

# People in Crisis helps ailing vet get home fixed up



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Lana Samuels of People in Crisis, left, and Pete Fitzpatrick of P.J. Fitzpatrick contractors, right, stand with homeowner Edgar Neel at his home, which just got new siding.

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

COLD SPRING — You may know the house at 1057 Seashore Road in Lower Township as the former location of a car detailing business known as Ed and Delores, and you may have noticed it has become rundown.

Edgar Neel, 80, ran a detailing business with his wife there for years. She is now living in a nursing home and his ailments tied to his military service in Vietnam have limited what he could do to renovate his house.

A non-profit organization, People in Crisis, stepped in to get much needed repairs to his home. P.J. Fitzpatrick contractors, of New Castle, Del., installed new siding last week on Neel's home at no cost.

Lana Samuels, co-president of People in Crisis, had contacted Angie's List seeking a donation but a number of contractors contacted her believing they had a paying customer. She said a staff member at P.J. Fitzpatrick company took an interest in the project.

Pete Fitzpatrick Jr. said the staff member brought him the information which fit the criteria of the company's "P.J.'s Giving Hammer," that does community outreach.

The company has won awards from Habitat for

Humanity. He said items that were measured incorrectly, or the wrong item was received are stored in a "dead pile" and often donated to Habitat for Humanity.

"We can't help everyone but often a case will be brought to me, and I'll investigate it with the owners of the company, my sister and my brother-in-law, and we'll begin to run through the cost of the job and what can we get as far as support from our vendors," Fitzpatrick said.

He said installing the siding on Neel's home was a five-day project. All the siding was donated by the manufacturer, CertainTeed, which provided some of its best product, Fitzpatrick said.

J and L Building Materials donated all the other items needed for the job, he said. They are also planning to replace a sliding glass door.

Fitzpatrick said it's been a priority for him and his sister to emulate what their dad did and demonstrate they weren't in business just to make a buck but to give back as responsible members of the community.

Neel said he moved into the house in 1970 and mice had eaten holes in his old siding. He said his front steps were rotted as well as a deck. He said he has spent an outrageous amount of money on medication.

People in Crisis was able to reduce his costs to about \$2.50 per prescription, Neel said. He is suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and post-traumatic stress disorder.

"When I knocked on his door, he was jaundiced and he said, 'I just want to give up,'" Samuels said, noting he had been without heart medication for two weeks.

Samuels said pharmaceutical companies have given grants to People in Crisis.

Neel served in the Navy on the USS Constellation stationed off the coast of Vietnam for four years. The drinking water on board was desalinated ocean water.

While the desalination process removed salt, it did not remove Agent Orange, which he consumed in the water. Samuels said Neel was also exposed to asbestos on the ship from the brakes of aircraft landing on the carrier, causing his COPD.

He said he would like to have a used riding lawn mower because he is unable to push a mower to cut his lawn, which is full of tunnels from moles.

"We want to finalize everything, we want his dreams to come true and complete this home," Samuels said.

He credits People in Crisis and P.J. Fitzpatrick with saving his life.

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## Foster House

Continued from Page A1

Councilman Tom Conrad told the Star and Wave that Township Council was trying to determine what needed to be done to the house and who would pay for the work. He said the Department of Public Works cut down brush and cleaned up the grounds.

"We want to get it open to the public as soon as possible. The Historic Commission wants it open, I want it open, everybody wants it open," Conrad said.

Architectural plans are needed for restoration of the interior, he said.

Conrad said the township had a tax increase of 2.5 cents per \$100 this year, which may cause some to view restoring the Foster House as a luxury.

One idea for future use is to offer it to the Lower Township Chamber of Commerce for use as office space, he said. Having the building inhabited would contribute to its well-being, Conrad said.

He said he would like to

open the house to allow the public to walk through and have a look at the building. It would not be possible to make the entire house accessible to the disabled, Conrad said.

"I'll be honest, I wanted it done three years ago," he said of the restoration. "When we're raising taxes, we better be spending on specific things we need."

The township is receiving county Open Space Program funding for other projects, Conrad said.

## Dune Day

Continued from Page A1

"We are in the early stages of discussion with the borough about what could be done with the overgrown island and the intrusive, invasive plants that dominate most of the lake's shorelines," Bergman said. "This would require extensive planning, approvals and substantial

dollars, which would require outside funding from the state of New Jersey or other grant sources."

He said residents have raised concerns about the low water level at the south end of the lake, which appears to be becoming more land than water. The borough has agreed to seek a professional opinion and develop a plan to address

the situation.

Bassett said approvals from the state Department of Environmental Protection would be needed prior to beginning work on the island in the lake or the south end of the lake.

Thomas Reilly, of Friends of Lake Lily, said the organization would assist in fundraising for those major projects.

## MTRAC

Continued from Page A1

than just a senior citizen discount, noting there are "a lot of seniors that are very wealthy in this town."

"The thought that folks locally that are needy can't go

to the beach is horrendous to me," he said.

Hanie said the current price of a weekly beach tag is \$20. He proposed raising the price to \$25, which would increase revenue by about \$122,000.

The current rate for a three-day tag is \$15. A proposal is to raise that fee to \$20, which would produce additional revenue of about \$127,000, Hanie said. He said daily tags are priced at \$8 with a proposed hike to \$10, which would bring in an increase of about \$188,000.

Commercial beach tags are priced at \$100 with a proposed increase to \$115, which would garner about \$42,000, according to Haney.

Van Walsum suggested raising commercial tags to \$125, noting rental rates have increased significantly.

Crowley said Cape May is the only beach town to offer three-day and commercial beach tags.

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