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Many hands, One mission

In town for convention, thousands of church volunteers repair homes for free

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James and Barbara Mosley sat in their back yard Wednesday looking stunned.

They had been told months ago what would happen when the Church of the Nazarene convention came to town this week, but James Mosley still shook his head and said, "I'm shocked."

Across the street in the 2700 block of North LaSalle Street, Constance Scott, 48, had a similar reaction: "It's Christmas in June."

Scott and the Mosleys received home makeovers provided free by **One Heart-Many Hands**, a community project that accompanies the church's national conference.

The conference, held every four years, began Wednesday in Indianapolis and runs through July 1. The event is expected to attract up to 40,000 participants and is using every available room in the Indiana Convention Center and RCA Dome.

The scene on LaSalle Street, where scores of volunteers from southwestern Indiana, Texas, Kansas and Arkansas were working on at least five houses, is playing out in neighborhoods across the Eastside.

More than 2,200 volunteers will make repairs on 110 homes by the time the initiative ends Friday. Others will pull weeds and paint playground equipment in 20 to 30 Indianapolis parks.

What's **more**, these volunteers paid \$150 to \$180 each to work eight hours a day for 4 days that began Monday and end Friday. The fee helps pay for the materials used to repair the homes.

Last week's Formula **One** race brought to the city thousands of people who dropped millions of dollars on food, drink and hotels. Those attending the Church of the Nazarene gathering probably won't be spending \$1,000 for a bottle of scotch like their F-1 predecessors, but they will have a big impact on the city in other ways.

About 60 volunteers were assigned to the Mosley home, which will get a new roof, windows and a new sidewalk and is being painted inside and out.

Ron Milburn, 51, pastor of Crossroads Community Church of the Nazarene near Crawfordsville, said he had a little trouble sleeping after being told he would be working with 60 volunteers with no background in housing repairs.

Milburn, who has a construction background, said it was amazing to watch as five layers of wallpaper disappeared off the walls in a 12-by-14-foot living room.

"They paid to come, and they wanted to work," Milburn said. "I thought I'd have a lot of kids sitting in the shade, goofing off." Instead, it was " 'What can I do?' It's incredible."

"It's a blessing," said Barbara Mosley, 72, as she and her husband sat in the shade. James Mosley, 74, said the repairs took a load off his mind.

Scott, meanwhile, said she didn't know how she would have handled the repairs, which included a new roof and a new back porch, by herself.

"These kids are amazing," she said. "They are just wonderful people."

Dipping a brush into a can of white paint, Adrianna Potts, 18, Newburgh, looked delighted. "It's fun," she said. "It puts a check on our life to see how good you have it, and it's good to give back to a community that doesn't have as much."

In the Mosleys' backyard, Lacey Rood, 18, Clay City, said their work shows God's love. "So it's fun," Rood said.

The **One Heart-Many Hands** initiative started at the church's conference here in 1993, said Ron Sylvester, who, with his wife, Laura, directs the initiative. The project attracted fewer than 500 people then.

The organization relies on city and neighborhood groups to select the homes to be repaired, Sylvester said. The aim of the effort is to assist the elderly, handicapped, single parents -- people who need help, he said.

"What we've found is people can actually enjoy being out there sweating, swinging hammers," said Sylvester. He and his wife are missionaries in Mexico. "We present it as a celebrating; we're just out there celebrating in a different way."

The city could be celebrating as well by the end of the conference.

Though it's hard to put a price tag on the **One Heart-Many Hands** effort, the convention's economic impact goes well beyond the sweat expended repairing Indianapolis homes.

"Financially, it's our largest convention of the year based on economic impact," said Bob Schultz, a spokesman for the Indianapolis Convention and Visitors Association.

"It will generate approximately \$40 million of direct visitor spending, money left behind in hotels, restaurants, shopping and for transportation."

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