

Local Habitat for Humanity Taking Applications for First Home

Stan Siegenberg
The Olds Gazette

Affordable housing is an issue that affects a lot of families across Alberta, and now that Habitat for Humanity has a Mountain View County chapter, local families in need have somewhere to turn.

Habitat for Humanity is an organization dedicated to building affordable housing for families in need.

"We're just getting going," said Laurie Miller, a volunteer with the Habitat for Humanity Mountain View. "There are Habitat for Humanity organizations around the globe, but for us, it's new."

Habitat for Humanity has chapters all over the world, and now after three years, there is an official Mountain View County affiliate.

"The first key point is our affiliate status," continued Miller. "Because over the past three years, we have worked towards that goal, and we've finally reached it. In November, we got our official

status as the 61st affiliate. Now we can forge ahead with our purpose of building houses. We're here. We're ready, and we're going to build."

There are three main criteria points that a family must satisfy in order to be considered for a Habitat Humanity home.

"The three main criteria for families are that they have a need for affordable housing, second, that they have to be willing to partner with Habitat for Humanity, and third, that they agree to pay back a long-term, interest-free mortgage."

Obviously, not a lot to ask considering how difficult it is to obtain a house of your own, and keep it that way.

"Partnering" with Habitat for Humanity ultimately means volunteering. The chosen family would have to commit a total of 500 hours of volunteer work.

"This is a hand-up, not a hand-out," insists Miller. "It's

estimated that the total cost of a house in our community, with our method of building, would be approximately \$60,000. A family needs to be able to pay back a no interest mortgage of approximately that much."

There are four very important dates that a family in

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*Laurie Miller
Volunteer
Habitat For Humanity
Mountain View County
Chapter*

need has to remember, March 1st, April 1st, May 1st, and November 1st.

"We are going to have available by March 1st at the latest, in town offices and neighbourhood places and in each of our five communities, the application for families," continued Miller. "Those applications must be back to us by March 31st. That way we can make a selection by April 1st, and by May 1st, we hope to have a family selected. Then, providing we have a family, we will start to build on July 1st, and the family will move in on November 1st, if our schedule goes according to plan."

The Habitat for Humanity Mountain View County affiliate covers the five local communities of Olds, Didsbury, Cremona, Carstairs, and Sundre. Miller insists that it doesn't matter which community you live in to be considered for the program.

"One of the key things is that, if we're building in Cremona, people might think that they have to live in

Cremona, or the area," said Miller. "Anybody who lives in the Mountain View County can apply for that house in Cremona, providing they're willing to relocate."

Habitat for Humanity is currently helping all over the globe, but our local chapter is a little more unique than the rest.

"When you look at the Habitat organizations in some of the larger, urban centres, like Toronto and Ottawa, they cover large urban areas," added Miller. "We're covering distinct separate communities, which is unique. They have Habitat for Humanities all over the country, but for the most part, they concentrate on one single area, whereas we're branching out and trying to reach different communities."

If you are a family in need of affordable housing, and you meet the criteria, or would like more information, you can phone 403-557-7994 or visit www.mountain-viewhabitat.ca