

Foundation donates home to West Roxbury family



West Roxbury resident Barry Wiener greets son Daniel after the 13 year old returns home from classes at the Perkins School for the Blind on Nov. 8, 2013. Wicked Local staff file photo/Kate Flock |

It's been almost two years since Barry Wiener, of West Roxbury, first started looking for a new home. A single father, he was, and still is, living with his disabled twins Dan and Andrew, 14, and an older son, Eddie, in the twins' grandfather's home on Overlook Road.

Both twins have been blind since birth. Andrew also has cerebral palsy and a seizure disorder and must use a wheelchair due to severe brain damage. Dan also suffers from a brain injury and was diagnosed with autism.

The one-story home, plus attic space, just didn't provide the accommodations that Wiener knew his children desperately needed. He launched a homegrown fundraising campaign using the crowd-funding site GoFundMe, and has raised almost \$80,000 to date. But after talking with local builders, he quickly learned that his original fundraising goal wouldn't be nearly enough to cover the substantial improvements needed for the home.

"It's been a long road trying to raise the money for the addition, and eventually we realized that it just wasn't going to be enough," Wiener said.

Since then, local builders, contractors and architects have offered their services to help get the family the improvements they need, but until recently, nothing fell into place. "First the addition didn't end up working out and after that we started looking for land," said Wiener who wanted to stay within Boston city limits. "The land we found would have taken too long to renovate and there were issues with building on it."

But the Fallon Family Charitable Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Fallon Company, came up with another solution. They eventually found a home for sale at 2836 Centre St. in West Roxbury and bought it in December. Renovations started this past winter, and will continue into the spring. They expect the Wieners to be able to move in this summer.

Updates to the home will bring it into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, including doorways and corners that can accommodate Andrew's wheelchair, a handicapped accessible bathroom with a ceiling lift from the bedroom to the bathroom, and an attached garage with enough room to maneuver a handicapped van as well as entrance to the home via wheelchair.

"We've been working with local contractors, construction [firms] and architects who've donated their time and resources to get the whole home handicapped accessible," said Mike Fallon, vice president at the Fallon Company and trustee of the foundation. "Our intent is for the boys to be able to live their entire lives there."

In addition to the help from local construction industry members, Fallon said that Mayor Marty Walsh's office was also very helpful in ensuring the permitting happened in a timely fashion. He expects that the three-bedroom home will include at least 2,000 square feet of living space, with a move-in date of mid-summer.

"We saw an opportunity where someone needed something that we could fix," Fallon said. "We were all able to come together and get them into a better environment and now the whole family will be able to get on with their lives."

Additionally, the renovation will allow the twins to have exercise space with mats and a standing machine, as well as an open kitchen and living room area that allows the entire family to interact with each other. And Fallon said that the new layout will also give Wiener and his older son Eddie some private space as well.

The family has been visiting the site as construction progresses, and Wiener said he's excited for the twins, who turn 15 in June, to begin living in their new space.

"This is a miracle and we're extremely fortunate," he said. "I've been talking about it for so long ... I never thought this day would come."