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- Weddings
- Engagements
- Anniversaries
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- Birth
- Engagement
- Wedding
- Sports Results

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Volunteers Improve Dozens Of Homes Across The County

Jennifer Peryam
 Times-Union Staff Writer

More than 1,100 volunteers rolled up their sleeves Wednesday to make repairs to homes in Kosciusko County.



Nancy Denney (front) of DePuy and Brandie Hamman from the Housing Opportunities of Warsaw blow insulation into the walls of Mike and Alice Schooley's home on Morton Street during Wednesday's Day of Caring. Photo by Gary Nieter, Times-Union

It was the sixth year for the United Way Day of Caring. The project was organized by United Way of Kosciusko County, Housing Opportunities of Warsaw, Kosciusko County Senior Services and Grace College.

Projects ranged from fixing roofs, paint, yard work and building wheelchair ramps. Carpenters had teams to build 18 handicapped ramps for seniors and families with disabilities.

There were home improvements made to more than 120 homes in Kosciusko County.

Homes that received renovations were in Warsaw, Winona Lake, Syracuse, North Webster, Burket, Claypool, Pierceton, Silver Lake, Leesburg and Mentone.

The first year started with four homes being repaired.

Families who received home repairs signed up at senior centers, churches and were referred by service organizations and service providers in the county.

Volunteers spent the day getting to know the families they helped, and local churches and service organizations fed volunteers in the communities.

Mike and Alice Schooley, 511 S. Morton St., Warsaw, started the Thanksgiving dinners at Center Lake Pavilion in 1970 with the

Reporter Shares A 'Great Opportunity'

BY DANIEL RIORDAN Times-Union Staff Writer

MENTONE - Since I spend most of my time with the newspaper at a computer or sitting in on meetings, I jumped at the chance to spend one of the last days of summer outside.

Rather than going through the daily newspaper grind, I spent the day with a great group of people from DePuy and Paragon Medical in Mentone for Day of Caring.

As a reporter, it's easy to develop the habit of standing on the sidelines.

You're paid to observe and report so it becomes a habit to do that.

So Tuesday was a great opportunity to actually get outside and get my hands a little dirty.

The day started promptly at 8 a.m. with Paragon Medical's Todd Haines serving as our team leader.

The guys with a lot more skill than I did the tree trimming or worked on the roof.

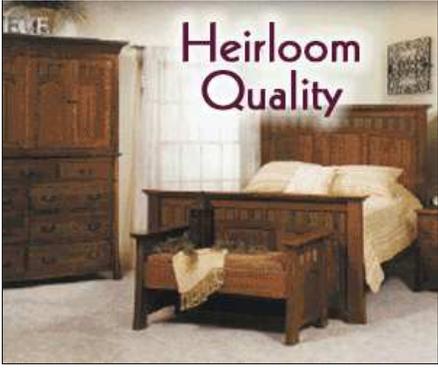
I was good with filling up the wheel barrow and taking it to the curb.

As the day progressed and the main project, painting the house, became the focus I was taken aback at how there was a total and utter lack of ego among anyone working.

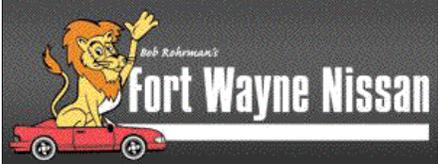
Nobody patted themselves on the back for what they were doing.

Bowen Center CEO Kurt Carlson was

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assistance of Ray Compton.

During Wednesday's Day of Caring, volunteers had the opportunity to serve the couple that has given to the community.

Volunteers from DePuy, Housing Opportunities of Warsaw, Dave's Insulation and Grace College worked together to remove the Schooley home's siding, blow insulation into the home's walls, and wash exterior windows.

Alice, 88, and her husband Mike, 89, have lived in the home 61 years and said the home has needed new insulation for some time.

"We are so happy to have the volunteers at our home today give back and couldn't have done the work without them," Alice said.

Jennifer Tikka, DePuy employee, volunteered to work on the Schooley's home with other volunteers.

