

Ramp builders come to the aid of area resident

By Heidi Tice

When Brenda Hoisington of Fruitport was diagnosed with MS, she didn't realize how many things in life she would eventually have to change. Brenda was always a giving person, and to ask for help as her



health started to diminish was very humbling. In great need, Brenda asked Steve Wilson, with the Fruitport football coaching staff, if they could build her a wheelchair ramp due to her declining mobility. Unfortunately, she was told there were no more funds available for those types of projects. Coach Wilson could find the labor for the construction, but not the funds for the materials.

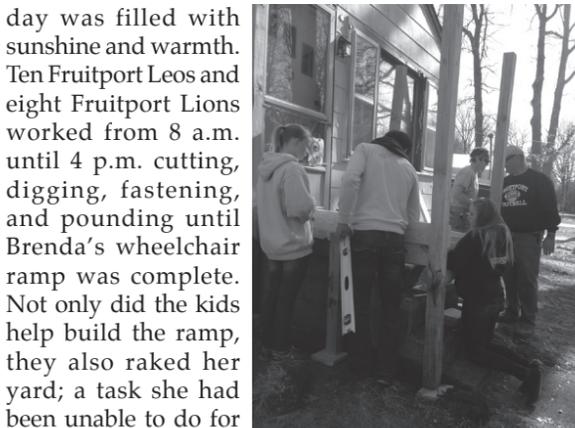
The Fruitport Leo Club, chartered in December, 2014, was just the club Coach Wilson needed. This group of young kids optimistically came forward and decided they would do whatever it took to raise funds for the ramp. They organized can drives, took part in a fundraiser event at Five Below, and raised the funds for the ramp materials with the additional help of an anonymous donor. The kids surprised Brenda with the news by Christmas caroling for her and gave her a card detailing the ramp they would be helping to build in the spring. She was quite surprised and very moved by the kids and their giving hearts.



It was a long, cold and snowy winter, but as April approached, the kids made plans for the ramp build. A date was picked, Saturday, April 18, and they all prayed it wouldn't rain. Their prayers were answered and the



day was filled with sunshine and warmth. Ten Fruitport Leos and eight Fruitport Lions worked from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. cutting, digging, fastening, and pounding until Brenda's wheelchair ramp was complete. Not only did the kids help build the ramp, they also raked her yard; a task she had been unable to do for several years. Brenda was tearfully thankful to the Fruitport Lions and Fruitport Leos for allowing her to regain her mobility and safety to enter and exit her home. Not only strong and sturdy, the ramp gives an inviting look to Brenda's house.



The Fruitport Leos hope to be able to build a ramp each spring for a Fruitport resident in need. Coach Wilson will find the recipient and the Leos will raise the funds.



The Fruitport Leos would like to thank Lion Steve Wilson for bringing a worthy project to their attention; Sethco Lumber for providing the materials at a discounted cost; Lion Bruce Gaultney, Jr., for the use of his power tools and knowledge to build the ramp; Pat Stressman for the wonderful lunch for the entire crew; their anonymous donor whose financial contribution made the project possible, and all the other Fruitport Lions who showed up to give a helping hand and moral support. This was truly an event that emphasized the Lion's motto: "We Serve." •

Before buyers transfer any money, he recommends they contact their agent by phone — not through email — to confirm the correct amount and routing numbers. He's also asking his 175 agent members to frequently change their email passwords. The scammers are targeting Gmail accounts, he said. •

Real estate officials warn of phishing scam

By Andrew Dodson, Bay City, MI

Michigan real estate officials are warning home buyers and sellers of a nasty scam that has already milked \$25,000 from a buyer in Midland.

The scam starts with an innocent email to realtors saying they have a buyer interested in some properties. When the realtor clicks the link, it gives the scammer an opportunity to hack their email accounts. From there, they seek information about upcoming transactions and then pose as a title company, asking the buyer to wire in their closing costs. Instead of going to the title company, the money, most of the time, ends up somewhere overseas.

"This is a very sophisticated group. They know what they're doing," said Gordon Hall, a realtor with Remax of Midland. "I saw copies of all the emails and they looked very legitimate, they include all the right lingo of real estate — one of the emails included the right name of the home inspector."

The Midland County Realtor Association filed a report with the Midland Police Department on Wednesday, April 22. But at this point, Hall said, the money is gone. Police officials linked emails being routed through and IP address in South Africa, Hall said.

The buyer was not able to purchase the home, the sellers lost a sale and the selling office lost a closing.

"It's not unusual to wire money when closing on a house today, but buyers need to be cautious," said Jennifer Stefanski, an escrow officer at Superior Title and Settlement in Bangor Township. "It's very common, actually," she said. "What's happening is they hack into the emails we send to realtors and manipulate the routing and account numbers, but everything else looks exactly like how we would send it."

Bob Adamowski, president and chief executive officer of the Bay County Realtor Association, said some area realtors have had similar phishing scams, but thankfully no one has taken the bait.

"We're being very proactive about communicating with our agents to let them know of these scams," Adamowski said.

Before buyers transfer any money, he recommends they contact their agent by phone — not through email — to confirm the correct amount and routing numbers. He's also asking his 175 agent members to frequently change their email passwords. The scammers are targeting Gmail accounts, he said. •

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