

Indiantown gets Extreme Makeover from more than 500 volunteers

BY JESSICA LAYNE
YourNews contributor

PALM CITY — When Keep Martin Beautiful applied for a grant from the UPS Foundation last March for a project titled "Extreme Martin Makeover: Indiantown Edition," the organization envisioned a one-year project that would improve 10 homes in the Booker Park community of Indiantown.

On Saturday, March 24, those initial plans were a distant memory when more than 500 volunteers arrived by the van-load to Booker Park Field. From children to retired citizens, it was clear that even the littlest hands can make a big difference. Volunteers of all ages helped to remove litter from streets, paint homes, landscape yards and plant trees at more than 40 homes in the community.

"Our intention was to collaborate with the ongoing Carter Park project spearheaded by the county. They have a five-year plan to create affordable housing and build a community center.

We felt it was important to revitalize what currently exists so more residents would benefit from the community improvement," Rob Ranieri, logistics coordinator for Keep Martin Beautiful said.

The funding KMB received from the UPS Foundation gave the local non-profit the foundation to partner with Habitat Angel, Habitat for Humanity, Indiantown Non-Profit Housing and the Martin County Sheriff's Office in Indiantown.

"Habitat for Humanity and Habitat Angel were also planning a similar project for the Indiantown Community, so getting KMB and Indiantown Non-Profit Housing connected to this effort helped us to achieve an even greater impact for Booker Park," said Captain Lloyd Jones of the Martin County Sheriff's Office. "Our kick-off event for this project was in February and the local high school Junior ROTC programs came out and made tremendous



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Local youth volunteer paint homes in Booker Park as part of the Keep Martin Beautiful Extreme Martin Makeover: Indiantown Edition.

progress during our litter removal day."

Since February, church groups and volunteers from Habitat Angel and Indiantown Non-Profit Housing spent Saturdays prepping the homes for the final cleanup this past weekend. Previous efforts with Habitat Angel in the East Stuart Edition of the Extreme Martin Makeover helped

teach the value of resident involvement, so the homeowners and renters in each home also participated in the revitalization efforts.

"For beautification and revitalization projects like this to work, you have to interact with the residents and address their needs. Changing their environment with long-term improvements to the

neighborhood makes a significant positive change to the attitudes of all the people involved. Everyone wants a clean, safe, Martin County in which to live, and we are pleased to be a part of these efforts," Frank Neff, Founder of Habitat Angel said. With all the partners onboard, the organizations have committed to two more years in the Indiantown community, with planning already beginning for next spring.

Additional sponsors and community supporters of this year's Extreme Martin Makeover: Indiantown Edition include; UPS Foundation, Waste Management, Indiantown Cogeneration, Martin County, The Firefly Group, Indiantown Ministerial Alliance, VFW, Red Tail Hawk, Steven Martine Photography, Ampersand Shirt Shack and Lowe's.

For more information about the Extreme Martin Makeover, contact Keep Martin Beautiful at 772-781-1222 or email infokeepmartinbeautiful.org.