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ABC renovates home in Jamaica

QUEENS VIRTUAL MALL

By Craig Giammona

JOBS

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News

The Peter family, natives of Guyana who lost their home on Grace Court in downtown Jamaica to a fire in 2004, are the proud owners of a new three-story home, thanks to ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition."

Page One
Northeast Queens
Southeast Queens
Western Queens
Sports
Police/Courts
Business
Weather
Latest News
Entertainment
QGuide
Dining Out
Restaurants
Arts Listings
Community Events
Opinion
Editorials
Columnists
Readers Write
Shopping
Place A Classified Ad
Queens Virtual Mall
Jobs
Autos
Real Estate
Public Notices
Home Improvement
Yellow Pages
Special Sections
Diverse Cultures of Queens 2006
Guide to Queens
Community Profiles
Information
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ABC landed in Jamaica on March 26, informing the Peters they had been chosen for the show and sending them off to Disney World in order to vacate the home for work crews. On March 27, the demolition and renovation of the house began, which ended Sunday with the presentation of the home to the Peters.

Decked out in blue T-shirts with the show's logo displayed on the back, Advertisement scores of borough residents and volunteers gathered behind barricades set up on Grace Court between 90th Road and 90th Avenue to welcome the Peters to their new home as the family's neighbors looked on from their front steps.

But some grew restless on the pleasant spring day as the show's crew delayed the unveiling. Workers will still putting the finishing touches to the house, including outdoor furniture.

A Hindu band playing the harmonium and tabla entertained the crowd during the lull in the action.

One member of the show's crew pumped his fist and, through a bullhorn, told the crowd how they should cheer when the cameras rolled.

"The hands up in the air thing is always a good visual for the camera," he said.

The star of "Extreme Makeover" is the energetic designer Ty Pennington, who is largely responsible for the interior design of the homes featured on the show, which airs on ABC on Sunday nights.

To the delight of the spectators, cameraman shot scenes for the show with Pennington smilingly running along the barricades and high-fiving those who turned out.

Winston Peter, a Hindu priest and his wife Hardai came to Queens in 1996 and were joined a few years later by their three children. While living in Jamaica, they had a fourth child, took in their niece and nephew and adopted another boy, packing their home near Rufus King Park with nine people.

In December 2004 their house burned and after six months their insurance company stopped paying for replacement housing. To add insult to injury some of their belongings that had been placed in storage were lost. The family had no choice but to move back into their home, patching holes with cardboard and enduring months without heat and hot water.

But everything changed last week when crews from Allure, a Long Island remodeling company, began taking the house down by hand, a process that took eight hours.

"It was tight quarters so we couldn't do the demo with machines," said Seth Selesnow, Allure's director of communications.

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Selesnow said the demolition was complete by Tuesday morning at which point the crews began working day and night to complete the home. "Extreme Makeover" is a 24-hour operation, Selesnow said, with crew captains stealing away to a nearby RV for occasional naps.

Selesnow said ABC receives thousands of audition tapes each week from families hoping that the "Extreme Makeover" crew will visit them and renovate their home.

Allure, which donates its time for the show, also completed an "Extreme Makeover" for a South Ozone Park family in 2004. Selesnow said the process is "grueling and exhausting," but also extremely rewarding.


"You couldn't get people to work this hard for a paycheck," he said. "But when you see the family come home, it's worth it."

The show will air in about six weeks, Selesnow said.

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