

Community embraces Bird family



The Dan and Kelly Bird family in Ormsby, surrounded by friends from as far away as Belleville and Frankford during a work bee on Nov. 14 trying to help them get back on their feet after losing almost everything that they own in a devastating house fire on Nov. 2.

JIM EADIE Special to This Week

By Jim Eadie

Coe Hill residents Dan and Kelly Bird, and their four children, lost almost everything that they own in a devastating house fire on Nov. 2. Seven of the family pets, two cats and five Guinea pigs also perished in the flames. The Bird family own and operate a small local construction business.

Kelly Bird returned home early in the afternoon of Nov. 2 to find an antique radio-record player on fire in the home. With the assistance of two Wollaston Township employees working nearby, the burning appliance was carried from the house, and Wollaston Township Volunteer Fire Department attended to douse the fire.

"We checked the area of the fire with our temperature probe," said fire chief Rick Middleton. "It will detect temperature differences of more than 10 degrees Celsius."

Bird left to conduct some business, but less than an hour later the fire crew was called back when passersby reported smoke was billowing from the home. On their arrival, the home was fully engulfed in flames. Limerick Volunteer Fire Department also attended to assist.

"It was awful," said Kelly Bird. "The kids lost their pets, their baby books, stuffed animals. We can never replace our photographs and wedding video."

The Birds have four children aged five to 15 years old. The youngest attend Coe Hill Public School, where they could see their house on fire from the schoolyard. Bird noted that they have lost all the brand new winter clothing just purchased for the children, and all of their Christmas shopping which was completed early this year.

The family owns another house near Ormsby, which is completely gutted for renovations that were scheduled to take place over the next year. A relative has loaned them a motor home which is parked in the yard, and the work on that house is now accelerated so the family can move in before it gets too cold to live in the motor home.

"We are in shock by the help from the community, how much everyone cares," said Bird. "It has been an awful situation, but the community has wrapped their arms around us! Someone north of Bancroft even offered us a house to live in, but we decided to try and keep the kids in the community where their school is."

Work bees have been organized, people have dropped off food and clothing, even a cottager the family does not know stopped by and gave them money.

On Nov. 14, a work community bee was organized at the house in Ormsby to try to get it closer to occupation including heat, water and hydro. Several dozen relatives, neighbours, and friends from as far away as Belleville and Frankford gathered over the day to pitch in. Some people cooked food, others carrying saws and hammers scurried in and out of the home, and a large contingent of young children ran about outside playing hide-and-seek.

‘We are trying as hard as we can to keep life as normal as possible for the kids,’ said Bird. ‘It has been very hard on them.’

Jo-Anne Carrol, along with other concerned residents are organizing a ‘pasta potluck dinner’ at the Limerick Centre on Saturday, Nov. 21 as a ‘big family fundraiser’ for the Bird family.

‘We want this to be accessible for everyone,’ she said. ‘We would love to see whole families, and lots of little kids. The Charlie Bird Band is playing for free, and we would like people to bring their instruments and join in.’

Admission to the event is free, and there will be a donation bucket available for people to give what they can for the family. A craft sale is being organized for the afternoon prior to dinner.

Anyone wishing to make a donation to help the Bird family can do so at the Toronto Dominion Bank in Bancroft account # 3431-6051728, or call Carrol for further information at 613-474-2405.