

Habitat event kicks off



Lauren Wicks/Suffolk News-Herald The 2008 Habitat for Humanity Building Blitz kicked off yesterday, with hundreds of volunteers working to build 16 new homes in the Huntersville neighborhood.

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The bangs of hammers, squeals of drills and muffled conversations off Townpoint Road could be heard hundreds of yards away. But, the ruckus is welcomed with open arms in the Huntersville community.

In fact, it's been awaited for some time.

The 2008 Habitat for Humanity Building Blitz has finally arrived.

All this week, hundreds of volunteers, community leaders and 16-soon-to-be-homeowners will take over Huntersville for the largest Habitat building blitz in the country. The blitz is part of a national Habitat effort to construct hundreds of homes across the nation in just one week.

Eleven two-story homes and five single-story homes will be built in the North Suffolk community, and families from all backgrounds and walks of life will be moving in. City officials and Huntersville residents have said the project should help revitalize the neighborhood.

Last fall, Suffolk City Council agreed to contribute \$280,000 to acquire land for the project. The money came from the city's \$345,000 Affordable Housing Trust. Habitat officials solicited builders, as well as between \$750,000 and \$1 million to get the project off the ground.

Mayor Linda T. Johnson has been a supporter of the Blitz since she saw the impact it had in Portsmouth in 2006. After that, she and Councilman Leroy Bennett worked with Habitat and city leaders to bring the Blitz to Suffolk.

Habitat was formed in 1976. In its 30 years, the non-profit organization has built more than 225,000 houses around the world, providing more than 1 million people in more than 3,000 communities with homes, according to www.habitat.org, Habitat for Humanity's Web site.