

Habitat makes huge progress

Stuart Jet has 21 employee come to work day in Booker Park

story and photos by Charles M. Murphy

Little by little, nail by nail, and brick by brick, Booker Park is changing.

Habitat for Humanity of Martin County has nine homes under construction in a project that eventually will mean 58 affordable homes for families in Martin County.

Bonnie Flint, Resource Development Manager for Habitat's local chapter noted volunteers came out last Saturday, January 20, to work on four homes. The Stuart Jet Center provided over 20 employees. They are the latest sponsor of a home and have committed to working over 200 hours with their employees to get the job done.

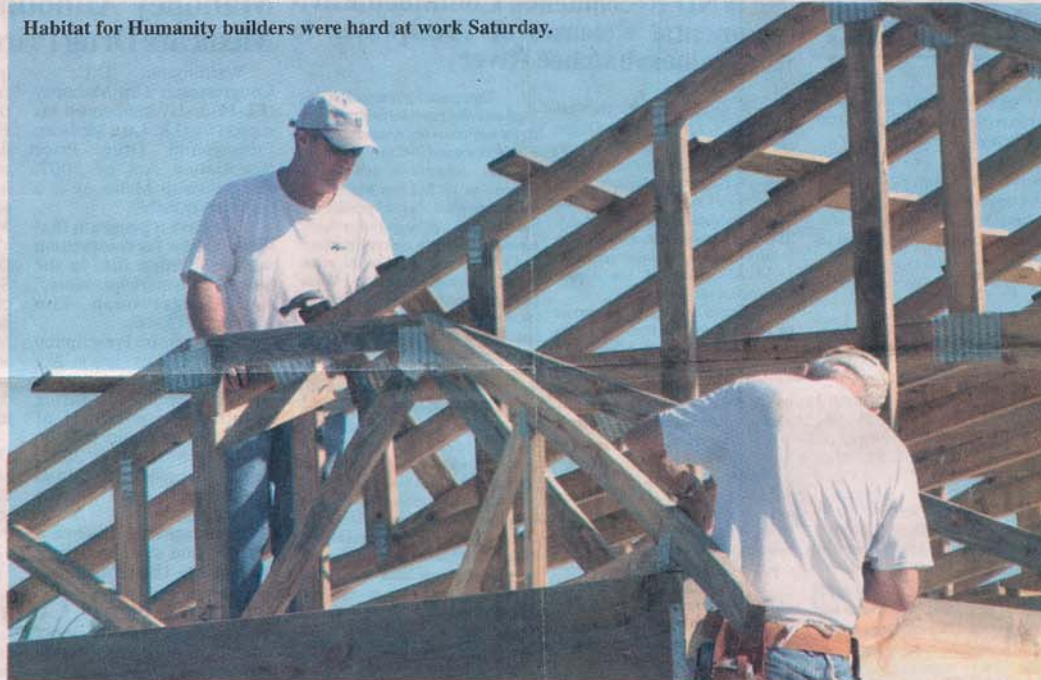
"This is our big priority right now," Flint noted, "We are working actively during the week and the weekends."

The effort could take four and a half years. So far four homes are going verticle and five others have had their concrete foundations poured. All are the normal insulated concrete block with styrofoam that they call green block homes. In the near future a new road will be constructed just west of where they are working now so more homes can be brought in.

Patricia Vacca and her son Chris have been spending a lot of Saturdays on the site getting read to move into their new home. The big day could come in March.

"I love it yes, I'm excited I can't wait," Ms. Vacca noted. Her son, Chris Campbell, said

Habitat for Humanity builders were hard at work Saturday.



he's also ready to move in and loves the thought of having his own room.

"We come all day Saturdays to work, I stay here as long as I can," Vacca added.

Habitat is definitely going above and beyond what they have done in the past. Normally they build between three and four homes per year in Martin County. In this project they hope to build 18 new homes per year. "It's ambitious, it's a significant increase in our presence here," Flint notes.

She thanked the many sponsors who have come for-

ward to sponsor homes. There are 11 so far. Each commits \$50,000 to be a sponsor. Some do get reimbursed for all or part of the sponsorship through a variety of state and other programs. Sponsors include Rines Supermarket in Indiantown, Baystate Milling, the Indiantown Co-Generation Plant, and the Indiantown Marina.

Ms. Flint noted they are still looking for sponsors and even donations from benefactors. They note that without the sponsors and the benefactors, they couldn't do these projects.

Another need is families. Flint notes that they are always actively looking for more families that qualify with income and other requirements. "The word is out, we want more families."

She noted that all of the families must provide labor for their homes and also must have accept a 30 year mortgage, interest free, for \$50,000.

"It is not just a free bee," she noted.

Another prospective new home owner, Tonya Molina knows things don't come for free, "It's a lot of work but it's worth it. Look at what you are

going to get. I'm very proud for my family and I thank Habitat for Humanity."

She has two children, Francisco 16, and Yvette 16.

Nora Gonzales was another homeowner who was working at the home Saturday. She noted she is very excited and thankful to all the volunteers who help, "We love it, it's a big help to everyone."

Gonzales has two sons, Jordan and Dylan.

Jordan said he enjoys doing the work, "I enjoy working here, it's a learning experience."

However he's not so sure about moving to a new town.

He is a student at Martin County High School and is reluctant to leave his friends. He still is willing to keep an open mind and see what Indiantown has to offer.

Stuart Jet employees who participated in the work day all said they were glad to help out such a worthy cause. It isn't the only project they've been involved in. The company has been around for 28 years and has been active in their support of Habitat, Meals on Wheels, the American Red Cross, the Council on Aging, and efforts to help Hurricane Katrina victims.

"This is a worthwhile cause, were excited about starting because these people need homes," Jeff Capen, one of the company owners. He had a hammer, a saw and other tools in his hands Saturday.

"The employees really are excited to help out. We expect there to be a huge turnout next time, and we'll devote a lot of time to this effort," he added.

Rebecca Cabrera should get a new home within the year. Still she is busy on weekends with her two children, working on other homes. She has a family of five including her two daughters Madelline Rodriguez, 16, and Yolando Rodriguez, 15. She also will live with her mother Martha Castro. All of her family work on Saturdays on these homes and are anxiously awaiting the day they can move in to their own home.

"I think it's cool," Madelline noted.