

GTHBA members show they have the Habitat spirit



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The smell of fresh cut wood. The sound of hammers. The whine of power saws. The coffee truck horn. All worksites have these things in common. But the townhouse that Joel Scopelleti recently worked on had something more — heart.

On June 22, Scopelleti and about 20 other GTHBA member renovators donated their time, skills, and energy as part of Habitat for Humanity Toronto's

Blitz Build. The build was an intense, nine-day event that saw volunteers of all skill levels working side by side with Habitat partner families.

The result was 10 new, affordable townhouses in the Islington and Lake Shore area, built on \$700,000 worth of land donated by The Daniels Group. The property represents the largest gift of land by a private company in Habitat Canada's history.

"All we had to do was show up," says Scopelleti. "When we arrived at the site, there was everything from hard hats to steel-toed boots — everything you could imagine ... including a wonderful lunch. It was very efficient, and very well run."

Renovator's Day took place toward the end of the blitz, while

the interior walls were being framed. The volunteers were divided into teams of four to five people, each with a leader from Habitat Toronto.

Learning is a big part of the day, according to Scopelleti. "What makes the Habitat build great is that you might have a corporate executive or a student on your team, so they have a chance to learn about construction.

"The professional renovators on the team also learned that 'maybe your specialty is carpentry, but now you have a chance to practise something else in the field.'"

When asked to identify the high point of the day, Scopelleti had some trouble.

"It's hard to say what was the high point, because there was no low point. There was amazing

energy and spirit, from morning all the way through. At one point, I stopped and looked around, and saw all these people working happily, coming together with different backgrounds and knowledge — it was awesome!"

Partnership is the key to a successful build. According to Neil Hetherington, CEO of Habitat for Humanity Toronto, the build "shows how much individuals, businesses and faith groups in Toronto are willing to do to solve the affordable housing crisis."

Hetherington thanks the GTHBA for acting as a conduit for builders and building suppliers and trades to help. The GTHBA has been involved with Habitat for Humanity Toronto since 2002, through fundraising, awareness building and vol-

unteering. There is a "natural synergy" between Habitat and the GTHBA, he says, and the partnership is deep.

Suzanna Cohen, director of communications for the GTHBA, agrees. "Owning one's own home is a significant achievement. Habitat for Humanity is based on a homeownership model, with no government subsidies."

This is the fourth Habitat Toronto house to which GTHBA members have donated their money, time and effort.

Scopelleti also has nothing but praise for the project. A partner in Carick Home Improvements in Toronto, he is also the 2006 chair of the Renovators' Council, which represents more than 170 professional renovators and custom builders. He is very

proud of the members who took part. "It's one thing to donate money, but it's more personal to donate time," he says.

The keys to the home are scheduled to be handed to their proud and happy new owners on Dec. 17. Everyone who attended the event will know that a lot more went into the home than bricks, mortar and drywall.

For more information on Habitat, visit www.torontohabitat.on.ca. For more information on GTHBA's RenoMark program, visit www.renomark.ca.

Do you have a question about the home building industry? Email **Desi Auciello**, president of the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association at president@gthba.ca or fax 416-391-2118. The views expressed here are those of the GTHBA president.