

# Rebuilding Together Philadelphia

Fall 2008

20 years of neighbors helping neighbors

## THE HOUSE THAT STEVE BUILT

*In loving memory of Steve Seweryn who passed away on September 30, 2008.*



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When Steve Seweryn passed away it was a personal loss for all of us. I mean a punched in the gut kind of loss. Then I realized just how supportive the Rebuilding Together community is. So many people, here in Philadelphia and across the

country, have sent condolences to the family, to the Board, and to me. Many people have said "how can I help?" and meant it. It has been a time of grief, but a shared grief, which somehow lightens the load.

Thanks to the leadership of long-time volunteer, Ed Vasoli, who stepped up big time (thanks, Ed!) we pieced together Mitzvah Mania—our first big project of the year—successfully. Then I had the "uh-oh" moment. Turning to the next project, I suddenly felt the gap left by Steve's particular kind of leadership and insight. Steve created the RTP we know today out of his heart and his head and we all followed him in our own way in the journey to help rebuild communities. I was worried about letting him down and ruining all that he had worked for. Then I realized that although we are weaker without

him we are strong because of him. He truly laid a solid platform from which we can lift off.

Then I met Carrie Rathmann (RTP's new executive director officially starting on December 15!). She is engaging, feisty, and smart, and she really, really cares about rebuilding communities. While we have so much to teach her about our twenty years of RTP experiences, we also have so much to learn from her. So, I ask you to join me in welcoming Carrie with open arms mindful that "the house that Steve built" will be left in capable hands as long as we join together to build on Steve's legacy as we look to the future.

**Jennifer Shropshire**  
President, Board of Directors

### NOVEMBER QUIPS

*"It was so high energy and amazing to see a sea of orange and red RTP t-shirts."*

Carey Roberts' thoughts as she addressed nearly 100 freshmen at the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Duck for Cover Dodge Ball Tournament, which netted nearly \$1,700 and 1,000 new friends for RTP.

*"Going into my kitchen is blinding. There are the new white cabinets and a window to the outside since they demolished that old shed that was falling down."*

Dorothy Ebright, RTP homeowner helped by ConocoPhillips volunteers

### 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., which supports 200 affiliates in using volunteer efforts to preserve affordable homeownership in 2,000 communities.

### CONTACT US

[www.rebuildingphilly.org](http://www.rebuildingphilly.org)

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**Carrie Rathmann,**  
Executive Director (as of 12/15/08)

**Jennifer Wootten,**  
Administrator

## PRO BONO COUNSEL

**Tony Chan, Esq.,**  
Dechert LLC

## FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION



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For the second year, RTP was a featured project in Mitzvah Mania—an event of the **Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia** to spark year-long mitzvahs (good deeds) throughout the Jewish community. The JCC Klein Center in Northeast Philadelphia served as home base on November 2—the big day. RTP set up two projects at the Center itself as well as for eleven homeowners in the area. Jewish Federation Real Estate was the primary funder for the RTP project.

The homeowner projects were ambitious. Led by Mitzvah Mavens, the 200+ volunteers worked on as many essential home repairs as possible. Weatherization needs were common

often requiring a significant investment in roofing and window replacement.

Hilary Bayer, co-chair of this component of the event relates why she got involved for the second year. "This is my 25th year as a volunteer with the Federation. I've worked on a lot of projects. We do so many good things. This is truly one of the great things that we do. We're not just giving money. It's hands on. Our lives are so busy, it's important to stop, take a breath, and look into each other's eyes."

This year's theme "From Generation to Generation" resonated. RTP was founded a generation ago and has helped more than 830 homeowners since then. Today's volunteers are inspired by the belief that what is done now will not only provide immediate help to those in need, but also change the course of the next generation.

*During his opening remarks, Leonard Barrack, President of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia dedicated the day, in part, to Steve Seweryn.*

## JEN'S JERRY MAGUIRE MOMENT

\*\*\*Spoiler Alert\*\*\* At the beginning of the movie, Jerry Maguire writes a manifesto of all of the things he thought should be changed. He got fired. While Jen Wootten, RTP Administrator and Program Coordinator, didn't have a moral epiphany, she did have her own version of a "Jerry Maguire Moment," and was applauded for it.

It happened after the National Conference for Rebuilding Together affiliates, which was held November 5-9 in Minneapolis, MN. Jen and Gabriel Mandujano, a new RTP Board member, both attended. They returned to Philadelphia armed with new tools that range from being technical to inspirational to strategic.

In addition to hosting a series of workshops, conference organizers

presented a Brand Standards toolkit, opened a new on-line RT Store, and unveiled promotional and training videos. Jen and Gabriel participated in a regional meeting wherein fellow affiliates shared opportunities and challenges. There were many chances to build relationships with the national RT staff and 300 affiliate representatives.

Having "drunk the Kool-Aid," Gabriel left his first conference energized with new ideas for how RTP could leverage volunteer efforts to preserve affordable homeownership here in Philadelphia. "It was inspiring to see all the good work that RT affiliates are accomplishing across the nation, and I look forward to applying some of the lessons learned here in Philadelphia."

