

# Sailors, airmen, soldier help build Habitat townhomes

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As residents watched from their stoops, scores of workers in white hard hats swarmed over a construction site on Clay Street yesterday, many carrying hammers and other building tools.

This week more than 125 active-duty servicemen and women and military veterans joined volunteers from AmeriCorps and SeniorCorps to participate in building 10 townhomes on the corner of Clay and Pleasant streets in downtown Annapolis.

Joshua McKerrow — The Capital

Air Force Senior Airman Jolian Sireer hammers on a wall for a Habitat for Humanity home on Clay Street Friday. This week more than 125 active-duty servicemen and women and military veterans joined volunteers from AmeriCorps and SeniorCorps to participate in building 10 townhomes on the corner of Clay and Pleasant streets in downtown Annapolis.

The 1,000-square-foot residences feature three bedrooms and 1 1/2 baths. The seven townhomes facing Clay Street have basements, five of which are being finished to provide an additional bedroom. The homes on Pleasant Street sit on slabs. The entire project will be completed in time for a formal dedication in late May or early June.

Former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, visited the site Oct. 5, the day the frames for the buildings' walls were raised.

At one house, Northrop Grumman Electronics employee Randy Kamischke, 65, of Severna Park, was checking a rear doorway with a right angle. He quickly held a ladder so Petty Officer 2nd Class Chris Conway, 25, of Odenton could nail an exterior insulation panel.

Though they are 40 years apart in age, the men share a common experience. Kamischke served in the Navy during the Vietnam era from 1966 to 1970.

Originally from Struthers, Ohio, near Pittsburgh, Conway has been in the service for seven years and is a cryptologic technician in computer networking with the Navy's Cyber Warfare Group.

It was Conway's third full day as a Habitat for Humanity volunteer.

For Kamischke, it was his 18th day on the Clay Street project. He has volunteered a full day every other Friday since June. Back then, he was building the homes' walls in a warehouse.

"I've done a little bit of everything," he said. "Drywall, framing, painting, sheathing, you name it. When I was in the Navy as a 'Nuke Spook' - a nuclear weapons technician, I built a couple of houses for friends in my off-hours."

He volunteers through the Severna Park Coalition, composed of members of Woods Memorial and Prince of Peace Presbyterian churches, St. Bernadette Catholic Church, and the Church at Severn Run.

"I got involved for service," he said quietly. "My family has been raised on service and volunteerism in the community."

Mingling with the volunteers yesterday were executives from Habitat and the Corporation for National & Community Service.

"This site is emblematic of national service at Habitat builds," said Mike Mitchell, CEO of Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake. "These veterans are doing something good and creating a transformation."

He pointed out the City of Annapolis donated the land for the new townhomes. Once they are complete, space will be created for a common parking area and a homeowners' association will be established.

Patrick Corvington, CEO of CNCS, pointed out that the volunteers spanned several generations.

Some were active in VISTA, AmeriCorps or SeniorCorps - all affiliated with CNCS.

"Habitat for Humanity has been a good partner in providing housing for America's military veterans and in engaging veterans in volunteering. Around the county, we've got 70,000 from AmeriCorps and 8,000 from VISTA engaged in community service," Corvington said.

There were 30 AmeriCorps volunteers on the site over the two days, he said, adding, "Each AmeriCorp member recruits or manages 35 volunteer members."

"How many Army people are here?" Corvington asked the assembled workers.

"Here!" said one voice.

"How many Navy?"

A thunderous roar went up.

"OK. Navy is here!

How many Air Force?"

A small cheer.

A Marine veteran, now an engineer with the state, watched quietly from the sidelines.

Ronald Moulden grew up with his nine siblings crowded into a two-bedroom apartment over the long-gone pool hall on Clay Street. He is the homeowner of 57 Pleasant St.

Though new homeowners are required to volunteer on Habitat projects for 250 to 350 hours, Moulden already has contributed more than 600 hours on projects in Brooklyn and Baltimore. He served in the Marines from 1972 to 1982, deployed to Korea, Norway and Japan.

One of his Habitat neighbors is Wanda Mitchell, who will own 103 Clay St.

She can't wait to move in with her husband and two grandchildren.

"This is my first day on the site since I had hip replacement surgery," she said.

With Jayna Powell, the faith relations coordinator for the Chesapeake Habitat organization, Mitchell visited area churches, talking to members about Habitat projects and signing up church partners. She also volunteered in the Habitat ReStore in Pasadena.

"I had a heart transplant in 2008 and the steroids ruined my hip joint. This year I have a new house, new heart, new hip! Three H's!" she exclaimed.

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