

News from Home



Home Repair Services

Resources for Home Owners

Autumn 2008

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Leading with Green! Home Repair Services Benefits the Environment

Nineteen years ago, Home Repair Services had an idea: To “recycle” used, scratched and blemished building materials so lower-income homeowners could maintain their homes.

So the organization created the Builders’ Abundance store for social justice and stewardship reasons. But the store has also had a tremendous environmental impact – keeping an estimated 3,500 tons of building materials out of local landfills.

“Home Repair Services is ‘greener’ than we realized,” says Dave Jacobs, executive director. “When we started, we simply had a strong ethic that it’s wrong to throw away a perfectly good light fixture or kitchen cabinet just because it’s scratched or used. We had a strong sense that those building materials could serve someone else and would save that someone else the cost of buying brand new products.”



A Home Repair Services staff member recycles glass using special safety equipment.

“Someone said we should calculate how much building material we’re passing through this place in terms of tons, and 3,500 tons was a real eye-opener for us,” Dave notes.

One of the biggest recent accomplishments involves a new invention that, so far, has helped keep 1,600 pounds of glass out of landfills.

“Builder’s Abundance gets lots of windows,” Dave says. “Some of them can’t be used in homes. We learned that there are places that process smashed window glass for use in lightweight concrete products, but smashing the windows is dangerous.”

So Home Repair Services staff created a special rig that keeps the glass contained during the smashing process; all the glass falls into a container at the bottom of the rig, making it easy to pour the glass pieces into a 55 gallon drum for recycling.

Green for Good: Key Facts and Figures

- 3,500 tons of building materials *kept out of local landfills*
- 1,600 pounds of glass *recycled with in-house equipment*
- 125 fluorescent light fixtures *removed from headquarters*
- Air circulation fans and motion-detection light switches *installed*
- At-work recycling center for employees *being developed*
- Lead paint education and plumbing sanitation *promote healthy homes*

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“We don’t have the capacity to be the community’s window recycling center,” Dave notes, “but when we get windows that won’t sell we are committed to recycling that glass.”

And this year Home Repair Services takes energy efficiency even farther with the addition of Saving Energy classes, the forthcoming launch of a new program on energy conservation and home energy coaching.

Leadership begins at home, and Home Repair Services took that to heart by initiating an energy audit of its own headquarters. The results are a list of energy conservation tasks that will reduce the bottom line on various utility bills. Some of the changes have been made; others are in process or are slated for the future.

“We pulled 125 fluorescent light fixtures out of the building – without making any noticeable difference in lighting levels,” Dave says. “We’re installing air circulation fans and motion detection light switches, and working with an electrician on other changes.”

“We were much greener than we realized,” he added, “and now we’re finding all kinds of new ways we can do this even better.” ■

Energy Efficiency Classes Pack the House

Home Repair Services Shows Homeowners How to Reduce Costs

The first step to saving money on electric, water and heat bills is conservation. One class at Home Repair Services fills nearly every available seat every week, and that class is all about helping homeowners reduce their home energy costs. And while many of us know how to put weather stripping on doors to prevent air leaks, that's not enough to substantially pare down our utility bills.

So, every Thursday evening and every second and third Tuesday afternoon, Ed Morgan, known as "Energy Ed," helps homeowners of all income levels save money with a hands-on, how-to energy efficiency course, *Saving Energy*. The class is funded by the Area Community Service Employment and Training Council (ACSET).

A homeowner's largest utility bill

is usually the heating bill, but the class also discusses electric and water bills.

"The biggest issue for people is how to prioritize things," says Ed. "I have them think about the question: 'Where in the house do I want to be the most comfortable?' If that means crawling around on the floor to find air leaks, that's what you have to do. If we can be more comfortable at home, we can maybe set the thermostat a little lower."

Besides showing participants how to stop window air leaks using temporary caulking, plastic window coverings, or Ed's own design for do-it-yourself storm windows, Ed delves into bigger subjects, like heating systems.

