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Habitat for Humanity completes 'green' home in Martin County

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Originally published 09:37 p.m., November 10, 2010

Updated 09:38 p.m., November 10, 2010

STUART — Leo Rodriguez and his new home in East Stuart were the center of attention Wednesday, with good reason — it's the first green home completed by Habitat for Humanity of Martin County.

Margot Graff, executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Martin County, said the project started a year ago when the city of Stuart and the Community Redevelopment Agency started looking into "green" opportunities.

Upon learning of the city's grant program focusing on "green initiatives," Habitat for Humanity of Martin County applied for and was awarded \$100,000 to build three green homes. The Rodriguez home is the first of those to be built in Stuart. Two more will be completed in December and January.

Graff said these homes are a great fit for Habitat for Humanity homeowners, for whom affordability is an issue. "We work every way we can to keep their expenses down," Graff said. Greener features mean lower utility bills and fewer maintenance costs.

Braden and Braden Architects designed the homes. Dan Braden, principal architect, said many components were incorporated to help the Rodriguez home meet green certification standards set by the Florida Green Building Coalition.

These features include a high-efficiency air conditioning unit; an on-demand water heater; closed-cell foam insulation; double-pane insulated windows; energy-efficient appliances; low-flow toilets, faucets and shower heads; and low VOC (volatile organic compound) paints and adhesives.

The exterior of the home features gutters and rain barrels to catch water that can be used to irrigate the home's small yard. The landscape plan was designed by Robin Pelensky, an LEED-certified professional with HJA Design Studio. To further the green theme, Pelensky chose native plants and grass that requires minimal maintenance and water.

Kyle Abney of Abney + Abney Green Solutions, which consulted on the project, said cost no longer keeps homeowners from going green. "It's getting to the point where it's almost a no-brainer. There's really little or no additional cost."

Rodriguez and his son, Joshua, a Martin County High School graduate, plan to move into their new two-bedroom, one-bath home over the next few days.



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