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YTI students install electricity for child with cerebral palsy

By *NIKELLE SNADER*

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RANDY FLAUM VIDEO

Sue Bozart's life changed dramatically when her grandson Raequan Singleton was born seven years ago.

Known as "Rae," the child has been in Bozart's care since that time, when he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, a disorder that affects muscle tone, movement and motor skills.

Bozart gained full custody of Rae a few years ago, but he had already been living full-time in her rancher-style home in York Township.

Bozart has never had a "regular" baby sitter, and family vacations are now out of the question because of the care required from five nurses who rotate to stay with Rae while Bozart works full-time as a nurse at WellSpan's York Hospital Wound Healing Center.

"It's 24/7 (care) and you never get a break," Bozart said.

In the past several years, Bozart has converted a van to accommodate a wheelchair and lift, filled her basement and living room with medical supplies and fought with insurance companies

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for necessary equipment for her grandson. In most cases, the bills have fallen to her.

Need for more room: But when Rae moved to a full-sized wheelchair and grew to 50 pounds, Bozart knew the narrow hallways and small rooms in her home wouldn't stretch.

"We knew as Rae got bigger we needed more space," she said.

She interviewed contractors for months to build an 800-square-foot addition for Rae, and chose

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to work with Jeff Henry from Jeff L. Henry Inc.

"The more she explained to me, the more I thought I should try to do something to help," Henry said.

Bozart said she has appreciated Henry's work so far, and his willingness to work with unique "sub-contractors" for the project.

Bozart doesn't ask for donations or assistance often, and is footing much of the bill for the addition that will include a larger bedroom for Rae, a living room and handicapped-accessible bathroom, complete with a roll-in shower.

But she is accepting help from 12 students from York Technical Institute, who have volunteered to install the electrical wiring and panels necessary to outfit the addition, free of charge.

Nurse's uncle: One of Rae's nurses, Donna Oerman, offered to mention the project to her uncle, YTI instructor Allen Stonebraker. Stonebraker has gotten his students involved in volunteering for Habitat for Humanity and other organizations in past years, and said his students were eager to help Bozart when they learned about Rae's needs.

But what impressed Stonebraker the most was the students' dedication to visiting multiple businesses in the York area, looking for donations or discounts for the project. Among others, Capital Tristate donated about \$3,000 worth of electrical equipment, and Yale Electric Supply Company has knocked \$800 off Bozart's tab. One student, Chris Burger, said he's talked with Home Depot and other organizations about further donations, though those haven't been finalized yet.

When it's all said and done, Bozart said the only part of the electric installation she will have to pay for is the wires.

Though the care for Rae is constant, Bozart said people who meet him often fall in love and want to stay connected.

Vernon Cox, one of the YTI students, met Rae in mid-December when he visited with Stonebraker to scope out the project.

Cox said after that visit, pledging his involvement was an easy decision.

"You could never walk away from doing this," Cox said.

Cox, 36, has two children of his own, and said he's glad to be a part of providing what Rae needs for a good quality of life.

"I know what it means for them to be able to give him something like this," Cox said.

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Valuable experience: Cox, Burger and another student, Jake Waltmyer, said the project is for a good cause, but also provides valuable on-the-job experience. Stonebraker supervised the work, which occurred with temperatures hovering in the teens for three days last week. After the work is inspected and drywall is up, Waltmyer said, the students will be back to trim up the outlets and install the lighting so it's move-in ready.

The cold weather has not been kind to the construction schedule: Bozart said the project is about two months behind because of the snow and cold temperatures. But the goal is to complete the project before Rae needs a hip surgery, likely this summer.

In the meantime, Bozart is celebrating the hope for the addition, and other victories: Bozart received word Monday that the York/Adams Mental Health - Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Program will partially fund a \$13,000 lift system Rae needs in his new space.

And despite her reluctance to ask for help, Bozart is also planning fundraisers to help offset the cost of the addition and Rae's ongoing medical costs. The first one is a Super Bingo event, scheduled for March 23 at the Alert Fire Co. in Emigsville.

Bozart said she hopes other community members will come out to support one of their own, just as the YTI students modeled.

— *Reach Nikelle Snader at nsnader@yorkdispatch.com.*

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