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Builders Helping Heroes assists Potts family

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It has been a long, tough road for the Potts family of Tiverton, but the Rhode Island Builders Association has done its part to smooth the way.

That was evident on November 11th, Veterans Day, as RIBA members, dignitaries, media, friends and neighbors gathered at the Potts family home on East Beardsworth Rd. for a ceremonial ribbon cutting. The house was newly renovated, thanks to volunteer efforts by Builders Helping Heroes (BHH), RIBA's charity, which offers construction assistance to the families of military personnel injured or killed in armed conflict since Sept. 11, 2001.

The Tiverton gathering on November 11th marked completion of BHH's first project.

Army National Guard sergeant Christopher Potts was fatally wounded in Iraq in 2004, on his 38th birthday. When he deployed, he and his wife, Terri, were in the midst of major remodeling work, which was stalled because of his loss.

"We decided that this was the perfect first project for Builders Helping Heroes, but the more we got into it, the more work needed to be done," said BHH president and RIBA vice president Robert Baldwin.

Completed in July, the project involved major excavation and drainage work on the property, as well as interior and exterior renovation. Altogether, it took more than two years to complete, and eventually involved volunteer labor and materials from nearly 50 companies, along with \$200,000 in donations.

"This is the very least we can do for the heroes who have shed their blood for our freedom. There are values worth fighting for, and we are eternally in the debt of those who fight for them," Baldwin said to those assembled on the home's front lawn on November 11th.

Among the dignitaries present were lieutenant governor Elizabeth Roberts, senator Jack Reed, representative James Langevin and major general Robert Bray, adjutant general of the Rhode Island Army National Guard.

In their own remarks, all praised the bravery of sergeant Potts, the courage of his family, and the generosity of BHH.

"RIBA has helped this family fulfill their dreams," senator Reed said.

Gen. Bray presented Baldwin and BHH with a certificate of honor and a "General's Coin."

Terri Potts echoed the good feelings and expressed gratitude.

"This is what Chris and I wanted, and (Builders Helping Heroes) came in and made it all happen," said Potts, who wears her husband's wedding band on a chain around her neck. "'Thank you' just doesn't say it all," she added, with her arm around the shoulders of her 6 year-old son, Jackson.

Baldwin stressed that the Tiverton project is only the beginning for BHH.

"We have a growing number of applicants for help, and we need volunteers. We need people to step up from all the trades. We need carpenters, plumbers, electricians, roofers, excavators and any

other construction professional willing to volunteer," Baldwin said.

For more information on how you can help, call RIBA at (401) 438-7400.

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