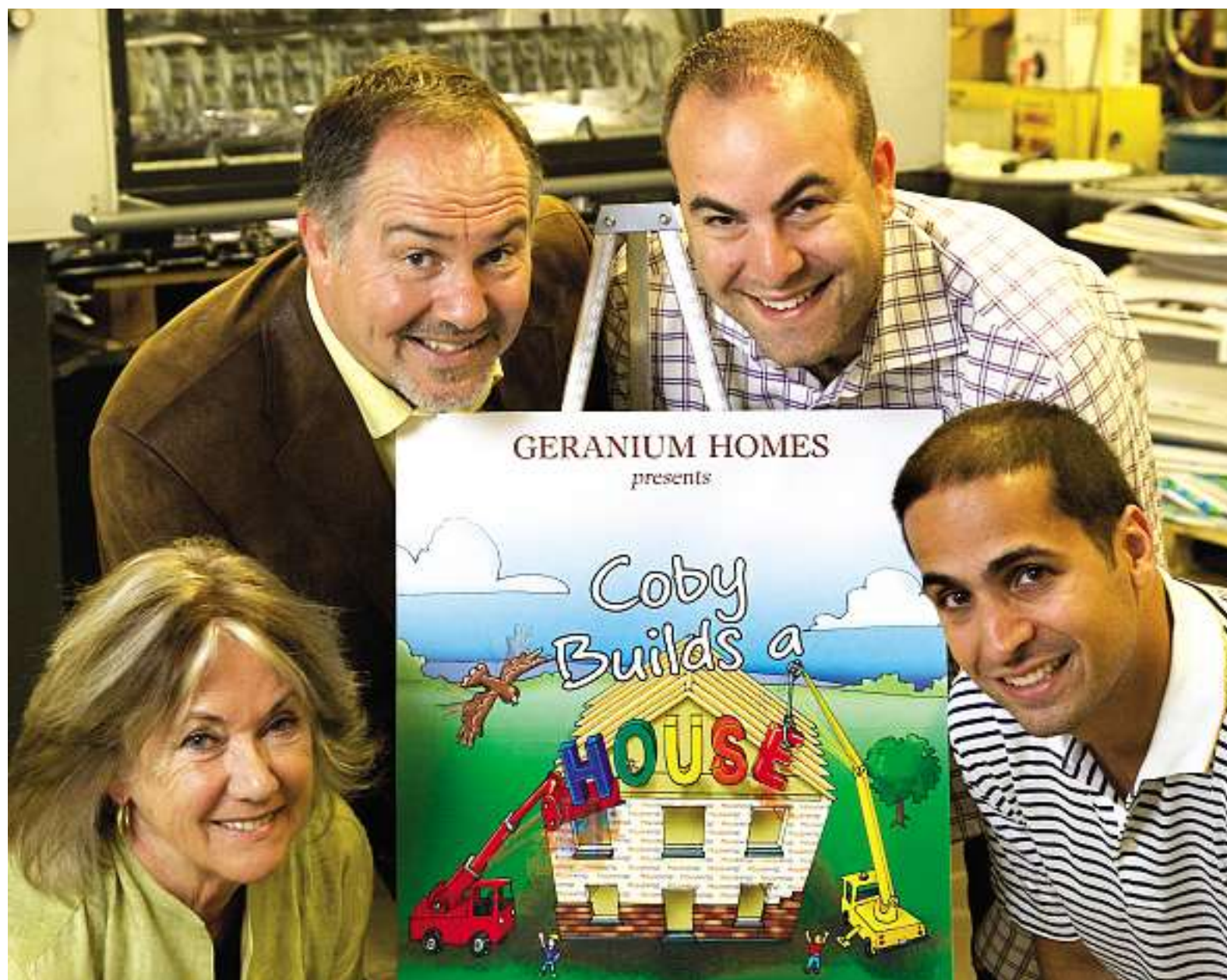




Homes-Extra



Team Coby (l to r) is Geranium Homes' Sue Webb Smith, author Neil Crone, David Elfin and Geranium Homes v-p Boaz Feiner. Copies of *Coby Builds A House* can be purchased at Geranium Homes's head office or sales centres, and are also available on-line at www.geraniumhomes.com/cobybuildsahouse.

Through the eyes of a child

Geranium Homes v-p's idea for a children's book about building homes comes from listening to his three sons

DIANNE DANIEL

Special to QMI Agency

A good idea left undeveloped is simply a good idea. But if you dare to take the next step, the results can be satisfying, says Boaz Feiner, vice-president, housing division at Geranium Homes.

And Feiner speaks from experience. This past spring, he spearheaded a project that didn't involve construction crews, engineers, designers and a master-planned community.

Instead, he turned to the drawing board — literally — to develop

a children's book about home building based on analogies and descriptions taken directly from his three young sons, Coby, Etai and Nate.

The end result — *Coby Builds A House* — is a picture book for the two-plus crowd that tells the story of building a house from a child's perspective. For Geranium Homes, the endeavour provided a creative outlet for staff while generating a unique opportunity to give back to their community at the same time.

"We're not going to become book publishers; we're builders," says Feiner, noting that 100% of proceeds generated from book sales

go directly to charity. "But it was a way for us, in terms of our creative marketing side, to get away from the everyday and have the opportunity to do something fun."

In *Coby Builds A House*, the "digger" is compared to an elephant, the cement truck to an ice cream machine and the mortar between the bricks to fudge frosting on a cake. The verse, written by children's author Neil Crone, was adapted from a brief compiled by Feiner using ideas from his boys, and the accompanying illustrations were created by Welland, Ont.-based artist Keith Nisbet. The finished project stands apart from other children's books about

construction because it tells the story from a child's viewpoint.

"The story of *Coby Builds A House* is really about a child telling a sibling or friend their perspective," says Feiner, who routinely listens to how his sons describe things whenever he takes them to visit a Geranium Homes construction site. "The idea was generated through long discussions with them about how the machines run, what they do and what they remind them of," he says.

To get things started, Geranium Homes self-published 2,000 copies and is suggesting a \$10 donation per book. The first charity to ben-

efit from the proceeds is the 2nd Annual Mayor's Thanksgiving Food Drive in support of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Food Bank.

"Every penny is going to charity," says Feiner, noting that Geranium Homes isn't recovering any of the costs involved in producing the book. "This is meant to create revenue for people who need it and to give back to the community on a grassroots level."

Copies of *Coby Builds A House* can be purchased at Geranium Homes's head office or sales centres, and are also available on-line via the company's website, www.geraniumhomes.com.