

Rebuilding Together Philadelphia

Winter 2010-2011

Carrie Rathmann, Executive Director

WARM, SAFE, DRY AND BEYOND



Volunteers in Walnut Hill. Photo credit: T. Vachon © 2010.

RTP's mantra for years has been "warm-safe-dry." These words reflect focused work within critical repairs. Nevertheless, as we gear up to serve our 1000th homeowner this spring, we anticipate having an even deeper impact on the health and safety of homeowners; the wellbeing of communities; and the life-altering experiences of volunteers. Long after the truck is packed, and volunteers have left, the spirit

of rebuilding lives on in the communities in which we work. Throughout this newsletter you will read examples of the varied and lasting effects the projects have had on all involved.

This includes RTP playing a strong role in the revitalization of a neighborhood by complementing others' efforts. This includes partnerships that add new dimensions to our approach. For

example, we are embracing storm-water management and other environmentally sustainable projects that improve our quality of life. And, the success of fall fund-raising events illustrates how many people (some of whom haven't volunteered on a Rebuilding Day yet) are building solid support for RTP.

RTP sticks with you. You'll read about two families: one who has benefited from RTP's services; the other who has benefited from the RTP experience in a different way.

I hope you will join us this spring and become involved in one of our initiatives, projects or events. It's an exciting time to get involved or to reengage. Thank you for your past support, and know that I am energized by what we can accomplish together in the future.

Carrie Rathmann, Executive Director

IN MEMORY OF MARY

This newsletter is dedicated to Mary Boston. Led by Lara Jakubowski, a team of Wharton students helped Mary rehab her home in 1994-1995. Mary's daughter called RTP recently to let Lara know that Mary had died.

Lara's response was, "Mary was a very special person and I'm so sorry to hear of her passing. I think it's a testament to the work of RTP that her daughter would contact Jen after all these years. I hope we were able to help her live out her final years in more comfort than she would have had otherwise."

OUR MISSION:

To prevent homelessness by 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.



RTP is an independent, local affiliate of Rebuilding Together, Inc., a national network of 206 affiliates serving 2,000 communities focused on preserving affordable homeownership.

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ST. HUGH: A STRONGER COMMUNITY

When Cricket Communications asked to sponsor a second Block Build with RTP, we jumped at the opportunity. Knowing Cricket's commitment to the communities in which it operates and the employees' high energy, RTP was eager to embark upon another remarkable neighborhood transformation.

More than 90 volunteers helped ten homeowners on the 3300 block of N. Lawrence Street in the St. Hugh section of North Philadelphia with critical home repairs, including energy efficient upgrades. Cricket employees were joined by skilled tradespeople, community residents, employees of local construction companies and seasoned RTP volunteers.

In HACE (Hispanic Association of Contractors and Enterprises), RTP found the perfect community anchor with which to partner. HACE was building Lawrence Court—a new affordable housing development—on the east side of Lawrence Street. In stark contrast to the new development, most of the

homes facing Lawrence Court needed critical repairs. Due to funding restrictions, HACE was unable to provide upgrades for the west side of the street.

RTP's repairs not only supported these homeowners, but also will help underpin the sustainability of St. Hugh. "Usually very little attention is given to surrounding communities where there is large scale development," says Maria Gonzalez, Vice President of HACE. "Having RTP help the homeowners there helps protect the large scale development and the investment made in the community."

The exterior of several of the homes were painted to match the new units across the street so the volunteers left behind a visually cohesive block, reflecting a stronger community. Rosa Vega, a homeowner who has lived on the block for ten years said, "What you did for me and this block—it has no price. The street looks gorgeous."

SCOPE OF WORK PERFORMED

- ◀ 7 Roofs repaired
- ◀ 2 Cool roofs installed
- ◀ 7 Windows repaired or replaced
- ◀ Electrical work (2 homes)
- ◀ 4 Entryways and railings secured
- ◀ Exterior painting (4 homes)
- ◀ 2 vacant lots = community gardens
- ◀ New sidewalks poured
- ◀ 5 New trees planted



Revitalizing St. Hugh. Photo credit: J. Roesse © 2010.

