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ABOUT THE PHOTO

Donal Livingston (green shirt) and Ron Thiery install a mirror at the Village of Hope community, where Livingston has donated countless hours. **Story, page 19**

THOMAS CORDY/Staff Photographer

General contractor brings hope to children who need homes

By NICOLE JANOK
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Donal Livingston can fix just about anything. When he was young, he worked with his father and uncle repairing engines in Aurora, Ohio. Even though he earned a two-year degree in computer science, Livingston ended up doing carpentry work in St. Petersburg after a short stint at IBM delivering mail.

A general contractor and owner of Aurora Sod, Livingston has made a successful career with his talents.

He also uses his abilities to help others.

The Loxahatchee resident has donated numerous hours remodeling homes and duplex apartments for two Palm Beach Gardens housing projects.

Place of Hope and Villages of Hope, started through Christ Fellowship, provide housing to homeless youth and young adults who are too old for government assistance but too young to make it on their own.

Livingston, 44, is a longtime parishioner of Christ Fellowship's church on Northlake Boulevard and got involved with the remodeling projects in the very beginning. Place of Hope was the first project, where Livingston remodeled two homes which were quickly filled with emancipated foster children and homeless youth.

The quick success of Place of Hope in 2001 brought about Villages of Hope, which began in November 2006.

Villages of Hope, which included three duplexes and two houses, was even larger than Place of Hope and proved to be challenging.

"They were really in bad shape when we got here," Livingston said. "Instead of windows they had plywood."

But Livingston used his home repair know-how and got to work. Every day, while he ran his sod business, Livingston went to the village and made sure plans were on schedule. He knocked out kitchen cabinets, laid car-



Donal Livingston of Loxahatchee installs a bathroom mirror at Villages of Hope, a Palm Beach Gardens housing project for homeless youth and emanci-

pated foster kids. Livingston is a general contractor who has donated his time and skills for the project.

THOMAS CORDY/Staff Photographer

pet, cut granite for countertops. Anything that needed to be done, Livingston was there to help.

Less than a year later, Livingston's work, along with that of many other volunteers and sponsors, is finished. The final touches on Village of Hope were completed last week.

Finishing Village of Hope has been a satisfying venture for Livingston, but he's not done with volunteer work. "I'll continue on," Livingston said. "I'm not so broke that I can't pay my bills or buy food yet, and I figure these kids need a place to live ... and there's a lot of people who donated a lot more than I have."

The project has become a family affair.

While Livingston is working on the homes, his wife, Holly, helps manage the sod business. Livingston's daughters, Christy, 21 and Shannon, 20, brought their high school cheerleading squad and friends to help paint a

home in Place of Hope, while his son, Tyson, 22, works at a shelter for abused children called Seven Stars, which was started through Place of Hope.

"He entertains the kids, takes them out," Livingston said of his son. "You don't want idle hands sitting around doing nothing. They keep them busy so, they stay out of trouble."

Livingston also is a biblical marriage counselor at Christ Fellowship. He said he realized that learning to listen helped his marriage, so his goal is to teach couples to listen to each other.

Livingston and his wife also lead group counseling for engaged couples and share some of their own experiences of their 25 years together.

"One of the reasons I like it, is that you find out the person you're helping the most is yourself," he said.

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