

# News from Home



A Non-profit Organization

## Home Repair Services

Resources for Home Owners

**Fall 2009**

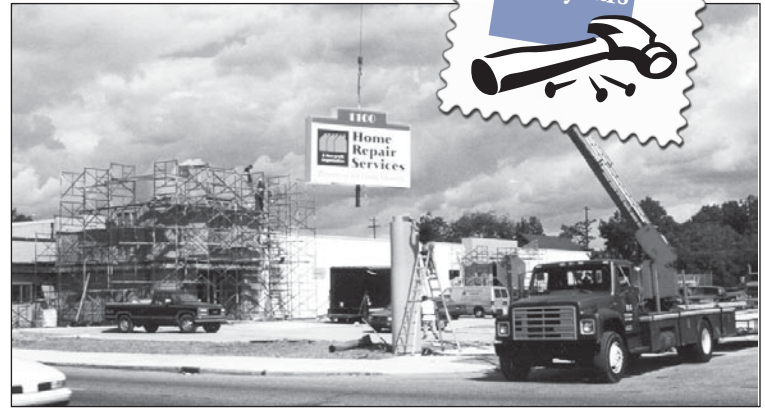
The Newsletter of Home Repair Services of Kent County, MI. Vol. 11, Issue 2  
www.HomeRepairServices.org

## Celebrating 30 Years of Service!

*Highlights from the First Three Decades of Home Repair Services*



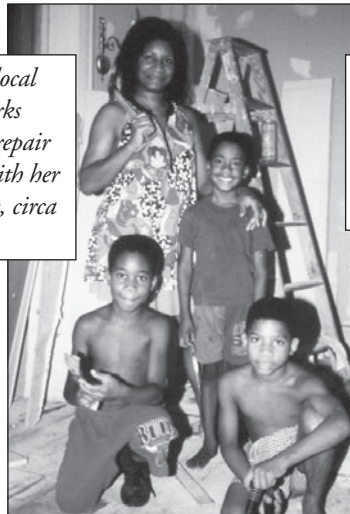
The original site of Home Repair Services at 1200 Jefferson St. was a former dairy. Across the street is the old Grand Rapids South High School, where President Gerald R. Ford attended. The warehouse was a mile away.



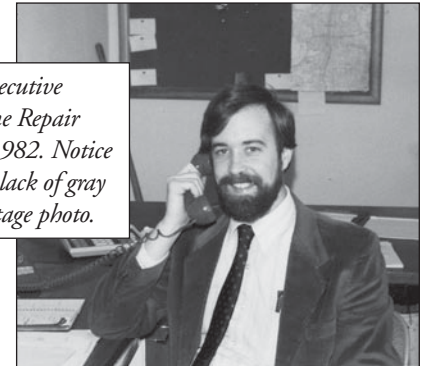
Construction crews hoist a large street sign in place at the new headquarters, which opened in 1999. Located at 1100 S. Division Ave., the building was converted from the former Mulvihill Oldsmobile dealership.



Right, a local mom works on a big repair project with her three sons, circa 1995.



Dave Jacobs, executive director of Home Repair Services, circa 1982. Notice the remarkable lack of gray hair in this vintage photo.



The first Community Repair Day in 1992 was a huge success. This partnership with the Home and Building Association has endured for 18 years.



Helping families build value and dignity is at the heart of our work. Right, participants at a Fix-it School repair class in 2002. Left, long-time Development Director Hank Kroondyk promotes the new Builders' Abundance program in 1992.



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## People Who Make a Difference: Don Hill

**Most people would think** they couldn't get a lot done in just a two-hour work day, but that's not how Don Hill sees it.

Besides being in charge of tool maintenance for the Tool Library, he's a gifted engineer who envisions ways to improve workflow and then sets about building whatever Home Repair Services needs to make it happen.

Don calls upon his 23 years' experience as a material handling engineer at Steelcase, where he designed conveyor systems that helped employees work smarter. He comes by his talent naturally: his grandfather was a former GM engineer who owned a tool shop in Lyons, MI.

**Don's primary job** is making sure the tools clients return to the Tool Library are in good condition. If they need cleaning or a repair, he does it. He relishes special challenges, though. "I take on special jobs," he says of his 13-year second career, "like if they need dollies for something or need something repaired. I built racks for hanging brooms and shovels by the



doors to keep them handy for the guys. No matter what door they're working at they can get what they need. It's right there."