"I help people understand what furnace efficiency is," Ed says, "and how to tell how much of their heat dollars get delivered to their house as heat, and how much goes up the chimney."

Homeowners can save money

by unplugging electronic items that have "instant on" features (like TVs), electronics with digital clocks (like microwaves), and chargers after cell phones or cordless drills are charged. All these draw power even when not in use.

And Ed helps the class interpret light bulb packaging to understand wattage, lumens and cost advantages of using compact fluorescent lamps.

"I've been doing home energy efficiency since 1985," Ed says. "I went through the U.S. Navy's nuclear power program and attended Jordan College Energy Institute. But my biggest qualification for teaching all this is that I'm an energy Scrooge. I do everything I can to keep my energy bills down."

If you're interested in attending an energy conservation class, please call **(616) 241-2601** to pre-register. ■

Energy Ed's Money Saving Energy Tips

When not in use, unplug electronic items that have digital clocks or "instant on" features.

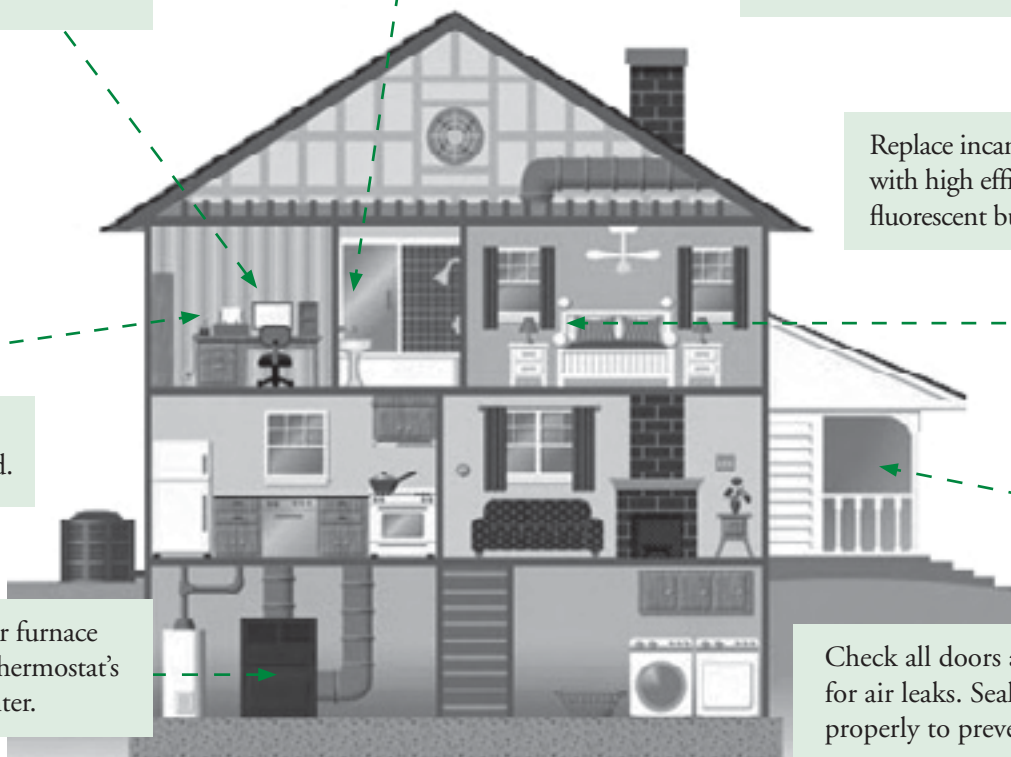
If there's a problem, like a dripping faucet, fix it. Don't wait.

Replace incandescent bulbs with high efficiency compact fluorescent bulbs.

Unplug rechargeable items when fully charged.

Make sure to change your furnace filter regularly. Set your thermostat's temperature lower in winter.

