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Celebrity treatment

Woman is benefactor of 'goodwill' day

By Dave Gorgon
, The News-Herald

TAYLOR - Doris Duplessie, an 82-year-old widow, said she felt like "a celebrity" as contractors provided holiday good will at the home she has lived in for the last 30 years.

Members of the Western Wayne Plumbing and Mechanical Association chose Duplessie's Haig Street residence for new fixtures and a variety of repairs during a daylong project Saturday.

The event is known as Richter Day, named after Fred Richter, a member of the association who started a goodwill day in the 1960s. When Richter died, the day was renamed in his honor.

Every year, the members of the association select a needy resident of the area and do what they can to make his or her life better.

After Taylor resident Sandy Ulin recommended Duplessie's house to the contractors, she became an obvious choice for the association, according to Charley Johnson, owner of Alert Plumbing in Taylor and president of the group.

She is on a fixed income. Her husband of 64 years, Clarence, died in January at age 83. And they "like doing things for seniors," Johnson said.

"We volunteer our expertise and get all the materials donated," Johnson said. "We tear it apart and put it back together," he said. "We're replacing all of the fixtures in her house. She'll get a new toilet, a new bathtub faucet, a new vanity and sink, a new kitchen sink and faucet, a new laundry tub and faucet, a new water heater and new sump pump, plus some other miscellaneous repairs."

The Western Wayne Plumbing and Mechanical Association is a group of professionals and business owners that prides itself on continuing education. Eight different companies were on site. All of the volunteers gave up a day's income while working together to improve the home.

"Everybody is a master plumber or a journeyman," Johnson said. "Everybody knows what he's doing. They get in there and get it done. It's pretty neat."

Richter Day shows that "there are good, honest contractors," Johnson said.

"We're out to help and do as much as we can when we can," he said.
"Usually, we try to do this in the fall. This year, it just got pushed back a little bit."

Taylor Mayor Cameron Priebe stopped by the house during the work and praised the contractors for their good deeds.

"I think what they're doing is pretty amazing," Priebe said. "This is absolutely incredible."

Duplessie was beaming throughout the process.

"They're a dream team, I'll tell you," she said. "Honest to God, I feel like a new bride moving into a new house. I'm not a religious fanatic, but the good Lord was looking over me."

Participating companies included Alert Plumbing of Taylor, A Burton & Sons and Lane Plumbing of Garden City, JC Hot Water Service of Livonia, Cameron Plumbing of Plymouth, GSA Water Heater Service of Westland, Richard Plumbing of Belleville and American Leak Detection of Dexter. Retired plumber Bill Parmentier of Plymouth also volunteered.

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