

LIFE

'Extreme Makeover' volunteers fight heat, clock

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By **THE FAYETTEVILLE OBSERVER**

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FAYETTEVILLE (MCT) — Goldsboro stone mason Rickey Fair watched the sun set and rise over Langdon Street from the site where he is helping "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" build a new house.

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Fair had been working virtually nonstop since about Sunday evening. He was still on site Monday afternoon, installing a stone feature on the house.

"You've got to do what you've got to do," said Fair, who hadn't had a wink of sleep. "You got to get it done, and sleeping through it ain't going to make it happen."

Fair is one of several hundred volunteers who have been working tirelessly to erect a home for Barbara Marshall, founder of the Steps N Stages Jubilee House for women veterans in transition.

"I've been here since Saturday evening," Fair said. "When the man says, 'Move that bus,' that's when I'll be coming home."

This is the second time Fair, who has worked as a mason for 30 years, has volunteered with the ABC reality series.

His first "Extreme Makeover" build was about 10 years ago in Princeville, when the show helped a family whose home had been damaged by Hurricane Floyd.

For the Fayetteville build, Fair said, his son, Reginald Fair -- a physical education teacher at Reid Ross Classical School -- signed him up as a volunteer. He said he didn't mind being volunteered one bit.

"At some point in our lives, we have to give something back to somebody," he said. "I couldn't find anything better than this to do."

In just a matter of days, Marshall's one-story, 40-year-old house was demolished and is being replaced with a two-story log-cabin-style home. The project's builder, Blue Ridge Log Cabins of South Carolina, said volunteers are the lifeblood of the project.

Chip Smith, chief executive officer and president of Blue Ridge, said they still need skilled volunteers, such as masons, carpenters and roofers, as well as donations of water and energy drinks.

The goal is to have the project finished in time for the big reveal Thursday.

First lady Michelle Obama is expected to arrive in Fayetteville that day to be filmed as part of the episode. The reveal will happen at 2 p.m., according to a news release, but spectators can start arriving at 11 a.m. at Fayetteville State University's Langdon Street parking lot. After a check-in process, they will be shuttled to Marshall's new house.

Many volunteers

On Monday, volunteers worked nonstop under a blazing July sun, putting shingles on the roof and landscaping the backyard. Inside the house, workers were installing drywall, insulation and wiring.

"We've come a long way," Smith said. "We still have a way to go. But we can do it with the help of the community."

Volunteers from all over North Carolina and beyond have congregated on the site to assist "Extreme Makeover" in giving Marshall -- a 15-year Navy veteran -- a dream home to expand her mission of helping homeless women veterans get back on their feet.

That's what brought Marisol Huertas -- a Hope Mills resident who works as a nurse at the Fayetteville Veterans Affairs Medical Center -- to the site as a volunteer Monday.

Wearing a hard hat and blue "Extreme" T-shirt, Huertas picked up trash around the construction site and handed out bottled water to fellow volunteers.

"I wanted to give back to the community and represent the VA," said Huertas, a fan of the show. "They seem like they care for people. You can see that it's a true feeling of caring."

Elizabeth Evenson-Murphy, a stay-at-home mom who lives in Sanford, decided to volunteer after she heard about the build from a friend. Her husband is looking after their children while Evenson-Murphy works at the site. She has spent most of her time unloading supplies, handing out bottled water, picking up trash and doing whatever else has been asked of her. Monday was her third day of volunteering.

"We've met people who aren't even from around here who come just for one day to help out," Evenson-Murphy said. "It's been overwhelming and exciting."

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