



Good neighbors

## Durham church helps rebuild Alabama town

Members of Bethany United Methodist Church in Durham pitched in after a tornado devastated a community in Alabama.

BY KATHLEEN McDONALD

**Piedmont, Alabama**  
Gary and Pat Crispell wanted to teach their three sons a lesson about community spirit. So in late July, the Crispell family and nine fellow members of the Bethany United Methodist Church in Durham formed a work team and traveled 470 miles to the tornado-ravaged communities surrounding Piedmont, Alabama.

It was last March 27, on Palm Sunday, when a tornado tore across northeast Alabama, gouging a swath of death and destruction. In mere minutes, the twister leveled three churches, including Goshen United Methodist Church, where 20 people were killed. Along its ruinous path, the twister damaged 1,400 homes and demolished 250 others.

The homeowners in all affected counties were immediately deemed eligible for federal disaster grants, but six months later only a nominal amount of funds have trickled in. This is the result of what some

### RELIGION

homeowners believe to be a massive amount of red tape. Tired of being homeless and frustrated with the government, many Alabama residents are relying on themselves and the kindness of others to rebuild their lives.

"Out there, we've got a lot of good families," says Kimberly Gura, a disaster relief coordinator with the North Alabama Conference for the United Methodist Church. "We've got terrific volunteers. We're just saying, 'The heck with the government. These people need homes.'" The church's Volunteers In Mission organization is committed to rebuilding 50 destroyed homes.

Since the spring disaster, dozens of work teams from around the U.S. have flocked to the area to lend a helping hand. Members of the Bethany United Methodist Church, some with construction expertise and others without, spent four days in late July framing, insulating and wiring homes for electricity.

"We were all given a talent," says Lee Hardin, a residential contractor and owner of JHL Construction in Durham. "And we use our talent to make a living.

We're also supposed to use it to help others."

Says Charlie L. Bumpass, a retired electrical contractor: "It just needed to be done. The people needed some help. I don't want anything in return. You just hope they pass it along to someone else down the line."

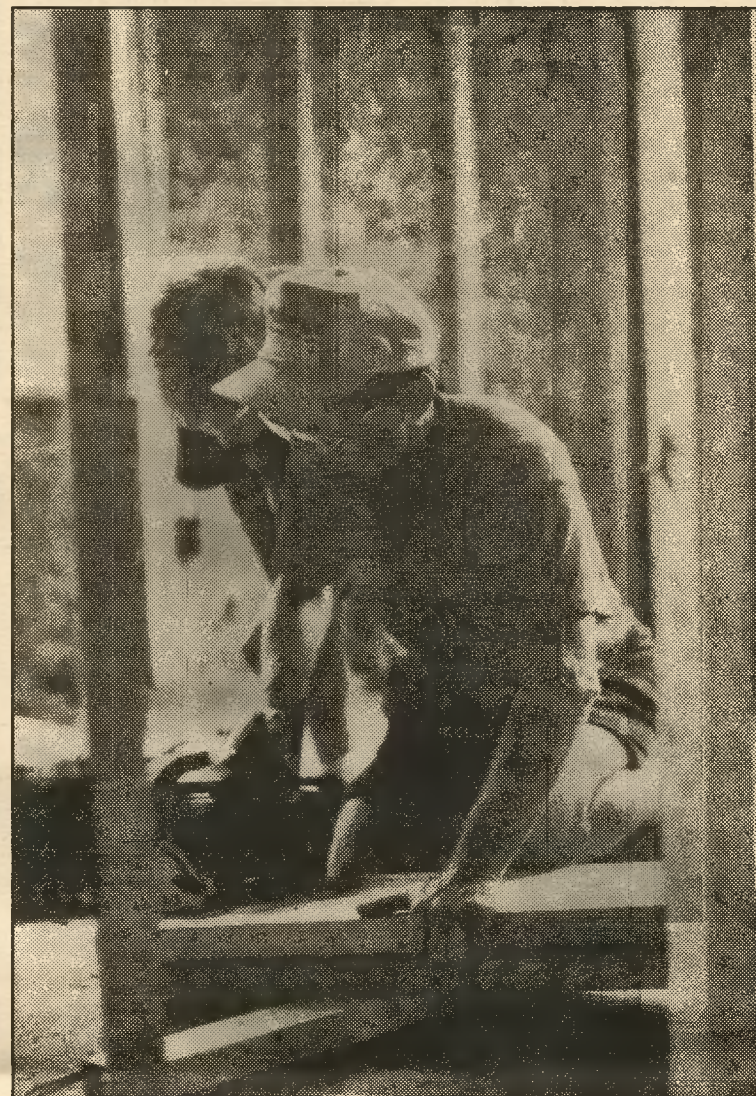
By helping Alabama residents, the Crispell family - including Peter, 16, Mark, 13, and David, 10 - got their chance to return the kindness they received in 1982 when their Durham home burned to the ground.

