

COMMUNITY

The House That Pride Built

A New Habitat for Humanity Effort Forges Foundations – and Community Bridges

By ADINA LEPP

The Jimenez family will have a new home by summer's end, thanks to a team of sexual minorities and allies working together during Habitat for Humanity's Pride Build.

"We're on the frontlines of Pride Build. We hope it becomes an annual event," said Jennifer Twyman-Perkins, volunteer program manager. The Portland project is the second Pride Build nationwide. The first took place in Austin, Texas in 2007.

Fernando Jimenez and Teresa Portillo live with their three children – Carlos, 19; Nathaly, 7; and Arnoldo, 2 – in a two-bedroom apartment. Fernando works as a set-up tech with a wire components company. Teresa stays home with Arnoldo, who is recovering from a serious operation on his spine. Carlos attends Portland Community College full-time, a student in computer information systems. Fernando and Teresa hope the Habitat home will bring them stability so their children can do well, in both life and school.

The Jimenez family will purchase the house, located at the corner of SE 97th and Woodstock in the Lents neighborhood, at cost with a zero percent mortgage. All families selected for Habitat's program earn an income of approximately \$20,000-\$40,000 a year, and put

in 500 hours of sweat equity between their home and other Habitat projects.

Jamie Schuvlin, chair of Portland Pride Build, views the project as an opportunity to break down barriers between sexual minority and non-sexual minority populations. Due to the rising land and materials costs, Habitat for Humanity is now building multiple properties on a single plot. The Pride Build house is an approximately 1,100 square-foot, three-bedroom duplex that shares walls with the Presbyterian Build. A total of nine properties will be constructed on the same lot. The Pride Build home is the first to go up; the Presbyterian house will also be constructed this summer.

"It's a great way to build bridges in the community," said Schuvlin. The alliances that could come of the effort also extend to the Jimenez family, who will work alongside Habitat volunteers.

"Habitat is about breaking the chasms that exist between communities," said Steve Messinetti, executive director of Portland Habitat for Humanity. "It's run by a group of volunteers from Habitat who are vested, and they've organized around this concept of bringing together community, giving back and raising their own funds.

"This project is different in the energy be-

hind it and the organization that is there. We're just trying to keep up with them. They've been tremendous in how well organized and successful they've already been," said Messinetti.

The cost of the house, \$70,000, will be raised through corporate sponsorship and individual support. Pride Build has already raised \$45,000, mostly through corporate sponsors Nike and Affiliated Computer Services. They plan to raise the remainder, via in-kind material donations, in time for the June 27 wall-raising event.

Pride Build is a specialty project of Habitat of Humanity. The organization's Portland branch also runs Women Build, Youth United Build and Faith Build.

"I think our community is going to really jump at the chance to be involved," said Twyman-Perkins. "This event is bringing a whole new group of constituents to us. People come to Habitat through our different projects and find their niche right away." Twyman-Perkins is the head staff support on the project and is recruiting volunteers to work on the build.

To complete the house, the organization seeks 400 volunteers. All volunteers are supervised and trained onsite by experienced construction site managers, so no prior knowledge is necessary.



Fernando Jimenez and Teresa Portillo with their three children – Carlos, 19; Nathaly, 7; and Arnoldo, 2 – will be the owners of Portland Habitat for Humanity's Pride Build home.

"Everyone on the team comes with a different background. We have people involved right now who are lawyers, in retail and healthcare. Everyone brings something to the table. We all figure it out together and make it work," said Schuvlin.

Habitat for Humanity will be represented at Pride with a Pride Build float shaped like a house, crafted by 100 volunteers.

To help with the build, email info@portlandpridebuild.org.

Pride Build Wall Raising Ceremony, Sat., June 27, 11 a.m., SE 97th and Woodstock. 503-287-9529, habitatportlandmetro.org/current/pride_build.php.

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