



Youth Build success means

South Collin County Habitat for Humanity program means a first home for Deborah Allen's family

By Britney Porter

Deborah Allen was working quietly at her desk at Lenders First Choice when she received a phone call that would change her life forever.

"Deborah? Deborah Allen? This is Geoff Davis and I wanted to let you know that you have been chosen for Habitat's Youth Build."

"Ahhhhh!" she screams.

Click. Deborah's friend Karen snaps a picture.

"You knew? ...You knew!" Deborah points to Karen.

"Deborah, it's going to be soon!"

The call came in August. Deborah Allen and her five children are now just weeks away from moving into their new home at 1107 F Ave. in Plano's Douglass Community.

"God Bless our Home" is written on the cement floor of Allen's soon-to-be carpeted bedroom. Her daughters Iesha, 14, Mahogoni, 12, and Bre'onna, 9, and her sons Lorenzo, 11, and Marcus, 20, claimed their bedrooms by scribbling signatures on the floor.

The 1,344-square-foot, four-bedroom, two-bathroom home marks South Collin County Habitat for Humanity's (SCCHH) 20th build and first Youth Build.

"It's unlike most other Habitat builds because we are drawing young people from such a broad age range - 7 years



Homeowner Deborah Allen.





future's bright for Habitat

old to 25 years old," said Youth Build chairperson Gwen Walters. "We have students from over eight high schools, two college campuses, an elementary school, and five churches, as well as scout troops, Boys & Girls Club, sports teams, and youth service organizations."

Walters has lived in Plano for about eight years and works for Verizon. As a mom of two teenagers, she knows how to motivate young people, which is important because there are many aspects of a Youth Build: construction, fundraising, serving snacks and meals, managing tools, landscaping, serving on the Youth Build Steering Committee, graphic design and Web support, manning the registration desk, and stocking the new home with essential items.

"Creating an opportunity for young people to engage in all aspects of sponsoring and building a home is a tremendous experience," said Walters. "Helping to build a home for a family

gives young people a great sense of ownership and pride. There is an attachment, a bond that grows as the home gets built. They can drive by the home years from now and say, 'Hey, I helped build that home.' Their enthusiasm is unmatched."

Walters' enthusiasm has rubbed off on SCCHH board member Beth Brown, who has volunteered with Habitat for about 10 months. She said, "Gwen is the driving force of Habitat for Humanity. She's got a vision - a dream - and she's really pushing it."

Brown also said, "It's incredible what the kids are capable of doing." Youths not only help construct the home, but also hold fundraisers, like car washes and bake sales, to contribute financially to the home.

"Then we've got support from the community," said Brown. "Pizza Hut supplies lunch and Starbucks supplies coffee. Krispy Kreme donates doughnuts. Sometimes churches bring food.



Thanks!
The Plano ISD Education Foundation would like to thank the following for making Ski Plano 2006 a great success!

Aspen Sponsor



Beavercreek Sponsors



JACOBS

Breckenridge Sponsors

Abernathy, Roeder, Boyd & Joplin, P.C.
Bank of America
Baylor Regional Medical Center
Jenny Birge
Bracewell & Giuliani, LLP
GCA Services Group of Texas, LP
GE Consumer Finance
HIT Entertainment
Medical Center of Plano
North Dallas Bank & Trust
Verizon

Keystone Sponsors

Alvarez & Marsal	Robert & Linda Paulk
Applied Data Resources	PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP
AT&T	Reliant Energy
Cadence McShane Corp.	Roach, LLP, Attorneys & Counselors
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Clerkin	Cristi & Kevin Ryan
First Southwest Company	Texas Instruments
Ken & Sue D. Kay	The Beck Group
M & A Technology	The Shops at Willow Bend
Main Event	VLK Architects Inc.
Nortel	WRA Architects
Northern Trust Bank	Betty & Steve Wright
PSK Architects	

Special Thanks to:

Bradley Graphics & Print • Chandler's Cuisine
• Dr Pepper Bottling Company • M&A Technology
• Plano I.S.D. Council of PTAs • Plano ISD Television Studio
• Don Powell, Avalanche Architect Extraordinaire
• Southfork • Wishbone Graphics/Plano Profile

2006 Ski Plano Committee

Betty Wright, Chair
Cami Alexander, Keith Braley, Mitch Bramlett, Becky Brown,
Mary Jo Dean, Judy Drotman, Elise Gold, Sharon Goldblatt,
Sue Kay, Kelly Palmer, Cindy Powell, Mirtha Rodriguez
Julia Shanklin, Sam Stricklin, Beth Webb



New homeowner Deborah Allen and her daughters (from left) Ilesha, Bre'onna and Mahogani.

