

First Lady Helping Build NC Home for Homeless Vets

AP Associated Press

By MARTHA WAGGONER Associated Press
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A crew working on a boarding house for homeless women veterans got a hand Thursday from first lady Michelle Obama during filming of an episode of "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition."

Wearing a sleeveless blue top, green capris and green sneakers, the first lady was cheered during her visit by hundreds of people after a crowd waited hours in searing heat for a glimpse of her. But the early afternoon heat and excitement got the best of some and a handful of people fainted, requiring the care of emergency medical crews.

The first lady had traveled to this North Carolina base town to view the construction of a new home for the women veterans of the Steps N Stages Jubilee House. The ABC network said the episode is scheduled to air in October.

Obama toured the site with Barbara Marshall, the 15-year Navy veteran who runs the project as a shelter for women veterans and allowed her own home to be demolished to make room for the new building. After a tour of areas including a playhouse and greenhouse, Obama gave Marshall a hug,

Reporters were only able to catch a glimpse of Obama as she arrived at the house and later when she returned in a change of clothes, wearing a green dress with a dark pattern and a gold belt.



AP
First lady Michelle Obama waves as she enters... [View Full Caption](#)

Audrey Culbreth, 56, drove about 25 miles from Roseboro with her friend, Ella Johnson, 63, of White Oak. While Johnson was interested in both the television show and Obama, Culbreth focused solely on Obama.

Culbreth missed Obama when she walked in the house, much to her disappointment.

"My heart dropped," she said. "I really did want to get a peek of Michelle Obama."

A little later, however, she saw Obama in the greenhouse behind the main house and smiled widely.

The heat bothered Culbreth, as it did others. She was one of the lucky ones, turning a heavy metal camera case on its side to use as a makeshift chair. Cries of "water, water" were at least as frequent as the show's famous phrase,

"move that bus," which means the family is about to see their new home.

Chip Smith, owner of Blue Ridge Log Cabins, the primary contractor on the project, said as many as 200 volunteers have worked as late as 2 a.m. to tear down the old house and build the new one.

People lined up for tasks such as moving furniture, hanging pictures and cleaning, he said. "I think it's just great to see people come out and give back to the community," he said.



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Obama's visit came a few hours before the finished house was expected to be unveiled. Later in the afternoon, Obama shook hands with members of the crowd, then went inside the house.

Several families will be able to live in the new house, which will include a resource center. Obama is participating as part of Joining Forces, an initiative to support service members that also involves Dr. Jill Biden, the wife of the vice president.

Fayetteville is home to Fort Bragg, which houses about 57,000 soldiers. According to an annual homeless census taken in January by local agencies, there were 96 veterans in local Cumberland County who lacked shelter and another 34 being housed in emergency shelters or short-term housing. The survey was first reported by The Fayetteville Observer.

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