

The House That HRSA Built

“The House That HRSA Built...A chance for someone to make a house a home!” This is the slogan for the 2008 Combined Fund Drive (CFD) for the **Department of Social and Health Services’ (DSHS) Health and Recovery Services Administration (HRSA)**. HRSA is partnering with **South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity** to raise 50K to build a house for a local family.

On Saturday the 20th of September, state leaders, employees, community members and the Habitat partner families joined together to celebrate the **HRSA House Wall-Raising Ceremony**. Those who attended would not allow their spirits to be dampened by the drizzle!

DSHS Secretary, Robin Arnold-Williams, was there in her cap and work clothes! She jumped right in and knew just what to do! She participated on another cabinet-level Habitat work group that was organized by Governor Gregoire earlier in this year. The house they helped build is now a home to an area Habitat family.

Participants included **HRSA Assistant Secretary, Doug Porter and Deputy Assistant Secretary, Heidi Robbins-Brown**. Four HRSA division directors were also on hand to assist: **MaryAnne Lindeblad, Division of Healthcare Services; Manning Pellanda, Division of Eligibility and Service Delivery; Duane French, Division of Disability Determination Services; and Thuy Hua-Ly, Division of Rates and Finance**.



DSHS Secretary
Robin Arnold-Williams



HRSA CFD Campaign Leader Amy Besel with HRSA Deputy Secretary Heidi Robbins-Brown and MaryAnne Lindeblad, Director of HRSA’s Division of Healthcare Services

Many HRSA employees enjoyed this fun and inspirational community event! They not only raised walls on the HRSA house, but also on the 3 other houses being built by Habitat!

“This is a wonderful example of community”, says **HRSA’s 2008 CFD Campaign Leader Amy Besel**. She reports, “I got the idea of partnering with a charity from the very creative **Cindy Craig!**” Craig is a CFD Campaign Manager with the Department of Personnel (DOP). DOP provides administrative support to the CFD and oversees the online giving resource found at www.cfd.wa.gov. The DOP issued the Habitat/HRSA House its own **CFD # 1478866** so any state employee or retiree can give to the cause. Cindy showed her support by

participating in the wall raising and notes, “A great crew came out! This is what it’s all about!” When asked why the partnership with Habitat, **HRSA Assistant Secretary Doug Porter** remarks, “There is a direct tie-in between housing and an individual’s overall health and recovery. This partnership is a natural fit.” **Habitat Executive Director, Curt Andino** agrees. “It is an honor for us to work alongside WA State workers who dedicate themselves on a daily basis to the improvement and care of the neediest amongst us.”



CFD Campaign Manager Cindy Craig with HRSA Assistant Secretary Doug Porter



Habitat Executive Director Curt Andino (left) raising the walls with HRSA staff and other community members

While the Habitat house is the centerpiece of the HRSA campaign, it is by no means the only charity at the table. “We have several charities coming to our Gimme 5! events and we are really trying to encourage HRSA employees to give \$5 a paycheck- either to the house or *any* of the other 2,600 screened and approved CFD charities.” She goes on to say, “As we feel the pinch at the check-out line or gas pump, everyone is encouraged to remember that these hardships grow exponentially the lower your income level. In reality, most of us are just one major medical event away from needing the very charities we are fortunate enough to be able support.”

The Gimme 5! events are orchestrated to help staff sign-up for the CFD using the new online system. “Some folks think \$5 a paycheck is too much to part with. In reality, it is only \$2.50 a week; that’s less than a latte a week! I can *lose* \$2.50 to an impulse buy at the check-out stand or in my couch cushions! Why not put it toward something that will make the world a better place?”

Along the lines of making the world a better place, Besel shared some other new developments in the HRSA CFD campaign. After a recent CFD presentation to HRSA’s Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA), DASA employee **Dave Albert** approached Besel and **Habitat’s Development Coordinator, Susan Newman**. He told them of a woman named Krishnammal Jagannathan and an organization in India called **LAFTI** (Land Tillers for Freedom- CFD #1478906) in which Albert has been participating for over 30 years. LAFTI helps build shelter for the lowest social caste in

India called the Dalits (“untouchables”). Albert reported that Jagannathan, called “Amma”, has been selected as this year’s recipient of the **Opus Award** (visit <http://www.opusprize.org/> for more information).

Albert described this award as the Catholic Church equivalent of the Nobel Peace Prize. He went on to say that Amma (83 years old) is coming to the U.S. to receive this award, which will be presented in Seattle. She also just happens to be staying with Dave Albert’s family! The Albert family lives 2 blocks from the HRSA/Habitat house.

So, on **Saturday November 15th**, Habitat and LAFTI are planning a special CFD event at the HRSA house; a day of fellowship, bringing attention to housing needs globally and locally. “This really is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet a truly remarkable woman who has led an incredible life. She has been counseled by Gandhi and has graciously hosted a visit in 1959 with the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and his wife. Both sat on the floor of her mud and straw hut because she had no furniture. Amma has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of life for Dalit women who are otherwise oppressed, discriminated against and exploited.” Said Besel, **“The CFD’s slogan, ‘Making a World of Difference’ really hits home for me. I not only believe we *can*; I believe we *must*.”**