

Rebuilding Together provides vital fix-up help

Pacific County chapter takes hammer to housing trouble

By DAMIAN MULINIX
For EO Media Group

OCEAN PARK, Wash. — Looking at the pile of old, rotted-out, water-logged wood that used to be Dot Wilks' back porch, it's obvious why it needed to be replaced. What may not have been so obvious is that the 82-year-old did a portion of the work herself.

"I'd take the hammer to loosen the nails and water would squirt out," she explained recently.

"She's a pisto! She can do anything, but she can't do it all!" said Joe Cade of Wilks, who had pulled some of the boards herself before his team of volunteers arrived to replace it recently.

Cade is the president of the Pacific County affiliate of Rebuilding Together, a national organization that focuses on helping low-income people stay in their homes. And Wilks' back porch is one of 30 free projects done by the group each year.

The case of the soggy back porch

"When I moved here it was a triangle porch and I made it square," said Wilks, who moved into her manufactured home in Ocean Park in 2003.

She said she used some boards that were originally on her front porch to build it.

"I've done most everything with zero finances, and that's why it rotted, because I used the old stuff," she said, adding that a few years ago she might have been able to do all the work her-



Photos by Damian Mulnix/For EO Media Group
Carpenter Jake Houseman takes measurements during a Rebuilding Together project in Ocean Park, Wash., recently.

self. "I just can't get up if I get down. My knee absolutely just gave up on me."

Wilks is a second time recipient of work from Rebuilding Together, having previously had part of her roof worked on. And the porch, which is the only way to get out the back door of her home, became dangerous.

"Dot stepped out that back door and her foot almost went through the deck. It was really bad," said Cade.

Keep them safe and warm

For the local chapter of Rebuilding Together, Cade said

they make most of their decisions based on two things.

"Keep them safe and warm," he explained. "We don't do things for aesthetic reasons."

There are some 220 affiliates of Rebuilding Together spread throughout the United States. Cade said their work is available and free to low-income homeowners of any age, but added that most of their clients in Pacific County tend to be 55 and older.

"To live in a home, especially here at the coast, you have to do stuff to your home probably once a week. There are nails rusting right now at my house



Kelly Rupp, a volunteer with Rebuilding Together, holds his pencil between his teeth while cutting boards during a recent project.

— and you can hear them!" said Cade. "But a lot of people don't have the knowledge or the ability to do a lot of that stuff."

The other thing that tends to keep people from home upkeep is money, and that comes into play sometimes, even for Rebuilding Together.

"We can't do everything for everybody," Cade explained. "We will only do (projects that cost) up to 25 percent of the value of the home. And that really comes into play when someone needs a new roof."

Cade said the only way to get it done is to share some of the cost with either the owner or another party.

"For example, last year (a client's) bathroom repair was going to be like \$3,000, but her house was not worth that much. But her granddaughter and niece pitched in and gave us some money," said Cade.

National, local planning

Rebuilding Together, on a national level, will often set aside a week or month (usually in April), when most of the projects are done. However, with fewer volunteers out here on the rural coast, they can only do the projects when they have

the people to do them. Cade was happy to note that the Ocean Park Moose Lodge has committed volunteers to do projects with them in August, which is when the local chapter will do their next round of work. That is, unless there's an emergency.

"Somebody's water heater goes, or it's raining and their roof is leaking," said Cade.

The group is reliant solely on donations and volunteers. Sometimes it's a large donation from a donor like the Quarter Foundation. But just as often it is in-kind donations and donations of labor. However, Cade said they can't take donations of materials because they do not have a facility for storing them between projects.

"We've done about 18 projects so far this year," he said.

The student and the master

When Kelly Rupp became involved with Rebuilding Together it was a way for him to give back to the community.

"There was a pretty wide network of folks saying, 'Hey, would you be interested in this?'" he said.

But what he'd also tell you is that he is also getting a free

education in the process.

You see, Rupp gets to work with professionals who have taught him new techniques and knowledge while working together on Rebuilding Together projects.

