

## PBG IN THE NEWS

Liberty Manor gets a makeover

07/28/08 Concetta DeLuco

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On Saturday, hundreds of volunteers gathered to begin renovations on Liberty Manor, a home for disabled and homeless military veterans located in Tampa. After becoming subject to costly code violations in May, the Pepsi Bottling Group Foundation and Rebuilding Together Tampa Bay, both nonprofit outreach groups, became partners and coordinated the repair services for Liberty Manor.

Nearly 15 months after being established in March 2006, Liberty Manor I was targeted by the Fire Marshall for violating safety codes. By law, the residents were forced to leave Liberty Manor and find other housing arrangements. Most found accommodations at New Beginnings, a temporary shelter, but five occupants who suffered from severe medical conditions did not leave.

Jesse Taylor, a veteran of the U.S. Navy who was active in the Vietnam War, is a resident at Liberty Manor. He said his involvement helped bring light to the situation at Liberty Manor that “got the ball rolling for the renovations.”

Rebuilding Together is a national organization that provides home repair services to low income families. Their Veterans Housing Unit specializes in assisting retired, disabled and active service members with housing modifications and refurbishment.

Quenten Wentworth, vice president and general manager of Pepsi Bottling Group (PBG) in West Florida, said Rebuilding Together partnered with PBG in five sites across the country including Tampa Bay which brought to life Rebuilding Together Tampa Bay, a local branch.

Formerly known as “Christmas in April,” Rebuilding Together began more than 30 years ago and branches are located wherever there is a housing population in need, including all top 20 U.S. cities.

Olga Gonzalez, a local liaison for the Tampa Bay sector and overseer of the restoration at Liberty Manor, discussed the transformation that is taking place with the help of PBG employees.

With 70,000 employees engaged in community service throughout the country, the mission of PBG through its foundation is to bring about positive change through volunteerism, executive outreach, financial support and product donations.

Liberty Manor I on N. 9th Steet in Tampa was the first of three veteran housing units that were acquired as part of Liberty Manor for Veterans, a nonprofit organization that was created to house homeless veterans. It currently houses 16 disabled military veterans that range in age from 28-83 and represent every war or major conflict since WWII. In accordance, the other two homes are “strategically situated in Temple Terrace and Largo, near Veteran’s hospitals” so medical assistance is readily available, said James Cherry, the director of Liberty Manor, resident and former US army ranger. He said the number of veterans that are homeless today would surprise people.

Financing Liberty Manor is a daily struggle for the veterans. The home is funded by the \$500 each resident pays in rent per month, but affording the rent can often be a problem, said Cherry.

Jeffrey Luddeke, is the co-founder and executive director of Liberty Manor. He said funding from the repairs came from mostly from donations including national and local Florida companies such as Home Depot and Scott Paints, consecutively, who provided supplies.

Renovations that will bring Liberty Manor up to code are expected to be complete by Aug. 1, then residents can move back in.