

GIVING BACK

Rosetta Team Helps Family Build Home in Mexico

For the Rosetta Hardscapes team, business is about more than making money. It's about using the team's talents to make the world a better place. In our work, that means providing solutions for the hardscape industry to make people's jobs easier and landscapes more beautiful. Wanting to reach beyond work to make the world a better place this winter, Rosetta managing partner Jim Manthei challenged the Rosetta team of staff, manufacturers, and vendors to give back with their time in a tangible way. He invited them to build a home for a family in need in Tijuana, Mexico on Feb. 4-5, 2014.

"When you're looking at giving back, you can give money and that helps in some ways. But if we really want to influence people, taking some time out of our schedules to actually go and build a house with a family has potential to have a huge impact, on us and on the family," Jim Manthei said.

Organized by the Homes of Hope program and Youth With a Mission (YWAM) in Tijuana, the home build project brought together 22 people including Rosetta manufacturers, vendors, and staff from across North America.



Adam Herold of Brown's Concrete and Andy Manthei of Rosetta Hardscapes build the front stoop and stairs.

SO, WHY MEXICO?

Despite Tijuana's proximity to the States, the poverty in this border town is very prevalent. The neighborhood chosen for this home build project is full of makeshift houses built of pallets, broken garage doors, scraps of metal, and tarps. The hills are cut back and reinforced with retaining walls built from pallets or old tires. 30% of dwellings in Mexico are made of rubbish, according to INEGI, a Mexican government agency that conducts a census every decade. Many of the homes have dirt floors and no running water.

ABOUT THE FAMILY

Looking for work and a better life, this young Mexican family moved from Southern Mexico to Tijuana several years ago.

The father of the home, Eustacio, works the night shift at a local factory that produces cardboard boxes. The mother, Diana, is a stay at home mom to the couple's three children, Jose Fabian, 6, Luis Alfredo, 4, and Diana Monserrat, 3 months. Eustacio's sister also lived in the makeshift house along with her two children. After her divorce, she needed a place to live and Eustacio took her in.

All three adults and five children lived in the makeshift house that stood on the building site the day the team arrived. Five of them slept in the full sized bed, and three slept on the floor. Measuring roughly 13 ft. by 19.7 ft. or 256 sq. ft., the house included a bathroom with shower (though it had no running water), a sleeping area with one bed, and a cooking area.

"The gift you're giving this family is profound," explained Sean Lambert, founder of Homes of Hope. "They are what I call 'working poor' or the 'fighting poor.' If you help people in the wrong way,

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Eustacio, Diana, and the rest of the family.



The crew painting and roofing the new house



The ladies watch as the walls of their new home come up.



Eustacio painting 2x4s.

you actually hurt them. That's why we only build for people who've fought to buy their own land. That shows that these families fought to save up for the down payment and that they're managing their money enough that they can spend roughly 50% of their income on their land payment each month. The gift you're giving would take them 10-15 years for them to achieve on their own."

Arriving at the building site the first day, the Rosetta team quickly set to work on the 16x20 foot house that needed to be complete by the following afternoon. Eusta-

cio, the father of the family, worked side by side with the Rosetta team throughout the whole process. This was impressive because he works the night shift at the cardboard factory, meaning he spent two entire days working almost around the clock. Diana, the mother of the family, and her sister-in-law prepared a traditional Mexican lunch to surprise the Rosetta crew both days. The food was delicious!

"It was amazing to see everyone pitching in," Manthei said. "YWAM gave a little direction, and we got to work. We worked alongside Eustacio, and by the end

of the first day, we had the entire 16x20 ft. house framed in, roofed, and partially drywalled. It was incredible."

The second day included trim work, more drywall, painting, plus furnishing the house with a dining set, beds, and a new stove as a surprise for the family. This group of hardscape professionals and engineers were excited to add a few additional features, like a custom stone stoop built by Adam Herold from Brown's Concrete, and a staircase built by the engineers from Automacad.

Participating Companies:

Browns Concrete Products Limited,
Sudbury, Ontario

Barkman Concrete Products,
Steinbach, Manitoba

New Holland Concrete,
New Holland, Pennsylvania

Automacad Inc.,
Candiac, Quebec

Advanced Concrete Technologies,
Greenland, New Hampshire

The Dancing Bear,
Cadillac, Michigan

Rosetta Hardscapes,
Charlevoix, Michigan

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The group gathered around the building site in prayer before the start of the project.

