

Neighborhood Post

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Extreme Martin Makeover hits Port Salerno

22 New Monrovia area homes will be painted, improved.

By Michelle Plasecki
Special to The Palm Beach Post

The community surrounding Murray Middle School in Port Salerno is getting a makeover. As many as 600 people are expected to flood New Monrovia Park on Saturday, starting at about 8 a.m.

Over the past few weeks, volunteers have been prepping the 20 homes that will be painted. Any rotten siding has been replaced, and houses have been primed and pressure washed. This year's biggest project is a home that will get a new roof, courtesy of Capps Roofing and the volunteers who help, and yet another home will be landscaped.

A total of 22 homes will be getting a face-lift as part of the community-wide project.

"This isn't just paint on rotten wood," said Thelma Washington, a board member for Habitat Angel, one of the nonprofit organizations involved in the project.

She said workers make actual repairs to ensure the job is done right.

"And people are very grateful," Washington said.

This year's edition of Extreme Martin Makeover, which started in 2009 and is a joint project between Keep Martin Beautiful and Habitat Angel, will re-do homes in the New Monrovia area in Port Salerno for the first time. The projects started in East Stuart and then



This is the home of Carrie West, 92, who will be getting a new roof on her house as part of a joint effort between Habitat Angel and Keep Martin Beautiful. CONTRIBUTED

moved to Indiantown for the past two years.

Volunteers from about seven churches are expected to attend this year's event, and people are invited to show up and help with the project, which is part of the Great American Clean-up that Keep Martin Beautiful organizes every year.

This event focuses on beautification and revitalization, said Jessica Waugaman, Keep Martin Beautiful's events coordinator.

The makeover is the biggest project each year for Habitat Angel, a nonprofit Christian organization, but it isn't the only project, said the event coordinator Hank Meira. Throughout the year, the nonprofit helps with smaller projects such as wheelchair ramps.

"We can't fulfill every

request, but we do our best," Meira said.

On the day of the makeover, volunteers will meet at 8 a.m. at New Monrovia Park. There will be a restroom trailer and a tent for volunteers. Lunch also will be served after the work is finished.

Meira, who has helped with the annual community makeover since Frank Neff formed the organization in 2009, said the projects are a huge help for those who are in need in Martin County. A new roof will replace one that has nearly started to cave in on the home of Carrie West, who is 92.

Meira said that during one makeover a year or two ago one woman told a volunteer that no one had ever done something that nice for her.

"That makes it all worthwhile," he said. "In

reality, when you're helping other people, you're being blessed too."

Washington, who is director of the Gertrude Walden Child Care Center in East Stuart, said it gives homeowners pride and ownership to have their homes beautified whether it's with painting or landscaping.

"And we find that the people keep it up," she said.

Washington helps with registration, and she meets with homeowners to make certain community needs are met and that the work done on each house meets those needs. The recipients of the makeover also are homeowners.

She said that the project doesn't include rentals for fear that the landlords might raise rent on those families living there, and

she said they always get homeowners and neighbors in the community invested in the cleanup by encouraging them to help on the day of the makeover.

She's seen first hand what an impact this project make. The Gertrude Walden Child Care Cen-

IF YOU GO

What: Extreme Martin Makeover
When: 8 a.m. Saturday
Where: New Monrovia Park, 4450 Field St., Port Salerno
Website: www.habitatangel.org

ter was one of the Extreme Martin Makeover's first recipients. She said she wanted to shout, "Move that bus!" much like on the television show on ABC.

The children noticed the change as well as so many in the community, she said.

"It was so wonderful seeing so many coming out to help," Washington said. "And that's why I stay involved." One year, she remembers a 4-year-old boy on East Stuart saying that somebody took his house and brought back a new one.

"The whole project gives people a whole sense of pride," she said.

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