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First Story, CSC YouthBuild team up to help Albany family



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Wall Raising

Mark Ylen

Tears of joy roll down Tyra Sifuentez's face after the first wall was raised on her family's new home in Albany on Wednesday. (Mark Ylen/Democrat-Herald)

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Tears of joy rolled down 10-year-old Tyra Sifuentez's face Thursday morning as she talked about the new home being constructed for her family by members of the Community Services Consortium YouthBuild program and First Story.

"It's a great opportunity," Tyra said, rubbing the tears from her eyes.

She was surrounded by her mother, Lupella, and sisters, Tavia, 12, and Leticia, 4.

Earlier, Tyra said she was excited because the house is in a "great neighborhood" with lots of kids to play with. Tavia said she was excited because she gets to pick out the paint colors for her bedroom.

"I've never owned a home before," their mother said. "I'm going to be able to give something to my children that I never had. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity. It means so much to see so many people here supporting us."

She learned about the First Story home ownership opportunity through the Linn-Benton Housing Authority, where she has been attending self-sufficiency classes. She will purchase the home with zero down payment and no interest with a 30-year loan from First Story.

The family hopes to move into their new home next July.

Several dozen friends, neighbors and workers joined the family at 2035 Lehigh Way in Hannah Estates. They shared lunch prepared by Parr Lumber employees, listened to guest speakers including Mayor Sharon Konopa and Hayden Watson, CEO of Hayden Homes, which founded FirstStory and then helped the family lift the first pre-built wall into place.

Hayden Watson said his parents founded Hayden Homes in the 1989 in Redmond and helped create the public non-profit First Story as a way of helping others. Since then, First Story has completed almost 50 homes in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. This is the fourth home in Albany.

“We have worked with YouthBuild on other houses and its a wonderful partnership,” Watson said.

YouthBuild provides apprentice-like opportunities for at-risk youth ages 16 to 24. There are 10 YouthBuild students involved with the project.

Sam Hunt, 17, dropped out of Lebanon High School his sophomore year.

“I love it,” Hunt said of the program. “I’m a hands-on kind of guy, so this fits me very well.”

Hunt said helping build the 1,058-square-foot, three-bedroom home for another family, “makes me feel good about myself. It’s helping people who need it and the community. I’d do this 10 times over.”

Hunt said he is working toward his GED and then, because of what he has learned through YouthBuild, he wants to go on to college to study fire science or diesel mechanics.

Anthony Moseley, 19, dropped out of high schools in both Lebanon and Albany.

“I’ve grown up a lot,” Moseley said of his first two months in the program. “I take things more seriously and I take more responsibility.”

Mayor Sharon Konopa called the project, “A wonderful opportunity for a family to get a home in a great neighborhood.”

Partners with First Story and YouthBuild are Parr Lumber, GE, Pacific Air Comfort, G.O. Plumbing, Branch Engineering, Pacific Landscape, Pro West Construction, A-Z Finish Construction, Ashland Brothers, Platt Electric, Schlage, Villalobos, Accurate Concrete, Ken Tooze Excavation and the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce.

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