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North Hills gets seven new 'habitats'

By Amanda Rittenhouse , Staff Writer

Local businesses and volunteers are pitching in to build a roof over some Upper Dublin residents' heads in the North Hills area.

The North Hills site will hold seven new Habitat for Humanity homes after construction is completed. One twin home will be completed in November and ground will be broken for a single-family home Sept. 13. Habitat for Humanity is currently seeking sponsorships for the remaining four North Hills homes to be built.

Mulhern and Kulp, a structural engineering firm in Ambler, and Barton Partners of Norristown donated time engineering the design of the North Hills homes.

"We are thrilled with the community's support. We have found that the Upper Dublin community has been very excited and captivated by this project and we appreciate their involvement," said Habitat for Humanity of Montgomery County Development Director Marianne Lynch.

Glenside Kiwanis, teachers from Thomas Fitzwater Elementary School and Lutheran churches throughout the area through the Thrivent for Lutherans organization volunteered time at the North Hills construction site, Lynch said. Chris Griffith, owner of Griffith Exteriors Inc. based in Warminster, put the finishing touches on a roof on a set of Habitat for Humanity twin homes in North Hills. Griffith Exteriors provided the labor and Liberty Roofing Center donated the roofing supplies.

Griffith, owner of the 2-year-old roofing, siding, trim and gutter installation company, said this is the first job Griffith Exteriors has done for Habitat for Humanity. Griffith said he is exploring the possibility of doing more jobs in the local area for Habitat.

"We've been fairly successful with our business and felt that it was time to do what we could to help out. When we came across Habitat it seemed like the right thing to do," Griffith said.

"It feels great to be able to offer services to people who otherwise may not have been able to afford them. It's a great opportunity to give back to the community," Griffith said.

Lynch said construction is ahead of schedule for the twin homes in North Hills and they should be finished by the end of November in time to be homes for families by the holidays.

Lynch said the homes typically are about 1,000 square feet with three bedrooms and one bathroom and are built on a cement slab. The homes stay within a basic Habitat for Humanity model that is energy efficient, Lynch said.

Lynch said families who live in the new homes are selected by their desire to partner with Habitat for Humanity. Stipulations require that applicants must be a resident or work in Montgomery County and make between 30 percent and 60 percent of the county's median income, Lynch said.

Homeowners purchase a home from Habitat by paying monthly mortgage payment between \$500 and \$650 per month. Lynch said mortgage payments are on the raw materials purchased for the home and said Habitat puts the money into a revolving construction fund to be used for other Habitat for Humanity of Montgomery County projects.

Montgomery County's Habitat for Humanity has finished 39 homes since 1989. This year alone the organization will complete homes for nine families in the county including the North Hills twin homes, five homes in Norristown and two rehabilitation projects in Pottstown.

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