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Learning To Repair Their Own Homes

Community

Dozens of women and men are gaining the skills to repair their own homes in an innovative community outreach program in Queens.

The Home Maintenance Workshop, organized by two non-profits, provides hands-on instruction in basic tool skills, carpentry, tile installation, plumbing repairs, drywall installation, taping and spackling, painting, wallpapering, electrical safety tips, energy efficiency upgrading and other home maintenance techniques.

Before graduating and receiving a certificate, students in the Home Maintenance Workshop program demonstrate their newly gained skills working with lumber, sheetrock and other materials by building finished rooms, complete with electrical and plumbing systems.

The free program is offered by the Housing Partnership Development Corporation and the Margert Community Corporation to assist homeowners and prospective first-time home buyers in maintaining their home investment. Classes are limited to 25 persons "in order to maximize the learning experience," said Walter Mullins, a home repair expert who conducts the Workshop. Two-thirds of the students are women. The Workshop is a beginners' course to learn the basics. All materials and tools are provided without charge.

"The Home Maintenance Workshop is an integral component of the postpurchase housing counseling services we provide to first time homebuyers. The Workshop is designed to provide individuals with the skill set needed to do their own home repairs and preventative maintenance," said Joe Barden, Executive Director of Margert Community Corporation.

As a member of Gifts In Kind International's worldwide network of nonprofit organizations, Margert Community Corporation partners with the Home Depot Retail Donation Program, through which it receives tools and home repair

materials for use in the Workshop. Graduates are eligible to “shop” these items at no cost in order to exercise and reinforce their new-found skills.

The weekly two-hour sessions are held in a workshop built in the St. Gertrude’s gymnasium at 307 Beach 37 Street, Far Rockaway run by the Margert Community Corporation.