

Changing world 1 home at a time

Continued from page 1A

One of the most vocal and hardest working members of the group on Williams' roof, Jake Fryar, of Chattanooga, Tenn., has participated in World Changers for four years.

"I'm sometimes the comic relief," joked Fryar, "but I get everybody motivated and we just try to help each other along." In addition to learning how to take off and put on a roof, Fryar has also painted houses, done carpentry work, and remodeled a bathroom. "This is what I do," explained Fryar, who runs his own lawn mowing business. "I love to come out and do this, 'cause I'm not really good in the classroom, so I like to show my colors out here."

"They've worked tirelessly since 8 a.m.," explained Dawn Hill, the city of Charlotte's outreach coordinator.

Like Fryar, many of the students are returning to Charlotte for a second year. "They've been involved for multiple years, and we've been privileged to work with them," said Hill. "It's amazing."

What's even more amazing is that the students pay to be part of the program. For between \$250-\$280 the students are lodged at Waddell High School, receive breakfast and dinner, a t-shirt, accident insurance, and project preparation materials. In exchange they are given the chance to work from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

daily - and they love it.

"This is my second time in Charlotte, and my second year in the program," said Britney Perry, 15 from Dublin, Ga. "I had never been on a mission trip, and I thought it would be awesome!"

Perry joined a group that worked in hurricane-ravaged New Orleans last year. Though she wants to be a professional fashion designer, Perry's face lights up when she talks about electrical work, windows, doors and insulation she's installed.

"I like helping people," she said. "It just makes me feel good on the inside."

Despite the 90-plus degree weather, one would think the volunteers were at an amusement park or pool instead of putting on a roof. Their enthusiasm is appreciated by the homeowners whose lives they are changing.

"I wish I could explain it, it's more than exciting, it's a blessing," said Williams' daughter, Jackie. "It's such a weight lifted to have something like this done for you. It gives you strength and reinforces the belief that God is real; to have something like this happen to someone like us."

The Williamses are not alone. Throughout the Lincoln Heights and Washington Heights communities, volunteers fixed 25 homes, some desperately in need of repairs.

"There's just as much

need here as there is anywhere," said David Suddreth, construction coordinator for the Charlotte project. Suddreth has been all over the south in his 18 years of missionary work, but as a native Charlottean he asked why go anywhere else? In addition to the students, skilled adults work on the houses that need more than patchwork, like a house on Gilbert Street, where owner Ronald Neal said the roof has been leaking for at least five years. "He said they haven't had repairs done to this house in 30 years," added Suddreth.

City officials started accepting applications last November. "We convey all applications to the World Changers coordinators, they look at the community, and who put in applications, and take that and couple it with who is in the program," explained Hill. Students have to be at least high school level to go on the roof, but middle schoolers are able to paint and clean yards. "If we get 11 crews that can do roofs, then we know we can fix 11 roofs."

Lowe's Home Improvement and Lowe's Heroes also partnered with the city and provided a grant, along with a volunteer base to assist with installing smoke, carbon monoxide, and motion detectors in the homes.

"It truly takes a village," said Hill, "and we show that, because it takes the city of

Charlotte to come up with the funds for the projects, and it takes community leaders to identify residents that need services and their homes repaired. But the real stars are the World Changers, they are the labor force."

"Kids from my school say, 'You're crazy for giving up your summer,'" said Hannah Claxton, 15, of Dublin, Ga., as she took a break with the Williams family. "They say 'You pay to work, that's crazy,' but it's not. I like helping people. God inspires me. I came last year and I'm going to keep doing this."

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