

The Marching Virginians make more than music



Photo by Lauren Page

While many Virginia Tech students have left for the summer, members of the Marching Virginians marching band will still be in Blacksburg, working to construct a house in memory of fallen band member Ryan "Stack" Clark, who was killed in the April 16 shootings. The house will be complete May 24, and it will officially open in a ceremony on June 20.

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BLACKSBURG - Virginia Tech's spring semester is over, but members of the Marching Virginians are still working hard.

The marching band members are building a house in memory of former band member Ryan "Stack" Clark, who was killed in the April 16, 2007 tragedy at Virginia Tech. Construction began May 11, and will continue every day until May 24, when the house is complete, according to a news release from the Town of Blacksburg.

The Town and band will hold a dedication ceremony for the new house on Cedar Hill Drive with Clark's family in attendance on June 20. The house will be named "Structurally Sound."

"It is with incredible enthusiasm that the Marching Virginians will tackle this challenge in the next two months," said a statement from Band Director David McKee. "The partnership between the Marching Virginians, Town of Blacksburg, and Community Housing Partners, a regional

non-profit housing and community development corporation, will provide the funds, supplies, labor and technical expertise needed to construct the house."

The house was formerly sponsored by Habitat for Humanity, but "due to unforeseen circumstances" (according to the band's Web site), the band switched its partnership on the project from Habitat for Humanity to CHP.

About 350 people will work on the house through the end of the month, according to a news release from the Town. CHP donated the land, designed the home, coordinated the construction, and arranged financing for the new home, which was also designed to be eco-friendly, according to the Town. The Town and the New River Valley HOME Consortium also provided funding, logistical, support, and construction inspections.

"CHP is happy to help the Marching Virginians create a lasting tribute to Ryan with a home that

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reflects the spirit of community partnership and environmental stewardship," said CHP President and CEO Janaka Casper.

Clark entered Tech in fall 2002. He maintained a 4.0 GPA in his triple major of psychology, biology, and English, while playing baritone in the band, acting as a resident advisor in West Ambler Johnston Hall, advising in the Imaginarium

programming resource center, and working at West End Market.

"The House has a very special meaning to the Marching Virginians," said a statement from the Town of Blacksburg. "While it has a meaning that fills their hearts with sadness, it's also one of joy, inspiration, and hope."

The band came up with the idea for "Structurally Sound"

last fall, according to the Town. During the 2008-2009 school year, the band raised more than \$41,000 for the project through donations from individuals, organizations, and businesses.

Over the years, the Marching Virginians have participated in other service projects too, including canned food drives, playing for fallen Hokies and their families, and Hurricane

Katrina relief.

"While many seniors will be preparing for graduation and anxiously awaiting their move to the 'real world', the seniors of the Marching Virginians, as well as the rest of the band, will be spending those last few weeks putting their hearts and souls into the building of the house," said a Town news release.