

BROTHERS' KEEPERS

Area roofers donate time, materials, manpower and expertise to Baltimore's Extreme Makeover house

Phil Jacobs

Executive Editor

Steve Zwagil was asking his wife, Phyllis, if she thought his company, Brothers Services Co., should consider building the roof for an upcoming "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" project.

Mr. Zwagil didn't even complete the question when his wife responded, "You've got to do it."

So last Sunday, July 18, with hundreds of volunteers helping to put the finishing touches on a beautiful group home in Overlea in Northeast Baltimore,

Mr. Zwagil, president of Brothers Services, along with colleague Dave MacLean, watched with a feeling of joy and satisfaction as the project came to fruition.

By way of total transparency, I write this article knowing that "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" is my wife Lisa's favorite television show.

Our Sunday evenings are scheduled around the ABC program, which has been helping

to transform the hopes and dreams of families since its first airing in December 2003. Say the phrase, "Move that bus!" and I know exactly what's being referred to.

Brothers Services was called only days prior to the build. It meant, according to Mr. Zwagil, bringing in enough materials and manpower to complete the project in such a short period of time.

Did we mention that "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" houses are finished within a week? According to Mr. Zwagil, the coordination between carpenters, builders, landscapers, plumbers, electricians, and interior and exterior designers has to run like clockwork.

What didn't fit into the schedule, however, was the irony of the whole story. The Baltimore region had been going through a drought at the time. So of course, the week of the build, there had to be a couple of days when the heavens opened up and it didn't just rain--there were damaging, dramatic storms.

Still, the show must go on, so the house must be built.

When Mr. MacLean first arrived with his crew to begin work on the roof, the framing had not





Volunteers, sporting the TV show's shirts, seemed to be all over the place.

been near being finished.

The scene of the street itself was amazing. Volunteers wore blue T-shirts and hard hats. For "Extreme Makeover" followers, the word "Reveal" is common vocabulary.

For the rest of us, the "Reveal" is the time when the "Extreme Makeover" bus blocks the view of the home's awaiting occupants for a final couple of minutes. There, the show's enthusiastic host, Ty Pennington, starts shouting the tear-jerking mantra, "Move that bus!"

The new house or property is then "revealed" to the family, the volunteers and the TV followers.

On a 95-degree, humid day in Baltimore, volunteer workers planted flowers around the property. A steady stream of refuse was moved away from the site. Construction workers with yellow or black plastic cases moved in to finish last-minute interior details. Benjamin Franklin, the Punctual Plumber's company truck, pulled right in front of the house. Neighbors watched patiently from their front

porches as strangers who probably never had spent this much time in Northeast Baltimore walked across their already parched front lawns.

Food was served to volunteers in a tent as security personnel, including one named "Big John," moved spectators away from the house as if he was expecting the meeting of the G-20 Summit. With hours to go until the "Reveal," spectators claimed territory with the same symbol of power used in Baltimore to preserve a parking space after a blizzard, the almighty lawn chair.

Men and women with lanyards and identifying tags dabbled with another in an air of self-importance. Fingers were pointed at windows, doors, roofs, shrubs, flowers and each other.

Framing Wasn't Ready

Mr. Zwagil and Mr. MacLean stood, hard hats on their heads, and watched, knowing that their team had already completed, in a short period of time, what they were asked to do.

"When they told us what they needed, and when we were cleared to begin work, we had allotted to us a 10-hour period to get our work done," said Mr. Zwagil. "We were supposed to start at 8 p.m. and be finished by 6 a.m. They wanted us to get in and get out."

Mr. Zwagil, a Pikesville resident whose family worships at Beth El Congregation, said that building any structure is like putting the pieces of a complex puzzle together.

see *Brothers' Keepers* on page 36

The renovated residence will serve as a new home for the Baltimore organization Boys Hope Girls Hope.

BROTHERS SERVICES 'EXTREME MAKEOVER' HELP BY THE NUMBERS

- Brothers Services donated the installation of the home's new metal, asphalt and rubber roofs
- Over 3,000 pounds of metal
- Metal roofing consisted of 34, 50-foot long panels that had to be hand loaded onto the roof
- Over 3,500 square feet of rubber roofing
- Total labor costs exceeding \$25,000
- Total material costs exceeding \$25,000
- 6,500 square feet of total roofing

MORE 'EXTREME MAKEOVER' FACTS:

- 11,120-square-foot building, making it the largest project in the TV show's history
- Project to benefit Boys Hope Girls Hope, an international charity helping at-risk children in a group home setting
- Organization helps these kids set a path towards high school degrees and then college
- Live Baltimore also provided school supplies for the project
- Alter Communications, the parent company of the BALTIMORE JEWISH TIMES, donated bags filled with book bags, binders, glue sticks, scissors, crayons, colored pencils, copy books, rulers, glue, highlighters and erasers □

Goldberg's Bagels of Pikesville was also onsite helping out. Stanley Drebin brought his well-loved kosher bagels and food for the workers.

"It made me feel very nice that I was helping the total community," said Mr. Drebin.



Brothers' Keepers from page 35

"Invariably, it didn't go as planned," he said. "The structure, the framing wasn't ready for us. Our guys were geared up and ready to go. We got here with about 25 guys. But we had to come back."

Not to mention that Brothers Services had other work it had to do as part of its regular schedule and to meet the contracts of other customers. On top of everything, then came the torrential rainfall, which pushed the project off about 12 to 15 more hours. Mr. MacLean said with a smile that he had to lie down on a tarp on the roof to keep the wind from blowing it away.

