

MOVING ON

Heziel Associates, which helps companies, government agencies and educational institutions evaluate programs and strategies, has moved out of its business incubator site and into new offices.

**INSIDE: BUSINESS, B-6**

The Post-Standard LOCAL

Owner of Cicero rinks denies a hotel will replace them

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Marilyn Jones, wife of former city schools superintendent, dies

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Dennis Nett / Staff photographer

KAREN LUCHSINGER reacts to her newly renovated kitchen Monday in her Abbey Road home in Onondaga. Contractor Scott McClurg and 38 companies donated labor and materials for the home makeover to help Luchsinger's husband,

Jamie, who has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly referred to as Lou Gehrig's disease. With Luchsinger are Jamie's aunt Heidi Kelly (*far left*) and his sisters Wendy Patriarco and Kim Devereaux.

Extremely Nice Makeover

Donations transform home for owner who has ALS

By Elana Zak
Contributing writer

Erica Luchsinger shrieked when she walked into her new purple bedroom, complete with matching new furniture and her name and flowers painted on the walls. She was so loud people heard her inside and outside the house.

"I love it!" the 8-year-old said Monday. "This one is more wonderful than my other (room)."

It was the first chance the Luchsinger family — Erica; her father, Jamie; mother, Karen; and brother James Jr., 11 — got to see their completely renovated home, a gift from local businesses.

Contractor Scott McClurg

syracuse.com

For a video blog of the home makeover of Jamie and Karen Luchsinger, go to blog.syracuse.com/video/

and 38 companies donated more than \$150,000 of materials and labor for the three-week home makeover. They did it to help Jamie Luchsinger, an Onondaga Hill farmer who has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly referred to as Lou Gehrig's disease.

The family originally wanted to put in a handicapped-accessible bathroom, but once McClurg saw the house, he

RENOVATIONS, PAGE B-2



Dennis Nett / Staff photographer

KIM DEVEREAUX leans over to give her brother, Jamie Luchsinger, a hug and a kiss while other family members applaud Monday outside Luchsinger's newly renovated home in Onondaga.

Neighbors

ONONDAGA COUNTY WEST



Jim Commentucci / Staff photographer

DONN SCHULDT (left) and Jim Welsh fit an area for a front window last month during renovations at the home of Jamie Luchsinger and his family, on Onondaga Hill. Jamie suffers from a debilitating illness, and the workers are among those rehabilitating his

home. Scott McClurg, president and owner of McClurg Remodeling and Construction Services in Marcellus, has spearheaded a \$150,000 project in which dozens of workers, volunteers and contributors are converting the Luchsinger home.

Willing to Help

Neighbors help a family after a member is stricken with a debilitating disease

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Gloria Wright / Staff photographer

THE LUCHSINGER FAMILY poses for a family portrait at property on Abbey Road in Onondaga. On hand are (front, from left) Henry Luchsinger Jr.; Karen Luchsinger; Jamie Luchsinger, Henry's son and Karen's husband; and Elieen

Luchsinger, Jamie's mother. Behind Karen and Jamie are their two children, Erica, 8, and James Jr., 11. In the back is Henry Luchsinger Sr., Jamie's grandfather. Volunteers are helping renovate Jamie and Karen's house.

Neighbors Rally to Aid Family

'It gives you goose bumps when you see how many people want to help in these situations.'

By Dyana Smolen
Contributing writer

When Jamie Luchsinger, of Onondaga Hill, was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) last year, he had to face a stark reality.

Not only would the 40-year-old farmer have to contend with a progressively debilitating disease that has no cure, but his family would also have to

figure out how to alter his home to accommodate the assistive equipment he would soon need.

A summer benefit sponsored by family and attended by the surrounding community provided some funding to address what Luchsinger's family members thought was a pressing need — a handicapped-accessible bathroom.

NEIGHBORS, PAGE 4

Neighbors help make living a little easier for Luchsingers

NEIGHBORS, FROM PAGE 3

But Scott McClurg, president and owner of McClurg Remodeling and Construction Services in Marcellus, saw a much bigger picture.

After looking at the bathroom and touring the rest of the 1,800-square-foot home on Abbey Road, McClurg told the Luchsingers he wanted to do more.

"I said to the family, 'let me try something and see if I can make this float,'" McClurg said. "Then I went great guns."

It wasn't long before McClurg, his 40-member team and a collection of volunteers began implementing a remodeling plan that rivals the ABC television network's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition."

Thanks to more than \$150,000 of donated materials and labor, the 30-year-old Luchsinger residence is being completely refurbished.

"I called 26 subcontractors and suppliers we deal with, and every single one of them except one has said 'whatever you need,'" McClurg said. "It gives you goose bumps when you see how many people want to help in these situations."

