



Wednesday, December 5, 2007

**Local spotlight**

## **Firm modifies homes to aid elderly, disabled**

**Christine Snyder / Special to The Detroit News**

Right before Thanksgiving, Lynn Peoples was preparing for her husband's homecoming from a rehabilitation facility following hip replacement surgery.

"I had called all over trying to find somebody to put a grab bar in (the bathroom) and everybody was saying no because the holidays were coming up," says the Oak Park resident. Then Peoples called Jeff Cates of CAPS Remodeling.

"Jeff said he didn't work that day but it sounded like my husband really needed it," says Peoples. "He came over on a Tuesday and my husband came home on Wednesday."

The Peoples are like many aging Americans, who want to stay in their homes, but need modifications to do so. CAPS Remodeling (CAPS stands for Certified Aging in Place Specialist) specializes in modifying homes to the needs of the elderly or disabled.

"Our purpose is to create freedom, comfort and safety within the home," Cates says. That could include a project as simple as installing grab bars, or as elaborate as adding a main floor bedroom and bathroom to accommodate a family member with disabilities.

Cates has been in the remodeling business for 25 years, the last 17 years as a business owner. Last year he decided to take his business in a new direction after spending a lot of time in hospital and rehab facilities following his son's car accident.

"I realized the need for remodeling projects geared toward the elderly and disabled and there really wasn't anybody out there doing it -- at least nobody specializing in it."

CAPS is the name of a certification program offered through National and Michigan Association of Homebuilders, says Robert Filka, CEO of the Michigan association. Filka says it's the state organization's most popular training program.

"If you think about it, the aging demographics of people who own homes or are remodeling homes -- they are the baby boomers getting up there in their 60s and 70s," Filka says. "You look at the average age of homeowners today, it's really increasing and thus requiring modifications to homes to accommodate disabilities or other factors."

CAPS Remodeling operates in two ways, Cates says. Sometimes projects are based on client specifications, which are usually based upon occupational therapists or other professionals' recommendations.

"We also have a very comprehensive assessment where we go in sit down with the individual and go through each and every area of the house and their disabilities and what can be done," Cates says.

Operating CAPS Remodeling is different from operating a traditional remodeling business, Cates says. "The biggest challenge is awareness. It's a lot of networking with different agencies and organizations," says Cates, who is the president of SCAN, Senior Coordinating Aging Network.

Peoples is making others aware of CAPS Remodeling. "I'm passing his cards out to everybody," she says. "To me this was very heartwarming. I just appreciated him so much."  
*Christine Snyder is a Metro Detroit freelance writer.*