



REPAIR TEAM FEATURE: New Partnership honors Marine

When Ricardo Vasquez enlisted in the U.S. Marines, he was young, strong, and ready to serve – eager to be among the “few and the proud.” He couldn’t have imagined a future where he’d need assistance from others for his everyday life. But his tour of duty concluded with Ricardo facing the significant challenges that would come with life as paraplegic, often needing support and kindness from others.

That kindness was recently on display in the form of an enthusiastic crew from SpartanNash, who gathered outside his home on Grand Rapids’ southwest side to build an accessibility ramp. The team’s first act was a small but meaningful gesture: they learned in advance that Ricardo was a Marine so they presented him with a Marine Corps flag, then attached it proudly to his porch overhang. The sight of the flag quickly brought tears to Ricardo’s 68-year-old eyes and it set the tone for a day filled with gratitude and respect.

Ricardo’s life has not followed a straight path, and like many journeys, it has had its unexpected twists, valleys, and hardships. But he also testifies to moments when the

generosity and kindness of others have been amazing, and this was one of those moments. “It’s incredible to see people come together like this,” Ricardo told the volunteers, needing to pause as he was momentarily overcome with gratitude. He later explained how the ramp was going to make it easier to visit his wife who has been receiving nursing care for an extended time.

The Vasquez home, built in 1875, holds decades of family history and this ramp represented a practical necessity for Ricardo to be able to age-in-place. “I want to stay in this home. I like living here in this neighborhood,” he shared.

While SpartanNash’s commitment to supporting veterans is longstanding, the partnership with Home Repair Services was new in 2024. Originally intended to be a single ramp project in April to highlight both Earth Day and our nation’s military veteran heroes, the scope quickly grew to include four additional ramp projects with the last one completed in September.

Trex—a company specializing in sustainable

decking materials—was included in the collaboration, providing enough material to do the five planned ramps and beyond. “By using the composite decking planks produced and donated by Trex, each of these ramps will not only look great long-term but they will require little annual maintenance for our clients,” shared HRS executive director, Joel Ruiter. “And it is so cool that the Trex decking is made from recycled plastic bags collected at SpartanNash stores. It’s a double win to be able to bless these veterans and be good stewards of the environment at the same time.”

“With each ramp using approximately 157,500 recycled plastic bags that would otherwise likely end up in landfills, this partnership presented us with an opportunity to not only give back to our nation’s heroes, but it showcased our recycling commitment,” said Adrienne Chance, SpartanNash’s Senior Vice President of Communications. “Our associates and shoppers who recycle those plastic grocery bags are helping to make these ramps possible, and it results in veterans with disabilities better enjoying life outside their homes.” *continued on page 3*



37 Federal Home Loan Bank of Indianapolis staff volunteered at HRS



Congresswoman Hillary Scholten visits HRS



HRS teaches financial education in Spanish at the Diocese of Grand Rapids



Keller Williams GR East raises funds for HRS at its golf outing



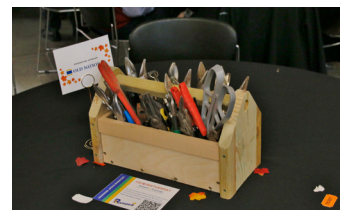
RDV volunteers in action



MSUFCU/ Desk Drawer Foundation partnership with HRS grows stronger

Full House Enjoys 2024 Impact Celebration Party!

- Presenting Sponsor: **Old National Bank**
- Beverage Sponsor: **First Merchants Bank**
- Dessert Sponsor: **ChoiceOne Bank**
- Gold Sponsors: **Independent Bank, Lake Trust Credit Union, Horizon Bank, LMCU, MSU Federal Credit Union, West Michigan Community Bank, AARP Grand Rapids, Northpointe Bank**
- A packed house gathered in the Home Repair Services outer lobby
- Tours of the HRS Cabinet Shop, Bench Building Room, New Electric Vans, and East Room
- A celebration of our collective impact during the 2023/24 fiscal year
- A feast of food and drink provided by Two Scotts Barbecue, a variety of local beverages, and Everything Bundt "Bundtini" Cakes



Save these dates and plan on joining us!

The 2025 Resourceful Homeowner Celebration

March 13, 2025 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

The 2025 Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast

April 23, 2025 8:00 am – 9:30 am
Home Repair Services Lobby

For more details or to inquire about sponsoring these two incredible events, contact Steven Nicolet at snicolet@homerepairservices.org or (616) 241-2601 ext. 223.

