

August-September 2008

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Remembering Jack Fitzgerald

On June 15, 2008, the Wexford Habitat Board officially dedicated the **2008 Community Build** to its long-time friend, Jack Fitzgerald. Jack was one of the longest serving volunteers for Wexford Habitat, having served on the Board for 16 years.

Not only did Jack play a leadership role in the organization, he also worked at the actual building sites. In fact, Jack joined the crews on almost every Habitat house built in Wexford County. His engineering background and his unassuming way made him an ideal volunteer as well as an inspiration to others.

The dedication for the Community Build took place during the 11:00 service at the United Methodist Church of Cadillac with many loving friends and family members in attendance. Executive Director Scott Powell presented Jack with an engraved hammer to commemorate the occasion and invited the church members to become active participants in the work of Habitat for Humanity in our community. With his wife Alice at his side, Jack graciously thanked Habitat for honoring him, and the congregation responded with a spontaneous standing ovation.

A few days later, on Wednesday, June 18, Jack and Alice were present for the ground breaking at 1025 Arthur Street. This was the



With wife Alice at his side, Jack Fitzgerald accepts an engraved hammer from Scott Powell.

official start of the 2008 Community Build, but soon it will be the location for the new home of the Brenda Whaley Family.

Sadly, Jack passed away on July 6, just a few weeks after the Dedication. We will miss his dry wit and his dedication to Habitat, but we know that his spirit will be present with us as we continue the work of helping others. Our prayers are with Alice and his family. May they find peace in their memories of a very special husband, father, grandfather, humanitarian, and servant of God.

Christmas in August? Of Course!

Believe it or not, planning has already begun for the 2008 **Breakfast with Santa** and the annual **Festival of Trees** dinner dance. Both events will be held on November 22 at the Cadillac Grill. The Breakfast is a gift to area children, but Festival of Trees is Wexford Habitat for Humanity's most important fundraiser. Its success is dependent on the generosity of and creativity of individuals and businesses in our area. Cadillac Rotary will once again be our partner for the event. Three large trees and at least a dozen smaller ones will be part of the live auction while many exciting donated items will be offered at silent auction. Rod and Amy Gibbs on Hagstrom's Flowers and Sally Goggin and Sherry Thomsen of Van Drie Home Furnishings will design two of the large trees, and the third large tree will be designed by a "coalition" led by Susan Martz of Oak Heirlooms. Please consider how you or your business might be able to help. Become a sponsor for one or both events, donate one or more items for the auction, or attend and participate in the auction! With your help, Habitat can provide affordable housing for deserving people in our county. **Be a builder of hope! Keep the Christmas Spirit Alive!**

Wexford Habitat was the real winner at the Kiwanis Golf Outing on June 28th. The contest was held at McGuire's Resort and featured twelve 4-person teams as well as many generous sponsors. Habitat is very thankful to all participants for the \$800 it received.



Calendar

Nov. 22 - Festival of Trees and Breakfast with Santa at the Cadillac Grill.
Questions? Call 775-7561

The Whaley Family Finds Power in Prayer

“Something good can happen if you work hard enough and pray hard enough.” These are the powerful words of single mom Brenda Whaley, and she says them with true conviction. For several years, she had been saving her money and praying for a new home for her two children, 9 year-old Travis and 11 year-old Brianna. And every day during morning prayers at St. Ann School in Cadillac, Travis had also been quietly praying for a place of his own. On June 18, the prayers of the entire Whaley family were answered. On this day, they broke ground at their new Habitat home on Arthur Street; simultaneously, the 2008 Jack Fitzgerald Community Build became a reality (see page 1).

The ground-breaking ceremony is a part of every new Habitat home, but



the Whaley children took their involvement in the process very seriously. They spent about an hour and a half at the Wexford Habitat office choosing just the right Bible verse to read during the ceremony, and when the day for the ground-breaking finally arrived, they each picked up the shovel to turn the earth. It was an extremely emotional experience for the whole family. .

When asked how the experience has changed her, Brenda said she has made some wonderful new friends, and she has realized that “there are good people out there” who are willing to help. She speaks passionately about the “amazing outreach” in our community and says she feels incredibly lucky” to be on the receiving end of so much generosity.

Since the ground-breaking, the Whaleys have been busy building their sweat equity. Brenda has worked at the ReStore and at the actual building site, and the children even helped with the painting project at Danielle William’s new Habitat house. Meanwhile, Travis has a new goal. Whenever he finds some free time, “he researches every dog he can.” Now that he will have a home of his own, he is hoping that a puppy will come to live there too.


Representative Booher Joins Wexford Habitat as Building Continues...

On August 9th, the skies were often gray, and intermittent wind and rain made work a little more difficult, but that did not stop a group of energetic Habitat volunteers from pounding nails and putting up walls at Brenda Whaley’s Arthur Street home. One of those volunteers was Representative Darwin Booher. He joined the group as part of the 2008 Statewide Legislative Build. The Legislative Build is a project that introduces Michigan Senators and Representatives to the work of those community-based organizations in their districts that provide affordable housing, help with downtown development, or assist with clean-up and demolition/deconstruction. Habitat for

Humanity is proud to be one of those one of those partner organizations.

August 9 was also one of the Jack Fitzgerald Build dates, and so all the volunteers were given green Habitat T-Shirts to celebrate the event. The day started with pastries provided by Blue Heron Restaurant and coffee by Java Express, followed by a devotional time led by volunteer Matt Metzger. Once the building started, almost two dozen people participated. In addition to Representative Booher, there were partner families, Habitat Staff and Board members, and other members of the community working together.

