

# Student wins \$60,000 for Habitat of Humanity Halton

by **Nathan Howes**  
Special to the Beaver

If it were up to Oakville's Arvin Bal, every person would have a happy home.

That was the theme behind the Heritage Glen Public School student's winning poem in Genworth Canada's seventh annual Meaning of Home writing contest.

The contest encourages Grade 4-6 students Canada-wide to submit a written essay on what home means to them for a chance to allocate \$60,000 to a Habitat for Humanity build of their choice.

Arvin's submission, *Happy Homes for Everyone*, won out more than 7,000 entries received in 2013. Genworth presented the \$60,000-cheque to Habitat for Humanity Halton Wednesday at Heritage Glen Public School.

"When I heard I (placed) in the top six, I was really excited. My teacher told me and then I came home and told my family, who were just as excited. The next day I heard I came first. I

was absolutely thrilled," said Arvin. "I told my family and they didn't believe me until I showed them the message."

The money will go towards building a 1,200-sq.-ft home on Pembroke Drive, near Upper Middle Road. Construction will begin in March and when the home is complete in July, Arvin will present the family of four with the key.

"I respect Genworth and Habitat for Humanity for building this home. It's really important to me because I'm putting a roof over somebody's head who doesn't have one," said Arvin. "I feel proud that I'm going to build a house for somebody else who doesn't have one."

The 11-year-old Grade 6 student said he was encouraged at school to enter the contest as a way to challenge his writing skills.

He said inspiration came from his family life and a recent trip to New York.

"Home means a place with lots of love and care and families that care for each other. It's not just a building, it's the families



Arvin Bal

within who care that matter," said Arvin. "I feel very fortunate to live where I am. Some people don't have this kind of luxury in Oakville that we have."

Mayor Rob Burton declared Jan. 29, 2014 as Heritage Glen Public School Day and offered an additional plot of land for a fourth Habitat for Humanity home in Oakville, if the organization gets Heritage Glen students involved with the construction.

"Arvin pointed out it's not about the individual every time. He pointed out it was the

school that made it possible for him to succeed. It's the school that is going to make it possible for each of you to succeed," said Burton.

The mayor noted the first two Habitat for Humanity Halton homes were built in Oakville, in 2010.

Since 2007, the Meaning of Home contest has generated more than \$675,000 in grants for more than 30 Habitat for Humanity affiliates across the country.

Debbie McPherson, Genworth Canada senior vice-president of sales and marketing,

said the contest was established to help students understand what having a home means and to appreciate its value.

"Winning this year is a huge accomplishment with all those entries. As we read (Arvin's entry), it touched our hearts and

see Mayor on p.9

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