Big Changes Coming to the HRS Cabinet Shop

In 2016, HRS relaunched its production of kitchen cabinets with a small group of dedicated volunteers. Initially, we kept the product range simple, focusing on standard box sizes and avoiding custom requests to help streamline production. However, as the years have passed, our volunteers’ skill has enabled the HRS cabinet line to grow increasingly sophisticated and customizable. Today, our offerings extend well beyond the original design, including pantry cabinets, locker cabinets, stackable units, lazy Susans, spice rack rollouts, angled cabinets, and soft-close hardware. With these high-quality, attractive cabinets priced at less than half the cost of the lowest options at big-box stores, it’s no wonder 95% of our DIY clients choose HRS cabinets for their projects.

Recently, we decided to reimagine the physical space of the cabinet shop to better reflect our cabinet line’s evolution and support our volunteers. This means creating a space that fosters efficiency, safety, and a sense of camaraderie. To achieve this, we’re transforming the shop into an open floor plan. The workflow will shift from a North-South to an East-West orientation, making the full shop footprint visible to all volunteers, so they can stay connected and work more effectively.

In addition, we’re establishing dedicated production stations with components for each stage close at hand, allowing volunteers to move through tasks smoothly and reduce extra steps. We are also consolidating the spaces where clients stain and paint their cabinets, equipping the area with a demonstration kiosk with tips for applying quality finishes.

Lastly, our workshop area for repurposing scrap lumber will also see upgrades. In addition to having space for volunteers to build benches, window well covers, and toolboxes, we’re adding a metal-bending station that will be available for our Repair Team and DIY clients to make custom repairs or create durable aluminum trim components.

These long-anticipated changes will soon become a reality, enhancing both the cabinet shop and our volunteers’ experience. With each improvement, we continue our commitment to delivering high-quality, affordable cabinets while creating a supportive, rewarding environment for our team of volunteers.



Repair Team Feature - continued

Dave Heglas, Senior Director of Supply Chain Excellence at Trex, said, “With partners like SpartanNash, we can work together to divert millions of pounds of plastic waste from landfills to create sustainable Trex decking. Knowing that these deck boards are going to help veterans served through Home Repair Services to live more comfortably makes it even more meaningful.”

Soon after the volunteers fastened the last deck board, they assembled for a team photo that included the Marine flag, a tribute to Ricardo’s sacrifice and resilience. It had been a special day – a day of kindness in service to others. We thank Ricardo for his service to our nation and Spartan Nash and Trex for their wonderful collaboration in 2024!



Follow us on social media.



98% Success Rate in Foreclosure Counseling!

In the 23 years since HRS began offering foreclosure prevention counseling, last year marked our highest success by percentage in helping clients stay in their homes — an incredible milestone. Although the number of cases was at an all-time low (a reality that we wholeheartedly celebrate) 44 out of 45 clients counseled through the program remained in their homes by the end of our fiscal year on June 30. This nearly perfect record is a testament to our counselors' dedication, expertise, and compassion.

For these households, having highly trained, compassionate professionals to guide them through the harrowing moments of foreclosure was a lifeline. Our program, free of charge for homeowners in Kent County and its seven surrounding counties, provides clients with essential support when they need it most. Our counselors, Amber Jones and Alisa Flores, are HUD-certified, and each bring years of experience to their counseling work.

Several factors contributed to last year's impressive success rate. One key element is that we do this work in partnership with others. Legal Aid of Western Michigan and the Kent County Treasurer's Office are close allies in finding solutions. Another element is the teamwork between Amber and Alisa. Amber shared, "We bounce ideas off each other on how to best solve our cases for each client. And we relentlessly pursue every possible avenue to keep a client in their home."

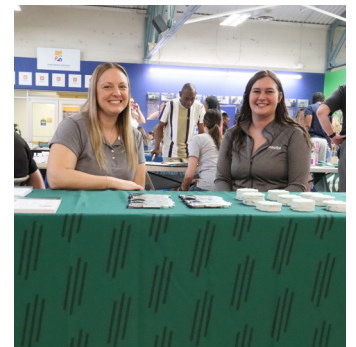
Reflecting on the year's success, both Amber and Alisa shared memories of individual clients whose stories had a lasting impact. For Alisa, one case was especially memorable: "I had a client whose difficulties started with a job loss during the pandemic and then things got worse when her sister and mom passed away. She cried through our first meeting. But we secured some catch up funds and it gave her hope for the future." Amber recounted the journey of a single mom with two kids who fell four months behind on her mortgage after a car accident required surgery: "Her case was complicated and she was filled with anxiety, but everything fell into place and resulted in loan modification with a lower payment. I could physically see the weight lifted off her shoulders by the end."

