



New home builders and future owners: Kristen Hobson (l), Tanya Hay (c) and Terry Sue Johnson-Rogers (r)

A VERY SPECIAL DAY!

*By Theresa Whistler
Workforce Housing Coordinator*

July 11th was a very special day for 3 Red Lodge families whose matriarchs spent the day beginning to build their new homes at the Spires under the guidance of Helena Area Habitats' Red Lodge construction manager, Andrew Ray. As the day started, residents took notice and there were some friendly introductions (including one neighbors' curious dogs). Within minutes after securing the Johnny-on-the-spot, each homeowner was measuring boards and had circular saws in their hands. This first day was an introduction to safety, basic carpentry skills and most importantly, building a set of sawhorses for each future home.



Andrew Ray

Andrew, a long time homebuilder himself, explained the "sawhorse" tradition to the newbies. To paraphrase, Andrew: "One of the oldest traditions of building a home is to start by building your own sawhorses and because we're building 4 homes in this turn, we'll build 8 sawhorses. By the time we finish building these homes, you'll notice all the cuts and dings on the top boards...you might even see a tiny smudge of blood here and there. The idea is that these sawhorses will be with you through the blood, sweat (and possibly tears) you'll put into building your homes. That makes them belong with these homes for all time. When anyone moves, the sawhorses stay". The joy of learning this tradition raised enthusiasm for what lies ahead even more so and left everyone wondering just how beat up those horses will be at the finish.

By the end of the day, 8 very sturdy sawhorses and a site plan table were built and ready for the work ahead. Everyone left with new skills, high spirits and readiness to learn more. Moving ahead, the homeowners will work together on site every Tuesday evening and Saturday with the partners they'll bring until all homes are move-in-ready. The "sweat-equity" families are putting into building homes on land placed in a community trust is all part of the agreement the families have with Habitat for Humanity and Trust Montana. This is a statewide pilot project happening in Red Lodge through shared efforts with Red Lodge Area Community Foundations' Workforce Housing Committee. It looks like we're off to a great start!

Anyone interested in building a home through this program or considering volunteering to build may contact Theresa@rlacf.org or call 908-872-5596. No experience is necessary. Protocol for working safely on site during the COVID-19 situation is practiced following Habitat's guidelines and limiting the number of people on site.

