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# ◆ Saginaw Habitat Highlights ◆

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## President Bush meets Charlie Wargel

It came on official White House paper, dated Aug. 5:  
"President George W. Bush will meet Charlie Wargel when he arrives in Saginaw, Michigan, on Thursday, Aug. 5, 2004. Wargel is an active volunteer with Saginaw Habitat for Humanity."  
"During the past seven years, Wargel has worked on 77 houses as a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. He spends four hours each day at the Habitat office and 10 hours a day during Habitat's annual two-week Blitz Build. Wargel has worked with every Habitat family in Saginaw since 1998, from the initial contact through the construction process."  
The letter went on to say President Bush has called on Americans to volunteer two years or 4,000 hours over the course of their lifetimes. And since March of 2002, he has met with more than 300 individuals from around the country, like Wargel, who are answering that call to volunteer services.



## Memories of meeting the President...in Charlie Wargel's words

It was a great experience to represent Saginaw Habitat for Humanity, our staff and you fellow volunteers when President Bush came to town Aug. 5.

For this visit, he picked Saginaw Habitat and I was nominated by our staff and approved by the White House staff after several phone interviews. All of this started about 9 a.m. on a Tuesday when I got a cell phone call while playing an early round of

golf. So as such, I represented you as the official Saginaw greeter. When Air Force One landed, I was placed by a White House staffer on the tarmac under the Presidential Seal. Bev was also allowed out on the tarmac to see and take some pictures.

After exiting Air Force One, and shaking hands with area Republican leaders, President Bush walked about 15 feet to where I was standing under

the seal and we had a nice one-on-one chat for three minutes or so.

As he approached me he said, "Habitat for Humanity...now that's a great organization and they do great things." He then talked about some of his own work with Habitat over the years. I recapped our history of houses built, the number of great families and how good our staff is.

He asked me specifically, "How many volunteers do you have?" When I said more than 1,500, and that most of them work with us during the summer to build seven houses in two weeks, he was sincerely impressed.

He talked about his own personal experiences and how good it is to be there with other volunteers when the family accepts the house. I agreed by saying, "Yes sir, we build houses but our families build homes that build community that make this job easier

*(see Memories continued on page 4)*



## In memoriam...

Saginaw Habitat for Humanity received gifts since our last newsletter...

### In loving memory of:

- ▶ Agnes Hayes
- ▶ Gladys & Karl Schultz, Schultz & Schultz Builders
- ▶ Walter Martin Sr.
- ▶ Gene (Nick) Wressel
- ▶ Rev. Kenneth Morris
- ▶ Peggy Benway and Joe Benway
- ▶ Daniel Kabobel

### In honor of:

- ▶ the Goodwin/Schneider wedding
- ▶ Marion Reinert's birthday
- ▶ Doug Holem
- ▶ the wedding of Helen and Jay Kiskel
- ▶ Father Kawka's 40th anniversary in the priesthood
- ▶ Victor Schroeder's (a clever builder/remodeler) birthday

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## Bravo to bevy of blitz boosters

This year's blitz was exciting and rewarding. Most of the individuals that we have spoken to regarded this

year's blitz as one of the best ever. Certainly, the site had a lot to do with this. The builds were close to one another, which allowed for an easy flow of materials and



Paul Warriner  
Executive Director  
Saginaw Habitat



Mary Stephens  
President  
Saginaw Habitat

mutual support. It was a short trip to the food tent and only a hop skip and jump from snack table to snack table. Even the rain failed to dampen the spirits or the progress!!

We want to acknowledge the work of all the volunteers who helped out in the food area. The work of Deb Davis, Laura Fox, Bobbie Davis, was vital its success. They are commended for working hard, both during the Blitz and for the many months in preparation. And Courtney did a splendid job with morning coffee, once she figured out that it's a teaspoon of ground coffee, not a cup, for each cup of coffee made. Even her grandmother was helping!

Once again we were able to provide three meals a day, mostly with donated food. Local churches continue to be a blessing, and we owe a debt of gratitude to them and to restaurants like Sullivan's Black Forest, Don Pablo's and Tim Hortons. Covenant Health was absolutely fantastic, providing some weekend meals.

We were very happy with all the nurses who turned out to (wo)man the nurses station. We have tried over the past few years to improve our safety program. Special thanks goes to Gail Mehalski for all her behind the scenes help. We had a few cuts and bruises, but all in all, we were thankful that this year's Blitz was once again a safe one.

