

Women Who Mean Business



Pamela Thorsch

Rebuilding Together San Diego

Pamela Thorsch has displayed a

level of leadership that has set a standard for others to follow. Her work in preserving affordable housing and renovating homes for low-income families has not only helped individual homeowners in need, but has led to extensive neighborhood revitalization throughout our community. Her example has inspired other non-profit agencies, community leaders, businessmen and women, and elected officials, many of whom have partnered with Thorsch and her organization, Rebuilding Together San Diego (RTSD) in recent years. When Thorsch took over as executive director of RTSD, there was only \$3,000 in the bank and the nonprofit's very survival was at stake. With no infrastructure to enable it to do more than simple renovation projects and a poor reputation, Thorsch turned the organization around by creating partnerships within the business community and working relationships with other nonprofits. In less than two years, RTSD acquired ownership of a warehouse and headquarters facility. As of today, with 220 Rebuilding Together affiliates in the United States, RTSD is now one of three that owns its own building, complete with a warehouse from which year-round events can be staged. Bringing sponsors and in-kind donors together to donate time and resources in the current business environment is no small feat, yet this is a daily happening on Thorsch's watch. In the past year alone, there have been more than 34 projects completed at a market value of over \$1 million. Some of these projects included renovating San Diego city fire stations, senior centers,

recreation centers and the Northern Division police station.

Thorsch currently is the board secretary for the NFL Alumni-SD Chapter, whose mission is to raise money through their annual golf tournament to benefit Bikes for Kids and other nonprofits that benefit children's plights. She is also an active member of the Citizen Diplomacy Council, hosting visiting foreign business leaders and dignitaries as an ambassador of good will and bridging friendships for the United States and San Diego. When Thorsch was 10 her mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She became the caregiver to her mother, and when her father walked out on the family a few years later, the responsibilities of being head of house were on her shoulders. Thorsch admitted her mother to a convalescent home when her condition became too grave to be cared for in the home, and went to live with her grandmother to finish high school. By age 18 she was on her own and two years later her mother passed away. This early experience set the stage of caring and giving that she continues to live out in her daily life.

Child Welfare Services asked RTSD for assistance to help renovate a dilapidated home with the hopes that an improved living environment would have an impact on a family, especially the children, three boys ages 7-17. The home belonged to the grandparents, who locked themselves in their room and did not speak to the family. Both older boys were having issues with the law and were very angry at the circumstances of their lives. Pamela took this project with a vengeance and rallied the assistance of Lowes, Grondin and Castle Construction, Anderson Plumbing, Rotor Rooter, Pella Windows, Palomar Flooring, and the IBEW 569 Electrical Union to come on board and make this home a better place to live. The end result was that through the caring and compassion shown to all the family members, the family came together. The parents opened the door to their room and began intermingling with their grandchildren for the first time in seven years. Everyone worked on the project and in the process the strain and depression that existed turned into laughter and joy in working together. The oldest boy, Richard, had shown interest in learning a building trade skill, and through Thorsch's efforts the Carpenters Union will be bringing him into its apprenticeship program. This kind of energy, pride of work and going the extra mile doesn't just represent an isolated incident, it is displayed on a continuous basis.