

Volunteers' workday to improve homes for 12 area seniors

By SARA PLUMMER
World Staff Writer

Ruth Noble sits happily in her kitchen as boards and lumber are moved from her living room to her hallway. She watches the two men work because she can't look out her windows; they are covered with a foggy plastic.

The 95-year-old doesn't mind the clutter. In fact, she could not be happier.

"I'm so excited about the changes," Noble said. "It's wonderful."

Noble's midtown home, along with 10 others, will be renovated on Saturday. Rebuilding Together Tulsa's annual workday.

The event is expected to draw 400 volunteers, and all 11 homes will be repaired and made more accessible to their owners by the end of the day.

Rebuilding Executive Director Deanna Boston said the homes belong to low-income seniors.

"A lot of them are overwhelmed that someone is doing all this for them for free," Boston said. "They are so grateful."

Noble is just that. "I couldn't afford to do it, so I am so thankful for the people who are doing it for me; they are wonderful people," she said.

Boston said Noble recently broke her hip, and the repairs and improvements to her home will make it more accessible and safer for her.

Noble's son, Lonnie Tate, said he is overwhelmed by the work that will be done to his mother's house, where she has lived for 62 years.

"It's great. I'm 70, about to turn 71, and I'm getting too old to be over here fixing things,"

For more information on Rebuilding Together Tulsa or to volunteer, call 742-6241.

Tate said.

He is leaving the work to the professionals, who include Barry Helms, president of the Remodelers Council of the Homebuilders Association of Greater Tulsa, and Ken Saltink of All American Remodel.

Saltink is co-captain of the Noble home project. He said the repairs will include putting on a new roof, replacing damaged siding, installing new doors, laying carpet, replacing windows, adding handrails in the bathroom, installing smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, painting the exterior of the house and installing new kitchen appliances.

Boston said \$12,000 worth of materials for Noble's home has been donated. In fact, Rebuilding Together Tulsa's entire budget for the workday is only \$150,000.

"We couldn't do this without the donations," she said.

Local businesses donate funds and time to the project by encouraging employees to volunteer.

Rebuilding Together Tulsa also serves Tulsa seniors throughout the year by installing roofs, handrails and wheelchair ramps.

"If they need a roof or a wheelchair ramp, those things can't wait till next year," Boston said. Noble can't wait either.

"It will be like stepping into a new home," she said.

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Homeowner Ruth Noble (left) stands with Ken Saltink, Barry Helms and Deanna Boston, the people responsible for her home being repaired on Rebuilding Together Tulsa's Annual Workday on Saturday.

Union teacher wins state honor

Alternative School instructor youngest to win Walker Award

By MIKE AVERILL
World Staff Writer

Michael Murray was the kind of kid who never got in trouble in school and did not have any problems with his home life.

In fact, it wasn't until he took his first teaching job at the Union Alternative School that he heard about alternative education.

But once he got into the classroom, he became enamored with the students.

"When they told me about the alternative school, I thought those were exactly the kids I want to work with," he said. "I look at these kids, and they're just the same as any others. They just have situations outside of the classroom that make it difficult for them."

The Oklahoma Alternative Education Association recently recognized Murray's efforts by awarding him with the Janice Updike Walker Award.

The award is given annually to an outstanding alternative education practitioner.

"It's a big honor, but I feel unworthy," Murray said. "There are people in the building that I look up to and say, 'I want to be a teacher like that.'"

Murray, who has taught science at Union Alternative School, 5656 S. 129th East Ave., for six years, said the key to his success is putting in the extra effort outside the classroom.

"The misconception is we work



MIKE AVERILL / Tulsa World

Michael Murray (left) explains the day's lesson plan to Christy Noah and her classmates at the Union Alternative School.

from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., but there's a whole lot more work than that," he said. "Even the summers are spent researching and evaluating my lessons and looking at ways to make changes."

Principal Richard Storm said Murray was deserving of the award.

"Michael epitomizes the creativity, intelligence and versatility that are the hallmarks of the best and brightest in the new genera-

tion of alternative educators," Storm said. "I think he's an excellent practitioner and a brilliant mind, and he works extremely hard."

Murray, the youngest recipient of the award, said his favorite part of teaching is watching his students succeed.

"Being able to see a kid who's had no success in school come into my classroom and be respected and encouraged and know that they can succeed because I'm here — that's something," he said. "It's a big motivator for me to see I've helped these kids look past their current situation."

Murray also teaches lower-level math classes, but science is where he excels.

"His classroom is a cornucopia of gadgets and gizmos, plants and pots, pulleys and posts, lasers and lamps, rocks and rockets, electrical circuits, half-completed robots, bonsai trees, hovercraft and unidentifiable stuff that some day will find its way into a science project," Storm said.

Botany is Murray's favorite subject to teach, and he always includes a lesson on bonsai trees. During this lesson, Murray brings in trees and lets the students prune them and take them home.

"There are piles of dirt, and they're getting their hands dirty. The whole time they're asking questions they normally wouldn't ask," he said.

Storm said another of Murray's strengths is his presence in the school, outside the classroom.

"Anytime something needs to be done he can do it," he said. "He's a natural teacher."

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