

CALISTOGA TRIBUNE

By Kim Beltran

Editor

Calistoga Affordable Housing, the local non-profit that has helped build 50 housing units since 2001, is launching a new program to help different segments of the city's population spruce up their properties.

The focus of "Rebuilding Calistoga" in this, its inaugural year, will be disabled and elderly homeowners who, for whatever reasons, haven't been able to repair or maintain their homes, said CAH Board of Directors president Larry Kromann.

"The purpose of Rebuilding Calistoga is to help seniors and handicapped homeowners correct problems that either pose safety hazards, threaten the structural integrity of their homes or negatively affect the appearance of their neighborhoods," said Kromann. "In an economy that makes construction of new affordable housing difficult, it's even more important that we preserve our existing housing stock and, at the same time, help citizens who can't make repairs through no fault of their own."

Modeled after the Christmas in April program in which volunteers in cities and towns across the country spend one weekend building or repairing homes for the less fortunate, Rebuilding Calistoga will take place one weekend this April.

Kromann said Rebuilding Calistoga will use donated materials and volunteer labor to complete the projects. The non-profit is now in the process of organizing various community-based agencies and organizations to assess applications and select projects, solicit donations and volunteers, and plan and execute the repairs.

Kromann said the program especially needs the help of qualified building contractors and other construction professionals to plan repairs and manage volunteer work crews. Most of the seven steering committee chairmen already have been selected, but Kromann said numerous other volunteers will be needed to provide manual labor for the projects.

Initial financing for the program was provided by a \$10,000 grant from the DeLong-Sweet Family Foundation, Kromann said, and CAH is in the process of seeking additional matching grants as well. All monetary donations will be used to buy materials and specialist contract labor, Kromann said.

"Although CAH is organizing the program, our goal is to make it as broadly based as possible," Kromann said. "Clearly, we can't pull this off without substantial community participation."

Kromann said CAH also hopes the grassroots approach of the project will nurture community spirit in Calistoga.

"CAH envisions Rebuilding Calistoga to be a 'community helping itself-type project,' " he said. "We hope it will not only help individuals but will benefit the broader community by giving people the satisfaction of working together for something that really benefits everyone."

Applications for Calistoga Affordable Housing's "Rebuilding Calistoga" program are available at Calistoga City Hall, the Calistoga Chamber of Commerce and the non-profit's Lincoln Avenue office, 1332 Lincoln Ave., and on its Web site at calistogaaffordablehousing.org

Applications must be submitted to Calistoga Affordable Housing by Feb. 15. "It's a very aggressive timeline, so we need people to respond quickly," Kromann said.

For more information or to volunteer, call the CAH office at 942-5920.

