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## Waiting list for handicap accessible ramps

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ALBANY, GA (WALB) –Imagine you are inside your home, but can't get out. That's the sad challenge a growing number of South Georgians are facing, because they have a wheelchair, but don't have a ramp for accessibility. A volunteer group that builds handicap ramps can't keep up with growing demand, and are asking for your help.



The stories of South Georgians needing help is heartbreaking. Handicapped persons having to crawl out of their homes, because they don't have a wheelchair ramp. One South Georgia volunteer group that has been filling that need for years, says now they are overwhelmed.

After a fall, Bugar Seely has a broken leg and must use a wheelchair. But without a ramp, leaving his home is a frightening challenge.

Seely said "I been going down the steps. My son, taking me down the steps, but it bumps my head. I'm afraid I'm gonna be left on the steps one of these days."

Right now the SOWEGA Council on Aging has a waiting list for South Georgians needing a handicap ramp, and two or three names are added most days.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Director Marilyn Westbrook said "The list is growing everyday. It's just overwhelming. They just can't get to all the people, and we need more volunteers to try to come in."

Ramp builder Paul Youngblood said "Our ramp will be the level of this threshold right here. We'll build a four foot platform out here. We'll take this railing down."

Paul Youngblood and Paul Laramore volunteer two days a week building ramps, and see more desperate South Georgians in need.

Youngblood said "Get on the ground and go to their car on the ground."

Laramore said "Pull themselves up with their hands to get in the vehicle, because they are legless. That touches the heart."

The RSVP ramp team builds in Lee, Dougherty, Mitchell, Terrell and Worth Counties. Many of the volunteers are 80 years old themselves.

Youngblood said "We're having trouble keeping up with the demand, and also we're having trouble having enough volunteers. That's what we desperately need, is the volunteers."

Seely's name has finally been reached on the waiting list, and he will have his ramp soon, making it easier on him and his family.

Seely said "This is the best blessing I've had in a long time, is getting a ramp."

But the ramp builders say they need more help, because so many more people need their help.

The R.S.V.P. ramp program, run through the SOWEGA Council on Aging, no longer gets any state funds, it's a strictly volunteer effort, with all the materials paid for by the homeowners, or donated by businesses and charity organizations.

The ramp builders want your help, and they will train you. Just call the SOWEGA Council On Aging Retired Senior Volunteer Program at 432-1131, extension 23.

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