

## Home modifications can make aging in place easier

By JANE PETERSON  
Of The Oakland Press

**B**ecause of injuries he received in an auto accident, Jeff Cates' son was unable to navigate the six steps at Cates' house a couple of years ago. This prevented his son from returning home to recover.

The incident had a deep effect on Cates, who has been in the remodeling business for more than 20 years. Going through the experience and speaking with others in the hospital and at physical thera-

py sessions, he learned about the challenges people face when they are unable to move comfortably throughout their homes and the worry they have about safety issues. It inspired him to focus on aging in place, a concept that involves remodeling a home to accommodate medical and aging needs.

Modifications like installing grab bars, widening doorways and converting tubs to showers can help people stay in the homes they have paid for and lived in for many years, said Cates, who owns CAPS

Remodeling in Ferndale and is a certified aging-in-place specialist through the National Association of Homebuilders. Simple adjustments like increased lighting may help prevent cuts in the kitchen and trips and falls in entryways, he added.

"It's all about safety, comfort, independence and the ability to function in your home for as long as possible," said Cates.

A lot of aging-in-place remodeling is in the bathroom,



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**Jeff Cates of CAPS Remodeling in Ferndale installs a safety bar in a bathroom.**

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## GOOD HEALTH

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said Mat Vivona, owner of Father & Son Construction in Troy. Some homeowners want to replace their bathtubs because they find it difficult to get in and out of them, he said.

"We build a shower where the tub once stood and add things like a seat and grab bars inside the shower stall. Some homeowners also like the idea of adding a handheld showerhead, which sits on a bar that they can remove and use as a body spray," said Vivona in an e-mail.

Some homeowners opt for lower-height tubs so they

can swing their legs over the units more easily while others choose jet tubs recessed into floors or built on platforms to ease some of their aches and pains, he said.

Other trends involve the height of bathroom vanities. In some cases, the height is increased so homeowners do not have as far to bend while using a sink, said Vivona. Those in wheelchairs may request to eliminate the vanity in favor of a sink that is hung from a wall instead of having a vanity underneath it, he added.

"Homeowners are glad that they called us — they can enjoy their new surroundings without difficulty that they may have had before the improve-

ments were done," Vivona said.

In the kitchen, some new innovations are cabinets, stovetops, sinks and countertops that can lower to heights more manageable for people in wheelchairs or can meet other height challenges with the touch of a button. The stovetops and sinks are roll-under types, which allow wheelchair users better accessibility, said Cates.

Both Vivona and Cates expect demand for aging-in-place services to continue to increase.

"This type of remodeling is perfect for the elderly, people who have sustained mobility-reducing car- or work-related accidents and even slip-and-fall accidents," said Cates in a news

release.

"We consult with the homeowner to provide a comprehensive assessment of their current living situation. With all the new products that are available, there is no reason why an individual or couple can't enjoy the comfort of living at home longer."

Another option is a home addition. Vivona said many people are choosing to modify their homes to accommodate Mom and Dad as they get older.

"We have done a lot of in-law suites to house their parents," he said.

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