

Students build local and national community with Habitat for Humanity



Kate Bauer, center, is a returning adult student at UW-Fond du Lac who has been on the receiving and the giving end with Habitat for Humanity.

Building instead of beaches. That was the uncommon 2012 spring break choice made by eight [University of Wisconsin-Fond du Lac](#) [1] students.

They decorated a rented Chevy Suburban with drawings of the Falcon mascot and the words “Georgia, here we come” and drove to a Habitat for Humanity site in Albany, Ga., to participate in a Collegiate Challenge build.

“I wanted to show students there is lot out there they can do,” says Kate Bauer, returning adult student and campus Habitat club founder, who was [honored as a Newman Fellow by Campus Compact](#) [2] for her community commitment. “I’m a Habitat homeowner, so I’m familiar with the program.”

“It was pretty obvious they needed Habitat to come in and build homes,” Kate says, noting how a river draws a geographical line through the city of Albany, with mansions on one side and poverty in the shape of burned out houses and shacks in the largely African American community on the other bank.

“I was moved to see people from different states come together to help these two families,” says Joan Wright, a UW-Fond du Lac student from the Fox Valley area who joined the campus group.

While Joan brought some construction skills to the trip – “I grew up in a family where we built things,” she explains – most of the UW-Fond du Lac students had more modest skills or skills not yet tapped. They received on-the-job training during their 8 a.m.-4 p.m. workdays and learned about paneling, siding, insulation made from recycled jeans, measuring and cutting materials, tool use and methods for moving materials.

“This was my first time to build anything, ever,” says Amanda Fellion, a Campbellsport native who now holds a campus Habitat chapter leadership role.

“I had never built before,” says first-year student Kayla Binner of Fond du Lac, who with Amanda painted the front of a house in a single day. She was interested in joining the Habitat for Humanity

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group because her mother has a friend with a Habitat home.

Amanda says she will continue to volunteer for Habitat for Humanity: "I know for sure it will be part of my life from here on out. It really does teach good values and morals."

Student volunteers recall with pleasure their invitation into an Albany Habitat home owned by a woman named Miss Lulu, who had been in her home for 11 years. "She welcomed a busload of us into her house," says Joan. The visitors filed through a buffet that included homemade fried chicken, exited out the back door and picnicked in the back yard.

"Habitat runs on the hearts and souls of people," Kate concludes. "It brings out the best in people. A lot of people do a lot of good in this world. Be part of it, and see the good."

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[1] <http://www.fdl.uwc.edu/>

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