

# BAGB Members Unite to Build Homes for Katrina Victims

**E**ight builders need BAGB's help! It has been over two years since our nation's worst natural disaster hit the coastlines of Mississippi and Louisiana in the form of Hurricane Katrina. Immediately after Hurricane Katrina hit, the town of Wayland responded with the formation of Wayland to Waveland (W2W), a town-wide public/private organization with the mission to help rebuild their sister city of Waveland, Miss., which was Ground Zero for the 40-foot tidal wave that destroyed the coast. Ninety-five percent of the homes in Waveland were destroyed, the infrastructure of the city was demolished and most of the businesses were gone.

In October 2006, W2W, in partnership with BAGB member Peter Bachman of Custom Designs Inc., launched a construction project to build three homes in Waveland. Under Peter's leadership, this effort involved building one house from the ground up and renovating two others.

This project served as a springboard to our current undertaking, Mission to Mississippi. Started in October 2007, Mission to Mississippi is a 14-week building effort by over 400 skilled tradesmen and 100 volunteers to build eight new homes for families in Waveland. Architect Mike Collins from South Natick generously volunteered to design these eight homes, as well as the previous three. Mission to Mississippi is being sponsored by W2W in partnership with eight BAGB builders who are leading the construction effort: Kenneth Vona Construction, Custom Designs Inc., Mitchell Construction Group, Thoughtforms, Twin Peaks Construction, CMG, Gallagher Home Builders and Whitla Brothers. They, in turn, have rallied the participation of dozens of New England-based subcontractors, many of whom are BAGB members, from over 50 communities who are donating their time, tools, materials and skills to com-

plete this project. Crews rotate in on a seven-day work schedule, starting with framing and continuing with electrical, plumbing, drywall, painting, carpentry and landscaping.

So what drew our BAGB members to this cause? "It's simple," said Tom Mitchell of Mitchell Construction Inc. "These families have been living in cramped, outdated trailers for over two years and they are the lucky ones! Children deserve a roof over their head and we're just happy to have been able to give them one."

The total cost of the project is \$1.6 million. Our eight BAGB builders have worked tirelessly to raise monetary contributions and donations of materials and supplies that have totaled almost \$1.4 million. Many local and national companies have contributed to the project, including Cape Cod Lumber, National Lumber, Yale Electric and Jarvis Appliance, to name a few. There is still \$225,000 remaining to be raised through increased publicity and upcoming fundraising efforts. Plans are underway to hold a raffle, selling a limited number (150) of \$1,000 tickets for two great prizes of air transportation and stay at two luxury vacation destinations (Pebble beach and Puerto Rico). We hope all BAGB members will support this fundraiser. The raffle will be drawn on Feb. 29. Please visit [www.missionto-mississippi.org](http://www.missionto-mississippi.org) for more information on the project.

## Pitching In

So what can you do? According to Ken Vona of Ken Vona Construction Inc., "We need builders to donate. We can make our goal if we can get real support from the builders of the Boston area. We need cash donations at this point to finalize the project and to ultimately complete our mission."

Ken is trying to live by the words on a plaque in his office: For whom much has been given, much shall be required. ■



**Top photo:**  
Volunteer David Lombardo.

**Bottom photo:**  
(from left) Jay Knowles, Keith Austin and John Knowles from R.T. Austin; Clifford Backman from Gallagher Home Building; Robert Austin from RT Austin; Thomas Tracey from Gallagher Home Builders; Jason Knowles; and Jacob Knowles (out the window).