The Professional Golf Association has announced a new tournament for the 2010 PGA TOUR Champions Tour, with Habitat for Humanity of the Mississippi Gulf Coast as the charitable beneficiary. The Mississippi Gulf Resort Classic will take place April 26 – May 2 at the Fallen Oak Golf Club in Saucier, MS and will consist of three days of competitive play and a Pro-Am, along with a wide array of special events.

HFHMGC's relationship with PGA Tour official Mickey Bradley helped to spark interest in having a larger golf event in the area. As the driving force behind the Mickey Bradley Habitat for Humanity Katrina Pro-Am from 2006 – 2008, Mickey Bradley has been invested in Gulf Coast recovery and HFHMGC for years. The Mississippi Gulf Resort Classic will be the first Champions Tour event held in Mississippi.

Not only will the tournament bring national recognition and funding to Habitat for Humanity of the MS Gulf Coast, the local economy will be stimulated by an estimated $25 – 30 million in tourism spending. The Mississippi Gulf Resort Classic will bring national media outlets to the area, which is an essential tool for both spreading the word about HFHMGC and acclaiming the area as a destination spot for potential tourists. Coverage will be broadcast on Golf Channel, reaching an estimated 160 million households globally.

The PGA TOUR Champions Tour, which was known as the Senior PGA Tour until 2002, is a professional tour for golfers aged 50 and older. Last year, the Champions Tour featured tournaments all across the United States, as well as events in England and the Dominican Republic. This year’s tour will consist of tournaments in 15 American states and 3 international events in the Dominican Republic, Scotland and for the first time, South Korea.

The Fallen Oak Golf Club is an 18-hole championship course designed by PGA golfer Tom Fazio and owned and operated by MGM's Beau Rivage Resort & Casino. In 2009, the course earned a top-20 spot on Golf Digest's list of "America's 100 Greatest Public Courses." The course's breathtaking views of waterways and Magnolia groves will surely make for an unparalleled experience at the premiere Mississippi Golf Resort Classic.

The 2010 Mississippi Gulf Resort Classic marks the first of a three year commitment for the event. The tournament's participants will include 78 professional golfers, including Hal Sutton, Loren Roberts, Fred Funk, Jay Haas and Fuzzy Zoeller, to name a few.

To learn more or get involved visit www.hfhmgc.org

Volunteer Opportunities are Available!

In This Issue:

- HFHMGC Featured in Television Pilot
- Looking Back on 2009
- Reflections from the Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project In Asia
- Volunteer Testimonials, Homeowner Features and Much More!
Letter from Leadership

This past November, I participated in the 26th Annual Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Work Project in Chiang Mai, Thailand. For someone like myself who doesn't travel abroad very often, I did not know what to expect. After 26 hours of travel, I ended up on the other side of the globe and what I found was truly amazing!

The experience was inspiring; thousands of volunteers traveled to Asia, all full of life and anxious to get their hands dirty and build houses. The goal of the 2009 JRCWP was to build 166 homes in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and China's Sichuan province. Of the 166 homes, 82 were to be constructed in Thailand.

My group from HFHMGC worked on the house of a church pastor and his wife who sell bread and rice to support their two young children. The family built alongside us each day and was very appreciative for what we were doing. Although we could not communicate well with one another due to the language barrier, words were not needed to see the impact we had on this family’s life. On the last day of the build, the pastor’s wife cried as she presented the family built alongside the pastor and his wife who sell bread and rice to support their two young children. The family built alongside us each day and was very appreciative for what we were doing. Although we could not communicate well with one another due to the language barrier, words were not needed to see the impact we had on this family’s life.

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My sincere thanks must go out to President and Mrs. Carter, Habitat for Humanity, the thousands of worldwide volunteers and the people of Chiang Mai. Together we made a difference and built homes that will benefit families for generations. That same difference is being made here every day at HFHMGC and I encourage you to get involved. I promise the rewards will be great!

