

GOOD NEWS

Building a better future – Heart and Hammers provide accessibility for family in need

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Jon Schiedel (L), project manager and owner of GreenStone Construction Management, joins John Casuga in filling a wheelbarrow while doing prep work outside a home in northeast Calgary, Alta., on Saturday, Sept. 27, 2014. The Hearts and Hammers project was to build a wheelchair ramp and do indoor modifications to help out Ramon Ramirez, whose Parkinson's has left him completely reliant on his wife Naomi. Lyle Aspinall/Calgary Sun/QMI Agency

Early Saturday morning, big-hearted professionals brought out their hammers on a day off, just to make a difficult life a touch easier for a Calgary couple in need.

It'll take a couple of months, but when the Hearts and Hammers volunteers are done, Naomi and Ramon Ramirez' northeast Calgary house will be much more accessible, which has been a struggle for the pair for roughly four years now.

Since Ramon lost mobility to a Parkinson's-like disease, Naomi took over his care.

"It's quite a large task," Hearts and Hammers founder Dave Bonk said.

"(Naomi's) not looking for sympathy, but it has been very difficult caring for Ramon," he said, describing Naomi having to basically drag her husband up and down stairs in their home.

"They've been looking around and they've applied, but they've not been able to find (the support they need)."

More than anything, Naomi and Ramon just want to continue living together in their home instead of having to move Ramon to a place where he's easier to care for.

Recently, Bonk gave them the good news: Hearts and Hammers would get them started.

He said Naomi was grateful, but hesitant — she believes and was insistent there are others more deserving than her and her husband and she had a hard time accepting the gift.

Then came tears of joy.

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Saturday, Hearts and Hammers volunteers started building a wheelchair ramp outside the home.

When that's done, a lift will be added to the inside.

Eventually, modifications will be made to the bathroom. There might even be a backyard deck, also accessible.

Bonk said it'll all be done by the end of the year — they promised.

It's a stretch, he said, but also something Hearts and Hammers felt strongly enough about to agree to anyway.

“They're truly vulnerable people with nowhere else to turn for help,” he said.

“That touches the hearts of a lot of people.

“They are in this situation due to no fault of their own ... we can make a huge difference in their lives and that's very satisfying.”

More information about Hearts and Hammers, including how to donate to the cause of providing home renovations to Calgary families in need that have mobility issues, can be found at heartsandhammers.ca online.

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