



Wavelengths Spring Issue

May /June 2009

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Welcome to Wavelengths!

Welcome to our 1st newsletter. Habitat for Humanity of Carlton County has combined forces with HFH-Duluth to serve the entire region with programs designed to put our faith into action. We hope the following articles act as a primer for what we will accomplish together in the coming years.



visit our website for updates and a summer build schedule at www.habitatduluth.org

Western Lake Superior Habitat for Humanity builds hope one home at a time, making simple, decent shelter a matter of conscience and action for all of God's people.

Our first Ground Blessing!

Habitat for Humanity founder Millard Fuller believed adequate housing was a critical factor in ending poverty. He liked to say a home is to a family what soil is to a plant. You can pour all the water in the world on it, give it plenty of sunlight but it will never bloom and grow without a place to set its roots. Children stuck in the cycle of poverty may not blossom when they are planted in poor soil or constantly uprooted. Once a family is well-rooted all sorts of wonderful things can happen!



On a day when the howling wind and snow flakes drove home the need for safe and secure shelter, Western Lake Superior Habitat for Humanity hosted it's first ever GroundBlessing on Saturday, May 16th.

Elim Lutheran Church Pastor and WLSHFH Board President James Hagen led the group in prayer for a safe and productive build season.

Warmed by coffee provided by core volunteers Chris and Judy Nelson, representatives from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans joined WLSHFH board members and volunteers in a ceremony celebrating Thrivent Builds Homes alliance with Habitat for Humanity that will help 311 families open doors to new lives in 2009, according to Launch Manager Jeff Hakala.

Members of the Carlton County Chapter of Thrivent Financial, led by Betty Osbourne, Kim Thompson, Jennie Hanson, Ardie Pykkonen, Sue Tester, and Marilyn Walters will be providing support and swinging hammers this summer alongside volunteers from area congregations and the Cloquet Chamber of Commerce. Past Chair Mark Roberts of Short, Elliot Hendrickson expressed his enthusiasm for Habitat and shared plans to join Alan and Renee Birman from Cloquet Ford Chrysler, Bonnie Pasek of Necessities Salon and others on site this summer as we build two decent affordable homes in partnership with families in need from the Cloquet area. Volunteers will stay hydrated with help from Culligan of Cloquet.

Thrivent Financial rep Steve Hallgren presented a hammer to WLSHFH Family Selection co-chair Jenny Cooke for safe keeping while a family is selected using the same cautious and thorough approach that has allowed Thrivent Financial to remain vital and even grow in the current economy. Pastor Jeffrey Walther of St. Matthew's Lutheran in Esko closed the ceremony as many of the attendees headed up the hill to join the Duluth Chapter of Thrivent Financial for a spirited nail pounding contest at the grand opening of their new office on Central Entrance. Thrivent Financial Reps Gene Pagels and Mike Hongisto tested Executive Director Nathan Thomson of North St. Louis County HFH. A wonderful time was had by one and all.

We'd like to thank Judy Dinger and her wonderful family, Julie Holmquist, Lisa Warren and Joy Peterson of ThriventBuilds for their unwavering support of affordable housing and Habitat for Humanity, we couldn't do it without you!



What's in a name?

Habitat for Humanity of Carlton County has combined forces with HFH-Duluth to provide affordable home repair and ownership opportunities for low-income folks in Carlton, Lake, and Southern St. Louis Counties.

we'd like to thank Karen J. Olson, Attorney at Law for assisting us with the legal stuff involved in a name change. we appreciate the support!

How many hammers does it take to build hope?

Plenty of hammers need plenty of support! There's the obvious things like cold beverages under a hot sun, warm meals after a hard morning's work, and whenever two or more are gathered in His name, coffee! But what about the nails we're using to secure the two by fours that form the walls? Those nails didn't just "appear" at the jobsite, nor did the plywood and glue and all the other things that go into building a house. That would take a truck and maybe even a trailer. Who paid for them? We get some stuff for free but we have to buy much of the materials we use then have the family pay us back over time. So we participate in a bike ride and think up other ways to raise money.