"The appeal for laypeople like me, is the opportunity to learn something and engage in some skills-building for ourselves. We clearly get something out of it," he said.

During the project to rebuild Wilks back porch, he got to work with professional carpenter Jake Houseman.

"Jake is a star," said Cade. "He's committed to this community. This is his way of doing service."

Rupp pointed out that a technique for sawing wood that Houseman showed him earlier that day, "Will change my life. And I have Jake to thank for that."

The projects themselves are all small-scale enough that volunteers get the satisfaction of seeing their work completed.

"They're all one- or two-day projects, so you can clearly see the results of your work very quickly. Simple stuff. Very practical," said Rupp, who has already painted a house and patched a roof.

"We did quite an extensive job on a house last year — support beams, installing windows, trimming them out, painting," said Houseman, who has been volunteering with the group for the last three years.

"In some cases, until you get into the project, you just don't know what you're dealing with," said Rupp.

For more information on the Pacific County affiliate of Rebuilding Together, call 971-322-9526 or email pacific-coastcadesm@gmail.com



Lyra Fontaine/The Daily Astorian
Chloe Zimmerman sold fresh fruit, veggies and herbs from Glory B Farms at the Seaside Farmers Market.



Lyra Fontaine/The Daily Astorian
Scott Thompson from Blackberry Bog Farm in Svensen displays rows of fresh herbs and produce.



Lyra Fontaine/The Daily Astorian
Angi Wildt displayed a variety of wines from Nehalem Bay Winery at the Seaside Farmers Market.

Fresh food: 'We've had people here from California and Nebraska'

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"It's a much better location," said master gardener Yvonne Whitney. "We've had people here from California and Nebraska." For Scott Thompson, co-owner of Blackberry Bog Farm, it's important for people to know where their food comes from.

"To me, the local part is important," he said.

The fresh flowers, produce and herbs he sells at the stand were grown 45 minutes away, in Svensen. The farm also raises Thanksgiving turkeys and chickens.

Thompson said the new location provided more tourist traffic, but not much difference in local customers.

Angi Wildt, of Nehalem Bay Winery, said the market had more activity this year and she enjoys talking to travelers.

"There are more vendors, but it's still growing," she said. "I love Seaside and want to see this grow. You get to know the other vendors and it gets friendly."

Although one of three sisters donning aprons that said "The Veggie Girls" were in charge of the stand for Glory B Farms, from Grays River, Washington, Chloe Zimmerman said she does not do any farming.

"We just have a farmer for a dad," she said, adding that working the stand was her sum-



Lyra Fontaine/The Daily Astorian
Two Crows Joy performs at the first Cannon Beach market.

mer job. "We wanted to get involved in a new market."

Strawberries, rhubarb, greens, beets, peas and herbs were on display.

Autumn Barnett, of Hummingbird Creations, sells unique plants in driftwood and moss balls, as well as dog treats.

Grace Body Essentials, Twig's Munch

Wagon, Sea Star Gelato, Notoriously Nutz and Three Little Birds Bakery were among other vendors at the market.

Cannon Beach

On its first farmers market day in June, Two Crows Joy played as local vendors welcomed visitors — despite wind, hail and rain — to a new season of organic produce, food trucks and sweet treats.

"We've been here since the Cannon Beach market started," said Anne Berblinger, with Gales Meadow Farm. "We've had the same customers year after year, and we also talk to visitors from all over the world."

Popcorn, jams, brittle by Sweet Treats By George, microgreens and sourdough from Nightlight Farm, goat cheese, hummus and pita chips, and wines from The Wine Shack were some offerings. "It's a nice mix of tourists and locals," said Market Manager Philomena Lloyd.

The market has about 25 vendors total and each week has a community booth. American Red Cross will be at the market Tuesday, and Cannon Beach Library and Tolovana Arts Colony will be there on July 19.

Local magician Brett Willyard will be at most markets engaging families in magic tricks.

The Cannon Beach market has three prepared food booths: Hello Waffle, O Falafel and Northwest Roll and Bowl.

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