

Habitat for Humanity Team

Site: Slidell, Louisiana

April 17-21, 2006

**First United Methodist
Church of Arroyo Grande**

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The ultimate goal of Habitat for Humanity is to eliminate poverty housing and homelessness from the face of the earth by building adequate and

basic housing. Five members of the Arroyo Grande Methodist Church can attest to this part of the mission statement for Habitat. It was with joyful hearts that Patti and

Dick Melsheimer, Tom Egan, Lynn Foster and Sandy Underwood spent the week after Easter in Slidell, Louisiana

working for Habitat's East St. Tammany Parish division.



Each morning at 8:00am we met in the Central Baptist Church's parking lot (now turned into an RV park for Habitat volunteers) to review safety tips, have a daily



devotion provided by volunteers and divide up into the daily work groups. Four new

homes are being built in south Slidell. These four homes are at ground level with trenches being dug



for the foundation. These five volunteers worked one day digging trenches along side potential homeowners.



It's hard work digging 18" x 30" ditches but necessary to avoid further flooding. What a great experience to meet the folks who will be owning these homes. They must each provide a

minimum number of hours working on Habitat Homes before applying; upon completing their basic hours they can then apply and select property. Second phase is they must complete another portion of hours (family members and friends may help them attain these hours) before a house is turned over to them with a manageable mortgage.





The remaining four days with Habitat these four Arroyo Grande Methodist church members worked along side about ten other volunteers at a Pearl River construction site to raise roof trusses, hammer nails in hurricane strapping, hoist sheathing to the trusses for roofing, wrap the house in a waterproof sheathing and paper the roof for the shingles.



As the week progressed temperatures gradually decreased from 98 degrees with 90% humidity and no breeze to 89 degrees and rain. The people in Slidell



have a long way to go for "normal lifestyle". They need volunteers, volunteers, volunteers. Restaurants are gradually re-opening but with limited hours, this goes for the grocery stores also. A lot of

people are still gone, so even fast food restaurants are offering bonuses as well as relatively good hourly wages. Executive Director of East St. Tammany Habitat for Humanity Nancy Wood provided us a tour of south Slidell. We were amazed at the number of cars destroyed and still not moved, boats in front yards and in the fields, sofas, wood, trash still waiting to be picked up. Houses that once stood on pilings on north Lake Ponchartrain are no longer standing but are sunk in a canal 300 yards away. One person told of their entire four plex gone, nothing standing on the slab but four feet of seaweed and debris. Not one thing of their belongings remained.

The second part of Habitat for Humanities mission statement says "Furthermore, all of our words and actions are for the ultimate purpose of putting shelter on the hearts and minds of people in such a powerful way that poverty housing and homelessness become socially, politically and religiously unacceptable in our nations and world." What an amazing statement! Does this intrigue you to volunteer for Habitat for Humanity? We're going back!

