

Turning over a New Leaf

Interview and Article By: Marie Vasitas

“We have that dream that everybody wants [...] We have a home,” Habitat beneficiary Jenn Hejnal comments. Recently welcomed into her new house, she, her fiancée, and two nieces express their gratitude toward Habitat for Humanity. “Without Habitat,” Nathan Brumfield states, “we wouldn’t be able to afford a house.” On February 26th, 2013, however, the family settled into a cozy abode in Lorain, Ohio. A refreshing contrast to the drafty, dilapidated trailer they had formerly occupied, the new home sits near the lake amongst a cluster of churches and other community buildings. Able to fill it with home furnishings and decor, the family is thrilled to add personal touches to the house. An avid gardener, Jenn hopes soon to continue her beloved pastime in the surrounding green yard as well. With insufficient space and safety for gardening at the old residence, she finds it a reminder of the chance she has received to turn over a new leaf in life.

Today, the family is extremely grateful for the opportunity to live in a safe and healthy environment. Having been victimized by vandals who would pull up Jenn’s plants by the roots and cut festively-strung Christmas lights, the couple and its nieces look forward to meeting more hospitable neighbors and joining community groups, including those at some of the local churches. They no longer have to endure a leaky roof, buckling steps, or an unmanageably large goose population intent on irritating the allergies of residents and pets alike. Poorly patrolled grounds and a frequent need for police presence in the neighborhood are not a concern anymore thanks to Habitat for Humanity. “We feel much safer in our home now,” Jenn remarks. Their new house is near a school for nieces Erin and Becca and is surrounded by clean sidewalks for dog-walking in nice weather. The police station, movie theatre, beach, and river are just around the corner as well.

Transformed by one application and the generosity of the Habitat for Humanity program, the lives of the Hejnal and Brumfield family are now devoted to paying the kindness forward. Remembering the moment they learned they had received the house, Jenn comments, “I don’t think I’ve ever felt so happy. I was tickled [...] We feel very fortunate and blessed beyond belief.” Nathan remarks, “Without them, we wouldn’t have a house.” Both are proud to say that Habitat has given them a gift that they hope can be shared with many others.