

Rebuilding Together Express

Volunteer Teams Are Making Home Repairs Year-Round To Help Low-Income Homeowners Age in Place

For the past 28 years, Rebuilding Together Arlington/Fairfax/Falls Church (RT-AFF) has mobilized teams of volunteers and skilled contractors to make free home repairs for low-income homeowners, veterans, persons with disabilities, and families with children. About 80% of our clients are seniors who want to stay in their homes and age in place safely and comfortably.

Our repairs and accessibility modifications are designed to make homes safe and healthy. Older homes in poor condition pose higher risks for: falls, fires, moisture and ventilation problems, allergens and other asthma triggers, carbon monoxide, and other toxic exposures.

Our traditional repair teams come from corporations, small businesses, and civic and faith-based organizations. In FY2017 RT-AFF repaired 73 homes and nonprofit facilities, with 25 volunteer teams completing projects on National Rebuilding Day, our signature event the last weekend in April. But RT-AFF is striving to help more low-income homeowners who need critical home repairs – and to respond more rapidly.

Our new delivery system called **Rebuilding Together Express** is mobilizing small teams of volunteers to complete targeted repairs throughout the year to help seniors age in place. **RT Express** teams deliver a menu of 30 targeted repairs, which are selected for their significant health and safety benefits, affordable cost, and relatively low skills required.

A growing cadre of skilled volunteers is working regularly on **RT Express** projects, which are scheduled on weekends as well as weekdays. RT-AFF assembles individual volunteer teams to provide the skills that each home needs. A volunteer Team Leader ensures each project's success by: assessing the home, developing the statement of work, assembling tools and materials, leading repairs, coordinating with the homeowner, and reporting the results. RT-AFF provides training, coaching, and support to volunteers with strong skills who are interested in becoming a Team Leader.

RT Express teams are helping RT-AFF help many more low-income homeowners – and to respond much more rapidly to meet their needs. To qualify for free home repairs, RT-AFF's clients must own their home and make less than 80% of the Area Median Income (about \$52,550 for one person and \$60,050 for two). Most of our clients are very low income, and 70% have a disability.

For additional information, call 703-528-1999 or visit rebuildingtogether-aff.org.

RT Express projects are designed for a team of 4-5 volunteers to complete in about half a day. A four-page Home Assessment Checklist provides a systematic way for Team Leaders to assess homes to identify health and safety hazards, design needed repairs, and purchase materials. RT-AFF offers our volunteers hands-on training, detailed specs, and step-by-step instructions.

RT Express teams deliver a standard set of repairs, including the following:

Fall Safety

- Install grab bars
- Install double handrails on stairs
- Replace toilets with comfort height
- Correct tripping hazards
- Improve lighting

Fire Safety

- Install Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Provide fire extinguishers
- Install GFCI electric outlets in kitchens and baths

Moisture and Ventilation

- Clean and repair gutters and downspouts (1-story homes)
- Repair exhaust fans in kitchens and bathrooms
- Fix defective clothes dryer vents
- Seal gaps, cracks and holes
- Provide furnace filters

Security

- Ensure house numbers are visible from the street
- Repair exterior doors and windows to lock securely

Energy Efficiency

- Seal air leaks
- Provide LED bulbs
- Vacuum refrigerator coils

RT Express teams will correct other health and safety hazards identified and address other homeowner priorities to the extent possible within their budget, timeline, and skillset.

RT Express teams will refer homes with health and safety hazards that require more extensive repairs to RT-AFF for follow-up by our traditional program, professional contractors, our cadre of “handymen,” and/or referral to Fairfax County Home Repair for the Elderly Program.