



GRAND TRAVERSE HERALD

By **LISA PERKINS**
lperkins@record-eagle.com

August 26, 2008 07:20 pm

—

TRAVERSE CITY -- Habitat for Humanity and dozens of volunteers got a jump-start on September's United Way Day of Caring with a four-day building blitz last week.

Eight volunteer teams, along with many individual volunteers, pounded nails and hung shingles in the three-bedroom, one-bath home that is scheduled to be finished by Christmas.

"Partnering with the United Way Day of Caring is a huge blessing for us because they always bring in big groups," said Robin Grubbs, executive director of Habitat for Humanity - Grand Traverse Region.

Teams from Faith Reformed Church, Huntington Bank, Traverse City State Bank, the Exchange Club of Traverse City, Young Professionals, Tuesday Toolmen, Viktor Incentives and the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative joined future homeowner Heather Beers, who will put in 200 hours of work on her own home and 75 hours on a future Habitat project.

"The volunteers help make this not just a Habitat project, but a real community project," said Grubbs, noting that passersby have stopped with food for the workers at the building site on Rasho Road in East Bay Township. Several local companies have also contributed food or paid for lunch for the work crew.

"People are looking for a place to volunteer and don't always know how. Habitat provides that," said Grubbs, who oversees five current Habitat projects in the Grand Traverse area.

Linda Forward, an AmeriCorps volunteer and mentor coordinator for the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative, said members of her group were very eager to participate in the building blitz.

"They requested to be part of it. They know they are doing something good for somebody," said Forward, who finds mentors for the group of 14- to 24-year-old foster youth.

"It is great for Habitat and great for the kids, it's all pretty empowering," said Forward, noting that the project is a good fit for the group that strives to create community leaders.

While Grubbs says that Habitat could not exist without the volunteers who so generously give of their time, the process is a two-way street.

"They will go home tired tonight and feel good about what they have done," Grubbs said.

The United Way of Northwest Michigan Day of Caring will kick off its 13th year of celebrating community volunteerism beginning at 8 a.m. Sept. 11, at the City Opera House in Traverse City.

An estimated 600 to 1,000 volunteers devote time to area nonprofit groups each year.

Copyright © 1999-2008 cnhi, inc.

Photos



RJ Green, left, and Marco Dedenbach of the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative work on a Habitat for Humanity home in East Bay Township. Record-Eagle