

# NEW ENGLAND Carpenter

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A Publication for Carpenters, Pile Drivers, Millwrights, Shop and Millmen and Floorcoverers  
of the New England Regional Council of Carpenters

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## Carpenters Suited for *Extreme* Construction

Members of the Carpenters union, along with contractor Complete Concrete, were recently involved in a project that aired on national television on November 21st.

The producers of **Extreme Makeover: Home Edition** recently notified the building inspector in the town of Medfield, MA to inform him that they would be coming in to town to work on a project, and they were looking for a contractor that could handle a very unique job. The producers needed a contractor who could lay the foundation for a home, and have walls up and stripped in about 13 hour's time, working through the night. The Medfield building inspector had union contractor Complete Concrete at the top of his list.

**Extreme Makeover** is a reality television program that airs on Sunday nights at 8 pm on ABC. Currently in its third season, the show receives over 10,000 applications each week, people hoping to be selected to receive a complete transformation of their home. **Extreme Makeover** surprises the selected family, which has often suffered a recent hardship, early on a Saturday morning, by showing up on their doorstep and whisking them off to a vacation in an unannounced location. The eleven person design team, along with volunteers from the community removes everything from the current home, demolishes it, and builds a new house from the ground up in only seven days.

Erica Stahler nominated her sister Heidi Johnson, from Medfield, and her



**Extreme carpenter volunteers included, left-right Walter Bartberger, Dennis O'Donnell, a friend of David Lombard, David Lombard, retired member of Local 33, Paul Donlan, and Tim Farrell.**

family to be the recipient of a new home. Heidi's son William, who is only five years old, has spinal muscular atrophy and cannot stand or walk on his own. This genetic disorder causes a breakdown of the nerves that signal muscle movement in the body, and is eventually fatal, over time weakening all voluntary muscles in the body.

Unable to stand on his own, William's family had to carry him up to his second-story bedroom each night, and he had a lot of difficulty maneuvering his motorized scooter on the first floor of their cramped home. The community recently raised \$30,000 for the Johnson family, which was used to build a handicapped-accessible bathroom in the home. The family had also recently remortgaged their home in the hopes of funding various other renovations to make the home more accessible for their young son. In stepped the crew from **Extreme Makeover** and working with the community 14-16 hours a day, often through the night, they were able to transform the turn-of-the-century farmhouse into a new Greek Revival-style home, with a wheelchair accessible design.

Brian Breslin, owner of Complete Concrete and member of Local 535, along

with Local 535 members Tim Farrell, Jason Savageau, Eddie Eppolito, Manny Martins, Walter Bartburger, Dennis O'Donnell, Cyril Chafe, and Paul Donlan began their work Monday night, with the footings put in place at 8 pm, they worked through the night, and had the walls up and stripped by 9:30 am, Tuesday morning.

While working at the house, these volunteers discovered there was another Carpenters union member on the site. The grandfather of William, David Lounbard is a retired member of Local 33, and he was on site helping to build a new home for his grandson.

The project was completed by Saturday morning, when the family returned for the unveiling of their new home. The new home featured an open floorplan and a chair lift, which made the entire home accessible by William in his scooter. The backyard features a replica of Fenway Park, complete with a working score board on the Green Monster.

The Johnson family is grateful for their new home and hope the episode will also help them in their efforts to raise both awareness of spinal muscular atrophy as well as the much needed money for research of this rare genetic disease. ■