

Rebuilding Together Philadelphia Announces 2009 Volunteer Awards

Philadelphia, PA, (May 31, 2009)—As Rebuilding Together Philadelphia (RTP) completes essential repair projects for 44 homeowners and 5 community-based agencies in the past twelve months, the Board of Directors awards those who have gone “above and beyond” the call of duty.

Jennifer Shropshire, President of RTP’s Board of Directors, expresses great appreciation saying, “While every one of the 1,500 volunteers who participated in RTP this year is critical to our mission, the engagement of these 18 individuals and groups has been extraordinary. They have demonstrated strong commitment to helping homeowners in need. Each has made a unique contribution to enriching the experience of rebuilding low-income communities, ensuring that RTP continues as a high impact organization.”

INDIVIDUALS

Kevin Blackney, Blackney Hayes Architects: Outstanding Skilled Volunteer

Kevin is a new Rebuilding Together Philadelphia recruit yet got involved with such ease that one could easily have mistakenly him for a seasoned volunteer. He helped with homeowner selection and was a House Captain for the Germantown Block Build. Then he applied his professional expertise to ensure that RTP’s Washeteria project for Face to Face, a community organization in Germantown, could go forward properly and expeditiously.

Jeremy Boardman: Management Excellence – Logistics

Jeremy’s skill at logistics and experience with Rebuilding Together Philadelphia enabled the Wharton/Penn volunteers to focus on the homeowner and his or her family’s needs not whether or not they would have the right materials close at hand. He maintained accountability for all of the supplies. He operated the mobile warehouse – the most critical element of the complex logistics process for the Block Build, which helped 14 homeowners – in an extremely efficient manner.

Mike Brosman: Above and Beyond

Mike said “yes” when asked to step in at the last minute to help an approved homeowner who did not have a house management team assigned to her. A few months later, Mike said “yes” when asked to help another homeowner. The extent of this project was unexpected, but under Mike’s leadership, the St. Luke’s team excelled at the projects that were undertaken. A seasoned Rebuilding Together Philadelphia volunteer, Mike continues to exceed expectations.

James Clearkin: Outstanding Skilled Volunteer

Smart, thoughtful, detailed, and efficient, Jimmy put his trade skills to use throughout the project. He developed an appropriate work scope for the team. He went to the house during the week to work because he wasn't sure that he'd have enough time during the weekend. In the true Rebuilding Together Philadelphia spirit, he built a great relationship with the homeowner and transformed an unsafe kitchen into a clean, bright, and cheery room.

Lisa Coben: Goodwill Ambassador

Introduced to Rebuilding Together Philadelphia via her role as the behind-the-scenes organizer for Mitzvah Mania 2008, the Northeast Block Build project, Lisa has developed an in-depth understanding of RTP's impact on communities and the way it operates. As a result, she has been a strong advocate for RTP's efforts to connect volunteers to homeowners in need. Her calm, professional, and decisive guidance helped RTP build relationships and spread good will throughout the greater Philadelphia region.

Jennifer Crawford: Outstanding House Captain

A relative newcomer to Rebuilding Together Philadelphia, the role of House Captain comes naturally to Jenn. She demonstrated deep caring for the homeowners, ensuring that they have a smooth transition during the repair process, and enhancing their future living environment. She demonstrated unique insight into fostering a supportive experience for the volunteers. She proved herself to be a strong leader, a determined problem solver. Sharing her undaunted energy with her teammates, Jenn does everything with style.

Gwen Gregory: Outstanding Leadership

Gwen has been a House Captain with Rebuilding Together Philadelphia for more than ten years, leading employees from Independence Blue Cross through dozens of projects to help homeowners in need. She has developed solid methodology for interacting with homeowners, volunteers, and contractors; all of which came into excellent use as a team leader in the fall Block Build. She continued to step forward throughout the year, playing various roles, including RTP spokesperson, skilled volunteer recruiter, and connector.

Mike Jurbala: Above and Beyond

Each week Mike stayed after the other volunteers had gone home to be sure the family could have full use of their house. He visited the homeowners on Easter Sunday to do repairs that were beyond the original work scope. He helped the volunteers learn new skills, which they applied immediately to the project. His enthusiasm for Rebuilding Together Philadelphia was infectious and his hard work and tireless energy motivated the entire team.

Matt Parker: Goodwill Ambassador

Matt was the initial force for Rebuilding Together Philadelphia's success in the *HGTV Change the World, Start at Home* on-line voting campaign. Using his connections to the American Legion, he found the house that would become the site of the volunteers' work. This was the catalyst for galvanizing the Philadelphia region in its support to help veterans in transition. The enthusiastic efforts of individual ambassadors, community ambassadors, and bloggers heightened RTP's visibility tremendously.