... ready to move in

A conversation with new homeowner Deborah Allen

Are there words to describe how you feel?

"This is a blessing. They say something good comes out of something bad, and to have this happen after I lost my son [Dequorius Allen, 16, July 30, 2005], it was a blessing from God. ... I couldn't believe it until Dec. 3 at the ground breaking. I thought, 'Oh my God! This is really going to happen!'"

How have you helped in building your future home?

"I've been nailing and hammering and building the walls. I was like, 'I don't know what I'm doing,' but we have good crew chiefs and it gets done."

Do you get to pick out the color of paint and carpet?

"Yes, I picked out my carpet and I picked the color for the siding. This is my first time ever owning a home and making those decisions, so I hope I did good!"

Do you get to choose where the house is to be built?

"No, but it turned out to be OK because I'm right here near Hwy. 75 and Collin Creek Mall. It's a very good location."

Are you a gardener? You have a huge backyard!

"I'm not certain what my plans are for the backyard. I'd like to invest in a fence."

What is your vision for the inside?

"I've always rented, so I've never taken pride in the walls. But now I have a chance to test some of my abilities that I didn't know I had! Nowadays people tend to get beige carpet, but I went with something darker. Brown is my favorite color and you know what goes good with brown? Burnt orange."

When do you plan on moving in?

"The end of April or first of May, which is good timing because the kids will be getting out of school. They can start fresh getting to know the neighbors and enjoying the community center on the next street. It's going to work out."

What do you think the children think of all this?

"I think the kids are happy to see how everybody can pull together for us. For people you don't even know to take away from their time - they don't have to be here. It's a blessing when people think about others and want to help." - Britney Porter

Food is important when you have all these workers!"

Volunteers work from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays, coming and going as they please. Experience is not necessary. Brown's son Brian said, "Even if you're inexperienced in building a house, a lot of people haven't done this, so you're not the only beginner out here."

The 14-year-old eighth-grader from Robinson Middle School is in the National Junior Honor Society but said that the Youth Build is more than earning community service hours. "It's a lot of fun to see everybody working for one cause. I've been working registration and hammering studs. It's a team effort."

It's a team effort both on the scene and behind the scenes. Said Walters, "Swinging a hammer is just one part! Our volunteers are actively engaged in Habitat's committees: Family Selection, Family Support, Volunteer Coordination & Support, and Development."

How is a family selected for a Habitat house? Prospective homeowners must earn an annual income between \$11,650 - \$43,900 depending on family size; they must have a good record of making rent and utility payments; they must have a stable employment history for two years; and they must not have owned a home in the past three years.

SCCHH president Charles Kramer emphasized that homeowners purchase their home with a 20-year, interest-free mortgage loan, including taxes and insurance. Down payments are earned through 400 "sweat equity" hours that the family attains by building their home or other Habitat homes.

Kramer said, "There are a lot of myths about Habitat. People think we give away houses, but we don't. We sell them." A Habitat home costs approximately \$60,000 - \$65,000, depending on its size and the cost of the land.

"And no one gets paid for their service," said Kramer. "Nobody is on the board of directors in this organization unless they want to be."

The youth are just as enthusiastic about volunteering. Kristin Evanto, a 17-year-old Plano Senior High School (PSHS) student, said, "Everyone is here because they want to be here. They have

First 200 tours will
receive FREE iTunes® music

It's Hip
To Be
Square.



AUSTIN **SQ**UARE

TOWNHOMES, CONDOS

from \$150s - \$250s

972-820-2243



Own at Austin Ranch www.AustinRanch.com



Centennial High School's Heather Nelson installs the maintenance-free soffit system.

“Service before self is one of our mottos in JROTC and Habitat for Humanity is a great way to serve in our community.”

a positive attitude.”

Evanto is working alongside Haley Slater, 18, and Bryan Ashley, 18, two other PSHS students. This is their first time to be involved in Habitat. “Most teenage kids aren’t involved in this kind of stuff, especially this early in the morning,” said Slater, “but it’s cool to know that people actually care.”

