

'The right thing to do'

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The housing industry is not ignorant when it comes to public relations.

It's common for developers, home builders, Realtors, mortgage lenders and the like to donate hundreds or thousands of dollars to worthy causes. This is done to "give back to the community," but any resulting publicity is not shunned. But what builder John King and other members of the Home Builders Association of Sarasota County are doing for the Glenn and Gail **Salter** family goes beyond just "giving back."

King and the HBA are building a house for the **Salters** and their son **Paul**, the 14-year-old who was paralyzed during a football practice last fall.

It will not be just any house. **Paul's** injury is similar to that of the actor Christopher Reeve, and because of that, it will have special features that will escalate its cost far above what is normal for a 2,100-square-foot home.

At a time when builders are busier than ever and hard-pressed for labor, King is undertaking this task, and donating his profit and overhead, for a very good reason.

"We're not doing it for the publicity. We're doing it because it's the right thing to do," said King, whose Rampart Homes is a leading Sarasota remodeling firm. "Most of us have a son or daughter, and doggone it, it's a terrible thing for this to happen."

King was approached by a neighbor, whose son also played football in **Paul's** league, about remodeling the **Salters'** existing home to meet **Paul's** needs. But King found it unsuitable for remodeling.

"When we saw that, we thought maybe we could build them a new house," said King, a past president of the HBA. "What I wanted was to build them a free house. But until we get into the thick of it, there's no guarantee we will be able to get all that is needed" in donated labor and materials.

But King is making progress. He said Jim Marqua of Environmental Engineering just completed the septic engineering, and David Hunihan at Lee Wetherington Homes donated the custom plans. Abbott's Backhoe Service will donate the demolition, and Paragon Electric is donating the electricals, including a generator that will keep **Paul's** respirator working in case of a power failure. D&D Air Conditioning is donating the medically necessary two-zone AC system, and Bob Black of Access of Sarasota, whose firm specializes in universal design, is donating his expertise.

The HBA will place the home in a trust in **Paul's** name so he will have a lifelong residence to accommodate his condition. As such, it will have to be durable.

"We want to build a house that is maintenance-free," said King. It will be accessible, with special cabinets and kitchen layout, wider hallways and doors, automatic door openers, a wheelchair path and ramp, an additional laundry facility and shower area, and a bathroom

for nurses, who must attend to **Paul** 20 hours a day.

And he wants to do this without touching the trust set up for the family by the United Way. "That's for medical bills. If need be, I will go back to the community. SunTrust has already ponied up to the table big-time to waive some fees.

"There's nothing in this for me other than giving something back. I just have to work it into the schedule." Contractors, tradesmen, suppliers or others who would like to donate to the project may call King at (941) 925-4835.

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