Thanks to Amber, Alisa, and a network of community support, HRS's foreclosure prevention program continues to make a profound difference in people's lives, assisting homeowners to overcome challenges and remain in the homes they cherish.

Show Me the Money Day Continues Growing

For the third consecutive year, Home Repair Services hosted Show Me the Money Day, an interactive community event aimed at connecting Kent County residents with resources to support financial well-being and stability. More than 80 attendees participated in a variety of workshops covering topics such as credit, budgeting, home buying, and entrepreneurship. This year, workshops were offered in both English and Spanish to increase accessibility. Guests enjoyed a delicious lunch from a local caterer, with plenty of free swag and door prizes. Additionally, a resource fair featured over 20 financial institutions, nonprofit partners, and other organizations ready to share their products and resources with the community.

Make plans to join us next year: May 17, 2025



For more details or to inquire about foreclosure counseling or financial education at HRS, contact Alisa Flores at aflores@homerepairservices.org or (616) 241-2601 ext.239

PEOPLE WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE: Jim & Dode Compere



When Jim and Dode Compere relocated back to Grand Rapids after living in Grand Traverse County, they were quick to adjust to life in a familiar city. Jim, a retired executive with Northwestern Mutual Life who had spent years working in both the Grand Rapids and Milwaukee offices, was eager to find a volunteer role that would allow him to apply his analytical skills and make a meaningful contribution.

His search led him and Dode to a visit of Home Repair Services (HRS) with Executive Director Joel Ruiter. During the tour, Jim noted and was impressed by the large number of senior homeowners who were served by the organization. He asked if the board could benefit from a senior's perspective to further shape its mission. Joel recalled, "I thought it was an insightful observation. I quickly ran the idea by other board members and they too saw the wisdom in adding the voice of an older adult to the board's discussions. Jim soon joined the board and went on to become one of the most dedicated board members I have ever encountered."

Jim fulfilled his board commitment in December of 2022 after serving a total of six years, including several as the board chair. "I was initially attracted to HRS's by its approach to helping people in a dignified way. The organization's philosophy of supporting homeowners while ensuring they have 'skin in the game' resonated with Dode and me," he explained.

Recently, after reading an article about HRS's commitment to replace its fossil-fuel-powered vans with all-electric ones, Jim and Dode were both intrigued and inspired. Jim shared, "Having been involved in board leadership, I knew firsthand the importance of HRS's work and how traveling to client homes is an integral element. Dode and I had been considering making a unique legacy gift and this really jumped out to us. The move toward electric vans aligns with our values, and we wanted to contribute to making it a reality."

Jim and Dode's generosity and commitment in its many forms has had a significant and lasting impact on Home Repair Services. Thanks Jim and Dode for being people who make a difference.

Why We Support HRS

"LMCU is incredibly proud of our partnership with Home Repair Services and the amazing work they do to support homeowners in our community. We love the variety of services they offer from repairs to the Fix-It School to their work in financial education. We appreciate how they promote the full continuum of homeownership from prior to purchase to what it takes to keep and maintain a home. HRS is such an important piece of our community."



- Matt Cook, LMCU Vice President of Community Relations



Please consider financially supporting the work of Home Repair Services at www.homerepairservices.org or use the QR Code.

news from HOME



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Join Us For a Lunch & Learn Tour

Home Repair Services continues to host monthly Lunch & Learn events in our building located at 1100 S. Division in Grand Rapids. We invite you to join us for a behind-the-scenes look at how HRS touches the lives of thousands of Kent County neighbors each year. We look forward to inviting you into our home, sharing how we strengthen housing structures and the people living in them and answering your questions about HRS. The event is from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm, with a tasty box lunch provided. If you have a few extra minutes, feel free to stay for a tour of our converted 1940's era auto dealership. Whether you are new to HRS or have been a longtime friend, please be our guest.

Please contact Brookelyn Guynn at 616-241-2601 ext. 102 or bguynn@homerepairservices.org



Upcoming 2025 Lunch & Learn Dates

Friday, January 17	Friday, March 21	Friday, May 16	Friday, July 18
Friday, February 12	Friday, April 18	Friday, June 20	Friday, August 15

Kent County
Senior Millage



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