



Frank Albert talks about his mother and the home she lived in from 1944 until her recent death. Albert moved in to care for her in 1986. The Home Depot Foundation chose Albert's house for their Celebration of Service project, in which volunteers help fix up veterans' homes. Photo by Joe Vaccarelli, YourHub

Denver veteran's home gets a makeover from The Home Depot Foundation

More than 100 volunteers teamed up to replace all appliances, carpet and more in just eight hours

Posted: 10/03/2012 10:53:03 AM MDT Updated: 10/03/2012 10:53:03 AM MDT Author: 114920



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Article

Frank Albert left his home early the morning of Oct. 3 to do something he hasn't done in years: go fishing with his daughter. The home he would return to eight hours later would not be the same one he left.

The address was just about the only thing that The Home Depot Foundation's Celebration of Service project left untouched. Between Sept. 11 and Veterans Day each year, the foundation brings volunteers to the homes of veterans across the country and transforms them into more accessible, refreshed abodes, and Albert's was chosen for their Denver project this year.

"Many of these veterans we are working with are from the Vietnam War and before that really need some help," explained Fred Wacker, director and chief operating officer of The Home Depot Foundation, who is visiting projects around the country during the Celebration of Service. "They're aging and we're trying to improve their quality of life and we are addressing some of the mobility issues that they're facing right now."

The Home Depot Foundation's local partner is Volunteers of America, which helped identify a veteran with a home in need of repair. Albert is a client of Meals on Wheels, a VOA program that delivers meals daily to homebound senior citizens. He is also a veteran of the Colorado Air National Guard 97th engineer battalion who served from 1950 to 1952 in Germany and France and at 77 years old and uses a walker for mobility, making it difficult for him to perform the necessary repairs and renovations to the home himself, said to Erika Nelson-Conrad, a VOA program manager.



Dozens of Home Depot volunteers gave up their time Oct. 3 to help transform the home of Denver resident and military veteran Frank Noble. *Photo by Joe Vaccarelli, YourHub*

The home belonged to Albert's mother; he initially moved in to take care of her when she was ill. She and he both loved the color gold and much of the home was decorated with the color, including a shrine to Albert's mother in the dining room, Nelson-Conrad said. As part of the renovations, the lower half of the walls, the top border and the window frames in the dining room were painted a luminous gold.

Albert's possessions were stored in a rented unit on the street and the house was basically gutted; the carpet, fixtures, appliances, countertops and cabinets were removed to be replaced with brand new items handpicked by Albert and donated by The Home Depot Foundation.

"Our intent was not to get rid of everything in the house that we didn't think he should have," Nelson-Conrad explained. Photos were taken of his home beforehand so that volunteers can make sure it was reassembled the way Albert lived in it.

"We really wanted to pick the projects that had the biggest impact for Frank and what he was looking for and then what we could get done in a day's work," explained Steve Powers, the Team Depot district captain and manager of the Home Depot in Evergreen, who was part of the planning process leading up to the project. Those projects also included a new fence in the backyard and xeriscaping the property.

The more than 100 volunteers working on Albert's property were employees from approximately 15 Home Depot stores in the metro area. Many of them are skilled plumbers and electricians, while some were unskilled volunteers just wanting to help out, Wacker said.

"What we really appreciate about our associates is that they divide into teams and do certain aspects of the rehab work and stay with their team until it's completed," Wacker said. "That's what makes it successful to do so much in a short period of time."

Albert said that his favorite project was "the whole house." He also said that his mother would approve. "Neither one of us ever dreamed it would be like this," he said.

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