

# 'A home away from home'

## Rotarians, others help to maintain hospitality house

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HEREFORD — Nearly three decades ago, a two-story barracks on Fort Huachuca was carefully dismantled.

There was no tearing the structure down without regard for ensuring the pieces couldn't be used again.

For 78-year-old Darl Goode, the object was to reassemble, with slight modifications, the structure on a piece of property off of Green Oak Lane in Stump Canyon.

The old barracks, once part of what was called Splinter Village on the post, wooden structures constructed in the 1940s to house two black divisions that trained in Arizona during World War II, was put together on an acre of land donated by the Schoen family, Goode said.

Establishing a place for GIs to relax was “encouraged by the post chaplains,” he said.

So began what became the Huachuca Hospitality House, a two-story, 3600-square-foot facility.

Goode came to Arizona from Colorado where he was a school teacher to work with a religious group called the Overseas Christian Servicemen's Center but now is called Cadence International.

Goode, a Korean War Army draftee who served in the military for two years, was the local leader. In 2006, retired Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Jose Cordero became the director.

The majority of the support for the facility is from donations, and much of the maintenance support comes from volunteers.

That was evident Saturday as members of the Rotary Club of Sierra Vista, commonly called the Noon Rotary, were doing a great deal of work with their hands — painting and digging holes for poles for a chain link fence, as others not associated with the club did other chores.

John Spengler, the club's president, said the members were seeking a hands-on project, something involving physical labor.

The Noon Club supports a number of charities ... mostly by “just writing checks,” he said.

Getting out and doing some physical labor is both challenging and satisfying, Spengler said.

When the idea to help the Huachuca Hospitality House was presented, it was what was being sought, he said.

A woman who is involved in the fort's Community Spouses Club, which helps the house, suggested the idea to her husband.

Ruth Quinn told her Rotarian husband, Tim, about the hospitality house, and the idea grew.

Spengler noted that he and some others in the Noon Rotary initially did not know that much about the hospitality house.

One of the key supporters in Saturday's project who provided much of the needed fencing items was Les Orchekowsky, who owns Ace Hardware in Sierra Vista.

Not only did Orchekowsky, a member of the club, provide the material, he was at the site doing physical labor. Also providing tools and hands-on labor was club member Mike Benson of TDY Housing, a company with many military clients.

Cordero, who remarked he and his wife became Christians while stationed in Guam, said there are nearly four



*The Rotary Club of Sierra Vista helped to spruce up the Huachuca Hospitality House near Stump Canyon on Saturday. Volunteers Ken Brown, left, and Tad Bloss paint the deck area. (Mark Levy•Herald/Review)*

dozen hospitality house programs around the world, primarily serving U.S. military members.

Cordero said the program “is a faith-based mission”; however, it does not push Christianity down a person’s throat. Cordero noted that many of the people who come to the local facility are not Christians, such as foreign officers being trained on the post.

Every Thanksgiving, foreign officers are invited to the traditional American holiday meal, and usually more than a dozen show up. That includes people of other faiths, and the discussions are interesting and friendly.

Mrs. Cordero noted there are three major holiday meals that draw many military people and their families from the post — Easter, Fourth of July and Thanksgiving.

During one Thanksgiving, as a large group was about to sit down for the meal, a flock of six wild turkeys went strutting by the house, apparently knowing they would not be the meal.

About 3,000 meals are served annually to those who come to the facility, and nearly 300 people a year are put up in guest rooms in the house, which is also where the family lives, she said.

A trio of soldier students from Company B, 305th Military Intelligence Battalion, had called and asked if they could stay overnight Saturday, she said.

They arrived at noon and almost immediately started doing some work outside.

Her husband noted that the younger students like to have a place away from the fort where they can relax and watch movies or play video games. Additionally, trips to such places as the Grand Canyon are part of program provided to house guests.

Two of the people helping do some work on Saturday were Capt. Mark Townsend and his wife, Etti. He is the commander of the company to which the three soldiers who would be staying overnight belong.

The special house “is good for the soldiers and good for the community,” Townsend said. “It’s a home away from home.”

But not all the military people who use the hospitality house are young.

Helping out Saturday was Staff Sgt. Clint Hardwick of the Intelligence Center’s headquarters company.

He knew about the house from when he was a student at the center a few years ago, and when he was assigned to the post he and his wife and their five children were crammed into a one-bedroom hotel suite, where they lived for about a week.

Approaching Cordero, Hardwick asked if he and his family could stay at the hospitality house, and of course the answer was yes.

So, the Hardwicks, with children ranging in age from 18 months to 16 years, lived at the facility for a week until they moved into their family quarters on the post.

But they still show up at the hospitality house to help, and Saturday, Zach the eldest, Sam the next oldest and Rebecca the middle child were pitching in to do whatever was needed.

While the two boys and their father worked outside, Rebecca was in the kitchen, learning how to dip fresh strawberries in chocolate.

Whoever shows up at the house, either as a guest or a volunteer worker, is guaranteed payment — a meal.

Cordero said the object of the facility “is to have a safe haven to which everyone can come.”

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