

Current Thoughts

from Dwight's corner

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Muriel, Max and I just returned from the **2007 Baptist Blitz Build** in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This is one small part of the massive **Habitat for Humanity** projects to rebuild homes for low-income families displaced by the devastating hurricanes of 2005 (yes, it has been almost two years).

This was not the first time volunteers from the Great Rivers Region were on the Gulf Coast. The GRR American Baptist Men's Disaster Team was among the first responders for

clean-up 18 months ago. Volunteers and entire teams have been to Biloxi, Gautier and Pass Christian, Mississippi. Many have made repeat trips. In lifting up this special project I am not diminishing the work of others. In fact, the GRR participation in the 2007 Baptist Blitz is merely a continuation of habits we have already developed.

The 2007 Baptist Blitz Build was a cooperative effort involving the Baptist World Alliance, American Baptists Churches USA, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, District of Columbia Baptist Convention, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Alliance of Baptists, and Canadian Baptist Ministries. About 600 volunteers worked during the two week project. American Baptists were the largest single group (about 200). And the Great Rivers Region was the largest single source of American Baptist volunteers (over 60, from 14 different churches). We worked with volunteers from California to Rhode Island to South Carolina to Canada. It was a great fellowship!

Twelve houses in twelve days was an ambitious goal. Unfortunately, we did not make it. Subcontractor delays and a day of record rain (8 inches) put us hopelessly off-schedule. But the good news is that four (maybe five) of the houses are 95% complete and the others are within striking distance (in my opinion).

Each of the homeowners was a family displaced from the New Orleans area by the hurricanes of 2005. Some had temporarily lived in California, and were now coming back



to Louisiana. Others had fled to Baton Rouge from New Orleans, and plan on staying. The families include 17 children and retired or disabled persons. You will hear more of their stories later.

Victoria Goff (National Ministries) was the American Baptist coordinator for this project. You had the chance to meet Victoria during the GRR Mission Conference in January. It was good to see her again in Baton Rouge. She did a great job of communication and coordination. She is already planning similar projects for next year.

I can't say enough about the local Habitat for Humanity staff. Twelve houses in twelve days is an overwhelming task. Add to that the fact that the work was scattered over three project sites. Add to that 600 volunteers, most of whom were previously unknown to the Habitat staff. Add to that the problems of dealing with subcontractors. Add to that the uncooperative weather. I was encouraged by the coolness, confidence, and competence of this young Habitat staff—and they were young, mostly college age men and women. They were more patient with volunteers than the volunteers deserved. They were flexible and committed. They were competent enough to be gainfully employed in "real" jobs, but were passionate for the work of Habitat.



You will be hearing more later.

"Thanks" to all of you who made this possible with your prayers and generous contributions.

"Well-done" to all the volunteers who have worked on this project (and others like it)

Isn't it GREAT to be part of the Great Rivers Region?!

You can find more on our website (www.abc-grr.org) or on the National Ministries website (www.nationalministries.org/caring_ministries/vim/photos.cfm) or on the Habitat blog (<http://habitatbr.blogspot.com/2007/04/baptist-blitz-build-blog-coming-soon.html>)



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