

## **By Heidi Kerr-Schlaefer**

### **The Surveyor**

Angie Purdy and her two children, Heidi, 14, and Noah, 11, are the recipients of Berthoud's second Habitat for Humanity House located at 1712 Fourth St. The house dedication will be held at the home this Sunday. Berthoud Habitat for Humanity is part of a non-profit, ecumenical Christian organization dedicated to eliminating poverty housing worldwide. Habitat for Humanity brings together people with resources and people in need, to build simple affordable houses. The homes are sold to those in need at no profit. Founded in 1976 by Millar Fuller and his wife Linda, Habitat for Humanity has built and sold over 125,000 houses. Purdy never thought about applying for a Habitat for Humanity House; in fact, she didn't feel she would qualify. But several friends persuaded her to submit an application in July 2009. Purdy was awarded the home on Oct. 17, 2009. "I was shocked and elated. I was beside myself with excitement," said Purdy, who by Oct. 24 was at the property working on the home. Recipients of a Habitat home help build the house from the ground up. "Now I can tile, I can drywall, this was stuff I never thought I would do in my life," said Purdy. Angie Purdy grew up in Sterling, Colo. She relocated to the Berthoud area about five years ago. In 1999, she and her family suffered a terribly tragedy that changed their lives forever. On May 8, while on their way to a wedding in Denver, Angie, her husband Jason, daughter Heidi, nearly three years of age, and son Noah, three months old, were in a horrific multi-car accident. Within four hours of the accident, Jason was dead from his injuries. Toddler Heidi was rushed to Children's Hospital with a severe traumatic brain injury. Little Noah managed to make it through the accident with only a small scratch on his lip. Angie Purdy still suffers from shoulder and back pain from the accident. Four days after the accident doctors asked Purdy to make the most difficult of all decisions ever proposed to a parent. The doctors had removed part of Heidi's skull so her brain would have room to swell, but her prognosis wasn't good. Purdy had to decide whether to keep Heidi on life support, in what the doctors felt would be a permanent vegetative state, or turn off the ventilator. "I knew in my heart that she did not deserve to live on life-support as a vegetable. I could not bear to see her with 'no life' — just existing," said Purdy. Purdy decided to keep Heidi on life support until after Jason's funeral on May 15, 1999. On May 16, with her family by her side, Purdy allowed the doctors to turn off Heidi's ventilator. The family prayed together and waited. The next morning Heidi was breathing on her own. "I immediately found the doctor who had been in moments before to see her (Heidi) and he threw his hands in the air saying, 'It's unbelievable! Heidi is showing us the will to live and we are not going to take that from her. We are moving her on up to the fifth floor,'" recalls Purdy. Fifth floor was the rehabilitation wing of Children's hospital. Heidi came home on July 24, 1999, and five weeks later she was walking, something none of the doctors thought she would ever be able to do. It's been a long, hard battle for Heidi Purdy, who is now 14 years old and attends Turner Middle School. There have been many successes and there have also been setbacks. To date, Heidi has had 21 surgeries, the most recent, a functionality hemispherectomy, was in May. Heidi's brain injury resulted in severe seizures and these were starting to affect the healthy parts of Heidi's brain. This surgery was done in order to prevent the seizures. "The doctors said that within five years Heidi would be declared brain dead if we didn't have some sort of intervention," said Purdy. Purdy finds strength in God and in the support of her family and friends. "I find inspiration through my kids and how they've overcome the obstacles that have been thrown at them," said Purdy. Her youngest, Noah, is 11 years old and will be in the sixth grade at Turner Middle School next year. Since 2008, Purdy has been an office administrator for CH2M Hill in Loveland "They have been very supportive," said Purdy. In addition to her job and taking care of Heidi and Noah, Purdy still manages to find time to volunteer in the Berthoud schools. Although Heidi's May surgery resulted in some setbacks, including having to relearn some basic skills, the doctors have declared the surgery a success. Heidi was discharged from Children's Hospital on June 25, returning to the family's new Habitat home. "It's been awesome," said Purdy. "It's a beautiful, beautiful home and I just feel so blessed. I'm very thankful to everybody who helped." The Purdy house dedication will be held this Sunday, July 18, from 2 to 4 p.m. Watch the Surveyor for the announcement of when Berthoud Habitat for Humanity will be taking applications for their fourth home. Learn more visit [www.berthoudhabitat.org](http://www.berthoudhabitat.org).