Don built a four-foot by eight-foot rack with wheels that stores the various rakes, shovels, tree-trimming saws and other unwieldy tools available in the Tool Library. A worker rolls the rack to the door, helps the client with their tool selection and rolls the rack back in place.

"We designed a machine (for the Builder's Abundance store) to roll the carpet on and off, so we don't have to throw it on the floor," he says. "I also designed a box to break glass windows into to recycle the glass." That box keeps the glass shards contained and keeps workers safe.

**The variety of projects** taps Don's imagination and showcases his value as a member of the Home Repair Services team. It also makes him eager for each new request. "You never know what's next," he chuckles. ■

## Safe at Home: Repair Team Partners with Regional Coalition

**Carbon monoxide poisoning**, lead poisoning and bacteria – deadly hazards lurking in many homes; hazards that can be remediated or prevented. Detecting the problems and fixing them, or stopping them before they start, are goals of both Home Repair Services and the

Healthy Homes Coalition. **Another goal is preventing** lead poisoning, a risk caused by lead-based paint often found in homes built before 1978. Home Repair Services and the Healthy Homes Coalition teamed up this year to teach safe lead work practices to 55 Spanish-speaking homeowners through *Hágalo Usted De Manera Segura*, a one-on-one coaching program.

"**Home Repair Services** communi-

cates the message of lead safety to clients and their repair crew is staying up on best practices," says Paul Haan, Healthy Homes' executive director. "Come April

2010, anyone who does work in pre-1978 housing units or child occupied units, like daycare centers,

will have to follow the federal EPA Renovation Repair and Painting Rule. Home Repair Services will be on top of their game for what they need to do."

Carbon monoxide poisoning is also a threat. The Repair Team and its subcontractors carry carbon monoxide testing equipment with them when doing furnace repairs.

"A cracked heat exchanger on an older furnace can leak carbon monoxide

into the home," says Repair Team Manager Bob Hengeveld. "We also check the venting system for the furnace and water heater; if that's blocked carbon monoxide can get into the home."

**Water from leaking roofs**, water pipes and sewer lines can create ideal conditions for other problems which can affect health. Other safety issues the Repair Team addresses include unsafe floors, stairs without railings, bathrooms without grab bars and electrical hazards.

"The families we serve want to be sure that things in their homes work the way they're supposed to," Bob says. "We want to give them peace of mind." ■

**Healthy Homes**  
Coalition of West Michigan



### Timeline: 1979- 2009

**1979:** Home Repair Services founded as a separate non-profit organization after its start as an emergency home repair ministry of the Catholic Human Development Office. Purchased the old Joppe Dairy building at 1200 Jefferson St. SE.

**1985:** Began constructing wheelchair ramps for disabled homeowners and senior citizens in need throughout Kent County.

**1988:** Assumed responsibility for the lending Tool Library upon request by the City of Grand Rapids.

# Empowering People: Reflections on Our First 30 Years

No one could have predicted the evolution of Home Repair Services since they set up shop in 1979 in the old Joppe Dairy building at Hall and Jefferson. Their beginnings as the emergency home repair ministry of the Catholic Human Development Office prepared them to continue that work. As they talked to their clients and discovered their needs, the Repair Team realized that the people needed more than working furnaces and sound roofs. They needed to be empowered to help themselves.

Many clients enjoyed working on their homes, but lacked tools, materials and know-how.



The Repair Team handled the jobs that required professionals, but could the organization help the do it yourselfers, too? The answer was yes.

Home Repair Services said yes to the City of Grand Rapids and took on the Tool Library. They said yes to opening the first Builders' Abundance store in a leased warehouse on Hall Street. They said yes to offering home maintenance

classes for homeowners. All these continue today.

"It took Home Repair Services about 15 years to find its mission to provide resources to help homeowners be successful," says Dave Jacobs, executive director. "But once we found it, our job became a lot easier. The down side is sometimes it gets kind of lonely because our narrow focus means there are not many other groups like us that we can compare notes with."

In 1999, Home Repair Services moved into the former Mulvihill Oldsmobile dealership after purchasing and renovating the property. The move brought offices, store and warehouse under one roof for the first time. Kevin Kabat, president and CEO of Fifth Third Bancorp, co-chaired the capital campaign with David Hooker, president and CEO of Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, and Nancy Treul, senior vice president for Foremost Insurance Group. The campaign raised \$3,007,857.

