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**ANDREA COX IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS INVOLVED IN AN ACT OF GIVING, PLEASE SHARE WITH US BY SENDING AN EMAIL TO ANDREA COX AT LIVINGBETTER2@YAHOO.CA.
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD**

Hearts and Hammers to the rescue

This weekend a deserving mobility-challenged Calgary couple will have their home refashioned to make it more accessible thanks to Hearts and Hammers, a not-for-profit spearheaded and founded by former real estate investor Dave Bonk. Naomi and Ramon Ramirez have been living a nightmare for the past few years. Ramon was diagnosed with a rare Parkinson's-like disease, so rare in fact that it has no formal name. But its symptoms have been ravaging. Over the last two years his condition has rapidly deteriorated leaving him unable to speak and with very limited mobility.

"They don't fit within any financial guidelines for aid," says Bonk, adding that the Ramirez's split-level home in Pineridge has no wheelchair accessibility and lots of stairs. In fact, he says that although the couple has hired a part time caregiver, for the most part Naomi is Ramon's sole helper and as such often has to carry him. "And she is a tiny woman. It is exhausting for her," says Bonk, with great admiration. The Ramirezes were nominated as candidates for the project during Hearts and Hammers' inaugural year in 2013. "But at the time the project was just too big and we didn't have the funding."

Hearts and Hammers' mission is to provide home renovations from minor upgrades to major accessibility improvements for individuals with mobility issues. It is completely reliant on volunteers and the support of trades and sponsors for the funding and labour involved in the projects.

Bonk started the not-for-profit because he full-heartedly believes in helping people and he saw a niche of very vulnerable individuals that often can't afford the renovations they require to live an adequate life. "Individuals and families with mobility challenges make up a large segment of those in need and for the most part they are not being serviced by other agencies or initiatives.

We can make a really big difference for people," says Bonk, who adds that Hearts and Hammers has just joint ventured with Accessible Housing, a local agency that assists homeless individuals with mobility issues. Although Bonk says that the Ramirez project still isn't fully funded, Hearts and Hammers is going ahead with blind faith and will complete the project over the course of two weekends.

"We will start with the ramps and accessibility and then if possible go ahead with the much needed maintenance on the home." And Bonk is trusting that the entire project will reach fruition.

"I have lots of trades that are volunteering but we still need some bobcat work done, a carpenter and some funding."

The renovation, which will include lifts and ramps, as well as modifications to the bathroom and easier access to the backyard by adding a rear deck, is slated to cost close to \$65,000. "This couple is way too young to be going through this. They really need some help."

If you would like to donate time, funds or supplies please visit www.heartsandhammers.ca.

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