

# Rebuilding & Uplifting the Community

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Helping each other and helping communities packs a big punch when muscle, enthusiasm and generous donations come together.

It's the biannual Rebuilding Together Day, April 27, a day to come together to provide critical home repair and maintenance for seniors, low-income, disable residents and many non-profit organizations such as the Uplift Family Services located in Los Gatos.

South Bay Realtor Rebecca Jepsen of Alain Pinel Realtors in Saratoga is rolling up her sleeves this year to help this non-profit beneficiary that has been a lifesaver for thousands of families recovering from trauma, homelessness, poverty, addictions and more. Her "team" of volunteers fondly called "Rebecca's Rockin' Rebuilders" will take on a few much-needed projects, such as creating a pathway connecting the main campus to a small cottage on the grounds. Her team will also demo two bathrooms in the structure and make way for future repairs and a complete renovation of the cottage to be affectionately named The Cameron House after Donaldina Cameron. Cameron was the driving force behind the building of the Ming Quong Home, an orphanage to protect young Chinese girls back in 1925 and a precursor to the Uplift Family Services.

The cottage, says Maricris Niles, Uplift's Bay Area Regional Projects Manager, is all about "providing a place of warmth and a place of hope for families to be

near their children."

"Every aspect of my life is really about building community, and nothing is more meaningful than getting people together to do good work," says Jepsen. Getting involved with Rebuilding Together to benefit Uplift was as natural for her as serving on the Los Gatos Jazz on the Plazz committee, or serving on the public safety task force for Saratoga.

Being involved is in her blood and, she says, engaging in this latest project right in her own backyard "feels really good." Her team members include fellow master gardener Monique Frappier, Heath Vaught, Contractor Doug Gilbert, Nancy Kirk, and Teri Hope, owner of The Los Gatos Roasting Company.

Uplift Family Services has been helping children and families for the past 150 years. Its humble beginnings as an orphanage and a home providing residential services for abused and neglected children removed from the families by court order has evolved over the years into today's comprehensive and innovative family-centered treatment program that provides services to more than 30,000 children and families per year throughout 30 counties in California. The largest area of service remains right here in the Bay Area where it all began, according to Niles.

Uplift provides help for addiction prevention, adoption, autism spectrum disorder services, behavioral school services, continuum of crisis care, family therapeutic services, outpatient mental health services, programs to help high-risk children and

adolescents, and more. All the services aim to keep families together.

This is the second year in a row that Uplift Family Services has been chosen as a beneficiary of the Rebuilding Together Day, says Niles.

Because its budget has little to do with beautifying the campus, she says, they appreciate being chosen for these projects. Last year's volunteers installed floors, carpets, and window covering at Uplift's San Jose campus in rooms that are dedicated to children and family therapy. A fresh coat of paint also was added to update the rooms.

"Volunteers give life to our mission," says Niles, "and without action, our mission is just words."

"I want to make a difference in people's lives and get involved with more than just my checkbook," says Jepsen, despite the fact that she is donating \$5,000 of her own money for the project. Her goal for the project is to double that amount, and invites anyone who may not be able to come out and swing a hammer or lift a shovel to help match that donation.

Rebuilding Together Silicon Valley Executive Director Beverley Jackson says April's Rebuilding Day will engage more than 1,000 volunteers including Jepsen's team to benefit 30 families and six non-profit community facilities. This effort, she adds, will in turn benefit a whopping 8,079 community members which is a 20 percent increase in projects from last year's National Building Day.

"We are committed to helping homeowners in need to maintain their homes, ensuring they have



Photo courtesy of Beverly Jackson

Pictured are volunteers from a previous Rebuilding Together Day.

not just a house, but a safe and healthy home," says Jackson. The average client is 74 years old and is living well below the poverty level and about 91 percent of the clients are seniors and/or disabled she adds.

"Rebuilding Day leverages the willing hands and hearts of community volunteers to make a difference in our community," Repairs to nonprofit facilities, she adds, allow those organizations to focus resources on serving the community rather than facility maintenance."

Three critical ways to help the effort include volunteering to roll up your sleeves and help paint, clean, landscape, and more. Trade professionals are welcomed to lend their expertise in areas of plumbing, construction, roofing and more. Gather a team of fellow employees, faith community or service organization members and sponsor a specific project or come together to work on projects. You can also donate materials and monies to the cause, or let them know of someone

who could use its services, and apply or recommend someone for assistance.

The scope and impact of Rebuilding Together Silicon Valley has grown over the past 27 years, says Jackson. Annually, it completes more than 420 projects in homes and for non-profits benefitting 15,000 community members. The 2019 goal is to complete work at 440 projects.

April 27 is "game day", says Jepsen. "I am truly excited and lit up," she says in her typical zealous voice. "I have been very blessed both in my life and in my business, and I believe that if you have done well - you need to do good." This is something, she adds, that "I will be involved in for the rest of my life." To join her team or make a donation, contact Jepsen at [rjepsen@apr.com](mailto:rjepsen@apr.com).

For more information about Rebuilding Together Silicon Valley, visit [www.rebuildingtogethersv.org](http://www.rebuildingtogethersv.org).

Visit [www.upliftfs.org](http://www.upliftfs.org) for information about Uplift Family Services or to make

a donation to its "donation bucket" to help support the needs of children and their families such as help with rent or the cost of sports camps. You can also support this non-profit by shopping at The Butter Paddle gift store at 33 N. Santa Cruz Ave., in downtown Los Gatos, or the Happy Dragon Thrift Shop at 245 W. Main St. also in Los Gatos.

