



# ZOOM

in on america

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## HELPING HANDS

By Nick Kolakowski and Jesse Colvin  
Text adapted from Hi International Magazine:  
<http://hiinternational.com>

It's a sunny Saturday in June. Since this is Washington, D.C. that means the temperature and humidity are soaring. Nevertheless, a dozen people hammer away on the roof of a house in a development that will eventually encompass 50 homes.

Nail by nail, hour by hour, the houses began to take shape on two plots of vacant land that once were littered with glass, rocks and needles. All the people on the roof of this house are lawyers, spending a day off volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, a group that builds houses for those not fortunate enough to have one.

"The most fun part of Habitat is you get to see what you are doing," says Carol Casperson, director of the organization's Washington, D.C. affiliate. "You can see what the house looked like when you got started and what [you] did. You can see progress."

In America, volunteers regularly contribute their time and skills to helping the less fortunate. Around 63.8 million Americans did volunteer work in 2003. That same year, the volunteer rate for teenagers rose to 29.5 percent. They build houses, mentor children and help out with public projects.

In the U.S. one American family in seven lives in housing that is severely inadequate. Statistics like those sparked Millard and Linda Fuller to found Habitat for Humanity in 1976 and continue

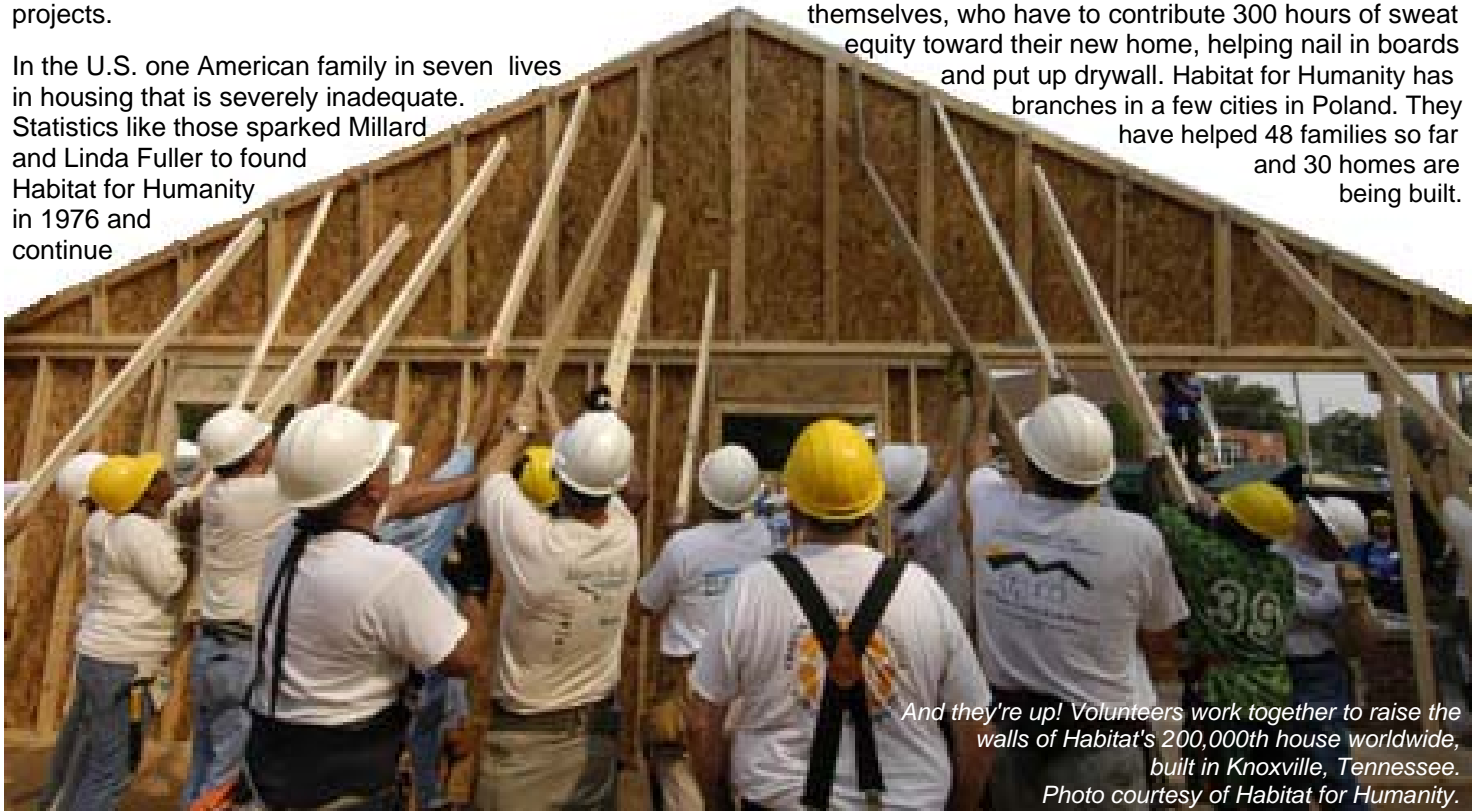
to drive thousands of volunteers and organization employees to put up house after house, often in the nation's worst neighborhoods.

