

West Michigan Edition

Builder/Architect

REACHING BUILDING AND DESIGN PROFESSIONALS IN KENT, OTTAWA, MUSKEGON & ALLEGAN COUNTIES



Home Repair Services

Linking Your Surplus Goods with People in Need

PHOTO BY W. PATRICK CHAMBERS

Builders' Abundance
MON - FRI. 9 am - 5 pm STORE HOURS
SAT. 9 am - 2 pm

Tool Library



The Builders' Abundance store occupies about two-thirds of the 33,000-square-foot Home Repair Services building at 1100 South Division Ave. An auto dealership back in the 1950s, this once run-down building was renovated in 1999 to become a modern, up-to-date facility. Designed by AMDG Architects, the renovation was performed by D&D Building, Inc. and paid for by contributions from every sector of the community.

Home Repair Services

Linking Your Surplus Goods with People in Need

By M. Lee Didur

Home Repair Services is not a builder, remodeler or architect in traditional terms. Rather, as a unique non-profit organization helping low-income families become successful homeowners, Home Repair Services is a builder of dreams, remodeler of lives and architect of healthy communities.

“Our story is different from the one that’s typically told on these pages,” David Jacobs, Home Repair Services’ executive director, said. “We don’t build or remodel houses. Rather, each year we

empower more than 2,800 low-income families to repair and improve their own homes.”

Home Repair Services was founded in 1979 to provide low-cost critical home repairs to low-income families living in the central city. Since then, Home Repair Services has expanded its programs to include building wheelchair ramps for the elderly and disabled, a tool library, repair classes, the sale of low-cost building materials, lead-poisoning prevention services and financial counseling to low-income

Blessed with a large amount of donated cabinet doors and other pieces, Home Repair Services organized a cabinet shop where volunteers could construct whole cabinets from donated surplus parts. Three regular volunteers are Bill Maston, John Milhaupt and Lois Flaig, all of whom find great satisfaction in making usable vanities and kitchen cabinets.



PHOTO BY W. PATRICK CHAMBERS



James Porter, operations manager of Pella Window & Doors by Home, has found that donating surplus product to the Builders' Abundance store works out best. Here James is pictured with Michael Gibson, Builders' Abundance procurement coordinator, who calls on building businesses and arranges for pick-up of donated surplus.

How You Can Help Home Repair Services

Donate New, Surplus or Lightly Used Material

Including but not limited to:

- Cabinets
- Roofing and Siding
- Windows and Doors
- Carpet and Flooring Materials
- Hardware
- Plumbing Fixtures
- Lumber and Plywood

Volunteer Your Expertise

- Do a small emergency repair
- Build a wheelchair ramp
- Teach a home repair class
- Spend a day in the cabinet repair shop
- Help out in the store

Write a Check

Monetary contributions are tax-deductible

Promote Home Repair Services

- Invite us to speak at your church, service or social club

Call (616) 241-2601 for more information.

homeowners throughout Kent County.

"National studies show that homeownership in urban neighborhoods is a key ingredient for a healthy community," Jacobs said. "When people are invested in these neighborhoods, we all enjoy lower crime rates, better schools, more business activity, higher property values and stronger families."

The West Michigan home building industry has long been a strong supporter of Home Repair Services, providing financial support, building supplies and skilled volunteer assistance.

"The Home and Building Association of Greater Grand Rapids has done a great job as our co-sponsor for the annual Community Repair Day," Jacobs said. "Each year, HBA members and other volunteers complete over \$30,000 worth of work in a single day, building wheelchair ramps and making critical repairs for people who are physically unable to do the work themselves."

While that support has been incredible, Jacobs believes builders, remodelers and suppliers make an even bigger impact on the community through their donations of surplus product to Home Repair Services' Builders' Abundance store.

"Our Builders' Abundance store provides low-income homeowners with quality building materials, fixtures and other supplies needed to complete home improvement projects at very low prices," Jacobs said. "Our goal at Builders' Abundance is to put needed materials into the hands of low-income families, not to raise money. That's why we restrict our sales to registered low-income homeowners and non-profit organizations, and keep our prices at about 25 percent of retail value."

Since Builders' Abundance does not sell to landlords or the general public, building and supply companies can donate their surplus product to Builders' Abundance knowing their regular customers won't be able to purchase their discounted products at this store.

Builders' Abundance links castaway products from builders, remodelers and lumberyards, as well as window, carpeting, plumbing and other distributors, with low-income homeowners who put those castaways to good use, investing them into their homes, rather than burying them as landfill.

All types of surplus product donations of any quantity are welcome at Builders' Abundance. From a single sink to a truckload of insulation, Builders' Abundance is eager to link surplus materials with homeowners.

"I think of leftovers, measuring mistakes, out-of-date or out-of-season products that take up space in a builder's pole barn or a distributor's backroom," Jacobs said. "What do you do with the stuff that's left after the annual tent sale? Do you save it in the back room for next year's sale, or give it to a worthy cause and use that space for your real inventory?"

James Porter, operations manager at Pella Windows and Doors by Horne, has found Builders' Abundance to be the best avenue for dealing with their surplus product.

