



Submitted photo from Habitat of Waukesha

An aerial picture of White Rock Avenue, taken by a drone, shows the lots on the east and west sides of White Rock Avenue prior to development.

Habitat

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working with Habitat Waukesha, has a program in collaboration with Milwaukee Community Service Corps for kids who dropped out of high school to get on-the-job training by assisting at the work sites.

“These kids are on our job site learning the trades,” McGeen said. “People see the value in this and they want to help. If there’s a way they can get involved with us, whether that’s sending people out to build, or donating money, or helping us to finance the project in some way.

“It’s kind of Habitat’s business model. We get the community engaged in something that affects the community. And it goes down to the micro level of affecting the families.”

The family factor

But along with other organizations and volunteers helping to make these homes a reality, the families that will own them are also involved in the process.

“The families are a true partner in the process. They’re right there building their home and they have to put in hours to contribute to building it,” Bauer-Phipps said. “They purchase the home, so they’re actually paying a mortgage to Habitat. It’s a very affordable mortgage, affordable price and sometimes what they pay in their mortgage with insurance and escrow is less than what they pay in rent.”

McGeen said the families that will be able to purchase the homes will be picked in the next week or so.

“We work with families

that are financially stable but they have a need for housing, whether the housing that they’re living in is substandard, or it’s more than they can afford, or there’s some other factor that would keep them from buying a home traditionally,” McGeen said. “People we partner with are ready to own a home. You can’t be homeless and then own a home, there’s a transitional process to be ready to take on the responsibility of home ownership. That’s why we call them partner families because we really walk them through to make sure they’re ready to take on that responsibility of financial and physical ownership of a home.”

‘A hand up, not a handout’

Families needing a home can refer themselves or can be referred by others.

“So many people don’t understand what Habitat is or even that there is a Habitat for Waukesha and that there’s a need,” Bauer-Phipps said. “Waukesha is the richest county in the state but there is a huge lack of affordable housing. So a lot of the working families are not able to acquire it. We like to say we give a hand up, not a handout, to help them be

successful.”

McGeen said the White Rock project may take one to two years to complete. Women volunteers from area business sponsors will be on site at the White Rock project as part of Habitat for Humanity’s 10th annual National Women Build Week. Over 100 volunteers will build the floors and outer walls of the two homes on the west side of White Rock from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. May 9 through May 13 and on May 16.

“It’s really empowering to see women framing in a house. A lot of times you think, ‘Oh I don’t know how to do that.’ It doesn’t matter. We train, we teach people how to get their hands dirty and swing a hammer,” McGeen said.

Volunteers will also sign the studs of the home with well wishes for the families.

Although Habitat Waukesha has enough volunteers for the upcoming Women Build, those interested in volunteering can sign up at habitatwaukesha.org. Along with the White Rock project, Habitat Waukesha is also working on projects on Ryan Street and Wilson Avenue.

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