

Fraternity constructs ramp

Pi Kappa Phi helps local family with construction of wheelchair ramp

By Robert Jeffries

After a full day's work by the members of Pi Kappa Phi fraternity, an East Grand Forks man will now be able to have access to his new home.

The new wheelchair ramp outside of Cory Penn's home is a result of Pi Kappa Phi's efforts for their philanthropy, PUSH America. It is the eighth ramp built in the Grand Forks Area in the last four years.

"We build a new ramp once a semester for families that need a ramp that can't afford it," said Sean Ryan, Pi Kappa Phi brother and the local organizer for PUSH America. "The ramps are built at no cost to the families through donations from local businesses and individuals."

There are many organizations in the Grand Forks area that aided Pi Kappa Phi Options, a non-profit organization that specializes in assisting individuals with disabilities, helps find families in need. ACME Tools provided free tool rental, and Simonson's lumber provided free and discounted lumber and hardware. Local contractor John Sang provided time and supervision for the construction of the ramp construction.

Without this assistance, the cost of the ramp for Penn and his family would have been around \$3,500.

"It's a way that we can give back," said Ryan. "It is nice to know that we made a positive change in someone's life."

Cory Penn is the benefactor of this semester's project. Penn recently moved out of a group home into a house that was not handicap accessible. He took his first trip down the completed ramp Saturday evening, just nine hours after construction began.

"When I saw Cory on the ramp, and how happy he looked, I welled up a little," said Jesse Joiner, one of the brothers that helped build the ramp. "Watching a man who was housebound use that new ramp for the first time, it was astonishing."

Ryan agrees with Joiner's sentiment. "When we do a project like this, we take the 'dis' off the front of 'disable,'" said Ryan. "It is a truly awesome feeling."