



DO IT YOURSELF RESOURCES FEATURE: Becky Nespital

When Becky Nespital set out to remodel her kitchen, she had no idea she was embarking on a year-long journey of transformation, problem-solving, and discovery. Now, her dedication and perseverance have earned her the prestigious 2025 Resourceful Homeowner Celebration Award.

Becky's 1920s-era home had a kitchen in desperate need of an overhaul. She envisioned a space that felt cohesive with the rest of her home and would serve as a comfortable gathering place. Taking the project down to the studs, she rebuilt from the ground up.

The renovation came with challenges. A drywaller failed to meet expectations, forcing her to bring in a second person to redo the job. Removing five layers of old flooring was painstaking, but it revealed beautiful hardwood floors, which she carefully refinished. She also removed a dated drop ceiling, and together with the flooring changes, gained an impressive eight inches of additional ceiling height which was put to good use.

Throughout the project, Becky prioritized functionality and efficiency. She worked with HRS Self-Help Program Manager Mike Zamarron to design a kitchen that eliminated dead corners, encased appliances within cabinetry, and extended cabinets to the ceiling for optimal storage. With three entry points, getting the layout right required creativity. Electrical updates were also necessary, and she made sure to include a much-desired dishwasher.

Becky's journey as a resourceful homeowner began in 2014 when she purchased her home. That winter, Michigan experienced the worst ice dams in 50 years, causing severe water damage. Fortunately, her homeowner's insurance covered repairs, and rather than being discouraged, Becky's enthusiasm for homeownership remained strong.

Determined to develop her skills, she discovered the HRS Fix-It School on Facebook and began attending Saturday workshops. Benefiting from the hands-on workshops in electrical, plumbing, cabinet

installation, and more, Becky tackled her kitchen remodel with newfound confidence. She selected cabinets built by volunteers in the HRS Cabinet Shop, customizing many to fit her layout and doing all the final finish painting herself.

When the dust settled, Becky's persistence resulted in a warm and inviting kitchen where she now enjoys cooking her specialties—pot roast, mac and cheese, and Christmas cookies. The finished kitchen is both functional and beautiful, maintaining the charm of her historic home while incorporating modern conveniences.

Reflecting on the experience, Becky shared advice for fellow DIYers: "People fear things will go wrong, and they do, but you just push through and learn as you go. We're all more capable of DIYing than we give ourselves credit for. I also found out just how awesome my friends are. I was well cared for throughout this project."

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2025 Resourceful Homeowner Celebration

Event Highlights

- Held at The Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park with capacity crowd
- Honored Dana O’Laughlin, Laura Kelso, Jim DeJonge, and Ron Byle as the 2025 Abe DeVries honored volunteers
- Celebrated the incredible home improvement work and resourcefulness of Linda Frazier, Angela Diesel & James Pruitt, Joanne Little, and Beck Nespital

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Thank you to our Award Selection Committee

John Bitely – Sable Homes
Leslie Bozek – Flagstar Bank
Danielle Coveart – MSU Federal Credit Union
Michael Dubiel – Inspire Wellness Chiropractic
Sarah Edgington – LINC UP
Patricia Griffin – 2024 RHC Award Recipient
Elzie Honicutt – Davenport University & HRS Board Member
Alexis Reame – PNC Bank
Carina VanderMeer – Priority Health & HRS Board Member



Saving Homes, Restoring Hope: How HRS Helped Four Homeowners Avoid Foreclosure

At Home Repair Services (HRS), we understand that a variety of financial hardships and life circumstances can put homeownership at risk. This past month, we helped four homeowners facing the loss of their home navigate the foreclosure process—and thanks to swift and expert action and community support, all four were able to save their homes.

Client 1: A Fresh Start After an Accident

Client 1 contacted us in January with a sheriff's sale only a month away. A work accident had reduced their income, making payments impossible. HRS helped complete a loss mitigation packet under a tight deadline, securing a mortgage modification with a lower payment. Their roommate also began contributing to utilities, stabilizing their finances.



