

Kress gets a lot of help from his wife and his brothers, who live “within spitting distance” of him. He gets picked up by ambulance twice a week to go in for dialysis treatment, but wasn’t able to wheel himself outside without a ramp.

“That’s all I need right now — just a ramp,” Kress said.

He and his wife didn’t think they’d be able to afford one, but last week they received a free ramp from veterans groups that was built at no cost by the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters.

First, Kress and his family called around to different groups and organizations in the area, eventually getting in touch with Christine Tonegatto-Salo, who herself is a retired Marine and has a soft spot for helping fellow veterans.

“We wanted to get the ramp built right away,” said Tonegatto-Salo, who was able to use her connections with organizations she’s involved in to help. “I put a letter together and took it around to various groups, like the American Legion and the Marine Corps League.”

Lowe’s Home Improvement store on Gratiot in Clinton Township agreed to sell the materials for the 36-foot wheelchair ramp at a low cost. The store offered Tonegatto-Salo the materials for \$790.

“I said, ‘I know I can get my hands on \$500 if you give me a few weeks,’ and they said, ‘sold,’” she said.

Donations started coming in, and an anonymous donor chipped in \$200 when they heard about Kress’ dilemma.

Dan Ferqueron, organizer of the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters, volunteered his group to build the ramp.

“We do these fairly regularly, probably about 50 a year,” Ferqueron said. They work all over Southeast Michigan building the ramps for people in need.

“We volunteer all our labor,” he said. “But this was hard to put together. Labor is free, but money is tight and the supplies are expensive.”

It took Ferqueron and several other carpenters a few days to build the ramp, and Kress said it will be a great help.

“He can get out of the house now,” said his brother Glen Kress, 51. “Before he only got out for dialysis.”

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