We can not thank enough every person (nearly 1,400!) who helped with construction. Our construction staff (Mike Bebeau, Steve Leal, Peter Bonk,

Katrina Scott, Tom Stover) led by Clay Strait, did a great job. We organized the Blitz so that each house had a staff member in support, and the staff did a great job. The whole community owes a debt of gratitude to the sponsors: Citizens Bank, SBC Pioneers, GM Powertrain and UAW, The Dow Chemical Company, Lutheran Churches, African-

American Unity, Church Workers United, United Methodist Churches, Catholic Churches, and Pepsi Bottling Group. And it goes without saying that Charlie Wargel was instrumental in keeping us organized and focused. It was nice to see John Perna at the site too!!

The family selection committee chaired by Leola Wilson, and the nurturing committee chaired by Laura Bush, spent countless hours interviewing, selecting and supporting families. Our families this year were well-prepared for the Blitz experience and also for homeownership. Sister Lois continues to demonstrate her love and support for our families.

We must thank the site selection committee for its vision in securing the property and to the volunteer Board of Directors. Special thanks to Cameron Brady for his work, which far exceeds the stated requirements of his position. Many of you know that Drew Downs left SHFH and entered the Seminary. Good luck Drew!

We have already begun the fall builds. Delta College, Saginaw Career Complex, Carrollton High School students will begin work shortly. Two houses are being built on the blitz site, one community build and one woman's build. And the Jimmy Carter Work Project is only 7 months away!!! Please continue to support our volunteers and families with your generous contributions and prayers. There is much work in Saginaw yet to do.

# Volunteer spotlight...Anita Collins

She's been there since the start of the Saginaw Habitat for Humanity affiliate ... meet founding board member and all-around Habitat volunteer Anita Collins.

"I never knew about Habitat before that first time when I went to an informational meeting to hear the Rev. Gary Dawes and others speak about it," says Collins. "From that meeting on I was very much on board."

And how.

She served on the board for 10 years, including as secretary.

Collins was the project coordinator, along with Delta Sigma Theta representative Odahlia Rance, on the first all-woman build in 1995, in the first house Saginaw's affiliate built in Saginaw Township. It was a summer-long project out there on Center near Gratiot.

She worked publicity detail for two years, getting the word out about Saginaw Habitat and putting together media packets.

She has worked on every Blitz Build. "I can use all the power tools; I am capable," she says with pride.

And for the past four years of Blitz Builds she has brought 30 to 35 of the students at her Growing Years Christian School & Child Care Center to sing and dance for volunteers in the food tent and to plant flowers for the new homeowners.

"What I like the most about this organization is that it is spiritually based," says Collins, "and that all the principles in its statement of philosophy are based on Christian principles. I am impressed, too, by the founder, the sacrifices he made for what he believed in.

"And I like the idea that Habitat is a hand up, not a hand out; that the work we are doing helps people attain something they might not otherwise have."

Working on those builds with Church Workers United, says Collins, also afford her the opportunity to start conversations with other non-Habitat owners in the neighborhoods, and she loves how bonds de-



**Anita Collins (left) helps homeowner Jasmine Pringle with a project.**

velop between homeowners and volunteers and those neighbors. Habitat is about more than physical structures, she notes.

"You know, almost inevitably, when we start building a house the neighboring homeowners come outside and start scraping paint off their house, or fixing up their place in some way, which is good. It is reigniting neighborhood pride."

And then there is the future-building that delights her.

"Homeowners of previous builds come back to build on following projects, the older boys in the families especially. They learned a lot in building their house, and they feel good about themselves and their skills because of that. So in turn they become volunteers as well. It's just an ideal situation."

Now add children's book author to the legacy of Freeland resident Anita Collins.

She and her two adult children have published a nine-book series dealing with such character issues as responsibility, caring, perseverance, being trustworthy, respect and self-discipline.

Each story (which includes a book, a CD containing a verbal recap of the book and a song, puppets and teacher/parent activity guides) revolves around the Peddlesfoot rabbit family of mom, pop "and three children who get into a situation and make good choices."

Each set costs \$99, and Collins is in the process of applying for a grant that will, in the years to come, provide each new Saginaw Habitat homeowner with a set.

So far, she says, 17 other agencies are on board to buy sets through that grant as well. And schools in Saginaw Township, Hemlock and Caro have purchased the set.

It took two years for Collins and her "children" to complete the project, says Collins, with each 24-page book in full color. "And it's just our first series. We want to write books for three more age levels."

Her son is Matthew Hill, a teacher at North Saginaw Charter Academy, and her daughter is Lisa Workman, a teacher at Swan Valley Middle School.

# Heading off to a higher calling

## Habitat staffer enrolls at seminary

Drew Downs, a familiar face around Saginaw Habitat for the past year and nine months, has headed off for a higher calling.

For the first year with Saginaw Habitat, Downs was an AmeriCorps worker assigned to coordinating volunteers and for the last nine months was the ReStore manager part of the time and support staff part of the time.

This month he's headed to London, Ont., and Huron University College where he will spend the next three years studying to become an Episcopalian minister.

