

One step closer to returning home

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By Jessica Tuggle

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GIFFORD - Louise Colley walked around her empty home, pointing out where the kitchen appliances once stood, and how the bedroom was arranged where the dinner table once stood.

She reminisced about all her children and the memories she treasures of them growing up in the house. While she spoke, a loud banging noise interrupted her speech, but she just smiled and said, "Praise God."

Mrs. Colley's home of more than 50 years was severely damaged by the 2004 hurricanes, Frances and Jeanne, and she has lived with relatives and friends for the five years since that time.

Volunteers with Every Dream Has a Price, worked hard on Feb. 7, to hang drywall in Mrs. Colley's house, and with every bang of the nail gun, she was one tiny step closer to moving back home.

"This was bigger than me, but it wasn't bigger than God," said Mrs. Colley.

Leaders of Every Dream Has a Price, a nonprofit organization that uses volunteers to help renovate houses in disrepair, learned about Mrs. Colley's story last year and began to help in any way they could.

Gary Ferguson and his son, Jack, were among the 10 to 15 volunteers that came to help hang drywall.

"I've never done this (installed drywall) before, but I'm getting the hang of it," said Mr. Ferguson.

Ron Sant Angelo, another volunteer, has hung drywall before and after demonstrating proper technique, seven men quickly got to work lifting and nailing the boards in place.

Mr. Sant Angelo, who works for Regatta Construction, was glad to provide his services and use his skills with Every Dream has a Price.

"One day I might need some help and you know, what goes around, comes around," said Mr. Sant Angelo.

"Everybody has a niche in the marketplace where they can chip in and help," said Mr. Ferguson, who works for Stock Building Supply.

"To you, it may seem like a little thing, preparing and serving food, or mudding drywall, but to Mrs. Colley, it's a big thing. It's a piece of the puzzle that needs to come together," said Mr. Ferguson.

Julianne Price, a founder of the nonprofit organization, said while the need is great in the community, economic conditions have resulted in fewer donations and volunteers to get the work done, but she is optimistic about the future of the project.

"We can't ask people to donate like they used to, but drywall we received today, we were able to get at 75 percent off, thanks to Mr. Ferguson," said Ms. Price.

"Mr. Sant Angelo's brother, who lives in Okeechobee, donated eight buckets of mud for us to use today, and that's the key to how this all works, using what we have and using our volunteers," said Ms. Price.

Jackson Hewitt Tax Service provided hamburgers and hot dogs for lunch and volunteers from John's Island prepared and served the meal.

Volunteers, especially technical tradesmen, are always needed, as are financial donations, Ms. Price said.

As Ms. Colley surveyed the work being done inside of her house, she couldn't help but offer thanks to the one that has kept her strong these past five years.

"I give God the praise," said Mrs. Colley.

"He's truly an awesome God. He put it in each and every one of these people's hearts to be here," she said.

For more information about upcoming workdays for any Every Dream Has a Price project, visit www.everydreamhasaprice.com, or call (772) 713-6883.