

Home Sweet Home

Habitat for Humanity – changing lives Two new homes for Tuakau in New Year

"We have come to some understanding of how hopeless it is for a low-income family to have any aspiration for home ownership. They are stuck in a trap that offers no hope for the future or any medium or long term security. It is a pleasure and a privilege to watch the amazing turnaround in the lives of these families. With a more stable home environment for their children, people can settle into their community, put down roots, take part in community affairs, seek further education or skills training and reduce dependency through better jobs. But it's not just about work - having fun and celebrating is central to what we do!" – Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity has come a long way since building its first house in New Zealand – in Pukekohe. The project was completed in 22 days at a cost of \$1859 from an initial pledged houseload of nails, a promise from a 'crazy jumper' (AJ Hackett) and a donated hot water cylinder, then driven by the vision of Auckland housebuilder Ian Hay.

Ian was answering a call in 1993 from Habitat for Humanity in America to start up in New Zealand. Since then, Habitat has helped 312 families in New Zealand into their own homes, including seven in Franklin – 200,000 plus worldwide. Habitat Manukau has built 54 houses with the cumulative value on today's market of around \$7 million. They also have a landbank for a further 10 homes,

Habitat's housebuilding projects involve communities, families, corporate groups, sponsoring businesses and hundreds of volunteer workers. Families meeting the housing needs criteria sign up for 500 hours of 'Sweat Equity,' though many far exceed that figure as they go on to help build other homes. One of Habitat's by-lines is 'we offer a hand up not a hand out.' Partner families need to have the ability to repay their modest, interest-free loan.

Each new house built is an experience. It is life changing for the families working on their own homes and for the people who join together on each building site. Skilled tradespeople guide novices, who include professional people, unemployed, people with community work sentences, visiting overseas groups and students seeking skills for NZQA Unit Standard credits. They come from all nationalities and ethnicities and together build houses and richer communities.

Habitat for Humanity is at present working with Housing New Zealand in Tuakau and looking to secure two sites within a development in Dominion Rd. A resource consent has been approved and the site may become available before Christmas, with construction expected to start in the New Year.

Once confirmation to build is received, Habitat will be seeking two families that most need a home and who are prepared to



Joy with Johnny and Ngahua

contribute their time to help with the building work. An advertisement will be placed in the local news to announce a meeting to provide details about Habitat for Humanity. Families who are interested in the Habitat partnership may put in an application form at that meeting. Each application will then go before a selection committee and the two families chosen will be those most in need.

Along with selecting the families Habitat will be seeking volunteers to help build the houses. It is not essential to have a trade to volunteer, but trades or retired people who have building skills would help enormously in the building process. Offers of help can be directed to the Habitat for Humanity Greater Auckland office Tel 09 271 3357. It is a beneficial experience working as a volunteer, experiencing the pleasure of helping a family into a simple, decent and affordable home.

Interest expressed in forming a committee to support the families during the building process would be welcome from the community. Support for this committee will be provided by the Greater Auckland office.

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