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NEWS RELEASE

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Youth United to build Habitat house

By Edie Grossfield

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From Rochester Post Bulletin

The site has been purchased, the family selected and plans are set for breaking ground this spring on Minnesota's first Youth United Habitat for Humanity house.

The three- to four-bedroom house in southeast Rochester will be constructed almost entirely by people between ages 16 and 25, under the instruction of professional home-builders. Contractors will handle the most critical components, such as the foundation, plumbing and electricity.

Rochester's Youth United chapter, which is part of Rochester Area Habitat for Humanity, became official in August 2005. In addition to being the first in Minnesota, it is one of the first in the Midwest. The Youth United program started in 2002 in North Carolina.

While only young adults can get involved in pounding nails and raising walls, children from age 5 and up are involved in all other aspects of the project, including fundraising and publicity, said local Youth United Coordinator Cody Logsdon.

Fourteen Rochester-area high school students make up the steering committee of the local chapter and have organized events to raise money for the first house. It conducted a letter-writing campaign to ask for contributions, had a rake-a-thon last fall and participated in a Trick or Treat for Change last Halloween.

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In addition, the Youth United chapter recently received a \$5,000 grant from the Argosy Foundation through Habitat for Humanity International.

The cost of the house is \$65,000, and Youth United has raised about \$20,000 so far. It needs at least \$32,500 to break ground, so the group continues to work on fundraising, Logsdon said. Habitat accepts in-kind contributions as well, preferring that these come in the form of services rather than materials.

The land on which the house will be built is part of a Community Land Trust held by the First Homes program of the Rochester Area Foundation. Habitat has partnered with First Homes to lease the land to the new homeowner.

The land lease reduces the cost of the house by \$35,000 to \$40,000, said Kevin Worden, executive director of Rochester Area Habitat for Humanity. The homeowner's monthly lease payment will begin at about \$10 and increase after a few years, eventually up to no more than \$50, he said.

"Land costs here are skyrocketing, so we do this to make houses as affordable as possible," Worden said.

Youth United hopes to have the home's foundation installed in April and begin construction in May, Logsdon said. The house will be one level to accommodate a disabled person in the family.