Home sweet home improvement

Photos before and after volunteers built a retaining wall that wraps around Bob Alexander’s home, one of many home repairs conducted by DAV and Wells Fargo volunteers.

Wells Fargo partners with DAV, brings urgent home repairs to veterans

Bob Alexander first noticed problems with his blood circulation a few months before leaving the Navy in 1981, leading to a diagnosis of Raynaud’s disease—a rare disorder that narrows blood vessels.

“That was the start of my disabilities,” said Alexander, a
former gunner’s mate who served aboard the USS Kitty Hawk.

The following year, ulcers began developing on his fingertips. Then came problems with his throat and breathing. In 1999, doctors at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center diagnosed him with scleroderma—a chronic disease in which the body’s immune system attacks its own organs. In Alexander’s case, his lungs are heavily targeted.

The 61-year-old was one of three Minnesota veterans, and another in Massachusetts, to receive a much-needed home upgrade thanks to a Wells Fargo Foundation grant, which is focused on addressing sustainable housing for America’s veterans.

“We knew Bob, like many of our disabled veterans, was on a fixed income, has health issues and needed work that was going to be labor-intensive and very expensive,” said DAV Department of Minnesota Adjutant Trent Dilks.

In October, 16 volunteers showed up at Alexander’s home in Minnetonka, Minn., and went to work fixing a litany of issues, including shoring up a sliding hill that has been causing damage to the house.

“I’ve tried landscaping on my own, I’ve had friends help me pulling out old railroad ties and putting a rock garden in, still to no avail,” said Alexander. “But the job everyone did was unbelievable.”

Community members, along with DAV, and Wells Fargo employees were able to landscape his yard and build a retaining wall that stretches around his home, all in a single day.

“There’s such a need for this, and having a company like Wells Fargo stepping up to fill that necessity really makes a meaningful impact for veterans like Bob,” added Dilks.

Wells Fargo Foundation has pledged $1 billion by 2025 to
address affordable housing, said Army veteran Jeff Chavannes, military community programs manager for Wells Fargo.

“The U.S. can’t afford unaffordable housing,” he said. “The DAV and their housing initiatives fit directly into the charge of us addressing housing affordability.”

“We can never do enough to express our gratitude for those who serve in the military, and we hope this DAV partnership demonstrates Wells Fargo’s appreciation and commitment to service members and veterans,” said Laurie Nordquist, Wells Fargo Community Banking lead region president and Minnesota CEO.