

Mom of 3 given Newark home after 400 hours of "sweat equity"

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Habitat for Humanity, Newark unveiled Abraham House, which will be the home of Rachel Acquoi and her children. From left; Reverend Rick Boyer of Prospect Presbyterian Church; Don Blaesser, Deputy Executive Director of Habitat Newark; Rachel Acquoi; David R. Zurheide, Executive Director of Habitat Newark; and Habitat volunteers Margaret Prentice and Barry Wolfensohn.

Habitat for Humanity, Newark recently celebrated as Rachel Acquoi closed on her new home, also called "Abraham House" as a symbol of cultural cooperation between Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and Ethical Culturists who helped make her dream a reality. The Acquoi family is scheduled to move in the home on Thursday.

During Sunday's dedication ceremony, West Ward Councilman Ronald C. Rice offered the family best wishes and commended Habitat for Humanity for the work they've done in Newark. Rabbi Francine Roston of Congregation Beth El of South Orange, Imam W. Deen Shareef of Masjid Waarith ud Deen Mosque of Irvington and the Rev. Rick Boyer of Prospect Presbyterian Church of Maplewood offered blessings in three languages.

"I want to thank Habitat for Humanity for all they have done to help my family," said Acquoi, an immigrant from Liberia who lived in public housing in Newark. "This is a mansion compared to where we were living."

Acquoi put in more than 400 hours of labor on the home, which she calls her "paradise." She will also make payments on the zero interest loan used to finance the construction. The land was donated by a member of Ahavas Sholom Jewish Congregation and the first \$33,000 for the project was donated by members of Prospect Presbyterian Church in Maplewood.

Abraham House is the 68th home Habitat for Humanity has built in Newark. The organization is working on their 69th Newark home in another neighborhood and has aggressive plans to build homes in West Orange in the near future, including "Abraham House 2."

"Each of the families that Habitat helps is unique and special," said Barry Wolfensohn, a habitat volunteer who envisioned the Abraham House concept. Volunteers and donors can call Habitat for Humanity, Newark at (973) 624-3330 or visit online at www.habitatnewark.org.