

Access Elevator Provides a Needed Lift

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Jonathan Tevz didn't start out to create a company to help individuals with disabilities remain in their homes; originally, he was mowing lawns and landscaping, explained Frank Wasilewski, Vice President of Access Elevator.

"John was cutting the grass and a person was living next door to one of his clients, (and the) grass was high and kept growing," Wasilewski said. "He went over to see if he could generate a new client, but the man was disabled and living on a fixed income. He cut a deal with him and said if he would pay for the gas he would mow his lawn."

For more than a year, John mowed the man's lawn and one day, he wanted to show him something outside, but the man said he hadn't been able to leave his home in three years.

"John built a ramp to get him out of the house and that is how we got started," said Wasilewski. "John began researching and found there were a lot of people in similar predicaments. He saw a huge need and that's how we got started."

Located throughout Wisconsin and in Roselle, Illinois, Access Elevator was founded in 1990 and is a leader in ADA General Contracting and is dedicated to serving those with physical disabilities.

Approximately 26 percent of Americans live with a disability, and as the population ages, that number is on the rise. The Americans with Disabilities Act attempts to ensure equal access for persons who utilize wheelchairs or other mobility devices in public spaces; however, many private homes lack basic accessibility features.

Access Elevator's primary focus is on adapting homes, businesses and automobiles to make accessibility easier.

"John started doing ramps, widening doors and adapting bathrooms, as well



▲ Access Elevator can do custom projects to accommodate the needs of their customers, such as this vertical lift for a home office. (Submitted photo)

as other little things to help people," said Wasilewski. "He got into scooters and mobility aids and a few years later, after learning about lifts, he began installing ceiling lifts, stair lifts and vertical platform lifts. He got licensed in elevators, and began doing home and commercial elevators."

Being part of the community and living as independently as possible is among the most important values and goals shared by people with disabilities, their families and advocates. An easy-to-navigate home of one's own — either rented or owned — is the cornerstone of independence for people with disabilities.

"It is important that people feel safe in their homes, and they can get out as

easily as possible," said Wasilewski. "We will lay out all the options for our clients, whether it is a handrail, rebuilding a staircase, installing an elevator or more. We generally lay out seven or eight options, which include short-term and long-term plans, and solutions to last the rest of their lives, not just the next couple of years."

Since Access Elevator began, they have helped more than 20,000 individuals and businesses navigate the best accessible options. Because they are also general contractors, they can do much more than install a ramp, handrail or elevator; they can remodel an entire kitchen or laundry room to accommodate a wheelchair.

"There are a lot of financial assistance

programs open for veterans, whether it is installing a grab bar, reconstructing a bathroom or building an entire accessible suite for them," said Wasilewski. "For those without military assistance, this type of work gets expensive, and Medicare does not offer any funding. We work with agencies and social workers for financial help, as well as apply for federal grants."

Wasilewski said working with the individual, family, medical management personnel and various funding sources has earned them high ratings in providing home and specialty modifications. Anyone interested in solving accessibility problems for their home, church or public building is invited to call and speak with their experts.

In addition to elevators, Access Elevator also provides lifts, ramps, bathroom and home modifications, wheelchairs and mobility equipment, vehicle lifts and ramps, caravans, dumbwaiters, stairlifts and more.

"We are out there to find a solution," said Wasilewski. "We will go through your daily life and really see what you need. Every home and every disability are unique, and what works best for one individual may not work for another. Every bathroom and stairway are also different. We want to cater to what our clients' specific needs are and we will walk through it with you, such as how you get to the bathroom, go to bed, get out of the house and more. We will explore all different types of solutions and work within your budget to accommodate you. Some of our clients are repeat and do a little more each year. It does get expensive, but we will work with any agency to get funding and grants."

For more information on Access Elevator or to schedule an appointment, visit www.allaboutaccess.com or call 414-727-2525 to find a location near you.