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Making 'Katrina cottages' permanent

By Meaghan Chapman
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A temporary housing fix for Katrina victims has been spruced up, laid on foundation and given a modular addition to become the new Coastal Cottage — a possible solution for the 3,000 Mississippi Cottages still occupied by Gulf Coast residents.

Two newly constructed cottages — which combine the Mississippi Cottage provided by MEMA with a 14' by 14' modular addition — were unveiled Thursday in Diamondhead. The cottages serve as a model of one way to solve this housing issue.

Habitat for Humanity Director of Communications Dave Walker said the goal of the open-house cottage was to show the possibilities of transforming a Mississippi Cottage.

"I think a lot of people will take this model and adapt it to their own purposes," said Walker.

Built to withstand winds up to 150 mph, the 1,000 sq. ft. homes include two bedrooms, a kitchen, dining room, bathroom and living room. Most significantly, the cottage and modular tags are eliminated, removed from their metal frames and secured on a permanent foundation.

A potential plan for these cottages couldn't come sooner for some residents as the third anniversary of Katrina passes and the deadline for removal of Mississippi Cottages looms in March.

Walker admits the feasibility of transforming all the Mississippi Cottages before the deadline is beyond the means of any one agency. "We're ready to do our part to be a key player, without committing to any numbers," he said.

A byproduct of partnership among several recovery vested agencies, the new Coastal Cottages were designed by FEMA Long Term Recovery and finished under the supervision of Bay-Waveland Area Habitat for Humanity.

Funding was provided by United Way of South MS, Gulf Coast Community Foundation and Gulf Coast Renaissance Corp.,

However, Mississippi Cottage dwellers who become part of the program will have a hand in the cost.

No ratio of cost distribution between the potential homeowner and other entities involved are currently set.

"We just want to show it can be done and the result is beautiful, practical and affordable," he said.



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