"When they yelled, 'Move that bus!'"

the reaction of the young ladies was just overwhelming. They were crying, they were laughing and screaming, they couldn't believe it."

— Steve Zwagil, Brothers Services Co.

Wind and rain, however, didn't keep Brothers Services from getting the job done. Mr. MacLean spent the entire week on the site to make sure that everything was done with craftsmanship and aesthetics.

The "Reveal" was pushed back, because of the weather, from its originally scheduled date of Friday, July 16, to Sunday. Despite the 4 1/2 inches of rainfall, Brothers got 30 workers and some 1,000 man-hours of work to get it done or, as Mr. Zwagil described it, "being in for a penny, in for a pound."

The result was beautiful.

"Giving back to the community is part of the DNA of Brothers Services," said Mr. Zwagil. "Brothers has been around for 25 years. John Martindale, our founder and CEO, has been helping people his entire career. A project such as this one is what we love to do for our community."

"The real heroes here are the people who worked 15-hour days through extreme heat and torrential rains," said Mr. Zwagil.

Mr. Zwagil also spoke about the recipients of his company's



Birds' Eye View: Dave Maclean and Steve Zwagil (right) scan the action from the roof as some of their 30 workers below keep at it during a hectic week.

work. As we found a place in the shade to talk over the week, he wanted it made clear that Brothers Services was working to underscore the word "hope" for Boys Hope Girls Hope, and that his company wanted to make sure that the work it had done will help provide a safe shelter and space to give these children the hope they need to succeed.

"This project gives the kids from the inner city a chance," he said. "We want them to have an environment where they can succeed."

"We at Brothers Services feel the beauty of this *mitzvah*," he continued, "because we know that if we can save one life, it can help save the world."

Mr. Zwagil brought his wife and daughter Alexi

back to the building site later in the day on Sunday. As *besert*, or fate, would dictate, he'd be standing next to the grandmother of one of the soon-to-be occupants of the new home.

"When they yelled, 'Move that bus!' the reaction of the young ladies was just overwhelming. They were crying, they were laughing and screaming, they couldn't believe it," he said. "But then I looked over at the grandmother and the tears were streaming down her face. In that moment, I knew that as a company we had performed a great *mitzvah*." □



PHOTO: KRISTEN BECKERMAN

LENDING A HAND

Local designers and youthful helpers work on project.

By Alyssa Jeffers

Jewish Times Intern

It was a family affair for Aryeh and Fanny Zigdon when Extreme Makeover: Home Edition (EMHO) rolled through Northeast Baltimore last week. With Fanny's background in interior design and Aryeh's construction ability, the two teamed up with the rest of the staff to make this dream home a reality.

After receiving a letter from the boys at Boys Hope Girls Hope for a house for their female counterparts, EMHO surprised the girls on the television show "Good Morning Maryland" on July 8, saying they had been selected to be on the show. The \$1 million home constructed for the girls is the largest in the show's history.

Needing help from local designers, EMHO contacted self-employed interior designer Fanny and asked that she and her associate partner work with the show's designer for the 11,120-square-foot home. "It was a great opportunity to help other people," Mrs. Zigdon said. "Having our own foundation [the Chananya Backer Memorial Fund] set up to help others, this project really hit close to home."

Because she was a local designer, producers approached Fanny and asked if she would help coordinate volunteers. She called in many people to help, including her husband, Aryeh, and his program Jewshave. He had set up the initiative for boys out of high school, either on their way to Israel or just having returned from Israel.

"Summer is a fun time and is known to be a party time. This program was designed to keep the boys on track. Each morning, the boys study Torah for an hour. In the afternoon, they do construction," Mr. Zigdon explained.

When asked why he had the boys go into construction, he said that as he was unsure of college plans, so he wanted to teach them a skill they could use in the future.

Originally scheduled for Friday, July 16, the reveal was delayed until Sunday due to torrential rain. "In order to cut back on time while on site, the walls were delivered with drywall and wiring already installed," Mrs. Zigdon said. "The roof had not been

built by the time it started raining, so the rain destroyed everything. The team had to devote an entire day to removing the damaged drywall."

Mr. Zigdon brought about 30 of his boys to the site to help with the framework, insulation and plywood. While it was raining, one of his boys even caught host Ty Pennington when he fell off a railing. Originally, the boys were only supposed to help out for six hours at a time. With all the extra work that needed to be done after the rain, some of the boys ended up staying until the early hours of the morning.

Before the boys went on site, Shui Steinharter and Elazar Engle from AEG Remodeling taught the boys everything they needed to know for the job. They even donated their time and helped on site.

Both Zigdons remarked on how much they enjoyed working together. "It made me proud to see him working with his boys," Mrs. Zigdon said. "I received many phone calls thanking me for coordinating everything, especially the group of boys that accompanied Aryeh. I was told that they were the best group of volunteers the show has seen in all seven years of production."

In fact, she said everyone warmed up to the group and that each boy left an impression on the other workers. Each time the boys left, everyone would inquire as to when they would be back. "[Fanny] took care of us, made sure we got everything we needed for the project," her husband said. "She even brought us bagels and pizza."

Mrs. Zigdon also was on hand during Sunday's reveal, getting a first-hand look at the girls' reaction to the hard work of the previous nine days. According to her, Director Marcia Meehan was "so happy to see the girls happy because this was their home."



Bringing In The Boys: Volunteers from Jewshave made their presence known for all the right reasons.

PHOTO JUSTIN TSUCALAS