



DAY OF CARING

OUTREACH CENTER GETS SPIFFED UP

100 power station workers give two days of elbow grease to renovation effort.

By James Thomas Jr.
Correspondent

SMITHFIELD

Surry Nuclear Power Station workers were given a choice: either come to work or go volunteer.

About 100 of them spent a recent Thursday and Friday volunteering to upgrade the new home for the Isle of Wight Christian Outreach Program.

"We encouraged them to go out and give back to the community," said Lois Little, a spokeswoman for the Surry power station.

"They work from 7:30 to 4:30 each day.

"It benefits Christian Outreach and gives us an opportunity to know our co-workers better because it creates a team-building atmosphere."

The effort was part of United Way's annual Day of Caring, when businesses are encouraged to give workers time off to volunteer at local charities and nonprofits. United Way designated Sept. 13 as Day of Caring this year, but the power station chose to observe it just before Labor Day to better fit its schedule.

After more than 20 years in temporary quarters, the outreach program found a permanent home at the vacant county health department building in Smithfield. The health department moved across town to the Smithfield Medical Center after Sentara St. Luke's Healthcare center opened in 2010 and primary care physicians relocated there.

Vacant for two years, the health department building had fallen



JAMES THOMAS JR. PHOTOS



▲ About 100 Surry Nuclear Power Plant workers repaired walls, mounted studs and Sheetrock, painted rooms and retiled floors at the Christian Outreach Program building in Smithfield. The effort was part of United Way's annual Day of Caring.

◀ Lahoma Williams, a nuclear construction support supervisor, spent time stripping and buffing floors at the new COP building in Smithfield.

into disrepair and suffered storm damage. Extensive renovations and remodeling were necessary to accommodate the program's storage needs.

Power station workers spent two days performing the needed cosmetics.

They power-washed the building exterior, sealed inside areas where walls were torn down, mounted studs and Sheetrock, painted rooms and hallways and even retiled floors.

Most of the volunteers were highly skilled and professional power plant workers, including electricians, plumbers, carpenters and engineers. Still they seemed unfazed at performing menial tasks.

"I'm cleaning toilets now," said Penny Owney, a mechanical engineer.

Fellow systems and design engineers David Tucker and John Lansing mopped and stripped floors. Nuclear construction supervi-

sor Lahoma Williams buffed and scraped, too.

"These people all know what they're doing; they're not asking questions, they're doing it," Dave Stafford said.

Dominion Virginia Power assumed "a lot of the material costs for the work," Little said. "Many suppliers give a reduced rate or even donate," she said.

"So not only are they getting

See CARING, Page 3

CARING

Continued from Page 1

our sweat but they're getting our dollars, too."

In past years, Surry power station has worked with the outreach program on individual home repairs for Isle of Wight County residents and performed work on several Surry nonprofits.

Power station fundraisers last year provided \$52,000 for IOW and Surry volunteer fire and rescue units and the Western Tidewater Free Clinic, Little said.

The outreach program landed a 25-year lease option from the county for its building in January with an obligation to only pay yearly real estate taxes,

COP president Charlie Seitz said. The lease includes a renewal option for another 25 years on expiration.

The group has launched a \$600,000 capital campaign to pay for major improvements on the building, including replacing the flat roof, installing an HVAC system, resurfacing the parking lot and buying a new walk-in freezer and refrigerator.

The program has provided food supplements, home repairs, furnishings and heating-bill assistant for indigent residents of Isle of Wight since 1990. More than 1,000 families get monthly food supplements at a value of more than \$500,000 a year.

COP organizers hope to move into the new building this winter.

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