

Editor's Perspective, by Judy Blalack

This is my 30th year of editing and producing this newsletter—first with Habitat for Humanity and now with the Fuller Center. I am so happy that the focus here has remained the same as when we started with Habitat, keeping it at the grass roots level with the same intent on how we can help our fellow neighbors and friends here and elsewhere when needed. We do tithe on undesignated income from gifts and fundraisers. That tithe is used for building materials, mostly in 3rd world countries where the Fuller Center has groups, like ours here, constructing their own homes and then repaying for the next needy family.

Our local group also contributes to the emergency builds such as the Kentucky tornado. We accept any donation designated for it and send those funds directly to our parent organization The Fuller Center for Housing, which has specific crews that come into disaster areas after the initial crews finish. These Fuller crews then help families repair and rebuild their homes. With their expertise, they can supervise volunteers from all over the country, making good use of skill, time, and funding. If you wish to contribute knowing where your \$ will be spent, please send a check to Fuller Center for Housing, PO Box 338, Smelterville, ID 83868 and note on it that it is for Tornado Relief. Or, you can make an online donation at The Fuller Center website: [www. fullercenter.org/](http://www.fullercenter.org/) and go to disaster relief.

These last 2 years have been very challenging for everyone and especially for small non-profit groups like we are. Just assembling for meetings was a challenge. For years we have relied on help from outside volunteers such as the youth groups that stay up the Coeur d'Alene River at Shoshone Mountain Retreat. This is a former forest service base camp now owned by Lutherhaven and supervised by Clint Kunze. Youth groups from around the country come for a week of work and fellowship and are highly appreciated by folks in the Silver Valley for their help with yard work and repairs. They have helped us in the past with home construction (when we could afford to build homes that low income families could then afford to buy) and with repair projects with our Greater Blessings. When COVID hit, all groups had to cancel coming. This last year started out with great hopes and some groups were able to come before the fire season hit the area near the Retreat. Clint and his crew took the job of housing and feeding the many firefighters. Their day lasted from about 4 AM to 10 PM.

We were able to complete four Greater Blessings projects with local help. And, I was fortunate to have a couple crews come before the fires hit to help with roof repair of a Fuller storage building after the January windstorm, with sorting and clearing a tool shed with Fuller tools, and with some yard work. These are amazing youth who are developing their own leadership skills.

I do miss the excitement of our first builds in the 1990s when we were the only non-profit engaged in such local work. We were given property and had a full crew for the board and many committees. One special volunteer comes to mind, Ron Boothe. He took the role of soliciting help with materials by offering business owners the “opportunity” to help. Jim Shadle was great at recruiting labor and machines such as when he saw someone with a backhoe on a trailer and followed it home. Our first president, Norma Seaton, recruited her son Randy to help at our first build with his Bob Cat. (And, many others.)

We were able to select the family and prepare the site so we could invite the Care-A-Vanners to help. These folks have their own RVs and stayed for a week or two and then went to the next project. They need to be booked about 6 months ahead. I am delighted to keep in touch with some of them especially at Christmas. To give you a small taste of what it was like, I am copying an article by Rich Pringle telling about working on our 5th home with the Haaks.

Rich mentions Curtis and Jean Wilkinson as leaders of this group and also Wally & Verna Baker. Sadly Jean is no longer with us, but Curtis writes us from a nursing home in Truth Or Consequence, NM. I was able to talk to Verna for a couple minutes today before the line went out. Evidently the snow is affecting the phone towers.

Like the Pringles with their positive outlook toward 2022 in their Christmas letter, I am very hopeful that Silver Valley Fuller Center will be able to generate a great year of worthy projects helping our neighbors by bringing volunteers with all kinds of skills together. We do need your help to do this. Many from those first days 30 years ago are no longer with us and others, like I, have had to cut back on what we are able to do. It is time for the next generation to accept this responsibility.

