

EDG Bulletin Column

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Value of Non-Profit Agency to Local Economy

A healthy community of social and economic opportunity needs economic supporters, including not-for-profit agencies which provide public services that increase the quality of life for Nanaimo residents. In Nanaimo Habitat for Humanity, along with its dedicated volunteers and supporters, is playing a fundamental role in the community's well-being.

Habitat for Humanity Mid-Vancouver Island (MVI) has been a society since 1994, and has been building homes at no profit and no interest for low-income families in Nanaimo since 2001. They have seen continued growth, going from building one house per year to building three or four annually. Since 2007, their projects have expanded into other mid-island communities. Their success has not gone unnoticed; they recently received the National Habitat Award in Excellence and were a finalist for a Greater Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce's Sterling Award in the Non-Profit category. "This was a great honour for us to receive community recognition, which is important since our organization is so driven by volunteer participation," said Teresa Pring, Executive Director for Habitat for Humanity MVI. There are approximately 200 people in Pring's volunteer database who assist with home builds.

Volunteers, donors, corporate sponsors and the homeowners themselves all work together to build a future for deserving families and a stronger sense of community for everyone involved. The family then pays 25% of their income toward the mortgage which allows them to afford things like further education, recreation passes and transportation which increases their overall quality of life and puts them in a better position to move ahead. Habitat calls this a "Hand Up", not a "Hand Out".

Corporate volunteers also assist to raise funds for Habitat for Humanity. Supporting Employment Transitions, and VFC Inc. (Vehicle Financing Company) recently raised \$4,000 and \$2,500 respectively for Habitat for Humanity and will each have their own corporate build day.

Aside from community participation, this organization is sustained by its social enterprise venture, the ReStore on Mostar Road. Another 40 volunteers work regularly at this store, which sells donated building supplies and materials at up to a 50% discount. "It helps the environment by reusing products that people would normally throw away, and helps the community by creating a self-sustainable not-for-profit organization," says Pring. It's also an economic way for homeowners to complete renovations, and purchases are eligible for the Federal Government's Home Renovation Tax Credit Program. The profits from ReStore help purchase land for new home builds.

Habitat for Humanity completed a home in Ladysmith in March 2009 and is planning to complete a duplex in Nanaimo and homes in Parksville and Port Alberni in the near future. Because of the tireless efforts of our local non-profit agencies such as Habitat for Humanity, Nanaimo continues to be one of the most desirable, livable small cities in North America.