

Surprise! Two families find they're chosen for Fresno Habitat homes

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Two families from Fresno and Clovis, who thought they were going to a meeting, were surprised on Monday with news that they would receive new homes built by [Habitat for Humanity Fresno County](#).

Typically, Habitat families are told quietly. But the Christian housing ministry had the chance to shake things up at news conference where the city of Fresno awarded the agency a \$200,000 HOME grant to build two houses on infill lots.

"I'm very happy," said Malee Srisaard, one of the homeowners, who cried. "We didn't know."

The families listened to a slew of speakers, including Mayor Ashley Swearengin, who all hinted that the new homeowners were present before the family names were announced. The celebration was subdued as the families digested what they had just heard.

"We're excited for this opportunity," Habitat executive director Matthew Grundy said.

"Through our neighborhood revitalization efforts, we are not just going to create decent and affordable homeownership opportunities for these two families ... but the neighborhoods are going to benefit as well."

Grundy joined Swearengin for the announcement in front of an empty lot on South Lotus Avenue, where the first home will be built for Srisaard and her family.

It will be nearly a year now since the family applied for a home through Habitat, they said. Srisaard, her husband, Ba Xiong, and their six children, ages 18 months to 18, have lived in a two-bedroom apartment in southeast Fresno for four years.

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Ba Xiong

"We're happy to have a home because we have a lot of children who need room to play and live," Xiong said in Hmong.

Representatives from Bank of America also presented a check to Habitat for \$20,000 to help finance the cost of construction for the Lotus Avenue house. Several employees will volunteer on the project. The house should be built by August.

The second home will go to Yang Vue, her two daughters ages 1 and 2, and her brother, Meng, who currently share a Clovis home with nine other people. The heat in the home doesn't work, forcing the family to gather around a space heater for warmth.

Vue's new house will be built on North Effie Street, several blocks west of Yokomi Elementary School. The three-bedroom, one-bathroom house should be completed by November.

"We're super excited," Yang Vue said. "We didn't think that we'd get picked."

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