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MORRIS COUNTY'S NEWSPAPER

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Builder gives fire victims shelter

BY TIEN-SHUN LEE
DAILY RECORD

Mt. Arlington family of 9 to stay in villa rent-free

MOUNT ARLINGTON — The developer of the Seasons Glen condominium complex has offered to let the May family, whose house was badly damaged in a fire last week, stay in a

three-bedroom villa in the complex for free for a few months.

"We own one of the villas. We've rented it out on and off throughout the last

few years, and at the moment it's vacant," said developer Bob Atkins. "We were about to put it out on the market to rent when I saw that these folks had

lost their home to fire. I thought rather than just put it out on the market, for the short term we could offer it to these people until they get back on their feet."

Lisa May, the mother of the family, said she was "floored" by Atkins' offer, and she is overwhelmed by the outpouring of kindness and generosity that she has

received from the community.

"Mount Arlington is a very tight-knit community, and seeing people pull together for us — it's amaz-

ing," she said. "We've had donations from Whippany, Jefferson, Morris Plains. A lot of people have touched our lives. We're forever indebted and grateful to the Atkins' for their generosity."

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Fire

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Nine May family members were inside their one-story wood house at 90 Bertrand Road on Bertrand Island on Friday when an electrical fire broke out at around 3:30 a.m.

Adam May, 17, who is a junior fire fighter for the Mount Arlington fire department, woke up with a burning sensation in his lungs. When he saw heavy smoke in his room, he immediately called 911 and woke up everyone else in the house by yelling and opening up doors in the house.

All nine family members and their three pet dogs escaped unharmed, wearing only the clothes that they had slept in. They were put up by the Red Cross for a few days in the Courtyard Marriott hotel on Howard Boulevard, and following Atkin's offer, they are expected to move into the Sea-

How to help

■ Anyone who would like to make a donation to the family can drop it off at the Mount Arlington firehouse on Howard Boulevard.

■ Also, the Boulevard Scoops ice cream shop, 180 Howard Blvd., will donate 20 percent of all sales on Feb. 3 to the family, shop owner Wendy Oakes said. Donations of cash and clothing and other items for the family may be dropped off at the shop at any time, Oakes said on Friday night.

■ Specific needs: Boys pants in 36/34, 32/32, 30/32, sweatshirts in S, M, L and socks and underwear. Girl's shirts in adult small and medium, and hats and gloves.

sons Glen villa, which normally rents for about \$2,300 per month, on Wednesday.

A slew of donations were dropped off at the Mount Arlington fire department over the weekend, Adam May said.

"The donations were mostly from strangers," he said. "A nine-year-old kid donated his PlayStation. He wrote a letter saying 'I wanted my parents to give you my PlayStation.' My mom actually started crying over it."

Other donations included clothing, toothpaste, deodorant, and gift cards to ShopRite, Walmart and BJ's.

"I want to thank everybody — friends, family, the community, and especially the Mount Arlington Fire Department. They have been with us every single day, checking on us, just going out of their way. They treat us like family," Lisa May said.

The 2,200-square-foot Seasons Glen villa is unfurnished, so the Mays have begun looking for furniture. Some friends have agreed to donate a dining room set and possibly a refrigerator to the family, and Mount Arlington Mayor Art Ondish said he would donate a sectional couch to them.

"Mr. Atkins and all the collections — they really show the character of Mount Arlington, the spirit of the community coming together," they mayor said.

Five out of the eight May children are expected to move into the Seasons Glen villa along with their parents, Adam May said.

On Saturday, Wendy Oakes, the owner of the Boulevard Scoops ice cream shop at 180 Howard Blvd., will donate 20 percent of proceeds from sales to the May family.

She will also collect donations for the family at her shop, where Adam May used to work.

Lisa May said she and her family moved into the Bertrand Road house in June 2006, but they had lived in other homes on Bertrand Island for 31 years. She said she is unsure if the family will move back into the Bertrand Road house, but they would definitely like to stay in Mount Arlington.

"This is where we want to be," she said. "We just love it, and Mount Arlington is our home."

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