"What stood out most to me was the quality of the people who were so deeply committed to the organization.

They truly were dedicated to improving the lives of others," Kevin says. "And I was moved by the stories I heard from the people who were helped. Whether it was helping them with their furnaces or teaching people how to make repairs on their homes, Home Repair Services helped strengthen the community by helping folks stay in their homes."

Home Repair Services still repairs homes. But they also offer one of Michigan's largest foreclosure intervention programs, lead-safe work practices programs, financial management classes and energy efficiency classes.

For three decades, thousands of homeowners have turned to them for help. It's because of the dedication and ingenuity of their staff and volunteers, the support of community partners and the generosity of their donors that Home Repair Services has been able to do so much for local families in need. ■



## Dick Westra

On July 22, Home Repair Services hosted a 30th Anniversary Celebration Open House. The event included a special honor for Dick Westra, a longtime friend and supporter and Board Chair during the capital campaign for the current headquarters building.

## Director's Appreciation Award

Home Repair Services recognizes Dick Westra, a faithful ambassador and committed friend since 1993. Chairperson of the Board of Directors from 1997 – 2000. Dick's far-reaching vision, boundless passion and reflective spirituality during those formative years directly impacted the organization's ability to serve homeowners for many years into the future.

**1991:** Leased warehouse space at 401 Hall St. SW for the Builders' Abundance Store, a resource to recover and redistribute surplus building and home renovation materials.

**1992:** Sponsored first Community Repair Day, a joint effort with the Home & Building Association of Greater Grand Rapids.

**1995:** Hosted first Resourceful Homeowner Celebration.

**1996:** Began offering formal home maintenance classes in the Fix-It School.

**1998:** Launched the Tools, Talents & Treasures Campaign to establish a new headquarters building.

**1999:** Relocated into the former Mulvihill Oldsmobile building at 1100 S. Division Ave.



To learn more, visit us online:  
[www.HomeRepairServices.org](http://www.HomeRepairServices.org)

*Left, a work crew from Bruce Vugteveen Builders completes a wheelchair ramp for a lower-income homeowner, one of 12 ramps built during this year's Community Repair Day. Above, Executive Director Dave Jacobs speaks to volunteers during the kickoff breakfast.*

## 2009 Community Repair Day:

*Volunteers Build 12 Wheelchair Ramps, Donate 368 Work Hours for Those in Need*

**Dale Shugars** couldn't believe his eyes when he saw the narrow stairs that one wheelchair-bound Home Repair Services client had to navigate to get in and out of her home. He says that was when he realized the impact that having, or not having, a wheelchair ramp has on a disabled person and their family.

**Dale is Executive Vice President** of the Home and Building Association of Greater Grand Rapids. You might say he's the new kid on the block, having just come on board in July. So although the HBAGGR partnered with Home Repair Services 18 years ago to sponsor the first Community Repair Day, this was *Dale's* first Community Repair Day.

"I had some idea of what to expect, but the impact was much greater and deeper than I thought it would be," Dale says. "It really is life changing for

someone when they can't get in and out of their home."

**The HBAGGR** has partnered with Home Repair Services on Community Repair Day since 1991. They rally volunteers from member businesses, solicit donations of materials and funding, deliver building materials to the work sites and provide expert builders with the tools for the task at hand. Many times the volunteer crews have worked in pouring rain or have split their time over a couple of days to get a job completed.

**This year on September 12,** Mother Nature cooperated by showering 83 volunteers with sunshine as they gave 368 work hours and built wheelchair ramps for 12 lower-income families. In addition, donations of lumber, materials, bottled water and other items

totaled nearly \$16,000.

Dale says his participation in the HBA's national and state Executive Officers Councils allows him to learn about some of the volunteer work taking place in other communities.

**"Grand Rapids certainly provides** an example of helping your neighbors out," he says. "These types of projects really show the soul of the community. When members in the home building community are willing to give up time and materials in these tough economic times, it really says a lot about the community and why Grand Rapids is a great place to work and live.

**"We understand** that giving time and money means a little more this year because of the economy. We certainly appreciate it more than ever." ■

**2000:** Completed the Tools, Talents & Treasures capital campaign, raising a grand total of \$3,007,857.

**2001:** Began counseling homeowners facing foreclosure through the Financial Counseling Program.

**2004:** Celebrated 25th Anniversary with a community open house.

**2004:** Hosted the first "Making It Home" Benefit Auction.

**2007:** Home Repair Services named "Non-Profit of the Year" by the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce.