Best Regards,
Scott Walker
Director of Government & Community Relations

Mark your calendar:

- February – March 2010 Collegiate Challenge Season: 272 Students from throughout the country will be coming to work with HFHMGC during Spring Break
- April 26 – May 2: The Mississippi Gulf Resort Classic, a new leg of the PGA TOUR Champions Tour, will take place benefitting HFHMGC
- May 3-9: Women Build Week – In the days leading up to Mother’s Day women volunteers unite in the fight on affordable housing
- Summer 2010: HFHMGC celebrates the completion of its 400th home

Same, Same...Only Different

By Erica Higgs

In November 2009, Habitat for Humanity of the Mississippi Gulf Coast sponsored and participated in the 2009 Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Work Project. Staff members, Board of Directors members, volunteers and friends spent a week building homes in Thailand and Vietnam.

If you poke around some of the touristy shops in Hanoi, you’ll find t-shirts and other souvenirs for sale with the phrase “Same, same” scrawled across them. This is the English translation of a common Vietnamese phrase. I learned soon after arriving that there is an unspoken, but implied, second half to the phrase, “same, same... only different!” Now, as I reflect on my participation in the 2009 Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project, I wish I’d bought the shirt, because it captures much about my experience.

Everything was so exotic and different on the one hand, and yet so familiar on the other. Many of the differences overwhelmed my senses as soon as I stepped off the plane: the food, the smells, the tonal language that was beautiful to hear but virtually impossible for me to learn, the completely chaotic traffic of thousands of motorbikes and few apparent traffic laws, and countless other nuances that made me want to just sit in a cafe and watch the world go by for hours (thankfully, this is a perfectly acceptable activity in Vietnam and the coffee is fantastic!).

As soon as I stepped onto the build site for the first day of work in a tiny fishing village called Ke Sat, about an hour to the northwest of Hanoi, my attention was called again to all that was different from my own experience.

We used blocks and mortar to build simple two room row houses. Many of the future homeowners earn their living from the nearby river and make their homes on ramshackle fishing boats, or small platforms erected just off the riverbanks. For many of the families moving into the homes built during the project, it will be the first time in generations that the family has had a home on land.

The sights and the stories were compelling, and certainly different in many respects from the stories of the homebuyers we work with here at home. However, the aspect of the Habitat model that has always moved me the most is the way it calls us not to give into the easy sensationalism of focusing on what people do not have, but rather to recognize how much they can do for themselves with what they do have, and to honor and support those efforts not as case workers, but as co-workers. While I expected, and in many ways had, an adventure filled with many new and different experiences in Vietnam, at the end of it all, it was as much of an honor to work side by side with the homeowners of Ke Sat as it is to come to work every day and work side by side with our homeowners here. Same, same... only different.

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Employee Profile: Brad Holland

A Call to Arms

By Brad Holland

As I rumbled into Mississippi at four in the morning of August 2006, I couldn’t help but wonder if I had made the right choice. There were dead trees aligned the highway, and the storm clouds overhead showed that this was a place of hurricanes. Maybe it was for a sense of adventure, or maybe it was because I got a “calling.”

Now, I don’t know exactly what this “calling” is or if it’s the same for everyone. I don’t know if it comes by phone, email, text message or as one of the Biblical fires from the sky, but one day in my parents’ home in Pennsylvania, I realized there that this was a place of hurricanes. Maybe it was right choice. There were dead trees aligning the highway, sand and water had devastated the coastline. Armed with nothing but a degree in English, a “How to Build a House” book, and no construction experience whatsoever, I bought a van, loaded it with supplies and a house, and headed South. “Use me in whatever way you will,” I said to the great unknown. The first thing I did was community. It was here that I learned that a 65-year-old woman can work harder than a 19-year-old man, that the greatest blessing is people in all their many forms, and that it doesn’t matter what race, religion, or gender you are—all serve equally when holding up a wall, or raising a roof, and, ironically, they do so together. A good volunteer is the one whose pride is invested in his fellow man.

