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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Grace Church Leads 500-Member Volunteer Effort for Maleno "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" Build

Who is Grace? Clara Ward's neighbors know. For them, Grace – as in Grace Church of McKean, is a landscaper, painter, porch repairer and now, a friend.

Not only is the "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" build taking place in Erie, so too is a 47-home-improvement project headed by Grace Church that extends along East 21st Street from Ash to Wayne streets. When Maleno Development, the firm charged with overseeing the extreme build, got overwhelmed with volunteer groups wanting to help, John Maleno turned to Grace Church, whose community-renewal program, ServErie, offered to organize and manage the hundreds of community members who wanted to lend a hand.

"We were getting flooded with individuals and groups who wanted to help with the build, but we also wanted to help the entire neighborhood," explained John Maleno, founder and president of Maleno Development. "Grace stepped up and stepped in to help us with the neighborhood-improvement efforts."

Among the 500 volunteers are parishioners from Grace and other Erie-area churches, including employees from First National Bank, the Erie County Bar Association, GE Transportation, the City of Erie, the Erie Community Foundation, Edinboro University and Penn State Erie, the Behrend College, to name a few. Working four-, eight- and 12-hour shifts through Wednesday, they are helping those residents of the two blocks of East 21st Street by painting and repairing front porches, removing trash, pulling weeds and removing overgrown landscaping, fixing sidewalks and cleaning out flowerbeds. The next step is planting shrubs, flowering trees and flowers and laying mulch. In short, this small army is giving the neighborhood a facelift.

Aaron Lundberg, Grace Church's director of campus operations, explained that many people wanted to help Clara Ward, the woman chosen to receive the new home, as well as those who live nearby. And by helping her neighbors, they are helping Clara.

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"We want her neighbors to know that the community cares about the whole neighborhood," Lundberg said. On Thursday, July 25, after the Ward family was revealed, volunteers went door to door, asking residents if they needed help with any household projects. "The best part is that they wanted to help *us*. Their reaction was so positive. They are so obviously happy for Clara, but they are also so proud for Erie."

He added that along with the volunteers, many Erie-area landscapers and nurseries quickly signed onto the project. "There was no hesitation on any company's part," Lundberg said. "We asked and they said, 'Whatever it takes.'"

John Maleno isn't surprised. "The Erie community has great character and heart," he said. "The outpouring of compassion and concern surrounding this project is immense; it reveals the authentic Erie, Pennsylvania – the one we all know."

Also helping the neighborhood is General Exterminating. Not only is the company donating its time and services to the "Extreme Makeover" project, its employees have gone knocking on doors on their own time, offering the company's services to neighbors along East 21st Street.

"We asked neighbors if they would like seasonal exterior preventive treatments that control spiders, ants and centipedes, for example," said Donna Reese, owner of General Exterminating. "No one refused our services. It was fantastic." Her team completed 22 homes on Sunday, leaving notes for those not at home. They will treat the remaining homes once they receive word from the residents.

"Since it was difficult to access the homes behind the spectator barricades, we will return once the dust settles and the barricades are removed," she said. "We want to make sure everyone in the neighborhood is covered."

So, on Thursday, July 2, when Ty Pennington shouts, "Move that Bus!" it won't be just Clara Ward's home on display. One look up and down her street will show the hard work and heart of more than 500 who pitched in for her neighborhood.

"Our mission, along with that of the many volunteers, is to act as the hand and feet of Christ, loving and caring for others," Aaron Lundberg said. "This 'Extreme Makeover' project gave our community the chance to do just that."

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Additional notes: The volunteers have also taken on McKinley Park, beautifying it with a flower garden that will surround a stone tribute in Clara Ward's honor.

The 47 households along East 21st Street will receive handmade mosaic stones with their street address to place in their front yards, also provided by volunteers.

Erie City Councilman Jim Thompson is sponsoring a resolution to name a portion of East 21st Street "Clara's Way." A vote will be taken at Wednesday's council meeting and a sign will be installed later this week.

For more information about the "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" project in Erie, visit www.malenoextremehome.com.

About ABC-TV's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition"

The Emmy award winning reality program "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," now in its 7th season, is produced by Endemol USA, a division of Endemol Holding. It's executive-produced by Anthony Dominici. David Goldberg is Chairman, Endemol North America. The show airs Sundays from 8:00-9:00 p.m., ET on ABC.

About Maleno Development

Co-founded in 1976 by John Maleno and his wife, Lynn, Maleno Development began as a husband-and-wife building and remodeling operation in Erie, Pa. Since then, the company has built more than 1,000 homes and apartments in their hometown. Maleno Development has changed the face of many Erie areas by creating beautiful neighborhoods and residential communities on otherwise undeveloped lands. What started with the Calico Fields subdivision off of West 38th Street now includes 13 residential developments. Today, five of John Maleno's seven children, his sister and his son-in-law are part of what is now a full-service real-estate team that specializes in construction, land development, property management and real-estate sales. For more information about Maleno Development, visit www.malenodevelopment.com.



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