Eventually, even more businesses helped.

Every room in the two-story house "and then some" has been touched by McClurg's workers. The extensive project includes a new kitchen, two new bathrooms, new plumbing, new electrical and heating systems, eight new windows and a new front door.

Work officially began Oct. 13.

"One-and-a-half years ago he could pick you up like a sack of seed and throw you. Now his legs are like concrete blocks. It's all been taken away from him."

— Hank Luchsinger Jr.

To help

The Luchsinger family has set up a trust. To donate, write to: James M. Luchsinger Sr. Better Days Trust, c/o Heidi Luchsinger-Kelly, Box 15245, Syracuse 13215

with McClurg and his crew donating their evenings and weekends in order to finish the job by Monday.

So far, workers are on target, even after uncovering the unexpected.

"From the outside, (the house) looks fine, but when we opened up the bathroom floor on the second floor, all the floor joists were rotted to the point where the exterior joists were, too," McClurg said. "Those are some of the surprises we encountered that put us a day behind at least."

Before work on the house began, Luchsinger, his wife Karen, 40, and their children James, Jr., 11, and Erica, 8, packed their belongings and moved down the road to Luchsinger's parents' house. As the family is close-knit, the move was a natural one.

Luchsinger, his father and

grandfather have spent their entire lives working their nearby farm. They have seen one another through some hard times, including losing the farm to a fire and starting over.

But, according to Luchsinger's father, Hank, the fire is nothing compared to the hardship his son is currently enduring.

"Our biggest question is why," said Hank Luchsinger Jr. "He always liked to work. One-and-a-half years ago, he could pick you up like a sack of seed and throw you. Now his legs are like concrete blocks. It's all been taken away from him."

More commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, ALS is a progressive neurodegenerative condition that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. The victim's voluntary muscle movement is affected, and in late stages, leads to paralyzation.

The prognosis for those who receive an ALS diagnosis is grim.

According to Mary Lou Watson, clinical coordinator of University Hospital's ALS Research and Treatment Center, ALS patients typically die within three

to five years of diagnosis and there is only one FDA-approved drug available for treatment.

"In terms of its effect, it prolongs life for three to six months," Watson said of the drug. "That's not much."

That drug is called Rilutek, and Jamie Luchsinger is currently on it. But even so, his physical state has deteriorated to the point where he has difficulty speaking. He must also use a walker to move around and cannot take showers unattended for fear of falling.

And Luchsinger soon will need his recently acquired wheelchair, which came with a \$30,000 price tag.

As McClurg learned all of this, he experienced a sad *deja vu* that inspired him to not only fix the Luchsinger's home, but to also create some kind of lasting security for the family.

"I lost a brother to cancer, and the family goes through some pretty tough times," McClurg said. "I want while (Jamie Luchsinger) is somewhat well to see that his wife and two kids are going to be all set; to know they've got a good house, a stable house."



Jim Commintucci / Staff photographer

WORKERS INSTALL new doors and windows at the Luchsinger house on Abbey Road on Onondaga Hill last month.

Donors list

These business have contributed to the Luchsinger home makeover:

Gold Contributors (\$1,000 or more)

Apex Drywall
Attainable Restorations
Benjamin Electric
Dave Card Plumbing
Case Supply Inc.
CKH Plumbing
Mike Dugger Drywall
Doug's Electric
B4 Lumber
Erie Materials Inc.
Ferguson Enterprises Inc.
Fox Scapes
Healy Plumbing & Heating
Mike Ladouceur
Liverpool Lumber Co. Inc.
McClurg Team
Paragon Supply
Roma Tile Co. Inc.
Skaneateles Scapes
Syracuse Haulers Waste Removal Inc.
Town & Country Linoleum & Carpet Co. Inc.
VP Supply Corp.
Silver Contributors (Less than \$1,000)
P. Black Glass Co.
C&O Plumbing
Fran & Chris Dickey
Thomas W. Doray, "Mason"
La Mathieson Portable Toilets
Midgeley Photography
Mike's Painting (John Michael Morse)
Morrisville College Residential Construction Students
Kathy Petrocci
Purcell's Wallpaper & Paint
Jim Reith Show & Producer Bill
Solvay Electric Supply Inc.

To say that Karen Luchsinger is grateful for what McClurg is orchestrating would be an understatement.

"He's like an angel from God to us, because without him, we wouldn't be able to do all this," she said. "He's quite amazing."

McClurg said he doesn't want the attention for himself. Rather, he wants this communitywide effort to inspire others.

"If everybody did this, just think how good things could be," McClurg said. "Please let other people try to do the same. Let this disaster with the Luchsinger family create good for someone else. There are a lot of people in the community in need. There's nothing negative that comes out of (helping). You get paid back fivefold."