



Tala, 14, Rebekah, 11, Laverne, Cheryl and Chris, 14, gather around the dining room table one autumn afternoon, reminiscing about the time they received their home.

# A Place to Call Home



TOP: Cheryl Rohrbach holds a photograph of her, her husband Laverne, their three grandchildren, and a member of Prince Edward Hastings Habitat for Humanity in front of the empty lot where their home now stands. BOTTOM: The Rohrbach family stands in front of their completed home for a family photo last October.

Photos and story by Anica James

Light filters through the dining room window into the home of the Rohrbach family, casting a late autumn glow onto the butter yellow walls of the open-concept space.

The five family members have gathered around the rickety oval oak table, flipping through photo albums that show what their living situation used to be like.

Cheryl Rohrbach holds up a photograph of her, her husband Laverne, their three grandchildren, and a member of Prince Edward Hastings Habitat for Humanity in front of the empty lot where their home now stands.

“We all had to work 500 hours in order to gain possession of the house,” Rohrbach explained. “It is mandatory, but it was also a lot of fun. It was a great learning experience and very rewarding.”

The family moved into the George Street South home in December 2008 and enjoy the convenient location next to the Jane Forrester Park along Belleville’s waterfront.

Because of unfortunate circumstances, the grandchildren were removed from their birth parents by the Children’s Aid Society and placed in foster care.

After gaining custody of the grandchildren, Laverne and Cheryl were told by CAS that their housing situation was not suitable at the time and that it needed to change in order for the children to move in.

Laverne and Cheryl fought for almost two years to gain custody of the kids.

“Our lives became an open book for a year and a half...it was very transparent. We went through psychiatric testing, psychological testing...just to prove that we were capable for raising the grandchildren.”

“But we wouldn’t change it for anything,” Cheryl added.

Hard on cash and exhausted from numerous court appearances, the Rohrbachs wanted to find a new home that could accommodate all five of them. That is when Laverne stumbled upon the local Habitat for Humanity website and applied for housing right away.

“It was the greatest gift we have ever received,” Laverne said. “There were five of us living in a two-bedroom apartment before, and now we all have our own room and a place where we can grow together as a family.”



Laverne Rohrbach pauses for a moment in the kitchen, reminiscing about the day he and his wife, Cheryl, gained custody of their three grandchildren as his grandson, Chris, listens intently.



Cheryl Rohrbach discusses an upcoming CanGrands event that she and Laverne are members of to her granddaughter Tala, in the kitchen.