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To set the record, the Chain Gang, with no more than 60 workers, must produce a chain at least 56 miles long within one 24-hour work session June 4 and 5 at Paul D. Camp Community College.

Wearing limited edition green T-shirts and fueled by pizza and Pepsi, they were ready to beat the standing record a 51.8-mile chain made at Alvin Community College in Alvin, Texas, in 1998.

Four Franklin Chain Gang volunteers are utility players: They refill staplers, gather and measure lengths of chain and connect them to the main, record-seeking chain. The other 56 Chain Gang workers must manufacture a mile of chain each to claim the Guinness Record.

One mile measures 10,560 links, each 6 inches long. That breaks down to 440 links each hour, or about eight links a minute. Teams of two must double that effort.

Last Sunday, the Chain Gang practiced at the PDCCC campus.

We did trial runs individually and in teams to let people see how they could work best, said Betty Thomas, marketing consultant for the project.

Thomas, something of a local Guinness expert, oversaw Smithfield's successful 2002 quest for the World's Largest Ham Biscuit title. That project produced a behemoth biscuit 8 feet wide and weighing 1,000 pounds.

I didn't want Smithfield to get ahead of us, said Diane Tobin, a Chain Gang volunteer.

She and Jerie Lankford, friends from Franklin High School's class of 1956, reminisced as they stapled.

Miss Hunley, our business teacher, taught us to type and take shorthand, Tobin said. I know she must have taught us how to staple, too.

Helped us to develop our speed-stapling techniques, Lankford agreed.

As staplers click, clicked rhythmically the mounds of paper chain grew.

Myrika Faulk and Leslie Courtney, full-time students at PDCCC, worked as a team, using the stapling technique they call the Go Go Method.

Craig Dupuy, assistant Scout executive with the Boy Scouts of America, teamed up with Gracie Foster and used a table-top stapling method easier on the hands and a good change of pace, he said.

Foster is the oldest volunteer. Her 70th birthday falls on June 5, the finale of the paper chain project.

Dupuy signed up for the Chain Gang because it sounded like fun. Foster thought the project was a good thing for Franklin.

This is one of my tickets to heaven, Faulk said with a laugh.

Joann Gatten, an assistant Girl Scout leader, signed up her troop of Cadette Scouts. When she

discovered the girls were too young to participate, she joined the Chain Gang.

The trial runs yielded some surprising results, according to Anne Williams, executive director of the Downtown Franklin Association. The group is sponsoring the Guinness Record quest along with the city, the college and International Paper.

We did better with music and seemed to do better in teams, with a rhythm, she said.

On our best test we were a little above where we need to be.

Franklin Mayor James P. Council III, appreciates that the paper chain project recognizes the contributions the paper industry has made to the city since 1887 and has brought together a team of students, housewives, business people and educators.

Shows Franklin is a special place with special people, he said.

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