



## Habitat home a mother's dream

Posted By CAROL MULLIGAN, THE SUDBURY STAR

Showing emotion is a family trait for Nicole Delaire and her father, Robert Delaire, so the tears flowed freely when they learned Nicole and her children will have a home built for them by Habitat for Humanity Sudbury District.

Habitat's Lise Rheault announced Thursday the single mother of two children -- Gillian, 9, and Ben, 8, -- had been selected by the non-profit organization to benefit from its fifth home build.

The announcement was made at a noon news conference at Habitat's Restore at 250 Froot Rd.

Nicole Delaire burst into tears and hugged her children when she learned the application she had made for a Habitat home in April had been approved.

"This is an opportunity of a lifetime," said a beaming Delaire after the official speeches at the event.

Owning her own home has been an impossible dream for Delaire, who works as a sales agent at Science North and Dynamic Earth.

"I've been struggling for the down payment, but I just can't get there as a single parent," she said.

Habitat for Humanity, a worldwide organization, builds new homes for people who qualify. They do not have to make down payments, nor do they pay interest on loans for their homes.

Delaire's home will be built by Habitat volunteers, including herself and her two children. They will contribute 500 hours of sweat equity.

Her father, whom Gillian jokingly called "Bob the Builder," is keen to help make the home a reality.

A retired electrician known as Mr. Fix-It at the downtown soup kitchen where he volunteers, Delaire was overcome with emotion at the thought of what a home will mean to his daughter and grandchildren.

When asked why he was crying, he said simply: "Because it's something big."

Delaire said his daughter and her children have been yearning to move out of their apartment in a downtown area that has high traffic and high crime rates.

"She's going to be really happy," he said of Nicole. "It's going to be nice for her, a home, a new home. They don't have to worry about anybody around. It will make a big difference."

Nicole Delaire is looking forward to being able to have a clean-air environment for Gillian who has cystic fibrosis. Some of the tenants of her coop smoke and it wafts into her apartment.

"We need the clean air, the clean environment," she said.

The premium sponsor for the build is Genworth Financial Canada, which invited students across Canada in grades 4-6 to submit a short story, poem or essay about what "home" really means to them. Habitat for Humanity Sudbury District is still searching for sponsors to complete the build.

Grade 6 student Jackson Topo, of Mississauga, won the contest and chose to give the money to Sudbury, where his late grandfather lived.

Habitat For Humanity board chair Jack Lanctot said all of the labour for the home will be done by volunteers eager to provide a safe, affordable home for Delaire and her children.

Raising money for these builds is challenging in difficult economic times, said Lanctot. "We've just got to keep plugging away, one house at a time."

Rheault encouraged businesses and schools to get involved with Habitat's Adopt A Day challenge in which employees or students volunteer in groups to work on a house.

Nicole Delaire said applying for the Habitat house and the process that followed it "was the most stressful thing I've ever done in my life, besides these children."

But she was determined to provide a home for them because it stands for something important to her -- memories.

"I want to put memories in a home. If we ever move out of that apartment, all our memories are gone to somebody else. These kids are getting older, and I really needed to provide that for them," said Delaire.

Pointing to her tearful father, Delaire said she wanted her children to "come to our home for Thanksgiving with their babies someday" like she does to Robert's Minnow Lake home.

Gillian was clearly excited about the prospect of moving into her own home. She has plans to paint her new bedroom beige and red, and maybe get a hypo-allergenic dog that won't aggravate her medical condition.

Ben seemed overwhelmed by the idea, but admitted he was excited to move to Garson and perhaps play soccer there.

Nickel Belt New Democrat MPP France Gelinias urged residents to get involved with the organization.

People need not have building skills to volunteer. If you can handle a broom or a paintbrush, you can be useful, said Gelinias.

For more about Habitat For Humanity Sudbury District, how to apply for a home, or to volunteer, visit [www.habitatsudbury.com](http://www.habitatsudbury.com).