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Volunteers Use Vacation Time To Build Homes

By **Kelly Bartnick**
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SIoux FALLS, SD - Not even the wet weather this week could stop the Amazing Blitz in Sioux Falls.

Hundreds of volunteers have converged on the city to build three new Habitat for Humanity homes this past week. Volunteers come from all over. Dozens of different local corporate groups have helped out, but the core builders are part of the Blitz that came from much farther away.

Sometimes it takes a village to build a community, even when many of them have never met.

"I was in South Dakota with a family trip when I was 17. So it's been a long time," Blitz volunteer Tim Bartz said.

For a week now, Tim Bartz has joined dozens of others on a single Sioux Falls street.

"There's quite a large crew of us from Phoenix," Jeannine Morse said.

"I'm just kind of a jack of all trades. Just don't put me up real high," Bartz said.

They're all offering help that will change the lives of three families, including Jafar Ali, who will share one of the new homes with his five siblings. The family is putting sweat equity into house number two.

"They say they're gonna finish in nine days. We should be able to move in by next month, I think," Ali said.

That means no more cramped apartment rental for Ali. And that is nothing short of amazing.

"This is our 14th blitz build this group's done. And of course, all of us volunteer at our local habitats through the year building there as well," Bartz said.

Some of the volunteers here are local; most are not. Some like Mary Wright are credentialed.

"They chalked the line. I'm staying on the outside of the blue line so I don't cut too much off," Wright said.

Others like Kari Schukei are brand new.

"They said we are ahead of schedule so we should be good," Schukei said.

The three families receive zero interest loans to repay Habitat for Humanity. All that money stays local to build more Habitat homes in the Sioux Empire. They'll get the keys to their new homes during a ceremony on Saturday.

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