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Elderly aided to 'age in place'

Business modifies homes to accommodate needs of aging owners

By Howard McEwen
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WOODLAWN - Terry Rasche developed hand tremors in March. Later, he had some bouts of imbalance, problems with hand-eye coordination and his vision changed. For someone who works in home preservation and restoration, these problems were limiting his ability to work.

But Rasche has capitalized on the situation. Facing the very real prospect of how to live in his Woodlawn home while aging, he's now working to help those that are already in a place he may someday be.

Rasche has partnered with Jim and Cheryl Stegman, owners of Jim Stegman Construction Inc. to help people "age in place."

He's started with his own home, a classic Cape Cod built in 1938 by Rasche's parents.

"To date, we have only added additional grab bars and beefed up handrails.

But Jim and Cheryl are coming over to assess our laundry facility, bathrooms and other safety issues throughout and around the exterior of the house," Rasche said about his home.

Cheryl Stegman said allowing clients to age in place by renovating their homes may extend their lives.

"It is a proven fact that, as we age, we have a better chance of living longer if we are able to remain in our home," she said

. "Often, this requires renovations of existing space to allow for better clearances and accessibility. As we age and getting around becomes more and more difficult, there are so many alterations that can be made in a home to maximize comfort and usability."

Stegman's job is to assess a home and point out what needs to be changed.

Rasche's job is to see if the changes are economically feasible.

"I can then give them an idea of the value of their home and determine if it is feasible for them to make the improvements or actually go ahead and search for an alternative," Rasche said. "If physical changes to the home are the option, then the financing options of the changes can be discussed. Reverse annuity mortgages are now an option. Sometimes, the improvements out-weigh the inflation of the home. To sell a home, move and actually find an accessible lifestyle may be much more costly than that of "aging in place" where the neighborhood and location have been so comfortable for so many years."

For more information, call Jim Stegman Construction at 859-581-8080.

