

Director's Update

March 21, 2009

March has been an exciting month on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Our volunteer count for the month has been within a couple of percentage points of last years. And until Friday, we had 10 houses underway. More about that later.

Camp Gospel has been full to the overflowing. It feels very good to see both so many boomerangers and so many new friends. It has been wonderful to see so many of you return and to meet many new people. For those of you who haven't made it recently, we've got a bunk reserved for you. The weather has been gorgeous!

We're adjusting to life without Heather, but Faith Bontrager and Alex Curtiss have been stepping up to the challenge! They always say that no one is irreplaceable, but they don't know Heather.

During the "Eyes of Hope" presentation on Wednesday evenings, one volunteer asked, "What percentage of homes still need to be rebuilt in Hancock County?" One of the homeowners present replied, "In my neighborhood there were one hundred fifty homes. Twenty of them have been rebuilt." Much remains to be done; of course, we know that many of these homes will never be rebuilt.

On Saturday, March 14th, we dedicated the new Bethel Free Health Clinic. The program included new and old friends. Pete Berlowitz and Judy Jones reminded us of our history, remembered those who have helped us along the way and re-iterated our mission for the future. Judy Bultman spoke and inspired us anew! Donna Tasker, Dr. Dave Clippinger, and Pastor Elijah Mitchell all contributed to recognizing those involved and blessing this new building in the vital work of reaching out to those in need of healthcare. Check out the clinic happenings at: www.bethelfreeclinic.org.

On March 20th we dedicated our 87th house on Avenue B. The house was sponsored by our great partners, Joining Hands. And that's house number 7 for them. And they're also sponsoring another house on Jeff Davis. The dedication was a grand event with a new record established for all the gifts presented to the homeowner. We had a quilt from the Finger Lakes Lutheran Churches; a grand card from all of the California Lutheran students who helped Marc Quade frame the house back in January. Yes, for those of you who are tracking such things, we drove the piers on this house on January 5th—eleven weeks, not bad.

So the Avenue B dedication means we're only working on nine houses, or better said: "**Homes for nine families!**" But we still need YOU!

Blessings,

Bart