

CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MACOMB TOWNSHIP

Dakota High dedicates home for Habitat for Humanity

Students build house for Clinton Township family

By Thomas Franz

C&G Newspapers



Dakota High School students continue construction of a home for Macomb Habitat for Humanity Feb. 9. (Photo by Thomas Franz)

🕒 Posted February 17, 2016

MACOMB TOWNSHIP/CLINTON TOWNSHIP — Inside a warehouse structure on the west side of Dakota High School's football stadium is where students assemble homes from scratch for individuals in need.

For 10 years, students in Dakota's construction trades programs have built nine homes for Macomb Habitat for Humanity. On Feb. 2, they dedicated a home for a family to move into in Clinton Township.

"We go through a complete build-out of the house, minus the foundation, of course, but we build the whole house from a pile of lumber to a finished product almost," Dakota teacher Joe Churches said.

The house is approximately 1,250 square feet with three bedrooms, a full kitchen, living room and basement with a nine-foot ceiling.

"It's a very premium built home. I would consider it probably better built than the houses we live in today," Churches said.

Churches, who has been teaching construction at Dakota for 17 years, said he and his students take great pride in their work.

"We don't let the house go out with nothing but the best," Churches said. "We make sure the materials are good and put in correctly, as well as when the kids actually make a mistake, we tear it apart and start again."

There are 65 students in the construction trades program. Jeremiah Wix, a senior, said he takes the course as a two-hour elective.

"You get a lot of benefits with this class, though," Wix said. "You get college credit if you're in it a long period of time. If anything, this should be a required course."

Wix said he has several family members who work in construction, and his background from working with them has made the class special for him.

"When I heard about this, I had never heard about it until this year, but so far I'm really used to it already. It's really fun," Wix said.

Using his talent in construction to help others is an added bonus for Wix.

“It’s actually kind of awesome. Not many people at my age can say we build houses and donate them,” Wix said. “I feel like we’re giving back a little bit.”

Senior Eric Lenander, who has been in Dakota’s program for three years, echoed Wix’s sentiments about giving back to Habitat.

“It feels good because you get to see a family in need get a house. When they say stuff like ‘I’ve never had my own bedroom before,’ and now they do, that feels good,” Lenander said.

Helen Hicks, the president and CEO for Macomb Habitat, said Dakota’s program has made a huge impact on her organization’s efforts. With a limited budget for construction workers, Hicks said Dakota’s students have been a great benefit to the community.

“When we get assistance from Dakota High School, that saves us so much money. Through their efforts, a home is actually built, a family can move into that home,” Hicks said. “It’s a wonderful collaboration, it really is.”

Churches said events like the Feb. 2 dedication are humbling experiences for his students.

“I think the kids understand how important it is to help with the community. They definitely see it when a homeowner walks in the door and it becomes a very emotional situation, both for the homeowner and the students,” Churches said. “It humbles them very quickly.”