

# GET THE SCOOP ON SWOOP!

*By Risa Foste*

They are called SWOOP! Many of them live right here in Durham. They SWOOPED the weekend of November 6, 2004, to help an elderly, disabled couple that lives in Old West Durham. And they have SWOOPED in Durham several other times.



*Strong Women Organizing Outrageous Projects*

SWOOP (Strong Women Organizing Outrageous Projects) unofficially began in September 1996 in Raleigh, North Carolina. SWOOP officially became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization on October 1, 2001. In the aftermath of Hurricane Fran, several strong women emerged from their debris-strewn houses and yards and banded together to help each other clean up the mess. They quickly discovered that, though the work was tough, they were totally invigorated by the power that they all felt from cleaning up a devastated place. They were, indeed, strong women! They quickly became specialists in awesome hurricane clean-ups. And the numbers grew as friends told friends who told their friends. From the original, they now have over 500 women from the Greater Triangle area and beyond on their mailing list.

The SWOOP mission is to provide short-term labor and support to meet otherwise insurmountable community needs in a spirit of cooperative sisterhood. SWOOP has done work for Triangle AIDS Interfaith Network, Wake Interfaith Hospitality Network, Durham Interfaith Hospitality Network, SEEDS in Durham, Raleigh's Men and Women Shelters, and the YWCA. They have also worked on several battered women's shelters in Raleigh, Durham, Oxford, and Pittsboro. They have completed dozens of projects for single families, the elderly, those with low income, and the simply overwhelmed. These unique and inspiring women do this the first Saturday of each month for 9-10 months of the year. June has been reserved for the Race for the Cure at Meredith College in Raleigh. July is too hot to work, and August is the annual Pool Party! If you are interested in becoming a SWOOPER, or want to find out more about SWOOP, please go online and check them out: [www.swoop4u.org](http://www.swoop4u.org)

Since 1996, SWOOP has branched out from hurricane work to construction/renovation, landscaping/yard renovation, fence-building, painting, and refurbishing projects for the elderly, disabled, or individuals simply overwhelmed. If there is a project to do, they usually can find one expert among them who can guide the rest of them – and BAM! – it's another SWOOP miracle!



Last September 11, 2004, SWOOP had its first Strong Women and Heroes Benefit. Over 300 attended. The benefit honored women working in public safety with the "Sisters of Strength Award." Nominations were made from the Carrboro Police Department, the Durham Police Department, the Durham Fire Department, the Raleigh Fire Department, and the Four Oaks EMS. Governor Easley declared that week "WOMEN IN PUBLIC SAFETY WEEK." [\[View Full Story\]](#) The next benefit dinner is September 24, 2005. The dinners help increase awareness of the organization and raise money.

In 2001, SWOOP was honored with the NC Interagency Council for Coordinating Homeless Program's Award for Outstanding Community Impact. This year, they are honored to announce that the Human Rights Campaign's (HRC) Carolinas Dinner Committee has awarded SWOOP the 2005 Community Service Award.

SWOOP is open to all women. Men with specialized skills occasionally assist with more advanced projects. You can learn more at [www.swoop4u.org](http://www.swoop4u.org) or call ~~919-233-7374~~  
919-623-2536

~~SWOOP workdays for the remainders of the season are February 5, March 5, April 2, May 7, and June 10-11. Come and enjoy the empowering camaraderie of SWOOP!~~