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Jawonio to name New City home for Salmon family

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For years, Jawonio wanted to honor Dan Salmon and his family for their years of service to the agency, which cares for people with developmental disabilities.

The Salmons always declined.

So when it came time for Jawonio to open its newest community home - a \$1 million technological marvel in New City - it didn't give the Salmons any choice.

The ranch house, home since April to five young men who use wheelchairs, will be known as "The Salmon Family Home." The dedication ceremony is May 31.

"This time they didn't ask. They just told us this is what it's going to be," said Salmon, who got involved with Jawonio in 1983 after he and his wife, Ellie, learned their infant son, Scott, had cerebral palsy.

As Scott received services from the New City agency, the Salmons' relationship with Jawonio deepened. Salmon joined its board of directors and eventually became its chairman. He began to raise money for the not-for-profit organization, while he and his wife's family helped establish a scholarship program to help the children of Jawonio employees.

"They are the most humble people you'd ever want to meet," Jawonio spokeswoman Diana Hess said of the Tappan couple.

Scott Salmon, now 25, began working at Jawonio last week as an advocate for people in wheelchairs. He recently graduated with a master's degree in social work from New York University.

"Look what they did for me," Dan Salmon said, adding that tennis player Arthur Ashe got it right when he said "the purest joy in life comes with trying to help others."

Jawonio CEO Jill Warner said the new community home was a fitting way to honor the family because it represented not only innovation but independent living.

"It's a tribute to their tenacity, their caring and really being part of our agency and pushing us forward, challenging us," Warner said of the Salmons. "Sometimes it's the families that push the agencies to go farther, to advocate harder, and they have done that."

Salmon insisted that the home be named after his entire family, which has worked to support Jawonio over the years. He said that included his wife, children, mother, aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws, and his father, who died recently.

"You got a big, extended group," said Salmon, who helped form the Challenger Little League.

The group home has been adapted for those with limited mobility. The men living there are either quadriplegic or paraplegic.

They are now able to open the front door, and their bedroom doors, with a switch on their wheelchairs.

In the kitchen, they can move their wheelchairs under the sink, and with the touch of a button, move it up or down.

"This is an amazing place," Salmon said.