"We lost everything and started over again," says Pat Crispell, whose mother grew up in Alabama. "And lots of people helped us. People we didn't even know."

"So it's pay back time," says her husband Gary Crispell, owner of Designs Alive, a Durham landscaping business. "And we're more than happy to do it."

Alabama residents accepted the help graciously.

"This was a devastating thing to happen, but all these people coming in has really been something," says Joy Miller, whose 100-year-old uninsured home was condemned after being struck by the



Durham resident Gary Crispell, who runs Designs Alive, works with his son David, on a home in tornado-ravaged Piedmont, Alabama.

Photo by Kathleen McDonald

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A community effort

## Crisis shelter is safe haven for abuse victims

Child abuse is a problem that hurts the entire community. In High Point, volunteers are working together to help victims and prevent abuse through an emergency care facility.

BY EALENA CALLENDER

**High Point**  
Armed with paint brushes, hammers and nails, volunteers in High Point have given new life to an old house and transformed it into a community asset.

Now, the house serves as an emergency shelter for abused and neglected children.

In a collaborative effort involving High Point Regional Hospital, Youth Focus Inc. and Childwatch Inc., Hallelujah House recently opened its doors.

"It's been a real community effort," says Meredith Eanes, vice president for development for High Point Regional Hospital.

Youth Focus, a private, non-profit organization that operates group homes for children in Guilford county, provides the staff and operates the house, known as Hallelujah House. The facility for Hallelujah House was leased to the Junior League by High Point Regional Hospital for two years for \$1 a year. Childwatch is a project of the Junior League.

The process of finding a safe

**T**here has been an incredible outpouring of community support to help these children. Nobody tells us no."

Ellen Whitlock

President, Junior League of High Point

home for abused children can often cause additional emotional damage.

"Once abuse has been confirmed, sometimes the wheels of the social service agencies turn rather slowly," says Eanes.

Before long-term arrangements are made, children might have to spend a night in a social worker's office or even return to an abusive situation, potentially compromising their safety even further.

Since the opening of Hallelujah House in late August, children have an alternative.

Hallelujah House provides short-term emergency shelter and 24-hour therapeutic care for children who have suffered abuse or neglect or are at risk of being

abused.

Children may stay in the home for a variety of reasons. For example, after being removed from their homes because of a crisis, children may stay at Hallelujah House while custody arrangements are being made. Or if a child's parents have been hurt or killed in a car accident, the child may stay in the shelter until a guardian is contacted.

"To disrupt a child in the middle of the night and have them sit at the police department or in a social worker's office versus having a place that is warm and nurturing until arrangements can be made will cut down tremendously

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### BRIEFLY

#### Teen talkline seeks voices

Teen Talkline, a program of Hopeline Inc. of Raleigh, is looking for volunteers to operate a telephone hotline service for teenagers. Training begins October 3 at 7 p.m. For information or to sign up call Stephanie Moore or Christie Fields, (919) 828-7411.

#### United Way seeks volunteers

The United Way of Wake County is looking for volunteers to work in a number of member agencies, including the American Red Cross, Easter Seal Society of North Carolina and Meals on Wheels. Call the United Way's Voluntary Action Center, (919) 833-5739.

#### SAFEchild seeks volunteer support

SAFEchild, a Raleigh non-profit that provides help to parents and children, is seeking volunteers to facilitate weekly support groups for its "Welcome Baby" program that pairs first-time mothers with experienced mentors. Training is provided. For information, call Joanna Hobler, (919) 231-5800.

#### Volunteer opportunities at rape crisis center

The Orange County Rape Crisis Center is seeking volunteers to work with survivors of rape, sexual assault and child sexual abuse. Volunteers will work in pediatric clinics, the center's office and as community educators. Call (919) 968-4647.

#### History museum needs guides

The North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh is seeking volunteer tour guides for the newly-expanded collection. Volunteers will take an 11-session course on exhibits, communications skills and teaching techniques. Guides will need to donate at least two hours per week. Call Debra Nichols, (919) 715-0200.

