

Movin' on up to the east side

Habitat for Humanity Pride Build to construct six new homes in Toronto's east end

JP LAROCQUE COMMUNITY NEWS

It has been said that Pride is rooted in community — a sense of shared experience and, perhaps most importantly, space. But for many in the city's LGBT community, finding a safe and affordable living space can be a challenge.

"We have seen that LGBT communities disproportionately contend with inadequate housing at critical points in their lives, namely in their youth and elder years," says Enloe Wilson, manager of faith and community development at Habitat GTA. "[Our organization's] work helps to relieve those related challenges through assisting low-income families in building and financing the ownership of homes."

On June 21, Habitat for Humanity GTA will host Canada's first Pride Build. The event, which is affiliated with WorldPride, encourages community members to aid in the physical construction of six new affordable homes in Toronto's east end.

"Given the celebratory nature of WorldPride, Pride Build promises to be a bit of an upsized soirée," Wilson says. "It will be held in our dedicated home-building factory in North York, and participants can expect fun décor, music, games, catered lunch, prizes for top fundraisers and a visit or two by VIP guests."

At the build site, new volunteers are matched up with skilled volunteer crew leaders, who deliver training and oversight. No experience is necessary, and the organization provides all tools, safety gear, lunch and other support through an eight-hour shift.

"By the end of the day, our volunteer crews go home a bit spent but absolutely invigorated by the tangible product of their teamwork and the gratification of knowing they have substantively contributed to the transformation of families' lives."

Pride Builds have gained traction over the last decade, with Habitat affiliates holding popular events in Portland, San Francisco, Tucson and Washington, DC.

According to Wilson, roughly one in five families in the GTA live in overcrowded, substandard or unaffordable housing, with more than 77,000 families currently on a waiting list



“Given the celebratory nature of WorldPride, Pride Build promises to be a bit of an upsized soirée.”

ENLOE WILSON, MANAGER
OF FAITH & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT AT HABITAT GTA

Pride Build will engage community members to aid in the physical construction of six new affordable homes in Toronto's east end.

for subsidized housing. Through a combination of strategic partnerships and outreach, the organization has been able to build more than 270 affordable homes across the city, and they hope to deliver home ownership to 100 more low-income families every year by 2020.

"By providing affordable, no-profit, no-interest mortgages ... [we try to] break the cycle of social dependence and benefit our local economy as Habitat homeowners contribute to municipal revenues through the payment of their own property taxes."

Alongside Pride Build, Habitat GTA has introduced other initiatives that directly address disenfranchised mem-

bers of the LGBT community.

"We have partnered with such programs as the 519 Church Street Community Centre Summer Camp

to educate early on about the need for adequate shelter for all," Wilson says. "And through our year-round Adopt-a-Day program, we also have enjoyed the partnership of countless community organizations, faith groups, elected officials and other individuals who work closely with LGBT communities to assist in the hands-on building of homes

at our construction sites."

Still, with the world watching as Canada hosts WorldPride, Wilson sees the Pride Build as integral to both the

organization and the LGBT community.

"Our hope is that through this first-ever Canadian Pride Build, we might further grow these important partnerships, bringing visibility to the broad need for af-

fordable housing in our area and, more particularly, to the empowerment of LGBT communities in making the availability of such housing a reality." X

PRIDE BUILD
Sat, June 21, 8am–4pm
Habitat GTA Home Building Facility
1100 Caledonia Rd
Free with fundraising challenge
of \$250 per participant
enloe.wilson@habitatgta.ca
or 416-755-7353 x242