



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Kym Luqman, Executive Director
(510) 625-0316 Ext 101
Kym@RTOakland.org

SAFE-AT-HOME PROGRAM ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF 250TH HOME

Oakland, CA – March 12, 2009 – Rebuilding Together Oakland (RTO) announced today the completion of its 250th Safe-At-Home house. Every 18 seconds, an older adult is treated in an emergency department for a fall, and every 35 minutes someone in this population dies as a result of their injuries. Falls are the leading cause of injury in seniors age 65 and over. One-third of these falls are attributed to hazards in the home; hazards that could often be avoided if homes were modified. Rebuilding Together Oakland's Safe at Home program makes the modifications and accessibility improvements — free of charge — that enable low-income elderly homeowners to avoid falls or injury and age comfortably and safely in their own homes.

In 2006 RTO extended its home repair services to the Oakland community with the launch of the Safe-At-Home program. Safe-At-Home is a year-round service which provides free home modifications and ramps for elderly and disabled homeowners in Oakland, and addresses in-home safety, accessibility and falls prevention. In addition to the 250 home modifications, RTO has built over a dozen wheelchair ramps. With a few simple changes to one's home, the risk of falls and other injuries can be greatly reduced and seniors and the disabled can remain safe, mobile, and independent. These modifications also prevent secondary injuries suffered by spouses, family members and care givers, who often carry and assist a feeble person and may injure themselves in the process.

According to Kym Luqman, Executive Director of RTO, "We are excited about the success of our year-round Safe At Home program. Our primary objective is to make these easy, yet important modifications to the home that will prevent falls and injury to people with changing or limited mobility. This modest investment provides significant returns to the individual and community at large. Individuals get to remain safely at home and the community at large benefits when the financial resources for institutionalization and hospitalization are not required."

Safe At Home volunteers work for a few hours to install accessibility aids such as grab bars, handrails, door and faucet grips, raised toilet seats, shower bench assist units, and safety lights. They also correct other safety hazards as needed and install fire extinguishers and CO2/smoke detectors. Kym Luqman noted that "Rebuilding Together Oakland provides training to Safe at Home volunteers. We are grateful to the volunteers that have dedicated their time to this important program. The Safe At Home program provides a year round opportunity for our RTO volunteers to give back to the community and help elderly and disabled homeowners feel safe in their homes."

There is a clear need for these types of services in the Oakland community. It is difficult for homeowners and social service agencies to find reliable and cost effective service providers to do these types of projects. We've found that many seniors are particularly fearful of letting strangers that are not associated with a trustworthy organization into their home. RTO works with several social service agencies that refer qualified clients in need, including Center for Elders Independence, BACS, Alameda County Public Health and Kaiser Permanente. We also aim to build the trust of seniors in the Oakland community so they will spread the word about our services in addition to recommending us to their friends. Through word of mouth we can reach more people in need.

About Rebuilding Together Oakland

Rebuilding Together (formerly Christmas in April) is the largest volunteer rehabilitation organization in America, providing free services to low-income homeowners, particularly the elderly, disabled and families with children. The Rebuilding Together Oakland (RTO) affiliate was established in 1993. Since then, RTO has renovated and modified over 650 homes and 80 community facilities in Oakland by mobilizing over 2,000 volunteers annually.

For more information about Safe At Home and Rebuilding Together Oakland, please contact Kym Luqman at 510-625-0316 ext. 101 or visit www.rtoakland.org.