street in Welland, with the help of construction and technology students from Niagara College. Habitat's next project in Fort Erie will see five homes being built with the help of high students from Port Colborne, Fort Erie and Ridgeway.