

Habitat Newark Volunteers Make Friends In Mississippi Who Return For More.

Inspired by a trip made in April of this year by frequent Habitat for Humanity Newark volunteers to help a small Habitat for Humanity affiliate, a group of volunteers from One Small House returned to Clarksdale to continue the effort to eliminate poverty housing.

In the heart of the Mississippi Delta, Clarksdale is among the poorest areas in America but it is rich in the character of its people and culture. Recent statistics show Mississippi trails the other 49 states with a median annual family income of approximately \$36,000 per year and Clarksdale lags Mississippi with \$26,000 per year. Put clearly, half the families in Clarksdale make due on \$26,000 per year or less.

The group worked in late September and was split into 2 teams. The two teams tenaciously attacked the tasks at hand. One crew fit the front and back doors and the locksets and handles for each and then completed the siding on the entire house and began the soffit work. Some of the other crew ran wiring in the rafters and insulated the entire interior of the house while others completed soffit work. All the time others were starting and finishing the storage shed in the backyard. The build ended with the entire team lending a hand siding the shed.



Through the dedicated fundraising efforts of its volunteers, One Small House was able to Present Matt Sutton. The Clarksdale Habitat Coordinator, a check for \$5,000 which went to provide materials for the build. The volunteers had a very rewarding experience, mixed in with recreation, as the group visited local blues clubs at night after putting in a full day's work.

One Small House is a volunteer run organization begun in 2000 as a group of friends who would travel to the outskirts of Tijuana, Mexico every December with founder Rob Katz to build a home for a destitute family who were frequently found living in abandoned trailers and shacks made from old garage doors on land they had purchased but then found they could not afford to build on. Much of their often less than \$100 a week income went to service the mortgage on the land. The once yearly trips became twice yearly and then three times a year as more people became involved.

2010 saw the group link with students from SUNY Downstate Medical College to build a medical clinic that replaced the leaky, crowded trailer that served as a clinic for more than a thousand families. A video made by one of the students can be found at: <http://onesmallhouse.org/casa-de-salud/>



2011 has seen One Small House return to Tijuana 5 times for house builds and to add a playground to the clinic. Most of these trips have been led by medical students energized by their experience building the clinic. Fueled by a generous matching donation from Roger Waters of Pink Floyd fame, the group has taken its performance to a new level and work is currently underway on a ten house project to be completed in the last week of December. Volunteers welcome.

For spring 2012, One Small House has scheduled three builds in Haiti, not far from the site of the horrific 2010 earthquake, to build six homes for those currently living in tents. You can follow One Small House at www.onesmallhouse.org and contact them at onesmallhouse@gmail.com