

Thieves couldn't stop opening of hospital foundation's lottery house: Despite the theft of installed kitchen and bathroom cabinets last month, the Ottawa Hospital Foundation today opens the doors of the dream house, Sheila Brady reports.

The Ottawa Citizen
 Tuesday, February 7, 2006
 Page: B3
 Section: City
 Byline: Sheila Brady
 Source: The Ottawa Citizen

Ottawa Hospital Foundation organizers were smiling yesterday, relieved that despite a recent break-in at their \$1.2-million lottery home, the house will be ready for today's launch of a major fundraising campaign.

In mid-January, thieves broke into the Manotick dream house, ripping out \$40,000 worth of customized cabinetry and smashing slabs of expensive granite. At the time, Ottawa Hospital Foundation officials were worried the vandalism would delay the completion of the house beyond the start date for the annual fundraiser.

But yesterday, as crews hung drapes and positioned furniture just hours before the campaign began, foundation officials were grinning.

"Actually, I am feeling quite relieved now," said foundation spokesman Carl Martin, recalling the shock he felt when he heard about the break-in. "I felt sick to my stomach when I got the call saying the house had been broken into," he said. "My tummy is feeling better now."

The Manotick house is the key component in the foundation's hope to raise \$1 million for the critical care wing at the General campus. The lottery is the organization's major fundraiser of the year, with 45,000 tickets printed. Each ticket is \$100. Last year, the lottery raised a little more than \$900,000, but competition for charity dollars is getting tougher, said Mr. Martin, pointing out that Toronto hospitals canvass in Ottawa with lottery campaigns.

"If there had been a delay, it could have jeopardized the launch and we would have lost out on the first week of sales and the amount of money we raise," said Mr. Martin.

But thanks to kitchen manufacturer Louis Gauthier, the replacement cabinets and granite were installed last Wednesday. And yesterday, the black granite was buffed to a high polish and the new cabinets sparkled under the lights as hospital officials and Joe Princiotta, owner of Princiotta Group, set the stage for the 2006 lottery.

The kitchen is the shining star in this 4,500-square-foot bungalow, which comes with a stocked wine cellar, a 1967 vintage Ford Mustang in the garage and a hot tub outside the master bedroom. There is also an elevator for folks who don't want to use the staircase.

"I modified my schedule, moved some orders around and put a rush order on the granite," said Mr. Gauthier, owner of Louis L'Artisan, a kitchen manufacturer in Bourget, Que. "Luckily we had all of the plans and designs and we can do a kitchen in a week in the plant."

Mr. Gauthier has been making cabinetry for three decades, and more than 20 years with the Princiotta Group.

"I must admit Peter Goyette, project supervisor, sounded a little discouraged and panicked when he called," said Mr. Gauthier.

The project supervisor discovered the robbery when he arrived at the bungalow in the Manotick community of South Pointe at 7 a.m. on Jan. 16. The lottery house is at 5760 Longhearth Way, near Mitch Owens Drive.

The original kitchen cabinets had only been installed a week before and glue on the tiles was barely dry. Thieves took the creamy kitchen cabinets, leaving behind cognac-coloured cabinets under one of the bars. The thieves also ripped down matching cabinets in the laundry room and the bedroom. They left behind hanging wires and a single set of tire tracks in the new snow.

"Somebody knew what they wanted and knew what was in the house," said Mr. Gauthier. "They went into the laundry room and took down the matching cabinets. The cabinets are very likely in someone else's kitchen now."

Police investigated, but so far no charges have been laid.

The morning after the robbery, an alarm system was installed.

Police were back at the bungalow this afternoon, taping a segment of Crime Stoppers, re-enacting the robbery for television, hoping a telephone tip will find the thieves. Crime Stoppers is at 1-800-222-8477 or 233-8477.

Illustration:

- Photo: Kier Gilmour, The Ottawa Citizen / The Ottawa Hospital Foundation hopes lottery ticket sales will help raise \$1 million for the critical care wing at the General campus.
- Photo: Kier Gilmour, The Ottawa Citizen / The house, worth \$1.2 million, features (a fireplace and hot tub) off the master bedroom, an archway leading from a hallway into the kitchen and a kitchen with white cabinets and granite countertops. The cabinets replace the original cognac-coloured ones that were stolen in the middle of the night in mid-January.
- Photo: Kier Gilmour, The Ottawa Citizen / The house, worth \$1.2 million, features a fireplace and hot tub off (the master bedroom), an archway leading from a hallway into the kitchen and a kitchen with white cabinets and granite countertops. The cabinets replace the original cognac-coloured ones that were stolen in the middle of the night in mid-January.
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Idnumber: **200602070088**
 Edition: Final
 Story Type: News; Crime
 Note: How a House Can Help a Hospital
 Length: 633 words
 Illustration Type: Black & White Photo

PRODUCTION FIELDS

BASNUM: 4523078
 NDATE: 20060207
 NUPDATE: 20060207
 DOB: 20060207
 POSITION: 4

IMAGES



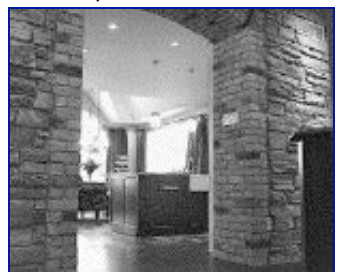
Kier Gilmour, The Ottawa Citizen
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