# REBUILDING GERMANTOWN

*"This project was one of the last that Steve initiated, and his spirit and energy linger as our relationship with RTP continues. As we prepare for the Washeteria, the planning and organization that Steve did has helped to make a dream come true."*

**Eileen Smith, Executive Director  
Face to Face**

With its Block Build strategy firmly in place, each year RTP looks for a community-based partner to serve as a home base for work in each designated neighborhood. After meeting Eileen Smith and learning of the programs and services of Face to Face, it was clear that RTP found the partner that could be a successful conduit for RTP's entrée into Germantown—a community with a rich heritage yet unique challenges.

## Face to Face

Face to Face is a human service organization that offers programs for the children and adults of Germantown seven days a week. It started as a soup kitchen and quickly evolved into a full-fledged Dining Room, open to all, which is the central component of all of its work. The Dining Room draws together people who are poor, lonely, sick and disabled for a free and friendly meal every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Other programs of Face to Face developed in response to guests' expressed needs and interests: a Health Center, Legal Clinic, and Neighborhood Art Program. The

Children's Program—a summer camp, after school club and counselor-in-training program for teens—serves a different population than the programs for adults. Many of the children are being raised by grandparents or other relatives. For adults and children alike, Face to Face provides a reliable presence, stability, and enrichment through year-round contact.

## A Community Investment

Block Builds require a significant investment of financial and volunteer resources. Several sponsors have stepped forward to make this neighborhood revitalization strategy possible:

Projects at Face to Face started in June 2008 when 80+ **HSBC-North America** volunteers devoted a day of their time as part of the "Power of 8500" Initiative. Local HSBC and Beneficial employees undertook a major clean up of spaces.

On MLK Day, January 19, 2009, **Honeywell** employees and other volunteers will take the first significant steps toward creating a Washeteria—a place where Dining Room guests will have access to a shower, lockers and a washer/dryer.

Ten of the 15-20 spring homeowner projects in Germantown will be underwritten by the **Opus Foundation**. **Opus East, LLC** employees as well as other volunteer teams will lead project management activities.

## THANKS TO OUR EARLY 2008-2009 SPONSORS

### Community Leaders—\$25,000-\$49,999

Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia  
Opus Foundation

### Community Sponsors—\$10,000-\$24,999

ConocoPhillips  
Dragon Boat Paddlers & Sponsors  
Honeywell Hometown Solutions  
Merck & Co., Inc.

### Block Sponsors—\$5,000-\$7,499

Anonymous

### House Sponsors—\$3,000-\$4,999

Pete Beale  
Robert Bellinger  
Henrietta Wurts Tower Memorial Fund  
Individuals through the United Way  
Whole Foods Market

### Builders—\$1,500-\$2,999

Anonymous  
5<sup>th</sup> annual Duck for Cover Tournament  
Michelle and Jason Kopp  
Margo and Rich Mocarshi  
Philadelphia Committee of the Garden Club of America

### Neighbors—\$1,000-\$1,499

W.L. Gore & Associates, Inc.  
Honeywell Employees  
Robert Hughes  
Keystone Mercy Health Plan Employees  
Tolson Solutions, LLC  
Vasoli Electric

### Friends—\$500-\$999

Lisa Most and Christopher Evans  
Shannon Farmer  
Wendy and Justin Klein Keane  
Denise and Doug Leach  
Opus East, LLC—golf outing  
Amanda Axelrod and Eric Redline  
The Scullin Group  
Edward F. Swenson & Associates, Inc.

### Special Thanks

PREIT/Portfolio Marketing Group

## Join Us!

Please let us know if you're interested in getting involved on MLK Day or in other RTP projects.

Contact Jen Wootten at  
[jenw@rebuildingphilly.org](mailto:jenw@rebuildingphilly.org).



# FROM ORDINARY TO THE EXTRAORDINARY

*"I've seen and met angels wearing the disguise of ordinary people living ordinary lives."*

*Tracy Chapman, Singer/Songwriter*



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This November was the third time that ConocoPhillips employees volunteered to make essential repairs for a homeowner living near their refinery in Trainer, PA. Often Dorothy "Dee" Ebright acts as the "mom" of her neighborhood. This time, Dee and her husband Albert were on the receiving end of someone else's kindness.

What makes the ConocoPhillips team so extraordinary is their "regular Joe attitude" about themselves; yet none of the work the Ebrights needed could have been accomplished without their particular talents. ConocoPhillips always goes above and beyond. In addition to its financial sponsorship, it sends a "dream team" of skilled workers. This year's major projects started with demolition of the dilapidated mud room off the kitchen, which the volunteers replaced with a small deck. The front porch also was restored. The back roof had deteriorated so much that water damaged all but one burner of the stove. The Ebrights received new kitchen cabinets and appliances as well as replacement windows, insulation, and a new heater.

In these difficult financial times, focus

on energy efficiency projects is especially meaningful. "RTP provides the framework that allows our employees to use their time and skills to make a significant impact for a local family," said Bill Tyson, the refinery's community relations director. "Our partnership has created great results."

