

"What we wanted to do was recondition the old building, but it was so dilapidated. It wasn't worthwhile," Larry Collette said of the structure that was bought as a tract of land from the government in 1839.

"We're trying to keep as much original as we can and keep the charm of the farm and keep it a nice St. Clair County farm. We only do things like tear buildings down when there's no other choice."

The work is entirely pro bono.

"All we're doing is feeding them lunch and shaking their hands, and they're putting up a building," Larry Collette said.

Union Vice President and Business Representative Dave [Pearson](#) said he and other carpenters were more than happy to help when Collette asked.

"Once you listen to what (the Collettes') goals are and how they want to help these adults out, because these adults have nowhere to go, you just want to help these guys out," Pearson said.

About 15 carpenters started the work Monday, a number that dropped to four by Thursday. Pearson said that kept too many volunteers from "tripping over each other."

He expects to have the construction complete Monday.

Charity work isn't new to the union, which has installed wheelchair ramps and is building a training facility for the [Southfield Fire Department](#).

And such work isn't new to the farm, which has been restored by volunteer tradesmen -- electricians, heating and cooling experts, pipefitters, plumbers and others -- since the Collettes bought it last October.

"When we purchased that farm, it was almost uninhabitable," Larry Collette said. "I said (to the unions) this is what we're doing and this is something all you guys can work on together. This can be something all the trades in the Detroit area can work on together."

"And you know what? They agreed."

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
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