I still do this newsletter and am very willing to mentor someone to take it over. It has been very rewarding. Call me at 208-682-3240. Computer skills and internet are a must. ☺

I do thank my granddaughter, Kayla, for drawing the graphic for our New Year front page during their Christmas visit. All five who went skiing raved about how great the powder was. I hope all of you enjoyed a lovely Christmas and have a very safe New Year—all year long.

Verne and I are glad to have been able to get all 3 shots and try to remember to wear our masks when out and about. I was exposed to COVID a few weeks ago but after being self quarantined until I could be tested, my test results, (Thank God) were negative.

I pray the Lord will open everyone's hearts and replace any hate, anger, sorrow, depression, impatience, despair, and greed with love, kindness, patience, caring, happiness, and healthy attitudes. Amen

Sticks & Stones: The Build

By Rich Pringle

The Habitat RV Care-a-vanners found a big pile of sticks (lumber) and stones (river rock) upon arriving at the Haak family Habitat build site June 24th. They also found Verne Blalack in his well-worn, shrapnel-damaged straw hat, with a vision of another Habitat home rising out of the dirt. Soon that vision was transferred to the 24 Care-a-vanners led by Curtis and Jean Wilkinson veterans of builds in 21 US states and in Hungary.



And the walls go up!

Photo by William Bunton

Tape measures flashed, hammers were drawn, and saws powered up in the early morning light as expressions like “strip the forms,” “measure the diagonals,” and “shoot the transit” filled the air. Experienced volunteers like Bill and Ann Weese, Jim and Jeannine Storelli, Tim and Dru Sharp, Paul and Billie Marie Scheel nodded in agreement as they strapped on their utility belts. Inexperienced “thumb bangers” like us, Rich and Vera Pringle, on our first build, looked around confused and said *uh*. But then the fog lifted and clarity emerged as tasks were assigned and instructions given.

Eager volunteers rushed the foundation walls, grabbed the forms and pulled mightily—with absolutely no effect. Dave Kramer sprang to our rescue with his “yank and jerk” technique and miraculously, the forms began to pop loose. Japanese battle cries enhanced the process, and soon the task was completed. Next came “rod poppers” Ann, Jeannine, Vera, and Verna Baker with hammers in full swing. The reinforcing rods that had held the forms could not long survive their mighty blows, and they soon moved on to other projects. Jeannine went off to work on a parallel project, the Duncan’s deck, while Ann, Vera, and Verna practiced their “*sil vous plais*” for two days. The French may make great bread and croissants, their drains are a pain in the tush, not to mention the shoulders, arms, and backs (thanks, Judy, for easing our pains). By the end of the second day, this project had become “the black hole,” with nearly everyone “falling in.” Who could imagine the amount of shoveling, carrying, dumping, spreading, and leveling that would take place—participated in by nearly everyone on the crew, plus Melissa Haak’s brother and two strangers off the street (they were good little workers, too).

Work on the deck next door moved quickly under the skilled hands of the Storelli’s and Rob and Mackie

Livingston, with new HfH recruits Steve and Nan Cole and Mike and Susan Harlan quickly performing like veterans. And, quicker than you can say Flexible Innovative Design Optimization (FIDO), they finished up and moved on to other projects, with the Coles joining Bill Weese and Ches Schart building a storage shed. Bill developed the unique process cited above especially for this building. His description of the FIDO process is “design it as you go along.” It works!!

By this time you must be wondering—Is any work being done on the actual house we came to build? Team leader Curtis “Measure Twice, Cut Once” Wilkinson has that project under control and moving smoothly with his able crew of the Sharps, Scheels, Bakers—and the less able, but nonetheless enthusiastic, Pringles. Everyone pitches in with the crew members rotating in and out of the “main” building as needs dictate. Some have special talents which they employ to support all the crews: Bud Shull operates the table saw, ably assisted and supervised by his tireless wife Dot and the equally tireless Carole Schart. Wally Baker, champion smiler, sprints around with a skill saw slicing and dicing all over the place. Verne, observing the entire operation, steps in when needed to consult and assist. He also reassures us when we question our work skills—“close enough” has become music to our ears. While he may actually marvel at the fact that all three structures are still upright, he says, “There are so many nails in there, it’s not going anywhere.”

