

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Stephanie Ockerman

Communications Manager

Frontier Housing

606-784-2131, x250

s.ockerman@frontierky.org



USDA Official Tours Frontier Housing Mutual Self Help Site

Salt Lick, KY – Melissa Burkhart walked Under Secretary Xochitl Torres Small through her new home, proudly showing her some of its features: walk-in closets, wood flooring, the hand-picked countertops.

“It’s been a long journey but I’ve met some good people,” Burkhart said.

Torres Small, who is the Under Secretary for Rural Development for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), was in Kentucky this week.

She toured USDA projects with State Director Tom Carew, who also is Frontier’s founding Executive Director.

Among Torres Small’s stops was Frontier Housing’s latest Mutual Self Help community called Redbud Subdivision. It is located off US 60 on Old River Road in Midland.

The Redbud Subdivision is Frontier’s 3rd Mutual Self Help build.

Through the program, groups of homebuyer families come together to cooperatively build their homes under the guidance, leadership, instruction, and support of Frontier staff.

The program helps low-income families get affordable, clean and safe homes of their own in rural areas. It forms communities on a shared commitment of hard work, mutual support, and long-term stability.

Mutual Self Help is funded in part by the USDA.

Torres Small learned first-hand about Frontier’s path to homeownership including financing option and credit counseling.

Frontier-built homes have energy efficient heating and cooling systems.

Homeowners can chose their home plan, and countertop, cabinet, and siding colors.

Burkhart told Torres Small about the build group’s adventures in constructing a home from the ground up.

She dug footers and put up walls in the snow at Whitney Barnes’ house. She did that and more in her own.

Despite the 30 hours of sweat equity each homeowner must provide each week, Burkhart and her neighbors agree the end result of owning a first home is worth the effort.

“I earned this, no one gave me nothing,” said Janie Grooms, who was on-site Wednesday, even though she has a broken leg and has limited mobility.

The new homeowners have worked alongside Frontier employees Phillip Cox, Mutual Self Help Construction Supervisor, and Robert Plank, Assistant Construction Supervisor.

They've become friends and Burkhart talks about how much she will miss the pair when construction is complete.

"All these people, they are my family," Grooms told Torres Small between hugs and tears with her new neighbors.

Burkhart summed up the feelings of the group as they toured homes with Torres Small.

"They taught me a lot," she said. "It's not just a house, I've made family and friends."

Frontier Housing along with its partners and families will celebrate the opening of this second phase of Redbud Subdivision on Tuesday, June 28, at 10 a.m.

Homeowners are still being qualified for the third phase of Redbud Subdivision, as well as Mutual Self Help sites at Big Woods Road and Rodburn Hollow in Rowan County. For more information go online to www.frontierky.org or call 606-784-2131.

Frontier Housing is the leader for affordable housing solutions in Appalachian communities in the heart of the Ohio River Valley. Frontier improves the quality of life for individuals and families, helping them achieve long-term stability, financial independence, and generational wealth.

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Captions:

Under Secretary for Rural Development Xochitl Torres Small, left, talks with Janie Grooms and Frontier Housing Mutual Self Help Construction Supervisor Phillip Cox at Redbud Subdivision in Bath County.

Frontier Housing President & CEO Tom Manning-Beavin, left, welcomed Xochitl Torres Small, Under Secretary for Rural Development, to Bath County this week.