*"My house is worth more than a thousand words. You're not going to find homes like this for single moms. Prices are high. You can't afford it. With Habitat, you can afford it."*  
*Elizabeth Dockery, 35, a single mother whose new home is being built through Habitat*

The recipients of new homes aren't the only winners. Volunteers find that their time with the organization helps turn them into well-rounded people. "[The Habitat experience] teaches you how to interact with people of all races, ages, economic status," says April Phillips, 21, a volunteer currently spending a year with Habitat.

Today Habitat has affiliates in all 50 American states and in 100 countries around the globe. Last year, the organization built a total of 150,000 houses, helping over 750,000 people in over 3,000 communities.

Professional contractors help with some of the work, but beyond that it's all volunteers and the homeowners themselves, who have to contribute 300 hours of sweat equity toward their new home, helping nail in boards and put up drywall. Habitat for Humanity has branches in a few cities in Poland. They have helped 48 families so far and 30 homes are being built.



*And they're up! Volunteers work together to raise the walls of Habitat's 200,000th house worldwide, built in Knoxville, Tennessee. Photo courtesy of Habitat for Humanity.*

# High School Volunteers

One program that I volunteer for is the mentoring program at one of our local elementary schools. Once a week, I go to the school and spend time with a fifth grade student. We play on the playground or go to the library, and we talk about how her week is going. The program is set up to help guide the children who might be at risk of having problems in the future. In my opinion, this is one of the more successful programs that our high school has because the children are gaining their confidence at a younger age. I have seen a lot of improvements in the children who have mentors, and those improvements will carry through the rest of their lives.

*Kelsey Blom, 18, grade 12, Centennial High School, Circle Pines, Minnesota (<http://www.centennial.k12.mn.us/chs>)*

From early childhood, I have experienced a developing interest in the environment. In the second grade, I joined the Ecology Club at my grammar school. We tried to beautify the school grounds and to oversee recycling projects.

In late 2004, I presented a paper to the U.S. Forest Service's Centennial Congress in which I addressed the issue of what is needed to ensure that young people hear and answer the call to developing sound environmental practices, not only for this generation, but for the future.

My interest in the environment has afforded me extraordinary opportunities to contribute my time and talent. Anyone who truly feels passionate about any issue needs only to volunteer and opportunities will present themselves that will help that person pursue his or her cause of interest.

