

Ask and you shall receive

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Wednesday, 20 January 2010 22:51 -



Residents receive home makeovers through housing grant.

Dorotea Nessen had never really received help from anyone.

But when she realized her 1508 Avenue A home required numerous and costly repairs, the 74-year-old Gothenburg woman swallowed her pride and thought about what she could do for assistance.

After seeing a newspaper advertisement about a chance to get funds through an owner-occupied housing grant, Nessen filled out an application and was accepted into the program.

Months later, her home has a new kitchen, bathroom, furnace and laundry room flooring and a faucet and garbage disposal, windows, front door, paint and soffits and fascia.

There is now heat in her bedroom, central air conditioning, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and attic insulation.

Workers also removed two dead trees that had broken a fence that they repaired.

“It’s a miracle,” said Nessen, a native of Italy who moved to Gothenburg 11 years ago. “I couldn’t have afforded it on my own.”

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Ginger Featherngill, a fiscal officer for West Central Nebraska Development District which administers the grant, said Nessen received \$20,000 for home repairs from two grants—one from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and another from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Because of a \$236,000 DED grant, WCNDD has facilitated rehabilitation on four of 10 eligible homes within Gothenburg which are—and will be—offered assistance under Gothenburg's owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program.

WHAT QUALIFIES

Repairs may include but are not limited to:

- Handicapped accessibility for porches, bathrooms, doorways, etc.
- Furnaces, hotwater heaters and air conditioning
- Siding, doors, windows, roof and foundation repair

A maximum of \$20,000 is available to bring the home up to rehab standards as established by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

Real estate taxes, mortgage payments and property insurance must be up to date.

Featherngill said the funds are for homeowners who have qualified under income federal housing authority department guidelines.

“The grant is to improve living conditions and also improves housing stock for Gothenburg,” she explained. “It also provides jobs for contractors in the area.”

Applications will continue to be taken, she said, until 10 qualified homes are selected or until October when unused funds will return to the DED.

Featherngill said the program is an opportunity for property owners to repair homes before they become severely deteriorated.

“This enables us to meet both the immediate needs of the homeowner and the long-term needs of the community,” she explained.

Contractors within a 50-mile radius of Gothenburg are eligible to bid on rehabilitation projects. They are selected by both the homeowner and WCNDD officials, Featherngill said.

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In Gothenburg, the four homeowners will receive much-needed repairs on such things as new furnaces, windows, siding, roofing, electrical upgrades and handicap accessibility.

“West Central is proud to help rejuvenate Gothenburg’s housing stock, provide assistance to those in need, and provide work for local businessmen,” Featherngill said.

Before repairs, Nessen said she scrubbed her kitchen and bathroom but to no avail. They still appeared shoddy.

She also piled bath towels, which she had to change and wash everyday, around the bottom of her leaking toilet.

These days, Nessen doesn’t miss the draft in her kitchen she once felt. She also likes the cozy warmth in her bedroom and how a fresh coat of paint makes her ceiling sparkle.

Most importantly, she said the renovations will last forever.

Because of what was given her, Nessen said she wants to help others who want to know more about the program.

“People around here need to be more generous with each other in sharing information about such things as owner-occupied housing,” she said.

Anyone who would like to hear more about Nessen’s experience or have her help with

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paperwork can contact her at 529-1059. Applications for owner-occupied housing grants can be obtained at city hall.

For more information about the program, call city hall at 537-3668, Featherngill at 308-284-6077 or visit www.west-central-nebraska.com.

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