

Annapolis volunteers warm to construction

By Larry Perrault and Susan Stevenson

Pete Cox was rushing by midmorning to shoot a photo of a wall going up on house No. 4, where the Gail and Barrington Allen family will live one day.



Former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, present Habitat homeowner Ronald Moulden with a Bible while touring the Clay Street build site in Annapolis, Maryland, on Tuesday. ©Habitat for Humanity/Steffan Hacker

It was just one skill required of the construction manager for Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake's site in Annapolis on the first day of the Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project here.

And it was a good day for Cox, who arrived at 6 a.m. to ready the site for the arrival of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter. The Carters toured the site, posed for photos and chatted with homeowners and volunteers before moving on before 10 a.m. to Baltimore, when actual construction began.

"You do all this preparation for two months, and then everything works as planned," Cox said. "Today couldn't have been better."

Volunteers—120 strong—chilled by the area's first real taste of autumn, were more than willing to stop standing around and get the tools out. Once started, they easily reached the construction goal for the day: get firewalls up between the houses and make sure all 10 houses on site reach the same stage of construction.



Volunteers work on the 10 new houses being built in Annapolis, Maryland's Clay Street neighborhood on Day Two of the 2010 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project. ©Habitat for Humanity/Steffan Hacker

A build site is a study in sharing

Fred Reno, senior site supervisor at the Annapolis build, described his main job as going around the site and "putting out fires," which seemed to mean sending supplies in various directions, answering question after question, and playing traffic cop with volunteers and drywall.

Walking among the structures, Reno told various crew supervisors to donate a volunteer for another house site that was lacking five volunteers.

Then another shout went out for a couple of volunteers to help two others carry some drywall to another house site.

The weather: Wind instead of rain

Emergency medical technician dispatcher Tiffany Kelly had a tent covering her first-aid work area Tuesday morning. By the afternoon, she lost the tent.

“We had to get rid of it before it blew away,” she said, pointing to an adjacent pile. The wind had picked up during the day, and it was better to take the tent down.

Rain had been expected in the morning, but wind and cold came instead. “I have on a fleece, two T-shirts and this coat, and I could still use more,” Kelly said.

Green and growing

Volunteer Meg Kahder was snapping photos Tuesday to help with plans for landscaping the Clay Street Habitat homes with native plants once construction is done. A master gardener, she’s considering perennials from Maryland that won’t need extra water or care to thrive. One example, she said, is pineapple sage, which blooms in late September, providing the last feast for hummingbirds before they head south for the winter.

Kahder retired two months ago after working as a librarian for years, and she’s energized by her new challenge with Habitat.

Rain barrels might be a possibility on the Clay Street houses, too, she said. “They slow down water runoff and keep pollution from running down the street into Chesapeake Bay,” she explained. Clay Street edges along College Creek, which empties into the Severn River and on into the Chesapeake Bay.

The sounds explain it all

Even without the T-shirts on everybody and the signs all around the build site, the many sounds would explain the work going on there.

Pounding hammers keep on chattering all day. Screaming electric saws make you aware that this is serious business. The oohs and ahhs and the muscle-grinding grunts of the volunteers resound as they carry a slab of sheetrock over to a new house.

And then there is the sound of silence. The quiet stare that overwhelms all noise as a new homeowner takes a break from her building chores to watch her home grow.

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