*John T. Vogel, 17, grade 12, Jesuit High School, San Antonio, FL (<http://www.jesuittampa.org>)*

*Adapted from "American Teenagers" Electronic Journal (July 2005) available in full text at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0705/ijse/ijse0705.htm>*



*Lisa Duke, center, of Soldotna, Alaska, volunteers for drainage work on the Resurrection Pass Trail in the Chugach National Forest on National Trails Day, June 7, 2003. Duke and her children, Jamie, 13, left, Jesse, 10, joined a dozen other volunteers as well as members of the U.S. Forest Service to repair boggy sections of the 39-mile National Recreation Trail located 70-miles south of Anchorage, Alaska. (©AP/WWP/Matt Hage)*

## Internet tip!

Are you thinking about becoming a volunteer? Get inspired at these websites:

- ⇒ <http://www.servenet.org/>
- ⇒ <http://www.volunteers.com/>
- ⇒ <http://www.humaneteen.org/>

## An American in Krakow

*Do you remember Ashley, a student of Slavic studies at the University of Chicago, who lived in Krakow for 6 months in 2005, from the October Zoom? She talked about her unusual high school. Read below what she has to say to Zoom about volunteering:*

### What kind of voluntary work have you done?

In my high school we had to do 25 service hours a year. I taught at summer camp for children with mental, physical and emotional disabilities. When I was in college, I volunteered less but I really missed it, so it was really nice to be able to teach an English course at Krakow's "U Siemachy" Association for two weeks this summer. I worked 25 hours in a week and I enjoyed it.

When I was in high school I taught Christian education at a Sunday school for 4<sup>th</sup>-graders and it was just a disaster! In college I was a tutor for 4<sup>th</sup>- and 7<sup>th</sup>-graders in Math and Science after school. It was OK.

Here, at "U Siemachy" it wasn't too bad but there were so many days when I came home and I thought it was terrible. I had students who wanted to learn but there were also

some who didn't. At the end I was really sad, some of those kids were really great, just amazing. One of the students came up to me and asked if I would return next year and I would really love to.

### In what way do you benefit from voluntary work?

You garner great experiences no matter what you do, whether you work in a soup kitchen or whether you tutor after school or you work in a camp or you teach English. People aren't always great at showing their appreciation, but if you have a group of 30 people and 29 are unappreciative but one is, for me that's all it takes. If just one person is actually happy that you're there, then it feels time-worthy.

There's definitely time for just relaxation in everybody's life but if you know that you're impacting other people's life, you walk away enriched and they walk away enriched.

# ■ African-American History Month



Rosa Parks is fingerprinted by police in Montgomery, Alabama, on Feb. 22, 1956, two months after refusing to give up her seat on a bus for a white passenger. (AP Photo/Gene Herrick)

A.

## Rosa Parks (1913-2005)

On **December 1, 1955**, 42-year-old Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama

She was arrested and fined. This led to the foundation of the Montgomery Improvement Association. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. was appointed the group's leader. For the next **381 days**, MIA coordinated a boycott of the Montgomery bus system by African-American citizens.

In **December 1956** the U.S. Supreme Court banned segregation on public transportation and the boycott ended.

Later in her life Parks worked for a U.S. congressman.

She received numerous awards and honorary doctorates in the U.S. and around the world.

Originally established as Negro History Week in 1926, this event evolved into the establishment in February 1976 of "Black History Month." This commemoration has increasingly been referred to as "African-American History Month," although both names are currently in use.

Read stories about two people who made American history below. Decide which story the quotes listed in the middle go with by circling A or B. Check your answers on page 4.

Some materials on this page have been adapted from <http://usinfo.state.gov>

1: A B "When I made that decision, I knew that I had the strength of my ancestors with me."

2: A B "There's not an American in this country free until every one of us is free."

3: A B "Whatever my individual desires were to be free, I was not alone. There were many others who felt the same way."

4: A B "I'm not concerned with your liking or disliking me... All I ask is that you respect me as a human being."

5: A B "We are (.....) asking every Negro to stay off the buses Monday in protest of the arrest and trial (.....) If you work, take a cab, or walk. But please, children and grown-ups, don't ride the bus at all on Monday."



