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Nearly complete, Habitat home is feted

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FAIR HAVEN — The Rutland County chapter of Habitat for Humanity held a dedication ceremony Sunday for its first home since it re-formed three years ago.

But it wasn't only a celebration of a 100-year-old rehabilitated property and a stable home for its owner, Melissa Fournier. The house at 30 West St. in Fair Haven is also a symbol for energy efficiency in a cold climate.

Like all Habitat homes, the emphasis is on providing affordable shelter to people who are willing to invest their time and energy to helping volunteers provide such accommodations.

Fournier, who works for the Holiday Inn in Rutland, and her two daughters, Aunahlyna and Gabriella, have joined 6.8 million people worldwide since 1976 who, through the program, find stability and independence by owning their homes.

"This has been an amazing and humbling experience. Volunteers have been selfless in the giving of their time and funds. I thank you from the bottom of my heart," Fournier said Sunday.

Asked about her favorite part of working on her own house, she said, "I really enjoyed working with everyone on the house and seeing it to completion." More than 200 volunteers had been on site to date donating their skills and time.

There is still work to be done.

"Melissa wanted to get her family in her new home before school started," said Chris Heintz, board president for Habitat for Humanity of Rutland County. "So we made it happen. We have a little ways to go to complete the work."

Not all of the siding has been installed, revealing rigid foam insulation screwed into underlying wood structure, with seams taped and sealed.

A brief tour of the basement led by Fournier showed more energy-efficient measures. Rigid foam board was on some of the walls, with sprayed foam coating wooden sill plates and crawl space foundation walls. Rockwool insulation also covered otherwise exposed earth.

It all translates into minimizing the opportunity for cold air to infiltrate the structure and force warm air out from the second floor and attic space.

"Green Mountain Power Corporation donated a heat pump to keep the house warm in

winter,” Heintz said.

The heat pump is mounted on the west side of the house, extracting warmth from ambient outdoor cold air and pumping it into the house’s upper floors.

The project came about through the re-establishment of the Rutland chapter of Habitat, and a donation of building, land and money to the chapter by Wells Fargo Bank. The Fair Haven house was one of Wells Fargo’s foreclosed properties and it needed a lot of work.

“We tore a shed off the back of the house. And we had to reconstruct about half of the foundation, which was collapsing, tear out and reconfigure the interior walls to meet a new floor plan, replace windows, and insulate throughout, including exterior walls,” said Al Williams, project manager for the property.

Still on the list — complete the siding, install railings on porches and landscape in the spring.

Volunteers from Fair Haven’s Rotary Club received donations of food from Fair Haven Inn and provided an cookout dinner including burgers and hot dogs for project participants on hand at the dedication. Other key supporters for the project included volunteers from Vermont Country Store and area churches.

Heintz said Habitat’s next home project will be 42 Cleveland Ave. in Rutland. Dick Malley, a Habitat board member, projected a time frame for the chapter’s work.

“Our goal is to have one project per year for the next five years. We hope to start 42 Cleveland Ave. in the spring of 2017,” he said.

For more information about Habitat or to get involved, visit the website rutlandhabitat.weebly.com.

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