As I look back on the first eleven days, with only three to go, several things come to mind which characterize the essence of HfH here in the Silver Valley. The local Habitat staff and our Habitat families who worked long and hard to prepare for this build and are still working daily to support us along with the local communities. And, all of these inspire us with devotionals, music, words of appreciation, on site snacks (Liz, you’re a jewel) and lunches, off-site tours, entertainment, and more food (Care-a-vanners love their chow). And, of course, the American spirit of caring, sharing, and giving demonstrated each day by every person at the build site, doing what needs to be done and doing it with not only a grand sense of purpose, but also a delightful sense of humor. It’s been great fun!




Two weeks work with many hands frame the home.

Photo by William Bunton

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Greater Blessings Fund

Judy & Verne Blalack, Alana Buckley, Josephine Davis,
Luke & Malinda Gilda, Marilyn Patterson

[Alana Buckley and Luke & Malinda Gilda designated
how they wished their gifts should be used. ☺]

Tornado Relief

Silver Valley Fuller Center for Housing
and Verne & Judy Blalack

Here's Help for SVFCH . . .

- ❖ I'd like to join the "300 Club" and pledge at least \$10 per month for one year. Please note 300 on your check.
- ❖ Here is my pledge for \$ _____ per month for one year.
- ❖ Here is my gift of \$ _____.
- ❖ I have a house and/or land to donate.
- ❖ I can make a no-interest loan for \$ _____. Please call about working out the details.
- ❖ I can provide construction materials either discounted or at no cost.
- ❖ I would like to help with construction and/or committee work. Please call me to help or send a volunteer form.

I do not wish to be on your mailing list.
 I do not wish a receipt or thank-you.

Name _____ Phone _____

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Please return to Silver Valley Fuller Center for Housing, Inc. ☐☐ P.O. Box 338, Smelterville, ID 83868 ☐☐ 208-682-3240

Coming Events

Jan 11—Board Meeting, 5:30 Mountain View
Congregational Church, Kellogg
Board Elections



Our December mailing workshop crew: Verne Blalack, Norm Holtz, Janice DeVoe, Kathy McPeak, Ellie Arguimbau, Bob Whitman and Judy Blalack (behind the camera.)

Since COVID began, we started dividing the newsletters so individuals could take a box home, fold, put in insert page, fold again, insert return envelope, and attach the side stickers required by the Post Office so their machines can process them easily. This leaves only the need to attach the mailing labels at the workshop. Thus the time exposed to other mask wearers was cut dramatically.

We do need more volunteers to do the initial folding, etc., and for the mailing workshop. The newsletters usually are ready for pickup at ABC Business on Thursday and the mailing workshop is the following Tuesday at 9 AM at St. Rita's Parish Hall in Kellogg. Please call Judy if you can help at 208-682-3240.

We truly appreciate ABC Business' help and the use of the St. Rita's Parish Hall for this workshop.



At left is the crab apple tree that inspires me each winter when the snow covers the apples that look like ornaments on a Christmas tree. The deer and moose come by frequently to catch any that have fallen, and in the spring, migrating birds stop by to refuel on their journey north. Such is the promise we are given—keep hoping and trying to do your best. Spiritual sustenance may seem to be hidden, but it is worth the effort to keep looking for it

We at Silver Valley Fuller Center for Housing are constantly searching to find better ways to help our friends and neighbors. But, in order to do that, we need more volunteers. We presently seem to be a skeleton crew and appreciate any offers of help.

We need volunteers for:

Construction Supervisors and Laborers

Committee Members for

Family Partnership

Family Selection

Construction Committee

Church Relations

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Volunteer Coordinator

Data Entry

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