



BRAD NETTLES/STAFF

Ron Labrie (front) with Absolute Home Services and James Kelley with Builders FirstSource start to put finishing touches on a four-bedroom house being built in St. Stephen Wednesday as part of the Habitat for Humanity Builders Blitz.

# 'Builders Blitz' challenge: 1 week, 6 Habitat homes

BY JAMIE MCGEE  
*The Post and Courier*

ST. STEPHEN — Build a four-bedroom house in five days.

If it sounds like a lofty assignment, that's because it is, said Jeremy Graves, president of FirstCoast Homes. FirstCoast and 10 other local builders agreed to take part in Habitat for Humanity's annual Builders Blitz and together build six new houses this week.

The Builders Blitz is a collaborative effort with Charleston Trident Home Builder's Association and the five local Habitat affiliates. Some builders have teamed up, while others are working alone.

The FirstCoast house off Kylie Lane was nearly complete Wednesday afternoon, with vinyl siding, ceiling, plumbing installation and painted walls. They hoped to be finished by noon today.

"It's achievable, but you've got to get everybody on board," said Will Herring, FirstCoast project manager. He added that the concerted effort of all the contractors has been invaluable. "I've been very impressed."

Delmore and Melissa Reeves will be moving from their trailer in Strawberry, where they live with their five children. The family has put in 500 hours of service helping other Habitat projects, in addition to contributing to their new home.

Their new house is built on two

acres donated by local landowner Johnny Ward and it is a far cry from their current trailer, ridden with mildew and leaks in the ceiling and walls and holes in the front porch. FirstCoast Homes built the 1,280-square-foot house using Energy Star standards, which includes upgraded insulation, glazing on windows to keep out UV rays and additional ceiling to seal in air-conditioning. All of these enhancements combined could save between 25 to 30 percent on energy bills, Graves said.

"If you are saving \$200 a year on power, that can be put somewhere else," he said. "We spend a little more up front so the homeowner can benefit greatly over the years."

The FirstCoast team has dedicated their week to the project, working sun up to sun down and putting off other projects in the meantime. About 25 people from FirstCoast's different contracting companies and Habitat for Humanity's staff have worked on the house each day. The project has been tough work, but has also been a rewarding experience, Graves said. Along with helping a family obtain a home of their own, they are able to show off their building skills and have a friendly competition with the other teams — an added perk, especially when they have been ahead.

Phillip Ford, executive director of Charleston Trident Home

Builder's Association, said the six day time-frame has been a "learning experience" for all the builders involved.

"It's pretty challenging," he said and laughed.

The Builders Blitz is an annual Habitat event across the nation, but this is the first year Lowcountry affiliates and the home builder's association has gotten involved.

"Our mission is to provide affordable housing in (the) Charleston area," Ford said. "It's just a good way to fulfill our statement and give back. The Charleston market has been good to the housing industry. This is what we do for a living, so it's a natural fit."

The Charleston Trident Homeowners Association will hold a ceremony Monday night during which the builders will hand over the keys to the families who will be moving into the new homes.

Reach **Jamie McGee** at 745-5856 or [jmcgee@postandcourier.com](mailto:jmcgee@postandcourier.com).



Tras  
Lanc  
hac  
Litte  
Cl

Wo

BY A  
The i

For  
pick  
lakes  
as ta  
"It  
prett  
avid  
said  
ence

Th  
ter c  
Mou  
urda  
be p  
Berk  
Th  
thes  
Litte  
thro  
with  
Caro  
tion.

"O  
look  
Jack  
nato  
and  
Th  
coup  
pick  
in P  
in C