

## Habitat for Humanity breaks new ground for those needing a home

By Ashley Csanady, Record staff

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KITCHENER — At first glance, it looks like any other construction site: dust-covered yellow equipment and exposed foundations.

Then you notice the volunteers — clad in red T-shirts and sporting white hard hats — hurrying around. Some carry plastic-covered planks of wood, others bend over a birch-coloured frame.

The approximately 15 carpenters-for-a-day hammered away at a Habitat for Humanity home on Howe Drive in Kitchener, sponsored by Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada.



**Habitat for Humanity.** Habitat for Humanity volunteers Cathy Sweeney, left, Judy Binder and Ray Murray, nail boards together while working on the Howe Drive project in Kitchener. David Bebee/Record staff Source: Record staff

Construction officially kicked off at a ceremony Monday.

Terry Dorscht, who has volunteered for Habitat for nine years, said he started because he “likes to do this kind of thing,” but the satisfaction of meeting grateful families kept him coming back.

He added that some of the families are immigrants, and come by the site with baked goods or dishes from their countries of origin. “You’re meeting families from differing countries.”

Brian Krinock, president of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada, donned a hard hat for the day and worked alongside employees. He pointed to one of the future homeowners, a woman walking toward the site and said she’s “out here today, pulling up her sleeves like everybody else.”

Habitat for Humanity, part of the region’s landscape since 1988, offers qualifying low-income families the chance to own their own home in 72 communities across Canada. It calls the program a “hand up, not a hand out” since recipients pay the mortgage once they move in. The families put in at least 500 hours of work on their homes in lieu of a down payment. (If they aren’t physically able, another volunteer opportunity is provided.)

“They want to work on their own house ... it’s pride of ownership,” said Jerry Lawlor, director of development for Habitat for Humanity Waterloo Region.

In total, the Howe Drive location will offer 16 units by 2013, bringing the regional total to 100 in time for the 25th anniversary of Habitat for Humanity Waterloo Region.

That unit marks a first for the manufacturer. Manulife Financial’s two houses, which will be launched Sept. 6, add to the list of Habitat projects it has sponsored.

“We stagger them because, if we had volunteers for three houses (on site at once), it would be a logistical nightmare,” said Jerry Lawlor, director of development for Habitat for Humanity Waterloo Region. “The financial support is important, but the volunteer support is so important as well.”

Of the decision to sponsor a Habitat for Humanity house, Krinock said, “At the end of the day, it’s about the people using the home.”

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