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## ROMULUS: United Way provides new wheelchair ramp for paralyzed Romulus man

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ROMULUS — May 31, 1975, was a pivotal day for Harold “Buddy” Rice.

He was involved in a motorcycle accident that broke his spine and his spinal cord and left him paralyzed from the chest down.

For more than 37 years, Rice has been wheelchair-bound and has relied on his wife, Bennara, to help him get in and out of his house. For the most part, he has been homebound.

In July, the couple celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They recently celebrated when volunteers from United Auto Workers/Ford installed a wheelchair ramp in the backyard of their home in the 9300 block of Chamberlain.

The winding wooden ramp was provided at no cost through the Ray West Memorial Ramp Project, an effort of United Way for Southeastern Michigan.

The ramp allows Rice to roll his wheelchair out of the back door, off the deck and all the way down to the garage without assistance.

“We are just so thankful,” Bennara Rice said. “I know our prayers have been answered.”

Bill Helwig, AFL-CIO/United Way labor liaison and chairman of the ramp program, said the project provides wheelchair ramps for adults and children with physical disabilities living at or below the poverty level.

The program honors the late Ray West, a dedicated labor liaison for the organization.

Helwig said that since the program’s inception in 1988, more than 350 of the “best quality” ramps have been built throughout Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. [Continued...](#)

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