

Extreme Makeover: UW Oshkosh Edition

by Shane Arman - Wednesday, January 28, 2009

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/1636/extreme-makeover-uw-oshkosh-edition/>

The day started at 3:30 a.m. with a four-hour drive to Richland Center, Wis. Some 106 hours later, four members of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's Circle K club finished their part in building a house for ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition."

The speedy construction project completed in July 2008 was a gift for the Anders-Beatty family of five, who lost their father to a heart attack four years earlier.

UW Oshkosh Circle K President Lyssa Bergstrom, who grew up near Richland Center, Wis., had an opportunity to volunteer for the show, which is known for its extravagant construction and rapid mobilization of suppliers and volunteers.

"I saw the chance because my neighbors were in charge of doing all the landscaping for the house," Bergstrom said.

Bergstrom and three other Circle K members were hired to landscape the house and help a family in need.

Circle K is a national college organization like Kiwanis. The global service organization aims to improve communities while developing and educating leaders. With 60 members, UW Oshkosh's Circle K is the largest chapter in the Upper Michigan district.

Although the group didn't have an opportunity to work on the actual house, the experience of working toward such a meaningful project was worth the effort.

"I watched the TV special, and I cried because I knew that I was there and we made a difference for this family," Bergstrom said.

The overall response of southeastern Wisconsin volunteers was overwhelming, with more than 2,500 people contributing to the project.

"It was amazing to see the commitment of so many volunteers there trying to help this one family," Bergstrom said. "These people weren't there to be on TV; they were there to help."

The Anders-Beatty family was chosen for the show because their former house had holes in the ceiling, water damage to the walls and a primitive heating system.

Mother of four Rochelle Anders, who won the 2005 Teacher of the Year award in Richland Center, enjoyed a seven-day Disney vacation with her four children in Canada while her new home was being built.

For Circle K, participating in “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition” represents one example of how hours of volunteering can make a difference.

Through the fall 2008 semester, Circle K volunteered more than 3,000 hours and donated more than \$2,300 to community groups in need. They hope to reach 5,000 hours of service by the end of the spring 2009 semester.

Besides the “Extreme Makeover” project, Circle K has reached beyond state lines for service projects.

In September, more than 30 members travelled to Marquette, Mich., to complete a non-stop, 24-hour service project. Circle K cleaned at a children’s museum, gardened and painted in the city, and worked at a disability camp for children.

Circle K also took part in the Nearly Naked mile Nov. 18. at UW Oshkosh, collecting and distributing clothing to a local shelter. Bergstrom remembers the children’s reaction to the donation.

“We sometimes take for granted everyday things, and these kids don’t,” Bergstrom said. “To see the expressions on their face when they knew they were getting some extra clothes was amazing.”

Photo courtesy of Circle K International.