

Rebuild Toledo And Home Depot Offer A Do-It-Yourself Degree

Residents of Toledo, OH, are gaining hands-on experience in home repair and improvement thanks to an innovative partnership between Neighborhood Housing Services of Toledo (NHS) and The Home Depot.

NHS, lead partner in **Rebuild Toledo**, expanded its HomeOwnership Center to offer The Home Depot University, a series of eight classes covering weatherization, drywall, painting, plumbing, electrical, landscaping and other topics.

“Home improvement and maintenance is not something people inherently know,” said Rebuild Toledo Manager **Paulette Huber**. “People are interested in improving the value of their homes and making them more attractive and comfortable. This is a way to learn from the experts.”



Kathy Parker and Scott Main grout tile.



Group learns the finer points of staining wood.

Giving Back to Communities

The partnership began in early 1999, when Huber approached Home Depot with the idea for taking their training program out of the store and into the community.

“The Home Depot is dedicated to giving back to the communities where we work and live,” said **Jim Watson**, Toledo Home Depot store manager. Since the first classes began in May, the company has donated more than \$22,000 in materials, cash and labor.

The free classes are held in the evenings in a house that NHS is renovating, which Huber said makes a difference: “There’s a tremendous sense of satisfaction because people are working on a real house, not a set.”

Each series of classes enrolls about 25 people; the four held to date have all been full. The Home Depot experts provide tips, materials lists, safety information and complete instructions.

Participants who attend at least seven classes receive a free copy of the how-to book, *Home Improvement 1-2-3*.

Building with a Fresh Perspective

Since its founding in 1977, NHS has focused on home ownership as the key to community redevelopment. Their services include homebuyer education, mortgage and improvement loan programs, and residential weatherization programs.

Huber said a large part of their work involves creating affordable, energy-efficient housing that gives people the choice of staying downtown. After acquiring houses in central city neighborhoods, NHS either does a complete rehab or tears them down to build new homes.

“Before joining Rebuild America, we built to code,” Huber said. “Now we have a fresh perspective and the impetus to build energy-efficient homes that serve our clients even better than before. We’ve done three ENERGY STAR® homes and have 18 more slated.”

Home Depot University was a logical next step for NHS, according to Huber. While NHS had offered many classes on the home-buying process, they hadn’t focused on owning a home. Now they’re taking a comprehensive approach to energy efficiency.

“Right now, this is the only program of its kind in the country,” Huber said. “But it is replicable across Rebuild America. There is an effort by Home Depot to build partnerships like ours nationwide, and they need to find non-profits to talk to.”

For more information, contact Paulette Huber at 419-691-2900 or e-mail rebuildtoledo@toledolink.com.



Joanne Wilson learns to cut ceramic tile.



Ribbon cutting for first ENERGY STAR® modular home in Ohio.