RMES students Build Houses Without Hammers

Wendy Keough
Ruth Murdoch Elementary School
RMES students build houses without hammers

Michigan — When Erin Hudson, executive director of Harbor Habitat (a division of Habitat for Humanity), spoke for the monthly assembly at Ruth Murdoch Elementary School in Berrien Springs, RMES students felt a desire to serve others in their community. “One student immediately wanted to know when he could start swinging a hammer and building a house,” said RMES junior high teacher, Chris Davison. “Our kids are ready to help out.”

Disappointed when they heard that volunteers must be at least 16 years of age to help with home construction, Hudson promised to keep RMES junior high students in mind for other projects.

It didn’t take long for the students to receive the call to help. Just weeks later, Harbor Habitat had a 2,000-piece mailing that needed to go out, but just didn’t have the manpower to get it accomplished. Hudson immediately thought of asking students at RMES for their help.

Two RMES staff arranged to take a small group of students to Harbor Habitat to complete the project. When 21 seventh- and eighth-graders arrived at Harbor Habitat headquarters, they saw huge stacks of papers sitting on tables. After introductions and instructions, the students got right to work.

It was interesting to observe the students in action. Not only were these students able to fill an urgent need, but they also put into practice life skills they’ve learned inside and outside the classroom. The amount of teamwork and self-initiative they showed was astounding! The students asked intelligent questions of Harbor Habitat employees, spoke very respectfully, and used problem-solving skills and common sense to work efficiently. As a result, everyone had fun and completed their work in a fraction of the time set aside.

“We thought they might complete half of the mailing in the time allotted,” said Hudson. “Needless to say, if we are fortunate enough to have them volunteer again, we’ll have three times as much work ready for them! The Harbor Habitat staff greatly appreciates their willingness to serve and positive attitudes. They have been taught well and are living testaments to the values that you all have worked so hard to instill in them.”

“Amen!” says Rod Lawrence, director of development at Harbor Habitat. “Thanks so much, Ruth Murdoch staff and students. We deeply appreciate your enthusiasm, cheerfulness, helpfulness, sharp eyes, nimble hands, bright minds, etc., etc., etc. We would love to have you back!”

While RMES students couldn’t pound nails and cut wood to build houses for those in need, God used them to do the work that was critical at that moment. Because this mailing was completed in time, others can now give resources to get houses built. RMES staff hopes each student working on this project takes some ownership in the housing that Harbor Habitat provides to those in need in Benton Harbor.