

Father and Son Duo Receive Keys to New Habitat Home

Mason City: Chris Hjelmgren was handed the shiny silver keys to his new Habitat home by Board President, Bill Burdick, during their home dedication ceremony on Thursday night in Central Heights.

Chris and Chris Jr., his 11 year old son, have been flood victims four times, most recently in June 2008 in Mason City when their rental apartment filled with 8 feet of water. When he applied for Habitat housing, his request was simple: "My only requirement was that I asked not to have a house near the river," Chris said.

The all volunteer Family Selection Committee voted Chris and his son as the perfect fit for a two-story, three-bedroom, split-level Habitat home built in Mason City 14 years ago. One of the first Habitat for Humanity North Central Iowa houses, it was recently donated back to the organization when the previous Habitat family moved down to Des Moines for a job transfer - truly living the "Pay it Forward" concept.

This single father and his son worked hard to remodel and restore the home to get in his required 250 hours of "sweat equity." They also helped at other Habitat build sites and the Habitat ReStore.

"It's something that I could never have afforded on my own," Chris said of their new home, on which he will make reduced, no-interest payments. "It helps me by having a foundation for my son. By having that foundation, he can grow up to be a healthy, happy child with a place to call home."

Chris, a manager at Subway, also fixes computers and electronics, which he will now be able to do from his new home. He and Christopher are excited to move in next week — far from any rivers.

***About Habitat for Humanity of North Central Iowa:** Habitat for Humanity is a not-for-profit ecumenical, Christian housing ministry that utilizes volunteer labor and donations to build simple, decent, affordable houses for families who would otherwise be unable to afford home ownership. The homes are sold to qualified families with 0 % interest loans and 1% down. Habitat also runs a **ReStore** home improvement discount outlet selling new and used building materials donated by area individuals, contractors, and businesses. **1411 South Taft Ave., Mason City, Iowa 50401, 641-424-8978, www.habitatnci.org** Now serving: Cerro Gordo, Franklin, Hancock, Winnebago, Worth and Wright counties.*