Jackie Robinson of the Brooklyn Dodgers poses at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn, N.Y., April 11, 1947. (AP Photo/John Rooney)

B.

## Jackie Robinson (1919-1972)

Jack Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson was the first 20th century African-American major league baseball player.

His **April 15, 1947**, appearance in a Brooklyn Dodger uniform broke baseball's infamous "color line," which consigned black players to their own "Negro Leagues".

Robinson endured fierce opposition from both spectators and players, some of whom far exceeded the normal bounds of rough play in efforts to deliberately injure him.

With unparalleled grace Robinson endured hardships faced by no American athlete before or since. At the end of that 1947 season, he was named Rookie of the Year, an honor now called the Jackie Robinson Award that honors the best first-year major league players. He would go on to be named to six All-Star teams and, in **1949**, was chosen the National League's Most Valuable Player.

# Activity Page

## Win a Prize!

To win a prize answer this question:

**What percentage of American teenagers did volunteer work in 2003?**

Send your answer to [zoom@usinfo.pl](mailto:zoom@usinfo.pl).

Give your name and address.

The deadline is February 28.

## Good Luck!

The winners from the previous issue will soon receive their prizes by mail.

Solution to exercise from page 3:

1: A      2: B      3: A      4: B      5: A

Find answers to activities on this page at [www.usinfo.pl/zoom/](http://www.usinfo.pl/zoom/)

## ■ From America with Love

Read another teenage volunteer story. Fill the gaps using words listed below, which are all connected with volunteering.

campaign  
economy

fundraising  
goal

raised  
welfare

The tsunami that struck South Asia the day after Christmas affected all Americans temporarily; however, it changed me permanently. The name Chennai, India, which was frequently mentioned in news coverage, took on special meaning for my family. My mother had worked with a woman, Becky Douglas from Atlanta, who had recently founded an orphanage there. It suddenly struck my mother that the orphanage was right in the path of the tsunami.

We learned from Becky by phone that all of the children in the orphanage, which was only a few hundred feet from the beach, were safe, but that nearly all the children in a nearby orphanage had been killed. We also learned that the \_\_\_\_\_ of the fishing villages along the beach had been destroyed. When we asked what would be the best way of helping these people, Becky replied that the long-term \_\_\_\_\_ of the people would depend on their ability to return to the sea and fish. How much would that cost? Becky said that \$11,000 would repair or replace the boats and nets of a village of 500 people.

When I got home from our holiday break I spoke with our headmaster and asked his permission to have a \_\_\_\_\_ drive at The Bullis School. He gave his consent, and three days later I gave a presentation to the entire student body to kick off the \_\_\_\_\_. On the first day of the campaign — and to our great surprise — we \_\_\_\_\_ more than \$4,000. By the end of the weekend we raised more than double the amount of our \_\_\_\_\_, and to date we have raised more than \$100,000. One hundred percent of this money has gone directly to India.

*Lauren Elyse (Ellie) Prince, 16, grade 11, The Bullis School, Potomac, Maryland (<http://www.bullis.org>)*

*Adapted from "American Teenagers" Electronic Journal (July 2005) available in full text at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0705/ijse/ijse0705.htm>*

## Discuss

- Why do you think people volunteer at all?

- Have you done any voluntary work? If yes, what kind of a project was it? Did you enjoy it?

- Does your school encourage or promote volunteer work? How?

- What organizations that need volunteers have you heard of? What kind of work do they do? Who do they benefit?

- What kinds of skills do volunteers gain through their work?

## ■ Glossary

affiliate - an associated organization

boycott - a common refusal to deal with a person or some institution to express disapproval of some situation

to encompass - to include

enriched - with added quality

to fine - to punish someone by making them pay a certain sum of money

to garner - to collect or earn

to litter - to scatter around in disorder

to mentor - to serve as a counselor

plot - a small area of ground

to pursue - to engage in

tutor - a person who teaches and guides someone, usually individually

well-rounded - fully developed

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## About ZOOM

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