

MLK Day Observed in Southeast Georgia with Parades, Ceremonies and a House-raising

By Terry Dickson The Florida Times Union

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College of Coastal Georgia volleyball player Kansas Robison is silhouetted against jet contrails as she hammers nails on a Habitat for Humanity of Glynn County project near the college on Monday.

While many people attended Martin Luther King Day observances Monday or simply took a day off, some College of Coastal Georgia students raised the roof.

In fact, they helped raise a whole house, from the concrete slab up.

The college's women's basketball team, volleyball team, some tennis players and other students and staff joined other volunteers to work on the first of two neighboring homes for Habitat for Humanity of Glynn County.

College President Valerie Hepburn said she was initially hopeful the two houses would be done by the end of the semester. But at the rate the job went on its first day, the students might have to slow down to make the job last until the end of April.

They didn't do it all from scratch. Jim Fucetola, Habitat's building superintendent, already had assembled the framing and some beams so the volunteers had only to raise them, square them and anchor them. Nonetheless, Monday's pace was pretty remarkable, Executive Director Bert Brown said.

The volleyball team had helped erect the walls in the morning, and the basketball players were lifting the roof trusses into place shortly after noon. Then came the roof decking.

Although it was something new for most, the players took it in stride.

"This is a good workout," one said as she and teammates lifted a heavy beam.

The students worked on the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service as part of the college's service learning program. The college crews will join other volunteers on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays through April to finish the two houses on Blain Street, about a block west of the edge of the campus.

Brown said the students will start the second house Saturday with plans of getting it to the same point of completion as the first.

As they worked on the house, Waycross, Brunswick and Kingsland observed the slain civil right leader's birthday with parades and ceremonies.

Wayscross residents and out-of-towners alike lined up in droves to march in the Martin Luther King Day Parade that stepped off from Mary Street Park in Waycross.

There was a notable new entry in the Waycross parade: the newly flagged South Georgia State College after the official merger of Waycross College with South Georgia College in Douglas.

As usual, most of the participants were local churches with the Ware County High School band and Albany State University bands providing thundering drums and soaring horns as the parade cut through downtown Waycross.

With no MLK Day parade in Albany, Albany State's band has become a mainstay of the Waycross parade.

Participants wore T-shirts commemorating this year's parade, "Together We Can Live the Dream."

Ware County Commissioner Carlos Nelson, who usually broadcasts the parade over radio, served as grand marshal.

"It feels good to do it," he said.

After the Brunswick parade, celebrants gathered at Glynn County's Selden Park for a program to honor King and others in the civil rights movement.

Calvin Waye, chairman of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Committee, reminded hundreds in the Selden Park gym that the park's grounds are where African-Americans received their educations at the Selden Institute when public schools were still segregated. Waye, who had been a police officer during integration, praised those who had kept the peace in Brunswick during turbulent and sometimes violent times.

He also noted that people died during the movement.

He urged the crowd to be worthy of those who gave their lives.

Correspondent Joshua Sharpe contributed to this report.

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