



We welcome your stories!

Habitat for Humanity Canada's *Women Build Program* promotes the involvement of women in the construction of Habitat houses. Women Build homes have already been built in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, PEI and Alberta, and we are now expanding eastward and westward.



The season for sharing, gratitude and appreciation

Thank You for an Awesome Experience

Cobourg, Ontario is a beautiful town on the shores of Lake Ontario, east of Toronto. A unique mix of country charm and community spirit shines from the people, everywhere you go within the Town. Immediately, you feel at home.

This sense of warmth and comfort greeted me on an early June morning, as I arrived for my first hands-on experience with the Women's Build Program. The organizers of the build were ready to go, encouraging and ready to help you prepare. Hardhat, safety shoes and goggles were handed to you at the Registration desk with a fresh cup of coffee and a big smile. Several questions were asked. Did you bring your hammer? Did you bring your measuring tape? Did you bring a small pad of paper and pencil? Suddenly a tool belt was provided, a Tea-shirt to identify you as a part of the Team, forms for safety to sign and off you went to get "changed". Don't forget to bring back the signed forms before you start, was commented as a reminder during your departure to the change room.

As I got ready, I took myself back in time and thought – well this is not so tough. We raised the funds in York Region, and now a family in this friendly place benefits! This is true Teamwork.

I arrived on the job-site. Immediately, I was provided with a "buddy." Her name is Rebecca Howard and full-time she works for the EMS Team from Cobourg. I realized that this was a very special woman. Her commitment was clear and her dedication to the tasks at hand alleviated my fears. "Just do your best" was her cheerful response. Our tasks were assigned – Ivy, sanding the drywall and dealing with clean up. Then, both of us, once the final landscaping products arrived, the rules were clear "let's get the ground level, the new soil down and packed to perfection." In the blazing hot sun, away we went – Rebecca hauling the dirt, and Ivy packing the dirt. By the end of our shift, I was very tired. We were both happy at the results. A fantastic day; Lunch was served, donated by Cafeteria staff from the local hospital, breaks, lots of juice, water and snacks provided by local businesses – what more could you ask for.

Each step of the way, expertise was provided. I had an interest in using a Power table saw and during a break period I could have taken, I made the request for training. I received the training and on day 2 was ready to saw and hammer the outside wall installation. I met more lovely ladies, and was glad that I had personal local support. My uncle and aunt, cousins, and a business colleague provided insights, a place to stay overnight and even came to visit on the job-site.

I had made a commitment to a total of 4 days in time. The days were not all together but expanded over the project. On Day 5 of my commitment, the final dedication ceremony took place. I stress to anyone on any build – don't miss this event. Meeting the family members became my inspiration for a lifetime. Their pride, smiling faces and the gentle hugs from the children are visions that will remain in my mind forever. Their reminder of the thrill they received in picking out their paint colours in their rooms, the flowers for the garden and a place they could call home shone on their faces. This vision of joy will never be forgotten.

The build concluded with awesome statistics. Over 400 women participated and the home was built in 16 days. During the event, an unexpected highlight took place. The Prime Minister's wife appeared and planted a "tree" of hope. The family, children and community were thrilled to receive this national recognition. A confirmation that all the hard work and dedication by so many people of their gifts in skill and time had not gone un-noticed. For me, it was a thrill to see my buddy Rebecca in the picture taken by the media, standing with pride next to the tree that was being planted. A win, win for everyone.

I am asked over and over if I would I get involved again. My response is simple. Absolutely. You do need to live the experience in order to fully appreciate the final result and everything that Habitat for Humanity represents. I encourage all ladies to get involved, leave your fear at the door and have an open mind of entry into a new Lifestyle. It will change who you are, inspire you to do more and give a loving hug to your family while you treasure your own home.

Ivy Hobe Marciniak *Lifestyle Consultant*



Women Builds

2000-2005

- 2000 - Waterloo, ON - single family
- 2001 - Tara, ON - single family
- 2002 - Calgary, AB - duplex
- 2003 - Brantford, ON - single family
- 2004 - Saskatoon, SK - single family
- 2005 - Winnipeg, MB - two single family
- 2005 - Cobourg, ON - single family

2006

- HFH Edmonton, AB - duplex
- HFH Saskatoon, SK - single
- HFH Winnipeg, MB - 2 singles
- HFH Northumberland County, ON - single
- HFH Windsor, ON - single
- HFH PEI - single

2007

- HFH Northumberland, ON (single)
- HFH Cabot, NL (duplex)
- HFH London, ON (3 singles)
- HFH National Capital Region, ON (double)
- HFH Winnipeg, MB (single) HFH Edmonton, AB (triplex)

That all important HUG!



