

# Small law firm sets big example

When Dady & Garner approached their ten-year anniversary, the small law firm decided to do something large to mark the occasion.

"We wanted to do a community service project where we not only contributed money to a special cause, but also created something tangible that made a significant difference in the community," said founding partner J. Michael Dady.

Someone suggested Habitat for Humanity to the firm. That resonated with Dady, who was heavily involved with Catholic Charities.

"Through my other community work, I learned early on that if you want to give people an opportunity to improve their lives, you have to start with good housing," he said. The partners also liked the Habitat for Humanity model, which provides the opportunity to work

alongside family members as they put in their sweat equity hours.

The firm committed to a house sponsorship, but were faced with the challenge of producing a large enough volunteer force. While all ten lawyers and ten support staff worked on the home weekly throughout the build, that still didn't produce the labor force needed to complete construction.

In order to meet the volunteer needs of the build, Dady & Garner was paired with the Twin Cities Campus Chapters – a group of volunteers from area schools. It was a match that pleased Dady and his partners. "The students were eager and anxious to work on the project, it kind of felt like a mentorship of sorts. We were asked a lot of questions about what it was like in the working world."

The project was also a humbling experience for Dady. "I have a much deeper appreciation for my secretary's

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—J. Michael Dady

Founding Partner, Dady & Garner

(construction knowledge) after working alongside her on the construction site. She really knows her stuff, and spent a great deal of her time fixing our mistakes. I may be her boss in the office, but she was my boss on the site," he said.

House construction was started in October 2005 and completed in April 2006. "It got awfully cold up on the roof over the winter, but the view of downtown was amazing," said Dady. The home was part of 11 TCHPH homes recently completed in Heritage Park, a near-north Minneapolis neighborhood.

The entire law firm showed up for the home dedication on June 17, where they had a chance to visit once more with the Habitat family and the students from the Twin Cities Campus Chapter. For Dady and his partners, it was a moving end to a fantastic service project.

While the project proved to be the perfect way to celebrate ten years of business for his law firm, Dady also sees his firm's sponsorship as a call to action.

"A house sponsorship like this is not an opportunity reserved for Fortune 500 companies, or in our line of business, for large law firms. We're a ten lawyer law firm. If we can do this, anyone can do this. If you are committed to making a difference, anything is possible," he said. •

Contributed by Sharon Rolenc



J. Michael Dady speaks to a crew of volunteers one brisk morning during the build.

Photo courtesy of Dady & Garner