Alisa Flores & Amber Jones

Client 2: Overcoming Self-Employment Struggles

Client 2 was just over a month from foreclosure after losing self-employment income. Their roommates couldn't help financially, and they needed assistance completing a loss mitigation packet. HRS guided them through the process, securing a mortgage modification and a partial claim to move past-due amounts to the back of the loan. With a new job and steady income, they are now on stable ground.

Client 3: Finding Strength in Community

Facing foreclosure within six weeks, Client 3 completed their loss mitigation packet and began trial payments. However, their brother, who was also their roommate, passed away unexpectedly. With funeral expenses mounting, they struggled to keep up. HRS assisted in submitting another loss mitigation packet, and with a new job and church support, they caught up and were able to keep their home.

Client 4: A New Chapter After Divorce

With three weeks until foreclosure, Client 4 was coping with divorce and job loss. Although newly employed, they had yet to receive a paycheck and couldn't make trial payments. HRS helped them secure a new trial payment plan, and with a better-paying job, they are now on a path to financial stability.

Each homeowner faced unique challenges wrought with anxiety, but with the expert help of HRS and their own determination, all four avoided foreclosure, and at no cost. A special shoutout to Housing Counselor Amber Jones, whose dedication made these successes possible and to Alisa Flores, Housing Counselling Program Manager, for her continued leadership. If you or someone you know is facing foreclosure, reach out today—HRS is here to help.

Popular Financial Education Event Returns



Home Repair Services is excited to once again host **Show Me the Money Day**—a special event highlighting our financial education programs. Join us for **FREE** breakout workshops on essential topics like budgeting, credit, identity theft, asset and wealth building, debt management, homebuying, and more!

Date: Saturday, May 17 **Time:** 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Location: HRS Lobby

Guests will enjoy **coffee and pastries, a delicious lunch, a vendor fair, and exciting door prize raffles**. This event is **free and open to the public**, with **two workshops available in Spanish**. Don't miss this opportunity to gain valuable financial knowledge—we hope to see you there!

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A social worker by profession—not to be confused with a woodworker—Becky's perseverance and willingness to learn proved that major home projects are achievable with the right mindset and support.

Growing up in St. Joseph, she moved to Grand Rapids to attend GVSU and has been a proud homeowner ever since.

Accepting the 2025 Resourceful Homeowner Celebration Award, Becky expressed her gratitude: "From the workshops, the amazing staff support, to the volunteers in the Cabinet Shop, I could not have done this kitchen without the help of Home Repair Services. I get to enjoy this amazing kitchen every day and I am so grateful!"

While she plans to take a well-earned break, Becky already has her sights set on her next project—remodeling two bathrooms. Given her dedication and resourcefulness, there's no doubt she'll tackle it with the same determination that earned her this well-deserved award.



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Wheelchair Lift Helps Homeowner/Musician Take the Stage Again

For Phillip, a lifetime musician and guitar teacher, mobility had become a daily struggle. At 75 years old and living with a below-the-knee amputation, the home he had cherished since 1989 in the Creston Heights neighborhood had become an increasing challenge. Living on a low fixed income, modifying his home for accessibility was not something he could afford alone. Fortunately, thanks to the partnership between Home Repair Services of Kent County (HRS) and Disability Advocates of Kent County (DAKC), a solution was found: a wheelchair lift installation.

Phillip's home, built in 1921, presented several obstacles to traditional accessibility modifications. The property's small lot size, the tight placement of a historic carriage house, and the dramatic changes in elevations made constructing a standard wheelchair ramp impossible. Michael Guis, HRS Repair Program Manager, explained, "Each year we encounter a handful of work sites that simply will not allow for building an access ramp. For Phillip, it wasn't just the lot size, there were multiple impediments including how close an original carriage house had been constructed to the dwelling. But we worked it out."

The solution? A wheelchair lift. The project involved more than just installing the mechanical lift—it also required reframing sections of the carriage house to provide the necessary headroom, pouring new concrete for a stable approach, and ensuring that Phillip could safely access his home for years to come.