Check all doors and windows for air leaks. Seal them properly to prevent heat loss.





To learn more, visit us online:
www.HomeRepairServices.org

Darrin Lucas (right), a Financial Counselor, discusses several foreclosure prevention options with a client. Home Repair Services opened 958 such foreclosure cases in the last fiscal year.

Behind on Your Mortgage? *Home Repair Services is Here to Help!*

Are you behind on your mortgage payments? The current foreclosure crisis hits homeowners in all income brackets. If you or someone you know is behind on your payments, perhaps one of our five qualified Financial Counselors can help you get back on track.

Home Repair Services understands the foreclosure intervention process. During our 2007-08 fiscal year, we opened a record 958 foreclosure cases and averted 282 foreclosures. Maybe you know some of those stories. Maybe one of those stories is yours.

The reasons for foreclosure are numerous. Perhaps you've lost your job due to downsizing or health problems, maybe you have overwhelming hospital bills, or maybe you've lost your spouse's income due to death or divorce. Whatever the reason, delaying action makes matters worse. Our Foreclosure Intervention Program is open to anyone at any income level. *Take action today!* ■

Foreclosure Prevention: Action Steps You Can Take Now

- ❶ Call or visit your lender now to explain your situation and discuss alternatives.
- ❷ Review all of your expenses and eliminate or reduce what you can so you can get current on your house payment.
- ❸ Speak with your other billing companies to explain your situation. Emphasize that you are taking steps to correct the problem. Discuss alternatives for overdue bills.
- ❹ Free up some money by supplementing your food budget with groceries from a local pantry.
- ❺ Ask to speak with your lender's "Loss Mitigation Department" to see what options they may have to help you get back on track with your mortgage payments.
- ❻ Call Home Repair Services at **(616) 241-2601** to schedule an appointment with a Financial Counselor. Don't wait until it's too late. Get started today!

People Who Make a Difference: *Lou Rawson*

Imagine this: Your bathroom, which is at the end of a dark hallway, no longer has electricity. No light, no hair dryer. You can't see yourself in the mirror, so how do get ready for work? School? How can your household function?

To the lower-income homeowners who live with problems like this, Lou Rawson is a hero. Lou volunteers his electrical repair skills to help Home Repair Services clients; so far this year he's been on 35 jobs.

"It's always a good feeling to be able to help somebody," says Lou. "I help people who otherwise would live miserably without the proper electrical items working. Sometimes the plugs in the kitchen or living room or bedroom don't work anymore. We chase the wiring down and correct the problems."

Lou is semi-retired. He worked for Meijer's maintenance department and was licensed in refrigeration and air conditioning. He says a person can't do that work without learning how to do electrical work as well.

The Rawsons first came to Home Repair Services as clients.

"My wife and I have low income and we buy things at the Builders' Abundance store," Lou says.

Two years ago they attended the Resourceful Homeowner Celebration and sat at the same table as Maureen Martin, a Home Repair Services staff member.

"I told her I could probably do some teaching or something and she took me up on that right away" Lou says with a friendly laugh.



Lou also helps the carpenters build wheelchair ramps when they need an extra hand. But doing electrical repairs is number one for him.

"It's fun. I enjoy it. I like working with the black people, the Spanish people, the white people—I like working with everyone. When I go on a job, I take time to

find out a little bit about their life and spend some time getting acquainted with them." ■



Making It Home
Charity Auction



5th Annual Making It Home Auction *Gala Event Raises \$67,000 for Home Repair Services*

They came for a good time, good food, good drink and good music – and the supporters of the fifth annual Making It Home Auction got all that and more. Have no doubt, the evening featured some friendly haggling over the 100-plus items in the auction, but great fun was had by all as they raised \$67,000 for Home Repair Services.

