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HELPING THE COMMUNITY

Ramping up service

*Ashland's Lions and Kiwanis clubs build gentle inclines for residents in wheelchairs*Photo 1 of 1 | [Zoom Photo +](#)

Charleen Braunbeck, 68, of Ashland drives down a ramp with her 5-year-old yellow lab, Asia, on Sept. 23. The ramp was built by the Ashland Lions Club. The Ashland Kiwanis Club has also been constructing ramps for residents.

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By Holly Dilemuth

For the Tidings

Posted: 2:00 AM October 04, 2008

Charleen Braunbeck had trouble transporting her wheelchair from inside her car to the garage before she received a wheelchair ramp from the Ashland Lions club earlier this month.

Braunbeck is one of several community members from Ashland who have received a wheelchair ramp from the Lions or Kiwanis clubs. Both clubs are providing the service free of charge to residents of the Rogue Valley who otherwise may not be able to afford them.

Diagnosed with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, in April, but still able to drive her car, the 68-year-old found it hard to get from her car to the inside of her house from the garage.

"I'm very thankful to the Lions," Braunbeck said. "They just took care of me in a great way."

The Lions installed a ramp inside the garage, extending from the kitchen door so that Braunbeck can transport to her car while shielded from the weather. The ramp's even surface makes it easier for her to use a walker or her scooter, which she does often when retrieving her mail.

For 15 years, the Ashland Lions have built ramps for the elderly and disabled who otherwise may not have been able to afford the cost.

"Without clubs like the Lions or the Kiwanis, the community would be forced to hire someone to install a ramp — another expense during a struggling economy," Mildred Buck said. Buck's husband, Paul, helped build Braunbeck's ramp earlier this month. "The Lions do this as a gift," he said.

The Lions club previously built a wheelchair ramp on the back porch of Braunbeck's home so that her handicapped son, who now resides in Central Point, could be transported into the back yard safely. Those

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Pete Jorgensen helped build the wheelchair ramp for Braunbeck, his first time working on this project.

"This was a matter of making it work for her," Jorgensen said. "It's part of what we do as Lions — try to help people in need in the community."

Recently, with the influence of the Jacksonville Kiwanis club, the Ashland chapter of the service group has followed suit with their first wheel chair ramp installment. Derek Sherell, who heads the wheelchair ramp committee, wants to focus on low-income clientele.

"I want to provide this service for people who otherwise wouldn't be able to have it," Sherell said.

Sherell had not heard that the Lions club had also built wheelchair ramps but was excited that community needs are being met.

When resident Ben Rothman had trouble getting out of the house with his walker due to the steps that led up to his Ashland home, Rothman and his wife Eleanore responded to an article in the newspaper and requested a ramp be put in.

"He was having a hard time using his walker to get out of his house and had already fallen," Eleanore Rothman said. Then at about the same time the ramp was being installed, Ben Rothman fell and fractured his hip, increasing his need for the Kiwanis service.

"The ramp could not have come at a better time," Eleanore Rothman said. "(The Kiwanis club) really did something beautiful for us."

"If it doesn't choke you up something's wrong," Sherell said. "There's instant gratification for them and it comes to you as well."

The Ashland Kiwanis club are currently planning four more wheel chair ramp projects to be built in the coming months.

For those interested in volunteering with wheel chair ramp projects with the Lions club, contact Richard Chenoweth at 482-2794. Those interested in becoming involved with the Kiwanis club, or in need of a wheel chair ramp, contact President Bill Feagin at 488-0532.

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