"My father is an Episcopal minister," says Downs, "and you know how it goes. All you hear growing up is, 'When will you follow in your father's footsteps?' Just like when you get married and all you hear is 'When are you going to have a baby.'"

"I dismissed being a minister for a long time, but I have taken it more seriously in the last four years."

And his experience with Saginaw Habitat, he says, is a valuable one toward that ministry.

"What Saginaw does is a miracle—building 15 houses in a year for the number of volunteers we have and the limited staff we have. We just accomplish things well beyond our means.

"We are all (as human beings) called to serve in some way, and Habitat is just a tremendous program to serve that call, through the physical work and the spirit it inspires."

He remains inspired, and amazed, "at how devoted our volunteers are, and how highly they respect the religious part of this institution. They are not only devoted to building houses but to serving God and Jesus."

He hopes, he says, to continue working in some with Habitat build throughout his career.

Downs is a native of Alpena, and his parents have lived in Midland for



**Sister Lois and Drew Downs share a laugh**

the past two years. The Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan, he says, has "been a part of my whole life." That diocese also has a strong working relationship with the London, Ont., seminary he is attending—despite the fact Canadian Anglicans and American Episcopalians are different, yet related, churches.

"My first choice, when I become an Episcopal minister, would be to serve a church somewhere in that diocese. It's my home. And definitely I want to stay in Michigan."



*(Memories continued from page 1)*  
and our country a better place for all of us to live in."

During the process, I also slipped him a "cross in the pocket" without saying a word and also told him I pray for him and our country every day. He smiled, said thanks, and left for his limousine—again shaking my hand and saying, "Keep up the spirit."

Later I will receive an autographed photo of me with the president. That day Bev and I also got to sit in the front row on the stage of the Saginaw County Event Center, just behind President Bush as he talked. Some of you may have seen Bev and me on television during the speech.

I was interviewed before and several times after, by The Saginaw News and Midland Daily News and two TV stations. There was a picture on the front page of both papers.

So while it was an honor for me, I want you to know, and I tried to make that a part of every interview, that I was just your representative for all the volunteer work each of you do and all the organizations like Habitat that do so much good in all our communities.

For sure I was proud to represent all of you fellow volunteers and hope you felt recognized too. Without all of your work, our AWESOME staff and great families, we would not have been the organization selected for this recognition.

*(Wargel also recently received an honorable mention award/senior nominees category during the United Way Volunteer Appreciation luncheon).*

### Did you know...

... That during the Blitz, Dale Stephan posted more than 1,000 photos on our Website.

## Some people pound with a keyboard instead of a hammer

Chesaning resident Marcia Westrick has a belief that in matters of stewardship “you use your talents that you have.”

So it should come as no surprise that Westrick, a retired typing/computer teacher, entered nearly 1,400 volunteer forms into the Saginaw Habitat for Humanity data base in preparation for the 2004 Blitz Build.

“I’ve done this for four Blitz Builds and I’ll do it again because I feel it’s worthwhile. I enjoy it. Sure it’s tiring, and your eyes cross. But I can set my own hours at doing it—working until the computer breaks down or I can’t see.”

She figures this year her data entry time amounted to 14 full days of work.

And no small task is this, she says, since the number of volunteers Saginaw Habitat has does in fact break the computer, or at least its software program, from time to time.

She enters names, addresses, construction skills, and which house build the volunteer volunteers for so Habitat staff can call up specific information if, for example, they are looking for an electrician or someone with a Catholic build history. Also in the data base are contact people at, say, Home Depot or other community or-

ganizations so the right click can call up their resources.

Then there is the matter of who’s who at the same address.



You can’t just assume, she says, that Marcia and Leroy Westrick living at the same address are a Mr. and Mrs. (although in their case they are).

“They might be a mother and son.”

So to keep down the multi-mailing of newsletters and other missives, Westrick tries to make sense of who’s who in the data base “so they get one newsletter mailing, but each member in the household gets a certificate if they volunteered.”

As for her determination and devotion to that duty, “It’s a short-term thing; only until the job is done. I’m German and lived on a farm, where you do it until the job is done, so I’m used to that kind of thing.”

The biggest hurdle? “Reading people’s writing on those forms.”

Biggest surprise? “What struck me,

what is amazing to me, is how many SBC workers came to Saginaw this summer to work on the SBC build house—a huge number, from Detroit, Wisconsin. And the ton of Dow workers that came to work on the Dow-sponsored house.”

What those forms reveal? “There is a huge group of people from Frankenmuth who volunteer, from the Catholic Church there and St. Lorenz (Lutheran). And there is a crew of kids from Maple Grove, where Sister Lois once taught.”

The first year on the job, says Westrick, she worked through a file drawer full of unentered forms. So first I put in all the old stuff. Now it’s down to keeping it updated, getting rid of duplications.”

