

# Catholic extreme makeover

By JIM GAUGER  
SPECIAL TO THE CS&T

GLENSIDE — It's spring. It's Saturday morning. There's a new energy in the air. Play some golf? Wash the car?

Why not use that energy to help others?

That's what Dave Gyza and friends are doing. Gyza is a member of Rebuilding Together Philadelphia, an organization founded more than 20 years ago. RTP's mission is "to prevent homelessness by

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Members of St. Luke Parish, Glenside, rehab a home in Germantown March 21

## St. Luke parishioners helping to rebuild homes

*(REBUILD continued from page 1)* partnering with the community to rehabilitate the homes of elderly, disabled and low-income homeowners so that they may continue to live in warmth, safety and independence."

Early in March at Sunday Masses at St. Luke the Evangelist Church in Glenside, the call went out for volunteers. "Skilled and unskilled labor" was needed to repair a house in Germantown owned by 65-year-old Juanita Wooten, who is wheelchair-bound. The "Saturdays only" project was to begin March 28 and continue through April 25.

"Monsignor (J. Michael) Flood was 100 percent behind us going (to the ambo) and trying to generate more interest," explained Gyza, 52. "We probably have six of us old guys who are the core group. We are getting the sons of participants, who are high school and college age and can do some of the so-to-speak grunt work, such as moving materials. We want to raise the talent bar a little and get people who can do what we can do — and maybe pull back a little on

our physical participation."

The group's main organizers at St. Luke's are Gyza, a planning and scheduling manager for a medical device manufacturing facility in Malvern; Mike Brosman, a salesman; and Terry Hersch, a licensed electrician.

They are following in the huge footsteps of Steve Seweryn, a Glenside resident who founded St. Luke's branch of RTP almost a dozen years ago. Seweryn, who was the executive director of RTP for seven years, died last September at 61 after losing a battle to pulmonary fibrosis. Carrie Rathmann became the new executive director in December.

"About 11 years ago our group at St. Luke's was called Christmas in April," Gyza said. "We would do the same type of work we do now. We would improve the status of homes, whether it was putting in windows or doors or fixing the plumbing, things like that. When Steve got involved with Rebuilding Together Philadelphia, our group was disbanded and we went with the larger program."

It was because of Seweryn that

Gyza first got involved.

"He asked me if I would be willing to help put in some windows in a single mother's house in Glenside," Gyza remembered. "Steve was a contractor who had a business that was successful enough that he was able to bow out of that and give his services more locally."

Seweryn was married to Kathleen May Seweryn, who along with her brother, Harry May, own the William R. May Funeral Home in Glenside. Kathleen is an honorary board member of RTP.

"Monsignor Flood gave Steve a room for his office," Kathleen Seweryn said. "Steve touched a lot of people and left us a lot of work to do."

Along with St. Luke's project, Seweryn is involved with her own group — their children, Steve's siblings, nieces and nephews — who are rehabbing two homes in Germantown this spring. "The family has always worked every spring on some kind of project," Seweryn said. "All volunteer."

RTP will honor Steve Seweryn on April 4 with a special moment

at one of this spring's projects, said board president Jennifer Shropshire. "His great attitude and great heart elevated the quality of our projects."

The RTP house to be helped this time around was visited by Gyza, Brosman and Hersch. "We analyze the project to see if it is within the scope of what we can do in five weeks without leaving too much behind," Gyza said.

The Germantown house qualified.

"There was a major leak in the house that led to the floorboards getting wet, and that led to termites," Gyza said. "There are six or seven joists that are crumbling and the floor dropped into the middle of the living room. We'll take the beams out and put in new flooring. We'll make it safe and livable." There is also drywall and ceiling work on the third floor and a hot water heater that needs to be replaced.

The work is financed by donations, both private and corporate, through RTP.

Male and female, young and old are encouraged to share their

Saturdays in April with Gyza's crew.

"We have between 15 and 20 people who have contacted us," Gyza said. "We don't turn anyone down. We can use everybody we can get, and hopefully they will remain on the list next year."

And the reward?

"Personally," Gyza said, "it is satisfying to be able to feel that you've made a difference in someone's life. Selfishly, there is a camaraderie in the group. We really have a good time."

"When Steve asked me, I thought I would be involved one year," Gyza said. "I guess each year the group grew tighter and we enjoyed seeing what we could do for other people. You can practice your faith outside the church. You can walk the walk."

To volunteer for the Germantown project, call Dave Gyza at 267-253-1708. For more information about applying for RTP help go to [www.cst-phl.com](http://www.cst-phl.com).



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