"We've tried liquidators and other outlets, but we've found that donating surplus product to the Builders' Abundance store works out best, because there's no strings attached," he said. "I make a phone call, and within a couple of days their truck and crew has picked the items up, and I have put that rack space back to good use. After all, mistakes

happen. They're only a very small percentage, but with our overall statewide volume, they add up. Not only that—since we're locally owned, it feels good to help out our community in this way."

Builders' Abundance also accepts used, but still functional materials.

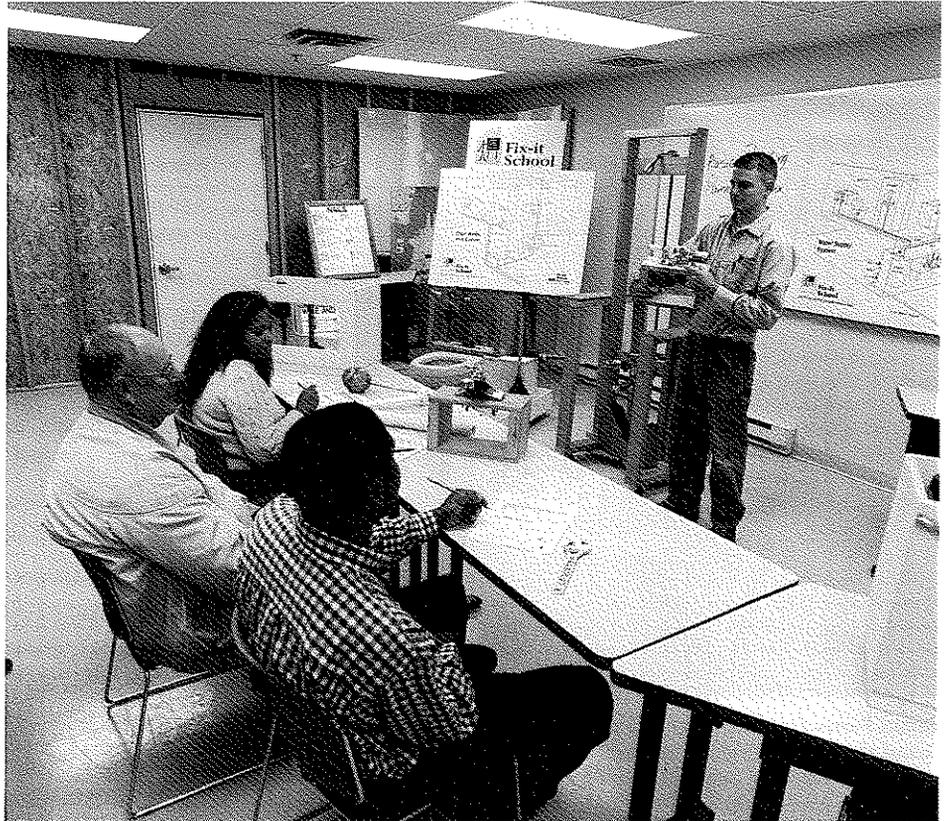
"Remodelers often remove cabinets, fixtures, carpet and other items at the start of a job that the homeowner no longer wants, but are still useable," Jacobs said. "We think Builders' Abundance is the perfect place for these unwanted items. Our clients put these products to good use, and the homeowner can receive a tax deduction for their donation. We have several remodelers who present the option of donating to us in their sales presentation to prospective clients. Many homeowners like the idea of their castaways going to a good home, rather than a landfill. Getting an easy tax deduction is a bonus."

Home Repair Services will send a crew to pick up items removed from a home or left over at a job site or distributor's warehouse. In some cases, the organization will send out a crew of volunteers to "glean" valuable materials from smaller cottages and houses which are being demolished or radically remodeled.

"We have a crew of volunteers who will take out the usable items like pre-built cabinets, pre-hung doors, windows and plumbing fixtures," Jacobs said. "We're not set up to reuse old framing lumber or fully deconstruct a house. But we can salvage a lot of useful products which would otherwise end up as landfill."

In a typical year, over 1,400 households shop at Builders' Abundance, a large, brightly lit store with aisles of windows, cabinet, plumbing fixtures and hardware. Crowded with homeowners on a busy Saturday morning, it could be a "big box" store in the suburbs, except the product selection may not be as consistent, and the dollars exchanged are certainly far lower, but there's the same anticipation, energy and satisfaction.

