

'EXTREME MAKEOVER'

Vermont ICF home construction may have set a world record

Insulating Concrete Forms (ICF) manufacturer BuildBlock Building Systems LLC may have built the fastest ICF home ever constructed in a project for the ABC program, "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," acclaimed for radically rebuilding homes for families with special circumstances.

The family for the Athens, Vt., project, which includes parents Lou and Sara Vitale and their two children, Kane who is 3-½ and Louie Jr., who is almost 2, have been living in a hunting camp in Athens for the past five years.

Louie Jr. (louisangelo.tripod.com) was born with several birth defects, including Arthrogryposis, club feet and skeletal dysplasia. He is on both a feeding tube and a breathing tube and is confined to a wheelchair.

Each episode of "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" is self-contained and features a race against time on a project that would ordinarily take at least five months to achieve. The new home was built from foundation to roof in just one week, and the family's story, the construction project and the unveiling of the home will be shown in an episode of the program in December or January. The filming of the family first seeing the home was Sept. 12.

"As far as we know this was the fastest ICF installation ever," said BuildBlock's Jason Fisher, who served as the ICF technical advisor during the construction. "We started stacking forms just after nightfall and completed pouring the concrete within the wall shortly after sunrise. This is far less than the usual installation time frame, but we accomplished it!"

Interior walls and siding were being installed at the same time forms were being stacked, and special high-strength concrete with hardening accelerators was used so the trusses could be installed just a few hours after the pour.

"The curing concrete was putting off so much heat it blistered the feet of the plumbers and HVAC crews that were working in the crawl space," Fisher said. "Huge fans were brought in to cool the area for workers." As many as two concrete trucks were pouring their loads into the pump truck at a time with two more trucks waiting to offload right behind them.

The challenging ICF installation was led by volunteer tradesmen from New Form Building Systems of Maine (newformbuilding.com). Owners Erica Libby and Michelle Atherton and a team of others made the trek to Vermont to contribute their expertise working with BuildBlock ICFs.

The general contractor for the Vermont project was The McKernon Group (mckernongroup.com), a Master Distributor for BuildBlock Insulating Concrete Forms (buildblock.com). The McKernon Group has been building "green" for more than



The Vitale's ICF home after the makeover.

two decades, so ICFs were a natural choice for the foundation and walls of the project.

BuildBlock CEO Mike Garrett said that the project is a real boon for the entire ICF industry because it will expose so many people to the concept of ICF construction, especially in relationship to green building."

According to Bill McGrath, McKernon's director of business development, in addition to BuildBlock ICF foundation and walls, the home includes state-of-the-art windows; low-flow toilets, sinks and

showers; green-certified hardwood floors, Vermont lumber and Vermont slate.

"We are also taking advantage of the southern exposure to provide passive-solar heating and solar hot water," McGrath said. "The use of insulated concrete blocks on both the foundation and walls will reduce heating cost and environmental impacts by 30 percent. But most important, it will provide the Vitales a totally new environment to raise and care for their family in a home that will be very low in maintenance costs."

Headquartered in Oklahoma City, BuildBlock Building Systems produces ICFs at 10 manufacturing facilities throughout the United States. The EPS panels stay in place to provide permanent insulation. Combined with the concrete core, the ICFs result in a structure with remarkable energy efficiency, safety, strength and noise reduction. **CM**

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