

Dale Dunning's Jusst Sooup dream comes true

Ministry gets 'Extreme' makeover with new home

By Ron MacArthur
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Dale Dunning got up at 1 a.m. like she does most mornings to start her soup-cooking ritual. Little did she realize that her life would change dramatically by mid-morning.

Around 10 a.m. Aug. 22, as she served soup at the Rehoboth Presbyterian Church at Midway, some guests from Hollywood surprised her. Ty Pennington and the crew of "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" shocked her with the news that her family and ministry were the recipient of the much-anticipated home makeover in Sussex County.



Dale Dunning

and distributes it to the needy and homeless at various soup kitchens she has established

Dunning has been operating the Jusst Sooup Ministry out of her Nassau home for the past 12 years. On an average week, she cooks nearly 1,000 quarts of soup in her kitchen

across the county. Her ministry dishes out soup, hugs and the word of God from a donated RV named Beulah.

It's been her dream to have a place with a commercial kitchen – not to make her life a little easier, but to expand her ministry. Now that dream will come true.

When Pennington and crew surprised her Monday morning, Dunning said she was overjoyed, excited, humbled and gracious. "I was doing my soup kitchen as usual but wondering if Ty would stop by," she said.

He did, and the wheels have been set in motion to build the Dunning's what is being called the Jusst Sooup Ranch on a 6-acre parcel near Coolspring off Route 9. Schell Brothers, coordinator of the project, donated the land to the ministry last December.

The show has been scheduled to air as a Thanksgiving special.

Although the exact details of the \$1 million build are not being released, company owner Chris Schell said the complex would contain several buildings totaling more than 5,000 square feet with ample space for a large garden, another of Dunning's dreams.

Schell said the green buildings

For more information, visit:
jusstsooup.org

would be powered by a 25-kilowatt solar system. He is also looking for a company to donate a new RV to replace Dunning's old one. Schell said several local punkin chunkers have volunteered to demolish the old RV the Sussex County way using chunking cannons.

Schell said the Family Fund endowment is well on its way to reality as well with more than \$200,000 collected toward a \$300,000 goal. Proceeds from the endowment will cover costs associated with running the complex.

"This will allow me to take it to the next level," Dunning said during a press conference surrounded by her husband of 40 years, Ken, and son Brooks, both of whom help her with the ministry. Ken works three jobs to help pay the bills.

Executive producer George Verschoor said he and the crew feel they have the best jobs in the world. "The reason we all do this is for what happens today and the reveal day," he said. The Dunning's will be brought back to the



RON MACARTHUR PHOTOS

CREW MEMBERS OF "EXTREME MAKEOVER: HOME EDITION" sneak into the front door of Dale Dunning's soup kitchen in the fellowship hall of the Rehoboth Presbyterian Church at Midway along Route 1.

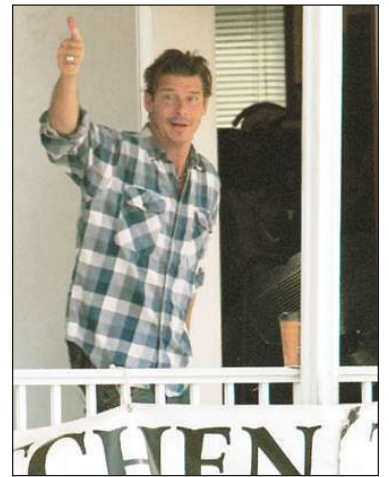
area to see their new home Monday, Aug. 29, after spending some time away on a much-deserved vacation.

More than 70 crew members are on site, and more than 1,000 volunteers have signed up to work around the clock throughout the next seven days. They will accomplish in a week what normally takes more than six months.

Verschoor said the threat of Tropical Storm Irene this weekend has forced the crew to rearrange its schedule somewhat, which is something the production company, Lock and Key, is used to.

He said the show seeks out people who are helping others. "She represents the spirit of Thanksgiving because of her gratitude and giving back. We are just helping her do what she has already been doing. Every day is Thanksgiving for her," he said.

Schell echoed those sentiments. "We want to provide everything they need to help as



"Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" host Ty Pennington signals that everything is okay after surprising Dunning.

many people as possible. By helping Dale, we all end up helping so many other families that she helps," Schell said.

"Mine is a calling. I fall in love with my people," Dunning said. "I can't help but answer their call."

For information on the ministry, go to jusstsooup.org.



Schell Brothers owner Chris Schell, far right, was instrumental in nominating the Dunning family for the show. He is shown with Ken, Dale and Brooks Dunning during a press conference after the announcement.

Below, Day 1. Site work begins on the Extreme Makeover location near Coolspring. Schell Brothers has donated the 6-acre parcel to the Jusst Sooup Ministry.



Delaware state troopers provide traffic control and security at the site of the "door knock" at the Rehoboth Presbyterian Church at Midway along Route 1.

For more photographs of the event as it progresses, visit us online at www.capegazette.com.