

Helping Hands for Seniors helps Sun City West resident with essential home repairs

Karen Smith is feeling much better about her home in Sun City West today thanks to the handy work of several skilled construction trade union members.

Nine men, all volunteers of the *Helping Hands for Seniors* program, came in to place roof coating and sealant around her leaky skylights, repair a leaky toilet, adjust a sliding door and make other minor fixes.

“People may think these are little things, but they’re not,” says Smith, who recovering from an extended hospital stay. She estimated the repairs saved her about \$1,000.

The project was the first of the newly launched *Helping Hands for Seniors* initiative by the Arizona Building and Construction Trades Council and Torres Consulting and Law Group. The program, announced in April, provides free minor home repair and independent living modifications for low-income seniors living year-round in metro Phoenix.



Construction union members provide the labor. TCLG and the building trades council pay for the cost of materials and supplies necessary to complete the repair work.

“We’re proud to be involved in *Helping Hands for Seniors* and to help our community,” says Buzz Murphy, president of the Arizona Building and Construction Trades Council.

Adds Israel Torres, managing partner of TCLG: “A simple home

modification or repair can make a huge difference in the functionality of a home for a senior. We hope this is the first of many efforts to give back to our community and help Arizonans, such as Karen, carry out daily activities that many of us take for granted.”

The first project took place on a warm Saturday morning June 28. The guys came in with a list of fixes and went to work. Some seemed minor, such as the loose toilet seat. But even those were important fixes for Smith, who has limited mobility.

“I was always worried about it, but couldn’t afford the \$35 an hour for a handyman,” she said.

Plumbing repairs were in the wheelhouse of Hal Brown, an instructor at the Arizona Pipe Trades Apprenticeship Training Center, and UA Local 469 apprentice Justin Cole.



“This isn’t anything I hadn’t done before at the apprenticeship,” Justin said.

The JATC has a plumbing laboratory where apprentices learn the basics of residential plumbing, noted instructor Hal Brown.

But, Justin admitted, the *Helping Hands for Seniors* project was the first time he used his skills in a private home. Most of his two years in the trade has been spent working at Intel and Apple.

Other volunteers tackled a varied assortment of tasks – a painter/roofer repaired a skylight and directed ironworkers and electricians on coating and sealing parts of her roof, while



an electrician and bricklayer adjusted an uneven sliding glass door.

“I’ve totally remodeled my own house in the last 15 years, so I’ve done a lot of this sort of thing,” said IBEW 640 industry/member development representative Jeff Sears.



Smith was selected from several letters of need submitted to the program during its first round of applications. A second round of applications is expected to take place late in the year, with work likely taking place in early 2015.

The volunteers on this first project were: Jim Cahill of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local #3, Hal Brown of UA Local 469, Justin Cole of UA Local 469, Alan Ruda of Ironworkers Local 75, Terry Wright of Ironworkers Local 75, Jeff Sears of IBEW 640, Ralph Meech of IBEW 640, Jeff Gotcher of IBEW 640 and Masavi Perea of International Union of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 15.

