

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2008

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BRADENTON HERALD | EDITORIALS

Habitat success story

Chapter completes first neighborhood

For more than three decades, Habitat for Humanity has been busy building stronger communities by constructing affordable homes. Next month, the international nonprofit Christian housing ministry will mark a milestone by beginning construction on its 300,000th house — just south of here in Naples.

In Palmetto, the Manatee County Habitat for Humanity chapter also marks a major milestone — the completion of an entire neighborhood, the 34-unit Village of the Palms. Five years in the making, the neighborhood represents the chapter's largest project ever and its first cluster of homes.

Our congratulations.

We're taken with this project for several reasons. Not only did the new homeowners put in sweat equity by helping build their new dwellings, as per Habitat's requirement, so did all their new neighbors. They share a common experience and a pride of ownership. And they've already bonded into a homeowners' association.

The homes in Village of the Palms, on 5.7 acres off 12th Street West and Sixth Avenue West, feature large front porches and white picket fences in a village atmosphere. All those factors will go a long way toward a rewarding quality of life often found wanting in many places today.

We're heartened, too, that nearby residents have started improving their properties. That ripple effect bodes well for the city, not only in beautification and desirability but in property values once the market rebounds.

Thanks to Habitat, mortgage pay-

Talkback

Should government support affordable housing projects with tax dollars? What are your thoughts about Habitat for Humanity? Share your views at bradenton.com/opinion.

ments on those 1,100- to 1,300-square-foot homes are under \$500, quite an achievement in affordable housing. While none of the new residents has encountered payment problems, Habitat stands ready to assist — another feather in the organization's cap.

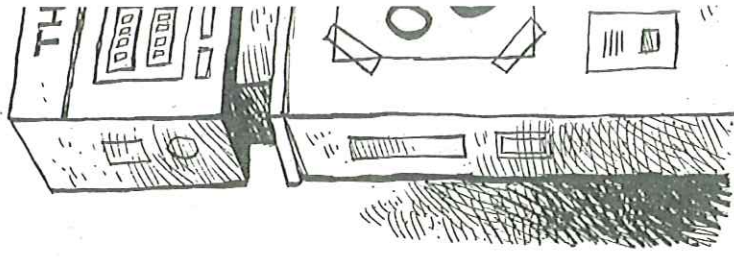
Manatee's Habitat chapter targeted the property when the Palmetto Community Redevelopment Agency sought proposals for affordable housing there to help resurrect a decaying area. The CRA smartly embraced Habitat's vision. That's an example of a public-private partnership beneficial to all.

Palmetto is now blessed with a vibrant neighborhood.

There are plenty of accolades to go around, and cheers to everyone connected with Manatee County Habitat for Humanity for their work on this project, cheers to the new homeowners, and cheers to the city of Palmetto.

Habitat never rests on its laurels either. This week marks the beginning of a new project, 12 homes in Washington Park, with the assistance of the Homes Builders Association of Manatee County. We look forward to another great success story.

R. Wille 02208 THX AUG



Blame Congr for economic

At this point in time, I speak after receipt of his statement for last month that this Congress has wiped out nearly a quarter of life's savings because of incompetence. Now, I drop in the DOW hit me. I am sure there are hundreds of families in this country are dealing with similar different degrees.

Thanks to this Congress considering getting a part I can find one; minimal on my account supplement, and letting all know that they will now

Make NASA a priority



LOCAL, 1C
**HIT-AND-RUNS
 STILL UNSOLVED**



SPORTS, 1D
**FSU TOPS MIAMI IN
 ANOTHER CLASSIC**



BATTLE OF THE BANDS IN LOCAL, 1C
**SEVEN YEARS PAST
 IS BEST IN SHOW**

BRADENTON HERALD

SUNDAY, October 5, 2008

MANATEE COUNTY'S NEWSPAPER SINCE 1922

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A new community, built house by house

Habitat for Humanity completes 34-unit Village of the Palms neighborhood

By **CARL MARIO NUDI**
 cnudi@bradenton.com

PALMETTO — For single mother Melissa Adams, living in the Village of the Palms is a dream come true.

"This is my first home," said Adams, who with her 14-year-old daughter, Shricka, moved

into her three-bedroom home in April with the help of Manatee County Habitat for Humanity. "I never thought I would be a homeowner."

