

Building Houses Brings Friends Together

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For the fifth year in a row, a group of Newcomb College alumnae made the trip to New Orleans to volunteer as house builders. [See the Empowers video](#)



Getting it done on a Habitat for Humanity home, a group of Newcomb College alumnae spends a week each year to help New Orleans neighborhoods rebuild. (Photos by [Mary Mouton](#))

The dozen or so friends from all across the country have been getting together once a year for nearly a week, usually right after Thanksgiving, to work on Habitat for Humanity houses, doing “whatever Habitat wants us to do,” says Judi Fagin, of Erie, Pa., who graduated from Tulane in 1971. [Watch a video](#) about their work.

This year, the women, most of them sorority sisters from the classes of 1967 to '71, cut soffit for exterior finishes and painted a typical Habitat house with three bedrooms and one bath.

"We all learn to do things we never thought we could do," says Cheryl Josephs Zaccaro, a 1969 graduate from Pittsfield, Mass. Zaccaro was the first in the group to travel to New Orleans in 2006 after Hurricane Katrina, "to test the waters," she says.

She reported back to [friends](#) that working with Habitat would be a great thing to do. Their volunteer labor was much needed in the area reeling from the devastation.



"We all learn things we never thought we could do," says 1969 graduate Cheryl Josephs Zaccaro about the rebuilding work.

"That was the beginning of communicating with a whole bunch of people to include them in the process," says Zaccaro. "Each year it gets better and better."

The get-togethers are not all work. The group eats well. And the yearly sojourns in New Orleans are mini reunions for the friends. "We pick up where we left off the year before," says Zaccaro.

Fagin says, "You go to school here, and even if you live here for a short amount of time, the city becomes important to you."

She adds, "The opportunity to do both something for New Orleans and to do something with women that I am fond of under the aegis of Newcomb and Tulane was something that I just couldn't pass up."