

## Luxury House sale in Vernon Hills will raise funds for St. Jude Hospital

By Abby Scalf  
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When her son, Connor, complained of headaches for a week, Laurie Johnson couldn't imagine the ordeal they would face.

A mass the size of a baseball was found in the 4-year-old boy's head. The cancer had spread through his spine and his brain. He had a 20 percent to 30 percent chance to survive beyond two years.

All that mattered, Johnson said, was finding the best treatment. A friend referred them to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. While she admits her family, including Connor's grandparents, was not happy about leaving their Libertyville home to go to the Memphis hospital, they knew it was best.

"We chose St. Jude because this is what they do. They take care of kids," Johnson said. "You go to the best place to take care of your child."

After undergoing treatment that included chemotherapy and radiation, Connor is now a happy 7½-year-old.



Charlie Murphy of ICON Building Group discusses the construction of a house in Vernon Hills that will be sold to raise money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.  
*Gilbert R. Boucher II | Staff Photographer*

The treatment was harsh, Johnson said, but Connor remembers the fun he had in the hospital. And she remembers the supportive network of families whose children were treated too, and the staff who made sure Connor and the family were taken care of -- from transportation to lodging and meals.

And, they never had to worry about money.

## Luxury House sale in Vernon Hills will raise funds for St. Jude hospital continued

Now, a reminder of what St. Jude does is coming to Vernon Hills in the form of a house that will be sold, with proceeds from the builder's profit after the sale and other donated labor and materials going to help the hospital so it can continue to treat children and their families.

Johnson said she could not be more excited. "Somebody is getting a great house and a great story behind it," she said.

The house sale in Gregg's Landing subdivision will be the first as part of the St. Jude Dream Home Showplace. It's a twist on the St. Jude Dream Home Giveaway, which is one of the largest single-event fundraisers for the hospital nationwide, said Adrienne Stewart, senior regional development representative for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Responsibility for bringing the premiere home to the Chicago area is Charlie Murphy, the owner of luxury homebuilder Icon Building Group, based in Algonquin.

Murphy approached St. Jude officials and said he wanted to do something to help children and families. Instead of raffling off a house, he wanted to do something more impactful. It was decided the house would be sold, and 100 percent of the builder's profit after the sale will go to St. Jude.

"Getting a clear understanding of what St. Jude is all about and how they were funded, I thought it would be good," Murphy said. "The cause is good, and it would give the company something to focus on that is bigger than a profit and the normal course of day-to-day business. Murphy reached out to contractors and asked them to donate to the project. Many of the materials, such as brick, framing, drywall, concrete and the HVAC system, as well as the labor, have been donated, Stewart said.



Carpenter Uriel Castaneda of Zavala's Trim Work, Inc. cuts a piece for a door frame as he works on a home in Vernon Hills that will be sold to raise money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The house will have a selling price of \$1.2 million and is expected to generate a donation of as much as \$500,000 for St. Jude.

*Gilbert R. Boucher II | Staff Photographer*



Construction crews work on a house in Vernon Hills' Gregg's Landing subdivision that will be sold to raise money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

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Construction began May 2014 at 1860 N. Lake Charles in Vernon Hills. The house will be just over 5,000 square feet and includes five bedrooms, six full baths, a three-car garage, finished basement and a lot that overlooks Lake Charles. The selling price will be \$1.2 million.

Stewart said the house is targeted to raise as much as \$500,000, compared to \$200,000 typically raised through the raffle.

"You will get a real home built out of love, built out of support and dedication," Stewart said. "Your purchase is going toward helping children. Your money is not going into someone's pocket. Your money is going to a place that is helping people."

The funds raised will support St. Jude, which has treated children from all 50 states and around the world. Stewart said families who come to St. Jude never receive a bill for treatment, food or housing. The daily operating budget is \$2 million, which is primarily covered by individual donations.

Once the Vernon Hills home is built, the St. Jude Dream Home Showplace will host several promotional events. There will be a Sullivan's Steakhouse cooking workshop and tasting April 30. The home will open to the public for free tours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays and noon to 5 p.m. Sundays, May 2 to 24.

Stewart said the home will be filled with furnishings donated for the open house and it will feature the St. Jude touch. Visitors will learn about cancer, the hospital and see patient photos.

Stewart said she hopes this house will not only raise funds so St. Jude can continue to help families and lead research on childhood cancer, but it will also bring awareness.



Construction workers Jose David Villarreal, left, and Alberta Nava do stone work on a home in Vernon Hills that will be sold to raise money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The house will be just over 5,000 square feet and includes five bedrooms, six full baths, a three-car garage, finished basement and a lot that overlooks Lake Charles.

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"Maybe we are reaching someone who didn't know and they need something like this. Maybe they just received the news their child was diagnosed with cancer. This is an opportunity to be aware," she said.

For information about the St. Jude Dream Home Showplace, visit [www.stjude.org/showplacechicago](http://www.stjude.org/showplacechicago).