

HOPE & HAMMER

Habitat for Humanity London Inc. Unit #10-45 Pacific Court, London Ontario N5V 3N4
Phone (519) 455-6623 * Fax (519) 455-8479 * www.habitat.london.on.ca
Newspaper Editor: Joanna Kurowski * jkurowski@rogers.com



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Women Build 2007

By Julie Coley

It is early May now and the staff and committee volunteers at Habitat for Humanity London have been busy making plans since last November for our first Women Build project. Habitat's Women Build project was established by Habitat for Humanity Canada to encourage the involvement of women in the construction of Habitat homes. Since the first women build project in 1991, more than 800 Women Build houses have been built across North America and in fourteen countries around the world. Women Build projects provide an environment in which women can feel comfortable learning the skills they might not normally have the opportunity to learn.



We kicked off the Women Build 2007 in November 2006 with the **Circle of Women** fund-raising campaign. The ten 'Circle of Women' that have been the face of the Women Build 2007 campaign (you've seen them on buses, paint cans, posters etc.) are: Cynthia O'Neill, Abbie MacMillan, Janette McDonald, Linda Crossley-Hauch, Cheryl Miller, Stacey Graham, Susan McElroy, Nadia Joseph, Kelly Garland and Jeanine LeRoy. They have been out in the community asking individuals, businesses and community groups to help make this the best project ever!

ReStore

ReStore Hours:
M-F 9-6, Sat 9-4
Phone: 519-659-1949



Some of the corporate/community sponsors for the 2007 project are: Andersen Windows, Auburn Developments, Realtors Care Foundation, 103.1 Fresh FM, The Forever Legacy Foundation, TD Financial Group, Cold Springs Farm, Vytex Corporation, Blinds by Design, and N-J Spivak.

Hammer the message home

by Emma Wadland



Marion Baskett didn't realize the extent of her family's poverty until her father passed away.

Someone let her mother a dress for the funeral, because she didn't have a suitable one herself. "We had a lot of love in the family, but we were just really poor" she says.

More than 40 years later, Baskett retired from teaching elementary school and turned to volunteering for Habitat for Humanity Canada, trading chalk for hammers and nails. Her former principal asked why Baskett, now 58, was joining the organization. The answer came from deep in her past. "I want to give back to

another community what mine did for me when I was growing up," she told him.

Habitat for Humanity London is part of an international network of non-profit governmental organizations that brings affordable housing to families classified as working poor. London's branch has built 18 local homes since its inception in 1993. The non-profit organization plans to construct at least four new houses this summer.

But this time, it will be mostly women wearing the hard hats.

Habitat London is recruiting female builders for its first Women Build initiative. While women make up more than half of Habitat's volunteers, they account for only 15% of its construction workers. More than 60 per cent of Habitat's homes are built for families headed by women. Because recipient families take an active role in construction, they in turn become handy homeowners. This means women learn their way around traditionally male territory.

Baskett has helped to build 14 houses in London and Collingwood. She can install cabinetry, sub-flooring, doors and windows. Her enthusiasm is infectious when she talks about drywall. You name it - she can do it. She enjoyed building houses from the moment she stepped on to her first Habitat construction site in 2001.

"I was hooked, absolutely hooked. This was exactly what I wanted," she says, eyes widening. "We started hammering at 8 o'clock and the first wall went up at 8:20. And I started to cry." Her emotion came from revisiting the community support she'd experienced as a little girl. Baskett grew up on a farm in Iona Station, five kilometres outside Dutton. Her family subsisted on what they raised. "The farm had everything on it-chickens, cows, orchards, vegetable gardens," she says.

But being a farmer in Ontario in the 1950s and '60s was precarious, Baskett says. On her farm, their ploughs and tractors were worn out. They also had no running water. In winter, Baskett's mother heated chopped ice taken from the eaves to do the family's laundry. Despite their poverty, Baskett says her family was surrounded by the love of a supportive community. "If somebody's barn burnt down, people were there the next day to rebuild it. No questions asked. You just did it," she remembers. "If you needed something, people were right there."

In 2005, Baskett worked on a house for a Ukrainian-Canadian family with four children. The father told Baskett how, in their former home, the children sat in pairs on their parents' laps because the kitchen was impossibly small. His sheer enthusiasm over the kitchen she was helping to build is one of many reasons Baskett comes back for more. "It's these little things," she says. "It's not just getting the Habitat house; it's making it a home."