The Ebright rebuild is part of a national **Energy Efficient Homes Initiative** that will have an impact on hundreds of homeowners this year. Like the Ebrights, every homeowner will be reminded of ConocoPhillips' extraordinary support when they see the savings on their future utility bills.

#### CONTACT US:

Write to P.O. Box 42752,  
Philadelphia, PA 19101-2752

Call 215.568.5044

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[www.rebuildingphilly.org](http://www.rebuildingphilly.org)

**SIGN UP FOR RTP'S MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER** [www.rebuildingphilly.org/contact.htm](http://www.rebuildingphilly.org/contact.htm)

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December 2008

Dear Friends:

Seventy years ago, there was a major housing boom throughout Philadelphia. Most of these homes were sturdy and beautiful – places for families to grow and thrive. Today, many of these homes continue to house families, and many of them are in need of repair. The US Census estimates that there are more than 60,000 low income homeowners in Philadelphia. Simple repair problems (left unattended due to lack of resources) escalate into larger problems that expose homeowners and their families to health and safety risks.

We are celebrating 20 years of Rebuilding Together Philadelphia (RTP) in 2008-2009. In that time, with the help of a multitude of volunteers as well as the homeowners themselves, RTP has helped approximately 830 homeowners in need. This year, the need is just as great, and RTP is poised to help even more homeowners than last year, powered by gifts from people like you.

Recently, we lost our executive director and friend, Steve Seweryn. Several years ago, RTP homeowner Carol Belton told us, *"Being part of the Rebuilding Together program helps me believe that there is more good than bad in the world."* Her words echo Steve's belief in the power of neighbors helping neighbors. With your help, we are proud to continue his passion for the work of RTP.

We are thankful for the many gifts that have already been given in memory of Steve. These gifts to RTP's endowment have established the Stephen C. Seweryn Memorial Fund and will ensure that Steve's legacy will live on at RTP for many years to come. Gifts made directly to the 2008-2009 program will be put to work immediately to keep homeowners warm, safe and dry by replacing heaters and roofs; fixing broken windows; and installing grab bars as well as railings. As Steve would have wanted it, we pledge to use every hammer and every nail wisely.

Thanks for considering making a gift to RTP this year.

Respectfully,  
Shelley Crognale  
RTP Development Associate

*The official registration and financial information of Rebuilding Together Philadelphia may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1.800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.*

Connecting volunteers to homeowners in need. ★ Keeping homeowners warm, safe and dry.

# BUILDING & GROWTH IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Recently, many nonprofit endowments have had a devastating blow from the global economy decline. RTP's modest endowment was conservatively invested so did not lose ground, and in fact, grew significantly as more than 130 people made gifts in memory of Steve Seweryn. Thus, a **Stephen C. Seweryn Memorial Fund** has been established within the endowment. This fund is not only a testament to the respect that people had for Steve, but also an important means by which RTP can bring his legacy to life.

Gifts to the endowment are distinct from the gifts people normally make to RTP. The latter are used immediately to make essential home repairs and/or improvements to community-based agencies. Endowment gifts do more, boosting support during difficult times.

RTP Founder Robert Bellinger encouraged the Board to establish an endowment—a permanent fund from which only a portion of the income generated is spent so that the principal can grow—three years ago. His generous pledge of \$25,000 ignited the endowment. Three years later, RTP's endowment stands at nearly \$90,000.

The Board designed the endowment to pay for extra projects, especially roofing, that directly benefit homeowners. It now seems particularly fitting that the Board also directs all gifts given in honor or in memory of someone to the endowment. Initially, these gifts were considered "above and beyond" and could not be counted on year after year. Today, many of these gifts also serve as a poignant reminder of generosity during difficult times.

## MAJOR DONORS \* ENDOWMENT 2005-2008

Many thanks for the gifts in memory of Steve as well as the earlier gifts made to build RTP's endowment.

Anonymous (4)  
Robert Bellinger  
Russell Bjorkman  
Peter C. Daggett Fund  
Gary Drumheller  
Lisa Most and Christopher Evans  
Beth Goodell  
Jim Koller  
David Meyers  
Margo and Rich Mocarski  
Donna Moore  
Red Oar White  
Talsen Solutions, LLC  
Mr. and Mrs. F. Yaeger

\* Note: list as of press time.



## Yes, I'd like to support Rebuilding Together Philadelphia!

**For the 2008-2009 Program—to be put to work immediately:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 pays for work on an entire home  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 fixes basement steps (another \$25 illuminates the steps for safer access to laundry facilities) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$2,000 provides a new roof  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 replaces a door lock  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 buys materials to build a handicapped ramp   | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 installs a handrail   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 subsidizes a major plumbing repair   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 equips a bathroom with two grab bars, a handheld shower and chair, and a toilet seat riser | (any amount you can give is much appreciated)   |

**For the endowment—to build a legacy for the future. Amount of gift \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**To give on-line, visit <https://www.networkforgood.org/donation/MakeDonation.aspx?ORGID2=232549594>**  
**Please mail your gift to: Rebuilding Together Philadelphia**  
**P.O. Box 42752, Philadelphia, PA 19101-2752**

[www.rebuildingphilly.org](http://www.rebuildingphilly.org)

12/08

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