



# News

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## **VOLUNTEERS HONOR DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BY BUILDING AFFORDABLE HOMES IN BEDFORD-STUYVESANT**

### **HABITAT FOR HUMANITY - NEW YORK CITY SPONSORS THREE-DAY BUILDING MARATHON**

More than 160 volunteers from Christian, Jewish and Muslim congregations braved rain and winter weather to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by building affordable homes in Bedford-Stuyvesant throughout the three-day King holiday weekend, Jan. 13-15, 2007

Habitat for Humanity – New York City’s annual “Building on the Dream” construction marathon celebrates Dr. King’s vision of social justice by putting faith into action. The nine low-income families who will own these homes worked side-by-side with volunteers, building their houses and secure futures.

“Dr. King based his life on the belief that ‘hate tears down and destroys. Love builds up and unites.’ So it is fitting that we come together—people of all races, faiths and cultural backgrounds—to build homes in his honor,” said Roland Lewis, Executive Director of Habitat-NYC.

Lewis noted that the median family income in Bedford-Stuyvesant is below \$25,000 a year. “In addition to building homes, our volunteers are following in Dr. King’s footsteps by working for social justice in this vibrant and vital community,” he said.

Volunteers framed interior walls in the nine condominium units of this three-story complex on Halsey Street and Marcus Garvey Boulevard, in Brooklyn’s Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood.

Nicknamed “the Coffee Cup Building,” this innovative “green” building is one of the first homes in New York City to be built with Insulated Concrete Forms (ICFs), a material that is extremely energy-efficient and durable. By incorporating green materials and techniques, Habitat-NYC will help protect the health—and pocketbooks—of its future inhabitants.

Completion is expected by the end of 2007, and these homes will raise the number of Habitat homes in Bedford-Stuyvesant to 41.

(More)

As part of the King weekend events, Habitat-NYC launched its Housing Covenant 2007, the organization's annual housing advocacy agenda. Priorities for 2007 target policies at the city, state and federal levels, which would help increase low-income housing, and fostering green building. The 2007 priorities include:

- Expanding city programs that foster mixed-income communities, including Inclusionary Zoning and reforms to the Section 421-a Property Tax Exemption Program;
- Urging the state to invest \$13 billion over 10 years in affordable housing and to create a true and effective New York State housing trust fund;
- Working to restore and expand funding for federally subsidized housing programs, such as Section 8, public housing and Section 202 housing for the elderly; establishing a national housing trust fund; and expanding programs for low-income housing tax credits;
- Fostering green building in New York City and supporting legislation that fosters green building.

On Monday, Dr. King's birthday, Habitat-NYC hosted a luncheon, celebration and panel discussion on "Faith in Action: Civil Rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." Held at the historic Concord Baptist Church in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the celebration featured a keynote address from the church's senior pastor, Rev. Dr. Gary Simpson.

A number of elected officials joined the celebration, including Congressman **Ed Towns**, Brooklyn Borough President **Marty Markowitz**, Bronx Borough President **Adolfo Carrión**, State Senator **Annette Robinson**, State Assemblymember **Jim Brennan** and City Councilmember **Letitia James**.

"Faith in Action: Civil Rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" was the subject of a panel discussion exploring how Dr. King's teachings on social justice apply to civil rights issues confronting New Yorkers today, including immigrants, voting and gay rights.

Panelists included **Dr. Marjorie Hill**, *Executive Director, Gay Men's Health Crisis*; **Jose Valencia**, *Executive Director, New York Association for New Americans*; and **Wendy Weiser**, *Deputy Director of the Brennan Center for Social Justice*.

*Habitat-NYC transforms lives and our city by uniting all New Yorkers around the cause of decent, affordable housing. With the help of an average of more than 10,000 volunteers every year, Habitat-NYC has built more than 170 affordable homes in the five boroughs of New York City.*

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