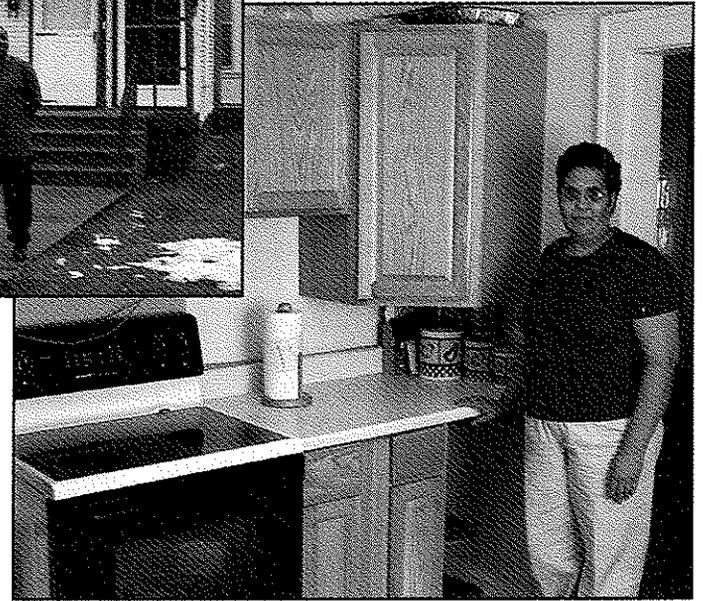
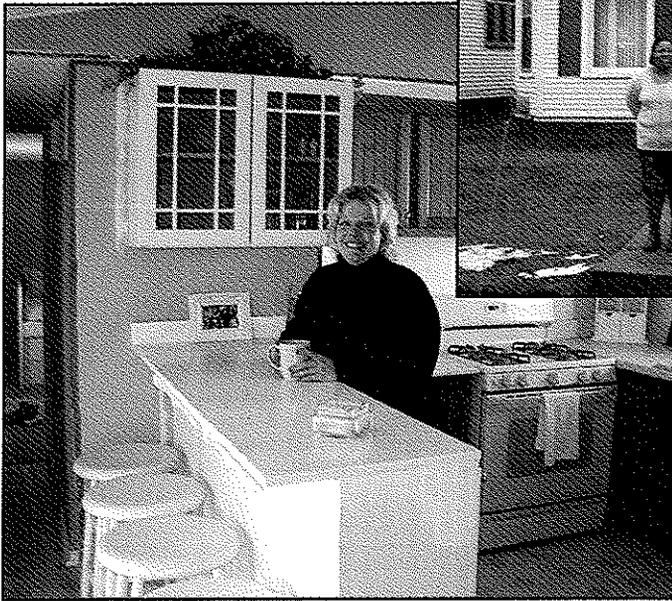
"It doesn't cost me a lot to go to Home Repair Services' Builders' Abundance store and get stuff to make repairs and improvements to my home," Curbie Toliver, a long-term southeast Grand Rapids resident, who's raised 11 foster children, said. "So far,



Ryan Engelking, who works as a plumber for the Home Repair Services Repair Team, also teaches classes in basic plumbing in the Fix-it School, another Home Repair Services program. Members of the Home and Building Association of Greater Grand Rapids contributed materials and labor to construct the Fix-it School classroom (shown here and on the cover).



The Home Repair Services Builders' Abundance store carries a wide variety of donated surplus products in a clean, brightly lit setting. Sales of surplus building materials are limited to low-income homeowners and non-profit organizations, who can also borrow drills, saws and ladders from the Tool Library.



Each year, Home Repair Services presents a "Resourceful Homeowner Award" to publicly recognize and affirm low-income homeowners who've shown initiative, creativity and resourcefulness in repairing and improving their homes. Presentation of this award at an annual banquet celebration to one of five finalist families also encourages other low-income homeowners to improve their homes with greater self-confidence and vision. Finalists from the past few years are proud of their accomplishments.

we have installed screens, a toilet, shelves, cupboards, a counter top, light fixtures, door hooks and a mailbox. I wouldn't have been able to do it without Home Repair Services."

Every day, the crew at Home Repair Services hears from homeowners like Curbie Toliver who credit the organization with making a tremendous difference in their lives.

"In our experience, the overwhelming majority of low-income homeowners want to provide a safe, attractive home for their families," Jacobs said. "People are willing to work—and work hard—if they have the right tools, training and materials to get the job done. And each project they complete is a springboard to more improvements."

"We have been called a 'Godsend' and a 'bunch of angels,'" Jacobs said. "But the staff at Home Repair Services know the real 'Godsend'

and 'angels' are the volunteers and donors who so generously give their time, money and surplus product to Home Repair Services."

Builder / Architect Magazine salutes this remarkable non-profit organization as they turn the corner on their second quarter-century. Congratulations on a job well done!

For more information on Home Repair Services, call (616) 241-2601. ■





**Home
Repair
Services**
Resources for Home Owners

7 Great Reasons to Donate Your Surplus Building Materials

1. Free pick-up
2. Reduces waste hauling expense
3. Helps low-income families
4. Tax deductible
5. Good for the environment
6. Supports local non-profit effort
7. It's just the right thing to do!



**Home
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Resources for Home Owners

If you or your customers have surplus or lightly used building materials to donate, call Home Repair Services at (616) 241-2601. We're a non-profit organization serving Kent County for more than 25 years. Only low-income families will benefit.

We can pick up directly from your site at no charge, or you can drop off your surplus materials at 1100 S. Division Ave. in Grand Rapids. To donate materials, or arrange a free pick-up, call us at (616) 241-2601 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday - Friday. Or use our new online form at www.HomeRepairServices.org. Thank you!