

Township Smooth's Way For Worthy Cause

The meeting of the Sylvania Township Board of Zoning Appeals had its usual discussions about setback and variances before it unanimously passed a request to allow a family to remain in their home while a new house is constructed on the same lot.

Not an unusual meeting in some respect, but "unbelievably amazing," to Veronica Taylor, whose family is now a big step closer to that home being built primarily by Southview High School students and funded largely by the school's annual charity, Dance For A Chance.

Mrs. Taylor, her husband Thomas and their daughter Valerie live in a home which is about 540 sq.ft. and significantly limits the mobility of Valerie who uses a wheelchair.

Students at Southview decided that proceeds from Dance For A Chance would go to Home family and have called the effort Project HAVEN (Home Accessibility for Val's Exceptional Needs).

The request to stay in the family's home during construction is primarily to keep Valerie in a stable environment and to avoid the disruption and expense of staying somewhere else for a relatively short period of time.

Jennifer Nafziger, an intervention specialist and Valerie's teacher at Southview, told the board it would be stressful for the family and Valerie who needs care at all times. An option, such as staying at a hotel, would not be practical, she said.

She added that residents who have become aware of Project HAVEN have been brought together by it. She noted that members of the school's carpentry, horticulture and perhaps other classes will gain practical experience when work begins.

The Professional Remodelers Organization has also agreed to be part of the project and will give advice to students on some of the practical aspects of the job. He added that members will also help in fund raising and seeking donations of building material.

Members of the organization are enthusiastic about it, he said, and praised the organizers for including Habitat for Humanity and The Ability Center in the planning phases.

He noted that Neal Mahoney, township trustee, and county officials have called him to say they will do whatever they can to see to it that the project is a success.

The township zoning and planning staff recommended approval of the project. They included a requirement that the current house be razed within 30 days of the completion of the new home.

Robert Johnson, of the school's engineering and manufacturing technology department, told the board that there have already been discussions with companies, and he assured the board that requirement would be met.

He added that his students would likely begin work on framing the house at the school and are hoping to work on site by the middle of next month.

After the board's unanimous approval, John Amos, acting chairman of the board, said they "were happy we can be supportive. It's a wonderful thing."

The school's Dance For A Chance is set for March 31.

In its first 8 years it has raised about \$120,000 for local charities.

Students have already begun to hold fund-raising events for the benefit of their 16-year-old classmate and her family.

If the house can be constructed for little or no money, funds raised will be used for furnishing the new home and providing any special items which may be necessary to make it fully accessible.