

# From paint to plants, ‘Rebuilding Together’ helps elderly homeowners



Members of the Rotary Club of Los Gatos were at 93-year-old Louise Blanton’s Blossom Hill home last Wednesday, prepping it for re-painting on Saturday. Rotarian David Karwowski, left, is shown here with Louise Blanton and her daughter Teresa as he preps the house for painting. (George Sakkestad/Staff Photographer)

By **JUDY PETERSON** | [jpeterson@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:jpeterson@bayareanewsgroup.com) | [Bay Area News Group](#)

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A contingent of about 70 Los Gatos volunteers were up early Saturday morning to paint an elderly resident’s home as part of Rebuilding Together Silicon Valley’s fall workday. Rebuilding Together is a nonprofit construction company that provides free home repairs to low-income

seniors and disabled homeowners in Los Gatos, Saratoga and other parts of Santa Clara County.

Locally, the Oct. 28 rebuilding day was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Los Gatos, whose volunteers answered the call from 94-year-old Louise Blanton on Blossom Hill Road. In addition to the Rotary club members, the Los Gatos High School Interact Club, Leigh High School Boy Scouts, Los Gatos Morning Rotarians and other community members rounded out the volunteer effort.

Nine Rotary members prepped Blanton's home in advance of the workday by pulling out dead bushes and trimming live ones, and preparing the home's exterior for painting.

"I don't know how I got to be so lucky," Blanton said. "I can't believe this is happening. It knocks me over."

Blanton purchased her home more than 50 years ago for \$30,000 and raised her two children there. Her husband is deceased, so her daughter Teresa is her live-in caretaker.

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It was Teresa Blanton who applied to have her mom's home fixed by Rebuilding Together.

"I never dreamed it would come out like this," she said.

"This is a great way to build community," Rotary president Suzanne Boxer-Gassman said. "It's nice for people to see us give of ourselves, and we walk away feeling really good at the end of the day."

After Rebuilding Together's Terry Gallo spoke to the Rotary club, Boxer-Gassman wrote a grant to fund a project, and Rotary kicked in another \$8,500.

Rebuilding Together's Executive Director Bev Jackson said her organization receives about \$260,000 annually in federal funds that are dispersed to Santa Clara County. The county, in turn, passes the money on to communities like Los Gatos.

So, funding for repairs to Blanton's home came from a mix of those funds and the Rotary funds.

"That's why partnerships with groups like Rotary are so important," Jackson said. "We're able to leverage our funding with volunteers to impact even more people."

All told, 38 homes and two nonprofit facilities were repaired during Saturday's rebuilding day.

Rebuilding Together also sponsors a Spring Rebuilding Day, as well as the Safe at Home program that focuses on fall prevention, mobility and accessibility improvements, weatherization and energy efficiency, and fire safety.

Prior to the rebuilding day, Blanton received some "critical safe at home repairs," Gallo said.

"She got a shower seat, a new handrail, and we repaired her flooring because it was a tripping hazard," Gallo said. "We also installed 10-year smoke and carbon monoxide detectors."

Safe at Home repairs are done year-round, with preference given to senior citizens, low-income and disabled homeowners.

In addition to the home repairs and new exterior paint, Blanton's front yard was beautified with low-maintenance plants and bark.

Rebuilding Together's service area also includes Campbell, Cupertino, Gilroy, Milpitas, Morgan Hill, San Jose, Santa Clara, San Martin and unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County.

Visit [rebuildingtogethersv.org](http://rebuildingtogethersv.org) for more information.

Visit [www.losgatosrotary.org](http://www.losgatosrotary.org) for more information.