

Faith communities unite to build home and relationships



Written by Risa Biggar - Special to the Town Crier

TUESDAY, 24 MAY 2011



Photo Courtesy Of Risa Beggar Cindy Jarvis and Allen Grimes of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Mountain View help out on All Faiths Work Day.

Imagine a place where people of different faiths – Muslim, Jewish, Christian – work together to achieve a common goal. Although it may sound utopian, this very thing is occurring right here in Silicon Valley.

For the first time, Habitat for Humanity Silicon Valley will sponsor the building of an All Faiths House. The single-family home, to be constructed on land donated by the city of Cupertino and seeded with \$250,000 from the city, is one of four new environmentally green homes that Habitat will build on a vacant lot located on Cleo

Avenue near Highway 85. Construction is scheduled to begin in the fall.

The Cupertino All Faiths House implements Habitat for Humanity founder Millard Fuller's concept of "The Theology of the Hammer." Fuller believed that while people may have several areas of disagreement, "we can all agree on the idea of building homes [for] God's people in need."

The local project invites diverse faith communities in Santa Clara County to demonstrate coexistence through building a home for a family in need. Together, the local faith groups will provide financial support and volunteer labor.

And – possibly, they'll build a community while they're at it.

"We intend to have a lot of fun with the 'All Faiths' aspect of this Habitat project," said Leslie Carmichael, member of Los Altos United Methodist Church and one of the coordinators of the Mountain View/Los Altos/Los Altos Hills All Faiths Alliance. "Each work day will include people from

different faith communities. We'll have breakfast and lunch together, and hopefully even enjoy some lunchtime musical entertainment from one of the congregations. It's a great way to appreciate the diversity."

The need for affordable housing is critical in Santa Clara County. A study released in 2007 by San Jose State's Institute for Metropolitan Studies estimates that 4,500 new affordable housing units would be required in the county over the next 20 years.

"The 'All Faiths House' project is a great way for people to contribute toward meeting the need for housing in our community," Carmichael said. "Like most volunteer projects, each individual's contribution may not seem like much, but when you put it all together, it adds up."

Habitat for Humanity Silicon Valley has divided the county into geographic All Faiths Alliances, which are expected to raise at least \$150,000 toward building supplies and supply at least half the volunteers needed to complete the house. In addition to Los Altos United Methodist Church, the local alliance currently includes approximately 10 congregations, including St. Nicholas and St. Simon Catholic churches, Congregation Beth Am and the Los Altos Ward of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"Building a house is a great accomplishment in itself," said Don Varney, Habitat's Faith Relations Manager, "but even more important are the relationships and friendships that are forged through the faith groups working together."

Interested congregations can contact Varney at dvarney@hfhsv.org.

No construction experience is needed. A variety of other contributions are essential: fundraising, preparing and serving meals at the construction site, checking in workers and cleaning up the site.

Habitat Silicon Valley has scheduled a dinner to learn how to be a part of this opportunity. All are welcome to attend the All Faiths Alliance Dinner 6 p.m. June 4 at Los Altos United Methodist Church, 655 Magdalena Ave. Cost is \$12 per person. Children under 6 are free. Purchase tickets online at: allfaithsdinner.eventbrite.com.

For more information, contact Leslie Carmichael at carm-lee@pacbell.net.

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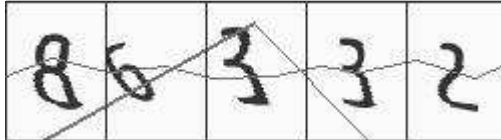
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