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Sports Editor

The City College baseball team is volunteering its time for five Saturdays from Sept. 25-Oct. 23 with Habitat for Humanity on various homes around the Sacramento area so it can, according to baseball player Chris Raulinaitis give back to the community and help families in need.

According to Chris Cerlenko, director of volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, the company “provides quality homes to low income families, and [they] use volunteers to build the homes.”

Since 1976, according to their Web site, Habitat for Humanity has built more than 175,000 houses and provided shelter for nearly 900,000 people worldwide. An international company with affiliates in 100 countries, Habitat for Humanity builds a home every 26 minutes.

City College baseball coach Andy McKay decided to get involved with the Sacramento affiliate because of the team comradeship involved in the project as well as the ability to educate the team about volunteer organizations.

“There’s a team building aspect to it of just getting your guys together to do something that is fundamentally good and away from baseball,” McKay said. “Just the idea of trying to educate our

players that there is a lot of people that need help, and that there are avenues to help them. That you don’t have to have money to do it, [and] that there are a lot of volunteer organizations that will help. It’s a hope that they understand that one, there are a lot of quality avenues for public service and that it’s desperately needed.”

Many of the players on the baseball team understand the importance of volunteering their time to a worthy organization. Sophomore pitcher Chris Raulinaitis said that donating time and giving back to the community is a way to make the team, as well as other individuals, feel better about themselves.

“It’s just a joy on [the families] faces when we go out and do this for them,” said Raulinaitis, who also volunteers his time helping to teach kids the fundamentals of baseball at Land Park on Mondays and Fridays. “It just kind of helps us out, you know. It makes us feel good about ourselves. It feels good to do that for a person.”

“Basically the purpose of [volunteering] is to show our players how good they actually have it,” said sophomore Matt Edgecombe. “Get a little reality check in giving back to the community. It’s a pretty good deal.”

A Saturday is set up, according to Cerlenko, by McKay splitting the baseball team up into four groups of 10, for safety sake, and rotating these groups between four separate construction sites at well as Habitat’s retail store.

At the house sites the teams rotate between trenching, to put gas lines in for the stove and the dryer work, painting the inside and outside of homes, and putting up fences by digging holes and filling them with cement for posts.

According to McKay it takes a lot of organization and careful planning to get the job done. Each week the teams regroup and see where they are at.

“Everything is donated, so there is a person that works [at the site] that is in charge of making sure that this is what we’re ready to do on this house, can we get the actual product, and [do] we have a licensed contractor who can be there who is capable of doing

this actual piece of the house? And then do we have enough volunteers to actually get the job done? They make a game plan each week and then try to put the pieces of the puzzle together,” McKay said.

Even with all of the work, the team knows that working hard will pay off for them and families in the end.

Pitcher Daniel Esters plans on getting more involved in volunteer work after this project is over.

“It was hard but you look at in the long run as going to help someone else,” said Esters.

“It makes you feel good. It helps you get through the hard labor.”

According to Gary Torgeson, dean of Physical Education, Health and Athletics, the volunteering by athletes at City College is not a new concept.

“It just shows a willingness to get up and go over and above what you are asked to do,” said Torgeson about athletes that volunteer.

“I think it’s typical that a lot of athletes are type A people that they do things over and above what they are just asked to do,” Torgeson said. “Especially when it’s a coach believes in it, Andy believes in it. He believes in getting out and helping people, setting the stage for his baseball team and having that type of image that they are willing to help others is a good message.”

McKay said getting out and helping others is good, and with that teaching his team a little more about the benefits of volunteering.

“The goal would be to have our baseball players understanding that there are a lot of people that need your help, and that if its not Habitat for Humanity there’s hundreds of groups that are out there on the front lines in the trenches doing the hard work that need help,” McKay said.

“And that maybe a couple of these guys will figure out and decided they are going to do something each year or work for a project or dedicate X amount of time,” McKay said.

“That would be the hope.”