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Rebuilding Together Philadelphia Announces 2011 Awards

18 Individuals and Groups Recognized for their Extraordinary Contributions

Philadelphia, PA —The Board of Directors of Rebuilding Together Philadelphia (RTP) recognizes volunteers and partners who have gone “above and beyond” the call of duty to help RTP advance its mission of bringing volunteers and communities together to improve the lives and homes of homeowners in need. RTP served 87 homeowners and four community-based agencies in the past twelve months.

1,000TH HOMEOWNER AWARDS

Several individuals were honored with awards in conjunction with RTP reaching an important milestone – helping the 1,000th homeowner since the organization’s founding in 1988. These individuals epitomize the themes of longevity, commitment, and dedication.

Robert Bellinger: Founding Commitment

- Robert has been a Board member for nearly all of the 23 years since RTP’s existence despite not living in Philadelphia since he graduated from Wharton. Whether he was living in Atlanta or D.C. his presence was felt. He was the initiator and primary fundraiser for RTP’s endowment, building resources for helping homeowners in need in perpetuity. Current supporters from as far away as Texas and Australia lead back to Robert’s founding and ongoing passion.

Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell: Lifetime Contribution

- Councilwoman Blackwell has visited Rebuilding Days in West Philadelphia every year since RTP’s founding in 1988. She has made a point to be knowledgeable about RTP just as she’s knowledgeable about the needs of her district’s constituents. Always gracious in thanking volunteers, Councilwoman Blackwell’s visits help ensure that volunteers feel how important they are to RTP’s mission. Throughout the year, Councilwoman Blackwell is a strong RTP ambassador; championing our cause and helping us navigate through City networks.

Mimi Gallen: Dedication

- Mimi has the soul of an artist and a heart of gold. She has been a RTP volunteer with Keystone Mercy Health Plan’s house management team for 11 years. Her precision with a razor blade (getting the paint off window panes) is legendary as are her illustrations as a face painter. She is a dragon boat paddler as part of Team RTP, and has designed nearly every t-shirt and special banner for a decade.

Scott and Todd Gardner: Generations

- Scott volunteered in RTP's founding year and every year since. His skills as a carpenter-contractor have transformed the homes of many throughout West Philadelphia. His character has affected many as Scott always asks for "the toughest house" saying "I want to help the students." As soon as Todd was old enough, he joined his father, working on projects every year. Todd has become a superb ambassador, and though only 20-something is one of the most seasoned volunteers.

Debra Ann K. O'Donnell: Commitment

- Debbie was an early recruit to RTP, and immediately lent her skills as a CPA to being RTP's unpaid bookkeeper and accountant for 18 years. Working completely behind the scenes, Debbie's face is not known to many of the volunteers, but her attention to detail and knowledge of accounting combined with her long-term institutional memory about RTP were key ingredients for high-level financial management that helped usher RTP through tremendous growth over two decades.

Jennifer Shropshire: Lifetime Contribution

- Jennifer's character and spirit have graced RTP projects for nearly 20 years from her time as a student volunteer at Wharton to her tenure as Board President. She led RTP through many milestones and continues to be an asset, leveraging her non-profit expertise whenever it is required. Jennifer never misses an opportunity to regale those around her of the homeowners we've served. Her smiling face is a welcome sight at events and always makes volunteers feel at home.

2010-2011 VOLUNTEERS

Eric Redline, President of RTP's Board of Directors, expresses great appreciation saying, "While every one of the 825 volunteers who participate in RTP each year is critical to our mission, these individual and groups stood out in 2010-2011. Each made a unique contribution to preserving affordable homeownership and to revitalizing low-income communities. The devotion of their energy and skills is a key reason that RTP is such a high impact organization."

Joan Burnes: Outstanding Leadership

- Joan prefers to paddle at the back of the dragon boat, keeping spirits high when oxygen levels feel low. Well respected as Team Captain, she sets a tone of friendly competitiveness on and off the river. Joan also is a leader in securing financial sponsors to support her participation, raising funds for RTP. She teaches new paddlers proper technique, gets the team in order before it boards the boat, and makes sure paddlers are safe.

Donna Colston: Above and Beyond

- Donna made herself a card-carrying RTPer within an hour of her first stint as a volunteer. She learned about RTP at the Old House Fair event, and then took her turn standing behind the table at a Rebuilding Day shortly thereafter. You'll see her welcoming volunteers and talking up RTP's mission, then working with the neighborhood kids on street clean up, and then helping with hospitality. Donna is an indispensable part of Rebuilding Days.