Evanto added, “I like doing something for the community that has a purpose.”

What would these three students be doing if they weren’t volunteering?

“Sleeping!” They all shouted in unison and laughed.

“We didn’t expect this many people to be out here,” said Ashley. “There’s around 50 volunteers here!”

House construction leader Jim Meyer divides the 50-or-so volunteers into groups. Each person wears colored duct tape as his or her name tag. Gray tape is for volunteers over 18 years old who

can work on the roof; green tape is for 16- or 17-year-old volunteers who can work on a ladder; and yellow tape is for volunteers under 16 who cannot be on a ladder or the roof.

Meyer has volunteered with Habitat for about five years. As the house leader, he assures quality control. “And, generally, I get blamed for everything!” he laughed.

The retired engineer said that of the 25 years he’s lived in Plano many changes have occurred, but one thing has remained the same: “This organization is a wonderful brotherhood. We have tremendous confidence in each other, and there is a unique combination of talented people plus dedication.”

Plano West students are running the Youth Build’s registration desk, passing out liability forms, raffle tickets, and T-shirts. Caitlin McMenamy, 18, is the co-president of Habitat for Humanity at

Smart Move.

Pick up extra college credit this summer



www.ccccd.edu

Early bird registration
March 13-19

Laura Chavez, “SMART” scholar and future computer engineer

Plano West. She said her favorite part of volunteering with Habitat is working alongside the homeowner. "Deborah (the homeowner) always has a smile. She's vibrant and happy and ready to go!" McMenamy said. "It seems like in most community efforts you don't really see who your efforts go toward and here you actually get to build alongside the owner."

McMenamy's co-president Albert Chang, 17, said that their student chapter comprises about 150 members. "We're a pretty tightknit group, and we try to get as many people as we can out here every weekend. You can't get enough of being out here!

Working on a house for somebody is a really satisfying opportunity."

This is Olina Jou's first opportunity to work on a Habitat project. Jou, 18, is the publicity officer for Plano West's chapter. She said, "It's really fun to work with people who are your age."

But teenagers aren't the only young workers at the Youth Build. About 10 second-grade Girl Scouts scurry around, passing out Amos chocolate chip cookies and hot chocolate to the workers.

Plus, a few fraternity brothers from the University of Dallas' Zeta Beta Tau are contributing to the Youth Build. Chad Chandler is a 26-year-old member of Zeta Beta Tau fraternity. "I've helped with Habitat once and loved it," he said. "It was the best feeling in the world, so I

wanted to come back."

As Habitat grows, the nonprofit is spotting land beyond Plano. Last year, the Christian organization changed its name from Plano Habitat for Humanity to SCCHH (South Collin County Habitat for Humanity) to serve families living on the south side of Hwy. 121, west of Hwy. 75; and the south side of Hwy. 380, east of Hwy. 75. Some of these cities are Allen, Trinity Park, Lucas, Murphy, Parker, and Wylie.

Wylie students contributing to Plano's Youth Build include high school senior Tiffany Park, 17, and junior Laura Parra, 16, who are part of JROTC. "Service before self is one of our mottos in JROTC," said Park, "and Habitat for Humanity is a great way to serve in our community."

These students and many other youth and adults have put service before self in Plano's first Youth Build. From floor to ceiling, the Allen home is covered with their signatures, prayers and notes. One 2-by-4 reads, "God Bless Deborah Allen and Family."



Crew chief Richard Mineo gives students a lesson on Sheetrock installation.

COLLIN COUNTY CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER 2006 GALA

Caliente

JOIN US *8 April 2006*

GRAND BALLROOM of the EMBASSY SUITES, FRISCO

OUR SPONSORS TO DATE *and* VALUED PARTNERS AGAINST ABUSE

Brennan Financial Services
Mark & Carolyn Speese
Baylor Regional Medical Center at Plano
Presbyterian Hospital of Plano
Anne Davidson

ESI
Rent-A-Center
Ebby Halliday Realtors
Locke, Liddell & Sapp, LLP
Hall Financial Group

State Farm Insurance
Sheriff Box
Texas Instruments
Neiman Marcus
Boardwalk Auto Group

FOR TICKET INFORMATION CALL
Diane Collins at 972.633.6610
OR EMAIL
dcollins@cacplano.org