



News

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HABITAT-NYC VOLUNTEERS HONOR DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BY BUILDING AFFORDABLE HOMES IN BROWNSVILLE, BROOKLYN

**THIS TWO-DAY EVENT ALSO CELEBRATES THE HISTORIC ELECTION OF THE NATION'S FIRST
AFRICAN-AMERICAN PRESIDENT AND KICKS OFF OBAMA'S CALL FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE**

More than 100 volunteers from diverse congregations gave up their holiday to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by building affordable homes in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, Brooklyn, during this holiday weekend.

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. Many of the 41 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 Josh Lockwood, Executive Director of Habitat-NYC. "Our volunteers are following in Dr. King's footsteps by working for social justice in this vibrant and vital community," he said.

Volunteers laid flooring in the affordable condominiums in the three, four-story buildings that comprise this complex on Eastern Parkway and Atlantic Avenue.

Madlen Parks is one of the future Habitat homeowners. She currently shares a small, one-bedroom apartment in Brooklyn with her two sons, Marlon Young, 18, and Michael Young, 11.

"I work hard to maintain our home, but my rent keeps going up and I am having a hard time meeting these payment," Ms. Parks said when she applied to Habitat-NYC. Now, she is looking forward to owning a three-bedroom home that she helped build.

Speaking at an afternoon celebration, Ms. Parks said: "I'm part of the change. I'm seeing my dreams come true, just as Dr. King would have seen his dream come true if he had lived to this day."

The Atlantic Avenue complex is one of the largest multifamily complexes ever built by a Habitat affiliate. It will meet LEED green building standards. By incorporating green materials and building techniques, Habitat-NYC will help protect the health—and pocketbooks—of its future inhabitants. Completion is expected by the summer of 2009.

After the build, volunteers and community members assembled for a celebration at the nearby True Holy Church. Area faith leaders, who shared their thoughts on Dr. King, included:

- Pastor Vivian Grubb, True Holy Church
- Rev. Mark Hallinan, Society of Jesus, N.Y. Province
- Rabbi J. Rolando Matalon, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun

They were joined by local elected officials, including Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz and Congressman Anthony Weiner.

Markowitz said: "I applaud Habitat-NYC for providing the 'American Dream' of home ownership in Ocean Hill-Brownsville to 41 deserving families who will be moving into the Atlantic Avenue complex later this year. But these affordable condominiums are more than just homes—they will have an added benefit of boosting the local economy. I am proud to support this ambitious project, and thank all the selfless volunteers with Habitat-NYC for their 'sweat equity'—building LEED-certified, 'green' homes to ensure a future that's not only affordable—but sustainable."

As part of the King weekend events, Habitat-NYC launched its Housing Covenant 2009, the organization's annual housing advocacy agenda. 2009's platform targets policies at the city, state and federal levels, which would help increase low-income housing, and fostering green building. The 2009 priorities include:

New York City:

- **Building Awareness of Predatory Lending Practices:** Habitat-NYC will expand a citywide campaign to prevent predatory practices aimed at low-income New Yorkers.
- **Keeping Affordable Housing at the Forefront:** Habitat-NYC will work to keep the issue of affordable housing at the center of public discourse.

New York State:

- **Maintaining our State's Affordable Housing Investment:** New York State should maintain its housing budget at the 2008 level.
- **Creating a Housing Investment Fund with a Dedicated Revenue Stream:** This Fund (also called an Affordable Housing Trust Fund) would establish a permanent vehicle to fund affordable housing.

United States:

- **Increasing Funding for National Affordable Housing Programs.**

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 180 affordable homes in the five boroughs of New York City.

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