

The house that love built

Federal government employee worked in mud and rain to help built a Habitat for Humanity house

By Suzanne Meunier

Sept. 7, 2006 – Ottawa, ON – It was an irresistible dare.

After a colleague challenged her hammer-wielding skills, an Ottawa volunteer became one of only two women on a team building a Habitat for Humanity house.

Kathleen Forder, an employee with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat in Ottawa, joined two dozen volunteers as they raced to build a house in just three weeks for a local family in need.

The foundation was dug—by hand—on the first day. The foundation frames were raised despite a downpour, so that the concrete could be poured the next day and the tight building schedule could be maintained.

“You can imagine the laughter as we crawled in and out of a muddy hole in the ground trying to level the foundation frames for an entire house in the pouring rain,” recalled Ms. Forder.

Yet despite winning a hammering contest and proving her colleague wrong, Ms. Forder says one of her most memorable moments came when her team presented the soon-to-be-homeowners with a lasting reminder of their support for the family.

“We gave them a 2 x 4 that all the volunteers had signed with messages of hope, love and support. This 2 x 4 was used in the walls of their house, literally making their house one that was built with love.”

Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit housing program providing affordable homes for low-income working families.

Ms. Forder is one example of Government of Canada employees making a difference in their communities. Along with their regular volunteering, thousands of public servants participate in the annual Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC), the largest workplace charitable project in Canada. In 2005, federal public servants contributed more than \$29.5 million to GCWCC in 113 communities nation-wide. GCWCC 2006 kicks off on September 7 and will run until November 22.

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