

Habitat makes house a home

Affordable housing in Central Oregon is hard to find these days. Apartments have long waiting lists, and purchasing a house with an affordable monthly payment seems unattainable for many.

Since 1991, however, Sisters Habitat for Humanity has been working with qualified families to do just that – purchase an affordable home. Hort and Julia Hammond formed the local Sisters affiliate, and since then 65 families have purchased affordable homes through the program.

“This program isn’t a hand out, but a hand up, Marie Clasen, Habitat’s volunteer and program manager said. “Individuals or families work alongside our staff and construction volunteers, take classes and start a savings plan. The entire process from filling out an application to moving into the home can take two years or more. But in the end, families have a place they can call home.”

The Habitat homeownership model was actually started by Millard and Linda Fuller in Georgia when they developed the concept of “partnership housing” in the early 70s. The concept centered on those in need of adequate shelter working side by side with volunteers to build decent, affordable houses. The houses would be built at no profit. New homeowners’ house payments come back to Habitat to build more homes. Habitat for Humanity International was officially formed and headquartered in Americus, Georgia.

To qualify for the homeownership program, an individual or family can first review Sisters Habitat’s homeowner qualification guide which is available on its website at www.sistershabitat.org. The next step is to make an appointment with Clasen, who reviews the application process with the family. When a family is accepted into the program, they are paired with family partners. The partners are Habitat volunteers who help the family navigate the homebuilding road.

Future homeowners must commit to completing 500 hours of “sweat equity” once selected. Sweat equity hours are done by working alongside Habitat volunteers, on the build site and Thrift store and ReStore.

“My family partners and co-workers at the Thrift store were so helpful. Everyone is so positive. They encouraged me every step of the way,” new homeowner Michelle Ehr said.

Clasen also pointed out that Sisters Habitat has a home repair program.



Michelle Ehr is the latest owner of a Sisters habitat for humanity home.

Individuals or families who own a home and have needed repairs are invited to apply. The application process is similar to homeownership, but the repairs happen much more quickly. Repairs can include exterior paint, adding ramps, replacing windows and roof repair.

Those interested in the homeownership or home repair program can review the qualification brochures for each program at www.sistershabitat.org and then schedule an appointment with Clasen by contacting her at 541-549-1193, marie@sistershabitat.org.

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HEALTHY: Food can be quick and still be good for you

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milk, spinach, and a piece of ginger, along with a scoop of protein powder. This smoothie has healthy fats, protein, and fiber along with the digestive and anti-inflammatory benefit of ginger.

Next, the healthy dinner that you might think takes all day to make actually can be automated. Going to work or for an adventure and want something ready when returned? The crock-pot will prepare this meal with ease. Look for a programmable pot with timer, and multiple temp settings. Try some autumn chili: A couple of cans of beans, a diced sweet potato, diced green bell pepper, a can of diced tomatoes, a diced onion, 2 T. chili powder, 2 tsp. cumin, and 2 cups of water. At the end, add some tomato

paste to thicken. Enjoy this warm bowl of goodness with cilantro and diced avocado toppers (a few tortilla chips wouldn’t hurt, either).

Next is the microwave. Yes, this machine can be used for healthy foods, and will not give off nuclear radiation. Needing a quick baked sweet potato to slice an avocado on and top with salsa? Half a sweet potato, place in a baking dish with a little water on the bottom and microwave on high for 6 to 8 minutes. That’s it. Another example is a poached egg: Crack an egg into a heat-safe ramekin with enough water to submerge it. Microwave for 60 seconds maybe a little more (careful — there’s explosive results if overdone). Add this to the sweet potato for a good source of protein. A note on microwaves, use glassware to heat up food, plastics and other vessels may off-gas chemicals into food.

Always check packaging for microwave safety.

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