The Habitat for Humanity organization Saturday had a gathering in the neighborhood to celebrate the completion of the 34-unit project on 5.7 acres

off 12th Street West and Sixth Avenue West.

"It's been five years of hard work to create the best community for our families," said Mike Kennedy, president of the Habitat board. "Overall, it's been a great experience."

This was the largest project the local chapter of the

national organization has done.

Since the local group started in 1994, it has constructed 83 homes in the county.

Gary Taylor, a board member in charge of procurement in 2003 when the Village project was started, said

HABITAT TO 13A

BRIAN BLANCO/bblanco@bradenton.com

Residents Teresa Heffner left, and Cecilia Terro help decorate Saturday for the completion celebration at Village of the Palms, a Habitat for Humanity community, in Palmetto. It was the largest project the local chapter has undertaken.



BASEBALL

ELECTION 2008

"It's a wonderful example of how attractive and wonderful a community and neighborhood can be."

Suzie Walters, volunteer and ex-president of Manatee County Habitat for Humanity, on the Village of the Palms

HABITAT FROM 1A

tackling a large undertaking was new to the local Habitat organization.

"Previously, we were building on single lots," Taylor said. "Then from our past experience and the experience from other Habitat groups, we tried to build in clusters of three or four."

With the success they were having with the cluster concept, he said the board began discussing doing larger projects.

"I found a piece of property with 100 lots and presented it to the board," Taylor said. "They found that hard to swallow, but when I presented the board with the 34-unit project, they thought they could handle something that size."

"I kid about shooting for the sky, and they will accept something smaller," he said.

Habitat was presented the opportunity to purchase the 5.7 acres when the Palmetto Community Redevelopment Agency put out requests for proposals to create affordable housing on the property.

The CRA saw the need to improve the decaying rental units in the neighborhood of single-family homes and duplexes.

The CRA purchased the property for \$850,000, and chose Habitat's proposal to build the 34 units.

Habitat for Humanity purchased the land for \$340,000 from the CRA.

Without the government subsidy, the price of land would make it very difficult to build affordable housing, said Tanya Lukowiak, executive director of the CRA.

"We thought Habitat for Humanity was unique in that they are nonprofit," Lukowiak said, "and they build community along with houses through their program of owner participation in the construction of the homes."

Suzie Walters, president of Manatee County Habitat in 2003 and long-time volunteer with the organization, said it is that sense of community and neighborhood that makes the project such a success.

"I just feel very appreciative of all the effort of the thousand and thousand of people who contributed to the project," Walters said. "It's a wonderful



BRIAN BLANCO/bblanco@bradsenton.com

Residents arrive at Saturday's completion celebration at Village of the Palms, a Habitat for Humanity community.

example of how attractive and wonderful a community and neighborhood can be."

She said larger projects create a sense of momentum.

"As volunteers come on site and see multiple homes under construction, they feel something is being accomplished," Walters said. "There's something about hearing the sound of hundreds of hammers at one time. It makes you feel like you're part of something larger."

The Village of the Palms is a mixture of three-bedroom, one-bath and four-bedroom, 1½-bath homes ranging from 1,100- to 1,300-square-feet.

In 2003 when building started, the cost of material and land was between \$64,000 and \$66,000 for each home.

Over the five years, those costs have risen. The homes have large front porches and white picket fences and are clustered to create a village atmosphere.

"It's a wonderful community," said Adams. "It's truly a very beautiful neighborhood, especially with the white picket fences. The neighbors look out for each other."

Some of the homes have been appraised at \$168,000 over the five years, which benefits the city with an increased tax base.

Before Habitat purchased the property, about \$13,000 in taxes was paid on a taxable value of about \$464,500, Lukowiak said.

Last year, when only 17 of the units were on the tax rolls, more than \$32,000 was collected on a taxable value of about \$1.5 million.

The Villages have had an impact on other homeowners in the area.

"It's an attractive, clean,

By **HADEEL AL-SHALCHI**
Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — An American member of al-Qaida pointed to economic troubles in the United States as proof that "the enemies of Islam" face defeat, in an English-language video released Saturday.

In a half hour video message, California-native Adam Gadahn urged Pakistanis to unite against their government and U.S. forces, and taunted Americans over their economic crisis, relating it to their military interventions.

"The enemies of Islam are facing a crushing defeat, which is beginning to

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