"REBUILD" LIVES ON WITHIN THE ROGERS FAMILY

Last winter, one of Terra Rogers' sons was handed a RTP application as he was sitting on their porch in Germantown. Their house had deteriorated to such an extent that the family couldn't live in many of the rooms, and it was beginning to affect their safety. "We were living in hibernation at certain times of the year," says Terra. She looked RTP up on the Internet thinking, "What have I got to lose?" Even so, entering into un-known territory Terra and eight of her children welcomed RTP volunteers this past spring, frankly, with trepidation. "I was caught off guard the first day. I didn't know what to expect, and it seemed like all of these people suddenly showed up." For months, RTP volunteers were a fixture at the house (see "The Work Scope of the Rogers' Family Project").

Terra's children also were significant to the work force. They were part of the demolition crew. They fetched and carried. They learned some construction techniques, but more

important perhaps, according to Terra, they gained a sense of work ethic. Terra's friend Fred explained more. "We talk about you guys every day. The house was practically falling down. You did work structurally, electrically, especially in the kitchen and dining room. You gave us a real big start, enough of a start so that we were able to move forward. Rebuild lives on! The children loved the hands-on work and

are always looking for something to do. We tell other people about it all of the time. Terra is an artist and wants to donate some of her artwork to raise funds for the program."



Upper: The Young 'Uns of the Rogers Family. Lower: Rod Robert and Kevin Blackney with Hammers with Heart. Photo Credit: T. Vachon © 2010.

THE WORK SCOPE OF THE ROGERS FAMILY PROJECT

Volunteers Leo Carey and Jim Rush report on work at the Rogers' home:

"It was February 2010 when we first inspected the Rogers' house. A number of problems, some serious others less so, were identified within this five-bedroom, 2.5-bath, 3-story brick twin. Non-functioning bathrooms, staircases without railings and pulling out from the walls, a hole in a corner wall that allowed air, water and squirrels inside were the most evident problems. Further inspection revealed additional concerns.

"More than 50 volunteers contributed their time, talent, and energy. Along with Jim, Kevin Blackney led a team from Hammers with Heart—a program of Wayne Presbyterian Church. Along with Leo, Jim Quigley led Independence Blue Cross' Blue Crew.

Bike & Build, Inc. volunteers pitched in for a day in July, also bringing significant financial resources to the project to complement in-kind donations, including the services of a structural engineer."

After the dust settled, anyone would appreciate the tangible results of the teams' devotion to the Rogers' house for nearly nine months:

- ◀ Staircases grounded and railings repaired
- ◀ Basement stairs replaced
- ◀ Basement cleared of unused or outdated belongings
- ◀ Basement water tight, better lighting, and better ventilation, including the laundry room
- ◀ Corner wall rebuilt
- ◀ Rotting floor and ceiling joists replaced

- ◀ New roof
- ◀ Insulation throughout the house
- ◀ Four new windows
- ◀ New back door
- ◀ New kitchen electrical wiring, circuits, plumbing, floor, drywall, counter top, sink, electric range, and a powder room; recycled kitchen cabinetry
- ◀ Two used personal computers

This was not a typical RTP project in that the scope ended up being much larger than originally expected; but no one could leave the Rogers' family without recourse. At the same time, this project was true to RTP's mission and approach and instilled a reciprocal spirit of giving within the Rogers family (see "Rebuild Lives on Within the Rogers Family").

RTP LIVES ON IN THE KOPP FAMILY

The history of RTP will need to include a chapter on Michelle Carr Kopp. During her first year as a graduate student at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, in 2001-2002, Michelle served as Chair of Homeowner Selection. During her second year she led Wharton/West Philadelphia Operations. Her footprint continues to be felt today. Through her leadership, RTP was introduced to the President's Office at Penn. This helped generate corporate dollars and has led to recent partnerships. She helped strengthen relationships between the Wharton crew and the RTP Board. In fact, three members of her team became Board members, shaping policy and advancing operations. The Kopp Family is a leadership level donor, and has been for several years.

