

summer 2007

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS

every child deserves a HOME

Armed with snacks, enthusiasm and a desire to help others in need, seven teens and three adults from SOS Lockport Village spent their spring break building homes with Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans' St. Bernard Parish. "Team SOS" joined 150 other volunteers in working toward New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity's goal of building 1,500 homes in four parishes over the next five years.

Based at an abandoned elementary school they called "Camp Hope," our SOS teens put their energy and skills to work helping rebuild a devastated neighborhood. The group's journal entries, continued on page 6, show how powerful and inspiring this experience proved to be.

continued on page 6

OUR MISSION

at SOS Children's Villages Illinois is to build families — to provide a stable home in a supportive community environment designed to help children in need grow into caring, productive and self-reliant adults.

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Net Gains

Since September 2006, SOS Lockport Village has had the Northern Illinois Tennis Association in its court. With support from the regional chapter of the National Tennis Association, SOS youth ages 5 to 17 have taken tennis classes and received their own equipment. Three of our teens have gone on to participate in extracurricular tennis at their high school. This summer, to help our kids hone their skills, we are working to create a tennis "mentor" program.

Educational Strides

The children in our villages face special challenges in and out of the classroom. To meet those challenges, we want to make direct professional tutoring available to every child in SOS Children's Villages Illinois. Through strategic partnerships within the educational community, our new tutoring program will provide standardized assessments and customized learning experiences for each of our children.

Your Help

Gifts to SOS Children's Villages Illinois help ensure educational, recreational, and social opportunities for our children, as well as training for foster parents. We've enclosed a donation envelope for your convenience; your support can make a real difference in a child's life, starting today. Please give generously.

**To learn more about how
you can help, call Bob Andorka
at 312-957-1800**

call to action

VILLAGE VOICES:

Why are friends important to you?

"I like friends because I like to play with them and they like to play with me." – AALIYAH, AGE 5

"My foster mom and foster sister are my friends. They are important friends because I love them."
– DESTINEY, AGE 6

"Friends are important to share secrets with and are especially good to have around Christmas because I can share all my toys with them and give my best friend a gift." – ZACHARY, AGE 7

"If I didn't have friends, when I go outside I wouldn't have any fun."
– SAMUEL, AGE 7

"I think friends are important because it makes me smile when people are friendly. I have two friends at school that I trust and have fun with. They come over to my house on the weekend and play with me, and it makes me really happy." – CHANDLER, AGE 9

"Friends are important because there might be a time when you need someone's shoulder to cry on. You can call your friend, and he or she will be there for you." – GLORIA, AGE 14

"Friends accept us for who we are. We can trust them with our embarrassing secrets and count on them to be there for us when we need them the most."
– BRIANA, AGE 17



The corporate sponsors and donors who have given SOS Children's Villages Illinois so much gave us cause for celebration at our annual gala. Their extraordinary contributions made our April 27 event a tremendous success. A special note of appreciation goes to these generous supporters:

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Sunday and Monday

Almost 17 hours of driving, but we arrived safely in New Orleans... Driving into St. Bernard's Parish, we were stunned at the level of devastation that still exists... We watched a movie about the events during Hurricane Katrina. It was sad learning about [all that happened]... Our first job was to finish capping off the top plates on the walls in preparation for the trusses... Nikki and some of the girls cut and nailed sheathing to the outside of the home... After much-needed showers, we drove through the Lower Ninth Ward. We saw areas where only front porches remain... "Be aware of all that you have," one of our teens said. "In a second it could be gone..."

Tuesday and Wednesday

We were assigned a new project, installing a chain link fence... Our captain was an Americorp volunteer named Ronnie. She was born and raised in New Orleans. Her family lost its home. We really enjoyed Ronnie and hearing about the area and local culture... We removed a rusty fence, dug out old concrete posts, saw the biggest cockroaches ever! ... We dug and dug and dug many holes, then set into concrete the first three posts... Today was by far the hottest and most humid. We moved indoors and started

construction of the porch railing... At day's end we were covered in dirt, concrete dust and more dirt... Someone asked, "Why did you come on this trip?" One of the teens responded, "At first I came so I could get out of the Village, but when we got here, and I saw everything, I realized I came to help."... "I have lived in the Village for 13 years, and had everyone do a lot of stuff for me. Now it's my turn to do something for someone else," another of our youngsters added... "I wanted to help someone less fortunate than me."

Thursday and Friday

I had a hard time waking up today... We moved lots of dirt, worked on the porch, went to dinner in the French Quarter... I put up cabinets and raked...I was glad to leave, yet at the same time not glad. Knowing I did some good let me leave completed... We made a thank-you card for Ronnie... We met many new friends while here, but most importantly, we learned about ourselves and how we can make an impact in our world... The group painted a mural to leave its mark on the walls of Camp Hope. The sign read, "Warning! Upon entry, you run the risk of being inspired!" 🧑🏻

dirk lohan:

In 1989, the first SOS Children's Village in the United States was built in Coconut Grove, Florida. Soon after, the idea of a new village in Illinois began to take shape with a group of educators at DePaul University. The concept quickly captured the imagination of architect Dirk Lohan, principal of Lohan Anderson, who helped pave the way for the SOS Children's Village in Lockport in 1992. His unstinting support has continued as the Lockport Village has grown to 18 homes and a second Illinois Village has opened in Chicago's Auburn Gresham neighborhood.

We recently asked our longtime friend to share his thoughts on SOS Children's Villages Illinois.

What motivated you to get involved in helping to build a village? I got involved with SOS for two reasons. First, I already knew about the SOS model from the villages in Europe. My parents supported SOS villages in the 1950s, and I saw how they helped children and families. Second, I realized we were not doing a good job with child welfare in the United States and Illinois. When educators from DePaul approached me, I got involved with the planning, site development, and building of the Lockport Village. I became the President of the Board of Directors and

have been an enthusiastic supporter ever since. Currently, I am the President of SOS-USA, the national organization.

You've witnessed SOS Children's Villages' growth over the years. What do you envision for the future of SOS?

I would like to see the village model we've started here in Illinois continue to grow across the state and nationwide. Illinois

has been in the forefront of this concept of caring for children, where brothers and sisters live in a safe home with a professional foster parent in a caring community environment. Creating a village to help 100 children is a good thing, but helping thousands of children is even better.

If you wanted to get someone else involved as a friend of SOS Children's Villages, what would you say to them?

I would tell them that all children need love and care. SOS Children's Villages is the next best thing to natural families. There are other organizations

that raise money and provide services for children, but not in the way that SOS does. The Villages provide a comprehensive and complete way to help children find the support and care they need to grow. I can think of no more essential mission than to provide children with security, family, and hope for a brighter future. 🌱

a faithful friend

upcoming events



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