

Cahokia-Dupo Journal

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VOLUME 20, NUMBER 31

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 1996

FIFTY CENTS

Prisoners donating labor to program

By Mike Viola
Staff writer

East St. Louis Habitat for Humanity is presently lining up volunteers to build four homes this summer for low-income families.

The organization has already received volunteer help from an unlikely source: state prisoners.

Inmates at the Western Illinois Correctional Center in Mt. Sterling are presently building the frames of two homes that will be constructed this summer in East St. Louis.

Last week, representatives of the local Habitat for Humanity program visited with the prisoners.

"Our visit to Western Illinois Correctional Center gave us a reason to celebrate," said the Rev. Buck Jones, president of East St. Louis Habitat for Humanity.

"It lifted our spirits and gave us a much needed

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(Staff photo by MIKE VIOLA)

Russ Sackett, plant manager for Monsanto's William G. Krummrich Plant in Sauget, presents a \$10,000 check from the Monsanto Fund to representatives of East St. Louis Habitat for Humanity, left to right, Lucy Foster, Jessie Miller, the Rev. Buck Jones, Sackett and Pat Lewis.

Monsanto makes Habitat donation

By Mike Viola
Staff writer

A project to build four new homes in East St. Louis received a large financial boost last week thanks to the Monsanto Fund.

A check for \$10,000 was recently presented to representatives of East St. Louis Habitat for Humanity at Monsanto's William G. Krummrich Plant in Sauget.

"We see a lot of value in this program and we are pleased to help out," said Russell Sackett, plant manager of the Sauget facility.

The Monsanto Fund provides financial assistance to a variety of charitable programs in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

The Rev. Buck Jones, president of East St. Louis Habitat for Humanity, is a member of the citizens advisory committee at Monsanto's Sauget plant.

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About 700 people have been contacted by the local Habitat chapter to line up volunteers and financing for the project.

Anyone wanting more information about contributing to the "blitz build" can call Project HOPE at 875-0888.

Last year, eight homes were built in East St. Louis with volunteers coming from throughout the country.

Most of the volunteers were from East St. Louis and neighboring communities such as Cahokia, Centreville, Belleville and Dupon.

•Labor

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for the property was turned in to city officials.

That transfer of property, however, is subject to approval by a state financial oversight panel, which has not given its approval.

A few of the homeowners of past Habitat homes have not paid their trash bills and the oversight panel wants the bills paid before authorizing the transfer of the lots to Habitat.

Habitat holds the mortgages to the homes.

Last week, Jones said an agreement has been reached with homeowners delinquent on their trash bills and expects the oversight panel to allow the transfer of the property to the charitable organization in the near future.

"Every time we try to light a candle, the wind of adversity blows out the match," Jones said. "We've had to fly against the wind."

Jones said Habitat workers are confident that at least 175 volunteers will be building homes in East St. Louis each day from July 8-20.