Unity Between Strangers *A Homebuilder's Story*

"IT WAS AN EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCE," says Habitat homeowner and volunteer Charlette Henry, "to achieve what one day seemed like an unachievable dream."

It may have seemed impossible; just a few years ago Charlette hadn't even heard of Habitat for Humanity.

Back then, Charlette's family of five was living in a two-bedroom apartment where she maintained an essential-belongings only housekeeping rule. She'd already pared down household extras, but had to ask her kids to get rid of some of their favourite things.

But, while the family lived with limited possessions and space restrictions, Charlette says it was difficult to ask her kids to give away personal items they cherished, and even more difficult to watch as they shipped out aging, but much-loved toys and prized artwork.

This constrained lifestyle changed for Charlette and her family when she overheard two Laundromat patrons talking about a planned inaugural Women Build in Cobourg.

Determination, she says, has always been her strong suit and she went right to work. She immediately dug in to learn more. Without the luxury of a home computer, Charlette looked up Habitat for Humanity listing in the telephone book then met with Cathy Lyons, Executive Director, Northumberland, to begin the application process.

From the get-go, the arduous task of building a home and booking 500 "sweat equity" volunteer hours didn't intimidate Charlette, partly, because she's no stranger to a construction site. A former drywall worker, Charlette met her husband Dwayne Labrosse, then a mason, on the job. Their relationship grew from coffee and lunch breaks to romance.



Upbeat and optimistic by nature, Charlette said she held positive through-out the application process that includes interviews, paperwork, and the compulsory waiting period. Her husband was hopeful, but his confidence in the outcome wavered, but Charlette reminded him that they had the right mix, "We're honest, hardworking, and we meet the criteria."

She looks at her home now and fondly recalls the days she spent surrounded by friends, family, tradespersons, and volunteers – collectively building a home.

Twenty-two friends and close relatives came out to support the build, including two aunts from Muskoka where Charlette was raised. The two women now volunteer at their local ReStore. Family members scratched heart-felt messages on floorboards and tucked away in the backs of closets – well wishes to the boys – Kody (12), Kayne (10), Kiefer (6), and Kashton (2).



It means much to her that her children have their own bedrooms. "The older ones, especially," she reflected, "waited a long time for that."

Her involvement in a Women Build

was rewarding in other ways, too. She liked the idea of sharing her construction expertise with inexperienced workers by helping others learn to use power tools. In fact, Charlette received a personal thank you note from her sons' teachers who praised the patience she demonstrated when sharing building techniques to them.

In the experience, Charlette discovered that building a home together is empowering, for everyone involved.

"The unity between strangers" and the prospect of being "a dream-maker for one day" are exhilarating by-products. The volunteers, she says were motivated, the tradespersons remarkable.

When she and her husband stepped into their home for the first time with their kids, there were plenty of tears. The kids raced immediately to their rooms and Dwayne and Charlette embraced. The boys then raced back and joined their parents.

"We're finally home," Charlette recalls saying to them and the words hung in the air. "This is our home."

It's a long way from three part-time jobs of her past, and the two-bedroom apartment she shared with three kids and her husband, while expecting their fourth child. And for this homeowner, it's the distance between impossibility and reality is not longer immeasurable.

Charlette remains involved in Habitat for Humanity participating in projects not because she feels obligated, but because she understands the instability of renting, the anxiety of believing a dream is beyond reach and the joy of discovering it is not.



This past July, in an on-site ceremony devoted to volunteers, Charlette Henry reflected on her experience and what it meant to her. She looked out at the crowd and explained how they were taking part in quite literally, building a dream.

Spending even one day as an on-site volunteer, Charlette explained, can make a difference for the rest of someone else's life.

– Valerie Bean

Participate in a Women Build and experience the a volunteer experience .

Women Build Projects 2008

At this location	we're building
• Winnipeg	a duplex
• Saskatoon	a duplex
• Toronto	10 x Units
• Northumberland	a semi-duplex
• Halifax	
• National Capital Region	



Courtesy of Charlette Henry and family