

Tornado survivor set to own a home; helped by program

Collaboration clears new path for people uprooted by the natural disaster in 2019.



Laura Mercer (left) explains the Tornado Survivors Pathway to Homeownership Project at the open house of a renovated home on Marlin Avenue in Trotwood on Wednesday.

MARSHALL GORBY / STAFF



The home at 4658 Marlin Ave., Trotwood, and its neighboring house, were the first two Trotwood homes undertaken as part of the Pathway project.
 MARSHALL GORBY / STAFF

BY AIMEE HANCOCK – STAFF WRITER

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

TROTWOOD — Nearly three years after Memorial Day tornadoes devastated parts of the Dayton region, an open house Wednesday celebrated the renovation of a Trotwood home as part of the Tornado Survivors Pathway to Homeownership Project.

The home, located in the 4600 block of Marlin Avenue, as well as its neighboring house, were the first two Trotwood homes undertaken as part of the project. Construction on the homes began a year ago, and new homeowners are expected to move in soon.

Huber Heights resident Sonya North is currently working with the Homeownership Center of Greater Dayton to become owner of the house that was showcased Wednesday.

North was displaced in 2019 after one of the Memorial Day tornadoes ripped through her Harrison Twp. apartment.

“I was in my house with my grandson when the tornado hit,” she said. “It was devastating; you don’t know if you’re going to make it out.”

North and her grandson were able to walk away unscathed, but the apartment was a total loss and North was subsequently homeless for the following 10 months.

“I had to start all over,” she said. “I lost everything.”

North said she’s thankful for the opportunity and, as a grandmother of 13, is looking forward to spending quality time with her family in her new home.

“To get this house will mean everything,” she said.

The Tornado Survivors Pathway program is funded by private donations, Montgomery County HOME funds, federal Community Development Block Grant Disaster Reconstruction funds, and with the help of local education institutions.

Currently, 16 homes are in construction or have been recently completed within Trotwood, Harrison Twp. and the city of Dayton as a result of the program.

The Pathway program was developed to provide qualified tornado survivors the opportunity to become homeowners.

Interested applicants work with the HomeOwnership Center to become mortgage-ready, while a team of skilled volunteers either construct a home on a vacant lot or rehab an existing home donated by a jurisdiction or the Montgomery County Land Bank.

“The Pathway project is both an affordable housing project and a neighborhood stabilization project,” said Laura Mercer, former executive director for the Miami Valley Long-Term Recovery Operations Group.

'I had to start all over. I lost everything. To get this house will mean everything.' Sonya North, Huber Heights resident

The program is the result of collaborative efforts by dozens of partnerships led by County Corp, a local nonprofit that focuses on affordable housing and economic programs.

Trotwood Mayor Mary McDonald was in attendance for Wednesday's open house.

"Every opportunity that we have to bring citizens back to the city of Trotwood (who left) as a result of the tornado is a phenomenal success," she said.

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