

A Place to Call Home



Habitat for Humanity of Yankton County has been filling a need in the Yankton community for the past 14 years. This summer the non-profit organization will finish its 31st and 32nd homes with the completion of a duplex on National Street.

Habitat Executive Director Julie Dykstra and Habitat Family Selection Chair Sherrie Lewis said the organization typically builds single family homes but because affordable lots to build on are tough to find in Yankton they sometimes have to resort to duplexes in an effort to serve more families.

Each Habitat home is 1,000 square feet, which includes three bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen and living room. The basements include washer/dryer hook-ups, two egress windows and pipes for an additional bathroom.

“We put the egress windows in and the pipes for another bathroom in case the family wants to finish the basement in the future,” Dykstra said.

The duplex on National Street was started last May and Dykstra said they hope to be completely done in October. Such a tight construction schedule is only possible through the generosity of many, many volunteers.

“We have wonderful volunteers and many, many donations,” Dykstra said. “Starmark donates all the cabinets for the kitchens and bathrooms and Whirlpool donates all the appliances for the homes. We buy our wood from ProBuild and receive a grant to get money back. Last year, we got \$16,000 back from wood purchases. It is those things that really keep us going and keep these homes affordable.”

This summer Habitat has been working Thursday-Saturday on the homes with crews that include volunteers from local churches, organizations and businesses, as well as individuals. Crews also include Yankton Federal Prison Camp inmates.

“We have a great working relationship with the Federal Prison Camp,” Dykstra said. “We have five inmates working Thursday-Friday and on Saturdays we are fortunate enough to have 10.”

Dykstra said the partnership with the prison is a win-win situation.

“They are definitely helping us out and I always thought we were helping them learn a trade, but I talked with one of the inmates who was being released and he told me about how much he learned about

life from working with Habitat,” Dykstra said. “He talked about how much he learned from the volunteers and the families and how he learned an important life lesson that God and family are the most important things in life.

“I was really surprised because I always thought of it from a skills standpoint but we are a Christian housing mission and we do start each day with prayer. It was nice to see how Habitat can help other people — not just the families that buy the homes.”

Lewis said the Yankton community has about 10 applicants for Habitat for Humanity homes a year.

“We used to get a lot more but I think a lot of people are afraid to apply lately because of the economy,” she said. “People are afraid their credit isn’t good enough or they don’t make enough money, but we have a lot of successful families in this community that can tell them otherwise.”

In order to qualify for a Habitat for Humanity home, Lewis, said

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