Building a house, even a simple, decent Habitat house is a big undertaking. We have someone to help coordinate it all but they need help hauling things and drawing things and applying for permits. And how about contacting all of the two hundred or more dedicated volunteers that participate in a build and letting them know when to come, what to expect, what to wear, etc?

And then there's the mess. Twenty energetic church folk fueled by plenty of coffee can make quite a mess while constructing simple, decent, affordable housing. And safety! We need someone ready with a swab and a band-aid so that no one takes home a souvenir in the form of a sliver. And what about the gloves that protect the hands from slivers? They had to be bought or someone who knew someone that made or sold gloves and was willing to donate them.

And what about turning that house into a home? Habitat for Humanity doesn't exist to construct houses, we want to break the cycle of poverty by building a stable platform from which to launch a dream. We need folks with caring hearts to counsel our partner families and prepare them for a new life full of possibilities as well as responsibilities. It is only when the responsibilities of homeownership are met that dreams grow in the fertile soil of a stable home environment. And that happens when we provide training in managing a budget, maintaining a home, and planning for the future.

So as you see there's a lot that goes into providing safe, affordable housing for all God's people. See if you can identify all the volunteer opportunities hidden in this story. Answers in the next edition of Wavelengths.

"Habitat for Humanity is building much more than houses. By building hope it is building relationships, strengthening communities, and nurturing families." - Paul Newman, Actor, Habitat Volunteer

What about Rehabs?

With Foreclosures dominating the news many of you have asked if Habitat for Humanity will be entering the rehab market. The answer is a firm maybe. In markets such as Los Angeles where available lots are scarce it may be the best way to provide homeownership opportunities to low-income people. During the month of February foreclosures affected 1 in every 209 households in L.A. County. Here in St. Louis County rates were much lower; 1 property in every 5,258 was affected, 1 in every 7,757 in Carlton County.

At WLSHFH we rely on volunteer labor not only to keep costs low but more importantly to provide a platform for partnerships with people eager to break the cycle of poverty. The sweat-equity requirements of our program ensure that folks build pride in ownership as they build a roof over their heads and break down old walls separating the haves from the have-nots. Rehabbing housing built prior to 1950's (well above 50% of the housing stock in Duluth) tends to be very technical, requiring skilled labor. This eliminates the possibility of a partnership between volunteers and homeowners, a vital piece of our mission.

If the right property at the right price comes along (built recently, requiring repairs that are volunteer-friendly and selling for under \$30k) we'll be happy to evaluate it. There are other affordable housing providers in the area that rely on paid labor and government grants to acquire and rehab foreclosed properties. They serve folks at a higher income level than the typical Habitat homebuyer and do it well. In the meantime we'll be working to gather the volunteers and funding necessary to begin A Brush With Kindness program that performs repair work that prevents folks from losing their homes in the first place. If your church or organization would like to sponsor A Brush With Kindness project this fall please contact us.



What's this new Director's story?

Daryl got his start in construction in the late 1970's hauling dirt for his Uncle Quido back on old Cape Cod. He met a girl from Minnesota and found himself attending Bethel College in Arden Hills soon after.

In 2000 a friend from church who knew Daryl was in the construction business asked if he might have time on a Saturday to lead a crew of volunteers with Habitat for Humanity. He found the idea of working for free intriguing, if not a little odd and said yes. The enthusiasm displayed by those volunteers in service of those less fortunate was infectious, and he soon found himself agreeing to overhaul warehouse operations for Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity.

Though challenging, the experience gained working for one of the top producers and innovators in the nation was priceless. Twin Cities HFH now accepts gifts of donated materials (Gifts-InKind) worth hundreds of thousands of dollars each year and delivers them to job sites all over the seven county metro area just in time for volunteers to stay busy building simple, decent, affordable homes.

