

## Weekend warriors ready to Rebuild Together

Written by

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More than [300](#) people in Farmington and Farmington Hills will not be mowing their lawns, running errands, watching TV or doing other “Saturday” things this weekend.

Instead, they'll be painting, trimming bushes, ripping out old kitchen cabinets, replacing floors, hanging new doors and more — at 10 homes in the community owned by residents who can really use the help.

It's all part of Rebuilding Together Oakland County, which will deploy about 1,400 volunteers countywide on Saturday at 50 homes that are in need of repairs.

Farmington Hills resident Sharon Miracle is excited and grateful for the help she'll receive at her home on Purdue, in the area of Nine Mile and Middlebelt.

She has two bad knees; she has a job, but doesn't have enough money to make needed repairs and improvements to her 1946 bungalow.

Crews will paint and ventilate her bathroom, paint the hallway and two bedrooms, paint the exterior foundation, lay a weed barrier outside and mulch, replace exterior doors and replace rotted trim on the garage.

Last year, the volunteers replaced her garage roof and made other repairs.

“I love them,” she said. “Honestly, I have never in my life — and, I've been working since I was 17 — asked for help. I never thought that complete strangers would come in and help me ... I just feel so blessed and I thank God.

“I love these men — they're so kind, so understanding and so great. And, the volunteers, they're wonderful people, all of them.”

### How it works

A local steering committee is in charge of projects at nine Farmington Hills homes and one Farmington home. The steering committee identifies eligible homes, finds volunteers, helps raise [funds](#) and organizes the work day activities.

Homes that are eligible have to be owner-occupied; the homeowner must be low income, according to HUD standards; and the needed repairs must be within the scope of the volunteer workers' abilities.

“We're not Extreme Makeover,” said Dan Harman of Farmington Hills, who is a board member for Rebuilding Together Oakland County.

Projects are identified locally by Rick Lampi, who was community development director for Farmington Hills prior to his retirement.

“Rick looks at the projects and at the teams, and assigns the teams to the houses,” said Harman.

The volunteers come from local churches, youth groups, businesses and [civic](#) organizations. They'll have a kickoff rally at 8 a.m. at Farmington Hills City Hall. Individual volunteers are welcome, too.

Harman said Saturday is the annual work day, but he noted that volunteers spend a lot of time prepping for the day. Donations are sought, materials are purchased — some are donated by The Home Depot and Lowe's — and materials are dropped off at the sites prior to Saturday's work day.

This year, major contributions came from Eaton Corporation of Southfield, Talmer Bank, Ameriprise [Financial](#), LOC Credit Union and the City of Farmington Hills.

“If the municipality works with you, you can get this done,” said Al Kaczowski, Rebuilding Together Oakland County executive director. “(Farmington Hills city officials) see the potential and they make it work.”

So far, 80 homes in Farmington Hills have benefitted from the program since it branched out to Farmington Hills a decade ago.

Volunteers are key

Kaczowski said the program wouldn't be possible without the hundreds of volunteers who give so freely of their time and talents.

“These people just give of themselves,” he said. “Dan and Rick are volunteers — Rick works endlessly to help people in this community. The only thing that's in it for them is to be able to help other people.”

Harman said he became involved 10 years ago, after he retired.

“I was looking for something to do, to give back,” he said.

He enjoys Rebuilding Together Oakland County because it's local, it's hands-on and he can meet the people they're helping.

“It's such an energizing process,” he said. “You see homeowners with tears in their eyes — it's something you can feel. It's a very rewarding experience.”

Harman said they've actually had homeowners who were helped by Rebuilding Together in the past, volunteer to help at other homes.

Lampi noted that it's not just the homeowner who benefits from Rebuilding Together — the neighborhood benefits from the improvements, too.

Spreading the word

The Rebuilding Together Oakland County has a website, which was designed recently by Mike Lawson of Farmington, who works for Element X Studios. It features everything anyone would ever want to know about Rebuilding Together Oakland County, which is an affiliate of the national program.

There are also tabs on the site where people can donate or sign up to volunteer.

Lawson, on Saturday, plans to collect testimonials and photos from the work sites, to post on the website.

Kaczkowski said they're also branching out with social media such as [Facebook](#) and electronic newsletters.

“This is a new focus and will help us meet more needs as we continue,” he said, noting for every dollar donated, they see a \$4 return in materials and labor.

Visit [www.rebuildingtogether-oaklandcounty.org](http://www.rebuildingtogether-oaklandcounty.org) for more information on how to become a part of Rebuilding Together Oakland County.

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