

## Organizations, businesses team up to build home for veteran

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By Mike Brownlee, nonpareilonline.com



*(From left), Bill Purdue with BP Quality Homes, Cherie Scott with Neighbor Works Home Solution and Dan Ozaydin with Heartland Properties pose for a portrait at the Veterans Memorial in Bayliss Park.*

It started with an idea.

Homebuilder Bill Purdue was speaking with his friend and cohort Dan Ozaydin of Heartland Properties.

"We were talking about veterans," said Purdue, who operates BP Quality Homes. "I said it'd be neat to build a new home for a veteran and give it to 'em with no strings attached, give it to 'em free and clear."

The idea grew. Purdue contacted subcontractors and suppliers he works with and the businesses have agreed to donate supplies and labor for free.

"It's unbelievable that everybody was on board," Purdue said.

Organizers plan to ask for a donation of land by the city, which would be subject to City Council approval.

Purdue and Ozaydin also contacted the Pottawattamie County Veterans Administration and the Council Bluffs office of NeighborWorks Homes Solutions, a nonprofit organization that helps low- and medium-income families find housing, for assistance as well.

"It's going to be wonderful for the area," said Darlene McMartin, director of the county Veterans Administration and an Army veteran. "Finding affordable housing in our area is difficult. It's great that we can do this, that he can do this for them."

McMartin and Cherie Scott, housing specialist with NeighborWorks, will work on an application to find an owner for the home. The group agreed on choosing a disabled veteran with children. McMartin explained that "disability" covers a number of maladies, both observable and hidden. "They may have wounds that aren't visible. Just a physical disability is not the only requirement," she said.

The recipient must be employed or have adequate disability payments to afford the home – including coverage of taxes and utilities – going forward.

The home will feature a forgivable mortgage for the first 10 years, with 10 percent knocked off per year over the first decade, organizers explained. That means if the homeowner sold it after three years, 70 percent of the proceeds would go back to the VA or NeighborWorks. After 10 years, the owner would net all proceeds from a sale.

“We don’t want to put someone in there where it’s above their income source. We want them to succeed,” McMartin said. “We want to make sure that success is there for them in the long run.” Scott called the project a “no-brainer.”

“When Dan and Bill came to us with this idea, I just fell in love with this idea. I’m so lucky that this came into my lap,” said Scott, an Air Force veteran. “We’re so grateful to do this for another veteran. This is a great opportunity.”

Until the land agreement is finalized, it’s unclear where the home will be located. The house will feature three bedrooms and two bathrooms, with 1,300 to 1,400 finished square feet. The house will be on a concrete slab, with no basement.

Construction is set to begin in the spring of 2016.

“There are still a few details to iron out, but we don’t see any roadblocks at this point,” Ozaydin said.

Throughout a conversation about the project, Perdue stressed one thing above all – the importance of his subcontractors and suppliers in the project. More than 20 local companies are donating material or labor for the project.

“This wouldn’t be possible without my subs and suppliers. They’re a great group,” Perdue said. “They’re making this possible.”

Perdue served in the Navy, fighting in the Korean War, while his father, Darrel, served in the Navy during World War II. Bill Perdue said his grandsons, Trevor and Brody Perdue, are Marines.

“I think it’ll be cool for everyone to be able to do this for a disabled veteran,” he said. The organizers of the project said they hope this is the beginning of a sustained program, with Perdue noting he hopes more donors come forward.

“Hopefully, this won’t be the last,” McMartin said. “Hopefully, we can do this, maybe not every year, but when we can. I think it’d be a wonderful thing to get other vendors and subcontractors to be able to do this on an ongoing basis, as resources allow.”