

Teen mothers get extreme home makeover

Remodeled building unveiled for four moms; Elevation Church put in 2,500 man-hours.

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Posted: Sunday, Aug. 21, 2010

Earlier this year, the four-plex on Ashley Circle was in disrepair.

The floors were plywood, the paint was peeling. There were no cabinets, and the appliances were broken.

But on Saturday morning, Elevation Church unveiled a remolded building that will be home to four teen mothers who have recently finished high school. Church volunteers spent 2,500 man-hours rehabbing the west Charlotte building, putting in new floors, furniture, appliances, windows and shrubbery.

In a ceremony modeled after the television show “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition,” more than a hundred church members, wearing bright orange T-shirts, clapped and cheered as the women were shown their new home.

Shakiyla Blackson, 18, recently graduated from Hawthorn High and is now attending Central Piedmont Community College.

She and her 2-year-old son, Sean, admired their new home, which had a new-paint smell and SpongBob SquarePants sheets on Sean’s bed.

“It’s just so beautiful,” said Blackson, as she saw the refrigerator and cabinets were stuffed with food. “It’s a blessing.”

When asked what she liked best, Blackson said “the bright colors.” She noted there were Scriptures through the apartment, which she plans to repeat daily.

Elevation worked with Communities in School: Safe Journey to find the moms who would be good candidates for better housing. The four-plex, adjacent to Charlotte/Douglas International Airport, is owned by Jackson Park Ministries, which provides services to inner-city residents.

Judy Sanders-Bull of Communities in Schools said the women were chosen for the project because they are hardworking, having stayed in school even after having children. They faced long odds.

“These girls really didn’t have a place to stay,” Sanders-Bull said.

Bradelyn Levi of Charlotte was one of the volunteers who made the house livable. The church estimated it spent \$50,000 on the apartments, which doesn’t include some of the supplies that were donated.

“We have done a million things here,” Levi said. “We have some volunteers here that haven’t gone home. They were here all night getting this ready.”

Elevation staged and filmed the ceremony to give the women a rousing welcome, and to show its congregation how its efforts are helping people.