

Volunteer Day at Los Indios Project

06/27/09

This morning volunteers from our YouthBuild Brownsville Alumni program, Team Depot, and representatives for Texas Roadhouse arrived early at our facility with sunscreen in hand and water to keep cool. Everyone was ready to work! Trucks and vehicles were loaded with hammers, ladders, paint brushes, and other construction materials in preparation for the hard day's work that lay ahead. Volunteers were here to lend a helping hand to Ms. Rios whose trailer home had been destroyed

during Hurricane Dolly last year. Up until recently, Ms. Rios and her three young daughters were living in dreadful conditions due to the damage that their home had sustained as a result of the hurricane.



Because of the generosity of our sister YouthBuild Program located in Philadelphia

who donated the basic structure of the dwelling and with the financial support of our YouthBuild USA sponsors, who had it shipped down to our area at no cost to us or Ms. Rios, Community Development Corporation of Brownsville (CDCB) was able to select Ms. Rios' family out of numerous qualifying families to receive this house as a free gift. Donations of building materials such as doors and windows, and other necessary construction items will allow CDCB to finish the project at no expense to the home owner.

Norma Hernandez, who heads the Team Depot (Home Depot) volunteers, is very excited to take part in this project. She and her volunteers are always looking for ways to help out in the community. Not only has she been able to assist us with "free labor" today, she is also making sure that Home Depot will donate construction gloves and work aprons, landscaping materials, plants, and other items that will help turn this house into a home for the Rios family.

On this hot blistering day in late June, young and old alike worked side by side and often in pairs to tackle some of the items still needed to complete on this project. Fearless young women were climbing up and down ladders as they worked on painting the home's fascia and soffit areas.



Young men and women took on the challenge of trying to level out the home's immediate surrounding areas that had mounds of compacted dirt lying around. It was labor intensive, back breaking work, but none of that seemed to matter because the volunteers were creating a synergy that seemed to provide the needed muscle power to get the job done! Even Mrs. Rios and her daughters got involved by picking up a shovel and leveling off some dirt too. Roadhouse volunteer, Ian Sloan, who was only there to help cook our lunch, was unable to hold back and grabbed some tools to help move dirt around too!



Some of our former students, like Rolando Trevino and Raul Hernandez who have gone on to start construction businesses of their own since graduating from our program years ago, took on the more challenging tasks such as installing interior walls and applying plywood under the carport area. Both

these individuals are very appreciative of the opportunities that they have received as a result of having participated in our YouthBuild program in the past. And both were more than willing to help us out with this project because they know first hand how YouthBuild helps provide opportunity to others.



Jaime Ibarra, our construction trainer, and himself a graduate of our program from years ago, was then free to help guide the rest of the volunteers with their tasks.





By the time lunch break rolled around, no one seemed to mind the heat and humidity.

While the volunteers from Texas Roadhouse, Margaret Davis and Ian Sloan, grilled burgers and hot dogs for the hungry crew, the impact of the volunteers' hard labor was visible at the home. Mrs. Rios had also brought some home-made tamales for those who needed a little taste of Mexican food with their burgers. In a flash the volunteers lined up at the only faucet available out there to wash up after a hard day's work.

The thirty minute drive back to the facility was a quiet one. Tired and sun drained, most of the volunteers quietly reflected on the impact that their generosity today had had on one very grateful family out in Los Indios and on the connections that they had made with the other volunteers who were there to do the same.

All in all it was a wonderful event for everyone involved. We had slightly over 30 volunteers working hard that morning. There were no injuries to report or bruised egos to tend to at the end of the day. Everyone there knew that their individual contribution would have a positive impact, not only on the Rios Family, but within themselves too for giving so selflessly of their time to help build this home and to help bring this family back to the life they had before the hurricane. Story & Photos by Griselda Martinez