**2009:** Celebrated 30th Anniversary and presented Director's Appreciation Award to Dick Westra.

# A Splendid Time for a Great Cause!

## 6th "Making It Home" Auction Raises Over \$59,000

### Nine "rooms" held hundreds of treasures.

The chatter and laughter of nearly 200 guests rose above the music as they wandered the rooms looking for that special something worthy of their bid. An electronic board glowed with the results of friendly bidding wars. Delectable aromas wafted through the air and every now and again one could hear the clink of wine glasses.

**October 15 was the night** and Home Repair Services' 6th Annual Making It Home Auction was the place. Once again, the normally expansive Builders' Abundance Store at Home Repair Services was transformed into themed rooms – including The Great Outdoors, Child's Play, Kitchen Essentials, Executive Office and Dining Packages & Great Giveaways – each room decked out in appropriate "décor" that was up for bids in a silent auction conducted electronically.

**When the final bids** were tallied, the event raised over \$59,000 for Home Repair Services programs.

"Sometimes you go to these things, you walk in and walk out, and this is not like that – you can see how important it is to Home Repair Services," says Mike Chase, owner of Eikenhout, Inc. "It passes right through to what their mission statement is as an organization. It shows their passion for helping people. They know they can help more people if the auction is a success."

**This year, Mike and his wife Carol**, Mick and Lucy McGraw and Mike and Michelle Van Dyke were honorary hosts who helped to make guests feel welcome.

**Among the silent auction items** were a wrought iron bistro table and chairs, lunch with Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell and gift certificates for the Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, the West Michigan Whitecaps and River City Improv. Auctioneer Dane Wysocki revved up the bidding on live auction items that included sailing adventures, a themed dinner, custom jewelry and a one-week condominium stay in Siesta Key, FL. Adding to the night's excitement was the drawing of the winning ticket in a raffle for a 2005 Harley Davidson Deluxe Classic motorcycle. Home Repair Services staff, volunteers and friends sold raffle tickets for seven months leading up to the drawing.

**San Chez - A Tapas Bistro** served up delectable taste treats and Art of the Table poured a selection of wines, beers and soft drinks to round out the festive atmosphere.

"It's a fun social event that benefits the community," says Mike Chase. "The crowd comes from different walks of life – from builders and business owners to ordinary people – and it highlights the diverse group that understands what Home Repair Services means to the community." ■



*This year's honorary hosts (left) were Mike & Carol Chase, Mick & Lucy McGraw, and Mike & Michelle Van Dyke.*

*Above, revelers enjoy wine and hors d'oeuvres at the auction.*



*Bottom, Maranda from WOOD TV8 hands over the winning ticket in the Harley Davidson Motorcycle Raffle to Stan Greene.*

*Thanks to everyone who made the evening a success!*

## 2009 Auction Sponsors

### Rooftop Benefactors

(Gifts of \$5,000 or more)  
Northern Cross Foundation  
River City Foundation

### Fireplace Leaders

(Gifts of \$2,500 or more)  
Anonymous  
Byron Bank  
Fifth Third Bank  
RoMan Manufacturing  
Universal Forest Products

### Bricks & Mortar Friends

(Gifts of \$1,000 or more)  
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Ben & Betty Brinks  
Butterball Farms, Inc.  
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Rick & Kristi Veldman - MetLife Home Loans



**Making It Home**  
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# News from Home



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Resources for Home Owners

1100 S. Division Ave.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507-1024

## Volunteers Needed!

Many hands make light work...and your hands can measure, cut, clamp and fasten to build and refurbish cabinets in our woodshop.

We're also seeking volunteers to repair cement steps, answer office phones with a welcoming voice and hand out information about Home Repair Services at various community events.

Call (616) 241-2601, extension 223, and say "I've got skills you can use!" Or visit [www.HomeRepairServices.org](http://www.HomeRepairServices.org).



### Save the Date! Feb. 25, 2010

Mark your calendar now for Thursday evening, Feb. 25, as we present the 2010 Resourceful Homeowner Celebration. Don't miss this heartwarming event!



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](http://www.HomeRepairServices.org)



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