Tikka said her grandparents in Iowa have a meal site for seniors, and said she is glad she can help do something for people who are her grandparents' age.

"It is great to help people who have helped so many people in this community and it feels rewarding," Tikka said.

Andrew Rupp, a Grace College student, said he was happy to help the Schooleys out.

"It is great to get outside of Grace College for a day and give back and serve others and show them Christ's love," Rupp said.

Work also was done in Westhaven Estates in Warsaw.

Wheelchair ramps were built at the trailers of Beverly Conley, 3762 W. Old 30, Lot 601; and Nancy Paseka, 3762 W. Old 30, Lot 610.

Volunteers from Zimmer worked on Paseka's home.

John Lacheta, Zimmer employee, said it was his first time for participating in Day of Caring. He worked with Zimmer employees installing a handicapped ramp at Paseka's trailer.

"Today is a day for us to give back to our community and we should help our neighbors," Lacheta said.

Conley's home also received a wheelchair ramp for her 5-1/2-year-old daughter, Anna.

"The old handicapped ramp did not have a turnaround ramp for my daughter, but this new ramp will and will be a big help," Conley said.

Conley's birthday is today, and she said having the volunteers at her home Wednesday was an early birthday present.

one of the first guys on a ladder painting the top of the house.

He also took time to give some career advice to Grace College student Carrie Bruns.

There was a lot of shop talk among the DePuy and Paragon guys and gals, but the focused stayed on the task at hand.

Nobody complained or said they were doing it because they had to.

Also a shout out to the Kosciusko County Sheriff's Department's Shaun Mudd who kept everyone in a good mood with his storytelling Tuesday.

I thought that was great because the guy whose house we were working on, Lynn, was there the whole time.

Lynn has been retired for a while after working for more than 30 years in Mentone on fuel injectors.

He was more than helpful to grab us a bucket or a broom if we needed it.

"I think it's really fantastic," said Lynn. "I'm well pleased at the job they've done. It helps me out. It helps the town and it helps the community."

As we finished the first coat of paint on Lynn's place, we were bussed to a church in town to grab some lunch.

The spread was great and those at the church were very welcoming.

Afterward it was back on the bus and back to painting.

I don't know if it worked this way for every group, but it seemed like there was the perfect balance of people who knew what they were doing and people like me who were just trying not to mess things up too bad.

I came away from Tuesday feeling satisfied for being a part of the project.

I also felt like it was a great way to spend a day.

So in 2011, I plan to once again be a part of Day Of Caring.

And if the company you work for has groups volunteering next year, I highly recommend you step on board.

Taking a day out to help someone else in the community is quite literally the least we can do to make a change.



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Volunteers from Mutual Bank worked on taking down the old ramp and installing a new ramp.

Robyn Palmer, Mutual Bank, said it was his third time for participating in Day of Caring.

"I am glad we can help make a safer handicapped ramp for the family," Palmer said.

Homes also had work done in North Webster and Syracuse.

Helen Wagoner, 309 Huntington St., and her daughter, Carol Adkins, 214 E. Huntington St., North Webster, had volunteers from Zimmer and Grace College at their homes Wednesday.

Wagoner, 91, said she was happy to have her old water heater removed, basement cleaned out and a smoke detector installed in her basement.

Amy Gulvas, a Zimmer employee, helped remove the old water heater from Wagoner's home.

"Nothing compares to seeing the smile on the homeowner's, face and it feels great to give back," Gulvas said.

Volunteers from Grace College and Biomet worked on the home of Jayne Timmons, 1034 N. Huntington St., Syracuse.

They removed a damaged roof, installed a new roof and removed water-damaged drywall.

"It's a gift from God to have this help because I have had to put down buckets to catch the leaking water and won't have to do that anymore," Timmons said.

Chris Nelson, a Biomet employee, said he enjoyed working with his co-workers on Timmons' home.

"It is great to use our skills to help the community," Nelson said.

A closing ceremony was Wednesday night at the Winona Lake Amphitheater where volunteers and homeowners had the opportunity to share their experiences from the day.



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