



Building Homes, Building Hope...

Local *Habitat For Humanity* Volunteers to Rebuild New Homes in Tsunami-Torn India

February 27, 2006

Halifax-Dartmouth – Two dedicated *Habitat for Humanity* volunteers are bound for India this week to help rebuild homes in a fishing village struck by the recent tsunami.

Halifax residents Anne Connolly and Merle Richardson are traveling to E.P. Thurai this Wednesday, March 1st as part of an international effort.

E.P. Thurai village is located in Kanyakumari district on the southern coast of India. The tsunami of December 26, 2004 dramatically changed the lives of more than 600 families in this small village of 3500 people. Houses were damaged, devastated, or completely washed away. This community was one of the more fortunate ones though, because no one died. Nonetheless, the results of the drenching are readily apparent all along the waterfront.

As an overall goal, *Habitat For Humanity Global Village* will help build and rebuild more than 70 homes in E.P. Thurai over the next two years.

Ms. Connolly has worked as a volunteer administrator for *Habitat for Humanity* since 2004, and was a site supervisor for last year's builds in Dartmouth. Merle Richardson was also a member of the Dartmouth build team last summer. Both women will be on the construction team for Habitat's three planned builds in Halifax-Dartmouth this year.

The India project will focus on dismantling and rebuilding homes that are vastly different from the typical North American home.

"I'm not sure whether there is electricity or indoor plumbing," says Ms. Connolly, who along with Ms. Richardson, will be assigned to a team rebuilding two houses.

Most houses are quite simple and small, built with concrete brick and mortar on a concrete slab. Due to the tsunami, one to three feet of seawater had settled into the homes for many days, which disintegrated the plaster.

"So we'll be doing a lot of brick and mortaring. It's heavy dirty work," says Ms. Connolly.

The volunteers have also been asked to bring their own mortaring tools because they're in such short supply in India. They also pay their own airfare, lodging and a registration fee.

There will be some cultural differences to adapt to, especially for women. Women are required to wear long pants and no sleeveless shirts on the construction site, despite high temperatures and humidity.

Despite the challenges, the two women are looking forward to the challenge. "I like to give back. There's a huge difference in putting your hand in your pocket and putting bricks on your back. Actually physically doing something for another human being – it's such an amazing feeling," says Ms. Connolly.

Please contact Ms Connolly and Ms Richardson for more details, or if you are interested in making cash or mortaring tool donations.

Habitat for Humanity Global Village teams are currently forming and being assigned to areas of crisis that are in great need. The primary goal of these teams will be the repair of 1,000 homes and the building of 6,000 new ones in the tsunami stricken areas of India over the next two years. For this huge undertaking Habitat needs both volunteers and financial support. . If you would like more information, contact Jessica Hunsdon at JHunsdon@cox.net or browse the Habitat for Humanity International website at www.habitat.org.

For more local information please contact:

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