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STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Craig Sosin with Blue, 4, wife Keiko and Audrey, 7, recently learned they would be the recipients of Habitat for Humanity's new home in Stouffville.

## NEWS ONLINE

yorkregion.com

### HOUSING

# 'Dream come true' for family getting new Habitat home

BY JEREMY GRIMALDI  
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When Habitat for Humanity came calling for one last question and answer session with Craig Sosin, he wondered what in the world they could possibly want to ask him.

"By that point they knew more than God did about me," the Richmond Hill resident said with a chuckle.

After a few questions though, the reason for the visit was revealed when ambassadors for the global charity that builds homes for those in need announced that the home was for him and his family.

"When they said, 'You got it,' he said, "it was quite literally a dream come true for my family."

What Craig and his wife Keiko, and their two children Audrey, 7, and Blue, 4, 'got' was a brand new detached home, to be built at Main and Stouffer streets in east-end Stouffville for the family who are hard working, but have always been a little short on dough — especially when it comes to having enough to buy a home in the current real estate market.

Their journey began in 2007 when Keiko visited Canada on a temporary work visa from Japan and began working in a grocery store.

She met the love of her life one night after her friend invited her out to a party.

Within three months the pair were engaged and a year later their daughter arrived. Craig and Keiko, who is now a permanent resident, have been "scrimping and saving" for the past eight years, but it never seemed to be enough.

"After RRSP, RESP and food, there was never enough left at the end," said Craig, who works on a limited income in the swimming pool industry. "I always thought Habitat for Humanity built homes in disaster zones; I had no idea they did this sort of thing."

Perhaps the most interesting part of the new three-bedroom, raised bungalow home that is to be built in two months is the payment plan. Keiko explained the couple will pay a 20-year, interest-free mortgage on the

home that will be put back into the charity, in order to build more homes for other deserving residents.

Craig and Keiko are also well on their way to fulfilling the 500 volunteer hours — the equivalent of a down payment — at Habitat for Humanity-related organizations.

"I feel so grateful, really blessed, it's hard to put it into words," said Keiko. "It's so emotional having so many people coming together to help our dreams come true."

"It's a huge relief, we have a new future and the kids will have a greater opportunity."

*'After RRSP, RESP and food, there was never enough left at the end.'*

Craig, who is originally from Markham and attended Saint Brother Andre high school, said the family got noticed while sitting and waiting eight years on the rent-gated-to-income assistance program.

"We were living in a cramped, two-bedroom apartment; it was very tight for us and very old," he said. "Now we hope the money we give will go to help a new family."

Thomas Fischer, vice-president of regional development for Habitat, said he hopes more residents, organizations and politicians will refer friends and family who need assistance.

"When I spent time with Keiko and the kids I thought to myself this family is excited and hard working," he said from the charity's booth at the Strawberry Festival on Saturday. "They're a kind family and that's the kind of people we support, they're looking for a hand-up not a hand-out."

Construction of the new home, the first Habitat build in Stouffville, is to begin later this year. The collection taken during the worship service at the Strawberry Festival Sunday went to the build. About \$20,000 has been raised for the project, it was announced.

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