Brandon Herrick, Utility Carpenter with HRS, led the installation and noticed the strong community spirit surrounding Phillip. "Just about every time I worked at the house, a neighbor paid a visit or was sure to ask me how things were going as I was packing up for the day," Brandon shared.

For Phillip, who had spent decades teaching music lessons at Rainbow Music and performing locally, this lift is more than just a convenience—it's a doorway to rejoining the world outside. "I am so excited that this lift will allow me the opportunity to get back in front of audiences with my guitar. I hope to play open mic nights at nearby venues," he said with enthusiasm.

Though he has spent years largely confined to his home, Phillip has maintained a positive outlook. With a chuckle, he quipped, "People have been great about coming my way." But now, thanks to the efforts of HRS, DAKC, and generous supporters, Phillip can go their way, too.

This project is yet another example of how collaboration and innovative problem-solving can restore independence and dignity to individuals in our community. Because as Phillip puts it—he may be older, but he's not dead. And now, with his new wheelchair lift, he's ready to prove it, one song at a time.



PEOPLE WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE: ELZIE HONICUTT

At Home Repair Services (HRS), we are fortunate to work with individuals who dedicate their time and talents to making a meaningful impact. One such person is Elzie Honicutt, a valued member of our Board of Directors since January 2022. With a deep commitment to service, Elzie has played a vital role in advancing our mission and supporting the families we serve.

Elzie first encountered HRS while working in the nonprofit sector, serving with the Urban League and ICCF Community Homes. These roles exposed him to the challenges faced by low-income individuals striving to improve credit, purchase homes, and build stable futures. Recognizing the critical services HRS provides, he saw joining the board as an opportunity to use his experience in a meaningful way.

Since joining the Board, Elzie has been all-in. He has been on the Board Development Committee and was elected an officer, currently serving as Vice Chair. His leadership and strategic insight have strengthened our governance and ensured HRS remains a resource for those in need. He also serves as the board's social director, planning gatherings that allow members to connect beyond the boardroom.

Outside of HRS, Elzie is dedicated to career development and education. As a Career & Internship Coach at Davenport University, he helps students navigate career paths, secure internships, and gain hands-on project experience. His goal is to empower students to transition successfully from academia to meaningful careers.

A Grand Rapids native, Elzie's local ties run deep. He graduated from Northwood University in 1997 with a degree in Business Administration and is a proud homeowner in Southeast Grand Rapids. His investment in the community fuels his passion for service and development.

Elzie is also recognized for his athletic achievements. He was inducted into the Grand Rapids Christian High School Hall of Fame for his excellence on the football field—a testament to his dedication, teamwork, and leadership, qualities he continues to demonstrate in his work with HRS.

Elzie Honicutt exemplifies what it means to give back, leveraging his experience to uplift others. We are grateful for his service and commitment to HRS. His dedication reminds us that true change happens when individuals step forward to make a difference.

Thank you, Elzie, for your passion, leadership, and unwavering support of our community!



HRS Welcomes New Team Members



Join us in welcoming Jennifer as our new Intake Specialist. She will be a friendly face greeting clients, answering questions, and assisting with program registration. We're excited to have her on board!



Welcome, Teresa! She recently joined our Repair Team as a Utility Carpenter and will be visiting client homes, focusing on general carpentry, flooring, and bathroom modifications. We're thrilled to have her on board!



Welcome, Erin! She recently joined our Development Team as a Development Specialist, where she'll be planning and executing events, stewarding donors, and supporting communications and social media. We're delighted to have her on board!

If you would like to learn more about **supporting the work of HRS**, contact Director of Development, Steven Nicolet, at (616) 241-2601 ext. 223 or snicolet@homerepairservices.org

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 with you how we strengthen housing structures and strengthen 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.

To reserve your seat at a future Lunch & Learn, go to:
homerepairservices.org/lunch-and-learn-tour/



Upcoming 2025 Lunch & Learn Dates

Friday, May 16	Friday, August 16	Friday, November 21
Friday, June 20	Friday, September 19	Friday, December 20
Friday, July 18	Friday, October 17	

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