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'Extreme Makeover' to reveal Fayetteville family this morning

By Amneris Solano
 Staff writer

When Ty Pennington knocks on the door of a lucky Fayetteville family this morning, it will set in motion a communitywide effort to build a house in one week.

Crews will work around the clock to give a deserving family their dream home. The build will be filmed for the ABC TV show "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition." The episode is set to air this fall during the show's ninth season.

It will be the first time the reality series has filmed in Fayetteville. The program, of which an energetic Pennington is the host, draws millions of viewers each week and is broadcast across the globe.

Senior producer Milan Vasic credits the program's success to the emotional connections it builds.

"At the end of the day, we are a television show, but we are really and truly changing lives," Vasic said. "Hundreds and often thousands of people coming together to help someone else out is a pretty miraculous thing."

Once the family is revealed, their neighborhood will be turned into a 24-hour construction site populated by an army of volunteers, designers, builders, spectators and camera crews.

The public will be able to park in a designated lot and ride a shuttle to see the construction site. Details will be released after the family's identity is unveiled.

The spectacle will end July 21 when the family returns from vacation to get the keys to their new home built by Blue Ridge Log Cabins.

"These families that we select are often heroes in their own community," Vasic said. "They might have a horrible circumstance, but they're reaching out to make a difference in their community. Those are the types of families that we're looking for."

Families are chosen from thousands of applicants who write to the program each week.

The show, which first aired in January 2004, has built 195 homes. Producers have been late only twice, Vasic said - in Seattle because of rain and in Los Angeles when the program set out to build two homes simultaneously.

Without revealing too many details about the project, Chip Smith, chief executive officer and president of Blue Ridge, said the "Extreme Makeover" home will be unique to the Fayetteville area.

The series recruited Blue Ridge for its unique approach to home building. The South Carolina company has built almost 1,000 log homes in more than 25 states.

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"We do something like no one does in the world from a construction standpoint," Smith said. "We take the uniqueness and craftsmanship of log home building and combine it with the high-tech, state-of-the-art process of modular construction."

This will be Blue Ridge's first time working with the reality series.

"The people that work with 'Extreme' from producers down to their design staff are all very genuine people," Smith said. "They are all very emotionally connected to these homes and these families they work with. What you see on TV is really how they are."

Blue Ridge has worked with the show's designers for the past few weeks. Part of the home has already been built, but a lot of the work will be done on site.

Once a Blue Ridge Log Cabin home leaves the company's factory, it can take several days to several weeks to finish the house on site. Because of the nature of the "Extreme Makeover" home, Smith said, finishing it in a week will be a challenge.

He said the company is honored to take on the challenge, and he feels confident the work can be done with the help of volunteers.

"If we can get a little cooperation from Mother Nature, I don't think we're going to have an issue," Smith said.

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