

Disabled veterans able to apply for mortgage-free Council Bluffs home

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A coalition of local organization is hoping to give a mortgage-free home to a local living hero.

Representatives of four groups – Cherie Scott with NeighborWorks Home Solutions, Darlene McMartin with Pottawattamie County Veterans Affairs, Bill Perdue with BP Quality Homes and Dan Ozaydin with Heartland Properties – recently teamed to offer the home to a local disabled veteran.

“We were talking about veterans,” Perdue said in November, remembering a conversation with Ozaydin. “I said it’d be neat to build a new home for a veteran and give it to ‘em with no strings attached, give it to ‘em free and clear.”

Cherie Scott, a housing specialist with NeighborWorks, announced Friday that applications are being accepted. To be eligible, veterans must meet the following criteria:

- VA service connected disability
- Honorably discharged – DD 214 required
- Current Pottawattamie County resident
- Agree to a background check – financial and criminal
- Currently not a homeowner
- No prior defaults on a mortgage or bankruptcy
- Must live in home for a minimum of 5 years
- Insurance must be maintained on home during the grant period (5 years)
- Income a minimum of \$500 a month to maintain the home
- If you have school age children, you must be willing to have them live in the Franklin Elementary, Woodrow Wilson Junior High and Thomas Jefferson High School attendance area
- Must sign a contract, if selected, adhering to these terms

“It’s going to be wonderful for the area,” McMartin, director of the county Veterans Administration and an Army veteran, said in November. “Finding affordable housing in our area is difficult. It’s great that we can do this, that he can do this for them.”

The home will feature a forgivable mortgage for the first 10 years, with 10 percent knocked off per year over the first decade, organizers explained. That means if the homeowner sold it after three years, 70 percent of the proceeds would go back to the VA or NeighborWorks. After 10 years, the owner would net all proceeds from a sale.

Perdue served in the Navy, fighting in the Korean War, while his father, Darrel, served in the Navy during World War II. Bill Perdue said his grandsons, Trevor and Brody Perdue, are Marines.

“I think it’ll be cool for everyone to be able to do this for a disabled veteran,” he said.

The organizers of the project said they hope this is the beginning of a sustained program, with Perdue noting he hopes more donors come forward.

“Hopefully, this won’t be the last,” McMartin said. “Hopefully, we can do this, maybe not every year, but when we can. I think it’d be a wonderful thing to get other vendors and subcontractors to be able to do this on an ongoing basis, as resources allow.”

Veteran Initial Contact Review forms can be picked up at NeighborWorks Home Solutions, 222 S. Sixth St., or at the Pottawattamie County Veteran Affairs Office, 223 S. Sixth St., No. 6. The form must be submitted or postmarked no later than Friday, Feb. 19, to McMartin at the Veterans Affairs office.