At midday, the skies opened up, and everyone moved to the basement to wait out the storm. Fortunately, the floor was already nailed in place and Subway had generously provided box lunches for the entire crew, so everyone enjoyed the break. When the box lunches were empty, the skies were clear once again, and work resumed. It was a positive and productive day for all involved.

 **Blue Heron Restaurant, Java Express and Subway (Mitchell St.)** are three of our **Habitat Stars**. They generously provided food and drink for our Habitat work Crew on August 9



Brenda Whaley pounds nails into the floor of her new home.



Representative Darwin Booher, (right front) works with other volunteers to build a wall.



Habitat President Ed Van Alst (left) works with other volunteers to put the wall in place.

What a difference a year can make! Last year, Danielle Williams didn't know much about Habitat for Humanity, and she certainly didn't have any experience in construction. This year, she is an official Habitat Partner and will soon have a home of her own. She has worked on her own home on Rogers Street, and she has also helped out with the construction project on Arthur Street.

Like other Habitat homeowners, Danielle must earn her 0% financing by building "sweat equity," so she pounds nails, paints walls, folds newsletters, works at the ReStore, and does whatever she can to add to her hours. When she is not working on her home, Danielle works as an in-home health care worker for the Council on Aging, but she



At left, Danielle pounds nails at the Whaley site and at right, looks out from her own new porch.

is also a part-time student at Baker College in hopes of becoming a registered nurse. While this is her personal dream, she also has an important goal with respect to her children; she hopes to provide a safer environment for her two

young children, 6 year-old Grant and 3 year-old Logan. Happily, that goal will soon become a reality. Grant shares his mom's excitement about the move. He has told all his friends about his new home and is planning a party for when they move in. What an exciting day that will be!

Did you know? During the past year, earnings from the Wexford Habitat ReStore will allow us to build two new homes and partner with two more families. The success is due to the organizational skills of ReStore staff and volunteers as well as the generosity of community members.



A Progress Report and a Farewell from Executive Director Scott Powell

If one word could describe what has transpired with Wexford Habitat over this summer, it would be **COMMUNITY**. Wexford Habitat has connected with over a dozen churches in this **COMMUNITY** who have made a commitment to work alongside this ministry and to build houses and hope with Wexford Habitat's Partner Families. Local churches have built walls and stood trusses, raised funds and provided build day meals, shingled roofs and in the coming weeks will finish the construction of a home in Cadillac.

As fall approaches, Wexford Habitat will not only prepare for its annual **COMMUNITY EVENTS**, Breakfast with Santa and Festival

of Trees, it will also close on three homes and should have three families in those homes before Christmas. As well, Wexford Habitat will continue its partnership with the WMISD Building Trades program on construction of another a house located on Boon Street in Cadillac. This program provides high school students the opportunity to earn academic credit and practical con-

First Presbyterian Church, Marion Amish Church, St. Ann Church, United Methodist Church of Cadillac, United Methodist Church of Manton, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, and Cadillac Jaycees all provided week-end building crews. Bless you!

struction skills, while continuing to fulfill Wexford Habitat's mission of building simple, decent affordable homes in this **COMMUNITY**.

As Executive Director, my life has been richly blessed while working with Wexford Habitat and serving alongside this strong and supportive **COMMUNITY**. Soon I will be departing WHFH to pursue a position in higher education and to further my graduate studies, but my connection to Habitat for Humanity will not end; it has been a large part of my life for the past eleven years and will continue to be so.

We will miss you, Scott!

"Where Moth and Rust Cannot Destroy..." *By Matthew J. Metzger, AmeriCorps*



As Volunteer Coordinator at Wexford Habitat, my job responsibility was very simple: help build houses. It might not sound like a big job, but since I didn't know the first thing about construction, my job was to find people who did.

What has that looked like this summer? Here are just some of the amazing experiences I've had: I've talked with pastors of all different denominations about how to reunite the body of Christ in the Cadillac area. I've met with a young couple who want nothing more than to give their baby-on-the-way a chance at a safe and healthy life. I've met a man who was divorced by his family because he was passionate about preaching the saving grace of Jesus Christ. I've sat

around the dinner table with an Amish family and worshipped the Lord in sweet harmony. Wow! How our God blesses when we seek Him first.

So now the obvious question: Did I find people to build houses? Well of course I did, and I spent my fair share of time on the house sites, but the houses are not my main concern. In Matthew 6:20, 21 Jesus gives us one of the most important lessons in priorities, "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Habitat for Humanity builds houses for the sake of the souls that live in them, not just because we

like building houses. If by spending three months of time, energy, and finances on a house, we can bring even one person closer to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, then our time has been well spent.

So I leave Wexford Habitat for Humanity, its staff, volunteers, supporters, and homeowners with a simple prayer that you always stay mindful of where you're storing up your treasure. Houses are the gifts; hearts full of thanksgiving and worship are the real treasures. May you always be aware of God's love and goodness in your lives, and may you find eternal life by seeking our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.



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Habitat For Humanity by the Numbers

- **22,000** — Number of families that are targeted to receive permanent housing on the third anniversary of the Indian Ocean Tsunami.
- **243** — Number of Habitat homes built in Michigan in 2007
- **90** — Number of countries where Habitat has a working presence.
- **22** — Date in November for Breakfast with Santa and Festival of Trees.
Contact Mary Garcia @ 775-7561 for more information

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This coupon is good until October 1, 2008



Wexford Habitat for Humanity was established in 1989 by community leaders of Wexford County who wanted to make a difference and eliminate poverty housing. They saw a need for simple, decent, and affordable housing. With the completion of the 3 homes this year, 20 families from Wexford County will be living in safe, decent housing.

Habitat for Humanity eliminates poverty one house at a time.