

SITE OF THOUSAND ISLANDS HABITAT FOR HUMANITY'S NEXT HOME



RONALD ZAJAC/THE RECORDER AND TIMES

Wayne Schaafsma, organizer of Saturday's fund-raising walk for Habitat for Humanity, stands at the site of the charity's next home, in Athens.

Habitat for Humanity 16/9/200 gets boost from walkathon

Trek from Gananoque to Athens raises \$7,000 for charity

By **RONALD ZAJAC**
Staff Writer

ATHENS — A small group of Habitat for Humanity supporters spent much of Saturday feeling the thrill of victory — and the agony of the feet.

Fifteen people, nine cyclists and six walkers, huffed and puffed from Gananoque to Athens in support of Habitat's Thousand Islands chapter, which is raising money to build a home in Athens.

When they were all done, they raised some \$7,000 for the effort, said organizer Wayne Schaafsma.

"We didn't care how many people participated. We were looking for money and we got it," he joked.

Habitat stalwart Valerie Kines, who is now away on personal business, walked the same route on Labour Day, adding another \$1,100 to the pot.

That reduces to roughly \$14,000 the amount the group needs to raise to reach its goal of \$50,000, after

which it can start building the new home.

Schaafsma is confident the group will be able to start construction as planned in May 2003.

The walk mirrored the success of an individual effort a year ago by the local Habitat chapter's chairman, dentist and triathlete Dr. Gord Di Labio, who raised \$5,000 by running between Gananoque and Brockville.

Habitat, an international charity that builds homes for deserving low-income families, has already built two homes in the region, one in Brockville and another in Gananoque.

The third site is slated for Athens, on a lot just below the hill on Mill Street.

According to the charity's rules, recipients are required to donate 500 hours of labour toward their new home and repay an interest-free mortgage.

Schaafsma, the chairman of the Athens fund-raising committee, is not sure if a family has been chosen

yet for the Athens home.

The walkers and bikers travelled a 49-kilometre path starting at the Gananoque home and taking them up Highway 32, to Highway 15, then to Lyndhurst Road, Oak Leaf and Upper Oak Leaf Road and along Highway 42 to the site of the future Athens home.

Schaafsma, resting comfortably in his living room late in the afternoon, took eight hours to do the walk in ideal weather.

"I'm starting to feel it now," he said.

"It was a good walk. I enjoyed it."

Volunteers, including drivers and people manning six checkpoints along the route, outnumbered the participants.

"It's just unbelievable the support we got for it," Schaafsma said.

The Athens committee's next fund-raiser will be a variety night, featuring songs and skits by local performers, at the Joshua Bates Centre on October 26.