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## The Reveal: First lady Michelle Obama joins Ty Pennington to welcome Barbara Marshall to her new home



Staff photo by Melissa Sue Gerrits

Barbara Marshall is escorted into the new home by Ty Pennington.

By Amneris Solano  
Staff writer

First lady Michelle Obama helped the "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" team give the women of 120 Langdon St. the surprise of a lifetime.

Obama came to Fayetteville on Thursday to film an episode of the ABC reality series featuring Barbara Marshall, founder of the Steps N Stages Jubilee House for women veterans in transition. Wearing a green floral print dress with a gold belt, Obama stepped off the show's famed bus and greeted Marshall with a warm hug.

The moment culminated the 106 hours of work by a team of volunteers who built Marshall a new home for her ministry.

"I am excited about this house because it's very much needed," said Jessie Holston, a neighbor of Marshall's. Holston was one of hundreds of people who gathered in front of the house near Fayetteville State University on Thursday. Spectators braved soaring temperatures to catch a glimpse of Obama and the cast of "Extreme Makeover."



Staff photo by Melissa Sue Gerrits

First lady Michelle Obama makes her way through the crowd Thursday on her way into the house.

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A large crowd of screaming fans were packed behind barricades along Langdon Street. Fans held up signs that said "Move That Bus" - the show's catch phrase - and snapped pictures as Marshall rolled up in a black limousine for the unveiling. The audience erupted into a chorus of "Move that Bus" as host Ty Pennington opened the limo for Marshall and the other women and children who live at Jubilee House.

"It is fantastic. It is phenomenal how much they've done," said Diane Hagins, a Johnston County kindergarten teacher.

Hagins, who visited the site Sunday, returned Thursday to see how the project turned out and document her experience for her class when school returns in August.

"We talk about how to help the community at school," Hagins said. "So this is a good project that I can share with my class - real life experience."

Obama arrived about an hour before Marshall and the women and children of the Jubilee House to do some filming inside a greenhouse in the backyard. She waved to the crowd before heading inside the log cabin style duplex.

Modell White, who lives in Fayetteville, held up a portrait she drew in pencil and marker of Obama. The portrait read, "Historical. We Love, Michelle Obama."

"I wanted to see her in person," White said. "And I wanted to come out to see the beautiful house."

Details are scarce about Obama's involvement in the project. But producers said earlier this week that Obama was there to support Marshall, a 15-year Navy veteran, in her quest to help homeless and jobless female veterans thrive. Volunteers spent 106 hours building a large, two-story home for Marshall. The home has red shutters, hanging baskets, rocking chairs and lush landscaping.

Marshall's 1,288-square-foot home was demolished last week to make room for a much bigger one so she can help more veterans. Local businesses contributed supplies, food and volunteers.

Chip Smith, chief executive officer of Blue Ridge Log Cabins, said that 150 to 200 volunteers were working on the house at 2 a.m. Thursday, putting on the finishing touches. They cleaned the inside, hung art, arranged furniture and finished the trim. He said there were no major issues with the construction and that everything went smoothly. After the reveal, there will be minor details to complete.

"Extreme Makeover" chose Blue Ridge to build the home. Smith said the experience of working on the show has been heartwarming. "It's just great to see people come out and give back to the community," Smith said. "We've met so many friends."

Hazel McAllister, who lives in Fayetteville, arrived about 10 a.m. so she could get a closer view of the action. McAllister had been coming to the site periodically throughout the week of the build to check on the project.

"To see a little structure go down and a humongous mansion go up in its place is amazing," McAllister said. She stood under a shady tree in an effort to stay of the sun. "As long as I can hold on to this shade, I'm good," she said.

Spectators had to endure oppressive temperatures, and not everyone did well. Fayetteville police said 22 people were treated Thursday afternoon for heat-related complications. Six people were taken to Cape Fear Valley Medical Center, according to Gavin MacRoberts, police spokesman.

Fayetteville resident Barbara Brooks wore a straw hat and sunglasses to shield herself from the sun. Brooks said she came to support Marshall because her husband, Roland Brooks, is a Vietnam veteran.

"The special things that Ms. Marshall is doing for these women is awesome," said Brooks, "It's just wonderful."

Abby Bradley was one of the hundreds of people who volunteered to give Marshall her new home. Bradley had been on the site since Wednesday morning as part a cleaning crew. She is one of the few people who got to see the inside of the house. "It's very beautiful and very elegant inside and out. A lot of hard work has been put into this home," said Bradley. "I was very excited and anxious about being a part of this. It brings a lot to the heart when you go out and help someone."

After most of the crowd had left, Marshall, overjoyed with her new home, stepped out onto her front porch and gave a big smile and wave.

Staff writer Nancy McCleary contributed to this report.

Staff writer Amneris Solano can be reached at [solanoa@fayobserver.com](mailto:solanoa@fayobserver.com) or 486-3521.

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