

New Habitat

By MARYANNE FIRTH

With a break in the snowy weather came a break in the ground as Habitat for Humanity Niagara kicked off the building of its second Port Colborne home.

Nineteen District School Board of Niagara students from across the region who will be building the house gathered with sponsors and organizers as the excavator picked up its first bucket of earth yesterday.



District School Board of Niagara specialist high skills major construction students and various community partners gathered yesterday as digging began for the second Habitat for Humanity Niagara home in Port Colborne.
STAFF PHOTO/MARYANNE FIRTH

The new Paul St. house will be built right beside the Habitat home built last year. CRL Campbell provided yesterday's excavation crew, with Cotton Inc. and Dufferin Concrete to provide the foundation being poured today and tomorrow.

After the foundation is in place, students taking the school board's specialist high skills major construction program will begin their work. Lead construction teacher Ken Willms said this is the seventh house he's helped build in the past few years.

Willms said his students are excited to get started on the project after receiving all the training necessary to do the job properly. They have also been training to ensure the house is built to meet Energy Star standards. Energy Star homes typically require 30% less energy than other homes, making them more affordable for the homeowner.

Rotary Club of Port Colborne has also teamed up with Habitat, committing to raise \$65,000 needed to build the home.

Habitat for Humanity Niagara marketing and communications director Lisa Aceti said she had high hopes the community would support the project "during this tough economic time."

Rotary fundraising chair Shelley Campbell said donations of both money and materials are needed for the project. People interested in donating can contact Campbell at 905-834-7104.

A golf tournament, with all proceeds going to the build, will be held June 17.

So far, \$15,000 has been raised toward the home build.

Aceti said the group has yet to find a family to move into the home in June. She said the family does not need to be from Port Colborne, but the organization does like to keep people in the community they currently reside. Houses are not given away, but sold to a family who may otherwise be unable to afford the purchase. Eligible families "must have a need" and must also be willing to put in 500 community hours of sweat equity. The family must also have the ability to pay for the home under prescribed conditions. Families are offered a chance to own the home with no down payment under an interest-free mortgage.

"This is not a handout but a hand-up program," said Aceti.

For families interested in applying, an information session will be held on Wednesday, March 4, from 6 p. m. to 7 p. m. at Dewitt Carter Public Elementary School, 435 Fares St. For more information contact the organization at 905-685-7395.