Habitat's community values captured Susan McElroy's attention, too. This will be her first year raising money and building houses. "I can probably wield a hammer without doing too much damage," she says, laughing. McElroy, who also grew up on a local farm, likens construction to a barn-raising - it's about community coming together to build shelter for someone, she says. She has an impressive volunteer track record in the city, beginning at age 10, looking after war veterans at a Red Cross canteen. Now she runs her own communications company and devised the Women Build promotional campaign. McElroy, 52, is among 10 women posing on a mobile billboard reading "Women Build 2007- We Need You" plastered to eight London Transit buses. She says every Canadian has a right to clean, safe housing. "If people are poor, it is not from a lack of wanting. Life happens to people," she says.



Shelley Milos is the executive director of the [London Housing Registry](#), an organization that assists low-income families facing housing crises. She says Habitat does wonderful work, but that it's "hard to put a dent in the number of people who need affordable housing."

Julie Coley, Habitat's executive director, says she would like Women Build to become a yearly event in the city. But she adds at least some men will be working on the sites this summer.

The Thames Valley District School Board has signed on as a main sponsor of Women Build in part to raise awareness about the trades among its female student body.

Overwhelming Response from Habitat Volunteers

By Julie Coley

We have received hundreds of volunteer applications this year from people interested in participating in Women Build 2007. To accommodate as many of you as possible, we have included the foundation and pre-fabrication of the walls into our volunteer schedule this year. Volunteers will be on the site from June 14th this year assisting with the construction of the foundation system, building the floor decks and walls to get ready for the 'blitz' portion of the build beginning Wednesday August 1st.

Kipps Lane Ground – breaking Ceremony and Dedication Day Dates

Ground-breaking ceremony will take place on Thursday, June 7th at 4:30 pm on the Kipps Lane site. Please be sure to check our website at www.habitat.london.on.ca for the date and time of the Dedication Day (the day the keys are symbolically handed to the new Habitat home-owners).

Alternative Spring Break

By Bethany Wiseman

Instead of heading south to hit the beach over Spring Break, more than one hundred Western students devoted themselves to local and international service-learning projects through the *Alternative Spring Break (ASB)* program.



On March 1st, our team arrived at the *Habitat for Humanity ReStore* in London to assist with the reconstruction of a shelving unit. With the help of ReStore Manager Gerry Pieroni and Habitat volunteers Bob and Peter, the London ASB team had the opportunity to participate in the start of a small construction project, a first for many of us! The entire group had an incredibly positive experience at the ReStore, working together as a team and learning important lessons such as "Measure twice, cut once!"

Thanks to Gerry and all of our friends at the Habitat ReStore for being a part of the Alternative Spring Break Program and sharing your enthusiasm and expertise with us!



Date
May 24, 2007

Time
7:00 pm

Location
Best Western, Lamplighter Inn, London

Sponsors



Please join us for a evening of fabulous styles from head to toe as we help Women Build construct housing for low income families in our community.

This fun night for men and women will feature a fashion show and a runway hair styling show plus other surprises! So, strap on your steel toes and tool belt for a roof raising night of good times!

All proceeds from ticket sales will go directly to the cost of building homes this summer.



Presented by:
Habitat for Humanity London,
Women Build,
and the Thames Valley DSB

Tickets are \$30.00 and can be purchased at:

Nova Vita
757 Richmond St.,
London
519-858-0007

Thames Valley DSB
1250 Dundas St.,
London
519-452-2000

Fisher & Company
515 Richmond St.,
London
519-672-0073

Sheldon Aaron of Best Western Lamplighter Inn on Wellington Road has graciously donated their Crystal Ballroom for our fund-raiser "Raise the Roof"

Fashion Show for Women Build 2007 on Thursday May 24th. Be sure to call the Habitat office to get your tickets.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2006-2007

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Habitat London is gearing up to increase our capacity to build more homes for London families. Please keep in mind that while Habitat values all of the time donated by its volunteers, we also need cash donations. Think about becoming a community builder by making an individual donation or a monthly donation to

DONATE ONLINE OR BY MAIL

You can now donate online at www.habitat.london.on.ca by clicking on the 'Canada Helps' icon on the main page. You can make a one time donation or donate monthly. Canada Helps sends you a tax receipt and your donation will be sent to Habitat London. To donate by mail, fill out the card below and send it to Habitat for Humanity London Inc., #10-45 Pacific Court, London, Ontario, N5V 3N4. Thank you for your support of Habitat for Humanity London in 2007!

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Method of Payment:

☐ Cheque (made payable to Habitat for Humanity London Inc.)

☐ Visa ☐ MC

Card Number _____

Expiry _____ Signature _____

☐ I would like to make a one time donation of \$ _____

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