Michelle's story really starts when she was a little girl. Her mother instilled a charitable habit in her at an early age saying, "Every time you go past a Salvation Army bucket, put a dollar in. That money is for kids whose parents cannot afford Christmas presents." When Michelle arrived at business school, first on her agenda was to find a community service club that addressed basic needs. Working on RTP while studying kept her grounded. After graduation, she moved near the Twin Cities RT affiliate and joined its Board as soon as there was an opening.



The Kopp Family's 2010 Holiday Card Photo

Why does she still give to RTP? Michelle explains, "Knowing my earning potential and professional work, I'll probably be successful and comfortable, but I always have to remember that I'm the exception. So many others have great need." Michelle's advice to others includes, "Think about what you would do with that extra \$100. You could go to a nice restaurant downtown. Think what RTP would do with that \$100, how much good work can be done."

As an industrial technology teacher, Jason, Michelle's husband, is a huge do-it-yourselfer, and greatly appreciates the volunteers' work. Both of them regret that they haven't been able to volunteer as a family yet (their girls are only 23 months and 10 weeks old). Both also are adamant that when their girls are ready, one of their first lessons will be "Put your dollar in."

VOLUNTEERING

RTP's program committee has been working on restructuring volunteer opportunities in an effort to improve the quality and reach of our year-round services. By creating a pool of specialists within all aspects of planning and executing Rebuilding Days, we can provide in-depth training then recruit among our trained volunteers to help in key areas.

Volunteer pools will include: home evaluators, skilled tradespeople, occupational therapists, an energy efficiency team, community gardeners, storm water management crew, safety captains, hospitality crew, and drivers/runners. You can be part of more than one pool, and you will receive training.

Here's how it will work:

- ◀ If you volunteer as part of a house management team, and would like to continue that way, great! We'll still rely on house management teams to plan and execute the bulk of spring projects.
- ◀ If you want get involved year round, then consider your skills and interests.
 - ◀ Are you a skilled volunteer who prefers to work without a crowd? Join the **skilled volunteer pool**, and you can schedule your volunteer time around your job.
 - ◀ Are you an expert at home inspection? Become a **house evaluator**, and help match projects and teams.
 - ◀ Do you like chatting up volunteers, community members, and VIPs? Join the **hospitality crew**.
 - ◀ Have a truck and love to drive? Be a driver/runner and support teams by delivering materials.
- ◀ As opportunities arise, we'll reach out to the applicable pool and see who is available. You won't be expected to help every time (although you're certainly welcome!). We'd love if you helped at least once or twice a year.

To learn more, visit:

www.rebuildingphilly.org/volunteers.htm

SNAPSHOT ON 2010-2011 PROJECTS

SUMMER PROJECTS

- ◀ Homeowner, Germantown
- ◀ Homeowner, Norristown

FALL BLOCK BUILDS

- ◀ St. Hugh, North Philadelphia
- ◀ Cobbs Creek, West Philadelphia

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

- ◀ Missionaries of Charity Soup Kitchen/Shelter
- ◀ The Veterans Group

SPRING BLOCK BUILDS

- ◀ South Philadelphia
- ◀ Walnut Hill, West Philadelphia
- ◀ St. Hugh, North Philadelphia

FAST LEARNERS

Upon first contact, Dermid Kelly (Regional Executive) and Michael Farrell (Chief Estimator) of StructureTone Philadelphia took a shine to RTP; specifically the Philadelphia Water Department-sponsored Green Homes project in Cobbs Creek. They rallied nearly a dozen department heads and employees for two days of service to prepare for and help execute projects designed to capture rainwater and prevent run off from storm drains that had continued to deluge the neighborhood during heavy rain falls.