After my year of service with AmeriCorps in Louisiana, I signed up for a second year and tried a growing and highly organized Habitat affiliate on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Mississippi hadn’t received as much media attention after the storm, but received an equal amount of destruction, and it was there that I had to go next. That was two years ago, and now, this one time English student who couldn’t swing a hammer is a Habitat for Humanity construction supervisor. I’m still in the South, because the need for housing is still present, volunteers are still a blessing and sacrifice is still one of the greatest ways to become a better person. And Lord knows I need it.

I traveled to the bayou area of Louisiana with the government program, AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is a government funded program designed to offer citizens a chance to aid their country and communities by working with non-profit organizations. I chose to work with Habitat for Humanity.

I had adventure on my wings, a calling in my heart, and an idea for a novel in my brain, and soon found that these things would all be taken up by the need for housing displaced victims of the hurricanes. Immersed amongst hundreds of volunteers building houses by the dozens, I found my selfish ambitions melted away. We were here to lift hand and hammer together in order to help people put roofs over their heads, and take ownership of their lives, and the only room in which it takes to learn carpentry and to learn to organize these hands into a unified effort. This was community. It was here that I learned that a 65-year-old woman can work harder than a 19-year-old man, that the

New homes available in Long Beach, Gulfport, Biloxi, Pascagoula, Ocean Springs & Gautier!

To learn more, come to one of our upcoming events:

Open Houses

- February 10
  4:00-6:00 p.m. Connor’s Garden, Gulfport
- February 24
  4:00-6:00 p.m. The Trace, Long Beach
- March 11
  4:00-6:00 p.m. Connor’s Garden, Gulfport
- March 31
  4:00-6:00 p.m. The Trace, Long Beach

Informational Meetings

Registration is Required to Attend

- February 3
  12:00-1:00 p.m. Innovation Center, Biloxi
- February 11
  5:30-6:30 p.m. Pascagoula Chamber of Commerce, 720 Krebs Ave.
- February 19
  12:00-1:00 p.m. Innovation Center, Biloxi
- March 3
  5:30-6:30 p.m. Innovation Center, Biloxi
- March 18
  12:00-1:00 p.m. Innovation Center, Biloxi

For more information call 228-314-0011 ext. 324 or visit www.hfhmgc.org

Eligibility based upon household income

Stay updated about Habitat for Humanity of the MS Gulf Coast at www.hfhmgc.org.

Letter from the Board

In February of 2004, I was searching for ways to give back to the community when I ran across a call for Habitat for Humanity volunteers. I called the number listed and was told that a house dedication ceremony would be held in my local area. At the event, I learned Habitat for Humanity of Jackson County would begin building a house near my home. I showed up the first day of the build with virtually no knowledge of construction, but full of enthusiasm! After volunteering, I immediately decided I wanted to continue with this ministry and see the house until the end. By the time we dedicated the home, I’d already caught the Habitat bug and was on fire to start another house. I could not believe how much we had enhanced the living conditions of a family and how much I had taken quality housing for granted, like so many others.

In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina destroyed over 50,000 housing units in coastal Mississippi, making affordable housing the most pressing issue in this area. Habitat’s goal is to eliminate poverty housing from the face of this planet and I strongly believe in this mission. Every person deserves the right to live in a decent, affordable and quality home. Habitat for Humanity performs one of the most important functions on earth as an advocate for the basic right of humanity to live decently, and that’s why I support this ministry wholeheartedly.
Welcome to your new home…

The Anderson Family
The Baker Family
The Bass Family
The Besa Family
The Bolden Family
The Bradley Family
The Braxton Family
The Buckley Family
The Bunch Family
The Cook Family
The Cousan Family
The Crain Family
The Dear Family
The Dent Family
The English Family

