

House to help children - State-of-the-art home built for simple purpose

Building a Parade of Homes house is no easy task, yet dozens of people have spent hundreds of hours, thousands of dollars and even risked their own businesses in hopes of raising much-needed funds for children they will never meet.

Local business owner Doug Collins created the Build it for the Children concept in 2004, a project that consumes hundreds of hours of his time but produces a Parade of Homes house that is auctioned off to benefit two local charities - Larimer County Child Advocacy Center and A Kid's Place of Weld County.

"I just wanted to find out some way to give back to the community in which I was born and raised and that gave me so much," said the president of Collins Custom Builders and Construction Management. "We really insisted it be a local charity because we want every single dollar to stay up here.

"People think Northern Colorado is a beautiful community, which it is, but we still have a large population of abused and neglected children."

An idea turned into reality with an ambitious Collins, who spent six months researching worthy charities.

"I never thought it could be done," said Laura Hunt, executive director of the Larimer County Child Advocacy Center. "But (Doug) put his money where his mouth is, and he backed it up 100 percent."

Windsor has hosted the Build it for the Children homes for the three years and each year the auction has netted at least \$35,000 for each charity. The past two years, the houses have sold for about 80 percent of their appraised value.

"I don't know how he took a dream and made it into a reality in such a short time," Hunt said of construction that began the beginning of June.

Collins spent hundreds of hours recruiting local businesses to donate everything needed for the four-bedroom, 3½-bath house, which is appraised at \$636,000 but worth about \$675,000, according to Collins.

One of those local businesses, Reprographics Inc., has made and donated the blueprints for the past three years, which can cost up to \$300, president Ken Conner said.

Collins said some businesses donated thousands of dollars to help with the house, even when their own businesses faced having to close the doors.

Kim Bleakley of Eheart Designs, who was the lead designer on the project, does many custom home designs but said this project had a different feel.

"As far as the end goal, it's absolutely different," she said. "(The house) is not built to sell and make money. Doug doesn't get a dime of it. It's just something that's near and dear to his heart."

And while the house is a typical Parade of Homes house that includes special features such as an outdoor kitchen for entertaining, don't expect to see it lavishly decorated with fine furniture, window coverings and accessories. Staging a house costs thousands of dollars, money Collins didn't want to spend to cut into proceeds for the charities.

Another concept that makes the house different is it is based on universal design, meaning the house is made to accommodate its residents as they get older. Features include no barrier thresholds in the doorways, lower countertops and no-step showers. The house already is framed for an elevator should future residents desire one.

Despite all the time and effort, the many people involved in the project will never see who they impact.

"It is so amazing how much they're doing to impact kids they will never hear a personal thank you from," said Christy Dodd, executive director of A Kid's Place of Weld County, which served 264 children last year.





Rich Abrahamson/The Coloradoan

The Build it for the Children home at 6626 Royal Country Down Drive in Windsor will be auctioned off for charity. The 4,548-square-foot home is being featured in the Northern Colorado Parade of Homes starting this weekend.

> **Where:** 6626 Royal Country Down Drive, Windsor

> **Parade of Homes hours:** 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays through Sept. 23

> **Cost:** Free

> **Map:** www.coloradoparade.com

> **Auction:** 4 to 7 p.m. Sept. 29