The first day was an orientation for employees to learn how to build flow-through planter boxes. They needed to become experts fast because they were assigned the task of leading other volunteers through the steps seven days later. On the actual Rebuilding Day, each planter box needed to be linked to a different house, each with its own quirky arrangement of internal plumbing. Mike Farrell recalls saying, "What an undertaking!" Nevertheless, the "trainees" exceeded even their own expectations. At the end of the day, three blocks of Spruce Street were lined with flow-through planters.

Mike cited the importance of a "local touch" as the driving force behind the 2007 founding of the Philadelphia branch of StructureTone, a construction firm serving clients from London to Hong Kong. Mike also believes that "community involvement is a corporate responsibility," and reflected on his on-site experience. "You could see the homeowners were happy, and wanted to understand and participate." He says his crew "always will remember how the children were invested in the future of their neighborhood, spending their Saturday clearing the street with shovels and rakes in hand."

Just in case you were wondering, StructureTone is now on speed dial!

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES TODAY & TOMORROW



Mayor Michael Nutter and Mike Belasco of The Stock Group share stormwater management tips. Photo Credit: T. Groll © 2010.

An impressive group of people braved the cold on November 6 to be part of a pilot project in the Cobbs Creek section of West Philadelphia. Sponsored by the Philadelphia Water Department, this was the inaugural event of a "Greens Homes" initiative designed to put innovative stormwater management tools into a concentrated area.

Mayor Michael Nutter was joined by State Senator Anthony Williams, Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell, Philadelphia Water Department Commissioner Bernard Brunwasser, Rina Cutler, Deputy Mayor for Transportation & Utilities, and Katherine Gajewski, Director of the Office of Sustainability for the City of Philadelphia. In addition to Water Department and StructureTone employees (see "Fast Learners") many of the volunteers represented new partners for RTP such as the Darby-Cobbs Watershed Partnership and the Pennsylvania Environment Council.

The efforts of the 100+ volunteers resulted in the installation of 19 flow-through planters, 12 rain barrels and one rain garden in a single day. In all, 32 homeowners each received an installation as well as educational tools for managing stormwater run off more effectively. Collectively, the block will take some of the burden off the combined sewer system that runs beneath

Spruce Street, doing its part to protect our local waterways. (Fact: 33 miles of streams run through Cobbs Creek.) The partners hope the project will galvanize this community and others to reach key environmentally sustainable goals.

Perhaps most important is the rationale behind all this focus on stormwater management. The Philadelphia Water Department has created one of the best, most efficient plans in the country. The commitment of \$2 billion over the next 25 years to transform our urban landscape and neighborhoods is called "Green City Clean Waters." It's not just about being "green" in order to preserve our natural resources for future generations. It's also about having an immediate impact on the cleanliness of our drinking water; for RTP it always comes back to the health and safety of homeowners and communities.

Although very much aligned with our long-time commitment to energy efficiency and neighborhood revitalization, these kinds of stormwater management initiatives are a new layer of services that RTP can provide for communities in need. Going forward RTP will integrate these important components, whenever feasible, into other critical repair, safe at home, and healthy home projects.

PROGRAM SPONSORS

(2010-2011 to date)

Civic Leader—\$50,000 or more
Cricket Communications

Community Leader—\$25,000-\$49,999
City of Philadelphia (Philadelphia Water Department)
Wells Fargo Housing Foundation

Community Sponsor—\$10,000 to \$24,999
Administration on Aging
Bike & Build, Inc.
ConocoPhillips
Dragon Boat Paddlers and Sponsors
Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia
Pepsi Beverages Company
Wachovia Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.

