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Family helps build itself a better future



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At just 16 years old, Amanda LeBeau knows girls and women can do just about everything guys can. "Women can do anything. If they really want to, they can!" she beams.

So she's rolling up her sleeves and helping build a better future for herself and her family. "I hope that we'll be able to have a beautiful house," the high school sophomore says. "Because I've never actually lived in a real house."

The LeBeaus live in low-income public rental housing now, but thanks to [Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity](#), they'll soon be homeowners. "This is a wonderful thing for all of us," mom Penny LeBeau says.

Most of the volunteers starting the family's new home are women. A program through Habitat called Women Build encourages female volunteers to work to reduce substandard housing. "I think a lot of people are struggling here," Penny LeBeau sighs.

Women Build organizers say the problem of substandard housing is acute in Vermont because of high rent, high cost of living, and the cycle of poverty that afflicts many rural areas.

"More often than not, their kids tend to go to college more compared to non-homeowners, they tend to excel in school, they tend to be small business owners in larger numbers, so a lot of surprising things can come through the pride of home ownership," explains Tamira Martel, the development director for Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity.

Penny LeBeau's husband and sons will work too, chalking up hundreds of hours of sweat equity on future days with construction crews of both genders. The family will assume a 25 year interest-free mortgage through Habitat, expecting a healthy and happy environment will pay dividends for the kids.

"I know I want to go to college!" Amanda LeBeau says, smiling.

The old house will be demolished Wednesday, and Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity hopes to have the new home ready for Penny LeBeau and her family by Christmas.

[Click here to visit Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity's website.](#)

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