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## Habitat for Humanity Blog

Hawaii 2007

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### The first day of work

Last night, the ride from the airport to the cabins was a little scary. We turned off the main road onto a little dirt road that led back to our cabins. The rough road was several miles long, and all we could see in the light from the headlights were tall reeds and jungle looming up on either side of the road. We finally arrived at the cabins, unloaded the van, and moved in. The area around the cabins was pitch black and the only light came from a tiny light on the bathroom building, a tiny light on the shower building, and the moon. Naturally, Dale was the only one who brought a flashlight, so we all stumbled around getting ready for bed.

This morning when we woke and walked outside, we were greeted by a beautiful sight. There was a field in front of us with other cabins around the perimeter. Surrounding us were steep mountains jutting up from the land. Everything was green and lush. We continued to take in the sights on the drive to the Habitat warehouse, noticing how much the landscape changed as we moved across the island.

At the warehouse, we were first greeted by Bob, a jolly guy who was the project manager of Kauai Habitat. We then met Bob and Jay, two guys from New Jersey who came for a month to work for Habitat. Bob got us outfitted with name tags and took us on a tour of the warehouse, pointing out the place where the last Habitat group from Bucknell left their mark on a work table. We loaded materials into a flatbed truck and into a tool van that was at least as old as me, and headed to the work site.

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The site itself was beautiful. In one direction, we could see the mountains. In the other direction, we could see the ocean. We found that the exteriors of the homes were basically completed, and only work on the inside remained. I didn't want to spend my time in Hawaii indoors, so I volunteered to help dig a ditch. The ditch was to house the sewage and water pipes, and was to run from the front of one home to the street, where the pipes would connect to larger pipes. Easy enough, right? Wrong.

Dale, a local volunteer, and I began work on the ditch. We had shovels and a device that Bob called a mud gun. The mud gun was basically a jackhammer that would loosen the dirt so it could be shoveled out. The ditch was supposed to initially be 14 inches deep, slope down one inch every four feet and be 12 inches wide. Unfortunately, the land sloped uphill, and we estimated that by the time we reached the end of the ditch, it would be about four-feet deep. Lauren soon joined us, and we labored away all morning, getting our first introduction to Kauai's red dirt.

Kauai is famous for its red dirt which stains EVERYTHING! The island is dotted with tourist shops selling "Red Dirt Shirts" that are dyed with the island's red dirt. By lunch time, our sneakers were caked in red dirt and our arms and legs were streaked with it. After a quick lunch break, I worked on the ditch for a while longer, and then spent the last part of the day power washing red dirt off one of the houses in preparation for painting. Although the temperature was supposedly a constant 80 degrees throughout the day, the afternoon sun made it seem much warmer. After cleaning up, we piled into the van and were on our way to the beach!

We were so excited about getting to the cool ocean water that we changed into our bathing suits in the van ride to the beach. Dale had done weeks of research with his Ultimate Guide to Kauai guidebook, and was leading us to what was apparently one of the best beaches on the island. Unfortunately, we were driving by miles of other perfectly acceptable beaches. The decision to go on was overruled and Brad pulled off at the next beach. We all sprinted across the sand and straight into the water.

We spent the next few hours playing in the water, washing off the red dirt the best we could, and laying in warm sun. We then piled back into the van and went back to the cabins. We showered and got ready for dinner. We went to a complex with several restaurants and were surprised how eerily quiet everything was. Everything seemed to be closed. We ate at a Japanese restaurant and headed home.

Posted by Sarah Bunk on March 11, 2007 10:04 PM | [Permalink](#)

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