

Storytelling

Helping one of their own

Habitat for Humanity and Marg Healey owe a lot to each other.

Marg, 49, was Habitat Canada's volunteer of the year in both 2009 and 2011. She's been volunteering for Habitat for 30 years. She started at age 19, when Habitat was only one-year old in Canada. In that time, she's helped to build 184 houses. That's over six houses per year. Most have been in Canada, but she's made a few trips to the United States through the Global Village program.



Marg never thought she'd be living in one of the houses she helped to build.

Changing circumstances

Three years ago, Marg's husband died, leaving her as the sole parent to their 14-year-old twins, Holly and Heather. She couldn't afford to keep the family in their large apartment on the small salary she made at Chapters. Marg had no family to ask for help, so she and the girls lived in a motel for eight months.

"I did the best I could for my girls," Marg says. "But teenagers need their own space."

Helping the helper

Matt Casey, president of Habitat's Toronto chapter, has known Marg for years. He encouraged her to apply to Habitat for her family.

"It was eye-opening looking at what Habitat does from the other side," Marg says. "Being part of the entire process really made me understand how much affordable housing is needed."

Habitat families are required to donate 500 hours to the organization in exchange for their house. Marg surpassed 500 hours long ago, but there was no way she and the twins would have missed out on helping to build their own home. It's something they take pride in as a family.

A space of their own

The twins love the new house.

"We're inseparable, but it's nice having our own rooms again," says Heather. "We didn't know how long we'd have to share a bed."

Holly painted her room a light blue, but you can barely see the walls which are covered in One Direction and Backstreet Boys posters.

"My mom introduced me to them," she says about the Backstreet Boys. "My mom has done so much for us. A lot of girls our age probably wouldn't want to listen to music with their mom, but we dance around our living room every time it comes on. We never had the space to do that before."

If you're interested in joining our 63,000 volunteers, please visit <http://www.habitat.ca/volunteeropportunitiesp4239.php>.