

HILLSDALE

# DAILY NEWS

DEDICATION CEREMONY

## Family receives Habitat home By Nancy Hastings

JONESVILLE – Hillsdale County Habitat for Humanity handed over the keys to a new home for a Jonesville family on Saturday. The Habitat for Humanity affiliate celebrated the completion of its eighth home at the dedication ceremony held at 327 Willow St. in Jonesville. The new homeowners are Cindy Conklin and Jason Cox, and their two sons, Tristan, 7, and Sawyer, 5. Following the ribbon cutting over the doorway, a dedication ceremony included a confirmation of the requirements met by the new homeowners, as well as recognition of local volunteers and sponsors who worked hard to help the Conklin-Cox family reach their goal.

Treasurer Pam Laurell welcomed board members and volunteers to the ceremony, noting the road to completion has been “long and joyous.” She said this project was unique because it was the group’s first remodel and came with a lot of challenges that differed from those which accompany stick-built homes. After the home was acquired from the village of Jonesville, board members and officers began the demolition process of ripping out old carpet and meeting required standards with new plumbing and electrical. “With delays came new challenges, and we are here today after a long process and great effort,” Laurell said. Affiliate president Melodie Coles explained the open application period and the number of steps necessary. “It’s based on need first, the ability to repay the no-profit mortgage loan and the ability and willingness to partner with us by putting in the sweat equity hours required,” Coles said before the ceremony. “They put in 500 sweat equity hours and that’s quite a bit of time.”

Coles said the board meets with families to determine need. Then, a followup visit is planned “out of the blue” to meet with the family and witness their environment. “In this case there was a need,” Coles said. “Jason works full time and Cindy worked part-time as well, but they were living in a one-bedroom apartment with their two sons, which was a difficult situation.” Coles noted the average waiting time for a home is two years. “You don’t just call up and say you want a Habitat home,” she said. “There is a whole process of growing together and being on a journey together.”

The recipients are also required to take an eight-session financial freedom class in addition to a Home Building Education class offered by the Community Action Agency, so that the family can understand what it takes to be a home owner. “We want them to succeed at being new home owners,” Coles said, noting how presenters at the agency raved about how wonderful it was to work with the family. “We couldn’t have asked for a better family.”

Before presenting certificates of sweat equity hours and financial education, Coles made a presentation to secretary Audrey Dunten, who has been with the affiliate since Habitat for Humanity started in Hillsdale County. Among board members and local businesses involved, she also recognized key leaders Rudy Kogelman and Alex Henvey. After the new homeowners were handed the keys to their home, Conklin addressed those present by thanking everyone involved. “Without all of you, we would not have been able to give our boys a bedroom of their own and a safe place to call home with a yard to play in... for everything we are grateful. Having somewhere to go to call home and having somewhere the family can love is fabulous, but having both is a blessing.” Coles said Hillsdale County Habitat for Humanity wishes to recognize the special support of the Village of Jonesville and the Hillsdale First United Methodist Church Missions Committee, whose gifts offered the foundation for this project. The Rev. Pat Brook, who provided a traditional blessing for the home prior to the program, said it was exciting to be a part of the process. “It’s nice to do something tangible like this for the family and to see the children so excited about their new home,” Brook said.



**Affiliate President Melodie Coles hands over the keys to the newest Habitat for Humanity home located in Jonesville during a dedication ceremony Saturday. NANCY HASTINGS PHOTO**  
**The newest Habitat for Humanity Home is located at 327 Willow St., Jonesville. NANCY HASTINGS PHOTO**  
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