

Ramping it up: Pace church makes wheelchair ramps for people in need

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The average person doesn't think twice about coming and going from their own home. For the handicapped, however, it can be a major undertaking especially if their home isn't equipped for special needs access.

One local church has been hard at work brightening the lives of the handicapped by providing wheelchair ramps created by caring parishioners and other community volunteers. Although the ministry is not new, the word is spreading, additional people are being helped, and the ministry is seeking the support of others to grow the effort.

"The ministry began in the early 90s," volunteer project director Stan Holmes said. "A great servant of God, Mr. Jimmy Ray, was driving his wife and saw a man in a wheelchair struggling to get into his house. Jimmy decided he needed to help him and others like him. He started building ramps with his wife and daughter. He was attending Woodbine United Methodist in Pace so he organized the ministry there. Another recipient told Mr. Ray that if he had an emergency and needed to get out of his house, he would just have to roll himself to the door and fall into the yard."

Ray ran the ministry on the job sites, first working and then supervising until his poor health prevented him from getting there and he passed away the end of February. That's when Holmes stepped in.

The ministry is managed by the Woodbine Outreach Riding Disciples (W.O.R.D.), the motorcycle outreach ministry at the church. They are assisted by volunteers such as military personnel from Whiting Field Naval Air Station, AmeriCorps and Department of Juvenile Justice kids and have even teamed up with neighboring Woodbine Baptist on several projects.

"Our volunteers are wonderful," Holmes said. "They give up their time and buy their own gas to get to the sites. Although we currently don't have any business sponsors, we are thankful to work closely with Pittman's Cash and Carry. Milton Kiwanis is helping as well."

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(Image: Clairen Reese/Pelican correspondent)

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