The Fair Family
The Fantroy Family
The Ford Family
The Garner Family
The Green Family
The Green Family
The Harris Family
The Harris Family
The Harrison Family
The Hayes Family
The Holloway Family
The Houston Family
The Irby Family
The Jackson Family
The Jackson Family

The Jefferson/Bowser Family
The Jokes Family
The Johnson Family
The Kellerman Family
The Keys Family
The Knight Family
The Langlinais Family
The Magee Family
The Massey Family
The McClain Family
The McCoy Family
The McGlaston Family
The McKinley Family
The Monroe Family
The Newsome Family

The Partridge Family
The Raymond Family
The Robbins Family
The Self Family
The Silver Family
The Smith Family
The Thomas Family
The Thompson Family
The Thompson Family
The Vaughan Family
The White Family
The Williams Family
The Williams Family
The Wilson Family
The Wilson Family
The Winstead Family

January
Pascagoula, MS families who were a part of the 2008 Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Work Project were welcomed to the community in a dinner hosted by local Pascagoula business, M&M Bank.

February
Members from the National Hockey League and National Hockey League Player’s Association visited the MS Gulf Coast and spent a day building in Moss Point, MS alongside the future homeowner, whose home they sponsored.

March
Habitat for Humanity of the MS Gulf Coast welcomed 6 new families home with dedications on Rosemont St. in Ocean Springs, MS. The homes were sponsored by Thrivent Builds and Schneider Electric.

April
Construction at Habitat for Humanity of the MS Gulf Coast’s first subdivision, The Trace, entered its final stages. The neighborhood, sponsored by Thrivent Builds, contains 28 homes and is located in Long Beach, MS.

May
Habitat for Humanity of the MS Gulf Coast participated in our first Women Build, in which women are encouraged to come together in the fight against poverty housing.

June
More than 500 AmeriCorps members from all around the nation came together in Cedar Rapids, IA to help build 20 homes in the area, which was devastated by floods in 2008.
We are blessed and believe everyone deserves to be... Habitat acts as a catalyst for this very belief. This experience has been more than we could have ever imagined. It has only reinforced and further instilled within our hearts that there are people who need help and we are perfectly capable of responding to that ever-present need.

Kelly Leather and Monica Leisner, Sacred Heart University

July
Habitat for Humanity of the MS Gulf Coast dedicated 22 homes in our largest dedication ceremony in Gulfport, MS on 45th Ave.

August
August marked both the four-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and the grand opening of Habitat for Humanity of the MS Gulf Coast’s first large-scale development, Thrivent Lane. Staff, volunteers, Partner Families, local politicians and MS Governor and First Lady Barbour were in attendance, celebrating the great strides made since the storm made landfall.

September
Members from Sandvik Construction and Mining, a Swedish company, made a trip to the Gulf Coast to build their sponsored home in Connor’s Garden; this was the second year in a row Sandvik has partnered with HFHMGC.

October
HFHMGC celebrated our first World Habitat Day, an event created by the United Nations to raise awareness to global housing and poverty issues. HFHMGC staff, volunteers and Partner Families worked alongside local business sponsors, who funded the build.

November
HFHMGC sent 20 employees, volunteers and friends to Thailand and Vietnam for the 26th annual Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Work Project.

December
Connor’s Garden, HFHMGC’s second subdivision in Gulfport, MS was the site for a television pilot, Cheat Day.
Did you know?

