Improving the Quality of Life through a Habitat for Humanity Build is a most rewarding experience for those involved in this project. The Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Texas State Court, recently dedicated the 8th Texas Habitat for Humanity Build on February 10, 2018 in Edinburg, Texas. Groundbreaking Ceremonies took place on August 17, 2017 with the Raising of the Walls on September 23, 2017. Texas CDA raised money for the $50,000.00 home in several ways: donations from local courts; donations from private individual; donations from CDA members; sponsorships; and with a Sporting Clays Shoot Fundraiser. In addition, Texas was able to secure a grant from the National CDA Office in the amount of $15,000.00. The goal for this worthy project was to provide a home for a family worthy of the endeavor.

As soon as possible after the 2017 Texas State Convention, the state regent met with Habitat for Humanity of the Rio Grande Valley in McAllen, Texas to begin plans and set a timeline. Rosie Stockwell, Texas State Regent, immediately informed the National Office of the intention to sponsor a Habitat Home seeking financial help, if possible. In addition, a letter was drafted seeking the help of the Texas Council of the Knights of Columbus.

After the first meeting with the Habitat for Humanity office, the state regent visited the lots that were available for building in Edinburg, Texas, the home town of the state regent. A lot was chosen in a neighborhood that is considered a "colonia", which means that at some point this land was unincorporated and had no amenities, such as water and electricity.

The Texas Council of the Knights of Columbus responded by agreeing to help with the build and agreed to be the Event Sponsor of the Sporting Clays Shoot. This gesture on their part brought a sigh of relief on the part of Texas CDA. The financial burden would now be shared with our brother Knights.

During the summer of 2017, Habitat for Humanity of the Rio Grande Valley invited the Catholic Daughters of the Americas Texas State Court to participate in the determination of the family who would receive the home. Esther Waters, State Newsletter Contest Chairman, and Rosie Stockwell, State Regent, sat in on the process and met the family that was awarded the home. The Julian Guzman family is a family of four who met the requirements of a good credit score and the means to pay the mortgage required.

The Habitat for Humanity Chairman, Herminia Martinez, started to work immediately on the project, designing flyers for things such as Sponsors, Construction Meals, Construction
Schedules, and the fundraiser. State Regent, Rosie Stockwell, drafted letters to the CDA membership, Knights of Columbus (local & state), community businesses, family, and friends asking for help. The local Habitat for Humanity branch allowed CDA to sponsor a HFH Shopping List worth $8,800.00 which would be deducted from the price of the home if all items were sold. This list included items to purchase as low as $1.97 for a wood stud or as high as $200.00 for the front door. This allowed many persons to donate whatever amount they could and still feel that they contributed to the home. This list was completely sold out before the home was finished.

Besides fundraising, CDA members signed up for donating the construction meals and volunteering to work on scheduled weekends. There was so much enthusiasm that the home was finished before schedule. Many persons from different walks of life heard about the project and volunteered their time or their resources to help complete the project. Some of the volunteers included a state senator, a federal judge, lawyers, elected city and county officials, JCDA, and CDA members and their families.

Some CDA courts who volunteered to build signed their local parish Knights of Columbus to sponsor the construction meal the same weekend so that the KC's and CDA's could work together.

The event that holds a special place in everyone's heart who participated is the raising of the walls. Everyone helps pull, push, nail, and hammer those walls into place and when the four walls are up by the end of the first workday -- what a beautiful sight! CDA courts were encouraged to write prayers and special wishes for the family that are stapled on the framing of the home. The faith and love poured out for an unknown family is a powerful statement of God's love in action.

CDA courts and individuals volunteer countless hours for several months to be sure the house is completed on time. Texas Catholic Daughters from 175 courts donated food, money, and sweat equity. In addition, 25 to 35 volunteers worked on the home every weekend for 13 weeks for an approximate total of 375 to 450 persons helping in the building. Also, several courts came not only to build but to feed the builders.

The family is asked to participate in the building of their home for which they gain untold blessings witnessing a home built by strangers with love. The volunteers gain a sense of accomplishment, community, and love of neighbor helping build a home for a stranger.

The Sporting Clays Shoot held on December 2, 2017 about 19 miles north of Edinburg, Texas in ranch country at "Mi Ranchito Sporting Clays" was an event that was enjoyed by many that included youth and adults. The impact of this event on the CDA members, the community, and the parishes who worked together to make it a success cannot be measured.
The JCDA courts in the area participated by helping to serve the meal, the Town and Country 4H Club in Edinburg provided their 4H Ambassadors to greet the participants, the CDA courts helped with registration and the "Bucket Raffle", individuals donated raffle prizes and a local restaurant, Bar-B-Cutie Smokehouse, went on site to cook the lunch meal free of charge.

After the house is finished, a house blessing and dedication was held. Over 100 persons, including national officers, state officers, state chairmen, district deputies, local courts, families and friends attended the Dedication. Fr. Gregory T. Labus, Texas State Chaplain, was present at the event.

A plaque was awarded to the Texas State CDA Court for their partnership with the Habitat for Humanity of the Rio Grande Valley in building this home. Certificates were awarded to various individuals who were instrumental in the completion of the home.

The family is given the keys to the home and gifts from CDA and JCDA for the new home were presented. Then, finally, the house is blessed and an Open House with refreshments ends the event. The home was built with God’s loving hands and the hands of the volunteers on earth. *The quality of life for the volunteers and the family are improved beyond measure with Habitat for Humanity.*

Attachments include:

1. Binder with sections on the build from start to finish.