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April 2011

# TulsaPeople

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**25** most  
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From the Tulsa Driller  
to the Praying Hands

Ren Barger,  
executive director  
of Tulsa Hub

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staycation

{ The **GREEN** ISSUE }

## The **WHEEL** **WORLD**

- Making the city safer for cyclists
- A guide to cycling in Tulsa
- Tulsa Hub's cycling community

Are we **green**?  
Local experts weigh in

**REAL WEDDINGS**  
Tulsa brides and grooms



REBUILDING TOGETHER TULSA

# Making homes safe and secure

At 88, **John Wallace** may have retired from his career as a social worker, but he hasn't retired from life.

An active community volunteer who serves on the Morton Health Center board, he is independent and on the go as much as he can manage. The one thing he couldn't manage were the needed repairs to his lifelong home.

That's why he wrote to Rebuilding Together Tulsa (RTT) in 2009 to ask for help. After all, RTT's mission is to help aging Tulsans with limited incomes make their homes safe, secure and weatherproof. Through RTT's Energy Efficiency program, in concert with Public Service Co. of Oklahoma, **Russ Miller** of Double R Construction provided attic insulation, window caulking, weather stripping and CFL bulbs, as well as sealed large gaps that had developed since the home was built in 1937. (It's actually the second structure on the site; the first home burned to the ground. "All seven of us escaped safely, thank the Lord," Wallace recalls. His father rebuilt around the only standing element, the chimney.)

The energy repairs might have been the end. But like many RTT clients, Wallace was so genial and appreciative that Miller and his business partner/wife, **Ruby**, wanted to do more. So they volunteered with AmeriCorps and other volunteers to paint the kitchen, install a new storm door and gutters, provide electrical repairs and construct a new back porch. Wallace was so thrilled, he joked, "I could have a dance out here."

During the interview, he and Russ Miller excused themselves to check out the kitchen plumbing, which Miller will fix, free, just because Wallace needs it done.

"We end up with our favorites, and Mr. Wallace is at the top of our list," Miller says.

He checks on Wallace and other former RTT recipients frequently.

"When they get to a certain age, people forget (about them)," Miller says.

Recipients may come with a long list of needs or just one item, RTT CEO **Jennifer Barcus-Schafer** says. Staff members help them narrow down their priorities and may add to the list when they visit



Photo courtesy of Rebuilding Together Tulsa.

**Russ Miller, owner of Double R Construction, works on a home repair with John Wallace, one of the older Tulsans who have been helped by Rebuilding Together Tulsa. Miller and AmeriCorps volunteers gave additional time to provide additional improvements to Wallace's house.**

the home.

The Energy Efficiency program is one of four RTT programs. RTT also offers Safe at Home to install wheelchair ramps and other assistive devices; Roofs, through which professionals repair or replace roofs; and R.O.O.T. (Repairs Offered Other Times), in which volunteers provide carpentry, plumbing, electrical, drywall and more. Repairs may be made throughout the year or on RTT's annual Rebuild Day in April.

Although Wallace contacted RTT himself, generally neighborhood associations and religious, community and social service organizations refer clients to the program. RTT is also conducting pilot projects in the Kendall-Whittier and Hawthorne neighborhoods, which may include households of any age.

Whatever the situation, "We're trying to put together the pieces of a wonderful homeowner experience, great volunteers and use the funders' money wisely," Barcus-Schafer says. "We need all three of those things to fit together perfectly to have the perfect experience."

Of his own home, Wallace says, "It was a lifesaver, and without their help, I could not have had these things done. I appreciated it and was happy they could do it and were available."

## HISTORY

Rebuilding Together Tulsa (RTT) was founded in 1997 to address the home-repair needs of aging citizens who were living on limited incomes. That year, RTT repaired six homes on the last Saturday in April. The tradition of the annual Rebuild Day has continued but now focuses on an entire neighborhood. Additionally, more than 500 volunteers make home repairs year-round as part of four programs: Roofs, Safe at Home, Energy Efficiency and R.O.O.T. This year, more than 175 homeowners will have home repairs made to their houses that will make them safer, more secure and weatherproof so the owners can continue living in them.

## LEADERS

### Board of directors:

- Brian Thomas, board president
- Brad Burkhalter, immediate past president
- Charles Foster, vice president
- Susan Crenshaw, secretary
- Scott Milburn, treasurer
- Dan Graves
- Eric Griffin
- Margot Heyne-Bell
- Ross Phippen
- David Reisdorph
- Danielle Runyan

### Staff:

- Jennifer Barcus-Schafer, CEO
- Deanna Boston, chief operating officer
- Kim Rolston, program director

## NEEDS

- Financial donations
- Sponsored volunteer groups
- Weekly volunteers

### Rebuilding Together Tulsa

P.O. Box 52201 • Tulsa, OK 74152  
918-742-6241  
www.rebuildingtulsaaltogether.org

## TULSAPEOPLE INVOLVEMENT

TulsaPeople has been helping raise funds for Rebuilding Together Tulsa since 2003 through the magazine's associations with the Home Builders Association of Greater Tulsa (HBA). TulsaPeople has co-hosted the HBA's annual Remodeled Tulsa Tour Patron Party, which benefited Rebuilding Together Tulsa, for many years.

In 2005, the TulsaPeople staff joined forces with the HBA to rejuvenate the home of Ruth Noble as part of the Rebuilding Together Tulsa program.





**Tulsa**

invites you to join us for our

## **14th Annual Rebuild Day**

**Saturday, April 30, 2011**

Over 300 volunteers and 50 sponsors will make a lasting impact for one Tulsa neighborhood! This event provides the opportunity for the community to come together to make homes safer, more secure and weatherproof for deserving Tulsa homeowners!

*To find out how you can sponsor or volunteer, visit*

**[www.rebuildingtogethertulsa.org](http://www.rebuildingtogethertulsa.org)**

**918-742-6241**