- HFHMGC has built more than 300 homes since 2007
- HFHMGC hosts approximately 5,000 volunteers yearly
- Through donations of labor, money and supplies, Habitat is able to provide simple, decent and affordable housing for sale at no profit
- Partner Families are selected based on their level of need, willingness to partner and ability to pay
- Habitat for Humanity operates worldwide in approximately 90 countries, including all 50 states and the District of Columbia

More than Exceptional

By Ms. Tammy

My experience with Habitat for Humanity of the Mississippi Gulf Coast has been more than exceptional. As a woman and mother, it has been my dream to own a home, and through the Habitat program I am seeing my dream become reality. Before I started the program, I heard so many different views on Habitat, but none would have prepared me for what was ahead of me. I am a single mother of two teenage children and a full time employee and managing my time while fulfilling my commitment to HFHMGC has been challenging. It has definitely been hard work, but the feeling of accomplishment has been overwhelming. I cannot express enough how this experience has impacted my life. I have met so many interesting people, some while on construction sites and others have been fellow partner families. As I near the end of my journey, it is somewhat bitter sweet. While I look forward to finally moving into my home, I will also sadly miss the time I have shared with others, whether it’s in class or building on the worksite on Saturdays. All in all, I would not have done it any other way.

Cheating for All the Right Reasons

By Lindsay Freise

One actor and a film crew of five trekked through a muddy jobsite this November, hauling video and sound equipment in order to film every step of the way. Their mission: to document Opie Cooper’s weight loss journey for their proposed television show called Cheat Day. Opie Cooper is a native of Biloxi, who after a lifetime of failed weight loss attempts has made a commitment to a major lifestyle change. His new plan consists of conventional dieting and exercising for 5 days a week, indulging in the foods of his choice on day 6, and engaging in a manual labor on day 7. The catch: the manual labor cannot take place at a gym and is intended to burn the calories consumed the day prior.

As part of the pilot episode of Cheat Day, Opie and his crew were eager to work with Habitat for Humanity of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. After feasting on a medley of seafood platters at Mary Mahoney’s Old French House (think Bubba in Forrest Gump, “Shrimp kabobs, shrimp Creole, shrimp gumbo. Pan fried, deep fried, stir-fried”), Opie tested his construction knowledge and skills at the Connor’s Garden subdivision in Gulfport. Alongside dozens of other volunteers, he constructed a floor system, laid sod and wiggled through a crawl space to install insulation underneath a house. These construction tasks are typical on an HFHMGC build site, but for Opie, each task proved more daunting than the previous. The Cheat Day film crew was right there with him through it all, laughing and joking along the way. The crew consists of a group of friends, with many years of film production experience, who will also provide witty commentary and laughable acts for the benefit of the show. Cheat Day is produced by Eyevox Entertainment, the largest film and video production company in Mississippi, and will be pitched to several networks as an educational documentary with a twist of humor.

The Cheat Day film day was a wonderful experience for Habitat for Humanity of the Mississippi Gulf Coast’s staff and may result in national exposure for the affiliate. The site visit has already gained local media attention as a local news station came out for the Cheat Day filming. Between construction assignments, Opie provided narrative. He also called on construction staff members for interviews, and to assist in the delivery of pranks and jokes. At the end of the day, everyone was caked with mud and Opie had hopefully shed a few pounds, mostly from the work, but also from the laughter.

A Day of Giving

By Meg Potts

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. dedicated his life to the causes of equality and social justice. He taught that through nonviolent partnerships and understanding, we can overcome barriers and address our communities’ most urgent needs. To honor Dr. King’s dreams and achievements, Martin Luther King Day has been named a “day on, not a day off,” urging everyone to join together in serving their community.

This MLK Jr. Day, Habitat for Humanity of the MS Gulf Coast AmeriCorps members spent their day of service at a Long Beach, MS YMCA painting, organizing and helping accomplish various chores around the organization.

Top: Denise Rybak washes the side of the YMCA building
Left: Steven Burkholder and Charles Sears paint new lines in the parking lot
Sponsor Spotlight

By Dustin Renaud

Sweltering Mississippi heat, monsoon like rainstorms, the random November tropical storm, spring-like autumns, and blistering Mississippi cold blasts. Traditionally, volunteers that work with Habitat for Humanity of the Mississippi Gulf Coast have the opportunity to experience only one of these climate types, however, during her stint on the Gulf Coast, Jodi Riha has seen them all. Jodi, a native of Minneapolis, Minnesota, is a seasoned Habitat for Humanity volunteer that has worked with affiliates including Chicago HFH, the Twin Cities HFH, and New Orleans HFH. She has volunteered both in the construction of homes and served on family selection committees.