With a sustainable supply system maximizing donations in place, it was time for a new challenge. Nowhere in the country is the need for affordable housing more profound than Southern California. Astronomical home prices coupled with a large low-income workforce producing much of the nation's fresh fruits and vegetables presented Habitat for Humanity with its toughest market. The lack of available land was just one of the many points of resistance Daryl encountered when he and his wife Jill packed up the cats and moved to Ventura, California.

A booming oil town in the 1920's and 30's and Hell's Angel's battleground in the 70's, Ventura was reinventing itself as a bedroom and arts community serving L.A. and Santa Barbara. Low paying service jobs and farm worker wages were no match for the sky high housing prices of coastal California, forcing many of the county's sons and daughters to relocate inland or out of state. The resulting resistance to Habitat's house building program was palatable as Daryl took on the responsibility of generating resources and goodwill for Habitat for Humanity of Ventura County.

One bright spot was the blossoming ReStore, a donated and recycled building materials outlet started with generous support from the Ventura County Integrated Waste Management Division of the Water & Sanitation Department. In addition to generating revenue in the \$70 to \$90k range per year for use in building homes, the HFHVC ReStore, located in the heart of a low-income neighborhood in Oxnard was making a positive impact on the housing stock surrounding the store. The ReStore provided access to cheap fix up items in a community long neglected by absentee landlords. This got Daryl thinking if Habitat's mission is more than building houses, it's about everyone having a simple, decent place to sleep at night. And then maybe there are more programs like the ReStore that provide preventative medicine. Why spend up to \$200,000 acquiring land and building housing for one family when \$2,000 worth of repairs might allow a low income family or elderly person stay safe and warm in their existing home?

Here was a chance to apply a concept developed by the Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity in a new service area. "A Brush With Kindness" is a repair ministry designed to make an impact one Saturday at a time. It began in response to an overwhelming need in Minneapolis and St. Paul neighborhoods to help low-income homeowners who because of age, disability or family circumstance struggle to care for their home. After years of deferred maintenance, homes fall into disrepair and a downward spiral of code citations, loss of homeowner insurance and ultimately in mortgage foreclosure that impacts not just individual homeowners, but entire neighborhoods.

Ventura was an aging community with a majority of the housing stock built prior to 1950. It broke the heart of the Fire & Safety Inspector and his staff each time they cited an elderly or disabled person for violations, knowing they didn't have the means to make the necessary repairs on their own. A repair ministry was the perfect fit. Where once the reception at City Hall was cordial but lacking substance, Habitat for Humanity's willingness to fulfill its mission in a way that fit with the community it served opened eyes and hearts once clouded by Habitat's reliance on producing two or three simple homes each year. A Brush with Kindness helps homeowners avoid the issues that create substandard housing in the first place.

While introducing innovative ways to address the need for affordable housing was exciting work, Daryl and Jill's own dreams of home ownership were increasingly out of reach. Heading home one day after looking at a manufactured house crumbling into the clutter of a postage stamp sized lot listed at \$499,999 they decided it was time to return to Minnesota. The seeds of a repair ministry had been planted in the rich Santa Clarita valley soil, and partnerships with local governments and other non-profits were growing*. So Daryl and Jill packed up the cats and headed back east on

Route 66 (Interstate 40 nowadays) for the shores of Lake Superior and a position as Executive Director for Animal Allies Humane Society.

Daryl joined Animal Allies at a time when enthusiasm was waning. A handful of dedicated staff and board members were doing their best to hold things together, operating out of an overcrowded and out dated concrete bunker. Applying strategic planning and fundraising skills honed during his time volunteering with Pepperdine University's NonProfit Education Project, he added functionality by drawing back supporters who had burned out and uniting board and staff behind a shared vision. Momentum began building around the construction of a modern animal care facility.