Auction items included a five-boat sailing adventure with winning bidders assembling crews for the event; a three-night stay in a Colorado mountain cabin with views of the Continental Divide; and an amethyst and diamond pendant set in 14-karat white gold, crafted especially for Making It Home.

Again this year, the auction was high-tech with bidding on “roaming laptops” and results projected on the “big screen.” Nine different “rooms” – including Great Outdoors, Executive Office and Dining Packages & Great Getaways – transformed the warehouse and Builders’ Abundance store into a haven of goodies up for bid.

San Chez – A Tapas Bistro provided food and Art of the Table provided wine and microbrews. Music by the John Gist Duo, auction item staging by The Home Setting and Elaine Carr Design, and floral arrangements by Gumina’s Flowers imparted a decidedly uptown flair to the evening.

“It’s delightful to have so many people come out year after year for this,” says Dave Jacobs, executive director. “They ask questions about our work and

our mission and that’s very affirming. We’re clearly extending our circle of friends....It’s also a way to bring in about 10 percent of our fundraising needs in a single night, and without those dollars our mission won’t happen.”

Honorary Hosts Bill and Lisa Ruoff, David and Bette Sebastian and Rod and Annie Van Tol share Dave’s enthusiasm.

“We’ve attended for the last two years,” says Lisa Ruoff. “Bill and I were brought in by friends and we were so impressed with the organization we said we’d like to participate at a higher level.”

Lisa also became a member of the auction committee. “The organization is everything I thought it was and more,” she says. “Every time I met with them I was even more impressed about their dedication to their jobs.”

“We’ve given something to be auctioned off for about four years,” says Annie Van Tol. “Home Repair Services does a fabulous job of transforming their work environment into the rooms and food stations. The collection of auctioned items was marvelous.”

“It was a happy, friendly event where people socialized and had a good time,” says Bette Sebastian.

David Sebastian noted that the Sebastian Foundation has supported Home Repair Services for years.

“It’s exciting to see people take charge of their homes,” he says. “That raises the value of the housing stock and makes the community healthier.” ■

Thank You! 2008 Auction Sponsors

Rooftop Benefactors (Gifts of \$5,000 or more)

Northern Cross Foundation
River City Foundation
James and Jane Welch Foundation

Fireplace Leaders (Gifts of \$2,500 or more)

Anonymous
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Byron Bank
Chase Bank
Exhibit Design Consultants
RoMan Manufacturing
The Grand Rapids Press

Bricks & Mortar Friends (Gifts of \$1,000 or more)

Anonymous
Art of the Table
Cottage Home
D&D Building
Eikenhout, Inc.
Elaine Carr Design
Gumina’s Flowers
Miller, Canfield, Paddock & Stone
San Chez – A Tapas Bistro
Sterk & Company /
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The Home Setting
United Bank
Universal Forest Products

Blueprint Supporters (Gifts of \$500 or more)

Belden Brick & Supply Company
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Brian Kelly Photography
Chemical Bank
CPR, Inc.
David and Bette Sebastian
Fence Consultants
Founders Bank & Trust
Lisa and Bill Ruoff
Lykins Law, PC
Meijer
National City Bank
Rod and Annie Van Tol
Schuil Coffee Company
Thompson Remodeling
True Wind Media
Witte Lawn Maintenance

2008 Community Repair Day

Volunteers Build 12 Wheelchair Ramps; Donors Give \$33,800 in Materials and Labor

“I’ve never seen it rain so hard on the second Saturday in September!” says Dave Jacobs, executive director, about the 2008 Community Repair Day.

Though the rain poured, the temperature was warm and the 70 volunteers stuck it out, building 12 wheelchair ramps for 12 families in need. Some volunteers kept an eye on the weather forecast and came a day early to work before the rain hit, then came back the next day, too. Others worked in the rain for as long as possible and came back later to finish up.



Jim Van Overloop volunteered as

a crew leader—his eighth year of volunteering for this annual event. Jim is a partner in Bosgraaf Company, a residential construction and remodeling company, and he enjoys sharing his carpentry skills.

