

The Extreme Makeover – Home Edition (EMHE) for the Beach Family, Larry, Melissa and children (13), has been one of the most rewarding community service projects that I have been involved with. When President McKinnie told the club members of this great opportunity, I had no idea of the tremendous impact that one could have on the lives of others. However, I knew that I wanted to be personally and financially involved. In the early planning stages of the project, the EMHE called as they wanted a jeweler to do a few things for the Beach family. The TV Producer and Crew came to our jewelry store Saturday morning to look at various designs for gifts for the children and Melissa. During the conversation I found out that no one was trying to help them with their old mortgage. Typical the constructor would take the lead, but not this time. I called President McKinnie Saturday afternoon and told him of the situation. President McKinnie wanted to get involved and made some phone calls to other Rotarians in District 5890. President McKinnie and I talked to the Extreme Makeover team on Sunday to ask if they would consider a VIP tour for potential donors and they agreed. President McKinnie announced the fund raising effort and the opportunity to visit the site and meet the Extreme Makeover team at the Club meeting on Monday. Scott Rainey became involved at that time. About 35 people showed up at the site. Scott emailed the Club members and President McKinnie emailed all the Rotary clubs in District 5890.

Merideth Ilier from the Houston Club came Tuesday to assist in the fundraising. The procedure called for money, not pledges and a “not for profit” organization to be the recipient of the funds for tax purposes. The pay off of the mortgage was about \$140,000. The Space Center Rotary Club Endowment Foundation was approached to be the recipient of the funds, but declined to participate because of legal requirements. The District 5890 Charities was willing to be the recipient and the process was set up. Information as to whom to make the checks out to was established. People could also donate on line as well. Money began coming in Wednesday before the completion due date of Thursday. Lewis Jewelers made an initial donation of \$12,000 to get the fund going, “How could I ask others to donate when I had not?” The Houston Housing authority donated \$25,000. The producers of Extreme Makeover had received \$15,000 from donors which they gave to the mortgage fund. By Thursday about \$100,000 had been raised and in the Beach’s banking account. Marilyn Musial, Vice President of Bank of America, handled the transfer of the money from the District 5890 Charities to the Beach’s bank account in Galveston, Texas.

The shooting for the TV show was on Thursday and I was invited to stay and watch. There were only four camera setups so it took several hours Thursday evening and night to complete, from 2 pm to 1 am Friday morning. I was asked who raised the money for the mortgage? I related all the people involved and that Merideth Ilier was a key player. However the TV Producer decided to name only Space Center Rotary Club in the two hour special on ABC which aired Easter night. Thursday was a long day, cold and wet day, but a most rewarding one. Merrith went to Sagemount Church and received another \$30,000 for the mortgage fund. As of this writing about \$3000 remain to be paid on the mortgage.

This was an experience of a life time. I saw firsthand how generous people are both with their time and money. I got to know the Beach family and saw their love and care for nine adopted and four biological children. (Writer note: Not only did Lewis Jewelers donate \$12,000 in cash, the gifts for the family amounted to an additional \$20,000).