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## Building homes & confidence

### Women volunteer time at Habitat for Humanity site

BY LOIS BARRETT

WAUNDA Lashley-Greer considers herself handy, but never in a million years pictured herself working at a construction site.

The 37-year-old nurse's aide from Guyana is required to work on Habitat for Humanity-New York City sites to help her qualify for her own Habitat home.

On Saturday, she drilled screws into door frame reinforcements and slathered sealant around electrical outlets at a building on Fox St. and Leggett Ave., the first Habitat undertaking in the Bronx since completion of an eight-family project in 2006 in Mott Haven.

The next Bronx Habitat project will be a 16-family building on Simpson St. in Longwood.

Habitat has built more than 180 homes for low-income New Yorkers, many of them single mothers, said Habitat Executive Director Josh Lockwood.

Lashley-Greer and her family will move out of their current cramped apartment in an East Flatbush housing project into her new home in Ocean Hill-Brownsville in September.

The new Bronx building, a seven-story, red-brick co-op, is scheduled for completion at year's end, and has all the hallmarks of the times.

It will be a LEED-certified "green" building, with floor to ceiling windows, a rooftop garden and washer/dryers in all units, most with balconies.

Twelve of the building's 50 units are Habitat apartments.

For the first time, Habitat is partnering with a private developer — the Blue Sea Development Co., a collaboration that has lowered building costs. Blue Sea, an affordable housing developer, provides all the materials and skilled labor for the project, while Habitat raises funds and provides volunteer labor.

Saturday's volunteer women ran the gamut from working professionals to stay-at-home moms in their early 20s to mid 60s.

Some came with friends, others worked side by side with their daughters. Some volunteered because they were not able to spend Mother's Day with their mothers. They came from Michigan and California and Manhattan's upper West Side.

There was talk of empowerment and what it can mean when women work together and stand behind a project.

"You look at these skeletons," volunteer Grace Lee, a 22-year-old management consultant in financial services, said of the Bronx building's exposed framework, "and you imagine them filled with people's lives."



Waunda Lashley-Greer, 37, of Brooklyn, helps build a new unit for Habitat for Humanity at a project on Fox St. and Leggett Ave. Lashley-Greer is required to work at a Habitat site so that she will be qualify for her own Habitat home in Ocean Hill-Brownsville in Brooklyn. Below, Grace Lee, 22, paints a ceiling last week while volunteering at the Habitat project. Photos by Susana Bates

