

The House the Media Built

We join Nissan in Nashville and pound some nails with purpose by Joe Sage

Nissan recently invited dozens of automotive media to their hometown of Nashville, Tennessee to build a house with Habitat for Humanity. Four waves of participants—three of media and one from fleet and event operator Prestige Auto—spent one day each, transforming a concrete slab into fully framed and plated walls and the first roof truss on day one, our day, and by the end of the week into a fully enclosed new home, ready for final finish work.

Habitat for Humanity began as a grass-roots effort in Georgia in 1976 and has grown to a global nonprofit organization in 1,400 US communities and in over 70 countries. Habitat homes are not giveaways. Driven by the vision that everyone needs a decent place to live, Habitat partners with people to build or improve a place they can call home, and they help arrange affordable mortgages. Selected

future Habitat homeowners learn building skills and work on other homes, then build their own homes alongside volunteers.

Nissan's partnership with Habitat began in 2005, when it donated 50 trucks and mobilized employees to assist in homebuilding following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the Gulf Coast region. In the last decade, Nissan has donated an additional 88 vehicles. Since 2006, Nissan employees have logged over 80,000 volunteer hours with Habitat for Humanity, building 71 homes across the US.

Nissan recently kicked off its second decade with Habitat with a new \$1 million grant. Portions will be used to expand Habitat's vehicle fleet, which supports disaster recovery efforts. The largest portion will go toward the cost of building homes in areas of the country where Nissan has an operational presence. Nissan's cash contributions to

Habitat for Humanity in North America total over \$14 million over the past 11 years.

The new owners of the home we built, Rahmi and Awadia, are from war-torn Sudan. They escaped to Egypt separately, met and married in 2000 and applied for refugee status in the US, soon settling in Pennsylvania. In 2014, they moved to Nashville to be closer to other family. Now a family of five, they live in a two-bedroom apartment on a limited budget. Rahmi has suffered failing vision, but that didn't keep them both from being hardworking members of our construction team, as they will be throughout the final build. "Words can't describe how I feel in my heart towards everyone who has helped," says Rahmi. They look forward to raising their three children in a home with a living room and back yard, and to building the kids a better future.

Nissan employees are volunteering on projects in 12 Habitat communities this year, including Phoenix. ■



Bold and aggressive

It's unusual to have a drive event at night, but we headed to Rawhide at Wild Horse Pass on a recent evening, the night before a consumer event, to learn the latest developments in Nissan's continuing rollout of a complete Titan full-size pickup lineup. Turns out nighttime was not a bad time for this.

"Bold and aggressive" was a theme in their presentation (along with their "Nissan: Year of the Truck" tagline). No question they have been bold to tackle the US-dominated big pickup market. And no question they're doing it aggressively. It was also a chance to show off the truck's bold lighting—LED headlights, signature DRLs and branded courtesy lighting when you open the door.

And it was a chance to try out their rear camera trailer alignment technology under challenging conditions. Nissan's cameras are top-notch already, notably with their pioneering 360-degree top view. Add centerline guides to bring you within inches of your trailer hitch, and any good cowboy is going to have to think of another reason to insist his cowgirl come along for a midnight horse ride.

Big announcements included a gasoline V8 to join the Cummins V8 diesel from the first round of Titan XD pickups—and yes, they pointed out that both engines are bold and aggressive—as well as Titan models to join the Titan XD models. Next was the announcement of a single cab Titan with 8-foot bed, perfect for contractors with 4x8 materials (and a segment winner at the Texas Truck Rodeo a few weeks later). Coming soon will be a cab-and-a-half King Cab—the return of a name and concept from Datsun and Nissan pickups of the '70s and '80s. And finally, they announced "America's Best Truck Warranty"—5 years / 100,000 miles bumper-to-bumper.

Our drive was brief that night, though it included dirt climbs and rough-road obstacles set up on site. But we had driven the Titan XD diesel at last year's Texas Truck Rodeo (where it won the title prize), then both engines and all models this fall at the Texas Truck Rodeo, then to and from our Habitat for Humanity build site in Tennessee, then on our longest leg of the Active Lifestyle Vehicle of the Year event, from Saguro Lake back to Chandler.

Full-size pickups are the most loyal, most competitive and biggest segment in the industry, and among the most profitable. Nissan is making their move, boldly and aggressively. ■