Unfortunately, after months of forward progress, a personal crisis intervened. What Jill had thought was homesickness in California turned out to be cancer and ultimately cut short their stay in Duluth. The life-saving doctors at St. Luke's recommended specialist treatment at Fairview South in the Cities so Daryl left Animal Allies in capable hands and located closer to Jill's family in preparation for the battle to come. It's been three plus years and the coast is clear so when the opportunity to return to Habitat for Humanity and the western Lake Superior area came Daryl and Jill packed up the cats again and headed up highway 61 (Interstate 35 nowadays).

Times are tough and the need for affordable shelter is greater than ever. In an effort to maximize impact the Carlton County HFH affiliate has combined forces with Habitat for Humanity-Duluth to create a more efficient organization ready to take on the challenges of the new economy. Armed with passion and a well-worn Bible, Daryl and Jill hope to join a handful of dedicated retirees and board members in training a new generation of service-minded citizens and students dedicated to building hope by making safe, decent, affordable shelter a matter of conscience and action for everyone in the western Lake Superior area.

** In April, 2009 Limoneira Farm Company and House Farmworkers Ventura received approval to build 74 units of affordable housing, capping four years of advocacy on behalf of farmworker families.*

What about the former Director?

What do you do after you've saved our local Habitat for Humanity affiliate from a boatload of bad debt? Sail off into the sunset?

Well, that's not exactly what former director John Miller will be doing, but he will be taking a well-deserved vacation. John came to the Duluth HFH from the City of Duluth HRA at a very difficult time for the affiliate. Immediately he set about the task of paying neglected vendors, smoothing the waters with other partners and building a core group of volunteers. Through creative use of construction services and his own checkbook John saved the Duluth affiliate from bankruptcy and set the table for what is sure to be an exciting time of growth.

This is all the more evident as we join forces with Carlton County HFH to serve the entire Western Lake Superior area. John received an award from the Habitat Board at our annual meeting in January for his outstanding leadership and dedication. Today, John is joining with the "Builder's Club" out on site. Please join us in saying thanks to John Miller for his dedication to the core volunteers and his personal sacrifice in building simple, decent, affordable housing for God's people in need.



Article provided by Pastor James Hagen, WLSHFH Board President

Habitat 500 Bike Ride

The Habitat 500 bike ride is coming July 12-18th in Faribault, MN. Riders from the northland will join bikers from around the country to raise funds while tackling the rugged and windy bluff country of southeast Minnesota. Top rider Phil Burke will be leading the charge for Western Lake Superior HFH. For more information visit www.habitat500.org

May and June also offers a chance to raise funds locally just by riding your bike to work. Pledge forms are available at Continental Ski and Bike or Red Rock Radio. The rider with the most pledges will win a bike from Continental!

The northern leg of the national Bike and Build team will be joining us on site July 25th to build and bond with fellow Habitat supporters. We'll be announcing the winner of the Bike to Work prize as well as the results from the Hab500. Bike on down the Munger Trail Saturday, July 25th and join us as we celebrate health, hope, and a new home for a deserving family.

What would we do without you?

The following sponsors provided free or discounted goods and services that helped your donated dollars build hope for more families in Cloquet and Duluth in 2008:

Brock-White
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Dale Armstrong Rentals
Gary Builders Supply
Lakes Region Storage
Storage on the Move
ThriventBuilds Homes
US Bank

Please support the businesses that support Habitat for Humanity in the Northland.

If you would like to make a contribution to safe, decent shelter in our community please contact us at (218) 722-3875 or you may write a check to **Western Lake Superior Habitat for Humanity** and mail it to the address below:

2002 W. Superior St. Suite 9, Duluth, MN 55806

Western Lake Superior Habitat for Humanity is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation

We'd like to thank all the wonderful individuals and organizations who have supported Habitat for Humanity of Carlton County and Habitat for Humanity-Duluth over the years and welcome you to join us in the years to come as Western Lake Superior Habitat for Humanity builds hope one home at a time, making simple, decent shelter a matter of conscience and action for all of God's people.

Sincerely,

The WLSHFH Board of Directors

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