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In just 9 hours, 'Extreme Makeover' house rises



Staff photo by Melissa Sue Gerrits

Construction crews work on assembling a new home for Barbara Marshall and the women of the Steps N Stages Jubilee House, a boarding home for women veterans. The 'Extreme Makeover: Home Edition' crews managed to get ahead of schedule on the project.

By Brian Dukes
Staff writer

A new, two-story home was born at 120 Langdon St. on Sunday morning.

Instead of being delivered by stork, it was brought by crane.

Instead of taking nine months, it took nine hours.

And instead of arriving as one single bundle of joy, 13 separate modular pieces were delivered via heavy-duty transport trucks.

Beginning late Saturday night, "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" construction crews worked around the clock to assemble the new home for Barbara Marshall and the women of the Steps N Stages Jubilee House boarding home for women veterans in transition.

In fact, the crews worked so well they managed not only to catch up (after initial dirt-removal delays), but get ahead of schedule. Just don't tell that to George Verschoor, executive producer for "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition."



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One of the modular units of the home is lowered into position late Saturday night.

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"I never say we're ahead of schedule; those are dirty words around here," said Verschoor. "They did a great job last night, and that's really helped us - but I won't say we're ahead of schedule."

What Verschoor would say, however, is that the Fayetteville project represents the TV series' 195th, all of which he's been part, and that of those 195, this one really hit home for him.

"Barbara's story is so inspiring - the work she is doing for women veterans is just incredible," said Verschoor. "We never really hear about the hardship of women veterans; this project has put things in a completely different perspective for us. It really highlights the need for all of us to help care for our servicemen and women."

With the home's overt construction taken care of, the busy work could begin in earnest, said Verschoor.

"Now is when things get crazy," he said. "Now is when our design team can go inside and 'extreme-ize' the interior, putting our custom touch to it, making each room special."

Verschoor couldn't provide specific details, but he did say that the home will feature an "excellent," multifunctional multipurpose room.

Workers also began installing and securing windows and doors, backfilling the foundation and beginning work on the landscaping, as well as installing the plumbing, electrical, HVAC, Internet, phone and security systems.

Tourist destination

The construction site was the hottest tourist destination in town Sunday. Through the afternoon, busloads of people came to the construction site to watch, take pictures and maybe catch a glimpse of a designer.

They got their wish shortly after 5:30 p.m., when construction came to a halt. Designer John Littlefield and the E.E. Smith High School marching band stood in the middle of Langdon Street in between the spectator site and the construction site. They proceeded to play some crowd-rousing music and concluded with "God Bless America."

Littlefield stood in front of them, eventually replacing the student drum major. He wore a band member's tall hat and waved a baton, as if he were leading the band.

"Johnny! Johnny!" shouted Lanna Jacobs afterward, beckoning Littlefield to her spot behind the spectator fence.

He waved to the crowd and bantered with Jacobs. She had gotten Littlefield's autograph on a hard hat Saturday and came back to the site Sunday with her friend, Valerie Locke. As a fan of the show, Jacobs said she planned to return every day this week until the "Move that bus" reveal on Thursday.

She said the show is bringing the community together, whether they're volunteering or not.

"There's excitement that Fayetteville is doing something for someone," she said, glancing around the swarm of spectators. "All the supporters came out (to) support a chaplain. It's amazing. It really is."

Locke is a faithful fan of the show and has been keeping up with construction at other sites around the country. And while both came to watch a TV production shot in Fayetteville, they hope that people will continue to help Marshall and her Jubilee House when the cameras leave.

"It's life," Locke said. "Are they still donating food? I'm not rich, but I'd give my last dollar to help someone get a meal."

"She's actually giving back to the community," added Jacobs. "How wonderful can you be?"

Music festival

That sentiment was reflected throughout the city Sunday, with other "Extreme" related events taking place. Film crews from the show and volunteers shot scenes for the Fayetteville episode downtown and other locations, while the free Heroes, Hearts and Hardhats Music Festival brought a crowd of about 1,500 to Festival Park to see performances by headlining country artists Jamie Tate, a North Carolina native, and Josh Thompson.

The festival offered food and drink vendors for the adults and inflatable rides and water slides for the kids.

Proceeds from the festival were designated to assist the builders fund and Marshall's Jubilee House.

While friends and co-workers Melanie Terry and Lugene Hamilton were disappointed with the size of the crowd, they were excited to be part of the celebration.

"This is a great event - it helps the family, and we get to hear country music," said Hamilton. "This is good for Fayetteville and for humanity."

"It's just a wonderful thing that the show chose Fayetteville," added Terry. "I wanted to come to support that - and I hope to see the stars of the show tonight."

The stars in question - designers Paul DiMeo, Tracy Hutson and John Littlefield, who are working on the Fayetteville episode - didn't disappoint.

The trio took center stage at Festival Park just after 7:30 p.m. to thank the crowd - especially any soldiers present - for their help and service.

"Yesterday, there was a hole in the ground," said DiMeo. "Today, there's a home; you helped make that happen."

Marshall's story really had an impact on Hutson, which she shared with the Festival Park crowd.

"When we heard about Barbara Marshall and what she's doing," said Hutson, "and that Jubilee House is one of only two women's veterans shelters in the country ... I just think that's asinine!"

With loud cheers and applause, the crowd couldn't have agreed more.

If you're a carpenter, then "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" needs you. Badly. If you'd like to volunteer your time and skills, then go to joinextreme.com/northcarolina or show up at the Langdon Street parking lot at Fayetteville State University.

Want to be part of the show? The "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" crew needs volunteers Monday to participate in filming a segment for the Fayetteville episode. Volunteers should meet at Jambbas Ranch (5386 Tabor Church Road) at 5 p.m. Be sure to wear jeans and farm-friendly attire.

Want to remember the "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" build? Naturally, you can buy a T-shirt.

Across from the house on Langdon Street, there is a tent set up with T-shirts with the show's logo and the "Heroes, Hearts and Hard Hats" chosen for the Fayetteville build. T-shirts are \$25 with proceeds going to the Jubilee House fund.

Down the street, near the intersection of Langdon and Ramsey streets and the spectator bus stop, James Brown set up a tent to sell the official ABC merchandise for the show. T-shirts come in blue or pink and have the show's logo on it. They sell for \$20 to \$35. A cap is \$35, while a thermal mug is \$10. He will be at the Langdon Street site through Thursday from noon to 8 p.m.

Features editor Jessica Banov contributed to this story.

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