Block Sponsor—\$5,000 to \$9,999
Nina Rivera and Peter Hardy
Honeywell
Lowe's
Preservation Alliance

House Sponsor—\$3,000 to \$4,999
Robert Bellinger
Keystone Mercy Health Plan
Sears (in kind)
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Neighbor—\$1,000 to \$2,999
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The Home Depot (in kind)
Robert Hughes
Individuals through the United Way
The Jones Group, Inc.
Keystone Mercy Health Plan Employees
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Carrie and Robert Rathmann
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ENDOWMENT DONORS

(Cumulative giving since April 2005)

\$25,000 or more
Robert Bellinger
In memory of Stephen C. Seweryn

\$10,000 to \$24,999
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\$5,000 to \$9,999
In memory of Peter C. Daggett
Lisa and David Meyers

MERRILY SUPPORTING RTP

Mandy Roach reports on Team RTP's participation in the 9th Annual Philadelphia International Dragon Boat Festival in October 2010:

"I always want to sing, 'Row, row, row your boat... Merrily, merrily, merrily...,' but for those who know the drill, you know there is no rowing. We paddle, and we paddle with intensity! Oh, but we sure were merry this year, especially after raising more than \$10,000 in net proceeds to benefit RTP. Gifts were made through fund-raising efforts by teammates from RTP, Keystone Mercy Health Plan, Gung Ho!, and from a kick-off party after our first practice session.

"If you've never seen a dragon boat, each one fits 20 paddlers not including the drummer (who keeps the beat) and the steersperson (who keeps us afloat).

RTP registered two teams and was joined on Festival Day by our friendly rivals Becky's Beauties, Gung Ho!, and Red Oar White. With nearly 125 teams competing overall, times 20 paddlers, it is a fun time for thousands. We were proud to hear 'Rebuilding Together Philadelphia' announced over the loudspeaker each time we made our way to the boat-loading area wearing green construction hats.

"I've been paddling with Team RTP since the beginning (five years ago), and I have always enjoyed the fun-loving and kind-hearted spirits of RTP supporters. Participating in the race has inspired me to volunteer more in 2011. Be sure to come out next year to join in the festivities and promote RTP's mission and work!"

THE FIRST RUN TO REBUILD

Jamie Friling reports on the creation of RTP's first race fundraiser (which netted \$2,100) held September 2010:

"I remember Jennifer Shropshire saying during our first conversation, 'Who are you and why do you want to do a 5k Run fundraiser for RTP?' Attending my first RTP event in the fall of 2009, I was exposed to one the most impactful organizations in the Philadelphia area. As a home designer, structural engineer and jack of all trades I was eager to be of service to the organization. In a larger sense I also was at a pivotal moment in my life where I realized that every individual, including myself has the ability to make a greater contribution to the world.

"Looking to the inner strength that I believe is in everyone, I reflected on my own life and decided that a run was the perfect way to physically drive myself, engage the local health and fitness communities, and inspire others. Although none of us had ever organized a Run before, Jennifer's event planning expertise, my enthusiasm and hustle, paired with the resourcefulness

Left to Right: Jamie Friling, Deanie McCole, Julie Daniels, and Jennifer Shropshire.
Photo credit: D. McCole © 2010.



of Julie Daniels and Deanie McCole made a strong leadership team fueled by each other every step of the way.

I was inspired everyday by engaging the local community, friends, and family. I realized a lot of times we sell short those close to us as well as strangers we pass on the street, thinking that 'they aren't interested in being part of what I'm doing' when in fact we're robbing ourselves of our fullest potential in life, in our community, and the world we live in. We are a community, and every great thing starts in an individual's heart. Go big. Create something. Be a leader."

REFRESHED INSIDE AND OUT



Thanks to the sponsorship and volunteer efforts of Pepsi Beverages Company (PBC), RTP helped The Veterans Group continue in its mission to provide shelter and rehabilitation services for 40 to 48 veterans. More than 70 volunteers from PBC plants throughout the tri-state area converged in West Philadelphia on October 22. They joined with the residents of The Veterans Group to improve the common living spaces of the 80-year-old residence on Baring Street.

Kevin Kocsi, Human Resources Manager Pepsi Beverages Company, explains the high level of participation. "We wanted to do something relevant in the community, and engage employees in activities outside of the plants and warehouses." Some of the PBC employees are veterans themselves. A number of people had volunteered on a previous RTP project. All came out ready to be put to work, bringing a can-do attitude and a Pepsi soda machine for the house.

