

"The Echo"
Westlake Hills
Presb. Church



Habitat House News

Habitat for Humanity's "Twelve Houses in Twelve Days" project is wrapping up at closer to a month and a half, but October's torrential flooding couldn't dampen the enthusiasm of the faithful volunteers.

Workers from Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church joined others in building House #12 for the Fuentes family. Herb Tays, Don Spencer, James Williams, and Paul Reinartz led the charge, putting in hundreds of hours of work among them. Flo Macklin and Joan Hassenflu were among the hard workers who helped prepare meals for the volunteers and also joined in the building efforts. The First Tuesday Men's group worked through their October meeting at the site and the WHPC staff spent two days working on the home. These dedicated volunteers were just a few among the 100 plus from WHPC who worked on House #12, and the nearly 2,500 volunteers who worked on the entire project.

The ambitious project started off behind schedule when rain delayed the pouring of the houses' foundations. Then, after the first week of building, record flooding hit central Texas and further delayed the project. Like any project of such magnitude, "Twelve Houses in Twelve Days" faced its share of additional setbacks.

Why would so many people choose to work so hard, out in the rain and mud, to build a house for complete strangers? According to the volunteers I talked with, it was an easy choice. Everyone who participated felt that it was a worthwhile cause that just made them feel good! And, when asked if they would do it again, the answer was an enthusiastic "yes."

Paul Reinartz, who put in nearly 200 hours on the project, summed it up best: "I wouldn't have spent so much time if I didn't think it was worthwhile."

One of the things that differentiates Habitat for Humanity from other types of mission work is that the recipients of the homes participate in the building process, putting in their own "sweat equity." Paul says this "nurtures the owner's self-worth. It also gives the volunteer a feeling of doing something very beneficial for people who really need it."

Herb Tays says a lot of charities fail because they don't expect anything from the recipient. Habitat for Humanity succeeds because it "helps people who are down, but not out; they show promise, but need a helping hand."

James Williams says that Julian and Rosa Fuentes, the owners of House #12, were at the site every day that he worked. "They were very enthusiastic and hardworking. The fact that they have to contribute work toward the home gives them a better chance of success."

Don Spencer says that it was "fun to meet the owners and have the chance to work alongside them."

But, what about the actual building of the homes? Don't you have to be a construction whiz to volunteer? Of the volunteers I spoke with, only Don Spencer has actual experience with home building. He

strongly encourages people to get involved with building. "It's a short commitment that most people can work into their schedules. You can work one day, or for many days. You may think you don't have any skills, but there's a lot that you can do." Experienced site leaders from Habitat for Humanity help volunteers find skill-appropriate tasks.

Flo Macklin has worked on other house projects for Habitat for Humanity. She says that there are lots of tasks that rookies can help out with, including painting and laying tile. In addition to working at the site, Flo worked two days by helping to prepare and serve lunch to the volunteers.

WHPC's House #12 is one of a planned neighborhood of 24 Habitat for Humanity homes and a community recreation center off the 900 block of Montopolis in Southeast Austin. The dedication ceremony will take place later this month. For more information on future Habitat for Humanity building projects, contact the church office.

Debbie Evans



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