



# Washington Jewish Week

## 'Awesome blessing' for homeowners in Southeast Washington, Prince George's

MAY 3, 2017 BY [JUSTIN KATZ](#) — [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

Jenifer Cobb's rowhouse in the Barry Farm neighborhood of Southeast Washington was unusually busy Sunday morning. A circular saw was set up on the sidewalk, an oven took up most of the limited space in her front yard and a ladder, stationed near the front door, leaned against the roof.

Through the narrow front doorway, volunteers could be heard drilling and hammering. For every one who walked in, it seemed two came out.

Cobb's home, built in 1941, has been in her family for 76 years. It was one of 17 houses in Southeast Washington and Prince George's County that Yachad, a Jewish nonprofit organization focused on urban neighborhood preservation, repaired during its 25th annual Sukkot in Spring.

The volunteer home repair organization was originally a part of Washington area's Christmas in April, which does similar work. This year Yachad will also help to repair five homes alongside Christmas in April.

Cobb, who wore a name tag that said, "Grandma Homeowner," lives full time with her 2-year-old grandson, and her son stays there part time. An ex-Marine, she moved back to her childhood Barry Farm home in 1993.

"I think it's really important when we think about our place in the world — we need to reach out to communities beyond ourselves," said Louis Tenenbaum, a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda, which contributed most of the volunteers who worked on Cobb's home.

Tenenbaum has been volunteering with Yachad for nearly two decades. His experience as a carpenter and building contractor has turned him into a de facto construction manager when Adat Shalom volunteers for Yachad, alongside Alan Kanner, a principal at Added Dimensions Construction of Takoma Park.

Yachad (it means "together" in Hebrew) aims to repair homes that have serious safety or health hazards, according to Kristin Maller, program and outreach coordinator.

In Cobb's house, 25 volunteers replaced a damaged basement entry door, demolished and began renovating the kitchen, and installed a vent for the dryer. Professionals had already made electrical repairs and worked on the roof.

“We want our repairs to affect as many people as possible,” Maller said. “We work with multi-generational households and families with children, and families that are housing other people who can’t find affordable housing in the city.”

On average, Yachad’s repairs save each homeowner assisted between \$10,000 and \$15,000, according to executive director Audrey Lyon. Cobb will save closer to \$30,000 due to the kitchen renovations, Lyon said.

Cobb described Yachad’s assistance as an “awesome blessing.” n

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