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Associated Press

First lady helping build NC home for homeless vets

By MARTHA WAGGONER , 07.21.11, 05:02 PM EDT

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. — A crew working on a boarding house for homeless women veterans got a hand Thursday from a prominent volunteer: First Lady Michelle Obama.

Decked out in a sleeveless, Navy blue top, Army-green capris and green sneakers, the first lady joined the crew of "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" Thursday afternoon to the cheers of a crowd that had been waiting for hours in the nearly 100-degree heat to catch a glimpse.

The crowd became even more excited after Obama stepped out of a greenhouse on the property to hug Barbara Marshall, the Navy veteran who's the driving force behind the project.

Obama wanted to visit a greenhouse and playhouse as part of the effort to construct a new home for the women of the Steps N Stages Jubilee House, according to a spokeswoman for the ABC network. The episode is scheduled to air in October.

Marshall, a 15-year Navy veteran, runs the project as a shelter for women veterans. Her own home was demolished to make room for the new building.

Chip Smith, owner of Blue Ridge Log Cabins, the primary contractor on the project, said as many as 150 volunteers have worked as late as 2 a.m. some nights to tear down the old house and build the new one.

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A crowd of at least several hundred cheered after seeing Obama in the greenhouse Thursday afternoon, a few hours before the finished house was due to be unveiled. But the heat and excitement may have proved too much in some cases, as a handful of people had fainted by the early afternoon and were being cared for by emergency medical crews.

Later in the afternoon, Obama shook hands with members of the crowd and greeted some of the people who will be living in the house.

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