

In the News - Habitat for Humanity

“Habitat for Humanity Builds Accessible Home”

Access Press, November 10, 2001

On Thursday October 18, Courage Center and Habitat for Humanity held a groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the first Habitat for Humanity home incorporating assistive technology. Habitat has built accessible homes in the past, but incorporating assistive technology such as aids for daily living, environmental controls, or mobility devices represents a major advancement in meeting the needs of homeowners with disabilities.

"Courage Center's goal is to help people with disabilities live as independently as possible" said Courage Center Executive Director Eric Stevens. "Our partnership with Habitat for Humanity is a perfect way to advance the needs of people with disabilities and educate the larger community about the lack of appropriate housing for the disability community. Accessible housing -- housing in which people with disabilities can enter and navigate easily is only part of the need. Assistive technology provides people with disabilities lifestyle-enhancing tools to accomplish everyday tasks on their own such as cooking meals, getting ready for a special event, or relaxing with friends on a deck."

Habitat for Humanity, excited about this new partnership, views this pilot project as an opportunity for its organization to learn more about accessible housing and to possibly pioneer a new development in Habitat housing. Courage Center is providing technical expertise and guidance on design, assistive technology, and information about meeting the independent living needs of people with disabilities.

"Habitat's mission is to eliminate poverty housing -- inadequate or inappropriate housing that is run down, poorly maintained, transitional, or too costly -- throughout the Twin Cities," said Habitat for Humanity Executive Director Stephen Seidel. "And we feel that the disability community's housing needs are underserved. Many families living with disabilities find it very difficult to find decent, affordable housing. This partnership will not only provide access to better housing for people with disabilities, but will shine a light on the need for more funding for housing of this nature."

Courage Center has also engaged Jane A. Hampton, founder and president of nationally recognized Accessibility Design -- a Minnesota-based firm specializing in residential and commercial design for people with disabilities- to consult on this project. Hampton's universal design concept focuses on providing barrier-free homes, building, and products to accommodate people of all abilities.

In the News - Habitat for Humanity

The future homeowners of the Habitat home, Scott Dehn and Lisa Baron, both have cerebral palsy and are long time clients and volunteers at Courage Center. Dehn is a staff accountant at St. Paul Companies and Baron tutors 4th and 5th graders in math and reading through the AmeriCorps program at Jenny Lind Elementary in Minneapolis.

"We never thought we'd have a home of our own," said Dehn. "Much less one with all the bells and whistles that will allow us to be truly independent."

The groundbreaking ceremony included remarks by Stevens, Seidel, and representatives from United Cerebral Palsy of Minnesota, future homeowners Scott Dehn and Lisa Baron, and a blessing of the project by Dehn's and Baron's pastor and priest.

Information for this article was provided by Courage Center and Habitat for Humanity.