

Home-building program benefits families in Castle Rock



Bill Wagner / The Daily News The Decoitos — from left, Thea, Joshua and Ken — walk past their new home in Castle Rock during a 20th anniversary celebration of CAP's Self-Help Housing Program.

By Barbara LaBoe / The Daily News | Posted: Monday, July 5, 2010

CASTLE ROCK — As Ken Decoito looks around his nearly completed home here he sees "new" everywhere he looks.

New walls, light fixtures and, of course, a new home to share with his wife, Thea, and two youngest children.

"Have you ever had anything brand new in your life?" he asks. "The closest I did was a 5-year-old car."

"Even a lot of my friends, they buy old homes and fix them up but they don't have new houses," he said. "When you see the light at the end of the tunnel and my wife and me in a brand new house, you just keep thinking 'We did it!'"

The Decoitos are one of seven families almost ready to move into their new homes in the Self Help Housing subdivision nicknamed the Field of Dreams. The land used to be an old ball field near the city's water treatment plant. Another eight families are ready to start work on the next round of homes in the program run through the Lower Columbia Community Action Program.

It's been a lot of work — participants helped each other build their homes step-by-step since November — but both the families and city officials couldn't be happier.

"This truly has become a Field of Dreams," Castle Rock Public Works Director Dave Vorse said last week during a 20th anniversary celebration of the CAP program. "We're adding 15 quality homes to our town and 15 families to the community who will invest their lives here and send their children to our schools and participate in community organizations and churches. In short, they'll enhance our entire community."

New home construction after several years of stagnant growth doesn't hurt either. City officials are looking forward to the expanded tax base these homes and a planned 29-home development on Lois Dye Lane will bring.

New construction is particularly beneficial to a city's overall tax revenue, and Castle Rock could use all the help it can get after several years of painful budget cuts.

State law bars cities from increasing their budgets more than 1 percent annually, but new construction proceeds are exempted from that cap.

The CAP houses haven't been appraised yet, but considering the land used to be an old ball field, they're sure to increase city coffers with the property taxes.

"It broadens our tax base but that's almost just an added plus," said City Councilman Jack Reilly.

"Bottom line this is giving people a chance to live the American dream."

Josh and Rebecca Mohler couldn't have said it better.

After 10 years of renting the young parents of Elijah, 9, and Katia, 4, can't wait to move into their own home.

"We're so done with renting," Rebecca Mohler said last week.

Josh Mohler would work 40 hours a week at his job with American Medical Response and then put in another 30 hours working on the house to meet the program's requirement. It was tough, but now that the house is almost done, it was well worth it, Rebecca Mohler said.

"It's going to be great," Mohler said of moving in.

As for the Decoitos, they said they never would have been able to get a new home without the CAP program.

Especially after Ken Decoito was laid off last fall.

"If the economy hadn't caught up with me, maybe (we could have bought a home without the CAP program)," he said. "We were saving and trying, but we were still on the verge."

Now though, he just marvels as he talks about paint, carpet and linoleum — also new — in his home.

"It's going to be amazing," Decoito said, looking around one of the upstairs bedrooms. "Just amazing."