

Robert Pierre Johnson Housing Development Corporation of the National Capital Area

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**Get Ready for
Monte Carlo Night
on May 12th, 2006:
Your invitation is
attached to this
newsletter!**

Serving Those Who Serve: A Soldier's Story

Rarely do America's citizens have a chance to tangibly express their appreciation for our soldiers' selfless service to this country. Rebuilding Together National and Countrywide Financial Corp. give us this opportunity through *Serving Those Who Serve*, a special initiative that provides critical home modifications for injured military personnel returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. This initiative, funded in large part by a \$1 million contribution from Countrywide Financial Corp., brings together community and Countrywide Financial Corp. volunteers, local businesses, and building industry partners to perform home modifications that enable military veterans to live in their homes with greater mobility, independence, safety and security. All labor and materials are provided at no cost to the families.

Rebuilding Together Arlington-Fairfax-Falls Church (AFFC) joined Rebuilding Together National and Countrywide Financial Corp. on March 27th to carry out the third *Serving Those Who Serve* project nationwide, at the home of the Briseno family in Manassas Park. U.S. Army Reservist and Civil Affairs Specialist Jay Briseno was severely injured in June 2003 while in a Baghdad market. The incident left Jay, in his early twenties, paralyzed from the

chin down. He uses a ventilator to breathe and a feeding tube to eat.



Our local RT team constructs the Briseno's screened-in porch

After assessing Jay's home environment to determine what modifications were necessary to meet his medical and mobility needs, Rebuilding Together National secured Butler Brothers Corporation and their subcontractors to make the bathroom accessible for Jay's wheelchair, to install new lighting and outlets, and to put in a new gas-powered generator that will provide back-up/emergency power for Jay's life-support equipment.

Rebuilding Together AFFC also obtained donations of materials from local vendors Decks Down Under, John Boy, Inc., Zask and McCormick Paints. Local house captain Jim Dillon directed a second wave of home repairs with team leaders Steve Breseman, Joan Dillon, Lou Curran, Carrie Smith and Michael Smith, and the able assistance of Roger Healy, RPJ Housing's Home

Repair Project Coordinator. Together, they led forty Countrywide Financial Corp. employees in building a screened-in porch, painting Jay's living space and exterior areas, erecting shelves for medical supplies, installing a privacy curtain, and making repairs to the porch, the fence and the garage door.

Once the dust settled, Jay received a surprise visit from his favorite radio personality, Teapot Tim, who stopped by to broadcast part of his show on HOT 99.5 FM from Jay's house on March 30th. Jay grinned from ear to ear as Teapot Tim joked with him and shared gifts with his family.



Teapot Tim and the Briseno gang

Contributions from organizations and volunteers like these across the nation enable Rebuilding Together to leverage \$4.00 for every \$1.00 of Countrywide Financial Corp. funding. More importantly, the goodwill leveraged by everyday citizens on behalf of the soldiers who risk their lives for our country is invaluable.

Hampton House Will Become Anderegg House

RPJ Housing's Hampton House transitional housing units will be formally renamed Anderegg House as a tribute to Jeanne Anderegg, the agency's former Families In Transition program coordinator, who passed away on February 5th, 2006. Jeanne assisted dozens of families on the path from homelessness to self-sufficiency. She spent countless hours in these homes and our other transitional apartment units linking families to mentors from Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church and other community resources, delivering Thanksgiving turkeys and Christmas trees, coordinating furniture drop-offs, and advocating for their basic needs.

"It is a fitting tribute that the home where Jeanne helped the most challenged families begin a new chapter in their lives be given her name," notes RPJ Housing's executive director, Herb Cooper-Levy. "Her legacy is one of empowerment and hope."

Rebuilding Together will be organizing an April project to spruce up the property in preparation for a "naming ceremony" later this spring. RPJ Housing will commemorate the name change by placing a plaque on the house. If you are interested in attending the ceremony, please contact Jeannie at jcummins@rphousing.org.

Jeanne's position has been ably filled by Amy Smith, who will serve as the new Families In Transition Program Coordinator. Jeanne brought Amy on board the program last fall to help develop a program manual. Amy has a degree in social work and has worked in group homes for adults with chronic mental illness. She is delighted to assume the helm and follow in the footsteps of such an inspirational leader.



Put in Your Two Cents for Housing

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will decide as part of their 2007 budget whether to increase the One Penny Fund to Two Pennies. Not only have all One Penny funds been spoken for, but there are applications in for next year. If you are a Fairfax County resident, give your Supervisor your "two cents" in support of affordable housing.

The statewide proposal to create a fund to match local housing trust funds has been tabled to the Virginia Housing Study Commission. It will be considered in the 2007 legislative session.

