



Habitat for Humanity will turn the keys over to families at two homes on Forbes Street in London, ON

December 6, 2017 – London, ON - Habitat for Humanity Heartland Ontario is excited to announce the completion of homes for the Kassa and Cooper families and will have a key ceremony at 20 and 22 Forbes Street, London on Friday, December 15, 2017 at 11:00AM. These homes, along with the two recently completed in St Thomas, represent our local contribution to the Carter Work Project in July 2017. The goal of the initiative which brought former US President and First Lady Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter to Canada was to build 150 homes for our 150th year. Habitat for Humanity Canada recently announced that this goal was not only met but surpassed and we are proud to have been part of this inspiring project.

“The days we hand over the keys to our families are the best days of our year, but particularly this close to the holidays,” said Brian Elliot, CEO Habitat for Humanity Heartland Ontario, “We are so happy to know that these two families are taking possession of their homes and that they will start a new year with a foundation built on strength, stability and self-reliance.”

Awatash Kassa and her adult children are excited to be part of the Habitat family. Originally from Ethiopia, Awatash has worked very hard to raise her children and put down roots in Canada. She came to Canada to flee political strife and hardship in her homeland.

Awatash is a single mother who balances working full-time with parenting. She works nights so that she can support her family, and accommodate her daughter Lemlem’s special needs. Lemlem is 36 years old and has Cerebral Palsy. After she completed high school, Lemlem began to attend Hutton House 3 days a week. Although she cannot walk or live independently, she enjoys her friends at Hutton House. Awatash also has a son, Mennor, who is a 21 year old Western student. Mennor is studying Chemistry and is interested in pursuing a career in the Medical Science field. Living at home, Mennor is devoted to his sister and shares responsibility for her care with his mother.

Awatash looks forward to the many benefits of home ownership. At present, she must do her laundry at a Laundromat, which requires having someone stay with Lemlem. Awatash loves to cook, and can imagine making healthy meals in her own kitchen, and tending her own garden. Our build teams had great things to say about the savory meals she prepared and served on the construction site over the past few months.

The Kassa family is a wonderful addition to the Habitat Forbes Street neighbourhood.

George and Viola Cooper currently live with their three daughters and two sons in an 800 square foot apartment. They met in a refugee camp in Ghana in 2000 after both fleeing Liberia with their families during a civil war. In 2005 George immigrated to Canada with his parents,

then three years later traveled back to Ghana to marry Viola. It was 2010 before George and his family could all live together in Canada due to costly delays during the immigration process. In 2015 the family was met with another challenge when their two year old son Timothy was diagnosed with lung cancer and required surgery.

The Coopers' daughter Alice and son George Jr. enjoy the Boys and Girls Club and take part in music and sports programs in school, while Viola and George are active in the London Liberian Association and their Church. Viola has been attending school to obtain her G.E.D and will continue with her education. Little Timothy has recovered well from his surgery.

Like all Habitat families, the Coopers have completed 500 volunteer hours in order to qualify to be homeowners in the program. They will purchase their home with no down payment, and through a zero-interest mortgage. George Cooper has been very active on the build site of his new home, taking great pride in participating in all aspects of the construction project. The entire family have been enthusiastic representatives of Habitat for Humanity in our community and beyond since the day they opened their letter of acceptance.

When asked what having a Habitat home will mean to them, the Coopers told us, "We will borrow an expression from the Mary Poppins movie - Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" The Coopers are extremely grateful for your help. A decent home gives them the strong foundation they need to create a better life for themselves and their families.

The public are invited to come out and celebrate with us as we get our families home for the holidays!

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Who: Habitat for Humanity Heartland Ontario

What: Dedication Ceremony - 20 and 22 Forbes Street, London

When: December 15, 2017 - 11:00am

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