

Blitz '95: Way to lend a hand

BY MARY RODRIGUE
STAFF WRITER

Jackie Troutman has lived a comfortable life in Plymouth Township, raising four children to adulthood, marrying twice. She escaped winter for several years with monthlong vacations in Hawaii. Now she believes it's pay-back time.

"Anyone lucky enough to be able to put groceries on the table and not have to work, I think we owe something in return," said Troutman.

At 60, she is deeply involved with Habitat for Humanity, an international group of volunteers dedicated to providing housing for people who might otherwise never realize the dream of home ownership. Troutman is involved in campaign development and publicity for Blitz '95, the first Habitat project that will result in the construction of several new homes in Detroit.

Supported by multi-denominational and multi-racial leadership and perhaps best identified by the involvement of former President Jimmy Carter, Habitat for Humanity promotes partnerships between businesses and neighborhoods. The goal is to eliminate substandard housing, one house at a time.

Troutman became involved with the organization after a devastating hurricane hit the Hawaiian island of Kauai two years ago, leaving thousands homeless.

"I had spent the month of February in Kauai for five consecutive years. I had friends who were residents of the island," she said. After Hurricane Iniki hit, she heard about Habitat for Humanity's plan to build homes for displaced victims.

"I thought this would be a good way to see my friends and help," she said. "When I applied, I thought (Habitat) would put me in food service because of my background in nutrition. I assumed I was not going to be on a construction crew."

Troutman flew to Hawaii at her own expense, stayed in a work

camp which cost her \$100 for the week, and worked daily from sun up to sun down, side by side with volunteers from Maine to California.

"Because I was merely in my 60s, I got put on a construction crew. The older people handled food service and child care," she said.

"I wound up painting houses. I think people find they have more skills than they realize."

A widow since 1990, Troutman traveled alone to Hawaii. In a column about her Kauai experience, she wrote "all (volunteers) were hardworking, ordinary folks. In a week spent in the blazing tropical sun doing grubby, fatiguing work I never heard a complaint or cross word. If questioned, most said it was a way to lend a hand, be neighborly."

When Astrid Valdivieso of Bloomfield Hills learned her son, Tom, like all Andover students, had to perform 40 hours of community service as part of graduation requirements, she wanted his choice to be something meaningful.

It led eventually to a total family involvement with Habitat for Humanity. Her daughter, Veronica, currently a junior, was part of a group of 25 Andover students who traveled to Miami for a Habitat project. Astrid accompanied the group. Her husband, Dr. Manuel Valdivieso, head of hematology and oncology at Harper Hospital, will be staffing first aid for the Detroit building blitz in August.

"Tom just finished the summer semester at MSU. I wanted him to get a part-time job. He asked to volunteer with Habitat. He will start with the pre-building this week," she said.

Astrid Valdivieso is hospitality chairwoman for the Detroit blitz. "My job is to recruit and schedule over 1,000 volunteers," she said. "Volunteer applicants for new construction jobs must make a five-day commitment and pay a \$50 fee."

Besides the new construction of



Getting it straight: Astrid Valdivieso corrects a bent nail as Bridgette Milhouse provides a steadying hand at a pre-fab site in Detroit in preparation for the Habitat for Humanity Blitz '95 scheduled for Aug. 6-11.

15 homes on Plainview in northwest Detroit Aug. 6-11, five other homes in the area are already undergoing rehabilitation.

"It's making a huge impact on the neighborhood," Valdivieso said.

Those with less time available to commit are still needed to volunteer. "At least a full day commitment is needed," she said. "This means arriving at U of D Mercy at 6 a.m. to be used to the construction site until 6 or 7 p.m. Cars will be in a secured parking

lot and three meals will be served. "Other services including at least a day's commitment include serving food, driving vans, checking security badges, manning a store selling Habitat hats and T-shirts."

"In the office, we need help answering phones and performing general office work," she said. Bloomfield Hills businessman Scot Norris became involved with Habitat when one of the former teacher's former students was executive director of the Metro Detroit chapter.

"I guess I enjoy the physical part of building things," said Norris, an attorney and construction consultant.

"It's a means to help people who are honestly trying to help themselves. It's not a handout program. The people who are the most direct beneficiaries are involved. And I think volunteers take away from Habitat as much as they bring."

Other suburban volunteers include Joe Newland of Farmington Hills, who is chairman of the steering committee; Robert Klep-

inger of Birmingham, campaign development committee member; Dawn Hogan of Bloomfield Hills and Joann Lloyd and Melinda Polk of Farmington Hills, on the family selection committee. Rick Wiaz of Livonia serves on the first aid committee; Deborah Paruch of Birmingham works on the finance/legal committee and site store; and Doug Andridge of Livonia is a transportation volunteer.

Many more volunteers are needed. For more information, call (313) 273-4787.



House work: Above, Scot Norris checks a master list of pre-fab projects. At right, Jackie Troutman of Plymouth maneuvers an armload of two-by-fours through a doorway at a pre-fab site in Detroit recently in preparation for Blitz '95.



Not free, Habitat for Humanity homes require 'sweat equity'

City and suburban workers will toll side by side next month to make the dream of home ownership come true for 15 Detroit families.

The new owners have long dreamed of owning a home, but haven't been able to qualify for a conventional mortgage. Enter Habitat for Humanity.

The national organization is not a giveaway program. In order to qualify for a Habitat home, the family wage earner must be employed and have a good work record. The family must have saved enough for the down payment and be able to afford the monthly land contract payments. Equally important, applicants are required to put in 400 hours of work "sweat equity" actually building homes.

Blitz Build '95, supported by Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer and Wayne County Executive Edward McNamara in cooperation with Habitat for Humanity of Metro Detroit, is set for Aug. 6-11. During that week, 15 new homes will be constructed on Plainview, near Schaefer and Outer Drive in northwest Detroit.

These homes will mark the first

Basic qualifications for homeowner selection are that the family must be in need of housing, meet minimum income of \$930 per month.

new construction of homes in this area for low- to moderate-income families.

Corporate house sponsors include Gordon Food Service of Canton Township, Valassis Communications of Livonia, NBD, Ford Motor Co., General Motors, Ameritech, the Masco Corp. and several church consortiums.

Co-sponsors include the Home Depot, with superstores in Canton Township and Redford Township, MichCon and Wolverine Technologies.

Other contributors include Pope Romano's, Detroit Edison, Proger supercenters, Livonia Building Materials and the University of Detroit Mercy.

Basic qualifications for homeowner selection are that the fami-

ly must be in need of housing, meet minimum income of \$930 per month, complete 400 hours of sweat equity, and provide a \$500 down payment.

Families who purchase their home at no profit to Habitat are provided a no-interest land contract, to be repaid over a 10- to 20-year period. The terms of the land contract are comparable to the rental charges of homes in the neighborhood, and generally less than standard mortgage payments.

Currently, the average Habitat homeowner monthly payment is about \$250, which includes taxes and insurance.

Because the Habitat program relies on donations of materials, services, labor and the family's sweat equity, the home is paid for by completion. The new homeowner's mortgage payments to Habitat are deposited in a revolving fund and used for new projects.

This makes the total cost of qualifying and purchasing a home far less than conventional methods, and far more feasible for families with annual income between \$11,000 and \$29,000.

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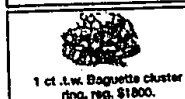
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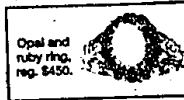
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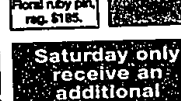
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