Jamie Friling: Goodwill Ambassador

- Jamie is a high energy, gregarious person who, fortunately for RTP, decided to lend these attributes to creating the Run to Rebuild 5K Run. His efforts made this fund-raising event a success. His initiative introduced everyone he's ever met to RTP as well as everyone who came near Forbidden Drive in the weeks preceding Race Day. Jamie used his networks to get fantastic prizes and has laid a solid foundation for Run to Rebuild II.

Peter Hardy: Goodwill Ambassador

- Peter endeared himself to his fellow RTP Board members immediately by declaring that he wanted to serve on the Fund Development Committee. His efforts led to CREW (Commercial Real Estate Women) becoming a sponsor at the Community Leader level. The association adopted RTP as the recipient of its Holiday Luncheon. Peter and his wife Nina opened their home to friends and colleagues to introduce new people to RTP and raise the equivalent of a house sponsorship.

Sue Hughes: Goodwill Ambassador

- Sue has taken her role as Goodwill Ambassador seriously, even before receiving the title officially. She was an avid Ambassador for the Maxwell House Drops of Good on-line voting campaign, sending funny, cheerleading messages to her fellow Gung Ho! teammates every other day. She even reached out to Mayor Nutter to urge his support. She has donated funds from her jewelry sales to RTP, and volunteered ever since Gung Ho! has been a house management team.

Victoria Kent: Above and Beyond

- Victoria has boosted our energy-efficiency activities since her first day of volunteering at the fall 2010 Block Build sponsored by Cricket Communications. Victoria puts her all into projects, providing valuable feedback and leading other volunteers in all kinds of energy repairs. She even has taken on some of the nitty-gritty basement jobs that intimidate others. Serving tirelessly, Victoria volunteered for every single project in 2010-2011, lending a dynamic hand wherever she can, even beyond energy repairs.

Avelina Leal-Taylor: Outstanding Service

- Avelina took up the reins of House Captain for the Keystone Mercy Health Plan house management team just a couple of weeks before the Block Build. She assumed her leadership role with ease, doing an awesome job of pulling all the volunteers together. Avelina led the team through substantial renovations self-sufficiently without any major glitches. She managed the homeowner's expectations appropriately, translating RTP's mantra "under promise over deliver" into action.

Paul Nolen: Outstanding Leadership

- Paul's direction of the Cohort G house management team stood out among his classmates at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. As House Manager, he showed tremendous knowledge, patience, and leadership. He and his team put in an enormous number of hours to redo the kitchen and basement for their "adopted" family in Walnut Hill. Led by Paul, Cohort G met the challenge of completing the extensive work within a short period of time.

Terry Ramey: Outstanding Service

- Terry caught his House Captain's attention because of his commitment and support as a member of Keystone Mercy Health Plan's house management team. He took on the back shed area – a huge job, which was an addition to the original project scope. He went back to the house numerous times, and inspired several of the team members to attend as a team-building exercise. This Outstanding Service Award recognizes Terry's unwavering commitment, flexibility, and support.

2010-2011 SKILLED & COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARDS

Matt Condiotti: Outstanding Skilled Partner

- Matt led the development of the green homes projects for Philadelphia Water Department's partnership with RTP. His passion about green job training was evident, and he was generous with his time in communicating with homeowners, volunteers, and partners. Matt provided technical support to RTP staff and conveyed complex engineering and hydrology principles so that the non-engineer volunteer and novice homeowner could understand. In short, Matt has made stormwater management accessible and integral to RTP's Block Builds.

HACE: Outstanding Community-based Partner

- Led by Guillermo (Bill) Salas, HACE (Hispanic Association of Contractors and Enterprise) incorporated RTP into the final year of its Elm Street program, which is devoted to community development through neighborhood beautification. HACE allocated staff time to coordinating homeowner visits and to translating RTP materials into Spanish, opening its doors to RTP staff and volunteers whenever space was needed. Always willing to share the spotlight, Bill even met with a potential funder to talk up RTP's good work in the community.

Yale Krugman: Outstanding Skilled Partner

- As a skilled tradesperson, Yale is a valuable commodity on any Rebuilding Day, supporting a number of house management teams throughout a Block Build by using his expertise to enable the team to undertake projects that otherwise would not have been possible. This year, the Unitarians (two churches united as a house management team) applaud Yale stepping up to the challenge with efficiency and realistic repair expectations, which gave the team a huge sense of security.

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 much of its work in West Philadelphia, Germantown, and North Philadelphia. Through its critical home repair projects, including energy efficiency upgrades, as well as its safe and healthy home projects, RTP has helped 1,033 low-income homeowners and 47 community agencies since its founding in 1988. For details, visit www.rebuildingphilly.org. Follow us on Facebook via "RT Philadelphia."

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