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Building a dream Green home in Centerport

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A young boy living his life from a wheelchair dreamed last month of traveling cross-country to raise awareness of the fatal disease that confines him, and to attract funds for a cure.



Today, Dylan Thompson, 15, a Duchenne muscular dystrophy patient, is at the center of a larger dream. He and others hope to leave his footprint - so to speak - in what organizers are calling a first-of-its-kind project in New York to fight global warming.

Using state-of-the-art German technology for energy efficiency, Mark Gunthner, owner of Paul Davis Restoration & Remodeling in Brentwood, will rebuild as a "passive house" the two-bedroom ranch home in Centerport where Thompson lives with his mother, Gloria, and his sister, Deanna.

The project has two objectives: to make the home fully accessible for the teenager, and with super-insulated walls, triple-pane windows and other "green" components, create a showcase, Gunthner said, "to teach everybody what a passive house is and what it can accomplish for us."

Gunthner is leading Dylan's Footprint, a campaign to obtain \$300,000 by June to build the house by Christmas. He is contributing labor and 2 percent of sales over the next two months.

Dylan's Footprint is part of an outpouring of support for the boy and his family, some of it generated by a Newsday story last month about Thompson and Darius Weems, an older Duchenne patient from Athens, Ga., who took a national fundraising drive to Harborfields High School in Greenlawn, where Thompson is a freshman.

Gloria Thompson received offers of a hospital bed, an electric hoist and other kinds of assistance from strangers, family and friends. The school, which has held several fundraisers, is selling Dylan's Footprint bracelets and plans a home run derby later this spring.

Harborfields principal Dave Bennardo is assembling a team to guide the home-building project and will meet at the school May 7, starting at 11 a.m., for agencies, charity groups, schools, parent organizations, student governments and others who want to help.

"The hope is for Dylan to become a national spokesperson for green construction while raising awareness about Duchenne muscular dystrophy," Ben-nardo said. "The fervor is building like a tidal wave."

Gloria Thompson is "thrilled. I feel like a weight is coming off me."

Her son, she said, "can't believe that everybody's so nice about coming forward and offering things."

Dylan Thompson got an idea of what the planned house would be like in mid-April when Gunthner sponsored a trip for the boy and his family to attend an international conference on passive home construction in Frankfurt, Germany.

"I'm extremely excited," he said about his prospective home. It "is not only going to help the environment, but it will also make life more comfortable and easier for me and my mom. I hope this will get people interested in green building, and hopefully they will copy the way our house is built."

Gunthner said people can give money, "swing a hammer on the house" or donate in-kind items. Call 631-434-1717, e-mail cburt@pdr-USA.net or visit Dylansfootprint.org.

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