

Letter to the Editor,

In 2011 a few people who were concerned about the shortage of affordable housing and wanted to do something about it came together to bring Habitat for Humanity to Parry Sound. Soon, other individuals, businesses, and volunteer organizations joined them; giving their time, donating money and goods, and supporting fundraisers. Together their efforts resulted in a new home constructed on Emily Street in 2013, and a donated home renovated on Lake Joseph Road in 2015. This year we will build a duplex on Addie Street, bringing the total number of new affordable homes in the first six years to four.

The Parry Sound organization achieved official Chapter status in 2016 within Habitat for Humanity Ontario Gateway North, the region which includes all Habitat chapters in northeast Ontario. There are now 50 permanent volunteers in the Parry Sound Chapter and additional people who help on a 'one time' basis. Volunteers include both permanent and seasonal residents and come from many walks of life. Several have had experience working with Habitat in other places.

Hans de Vries took the initiative to start Habitat in Parry Sound and is Chair of the Steering Committee. Five other 'originals' from 2011 who remain on the Committee are Ab Fuller, Peter Herbert, Doug MacDonald, Lynn Martin and Jacqui Morrison. With them now are newer members Gregg Holmes, Pat Howe, Jim McLellan, Keith Mowling, Jo Ann Poglitsch, Ernie Vankoughnett, Anita Venne-Koke and Linda West.

The Steering Committee plans and coordinates the Chapter's activities. Its members individually or with committees take on responsibilities such as organizing fundraising events, coordinating the building process, recruiting volunteers, selecting families to purchase homes, being the communication link with the families until they take possession of their new homes, and representing Parry Sound on the Ontario Gateway North Board of Directors. Public information coordinator, a position responsible for promoting public awareness of the Chapter and its events, is currently vacant and applicants would be welcomed.

The development of Habitat for Humanity in Parry Sound during its first six years is an achievement of which the entire community can be proud because all parts of the community have contributed generously to make it happen. It also shows what can be done when a few determined people volunteer to undertake a project. They started with one home; soon there will be four, then more in the future at an increasing rate.

Like the successes of the past, future success will depend on broad community support, including new volunteers to help build homes, serve on committees, and take on positions such as public information coordinator. Anyone interested in helping in any way is encouraged to contact Hans at devrieshans3@gmail.com or 705-774-0994.