Volunteers cleaned and painted. Some of the common areas received new drywall and chair molding. These

rooms hadn't been painted in quite some time so the use of subtle color and bold accents created a more comfortable atmosphere. Volunteers installed new lighting to replace the two incandescent light bulbs that were trying in vain to light the kitchen. New strip fluorescent lighting now makes the kitchen not only more pleasant to work in, but also safer.

The front yard was transformed. Previously, it was a dirt and brick area where the veterans gathered on a daily basis. Thanks to the assistance of Andrew Warner and Warner Landscaping of Collingswood, New Jersey, the veterans can now relax on a brand new patio. Andrew volunteered his professional experience and guidance while working alongside the volunteers and veterans during the complicated installation.

Even with all this work, the residence still needs improvements. The Veterans Group will proceed with other projects as funding becomes available. RTP returned on the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service to provide additional support.

MIKE COLLAZZO SKILLED VOLUNTEER

A behind-the-scenes look at a RTP volunteer. Many thanks to Mike and other skilled volunteers for lending their expertise to ensure high quality needs assessment and repairs.

Age: 44

Family: Wife and two children

Education:

High School Graduate;

Completed Apprenticeship Program
for Cement Masons

Construction Background:

Started construction in 1984;
continues to work in the field

Occupation:

Cement Mason/Apprentice Instructor

Current Day-to-Day Responsibilities:

Teaching and preparing young
cement finishers for the future of
concrete construction.

Why He Helps RTP:

"I really like and respect the things
RTP does for the neighborhood."

MORE ON MIKE

Mike's first project with RTP was the Block Build on N. Lawrence Street sponsored by Cricket Communications this past fall. As a member of the Cement Masons and Plasters Union No 592, he led the project of repairing most of the sidewalks on the block—a very large project as you can imagine. He rallied the assistance of his apprentices and coordinated logistics with the Laborers' International Union of North America Local 332 and the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 25. Mike was very taken with the idea of helping the community, and was eager to do more to support the cause. He lent his weight and connections in order to strengthen Carrie's requests to get materials in kind, which made the process easier and effective.

Endowment Donors continued...

\$3,000 to \$4,999

Nina Rivera and Peter Hardy
Donna and Edwin Moore
The Seweryn Family

\$1,000 to \$2,999

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In memory of Michael F. O'Malley

Talson Solutions, LLC
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Mercantile Beneficial Association
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Roach, and John Messina
William R. May Funeral Home
Margo and Rich Mocariski
In honor of Steve Seweryn's 60th Birthday

RTP HELPS OLDER ADULTS AGE IN PLACE

In her 90s, Madeline Robinson of West Philadelphia heads a household of five generations.
Photo Credit: T. Vachon © 2009.



conductive to "Aging in Place." This work builds on RTP's ongoing commitment to older adults in Philadelphia, including a major concentrated collaboration with AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) in 2008 in which 12 older adults in the West Shore section of West Philadelphia received home modifications.

According to research conducted by AARP, 83% of older adults want to remain in their home as they age. Yet as we age so do our homes, and not necessarily in complementary ways. The traditional two- to three-story Philadelphia row home presents particular challenges to aging in place: usually five steps leading up to the front porch; laundry facilities in the basement; and no first floor bathroom. As we age, issues such as slippery floors, high bathtubs, low

toilets or stairs without handrails drastically increase the potential for slips and falls.

Statistics published by the Center for Disease Control indicate that among those age 65 and older, falls are the leading cause of death from injury. They are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma. It may sound dramatic, but it's true—simple home modifications such as grab bars around toilets and tubs, adding hand railings on both sides of the stairs or using non-skid materials under rugs and carpets can save a life.

The Administration on Aging is sponsoring home modifications for up to five homeowners. Through a \$10,000 grant, RTP will be working with older adults in West and North Philadelphia to identify ways to make their home safer and more

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