George Ramsey: Outstanding Skilled Volunteer

George played a multitude of roles to help the Keystone Mercy Health Plan house management team make essential home repairs. These roles included: project manager, inventory manager, architect/planner, carpenter, drywall expert, masonry, floor replacement, and electrician. As a master of all trades, he was an amazing asset to Rebuilding Together Philadelphia, quietly tackling task after task and lending his skills to enable more significant work to be done than otherwise would have been possible.

Eric Redline: Outstanding Service

After two years as a lead volunteer with Rebuilding Together Philadelphia as a Wharton student, Eric joined the Board. He dove into this role, including agreeing to be Chair of the Operations Committee. This was crucial to engaging a team of people to focus on delivery of repair services. He was a constant presence during the West Philadelphia Block Build and enhanced the Board's awareness of critical issues that affect RTP's program and homeowner relations.

Beth Goodell and Janet Scannell: Outstanding Leadership

Beth and Janet have been a steady force for Rebuilding Together Philadelphia for more than a decade, individually and collectively. This year, they took responsibility for organizing and executing homeowner selection for the Germantown Block Build. By ensuring a successful homeowner selection process they cemented the success of the entire Block Build. Due to intense weekends of planning, the projects were rich with meaningful experiences, the involvement of diehard and newbie volunteers, and sophisticated repairs.

Debby Schultz: Outstanding Service

Debby is a 10-year volunteer with Rebuilding Together Philadelphia and has always brought lunch for her team as well as taken on the important job of watching the clock and announcing clean up time. This year, she became a House Captain without much advance notice, leading the First Unitarian Church house management team's second house. She was proactive and an excellent planner. Debby's commitment over the years is undeniable, and her value this year has been tremendous.

Kathleen May Seweryn: Lifetime Contribution

Kathy has shown her true colors since her husband Steve's death in September, living her life with strength, grace, and compassion. Her leadership attracted enough volunteers to help several homeowners in Steve's name. She organized lunches for all of these houses and visited St. Vincent de Paul's warehouse for home goods. She advocated for Rebuilding Together Philadelphia during the HGTV on-line campaign to the extent that her children found themselves repeatedly saying, "Yes, Mom, I voted today."

Heather Van Heusen: Rookie of the Year

New to Rebuilding Together Philadelphia, Heather joined a long-time house management team in response to their outreach to other congregations. She brought experience gained working to restore New Orleans as well as a take-charge attitude and sunny disposition. She not only assisted her fellow volunteers, but also mentored the homeowner's son, teaching him how to put up cabinets and do a variety of other projects with her amazing collection of power tools.

Special Recognition to **Ed Vasoli**

Ed already has received several awards, which is a testament to his 20-year commitment to Rebuilding Together Philadelphia. He was called into action once again as everyone relied on him to keep operations running throughout the fall. Ed willingly gave many hours of his time. He was superb at navigating relationships, negotiating prices, and using his networks for RTP's benefit. As always, his character engendered confidence that RTP would stay on course and true to its mission.

GROUPS

Face to Face: Outstanding Community-based Partner

Eileen Smith, Executive Director of Face to Face, and Steve Seweryn, then Executive Director of Rebuilding Together Philadelphia, joined forces on an initiative that took advantage of the unique strengths of both organizations. The result – the Washeteria – is illustrative of how collaboration makes a significant impact on a community. Face to Face also used its neighborhood relationships to refer homeowners to RTP and to spread the word about RTP to the congregation of St. Vincent's.

Wayne Presbyterian Church: Outstanding House Management Team

Led by Jim Rush, the congregants of Wayne Presbyterian Church adopted Rebuilding Together Philadelphia as a recipient of its time, talent, and financial gifts. This first-year experience with Wayne Pres has been tremendous as RTP has benefited from the Church's "construction ministry." A corps of congregants lent its skills to help a homeowner in Germantown and also volunteered to install the kitchen cabinets for the house for the veterans in transition.

About Rebuilding Together Philadelphia

Rebuilding Together Philadelphia is a local, independent affiliate of a national network focused on preserving affordable homeownership using volunteer resources. RTP concentrates its work in North and West Philadelphia as well as Montgomery County. Through its warm-safe-dry essential home repair, energy efficiency, and home modification projects, RTP has helped nearly 875 low-income homeowners and 35 community agencies since its founding in 1988.

For details, visit www.rebuildingphilly.org.

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