The Outcome

After lunch the second day of the build, the house was complete and it was time to present the keys to Diana and Eustacio. There wasn't a dry eye on the site amongst the group of mostly macho guys.

"We were all so clustered together before in the house. I was pregnant and it was a stressful situation for me and the kids. Now, the kids will have their own space so there won't be so much stress," Diana said. "Now, the kids will grow in this house and they will go to school!"

"We're really happy that God allows you to help people," Eustacio told the Rosetta team. "And if we were in a position to help, we would be helping others in the same way."

After Diana, Eustacio, and their family had gone in the completed house for the first time, they invited the Rosetta team in as their first guests. "This is your home, too," he told the team.

"There's always the question, 'What was your favorite part of the trip? What made it worth while?' shared Andy Manthei of Rosetta Hardscapes. "There are so many: shar-

ing a smile with baby Diana while waltzing her through the chaotic construction scene. Watching Eustacio hold his family tight to his chest as tears streamed down his wife's face, their children clutching their newly purchased toys close to their little bodies, as the keys to their new home were dropped into the palm of his hand. Hearing the excitement in their children's voices as they closed their door for the first time and saw their very own bed to sleep in. In the end, we realized we got a lot more from the family than we could have ever given: timeless memories, a new perspective, and a new love for our neighbors to the South. That's the best return on investment I can imagine."



What's Next?

Rosetta Hardscapes plans to sponsor another Homes of Hope trip in the winter of 2015, and all Rosetta manufacturers and vendors are invited. "There's nothing wrong with writing checks, but you can change a whole organization's identity by giving back," Lambert says. "What we're finding out is that the business community enjoys being part of Homes of Hope. Over the past few years, we've hosted the presidents of more than 500 companies as they've built houses with their teams and families."

"I'd absolutely encourage other producers to join in," said Rick Miller of New Holland Concrete Products. "It's been an incredible experience. Nothing like it. I will definitely come again."

Ralph Herold of Brown's Concrete Products Limited agreed: "It's worthwhile to put your effort into. You can make money in a lot of ways, but people are more important. It's good to give back."

Interested in learning more about Homes of Hope? Visit ywamsandiegobaja.org/homes-of-hope/



Homes of Hope founder Sean Lambert shared that assisting a family build a house can help end the cycle of poverty in one generation. Here's how:

- Having a debt free home catapults a family about 10-15 years ahead, allowing the family to focus resources on schooling, health, and helping others.
- The children are 3 times more likely to stay in school and they'll go 2 times longer than the national average.
- Concrete floor transforms people's lives. Getting people off the dirt reduces recurring respiratory problems and diarrhea.
- A home changes their ability to think implicationally into the future and it breaks the cycle of poverty in one generation. A home will completely transform the way a family thought about their legacy."

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“Being here, I compare it to the house I lived when I was young. Growing up outside Montreal as a kid, I lived in a house that was made out of brick outside, but the inside walls were lined with cardboard and masking tape then painted over. I never brought any of my friends home because I was embarrassed of the house. When I saw these kids, they are living what I lived when I was young. When my father got the cardboard out and put up dry-wall, it was like a party! I invited friends home and I was proud of my house. Through the eyes of these kids, it will probably be the same thing. I know what they mean when they say when you have a better house, you also have a better education. It was true for my family; my brother and I both went further in school and I went on to become an engineer. When you have a better house, you're more proud of what you are and you go further.”

Richard Marchand,
Automacad



“It's great that there are business people in this world, and it's great that there are missionaries. It wouldn't work if there was just one or the other; the world needs hands and feet. Usually, business people are the ones who are able to give money to these organizations who go out and build houses like this. But getting involved ourselves really puts things in perspective. This family is so amazing; the father is so excited to be providing for his family in this way, and the mother I just so happy to be able to have this house for her kids. You never know what these kids living in this house are going to go on to do. They have a brighter future ahead of them now, and we're so happy to be involved.”

Shiloh Barkman,
Barkman Concrete Products



“I really like the model that the family is involved. You're not just giving a house. Right now, the father of the family is going to the hardware store with some of our guys to help design and pick out materials to build a staircase to the house. That builds a sense of pride and ownership, and it's huge that it's not just a donation. For a lot of us in America, it's easy to send money. It's gets the job done, they get a house.... But for the family to see us involved and giving our time, I think it could be inspiring to them as they may be in a better position to give back in the future.”

Max Hoene,
Advanced Concrete Technologies

