

Relief from the Heat in the Show-Me State



Barbara moved into her small, cottage-style home in 1989. Having raised her two children and divorced, she was ready to downsize to a smaller and more manageable place. Something just for her. She remembers finding her new home and just knowing it was the place she wanted to be.

Almost 35 years later, she still loves her little cottage. "I've lived here longer than anywhere else in my life. This is where I belong," she says.

Like Barbara, now 84 years old, her 1949 vintage house is getting older. And while she always enjoyed doing all the things that come with homeownership - painting, decorating, working in her yard and doing minor repairs - it's become too difficult for her to manage by herself.

A bigger worry for her now is making sure every single dollar stretches as far as possible to keep her and her beloved, and also elderly, dog taken care of for the rest of their years. That means keeping their home maintained, in good working order, and safe for them to live in.

Staying Safe While Aging in Place

Barbara's niece, who lives several states away, has been helping her navigate her increasing home maintenance and repair expenses. They both knew the 30+ year old appliances and crucial air conditioning and heating equipment were going to need to be replaced soon.

"Every spring, Aunt Barbara tells me she hopes her AC will hang in there for another summer. Extreme temperatures are so hard on older people, and I've been nervous about what would happen if it broke down. She just doesn't have the money for a new unit," she says.

A piece about a weatherization program in Barbara's utility company's email newsletter triggered action. It was early spring, and she felt like it was time to quit worrying and start exploring Barbara's options. This program seemed like it might be the answer.

Truman Heritage Habitat for Humanity partnered with the City of Independence and Spire Energy to help income-eligible residents. The program provided services such as caulking and sealing, insulation, and water heater replacement. But the big one on both their minds was the air conditioner and furnace repair or replacement.

After reading that newsletter, Barbara's niece wanted to find out if Barbara would qualify. She called Truman Heritage Habitat that same day.

Aunt and niece worked together to complete Barbara's application and were able to quickly submit it online. Barbara received preliminary approval for the program within days.

Next, Habitat and their contracting partners assessed her home. They determined she was eligible for new air conditioning equipment, a tune up of her furnace and heating system, new attic insulation, and weatherization of her home, which included weather stripping around windows and doors and sealing vents and cracks around the home.

Soon, everything was all set, and the work was scheduled to begin.

Unexpected Crisis – Habitat to the Rescue

It was a particularly hot spell in Missouri. Just days before the work was to start on replacing her AC equipment, Barbara noticed her house was not staying as cool as it should. The temperature in the house was creeping up, degree by degree. She called her niece, who immediately called their Habitat Construction contact, Paul, and described Barbara's predicament.

Paul flew into action. Within two hours, he found a window air conditioning unit, drove it to Barbara's house, and installed it in her living room himself. He then arranged for the company that would be replacing her main unit in a few days to deliver a portable AC unit and set it up in her bedroom.

The relief for Barbara's niece was immense. "Being so far away, there's only so much I can do to help. I was blown away by how concerned with Aunt Barbara's welfare they all were at Truman Heritage Habitat. It took several people to make that all happen so quickly, but Paul was the real hero of the day," she says.

Barbara agrees. In the next week, all of the HVAC, heating and weatherization work was completed.

"I couldn't believe how much they did. How hard they worked. I'm just so grateful and blessed!" Barbara says with tears in her eyes. "This means everything to me, to know my home will be safe and comfy for me and my little dog all the hot summer. And for seasons and years to come."