



Syracuse Hearts O'Fire
Johnson Family Home Project



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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**Volunteers and Sponsors Kick-off Johnson Family Home Project
and Construction Launch**

TULLY, NY (April 16, 2012) – Syracuse firefighters and community volunteers gathered today at the home of retired Deputy Fire Chief Dave Johnson and his wife, Diana, to launch the start of a complete home makeover where volunteers will work 24/7 to finish construction by May 7.

Extensive repairs and modifications of the entire home are essential to meet the medical and space needs of the family, where eight of the Johnson's 17 children currently reside.

Last year, Syracuse firefighters nominated the Johnson family for ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition." When the family was not selected, the firefighters decided to renovate the Johnson's home themselves with the help of the community. Planning of the project was initiated in August 2011 and involved a committee of 30 members.

The launch event began with a blessing of the home and volunteers by Rev. Rob Gates of Lafayette Alliance Church.

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“We are very thankful to the 200 plus volunteers from our community who are committing their time and talents to renovate the Johnson home,” said Syracuse Fire Department Captain Bob Whitehead who co-chairs the project committee. “Many of the volunteers have never met the Johnsons, but were moved by all that Dave and Diana have done over many years to help children in need and families seeking to adopt, wanted to give something back to them.”

“In addition to individual volunteers, more than 100 local companies are donating materials, supplies, services and labor,” said Scott McClurg, President of McClurg Remodeling & Construction Services and project committee co-chair. “We are very excited about beginning work on this project to help a very special family. We have been planning the build for the past eight months and truly appreciate the support of the local businesses and volunteers who have made this project possible.”

“This project is a perfect example of the adage ‘Fire Family’,” said Mark McLees, Chief of the Syracuse Fire Department. “On a daily basis, members of the fire service care for total strangers in their greatest time of need. Today, the fire family takes care of one of their own, retired Deputy Chief Dave Johnson. Anyone who ever worked with Dave Johnson witnessed firsthand his benevolence and generosity. Adopting 14 children from all over the world - now that is kindness to humankind we all should commend.”

National Grid, among many businesses that are contributing to the project, has dedicated approximately 500 volunteer hours including equipment and materials equivalent to a \$55,000 donation. The company also today presented a check for \$3,500.

“On behalf of National Grid we are very pleased to be here today and recognize Dave and Diana Johnson for their tireless commitment to children in need,” said Melanie Littlejohn, National Grid Regional Executive of Central New York. “They are true heroes and it is because of the Johnson’s and the lives they touch, National Grid crews and volunteers have been working on the project since early this year and will continue to support this effort when keys to the new Johnson Family home are presented on May 7.”

Concluding the launch event, Dave and Diana Johnson handed over the keys to their home to volunteers while Chief McLees sounded a fire siren signaling the work to begin.

To learn more about the Johnson family and to follow the progress of the project, visit the Johnson Family Home Project Website (<http://www.johnsonfamilyhomeproject.com/>) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/JohnsonFamilyHomeProject).

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