



Mike McCollum

The Mancillas family, from left, Misael, 13 months, mom Patricia, Jose Alfredo, 12, Yesenia, 9, dad Alfredo and Ivan, 8, were on hand yesterday for groundbreaking on what will be their new home.

Cause for celebration

Family sees work begin on new home

By JUDY BRILL
STAFF WRITER

Yesterday at 5:04 p.m., the earth moved again in Watsonville. But unlike four years ago when the Loma Prieta earthquake struck, the movement heralded not destruction, but the start of new life for a local family.

Surrounded by friends, family and local dignitaries, Patricia and Alfredo Mancillas yesterday saw the first shovelfuls of earth lifted for the foundation of what will be their new home.

Under a program of the local Habitat for Humanity, the Mancillases were selected to receive one of four new affordable homes that will be built by all-volunteer labor at Atkinson Lane and Arista Place.

It was little more than a decade ago that Patricia and Alfredo, both natives of Mexico, happened to meet at the Fox Theatre in Watsonville. They fell in love and married, then looked for a place of their own.

They lived in Castroville a short time before moving back to the area in 1984, to a converted garage on property in Freedom owned by her parents.

The arrangement may have been suitable for the newlyweds, but not for a growing family.

Today, with four children ranging in age from 13 months to 12 years, their two-room, \$300-a-month home is bursting at the seams. All four kids sleep in the living room.

Patricia Mancillas works as a prevention specialist for the Alto Counseling Center in Watsonville. Her husband is a laborer for Western Ranch Artichokes.

Their combined incomes can handle their current rent, but making the down payment and mortgage for a new home of their own was out of the question.

Then in May, someone gave her a Habitat for Humanity application. They filled it out, and got called for an interview. They went to an orientation about the program, and were interviewed again at their home.

Based on such factors as income, need and the family's ability to repay a low, no-interest loan and meet monthly payments, the Mancillas family was selected from 80 applicants.

"It was more than a blessing," Patricia Mancillas said, laughing

gleefully. "Finally, (the children) are going to have their own room, their privacy. They're at the age where it's important. I think that's the best thing."

The kids agree. They're so excited about having their own space, they don't even care about having to leave old school friends behind, she said.

After the groundbreaking yesterday, work will begin in earnest on building the new single-family, three-bedroom, 1½-bath house and single-car garage. Some materials have been donated and volunteers will do all the work, pitching in on a twice-a-week construction schedule.

The total cost of the new home is estimated at \$400,000; the Mancillas' payments will be about \$500 plus utilities, Mancillas said. The money will be recycled to build more homes in the community.

Habitat for Humanity eligibility requires that the new tenants volunteer 500 hours of their time to building the house. That rule poses no problem for the Mancillas.

"We'll be doing whatever we can to help ... sweeping, anything," Mancillas said.