Spring Has Sprung for Rebuilding Together

On March 7th, nearly 70 volunteer team leaders attended the House Captain's meeting and received their "marching orders," including their assignments to homes of low income homeowners or non-profit residential programs. Teams were matched to homes on their skill levels and group sizes. Team leaders are now meeting homeowners to assess the scope of work for each project, determine material needs and organize their volunteer teams. During this process, an occupational therapist will visit many homes to assess how the residents interact with their home environment and suggest different home modifications team captains can incorporate into their work to improve the residents' safety and independence, including grab bars, raised commode seats and stair lifts. These dedicated leaders will spend 60 – 90 hours pulling together the various pieces of these projects so everything runs smoothly on Rebuilding Day.

The April issue of the *Senior Beacon* will feature RPJ Housing's Rebuilding Together Program in Arlington, Fairfax and Falls Church in an article highlighting the experiences of house captains Giles Sinkewiz and Jim Dillon as they organize a project, from soup to nuts. Grab a copy in a store near you!

Rebuilding Together's 2000+ volunteers will work on approximately 55 homes on April 29th and 30th this year. If you are a skilled plumber, electrician or tradesperson interested in being a "rover" on Rebuilding Day to consult on problems that arise on worksites throughout the day, or if you would like to volunteer for Supply Separation Day on April 27th, Supply Pick Up Day on April 28th, or Supply Return Day on May 1st, contact Patti Dennis at 703-528-5606 x16 or pattid@rpjhousing.org.



Tenant Spotlight: Ben

Ben is a police officer who has lived at RPJ Housing's Mount Vernon Gardens Apartments for several years. RPJ Housing's relationship with Ben has been a mutually beneficial one: he provided an authoritative presence in the apartment complex which enhanced the residents' sense of safety, while the affordable rent at Mount Vernon Gardens enabled Ben to save enough money to make the downpayment on his first home in Springfield, Virginia.

About the time that Ben notified RPJ Housing's property manager he would be moving on, he learned we had just taken in two Hurricane Katrina families. Not missing a beat, Ben began picking off the pieces of furniture in his apartment that he would be happy to give to the families. By the time he finished, he had furnished an entire town home!

Ben moved to his new home several months ago. We will miss his commanding presence and generous spirit, and wish him well on his adventure as a first-time homeowner.

RPJ Housing Classifieds

Wanted: Enthusiastic, capable multi-tasker who loves variety to serve as our full-time Director of Administration. Provide office management and administrative support to our Volunteer Home Repair Programs. Contact Michele for more information at (703) 528-5606 x10 or mpalmer@rpjhousing.org.

Wanted: Volunteers to help at Monte Carlo Night with setup, cleanup, the silent auction, raffle prize drawings, registration, game tables, and more. Contact Jeannie at x18 or jcummins@rpjhousing.org for more information.

Wanted: A new or gently used multifunction laser copy, printer and fax machine for our property management office in Front Royal. Contact Michele if you have a donation at (703) 528-5606 x10 or mpalmer@rpjhousing.org.

Wanted: A new/gently used 17" or larger computer monitor for our property management office on Fordson Road. Contact Michele if you have a donation.

RPJ Housing Gets Group Home

The Fairfax Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB), the County's public agency responsible for planning, organizing and providing services to persons with mental illness, mental retardation, and substance abuse disorders, is partnering with RPJ Housing to purchase and renovate a five bedroom home in the central part of the County to be used as a congregate residential program for adults with mental retardation.

Together, RPJ Housing and CSB staff have identified an appropriate rambler-style home, and RPJ Housing has executed a sales contract for purchase in late April. A soft second loan of \$200,000 from Fairfax County's CDBG funds will reduce the amount of debt service required on the first mortgage, which will make the rents affordable. The CSB will contribute additional funds to support the cost of renovations to the property to make it fully accessible including the construction of an accessible bathroom and laundry area, ramps to the main entrance and the rear entrance, an office for CSB staff, and a sixth bedroom. A sprinkler system will also be installed for resident safety.

RPJ Housing will provide a long term lease to the CSB so its residents have a stable source of housing. The residents are very excited to move and have begun planning their housewarming party. We will be there with plants in hand!

Count me in! I want to help RPJ Housing support Jeanne Anderegg's legacy. Here is my tax-deductible contribution to support *RPJ Housing's* efforts to develop and preserve affordable housing in the Washington metropolitan area.

\$25.00 \$50.00 \$75.00 \$100.00 Other \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Or, go to www.rpjhousing.org to donate online through Paypal or the Network for Good on our Home Page.