



“Extreme Makeover” Finale Draws Hundreds To 128th St.

by **Bryan Joiner**

South Queens Editor

Hundreds of people lined 128th Street in South Ozone Park Tuesday for the final day of filming the television show “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition,” in which a dilapidated local house is completely renovated in just one week.

The crowds cheered wildly just past 3 p.m. when a limousine containing the Ali family—mother Lucy, sons Paul and Kuran—pulled up next to a large bus, which was parked in front of the house to block their view. When the bus pulled away, the family jumped in the air and danced as the crowd roared.

The last time the Alis had seen their house, it was so run-down they could not live there. They paid a contractor \$72,000 to expand the top floor two years ago, but the contractor filed for bankruptcy before finishing the work. Since then, the family has lived in various apartments and shelters, most recently in Queens Village.

The whole time, Lucy Ali continued to pay the \$1,400 monthly mortgage on her property while caring for her two adopted sons and paying \$750 per month in rent. The family had briefly lived in a homeless shelter but was ejected after the shelter’s administrators learned that Ali owned property.

The show typically selects families that have overcome or are enduring hardships for its subjects. Paul and Kuran, both former foster children, were born addicted to drugs and are developmentally delayed.

Ali’s daughter, Pamela Faison Browne, 41, was in the first row of spectators with her brother, Dean Colter, and other family members. She said Ali was weary from financial and emotional hardship before she was selected for the show. “She got so at the end of her rope, if this didn’t come along, I don’t know what she would have done.”

The family was surprised at its Queens Village apartment last Tuesday morning before being whisked off on a week-long resort vacation. That’s when the show’s producers and contractors from Allure Construction began what would normally be a seven-to-eight-month renovation job in seven days.

“Up until the minute we started, we were



Paul, Kuran and Lucy Ali wave to the large crowd.

making changes, and even after that, I’m not sure how we did it,” said Carl Hyman, CEO of Allure Construction. He said that under normal circumstances, he would not offer to complete a similar job in three months working at full speed.

On Tuesday, the house looked nothing like it did seven days before. Last week, there was a chain-link fence surrounding it, still in mid-repair from two years ago. The white siding had been removed in some places for the construction and never replaced. There were overgrown weeds in the front yard.

Now there is a wooden front porch, with a flower garden, and the siding was entirely replaced with beige siding and white trim. Hyman estimated the cost of the house itself at \$400,000, and, with furnishing, upwards of \$650,000. “If you told me the value was somewhere between \$600,000 and \$1 million, I wouldn’t argue with you,” he said.

The family will be able to cook its own meals for the first time since the aborted renovations began. They have survived on microwave snacks and “have been eating take-out for two and a half years. They never had a kitchen to cook in,” Colten said.

The renovations took on a life of their own during the week. Passersby came each day to watch the lightning-quick transformation. Spectators came from as far away as Pennsylvania to watch the family arrive, many of them with welcome signs.

Faison Browne said her mother was “ecstatic” when she received the news. “She said, ‘I think the worst days are over now,’”



The house last Tuesday.



The Ali family’s house, at 118-76 128th Street, was completely renovated in one week.

(photos by Bryan Joiner)