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Home for developmentally disabled opens soon

On Keeling Road; 3rd Bridgewell home in Wakefield

By GAIL LOWE

WAKEFIELD - Five developmentally disabled elderly people will have a new place to live in September when they move into a five-bedroom home now under construction at the corner of Keeling Road and Lowell Street.

People in the neighborhood have been wondering what the construction is all about, said Kelly Johnson, chief operating officer for Bridgewell, the nonprofit, state-funded provider of services for the developmentally disabled that won the bid to build the home.

She said that when the state has a need for providing housing for developmentally disabled adults, they invite bids from providers such as Bridgewell.

Funding for the new home has been made possible through the Department of Developmental Services and all building costs involved are included in the contract, said Johnson.

"So far, the reactions of neighbors to the new home have been positive," she said. Bridgewell has built two other homes in Wakefield but she declined to give their addresses.

"People become resistant to something they are uncertain of," she said. "But a simple phone call will clear up any misunderstandings."

The new home on Keeling Road is being built all on one level and will boast not only five bedrooms but two bathrooms. Men and women in their 70s will occupy the residence.

The house will be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week and will feature a backyard where the residents will decide whether to plant flowers or a vegetable garden or maybe both. "What they do with the yard will be up to the residents," said Johnson. "The space will represent their interests as a group."

The residents will also choose the colors for their bedrooms as well as their bedding and window treatments to personalize their private space.

The majority of the people who will occupy the home are now living in Saugus, said Johnson. "These people have a need for better accessibility and they will have that at the Keeling Road home. A few people outside of Saugus will live there, too."

"Our goal is to be the best neighbor that we can be," said Johnson. "When people see one of our homes being built, they say, 'Gosh, it's the best house on the street.' That's what we want to hear about Keeling Road."

Johnson said that Bridgewell did not need zoning approval to build the home because "It's a home for a five-person family. The people living there will be members of the community."

In addition to the home, in the driveway there will be a handicap accessible van readily available to transport the residents to and from stores, banks and medical appointments.

In business for the past 52 years, Bridgewell's headquarters are in Lynnfield. Other Bridgewell homes have been built in Lynn, Saugus, Melrose and Medford.

The builder of the new home is Caruso & McGovern, Inc., Georgetown.