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Local family calls Habitat home a life saver

By ANN NICCUM , The Edwardsville Intelligencer

Having a place to call home can mean the world to a family.

Habitat for Humanity is an international organization dedicated to providing simple, decent and affordable homes to families around the world.

Last year, the Edwardsville Rotary Club started a service project in conjunction with the Habitat for Humanity Wood River Chapter to build the first-ever Habitat house in Edwardsville.

And the Middleton family got the call.

The family-- Roy, Crystal and their three children --moved into the house last October.

Habitat partners with the family they select and qualify for the home.

The houses are not free, but sold to partner families at no profit, financed with affordable, no-interest loans and the homeowners' monthly mortgage payments are used to build more Habitat houses.

Roy Middleton said the house has been a life saver.

"I found out about the house through my brother. He saw it in the paper and we applied," Middleton said.

Middleton said the family had been living with family members and did not have a permanent place to call home.

He said getting a loan for a home that he could afford was difficult.

Habitat helps families like the Middletons who can pay a feasible mortgage payment have a simple and decent home to live in.

Middleton said the home had a positive impact on his family.

"It has changed our life drastically," Middleton said.

He said the house has made a difference, especially with the children.

"It has helped out our family. The kids are more stable and doing better in school," Middleton said. "You can tell the difference in the kids."

He added, "It has also relieved a lot of pressure on us."

In addition, Middleton said he wanted to stay in Edwardsville.

"I grew up here all my life. There is a good school and athletic system," he said. "If not for Habitat, we probably would not have stayed in the area at all."

Habitat has united the community and left the Middletons smiling.

Now, the house has spurred community members to start an Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Area Chapter of Habitat for Humanity.

The chapter is in the process of becoming official.

Acting Vice-Chair and Public Relations Chair Trish Cheatham said the chapter hopes to become official next week.

Cheatham said the community has been very supportive and many involved would like to continue building homes in Glen Carbon and Edwardsville.

"Everybody is so excited," Cheatham said.

Acting Chair Chris Azar said Habitat provides simple, but affordable homes for local families.

Azar and Cheatham said there is a sense of wealth in Edwardsville, but there is still a need for affordable housing.

"Certainly a need," Cheatham said.

She said there are children in the school district who lack winter coats.

"The community needs to step up to the plate and help those kids," she said.

That is what Habitat is about.

She said, "It is not intended to be hand outs but hand ups."

Middleton was thankful.

"Everybody who helped with this house was tremendous," Middleton said. "I can make house payments I can afford."

The new chapter has started raising money and collecting donations for the next house in Edwardsville.

Joseph Myers and Associates donated the lot for the first house and have also donated a lot for the second house next door.

Azar said the chapter needs \$40,000 to break ground.

The chapter is planning fund-raisers to help raise needed money and is asking local businesses for donations and seeking corporate and community sponsors.

"We have commitments of about \$5,000," Azar said.

Cheatham said, "Our goal is to break ground this summer."

Azar said that all depends on funding.

Cheatham said the chapter is hopeful.

"So far this community has been very generous. The Edwardsville/Glen Carbon area has always been generous and supportive. We can make a huge change in this community." Cheatham said. "This family has been a dream for us and exemplifies what we are looking for in a hardworking family that wants ownership."

In addition, Cheatham said the money is going into the community, not going somewhere else.

Habitat has built 175,000 homes and provided shelter for 900,000 people worldwide since 1976.

The Lewis and Clark Habitat for Humanity Chapter has constructed more than 25 homes locally.

To learn more about Habitat for Humanity, visit www.habitat.org.

The Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Area Chapter has about 30 active members, additional participants and help are always needed.

Donations can be mailed to Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Habitat for Humanity at P.O. Box 355, Edwardsville, IL 62025. For more information about the new Edwardsville Chapter, about becoming a member or to donate, call Cheatham at 692-7692 or e-mail her at flair4design@sbcglobal.net.