

Manitoba truck dealer gives back to our community in a big way!

Within the Canada's business community the western trucking industry is known for its charitable generosity and a fantastic example of the group's commitment to giving is Freightliner Manitoba Ltd. For the past five years Manitoba's sole Freightliner dealer has sponsored a home with Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg (HFHW) and become the not-for-profit's most consecutive corporate home sponsor.



The idea to forge a relationship between Freightliner Manitoba Ltd. and HFHW started not in the boardroom, but in a Headingly, Manitoba church auditorium. Elane Talbot, wife of Freightliner Manitoba Ltd. partner Barry Talbot, heard a presentation given by the not-for-profit during a Sunday service, and was quick to embrace the idea that low-income working families in Winnipeg needed access to better housing.



"It was in early 2004 and Elane had come home from church," says Talbot. "Barry—we have to do this. We have to help these families," Talbot recalls his wife saying.

Following Elane's comment to Barry, inquiries were made to HFHW as to how the truck dealer could best help the charity fulfill its mission of building safe, decent, and affordable housing for low-income working families. Fellow Freightliner Manitoba Ltd. partners Ken Talbot and Rod Snyder were brought into the discussion and together the three decided that their company would become a HFHW home sponsor. The decision was followed by a generous donation to Winnipeg's Habitat affiliate and construction on the first Freightliner Manitoba Ltd. sponsored home began a few months later.

The first Freightliner home was followed by a second in 2005, and in 2006, senior management decided to get their staff involved in the construction of the third Freightliner Habitat home. Ken Talbot is quick to mention one of the lesser known benefits of partnering with Habitat for Humanity—the team building opportunities. "Having our employees go out

and physically build our Habitat home, is one of the best teambuilding exercises we have ever done.”

Rod Snyder echoes Ken’s thoughts on the benefits of having their company involved with Habitat. “The Habitat program is great for the families, but it’s good for us too. It gives us an opportunity to bond with our staff,” says Snyder. “Our staff can see us in a different light and as management we can let those professional guards—necessary in business—down.”



With three of the five Freightliner Manitoba sponsored habitat homes involving Freightliner employees, many of the staff have participated in Habitat construction for three consecutive years. The Freightliner group has become one of HFHW’s strongest teams of volunteers and can be counted on to have their home completed in record time. James Hillock, Freightliner Manitoba Ltd.'s product delivery manager takes a leadership role within Freightliner’s Habitat component and uses his personal construction experience to guide his fellow employees with less building experience through proper construction techniques. “It’s fun to participate and I’m happy to help out each year,” he says.

In addition to working side by side with fellow co-workers, Freightliner staff also work alongside the Habitat homeowners who purchase the finished Freightliner home. Each Habitat homeowner must complete 500 hours of sweat equity prior to taking possession of their new home and 100 hours of this requirement must be completed through hands-on construction time. Throughout the weeklong build, a strong bond often develops between Freightliner staff and their Habitat homeowner.

Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg CEO, Sandy Hopkins, knows that the special relationship that exists between Freightliner Manitoba Ltd. and his organization is very unique. “The long-term nature of Freightliner’s support of our home building program is extremely important to us,” Hopkins says. “We’re eager to keep working with this great team of individuals and to honour the history of the relationship. This team has not only made a vast improvement to the lives of their sponsored five families, but the mortgage payments these families are now making will be cycled back into future builds. Freightliner Manitoba has created a great legacy with Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg.”



Fernando & Laura, along with their children Daniel and Manuela will purchase the Freightliner Mb. Habitat home.

Freightliner Manitoba Ltd.'s partnership with Habitat took an unusual turn this past May when they donated a 2005 GMC-7500 five-ton cargo truck with a 22' enclosed box. "The truck came in on trade and because the paint job matched Habitat's colours perfectly, I thought of them and wondered if they would have a use for it," said Ken Talbot. HFHW certainly did have a use for the mint condition truck and the vehicle was a welcomed addition to HFHW's ReStore fleet which generates enough money to cover HFHW's administration costs.

"Since the arrival of the larger truck we have been able to secure some very valuable salvage jobs and the resale value on the recovered goods has been well over \$7,000 to date. And the graphics that J & J Graphics donated have given us great exposure all over the city," says Janice Sells, procurement manager for HFHW.

With five years of Habitat home sponsorship and a recent truck donation, there can be no question that Freightliner Manitoba Ltd. has taken charitable giving to a new level. With incredible staff participation and generous financial support, Freightliner Manitoba Ltd. management are setting a shining example of how Winnipeg companies are giving back to their community.