



A Castle on Viola Street

By DyAnne DiSalvo

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Andy is so used to his family's small, run-down apartment that he has never imagined living anywhere else--especially not in a new house with a garden and a porch. Such houses seem like castles to him.

But when he hears about an organization that turns abandoned houses into homes, he discovers that his castle isn't in the clouds--it's on Viola Street. And with some hard work and community caring, it could be his very own.

DyAnne DiSalvo combines new faces with familiar ones from earlier stories in this warm, vibrant tale about the good things that come when a whole family pitches in to make a better life for themselves.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Likable young Andy narrates DiSalvo's (Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen) latest tale celebrating the importance of community and home life. He lives with his parents and two younger sisters in a cramped apartment that lacks sufficient heat in winter. His father, who each morning rises before dawn to go to work, says, "Someday things will change around here." Yet the family keeps an upbeat attitude: the narrator notes that "There always seemed to be enough to go around, even with five people at our table," while his mother comments that "Our family is rich in more ways than we can count." One day Andy learns of a meeting organized by a Habitat for Humanity-like organization, and his family joins the effort to refurbish a nearby abandoned home. As Andy's father succinctly explains, "If you're interested in helping to fix up a house for other people... then one day other people will help fix up a house for you." DiSalvo's conversational text tells how the family pitches in, and readers will applaud the news that Andy's family will move into the next house the group tackles. The loosely rendered artwork effectively captures the characters' energy and spirit of cooperation. This affecting tale will be an eye-opener for youngsters who take their warm home for granted and will send a missive of hope to those who long for the same. Ages 5-8.

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From School Library Journal

PreSchool-Grade 3-Readers who are familiar with Habitat for Humanity and similar programs in theory can now see it in practice from a child's perspective. After Andy and his parents work as volunteers for an organization that buys deserted buildings and fixes them up, they finally get word that they will soon be working on a house that will become their own. The first-person narrative, while not consistently childlike in voice, does include plenty of details that gives a feel for the family's modest goals. More about their circumstances, such as Andy's lack of a bedroom before the move, is revealed only through the large, upbeat, colored-pencil and gouache illustrations. They also show that the family is warm and loving, living in a diverse neighborhood. Text is well placed, primarily on double-page spreads. The intent of the book is made clear by the foreword by Habitat for Humanity founder Millard Fuller. Although unmistakably a book with a purpose, it succeeds in introducing children to an important movement, with the art and design allowing them to see a story along with the message.

Faith Brautigam, Gail Borden Public Library, Elgin, IL

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From [Booklist](#)

Ages 5-8. For Andy's family, owning a home seems just a dream--until Andy learns of a project where volunteers rehabilitate old houses for others, who eventually do the same for them. The whole family pitches in, a challenging but rewarding experience, and joyfully learn that they, too, are slated for a new home. DiSalvo-Ryan shares an uplifting story of the importance and impact of community pride and support, effectively illustrating the meaning of "sweat equity." Andy's conversational narrative conveys the hopes of his family and others and describes rehabbing endeavors, how residents diversely react to changing neighborhoods, and how such change gradually comes about. The colorful gouache, pen, and pencil pictures are folksy and warm, expressively portraying the multicultural neighborhood's lively residents and the structures "before and after." An introduction by Habitat for Humanity's founder-president describes Habitat's program and others like it, which will further raise awareness of how volunteering and home ownership can make a difference, for communities and individuals. *Shelle Rosenfeld*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Nicholas Mishler:

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