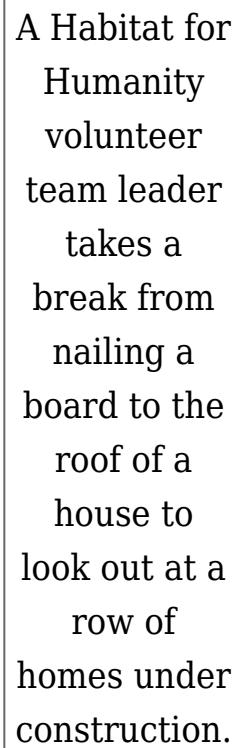


Dallas-area Baptist volunteers join in Habitat for Humanity building blitz_53104

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A Habitat for Humanity volunteer team leader takes a break from nailing a board to the roof of a house to look out at a row of homes under construction.

Dallas-area Baptist volunteers join in Habitat for Humanity building blitz

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

DALLAS-Texas Baptists helped an effort to construct 22 homes in south Dallas through a Habitat for Humanity building blitz.

Volunteers from Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated churches were the primary providers of food and meal service for several hundred volunteers who came daily for a week in late May.

Texas Baptist Men cooked more than 1,100 meals a day using a new unit from Lindale. Some days, the workers also served the food. Other days, volunteers assisted TBM.

Volunteers included members of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Dallas, Bible Way Baptist Church in Dallas, Bethlehem Baptist Church in Fort Worth, West Side Baptist Church in Lewisville, True Believers Baptist Church in Dallas and Northlake Baptist Church in Garland.

Willie Smith, pastor of Bible Way Church, coordinated about 115 volunteers through the Oak Cliff Network, a group of churches in southern Dallas. The BGCT African American ministries office, Missions Equipping Center and City Core Initiative also urged people to participate.

Smith said it was important for churches in the area to give visible support to an effort that he hopes will bring some revitalization to a community transitioning downward economically.

The blitz also serves as a tune-up for when Habitat builds another 22 houses in Oak Cliff, an area of south Dallas just north of this construction site with a reputation of high crime and low income.

Texas Baptist volunteers will put down their serving gloves and pick up hammers for that effort, Smith said.

Action helps area residents see Baptists care about them and want to help, Smith said. Workers can build neighborhood relationships that will expand

ministry.

"This helps our church be more visible," he said. "It helps them see us outside the walls."



A Dallas-area Texas Baptist Men volunteer washes a tub after preparing lunch for several hundred volunteers. Texas Baptist Men cooked more than 1,000 meals a day.

(John Hall Photos)

Bill Gresso of Northlake Baptist in Garland, who coordinated the TBM effort, said the Habitat venture provides an easy opportunity for believers to come together in order to make a positive impact on several families.

Houses are provided for lower-income families who put at least 400 hours of work into constructing the house.

Volunteers have the opportunity to meet and build a relationship with family members.

Staff members of Habitat for Humanity, an ecumenical housing ministry, visit the homes on a regular basis.

Gresso said volunteers are able to share the gospel with the families in some cases. Workers also are able to pray with them.

"Habitat for Humanity is a humanitarian group just like we are," he said.

"I'm just supporting them in their endeavors to improve lives of people and communities."

Alther Bryant of Cornerstone Baptist Church said he seized the opportunity to use some of his time to bless others. He said he enjoyed the work and helping as he could.

"It's amazing to see them put people in homes," Bryant said, looking at a row of in-construction homes dotted with volunteers hammering together roofs.

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