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Published: 07:07 AM, Sat Jul 16, 2011

'Extreme Makeover:' Volunteers make way for a dream home



Staff photo by Melissa Sue Gerrits

Ty Pennington of 'Extreme Makeover: Home Edition,' tells volunteers to pull down the house during a second day of filming on Friday. See more photos, video and the 'Two Chicks' blog at fayobserver.com.

By Amneris Solano
 Staff writer

With a heave-ho, more than 150 volunteers tugged on a winding rope tied to the front of the house at 120 Langdon St.

"It's going to take us all pulling together!" shouted Ty Pennington, host of "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition." "Let's pull this sucker down!"

The volunteers - all active-duty and retired military women - yanked on the rope with all their might, causing at least part of the house to come tumbling down and the women to spill like dominoes on the pavement. No one was hurt, and everyone had a good laugh.

It was all in the name of lending a helping hand and filming an episode of "Extreme Makeover." The reality series is in Fayetteville for a week documenting the construction of a dwelling for Barbara Summey Marshall and the women of the Steps N Stages Jubilee House boarding home for women veterans in transition.



Staff photo by Melissa Sue Gerrits

A demolished Jubilee House provides the backdrop for a photo with host Ty Pennington during filming of 'Extreme Makeover' on Friday.

VIDEO:
 A look at the home demolition

SLIDE SHOW:
 "Extreme Makeover" - Friday's photos

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"It's not just because it's TV. It's because of the cause," said Lena Billingsley, a volunteer who serves in the National Guard. "All of us are either in the service or are prior service, and we're helping somebody else who was in the service."

Demolishing Marshall's 40-year-old house Friday gave way for the project's builder, Blue Ridge Log Cabins, to begin construction of a dream home. An "Extreme Makeover" build typically takes 106 hours. Workers and volunteers are expected to start construction once the foundation has been poured. The finished home will be unveiled July 21.

Designers say it will be a place where Marshall, a Navy veteran and former chaplain, can expand her mission of supporting struggling women veterans.

"Barbara Marshall is a hero," Diane Korman, the show's senior producer said in a statement. "Not only did she spend 15 years in the Navy fighting for our country, she fights every day to end homelessness among her fellow female veterans."

U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan - co-sponsor of the bipartisan Helping Our Homeless Veterans Act to provide housing assistance to veterans - visited the construction site Friday wearing blue jeans, a hard hat and a blue "Extreme Makeover" T-shirt. Hagan said the project spotlights the need to help homeless and jobless veterans. There are more than 1,000 homeless veterans in North Carolina alone, according to a 2009 federal study.

"I think it's fabulous 'Extreme Makeover' has chosen Fayetteville," Hagan said. "We have so many homeless vets in our nation that we need to come together to help them."

After Pennington knocked on Marshall's door Thursday, she and the five women and two children who live in the house were sent on a weeklong Disney World vacation in Florida. That night, volunteers cleared the inside of the house and workers shut off the power.

Some of the home's parts - including a mantle, doors, cabinets, appliances and bathroom fixtures - were donated to the Re-Store Warehouse.

Before the old house was torn down Friday, TV crews coordinated shots. Volunteers wearing T-shirts and hard hats stood on the front lawn untangling the yellow and red rope that was used to help bring down the house.

Producers instructed them on safety precautions while Pennington's mere presence got them excited. Carrying a handheld camera, Pennington filmed himself recording the action as a bulldozer ripped the house to shreds.

In between takes, Pennington waved to shouting fans and signed autographs. Julia Leightner, an 82nd Airborne Division soldier and one of the day's volunteers, got Pennington to sign her T-shirt with a black marker she kept in the pocket of her blue jeans.

"It's one of my favorite shows," Leightner said. "I like that they help people. They are genuine people and they are actually nice and they're fun."

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