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Habitat for Humanity to begin construction on Bay Point development

By Sam Sutton and Hannah Dreier
Contra Costa Times
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BAY POINT — She works at a department store, shares a small Concord apartment with her family, and is still learning English. But in a little more than a year, Rosa Aguilera will be the proud owner of a new home in Habitat for Humanity East Bay's first development here.

"It would have been impossible to come up with the money for a down payment. Habitat for Humanity makes it possible," Rosa Aguilera said. "My husband still can't believe it."

After several years of planning, construction will soon begin at the El Rincon development. The organization will break ground in a ceremony Saturday.

"It's been a long road to get to this place. We're very excited to get a shovel in the ground," Habitat for Humanity East Bay President Janice Jensen said. "This is the first time we've ever built a home in Bay Point."

The 1-acre, nine-house Inglewood Street development will provide homes to nine limited-income families.

Families applying for homeownership through Habitat for Humanity must demonstrate a need for housing, as well as a consistent, but limited, income. The organization assists applicants with financing for the home, making the process more affordable.

Mt. Diablo Habitat for Humanity purchased the property in 2004 before merging with the East Bay affiliate in 2007. The project was delayed for several years because the organization had trouble resolving easements relating to storm, creek and sewer systems on the

property.

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"The land had quite a bit of challenges with drainage and sewage and what have you," Jensen said. "It's a tough location to build in."

Several organizations and individuals contributed to the development. Volunteers will assist with construction of the homes, including members of the Habitat for Humanity East Bay Women's Crew, who raised \$50,000. In 2008, Lafayette resident Bob Frick rode his bicycle from San Diego to Florida, raising more than \$100,000 for the development.

Organizations are able to sponsor individual homes for \$100,000 each. Moraga Community Builds' sponsorship marks the first time a town has sponsored a home for Habitat for Humanity East Bay.

"We went through a lot of community groups, faith groups," said Larry Briggs, co-chair of Moraga

Community Builds. Briggs and other community leaders raised funds from a number of local organizations, including Kiwanis, Rotary, Saint Mary's College, youth groups and churches.

"Never before had a community come together (for the East Bay affiliate); and we said, we can do it in our community," Briggs said. "All of the donations were made directly to East Bay Habitat."

Construction is expected to wrap up in fall 2011, at which point Aguilera and her family will receive the keys to one of the new homes. Her son, who currently sleeps on the couch in the living room, will finally have a room of his own.

"It's very exciting to think they'll have their own room. Maybe a place to put plants and a place to bask in the sun," she said.

Aguilera applied for homeownership through Habitat for Humanity after learning about the organization from a friend she met at adult school, where she is taking English classes.

"I'm always surprised by their desire to help," she said. "It's a beautiful thing."

For information about Habitat for Humanity East Bay and volunteering, go to www.habitateg.org.

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