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**Any Color you Like, As Long As It's Green**

*Rising energy costs and environmental awareness power an emphasis for Habitat for Humanity to build tighter, more efficient homes*

This July, months of hard work will pay off as the Rincon family moves into their new South Salem home. Built by Habitat for Humanity of the Mid-Willamette Valley, there are many things that make this home exceptional—the thousands of volunteer hours poured into its construction, its zero-percent interest mortgage, a floor plan that accommodates the couple's son who requires the use of a wheelchair. But it's the home's Energy Star and Earth Advantage ratings that give the Rincons and Habitat for Humanity reason to celebrate.

Builders of energy-conscious homes have always known that lower utility bills more than offset the additional costs of efficiency upgrades. That makes energy-efficient features a natural fit with affordable housing. From proper air sealing techniques during construction to fluorescent light bulbs and energy efficient appliances, the Rincon's home was built to make sure the family can afford their monthly mortgage payments and their utility bills as well. "It makes no sense for us to build a home that a family can't afford to heat," explains Habitat's construction manager LouJean Fobert.

Now one of the nation's largest home builders, Habitat for Humanity strives to make energy-efficient, environmentally-friendly construction a priority in all its projects. In the last several years, Habitat for Humanity affiliates have enjoyed an increasing number of green building resources at their disposal: new high-efficiency products at affordable prices, better publicized green-building techniques, partnerships that share costs, and standardized rating criteria to evaluate energy use.

"Some of what we've done to meet the Earth Advantage criteria is the natural next step from what we were already doing," says Fobert. "With the Rincon's home, we were able to use additional green building strategies like recycling construction waste, using products that are more sustainable or that contain recycled content, and sourcing materials locally."

The home, located at 905 Fuller Lane in Salem, will be featured on the Home Builder's Association Tour of Homes Saturday June 18-Sunday, June 26. A house blessing ceremony will be held at the home at **11 am on Saturday, July 23** and is free and open to the public.

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Habitat for Humanity of the Mid-Willamette Valley has been serving the community since 1991, working in concert with volunteers, donors, and partner families to build decent, affordable homes in Salem, Keizer, Polk County and the greater Stayton area. To date, Habitat for Humanity of the Mid-Willamette Valley has built more than 75 homes, housing more than 300 individuals— including over 200 children.

Habitat for Humanity is a worldwide, grass-roots movement. There are more than 2,100 active affiliates in 100 countries, including all 50 states of the United States, the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico.

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