



Kelley Hurrell / Garnet & Black

The 'College House':
Students from the University of South Carolina, Midlands Technical College and Columbia College volunteered to build a house for Habitat for Humanity. The house is being funded by the three schools.

Local college students build house for Habitat for Humanity

By Rosalind Harvey
staff writer

It is a beautiful Saturday afternoon and several USC students are working without pay on a construction site.

Many students from USC have volunteered their time to help build houses for Habitat for Humanity.

Habitat is a non-profit organization that helps families in need. Habitat was founded in San Antonio, Texas, in 1976 by Millard and Linda Fuller. Their mission is to eliminate poverty housing and end homelessness.

According to a fact sheet distributed by Habitat for Humanity, "Habitat invites people from all walks of life to work together in partnership to help build houses with families in need."

Habitat relies on donations from the community and organizations for material. However, they could not build these houses without volunteer workers. These volunteers are able to help build someone a home, one that the owners can be proud of.

Mary Ankrim and Shirley Anderson are co-presidents for the USC chapter of Habitat. They are two of the many USC students who reach out into the community each

week and help someone in need.

Ankrim said the Habitat chapter on campus has been around for a while, but the chapter's involvement was minimal until three years ago.

Ankrim and Anderson are two of the several founding members of this "new" chapter. The chapter meets once during the week and then again each weekend at the College House.

The College House is not a place where USC Habitat chapter members can party. Cynthia Rahal, the volunteer coordinator of Habitat in Columbia said the College House is a house that Habitat is currently building.

It's called the College House because USC, Midlands Tech and Columbia College make up the majority of the volunteer labor force. The funding for this house is coming from these colleges, Rahal said.

Ankrim and Anderson have worked for Habitat for several years. From painting to stuffing envelopes, these active USC volunteers have done it all.

Ankrim said she wanted to become active in the Habitat program in order to help someone else.

"I believe in giving back to the community, and this is a fun way to help someone as well as meet some really neat people," Ankrim said.

"Our philosophy is to provide simple decent housing. We help build a hand up, not a hand-out. Habitat is not a give-away program,"

**- Cynthia Rahal
volunteer coordinator for
Habitat for Humanity of
Columbia**

Ankrim decided to become president for the Habitat chapter in order to keep it active.

"Students can really benefit from this experience. I would like to see USC students become more active in the Habitat cause."

She said she feels like the Habitat program is a step in the right direction to do away with substandard housing.

"Being able to have your own house and pay for it gives people a sense of achievement and pride."

Ankrim said the USC chapter is still in the building phase. Currently there are around 100 members of the Habitat chapter. Of these 100 peo-

ple you can find anywhere from 10 to 20 of them each and every Saturday afternoon working on the College House, Ankrim said.

According to Rahal, USC students from other campus organizations have worked on the College House. Fraternities, sororities, faculty and alumni have pitched in to help with Habitat projects.

The average cost to build a house similar to the College House is around \$35,000.

This cost varies according to the location, the size, and any special needs that the homeowner might need to live there. This money comes from donations from churches, corporate sponsors, businesses and individuals, Rahal said.

Even though donations are being made, the family who moves into the home will eventually pay for the home over a 20 year period in a no-interest mortgage, she said.

"Our philosophy is to provide simple decent housing. We help build a hand up, not a hand-out. Habitat is not a give-away program," Rahal said.

Habitat has several guidelines that it follows when choosing a family to live in a Habitat home. Some of the things Habitat is looking for are:

■ Does the candidate live in a

neighborhood made undesirable by crime, drugs, or lack of service.

■ Are their utilities and monthly rent more than a third of their income.

■ They are willing to produce at least 20 hours of "Sweat Equity" per month for a total of 300 hours.

■ Is their income steady secure enough to be obligated to a twenty year mortgage.

According to Rahal, there are over seventy Habitat homes in the Columbia area, and five more are in the progress of being built. She said there are 542 homes in South Carolina, and 83 of these homes were built in 1996.

Bonnie Martian, Administrative Assistant for the South Atlantic region of Habitat said there are currently 12,521 homes in the United States that were built by Habitat volunteers and donations.

"Habitat does not limit itself to just the United States," Martian said. "Currently there are more than 200 international affiliates in almost 50 nations around the world. These affiliates have been responsible for 800 building projects in these nations."

To become involved in Habitat for Humanity or to make a donation call 252-3570.