



Print this article

Habitat house dedicated to new family

Rick Lemyre

Published 06/26/2008 - 3:35 p.m. PDT

It had been four months since Rocio and Elizabeth Cruz slept well. That's when the girls, 15 and 11 respectively, had headed off to bed in their dilapidated Byron home, only to find a snake had found its way into their room.

The girls, along with their father, Jesus, and mother, Bertha will rest comfortably now, safe in their new Brentwood home provided by East Bay Habitat for Humanity.

The house, located on First Street, was built in 1999 during a week-long "blitz build." The family that had originally owned the home moved to another state, and on Saturday Habitat officials, volunteers and other well-wishers re-dedicated the home for the Cruz family.

"This is a moment of celebration," said Habitat Board Member Sue Howell. The event also helped mark the 20th anniversary of the organization that has erected more than 200 houses since its beginning.

Re-painted inside and out, fitted with new kitchen counters and solar panels (provided through a partnership with PG&E), the two-bedroom house replaced the one the Cruz's had occupied for most of the 18 years that Jesus has lived in East County, working for DeBorba Farms. The old place leaked when it rained, had no heater, and the septic system backed up through the toilets in the winter. The new house provides a place where the family can live with dignity, Jesus said, through a translator during the ceremony.

"God will bless all the volunteers, and the city of Brentwood, who made this possible," he said. "Please continue helping other families the way you have helped us."

Habitat Board Member Nancy Williams said that the re-dedication showed the long-term benefits such an effort yields.

"The hope is to break the cycle so that the next generation doesn't have a need for a Habitat house," she said.

The house was Habitat's first foray into East County, and has since been joined by nine more in Oakley and four in Antioch.

"Our goal is to build 200 more in the next five years," Williams said.



Habitat for Humanity volunteer Mike Ballen presents Jesus Cruz with a hammer used in the re-fitting of the house, as Cruz's wife, Bertha, and daughters Rocio and Elizabeth look on. Usually held on the front porch, blistering heat forced the ceremonies into the garage, where the house did exactly what it's supposed to do: provide shelter.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rick Lemyre

Email:
rick@brentwoodpress.com