

ESCANABA – An Escanaba mother and daughter say they're thankful for a joint program that has opened up their lives a bit more to the outside world.

The mom, who wishes to remain anonymous, received a free wheelchair ramp last week from a program made up of Delta County Trades and Labor volunteers, Hannahville Indian Community and Menominee-Delta-Schoolcraft Community Action Agency.

The program, administered by the CAA, is funded by 2 percent Hannahville funds with all labor and construction tools donated by Delta County Trades and Labor Council volunteers, according to Mike Parrett, business manager for Carpenters Local 1510.

Parrett said the program has existed for the past few years, and its conception goes back to local union members who wanted to do even more for the community.

"We looked at giving something back to the community, in addition to the monetary donations that we do," Parrett said.

The daughter of the woman who most recently benefitted from the program said it's difficult to put their gratitude into words.

"They did a wonderful job and they're in my prayers," she said.

Two years ago the mother received the medical OK from her doctor to get a wheelchair. "She was starting to get weaker and weaker, and she was having to climb up and down the stairs. Finally, her doctor gave her a prescription for a wheelchair," the daughter said.

Since getting the chair she has had to take the rather perilous journey up and down her front porch every time she had to see her doctor, go to medical tests or see her dentist. It was particularly difficult in winter, the daughter said.

"It will mean the world, let me tell you. It will mean a much more secure way to get her out of the house," the daughter said.

Parrett said volunteers try to build a ramp once a month through summer. The effort consists of volunteers from unions affiliated with Trades and Labor Council. This summer members of the Gladstone Kiwanis also helped in the building process.

"We usually get them done in a day, but sometimes it can take a couple of days depending on the weather and the amount of help that's available," Parrett said.

Parrett estimates donated labor is worth \$400 and \$800, with some larger ramps needing up to \$1,200 in donated labor. He also said materials for one ramp cost \$500 to \$900.

He said the crew plans on building two more ramps this year. People tend to hear about the program through word of mouth, Parrett said. Theresa Nelson of the CAA said three ramps have been completed so far this year, and three residents have been selected to receive the final three ramps for the year.

Parrett said the program is a real team effort. "If we didn't have Community Action, we wouldn't be doing this. Especially with this funding, there's no way we could administer the program and take care of the building. Same goes the other way; we have the labor and resources that's not always available on their end. It's a great fit. But, without them, we're nowhere with this," Parrett said.

CAA Executive Director Bill Dubord said while the program is a very tiny part of CAA, it's still important when considering the help provided to local residents.

“Resources are always limited, and funding historically is not available from state or federal grants, so the 2 percent grant funding from the tribe is really appreciated,” Dubord said.

The CAA, based in Escanaba, serves Menominee, Delta and Schoolcraft counties, has been offering a myriad of services since 1965. Its other services include Head Start, home-delivered meals, senior citizens centers, weatherization, homemaker aides, promoting volunteer services for seniors, and Perspectives Adult Day Care Center for those with Alzheimer’s.

Caption for anderson tauzer caa ramp.jpg

Nick Anderson, left, apprentice for Carpenters Local 110, and Dylan Tauzer, member of the Gladstone Kiwanis, help construct a new wheelchair ramp in Escanaba last week. Income-eligible residents receive free ramps as part of a joint program between Delta County Trades and Labor volunteers, Hannahville Indian Community and Menominee-Delta-Schoolcraft Community Action Agency. The Gladstone Kiwanis started helping in the construction process this year.

Caption for wheelchair ramp photos 001

This is the wheelchair ramp built last week for an Escanaba woman free of charge as a result of a joint program between Delta County Trades and Labor volunteers, Hannahville Indian Community and Menominee-Delta-Schoolcraft Community Action Agency.

Caption for wheelchair ramp photos 002

Gladstone Kiwanian Ken Benson, left, Nick Anderson, center, apprentice for Carpenters Local 110, and CAA Executive Director Bill Dubord stand on a wheelchair ramp built last week free of charge. Income-eligible residents receive free ramps as part of a joint program between Delta County Trades and Labor volunteers, Hannahville Indian Community and Menominee-Delta-Schoolcraft Community Action Agency. The Gladstone Kiwanis started helping in the construction process this year.