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## **Smyth & Helwys Publishing and Habitat for Humanity International Introduce a New Vacation Bible School**

MACON, GA. Smyth & Helwys Publishing and Habitat for Humanity International this week announced a new Vacation Bible School program, *Under Construction: A Habitat for Humanity Vacation Bible School*.

*Under Construction* is designed to encourage the growth of Christian service habits among preschoolers and children. Using a construction theme, the program involves children in activities that teach the value of "building" Christian community.

Millard Fuller, founder and president of Habitat for Humanity International, expressed excitement over the potential of the new resources. "By using these Vacation Bible School materials, you join with thousands of other churches around the country that have chosen to make their Christian education program one that challenges young people to learn about Christian service and also provides them with specific opportunities to serve. Habitat for Humanity is proud to be called a Christian ministry. At the core of our work is a focused desire to express in practical, tangible ways the love of God shown in Jesus."

The new Vacation Bible School does more than simply teach about Christian service. It directly involves children in service and ministry. While children do not participate in the construction of homes, they do discover the joy of serving by creating crafts that are given away and used in ministry. For example, in one craft project children construct attractive and useable "caring hands quilts" that are then presented to the family moving into a Habitat home.

Churches that use *Under Construction* are also directly supporting the building of additional Habitat homes, since a portion of each purchase goes to Habitat for Humanity International.

Cecil P. Staton Jr., president and publisher of Smyth & Helwys Publishing, explained the significance of the project for churches and children. "We are enormously proud to partner with Habitat for Humanity International in producing this wonderful resource. When your church uses *Under Construction*, you will not only teach your children about putting their faith in action, but you will join with many other churches in raising much needed resources for building houses for those in need."

The Vacation Bible School package contains: an administrative guide, a preschool teaching guide, five (5) "Job Site" teaching guides, a high quality music CD, four (4) hardcover children's books from Habitat for Humanity, full-color promotional posters, an *Under Construction* T-shirt, and an *Under Construction* cap.

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The initial set includes everything a church needs to conduct a Vacation Bible School for up to 100 children. Additional materials are available for VBS weeks with larger attendance. The program uses a format in which teachers plan for only one area, and the children rotate through the areas during the course of the day. Flexible ideas are provided for a variety of settings and timetables.

Many churches are already planning to use *Under Construction* in 2003. The Rev. Marsha McDaniel, minister of education at the First Baptist Church of Indianapolis, describes her interest in the program. "First Baptist Church of Indianapolis has been using Smyth & Helwys children's curriculum for a couple years. We have appreciated its quality and format. . . . We will be building our next Habitat house in the coming year. Hands-on mission projects are one of our most effective teaching vehicles. *Under Construction* will help us teach children about relevant faith, provide effective community ministry and raise awareness of Habitat for Humanity."

*Under Construction: A Habitat for Humanity Vacation Bible School* is also supported by a website. The site includes information on Bible study, organization and promotion of the program. It also contains graphics for downloading, customizable press releases, and information for planners and teachers. The site can be accessed at [www.helwys.com/vbs.html](http://www.helwys.com/vbs.html).

Each day begins with an opening assembly where two dramas unfold. The Bible drama introduces the core Bible story for the day. The Habitat drama follows the journey of a "partner family" (a family receiving a home) from needing a home to receiving one.

One of the "work sites" is a story-telling area. Each day the leader shares a story of a different individual who comes in contact with Habitat for Humanity in some manner. One story looks at a partner family while others highlight the stories of volunteer workers and churches. The goal is to help children form clearer ideas about the ministry of participating in the work of Habitat for Humanity International.

The construction theme also makes planning and promoting the Vacation Bible School more effective. Children and staff are encouraged to dress as construction workers, wearing overalls, jeans, boots, hard hats or other theme attire. The children are formed into "building crews" with teachers being called "engineers." Multiple ideas are provided for using the construction themes to promote participation in the Vacation Bible School.

Smyth & Helwys Publishing, a long-time supporter of the work of Habitat for Humanity, also published Millard Fuller's book, *A Theology of the Hammer*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing Inc. is an independent publisher of Christian curriculum, books and Internet content known for its innovative resources supporting the ministry of the local church. Smyth & Helwys can be reached at 800-747-3016, or [www.helwys.com](http://www.helwys.com).