“Home Repair Services is a great organization and I wanted to help put ramps in or porches for people who need it,” Jim says. “The organization makes sure the people really need help, so I knew my work was going for a good cause.”

Despite the downturn in the housing market, local builders, lumberyards and



To learn about other volunteer opportunities, visit us online at www.HomeRepairServices.org

Volunteers from Eastbrook Homes built a wheelchair ramp for homeowner Suellen Dekorte. Scores of local volunteers built 13 wheelchair ramps for disabled residents throughout the metro area.

other donors donated nearly \$35,000 in materials, labor and funding to make the day-to-day lives of Kent County’s lower-income homeowners easier.

“There are not as many builders in this town this year as there were last year,” Dave Jacobs says. “Despite that, just as many wheelchair ramps were built. The lumberyards, who I know are in financial pain, managed to come up with nearly \$20,000 worth of lumber this year and that lumber is a key factor in the success of the event.”

“What really makes it work is

the Home & Building Association of Greater Grand Rapids supports this event,” Jim Van Overloop notes. “Judy Barnes (Executive VP, CEO) tours the sites, takes pictures of everyone working and encourages us by saying, ‘Hey, great job guys.’”

“I think that life is not about achieving, as much as it’s about people,” Jim adds. “We’re here to serve; we’re here to run our businesses efficiently and to share our talents.” ■

Thank you to the many donors listed at right for supporting Community Repair Day 2008! They provided the materials, tools and volunteers needed to make the day such a big success for everyone. We are deeply grateful!

Please support these civic-minded businesses whenever possible.

Advanced Homes
Affordable Renovation, Inc.
Allied Waste Services
Balk Builders
Bank of America
Bayes Water Treatment
Biewer Lumber
Bosgraaf Company
Bruce D. Vugteveen, Builder
Carter Lumber
Creekside Construction, Inc.
Disability Advocates
Dry Mix Crete & Supply

Eastbrook Homes
Exchange Financial
Executive Group Realty
Falarski Construction
Company
GR Construction Services
Groot Builders, Inc.
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Hager Distribution
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Association of GGR
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LB & LB Construction, Inc.
Macatawa Bank
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and Counseling
Monsma Marketing
Morris Builders, Inc.
Mullen Builders
National Nail
RDI Development
Company
Roersma & Wurn Builders

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Standale Lumber
Standard Lumber/
Standard Kitchens
TLP Contractors
Universal Forest Products
VanderWerp Interiors
VML Insurance
West River Framing
Wireworks Electric, Inc.
Zaskowski Builders, Inc.
Zeeland Lumber

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Mark your calendar now for Thursday evening, February 19, as we present the 2009 Resourceful Homeowner Celebration. You'll love this unique annual event for friends and clients of Home Repair Services.

Got Surplus?

We Need Your Extra Building Materials

If you have lightly used building materials, please call Home Repair Services! We'll send a truck directly to your site to pick up new, surplus or lightly used building materials – for free. We're especially looking for:

- Kitchen cabinets
- Bathroom cabinets
- Carpeting
- Tile flooring
- Laminate flooring
- Linoleum
- Light fixtures

Free Pickup!
Call 241-2601

The next time you have surplus building materials – from a job site, from a tear-down or in your company's warehouse – just call Home Repair Services at (616) 241-2601 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to arrange a free pick-up. Or visit our website at www.HomeRepairServices.org.

It's good for the environment. It's good for you. And it's great for the future of our community. You'll be helping thousands of lower-income families throughout our area. Your donation may also qualify for a tax deduction (see your tax advisor.) ■



This newsletter is a publication of Home Repair Services of Kent County, Inc., 1100 S. Division Ave., Grand Rapids, MI 49507. Phone: (616) 241-2601. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization; all contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Your questions and suggestions are welcome. www.HomeRepairServices.org