

Keys awarded to second Habitat family in Port Colborne

Shea family moves in next month — after twins make six

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PORT COLBORNE — Their new address is 25 Paul St. in Port Colborne.

With keys in hand, the Shea family officially entered as homeowners Wednesday during a Habitat for Humanity Niagara dedication ceremony.

It's a dream come true for Bradley and Charissa Shea and their sons Caleb, 5, and Joshua, 3.

"It's a fantastic morning of celebration. ... Today we are dedicating a brand new home to the Shea family," said Habitat CEO Alastair Davis.

He said thanks for community contributions, donations and support.

About \$30,000 has been raised to help pay for materials. However, fundraising efforts continue to raise a remaining \$30,000 for the home build.

Special thanks were given to Earl Ruston, who donated the land for Port Colborne's two habitat houses, and to District School Board of Niagara and 19 of its specialist high skills major students.

Under the supervision of Ken Willms, the students built Habitat's second Energy Star home, which will prove to be more affordable for the homeowner.

"It's incredible work, dedication and skills with the specialist high skills major students," Willms said. "It's the second Energy Star home and we're proud to have increased our standards."

Surrounded by students he has had under his wing since the frigid winter months, Willms said his first Energy Star build was a fun adventure.

"The inspections passed without infractions," he said with the crowd laughing. "In spite of obstacles and the weather we all had a great time."

His 19 students came from Port Colborne High School, Ridgeway-Crystal Beach High School, Eden, Beamsville Secondary School, Eastdale and E.L. Crossley. They did framing, roofing, brick laying, installed windows, doors and frames, insulated the house and did all the drywalling.

For Crossley's Calli Doucette, the work term opened her eyes to residential construction, a term she said made her "knowledgeable for now and the future."

Rotary Club of Port Colborne Centennial president Sandy White said Wednesday was a proud day for the Shea family and for the city.

"We believe in Habitat's mission to provide affordable housing," he said from the home's front porch to about 100 well-wishers.

Bradley Shea ended the ceremony with his children and wife, who is pregnant with twins, by his side. He found it difficult to control his emotions, often pausing while reading a carefully-crafted thank-you letter.

He expressed "how grateful we are to those who uplifted us in prayer and help."

"The students were pleasant and enthusiastic. We are proud to say our home was student-built."

Joshua was being held by dad and interrupted his father's speech on a few occasions to say "thank you for our house."

Bradley recalled the day the Sheas received a phone call notifying them they had been selected for the home. For a person who often isn't speechless, he said he was speechless and could only say thank you.

He categorizes success with providing for his family, something he can now do with health, safety and stability a home provides.

For Charissa, the experience that Habitat for Humanity Niagara has provided for her family is overwhelming now that they are homeowners.

"My heart is in Port Colborne and my home is in Port Colborne," she said. "We will be forever grateful to Habitat for Humanity."

Although the dedication ceremony was held yesterday, the family won't move in until the beginning of July, just weeks after the birth of the twins.

kforand@wellandtribune.ca

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