

January 24, 2009

January continues to move ahead in a strong way. We had over 80 volunteers here this week!

This week we dedicated the house on Choctaw street. This family is especially near and dear to my heart. I was with Bart when we made the initial visit to the house and met the homeowner. It was obvious that this multi-generational family was working so hard to restore their home. They live on a bayou and they lost everything in Katrina. The 7 family members lived in 2 FEMA trailers for the last 3 years while they tried to earn enough money to rebuild their home. Project REHAB (now Fuller Center Disaster ReBuilders) took over the house and completed it in time for Christmas 2008. The homeowner's 18-month old grand daughter lives with them. She has never had a house to run around in. Now she squeals with delight as she races from room to room. The 2 FEMA trailers are GONE!! The homeowner said "When they took away those trailers, Katrina went with them. We can finally say 'It's Done'" **Halleluiah!**

Last weekend we attended that first-ever Fuller Center for Housing Covenant Partner Conference in Virginia. We had a huge turn out for Fuller Center Disaster ReBuilders (FCDR) including Bart Tucker, Faith Bontrager, Steve Martsolf, Scott McBride, Carl & Jeanine Santillo, Hap Whitestone, Pete Berlowitz, Leda & Lyn Thompson and Peter Salemme. It was awesome to be surrounded by like-minded people who share a desire to serve and do it in the spirit of God's love. We gave a presentation about our new FCDR operation. The audience loved it. We generated lots of enthusiasm and interest. We've already gotten several requests from Fuller partners who want to send groups of volunteers down to the Gulf Coast. The conference was well worth the long drive from Mississippi to Virginia.

We have some new faces and talent in the offices at Camp Gospel. Ella Kliger has been a working with Hands On since June participating in a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. She'll be helping out in the office while she stays with us until February. Ella can do anything! I know, because we've asked her to!! Alex Curtiss, from the Twin Cities of Minnesota, is our new Volunteer Manager. Alex is part of the AmeriCorp "state" program, which means he will be part of the FCDR team until Nov 2009. He has jumped right in and is doing a fantastic job. I couldn't be happier, and, with his help, hopefully I'll be a little saner too!

Thank you to Ella and Alex who covered for me when we went to Virginia for the conference. They did an amazing job, with little notice and little training. I know they are going to be a real "Dynamic Duo"!! We'll tell you more about them in our next Update newsletter, coming soon....

Peace & Blessings,

Heather