

Teams of volunteers at Neighborlink have completed 49 wheelchair ramp projects in Allen County in the past 12 months, with the majority of those being new ramps, but teams also do threshold ramps, and ramp repairs, as well as a multitude of home repair projects. Below is just one of the many stories related to the need for wheelchair ramps;

“NeighborLink volunteers often wonder whether they're making an actual difference, having an impact, or even doing the right thing when it comes to taking on projects. The transactional nature of most projects leave less time for getting to know someone in a meaningful way than we'd like. Those volunteers that have had the opportunity to journey with a neighbor for months or years at a time do get to form relationships and gain the understanding of impact, but it can be hard to really know given the dynamics of giving, receiving, or transacting help.

For all of you that wonder whether you're making a difference or not, read the following note we received recently. Let this be a testimony that what you're doing matters whether you hear directly from the neighbor you're helping or not.

A neighbor reached out to us in early 2016 with the need of a new wheelchair ramp at her home for her adult daughter that has had a variety of life-long disabilities. The ramp they had was old, broken down, and had one long stretch that made it challenging. Our team of retired men that love to build wheelchair ramps connected with this family in mid-summer and by the end of the fall had built them a new wheelchair ramp. The family was overjoyed and the men got to know the family over those couple of months. At the end of the project, everyone was impacted by the project and the beginning of relationships formed.

Unfortunately, the daughter became ill in late fall, couldn't quite recover, and passed away in February. We received the below note from a neighbor/friend and a sweet slideshow she created for the family. Life is complicated, often seemingly unfair, and at times brief. One thing is for sure, there are always opportunities to be able to journey with each other in times of need no matter how long or short they may be. “

**I wanted to reach out to you and the group in case you haven't heard, that (neighbor) passed away on 2/18/17 at Lutheran Hospital. She had been hospitalized for several weeks due to respiratory issues. She had been gradually going down and her needs increasing since November, and I never**

got a chance to send you a thank you for the ramps. They meant so much to us and she was excited to have them. Forgive my poor memory right now, but when the 2 gentlemen came at Christmas to give us the coin boxes, I was overwhelmed. I don't know when a gift meant so much or brightened my heart as much as they did. Not for the dollar value, but for the love, care and support behind them.

I have such a high respect for the organization and the people who give of their time and hearts to help others in need. I hope one day I might be able to join the group and pass along some of my skills to help someone.

Please extend my heartfelt thank you to everyone who gave their time and help to us. I don't know if I'm going to continue to need the ramp for myself or not, but should my health improve, I will pass the ramp and/or lumber on to someone else.

I thought you might enjoy seeing the slide show and reading the Remembering (neighbor) obit I wrote for her.

Blessings to you and the rest of the team