Feeling that the Mississippi Gulf Coast was slighted by the national media following Hurricane Katrina, Jodi and a group of her friends made a commitment to come down to HFHMGC to answer the call. An opportunity arose for Jodi in which her employer was willing to allow Jodi to volunteer with HFHMGC for three months.

On September 21st Jodi once again arrived to the MS Gulf Coast to begin her three month volunteer journey. Jodi has been able to experience the complete construction process - from the pouring of foundations to the readying homes for Certificates of Occupancy. When asked about her favorite aspect of working with HFHMGC, Jodi replied, "The staff, the quick heal of a wound, the pride of returning anything to its original state, the amazing friends I have made, and the complete knowledge gain of what it takes to build a home." Jodi's volunteer days in the MS Gulf Coast came to an end in late December; however, she will continue her work with Habitat for Humanity. Jodi returned to Twin Cities HFH to serve in Family Services, and is planning a trip to work with the Cedar Rapids, Iowa affiliate next summer. A devoted volunteer, Jodi shares, "If you are thinking of volunteering, don't approach the experience with the fear of not knowing if you can do it. Come ready to learn and work - you'll have a great time!"

Strive to Thrive

By Jeannie Woerner

Volunteer goal was to send 60 teams of volunteers to the Gulf Coast. And that they did. Their volunteer support to the Mississippi Gulf Coast was by far the most substantial, with over 390 volunteers participating in the Thrivent Builds as a part of their 2009 contribution to Habitat for Humanity of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The most recent milestone in this one-of-a-kind partnership is the completion of the 28 homes in Connor's Garden Subdivision sponsored by Thrivent Builds that began in March 2009 and all 28 homes were completed by the end of December 2009. All of the homes in Connor's Garden are ENERGY STAR certified. This translates into lower utilities for partner families and a greener Gulf Coast.

Since the inception of the TBWGCC, 68 homes have been built by more than 730 volunteers and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans has donated a whopping $4.2 million. The partnership between HFHMGC and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans will continue in 2010. Thrivent Builds Worldwide Gulf Coast Community will be hosting 25 volunteer teams this year and will be providing a contribution for each team.

"The continuing partnership between Thrivent Financial and Habitat for Humanity in 2010 provides an ongoing focus for volunteers, helping ensure that even more families will have not only have decent, affordable housing, they will also have the opportunity for prosperity," declares Chris Monforton, CEO of Habitat for Humanity of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Interested in Volunteering? Contact our Volunteer Services Department at 228-374-4946 ext. 310 or email volunteer@hfhmgc.org

“ My time volunteering in Mississippi was unforgettable. Seeing homes finished, almost finished, and walls starting to be raised proved to me that the rebuilding of this area was making real progress. It is exciting to see that the residents of the Gulf Coast are reclaiming what Katrina took away. During my short week there, I learned more than I thought I would—about myself and about my team. We all came from different places and met together in Mississippi for the same purpose; all unique children of God, each filling our separate but specific roles. We laughed until we cried, we bonded, we learned, and we shared, all with a common goal to serve others. I was blessed by the eight who joined me in making a difference for families and in helping to eliminate poverty housing right here in our own country.”
Habitat for Humanity of the Mississippi Gulf Coast (HFHMGC) works in partnership with community stakeholders throughout Harrison, Jackson and Stone Counties to create innovative, sustainable housing solutions by empowering all members of our community to actively participate in creating opportunities for people in need to transform their own lives.

Visit us at www.hfhmgc.org

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- Facebook
- Twitter: @HFHMGC

Find Us Online!