Westrick retired from teaching in 2000, after 31 years of it, and soon after went to a Christmas party “and ran into Charlie Wargel, who told my husband and me all about Habitat. I figured it was time to do something for other people now that I had the time, although I had volunteered for other things through the years.”

Husband Leroy, a retired accountant for General Motors, volunteers for Habitat on the construction end, working year-round for the Blitz builds and rehabs.

## Welcome to the five fall build families

Saginaw Habitat for Humanity is anticipating build five new homes this fall, two of them on the site of Blitz 2004 and three with long-time partner schools.

They are:

🔧 Timothy and Sarah Gonzales and daughter April will be building their home with Delta College volunteers at 1309 Greenwich. Timothy works for Waste Management and Sarah for L’eggs Hanes Bali Express in Birch Run.

🔧 Debbie Smith and children Tiffany, 16; Dominique, 12; Toni, 9; Tony, 7, and Derrick, 2, will be building their home with the Saginaw Career Com-

plex building class at 1552 Division, next to the house the school built last year. Debbie works at Tendercare Nursing Home.

🔧 Denita Rider and son Kaheel, 8, will be building their house with Carrollton Public High School at 201 Lynn in Carrollton, next to the one the school built last year. Denita works at CAC Headstart.

🔧 Yvonne Youngblood and daughter Erykah, 5, will be building their home with Saginaw Habitat for Humanity volunteers at 831 S. 15th. Yvonne has been employed with Z.L.B. Plasma Services and is currently seeking other employment.

🔧 Angela Harry and her children Sha’Drea, 9; Marcus, 7, and Mar’kuta, 4, will build their home at 842 S. 14th with Saginaw Habitat for Humanity volunteers. Angela works for Durolast.

One of those last two builds may become another woman’s build, says Habitat executive director Paul Wariner.

“We would stretch those two Habitat builds over the winter, as long as we can get the walls up and get them enclosed this fall. We’d like to stretch these builds over a longer period of time (than the Blitz) to make better use of our staff and volunteers.”

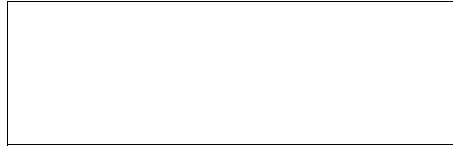


**Saginaw Habitat For Humanity**

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 **In this issue....**

**Meet volunteer Anita Collins**

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**Brady moves**

....from the Saginaw Habitat for Humanity headquarters on Jefferson to the ReStore site on Michigan, where he puts to good use his nearly 10 years of experience in retail to help out there (with the departure of Drew Downs and Charles Severance). First up was a garage/rummage sale to get rid of all non-construction items (couches, chairs, toasters, etc.) at the bargain-basement price of no more than \$5—netting \$1,700 in one day! Katrina Scott, Toby Agnew and Frazier Wilson also are at work at the ReStore as it seeks to improve its sales and define its role.

**Did you know...**

....That during the 2004 Blitz Build, dozens of SBC volunteers came to Saginaw from around the state and beyond to help build the home their employer was sponsoring. On VIP day, upwards of 70 SBC regional directors came to work on the house, and each day saw a group of six to 15 at work for eight hours, especially during the second week of the two-week build.

**New homeowner turns to poetry**

In June, new homeowner Phaedra Gissendanner wrote the following words about what her new home means to her:

**Freedom from**, broken this, broken that,  
**Freedom from**, calling the landlord, do you think you can maybe fix this or that,  
**Freedom from**, well we won't be able to fix that until a couple of days down the way, but it's still broke, I say, if I pay, will you reimburse me that that,  
**Freedom from** listening to every move my neighbors make,  
**Freedom from** my neighbors listening to my kids and all the noise they create.  
**Freedom from** renting.

**Major Contributors**

*Thank you to the following groups and individuals who contributed more than \$1,000 since the last newsletter:*



- Ames United Methodist Church † Anonymous † Bethel A.M.E. Church † Blessed Trinity Catholic Church † Chemical Bank and Trust † Citizens Bank † Diocese of Saginaw † First Presbyterian Church † First United Methodist Church † Freeland United Methodist Church † General Motors Corporation—Saginaw Metal Casting † Michigan Society of Professional Engineers † Mt. Olive Baptist Church † Our Saviour Lutheran Church † Resurrection Lutheran Church † St. Elizabeth Church † St. John Vianney Church † St. Lorenz Lutheran Church † Saint Mary's Hospital † St. Thomas Aquinas Church † Second Presbyterian Church † State Street United Methodist Church † Thrivent Financial for Lutherans † United Building Centers † Warren Avenue Presbyterian Church † Wilcox Professional Services, Inc. † William McNally Family Foundation † Zion Missionary Baptist Church